

**ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S  
MANAGEMENT OF THE MEDIA DURING  
THE ETHIO-ERITREAN WAR 1998-2000**

**BY  
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**SUBMITTED TO ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE  
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**A THESIS PRESENT TO THE ADDIS ABABA  
UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM  
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## **Abstract**

The development of journalism in Ethiopia is yet in its infancy. However, Ethiopia has a long tradition in journalism the first known publication *Aemiro* going back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Shimelis, 2000:7). For many people the main reasons for this are lack of professionalism due to absence of journalism training schools, and the use of media by successive governments as instruments of propaganda. The country guaranteed freedom of expression only in 1991 that led to the emergence of private press. Liberalization of the press –domestic broadcasting has not been liberalized-altered the relationship of media and the government as many private local press became too critical to the government while the government media both electronic and print remained pro government. There also emerged some middle ground private press but the government puts them all in one box.

Such an antagonistic relationship between the government and private press was to change for some time when Ethiopia was at war with Eritrea in 1998-2000. Almost all the news papers that assume different outlook on the government joined hands with the government during the war. The media served the interest of the government as they both had a shared interest of maintaining the country's 'national interest.' The fact that the media believed in the 'justness' of the war was the crucial element that had effect on the media management during the War.

# Chapter One

## I. Introduction

The term media management refers to not ‘to those engaged in the professional work of managing media organizations, but to the wide variety of practices whereby political actors may seek to control, manipulate or influence media originations in ways which correspond to their political objectives’ (McNair, 2003:135). Accordingly, this paper aims at assessing the nature of media management exercised during the Ethio-Eritrean War 1989-2000. It focuses mainly on variables that were crucial in determining the media management. These are information source; access, transportation and communication; censorship; patriotism as well as the forth estate role of the media.

Questioning what the relationship of the media and the state should be; the role of the media whether or not it should promote a country’s national interest, whose interest the national interest is e.t.c would ignite varieties of theories that have different if not contradictory views on these issues. Thus, it would be difficult to deal with all these issues and theories.

What this paper attempts to assess is how the government managed the media during the war and the variables that had influence in the shaping of the relationship between the two. The first chapter of the paper deals with the overview of the Ethiopian media and the Ethio-Eritrean War including the framework of the paper; the second chapter deals with the review of literature; the third chapter contains the methodology while the fourth and the fifth chapters present the data on media management and analyze the data, respectively.

The timing is not consistent as the paper used both Ethiopian and European calendar. European calendar is used in all the chapters except in Chapter Four and Five particularly while referring the newspapers. This is because the news papers are published in Amharic and the dates are available in Ethiopian Calendar. Besides, it is convenient for the

researcher to put the dates as published rather than converting them into European calendar.

## **1.1.2 An Overview of the Ethiopian Media**

### **Radio**

An experimental radio station existed in the 1930s which was interrupted during the Italian invasion in 1936. After Ethiopia chased out the Italian invading force Radio Ethiopia started broadcasting in 1941 with a 7 –kilowatt shortwave transmitter and five full-time employees. The broadcast was not able to scale the surrounding hills of the city of Addis Ababa. By 1970 the Radio managed to expand its broadcast to cover 40 percent of the population across all major cities, towns and hamlets of Ethiopia. The radio operated under the direction and guidance of the Ministry of Information. (Mekuria, 2005:9)

The broadcasting of Radio Ethiopia includes issues related to economic development, citizenship, public health, commerce in addition to news and international issues. Educational programs constituted 50 percent of the radio's programs while information and entertainment occupied 15 and 35 percent respectively. In 1974 the name Radio Ethiopia was changed to Voice of Revolutionary Ethiopia when Derg took power but it got its name back in 1991 following the demise of the Derg regime (Mekuria, 2005:10).

In addition to Radio Ethiopia, existed Christian voice of the Gospel established in 1963 which the World Lutheran Federation owned. With its coverage of Addis Ababa and its environs it broadcasted five and half hours daily with MW transmitter and an hour with SW transmitter every evening in Amharic, English and French languages but the national broadcast was entirely in Amharic. Christian voice of the Gospel was nationalized in 1980 by the Derg Regime. At the moment there is no religious broadcasting as the 1999 Broadcast Agency Law prohibits the setting up of religious broadcasting stations in Ethiopia (Mekuria, 2005:10).



Other radio stations the country has are FM Radio, Radio Fana, and Zami the only private radio the government allowed to operate in 2006. FM Radio covers only the capital Addis Ababa with 80% of its programs occupied by entertainment and advertisement (Ethiopia Radio Editorial Policy cited in Mekuria, 2005:25). Radio Fana's present legal status renders it private station. However, whether Fana is non-partisan has been debated (Mekuria, 2005:26). In general, the Ethiopian Radio stations can be classified in to three - governmental, party owned and 'private' station (Mekuria, 2005:25).

## **Television**

Television broadcasting was launched in Ethiopia in 1964. The Ethiopian Television expanded its coverage from one percent when established to 47 percent in 1998 and increased its staff from 31 in 1964 to 643 in 2005 ((Mekuria, 2005:11). ETV used to broadcast in Amharic and English until it also started broadcasting in Oromiffa and Tigrigna in 1991. ETV broadcasts about 8 hours a day. The television broadcasts news, economic, socio-cultural, and educational and entertainment programs which are prepared by the station. It also broadcasts news it receives from local news agencies mainly Ethiopian News Agency ENA and Walta Information Center as well as international news agencies the like of BBC, Reuters, and CNN.

ETV which is the only television the country has is a state owned station. Radio and Television broadcast is regulated by Broadcast Proclamation No. 178/1999 and it is the Ethiopian Broadcast Agency that is accountable to the Ministry of Information that governs the radio and Television enterprise. The Agency is authorized to issue, suspend, revoke license of broadcasting service, and inspect the station and take allegedly illegal materials without an order from the court.

## **Press**

Although Ethiopia has a long tradition of cleric inscription and the first news paper publication is a century old Ethiopia is yet far from having a well established vibrant free press ( Shimelis, 2000:7). Private press was non existent in Ethiopia before 1991. It was only when the present government Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPRDF took power in 1991 that freedom of expression was guaranteed first in the transitional government's charter and then in the 1995 constitution eliminating the long standing tradition of censorship. Thus, there mushroomed a range of private publications in addition to the existing government news papers which are not as popular as the private ones.

However, the circulation of news papers and magazines went down from 638 and 241 respectively in 1992 to 85 and 39 in 2005 respectively. 77 percent of news papers and 61 percent of the magazines in the country are controlled by private organizations (Mekuria, 2005:32). The weekly news papers amount to 53 while the daily, biweeklies, fortnight newspaper, monthly are 3, 2, 6 and 21 respectively. (Ministry of information)

In general, newspaper by and large reaches the urban areas very much concentrated in the capital Addis Ababa mainly due to low level of literacy. Television too is largely urban although reaches much larger people than Newspaper. Radio however remains to be the affordable medium that extended its coverage to include much of the rural population which constitutes 85% of the country's population.

### **News Agencies**

The country has only two news agencies the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) and Walta Information Center (Walta) which are both government controlled. ENA is the largest local news agency in the country which is government funded. It gathers news from all over the country through its regional desks and also from international media houses while Walta has 39 correspondents in zonal towns.

### **Journalism Training Schools**

Although the practice of journalism has a long tradition in Ethiopia the country has very few higher institutions that offer training in journalism and communications which were established recently. The first training institution is the Ethiopian Mass Media Training Instituted EMMTI that was established in 1997. So far it has graduated 552 journalists with diploma of which 210 are in print, 114 in radio and 113 TV journalism. It is only in

2004 that the institute upgraded its programs to a degree level and came under the Graduate School of Journalism and Communications, Addis Ababa University in 2005.

The second higher institution that provides training in journalism and communications is the School of Journalism and Communications, Unity University College a private higher learning institution established in 1999.

Graduate School of Journalism and Communications, Addis Ababa University is the third higher learning institution which was established in 2004 and offers a graduate program in journalism and communications.

In general, it is evident that the electronic media TV and particularly Radio that reach the mass of the population as well as news agencies are controlled by the government thus information on the Ethio-Eritrean War had been availed to the mass in the way the government wanted it. In addition, the fact that the practice of freedom of expression was guaranteed only after the 1991 transitional charter and the 1995 constitution and lack of higher institutions until after EPRDF took power contributed a lot to lack of professionalism in journalism in Ethiopia. Thus, the alternative private print medium has been affected by lack of professionalism which was reflected in their outlook on the Ethio-Eritrean War.

### **1.1.3 An overview of Ethio-Eritrean War 1998-2000**

#### **Historical Background**

Eritrea was historically a territory of Ethiopia except during the Italian colonization of Eritrea 1889-1941 (Medihane, 1999:1-2) and British military administration of 1941-1952. After 1952 Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia based on the Decision of the UN. But later Eritrea was reduced to a province by Ethiopia. Up until the colonial period the Tigrean people of today's Eritrea and the Tigrean people of the northern Ethiopia have always been kith and kin. Under the Italian colonial period Italian rulers made a large number of the Ethiopian Tigrigna –speaking population live in a different setting and experienced a relatively new historical development (Medihane, 1999:22, 26). During colonial period Eritreans particularly those who joined the colonial army had been able to make their children have access to education which resulted in the first generation of the Eritrean urban elite. Italian Fascist Party established modern infrastructure and facilities to facilitate the invasion of Ethiopia and the war economy created job opportunities for many Eritreans. Its economy was integrated in to the Italian market economy. This socio-economic change has significant implications (Medihane, 1999:27-28)

“The central and persistent element in Italian fascist propaganda was that Tigrigna-speaking Eritreans are different from the Tigray. Moreover, the Italians launched a force-backed-up propaganda which claimed that Eritreans are superior to the people south of Mereb in intelligence, creativity, moral virtues and will power” (Medihane, 1999: 29). “...up to the colonial period there was nothing wrong in relations among the Tigrigna-speaking peoples; and the so called- separate Eritrean national consciousness has a shorter history than is otherwise claimed. Colonial rule and subjugation on its part had left behind a negative socio-psychological context in Eritrea which led to mutation in the behavior of the Eritrean urban population towards Ethiopians in general and the Tigray in particular ” (Medihane, 1999: IV). “The self image and the psychological disorientation of the Eritrean urban population slowly developed into a political culture and continued to disturb relations between the Eritrean and Ethiopian political elite” (Medihane, 1999: IV, V).

The legacies of colonialism coupled with its incorporation as a province resulted in the 30 year civil war between Ethiopia and Eritrea as Eritrea fought for secession (Addis, 1998). After 30 years of struggle Eritrea became an independent state in 1993 following two years of de facto independence, with full support of the Ethiopian government under the rule of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). EPRDF took power in 1991 overthrowing the Derg regime against which both EPRDF and Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF) fought.

When Eritrea became independent the governments of both countries did not clearly deal with decisive issues including Eritreans' legal status in Ethiopia, economic co-operation modalities as well as border demarcation (Medhane 1999:135). Thus, the Ethio-Eritrean relation culminated in Eritrea's invasion of the Ethiopian-administered territory in May 1998. But until then EPRDF and EPLF cooperated on crucial issues particularly in the early days after they came to power because EPLF needed EPRDF to ensure its independence and EPRDF needed EPLF to maintain stability in Ethiopia (Mehane 1999:134).

### **Causes of the War**

TPLF and EPLF had differences on issues of ideology, politics and military strategy when they were fighting Derg which even made them engage in conflict thereby making their relation that of hostility and friendship (Tekeste 43, 2000). The political difference is witnessed in the political system both maintain in their respective countries. TPLF [EPRDF] maintained ethnic federalism with a focus on decentralization. Ethiopia also witnessed the emergence of a number of political parties as well as private press. Whereas, EPLF maintained a centralized administration undermining ethnic diversity, as well as prohibited the establishment of political parties and independent press (Henze, 2001:11; Medhane, 1999:116). As Eritrea and Ethiopia maintain different political systems Eritrea wants to ward off the spread of Ethiopia's ethnic federal system for fear that it would cause challenge from the border communities it shares with Ethiopia such as *Kunama*, *Afar*, and *Saho* (Tekeste, 2000:16).

In addition, Eritrea's aspiration to be a hegemon in the region widened the differences between the two countries (Medhane, 1999:120-125). Eritrean officials are seen saying " ' If a people could win a Soviet-backed half a –million-man army[Derg], what else can it not achieve?' (Medhane, 1999:122). "Government publications openly declared that Eritrea is destined to undertake a central and focal role in the Horn of Africa region (Profile, 1997, Dec.13 in Medhane 1999:123) .This was shown in the intent of the Eritrean leader Isayas Afeworki to have dominance in IGAD(Inter Governmental Authority on Development"(Medhane, 1999:123).

Moreover, Eritrea had an economic policy that focused on transforming resources from Ethiopia, using Ethiopia as a market for Eritrea's industrial manufactures and as a supplier of agricultural products, in addition to generating revenue from Ethiopia's use of ports of Eritrea and transferring capital from the Eritrean Diaspora in Ethiopia and elsewhere in the world. Moreover, strengthening the economy emphasized on securing foreign assistance and discovering petroleum in the Red Sea as well as exploiting the talents and skills of the government of Eritrea and the human power which they regard as " 'unique and superior'"(Addis Tribune, 1998:3). Hence, Eritrea was not comfortable with the stability and peace in Ethiopia because this was conducive for economic development as opposed to Eritrea's aspiration to make Ethiopia consumer of Eritrea's industrial goods and services (Addis, 1998:91-93).

Although Eritrea depended on Ethiopia for resources as a relatively resource poor country, Ethiopia too depended on the use of Eritrean ports for its import and export as a landlocked country. Recognizing, the mutual benefit the two countries made possible the free movement of goods and services for domestic consumption though this was not applicable on goods and services in short supply. This was realized as a result of the treaty of friendship and cooperation signed between the governments of the two countries in July 1993. The agreement however, did not allow re-exportation to a third party. Ethiopia imposed indirect taxes on its exportable goods to prevent Eritrea from re - exporting the products such as coffee. Ethiopia's restriction of franco valuta imports made Eritreans "nervous and hostile" as the system was imposed against illegal trade

(Medhane, 1999:143-145). That Eritrea was unable to import exportable goods from Ethiopia and re-export imported goods to Ethiopia, made Eritrea feel “effectively shut out of the Ethiopian economy.” The economic relation was further aggravated by the disagreement on procedures and charges of Eritrean port and Ethiopia’s preference to import petroleum through Djibouti which was cheaper than through Eritrean port Assab ( Tekeste, 2000:33).Although Ethiopia claims it realized free trade Eritrea considers Ethiopia as a country that follows a protectionist policy because Ethiopia reserved certain investment opportunities for Ethiopian nationals (Medhane:1999:147) .

Furthermore, even if Eritrea was using Ethiopia’s currency Birr Eritrea introduced a new currency Nakfa in November 1997 to destabilize the Ethiopian economy (Medhane, 1999:149) with out consultation with the Ethiopian government on its consequences on trade and investment as well as fiscal and monetary policy (Addis, 1998:45). In response, Ethiopia wanted to use dollar as a medium of exchange. But, Eritrea was against this as 65 percent of its trade was with Ethiopia which affects its foreign currency reserves (Kinfu, 2004: 112). Ethiopia that was afraid of the outflow of birr notes from Eritrea (Medhane, 1999:149) introduced its own new bank notes. Eritrea wanted the currencies of both countries to have equal value and to be serviceable freely in both countries which Ethiopia opposed as the two countries do not any longer have the same exchange policy regimes. For Eritrean government putting in place the new trade policy was regarded as “ a declaration of economic war” (Tekeste, 2000:43).

On the other hand, others argue that Ethiopia’s expansionist nature caused the war because Ethiopia wanted to ‘embark on its old expansionist designs against Eritrea on the pretext of a border dispute’ ([http://www.dehai.org/conflict/articles/saba\\_ethio-eritrea\\_war\\_makes\\_sense.html](http://www.dehai.org/conflict/articles/saba_ethio-eritrea_war_makes_sense.html)).They argue that up until 1974 Ethiopia was ruled by feudal monarchy that oppressed the masses of the people and conducted colonial war to annex Eritrea. Even if the masses managed to realize a democratic revolution in Ethiopia and overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie the pseudo- socialist Derg took over and perpetrated the operation of the masses and the colonial war against Eritrea. Eritrea fought and gained its independence and the Ethio-Eritrean war was conducted to reverse

Eritrea's independence. '...in just seven years after gaining power the TPLF was pressing the masses into a bloody crusade to reverse Eritrean independence' (Frank, 2000:) (<http://home.flash.net/~comvoice/25cEritrea.html>)

## **The War Episode**

After launching an attack in May and June the Eritrean military forces occupied different locations within Ethiopia such as Badme, Alitena, Aigar, Zalambessa and Gada(Kinfe, 2004:119). After Eritrea's invasion of the Ethiopian administered locations Ethiopians' goods in the ports of Massawa and Assab worth millions of dollars were confiscated and the freedom of Ethiopians residing in Eritrea was restricted (Henze, 2001:7).

"...the first round of fighting was brief, bloody, but confined to clashes along the border between 22 May and 11 June. There was also a series of air raids that resulted in a number of civilian casualties. On the ground the fighting centered on three areas: around Sherraro and Badme in the West, around the town of Zalambessa on the road linking the two countries in the center, and in the far south for control of the road to the Eritrean port of Assab" (Gilkes, 1999:27). During the war the two countries employed bitter propaganda (Vestal, 1999:193)

Many Ethiopians consider Eritrea as part of Ethiopia and were against the independence of Eritrea. In Ethiopia there was a popular demonstration against the aggression of Eritrea. The Ethiopian people actively responded to the sweeping mobilizations of civilians into the military. People expressed their support by waving their hands and shouting while seeing military trucks leaving towns packed with the mobilized youth and adults who were roaring with excitement all along. Regional governments, organizations, private companies and even individuals were contributing moral and material support to the war efforts. People were extending support both in cash and material including sheep to the armed force in the front for slaughter. Even the regular TV entertainment shows held on holidays were held at the front with the military where popular singers participated to maintain the morale of the military and engage the civilians in the war efforts.



In an effort to mediate the two countries the international community took a number of initiatives including African countries - Djibouti, Egypt Burkina Faso Kenya, Rwanda Zimbabwe-; European countries- France, Germany, Italy, UK ;the United States as well as international organizations - OAU, UN ,EU-

However, the war continued though with interruption up until 31 May, 2000 when Ethiopia announced that the war was over as it had the military upper hand (Henze, 2001:36) and the two countries signed through mediation an agreement on cessation of hostilities on 18 June 2000 in Algiers and agreed to international arbitration.

But there still remains tension between the two countries due to controversies over the final ruling of the border commission which is not yet implemented leaving the boundary undemarcated.

### **Consequences of the War**

The war is estimated to have claimed the lives of 70,000 to 100, 000 people (Woodward, 2003 194-5). It involved about 500,000 troops and displaced about 600,000 civilians. The war cost Ethiopia about one billion dollars for armaments alone (Tekeste, 2000:53) not to mention its economic, political and social impacts.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

"War is among the most horrific of activities pursued by mankind. Under a cloak of military splendor and the prospect of glory, war is cruel, bloody and destructive. Its reporting, however, makes brilliant news: it offers excitement, anxiety and horror and sometimes exultation or despair."(Hudson and Stanier, 1998: xi-xii)

"War sells." (Carruthers, 2000:3). During wars across the world the media has been playing an important role although some argue that its effect is minimal. But there is no debate that most governments try to use the media as tools to realize their causes. Many people have written about different wars and the media while no significant study has been done on Ethiopian media and war though Ethiopia is a country whose history is

characterized by conflict and war. The Ethiopian media has been witnessed forging ties with the government when it was engaged in war with Eritrea in the region, which is politically unstable.

The Ethio-Eritrean War of 1998-2000 claimed the lives of thousands of Ethiopians and Eritreans and had considerable political, economic and social impacts. What is more, Ethiopia is just an emerging democracy, which witnessed a private press only a decade and a half ago. However, there has been no significant study on the reporting of Ethio-Eritrean war, which the writer believes, made pertinent bodies and people unable to have an organized knowledge of the media and the war. Although several aspects of the media and the war –performance of the media, the role of the media, state-media relationship– could be studied this paper aims at assessing the government’s management of the information and the media including the role patriotism played in making the government get compliance from the media during the Ethio-Eritrean war.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

- Did media have access to information?
- How did the government manage the flow of information?
- What were the institutional and social factors that influenced journalists in obtaining and disseminating information?
- Did the media believe in the justness of the Ethiopian government’s aims and in the delegitimation of the enemy?
- Were journalists reflecting their convictions considering themselves as part of the Ethiopian society?
- To what extent do the government and private press differ in their position towards the war?

## **1.4. Hypothesis**

During the Ethio-Eritrean War both the government and the domestic media – government and private- assumed similar stance on the ‘national interest’ that made information management less challenging task for the government.

## **1.5. Objectives of the Study**

### **General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to explore the information management system the government of Ethiopia exercised during the Ethio-Eritrean War.

### **Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study include:

- To assess and analyze how the government controlled the media.
- To study the media management techniques the government employed.
- To assess the variables especially patriotism that were crucial in shaping the relationship between state and media.
- To examine whether there was difference in government’s relations with the government media, private media and international media.

## **1.6. Significance of the study**

The history of Ethiopia has been highly marked by conflict and War, the recent one being the Ethio-Eritrean War that left thousands dead, displaced, maimed, orphaned, and widowed not to mention its political and economic impacts. However, there has not been research conducted on media and the war, which caused lack of an organized knowledge of the media in relation to war. Amid rising tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea this paper provides an understanding of the Media’s relation with the state during the Ethio-Eritrean War. The researcher believes both the media as well as the government can draw lessons from their past experience which this paper aims at addressing. The study will

make a useful contribution concerning the media and Ethio-Eritrean War on which no study has been carried out.

### **1.7. Scope of the Study**

People have been interviewed both from private and government media as well as international media who reported on the Ethio-Eritrean War. Government officials including the then Ethiopian government's spokesperson had been interviewed.

The study selected the editorials and news of three news papers namely *Addis Zemen*, *Reporter* and *Tobia* published a month before the war and two weeks after the war started. In addition, it included one week publications of the three newspapers after the international final and binding ruling by the boarder commission.

### **1.8. Limitation of the Study**

The research was undertaken about six years after the end of the Ethio-Eritrean war. Thus, the journalists particularly the international media correspondents were not available as they had already left Ethiopia by the time the research was conducted. The fact that there were not many international journalists to be interviewed had made the information generated on the international media limited.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

### **2.1 An overview of the media during war**

The world has been characterized by war through out history. While states have been conducting war media had also been playing its part particularly following the development of mass press as well as radio, television and internet. But there is no consensus on the role media play during war. Some argue that it has influential power while others undermine its effect which led to the development of various theories ranging from considering the audience as passive consumers to active negotiators and interpreters of media message. Though the role media play is controversial in war time states have been using the media at different points in history as one of the tools to realize their cause. This was sometimes done with the consent of the media itself as history witnessed.

During the American Civil War 1861-1865 maintaining the morale of civilians and the army was what most of the correspondents considered as the basic element of their responsibility as Knightley stated. Although the American Civil war was covered extensively with only the New York Herald assigning 63 correspondents and spending about one million USD to cover it “...majority of the Northern correspondents were ignorant, dishonest, and unethical; that the dispatches they wrote were frequently inaccurate, often invented, partisan, and inflammatory.” Knightly describes the time as an “age of declamatory journalism” which undermined ‘objectivity’ (Knightley, 2000:19, 21). One of the reasons for reporting the civil war poorly was the inexperience of journalists as the job was not attractive since it did not pay well by then on top of being a demanding task ((Knightley, 2000:22-23). In addition, reporting was affected by poor communication that caused delay and even loss of letters. Moreover, censorship imposed to stop publication of helpful information to the enemy extended to include preventing criticism of engaging in the war. Furthermore, war correspondents were not genuine correspondents as they were serving officers who were willing to send a telegram or a letter when situations allowed (Knightley, 2000:24, 25).

The media continued to serve political purposes to disseminate official information, to sustain home morale, to persuade and spread propagandist messages in the twentieth century too. Gorman and McLean stated that during 1939-1945 totalitarian regimes as well as democracies exercised wartime controls over information and made the media serve their own purposes in a war of competing ideologies. They made note of how during both World War I and World War II journalists and news agencies inclined to willingly collaborate with governments, heading to censorship requirements, and joining hands in the war effort. According to the writers war reporting took little consideration of accuracy than impact as there was little conflict between the mass media and political and military leaderships, and journalists often supported nationalist patriotic causes (Gorman and McLean, 2003:170-171).

The Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s made the mass media, particularly television to attract attention in an attempt to give explanation about the American defeat in the Southeast Asian conflict (Gorman and McLean, 2003:170). Although television has been considered as being “capable of ‘losing war’ ” (Mandelbaum, 1982:157 cited in Carruthers, 2000:4), the role the media played in determining the outcome of the Vietnam War has been contested.

Reports of journalists who covered the Vietnam War faced accusations of assisting the enemy. A former Vietnam correspondent a long-serving Asia expert Robert Elegant, is quoted by Knightley as saying “ ‘For the first time in modern history the outcome of war was determined not on the battlefield but on the printed page and, above all, on the television screen...never before Vietnam had the collective policy of the media-no less stringent a term will serve- sought by graphic and unremitting distortion, the victory of the enemies of the correspondents’ own side’ ” (Knightley, 2000:470).

However, for Knightley this was not correct because most of the journalists as everyone engaged in the war were unable to grasp the complexity and ramifications of the War and be of any help to the enemy. What was important about the accusations as knightly put it was, how it influenced governments across the world to be ware of letting the media

enjoy access to the war front and how to manage information flow during war which made it difficult for correspondents to enjoy access in the wars to follow (Knightley, 2000:470). Governments took measures to limit media freedom in the 1980s limited wars unlike in the case of Vietnam War characterized by the absence of formal censorship, and in which numerous journalists had gone to Vietnam and had no constraints by strict military controls though they depended on the military for transport and communications out of necessity (Gorman and McLean, 2003:176).

One such example is what the British government practiced while Britain was at war with Argentina in 1982 over the Falklands, group of islands in the South Atlantic between the two countries. The British Ministry of Defense's accreditation paper given to journalists covering the War says " 'the essence of successful warfare is secrecy; the essence of successful journalism is publicity'" (Carruthers, 2000:4-5) which shows the antagonistic nature of the relationship between journalists and the military although the media had been witnessed collaborating with governments in different wars as shown above. The British government and military leadership followed a policy of " 'deception, misinformation, disinformation and media manipulation through denial of access, control of communications and politically based censorship.' " (Gorman and McLean, 2003:176-77) in addition to securing support at war front and home front under the pretext of patriotism and regarding deviants as traitors (Knightley, 2000:482).The government and the military managed to use these restrictive measures because the war was short and limited and in a remote area (Gorman and McLean, 2003:176-77); thus, were able to keep the public uninformed through managing the media (Knightley, 2000:477-78).This was not however, made possible with out some consent of the British media. Some newspapers "...supported the government all the way, even to the extent of attacking other newspapers or television programs that expressed the slightest reservation about Britain's actions" (Knightley, 2000: 481).

In contrast to what most of the British media practiced Dorman and Livingston stress the need to question a country's foreign policy as well as stimulating debate on alternatives especially during a state's engagement in war. They argue that " ' The quality of news

coverage is never more important than when a society is pondering whether to wage war' as would any liberal proponent of the press' democratic function: to apprise citizens fully on matters of foreign and domestic significance, there by encouraging informed deliberation of policy options"(Dorman and Livingston,1994,63;Peer and Chestnut, 1995:84 cited in Carruthers, 2000:39).

Failure to stimulate debate on foreign policy alternatives continued to be seen also in the case of the August 1990 gulf war when the U.S media failed to inform the public and stimulate debate on policy alternatives the country had to follow after Iraq invaded Kuwait. The mainstream media in the US seemed to have supported the use of force over continued economic sanctions against Iraq, or the diplomatic negotiations brokered by the UN-at the time of Operation Desert Shield-"when the USA mustered in Saudi Arabia the largest coalition of forces deployed since the Second World War". Media were silent about US- Iraq relations in the 1980s. Iraq was not represented as major threat to international stability before 1990 by the US mainstream media which might have had an impact on the US foreign policy towards Iraq. "... more attentive American media would have alerted Americans to the nature of the Iraqi regime at an earlier stage, and that this vigilant public might not accordingly have tolerated the 'appeasement' of Iraq by both Reagan and Bush(Lang and Lang, 1994,59-60 in Carruthers, 2000:39-40)which might have "encouraged Iraq's adventurism"(Dorman and Livingston, 1994, 71 in Carruthers, 2000:40).

The war against Iraq further witnessed the ineffective role of media in spite of extensive coverage. "Nearly one thousand media personnel –on the ground, in the air and at sea-would miss nothing. It would be the biggest news-gathering operation in the history of television. Money would be no object- CNN alone would have a budget of 35 million USD. A radical American plan for managing wartime media perpetuated an illusion that the Iraq war was a triumph for modern media and its technology. In reality, it was an overwhelming victory for the military and its propagandists" (Knightley, 2000:529).



This shows that the media had been by and large witnessed being an ally of state during war than being an opponent even when there is access to war and extensive coverage on top of experience and advanced professionalism. For Gorman and McLean "... a review of the relationship of the media and government during ...wars of the twentieth century serves as a reminder that in most cases media cooperated with governments, complied with measures such as censorship, implemented to protect the national interest in war time, or indeed acted in such a way that regulation was unnecessary. From this perspective the adversarial stance of some media during the late 1960s and 1970s was an aberration rather than the norm" (Gorman and McLean, 2003:179-80).

On the other hand, the media in general has been reporting on what provokes governments since the early twentieth century up until the recent war against Iraq- as in the case of William Howard Russel who in 1854 Crimean War reported the incompetence of the British military officials in Malta and sufferings of the soldiers – attack leadership of the officers, weaknesses and misery of the army, the medical services-(Knightley, 2003:10); and as in the case of exposing the abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghraib by the American army.

The reasons why states have been striving to get the compliance of media as shown at different wars above include ensuring victory, national security, legitimacy, as well as for misinforming and confusing the enemy, and disseminating propaganda. Because of mistrust of the media and its influential power during war, although many academicians undermine the effect of media, the lay people particularly the government and military believe that "the act of representing war" has anti war effect. For instance the military and policy makers regard Television as the most influential medium due to its 'sheer audience size, visual impact and immediacy' (Carruthers, 2000:7, 8).

" 'Operational security' " is often the reason for governments' manipulation of presentation of war as "... untrammled media may stab the military in the back- that unregulated images generate intrinsically anti-war effects" (Carruthers, 2000:9).

Also in their attempt to ensure popular legitimacy governments strive to use the media to persuade their people the justness of their war and the ruthlessness of the enemy, and this projection of the image of the enemy is a necessary precondition for war (Carruthers, 2000:5,24).

For Wilhelm Kempf the reason why governments take so much pain to control the media is social and psychological.

“... the actions of the conflicting parties are not determined by the objectively defined conflict situation(i.e., the actual incompatibility of their rights, intentions and actions )but rather by their subjectively defined perceptions of the conflict. People do not act because of the objective nature of things in their environment but because of the meaning these have for them.(Blumer, 1973 cited in Kempf, 2003:4)...Meanings are the result of social negotiation process and are constituted in the social discourse-here in the discourse with in and between the conflicting partners. In the case of political conflict, the media take on an important mediating role and this is why warring parries always try to ensure that media reporting serves their propaganda aims.”(cf.Jaeger, 2003, in Kempf, 2003:4).

## **2.2 Media Compliance and Media Management Techniques**

During war states employ a range of techniques to manage the media and meet their purpose while the media provides compliance to the government by favoring and serving the purposes of states through playing different roles as well as through subjugation to war time impositions.

One of the roles media is made to play is legitimizing the use of force as the best option over other alternatives for self defense from an enemy labeling it as a threat. (Keen, 1986 cited in (Carruthers, 2000:44)

“ the themes of states and media ‘pre-propaganda’ are often notably similar: and insistence that the Other began hostilities, or is intent upon launching them (thus making

a pre-emptive, 'defensive' attack necessary); a return to history for evidence to justify (and perhaps nurture) this sense of victimization; and a corresponding focus on enemy 'atrocities' (verified, rumored or invented). Such atrocity stories may justify retaliatory attack, and, intensifying to the Other's lesser humanity, also sanction treatment otherwise considered inhumane, even within war time's extended parameters of the morally acceptable" (Keen, 1986 cited in Carruthers, 2000:52)

The Military exerts efforts to also use the media as instrument to "forge the bonds between home front and the fighting front" by intensely engaging the civilians in the war efforts and maintaining the military morale (Carruthers, 2000:5).

Media is manipulated not only for cheerleading specially when the people are regarded as "willing participants in 'a war culture'" but also for meeting tactical objectives of confusing or deceiving the enemy through misinformation which some journalists protest when they discover it after wars end although others are part-takers as in the 1991 Gulf War concerning the direction of looming assault of the Allied force on Kuwait and if it would be by land or sea (Carruthers, 2000:6).

In addition, the military has been witnessed engaging in "black propaganda" disseminating information without disclosing the right source particularly using radio, as in the case of World War II where the militaries of German and Allied powers run clandestine radio to disseminate disillusion and defeatism among each other's forces (Cruikshank, 1977; Howe, 1982; Bergmeier and Lotz, 1997 cited in Carruthers, 2000:6-7). This was also practiced, after four scores, in the Gulf war Operation Desert Shield where the coalition forces carried out "black broadcasting" (Taylor, 1997 cited in Carruthers, 2000:6-7).

Governments further employ patriotism as a tool to make the media behave in the way they desire. Patriotism is manipulated as an instrument of guaranteeing compliance from the media attaching national interest to the ends for which the country engaged itself in war (Carruthers, 2000:9). The Falklands War demonstrates the challenges journalists

faced in questioning resort to War which was even perceived as forsaking the national cause.“ The Falklands episode illustrates the difficulty that journalists face in questioning the efficacy or morality of military solutions to diplomatic crisis once mobilization is underway; this phenomenon was also observed during the months of Operation Desert Shield in 1990. To demur is to open oneself to charges of ‘treachery’, ‘defeatism’ and ‘back-stabbing.’ Paradoxically, dissidents (or those branded as such) are treated as though their very doubts about military action endanger the lives of their country’s armed forces, even though diplomatic alternatives aim to forestall loss of military life and are sometimes endorsed by strategists themselves (General Colin Powell, for example, supported lengthier UN sanctions against Iraq) (Carruthers, 2000:52-53).

For governments being unpatriotic included even the reporting of deficiencies of home military (Knightley 2003:6). Moreover, there is accusation by government of being of assistance to enemy and breaches of security on top of maintaining control over information flow (Knightley 2003:11).

Wartime impositions further include censorship, restrictions and reluctance to provide immunity to journalists and means of communications (Gorman and McLean, 2003:171; Knightley, 2000:476; Carruthers, 2000:13)

The media management employed by the American administration during the Iraq War could be reduced to the following four points:

“1.Emphasize the dangers posed by the Iraqi regime; 2-Dismiss and discredit those who cast doubt on these dangers;3- Do not get involved in appeals to logic but instead appeal to the public’s hearts and minds, especially hearts; 4-Drive home the message to the public: ‘ Trust us. We know more than we can tell you’ ” (Knightley, 2000:529).

The Pentagon came up with this kind of plan drawing lesson from past several experiences. “The pentagon could impose the ‘pool’ system whereby it would escort a small number of war correspondents to the front and they would file ‘pooled reports’ for

the rest of the media. But the media so hated this in the first Gulf War.” “In Afghanistan, the balance had moved even further in favor of the military because of the Coalition’s reliance on air power (impossible for the media to cover) and special operations (off limits for the media) until even the few pools that were arranged were abandoned” (Knightley, 2000:529-30).

Having learned the media’s exposition of the casualties from American bombing in Afghanistan “ Pentagon sought a media strategy that would turn back attention to the military’s role in the war, especially the part played by ordinary American service men and women. This would require getting war correspondents ‘on side.’ But every system that the Pentagon had tried for managing the media in wartime before now had aroused the media’s ire precisely because it felt it was being *managed*. What if, instead of managing the media, the Pentagon incorporated the media into the national war effort-enlisting its vast resources in the service of the country as it had done in the Second World War.” Then came “ ‘ embedding’ ” (Knightley, 2000:530-31).

Pentagon was successful with its strategy of embedding which worked out for controlling most of the correspondents (Knightley, 2000:533).

Apart from government intervention Journalists also face social-psychological pressures as they operate with in the political, economic and social structure of the society they belong to. “News organizations do not float detached from their society’s political, cultural and economic structures.” (Kempf, 2003:3-4; Carruthers, 2000:15)

The relationship between media and audience is another important element to consider as some emphasize on the existence of reciprocal relationship between the two in shaping content as well as form of news while others who do not consider the audience as important do not agree with this (Schlesinger, 1987:116; Hallin and Gitlin1994 cited in Carruthers, 2000:19-20). The audience makes the media decide the extent to which war is presented. J. Taylor argues “certainly, decisions about how much of war to reveal-where to draw boundaries around the showable and sayable- are often rationalized with

reference to public sensibilities, not state sensitivity. Self-censorship is thus undertaken, at least ostensibly, in the interests of ordinary viewers or readers, not to protect the state from potentially embarrassing or damaging images, opinions or disclosures” (J.Taylor, 1998 cited in Carruthers, 2000:20).

### **2.3 Intervention in Media during Peace Time**

War time intrusion of states is considered as a unique situation that presents challenges for journalists, but such challenges are not special as intervention also exists in peace time although it might take different forms.

Challenging Senator Hiram Johnson’s statement in 1917 ‘when war comes the first casualty is truth’ Carruthers says “... the aphorism may be misleading. Applied to the realm of journalism, it might suggest that peace and war constitute two quite distinct spheres, in which reporters necessarily operate differently: in peacetime, they convey truth, while in war time, half-truths, propaganda and lies. But where truth slides into half-truth or outright falsehood may be difficult to determine, and whether journalists can ever hope to convey ‘the truth’-whether there is indeed a truth to be told- is a moot point, both at the level of philosophical abstraction and of professional practice” (Carruthers, 2000:22).

In peace time too states exercise intrusion in media even setting a legal frame work with in which the media has to operate in order to prevent libel, protect honor and reputation of individuals and wellbeing of citizens just to mention a few. Even in USA a country whose libertarian tradition is strong, freedom of speech as Caruthers puts it is ‘rarely absolute’ although countries differ in classifying what is decency, treason or blasphemy. Media is subject to legislation governing ownership specially “ ‘cross-ownership’ ” of various media outlets in an attempt to prevent individuals or corporations from monopoly which undermines plurality of out put. Measures are also taken to stop the spread of politically undesirable material (Carruthers, 2000:22). In the Ethiopian case the country’s constitution which stipulates that people have the right to freedom of expression limits

this right to protect the reputation of people; the wellbeing of the youth; and national security. Thus, it is apparent that intrusion also exists in peacetime.

Nevertheless, unlimited intrusion in the public's right to know and the media's practice of its watchdog or the Fourth Estate role is not justifiable in a democracy. According to normative theory there must be "a gradation in the democratic state's practice vis-a-vis media as war escalates in magnitude. In other words, while there may be a place during 'limited war' for measures to protect operational secrecy, conflict over limited (sometimes politically contentious) objectives does not legitimize sweeping censorship which a war of 'national survival' may necessitate." (Young and Jesser, 1997 in Carruthers, 2000:11-12).

Concerning self censorship which is practiced in wartime in an effort to decide the extent of revealing war by distinguishing between the "sayable" and "showable" it is also witnessed in peace time as taste and tone are taken in to consideration in news. (J. Taylor, 1998 cited in Carruthers, 2000:20). Hence, as part of the society to which journalists as well as news organizations belong they live with institutional as well as social- psychological pressure (Kempf, 2003:3-4).

Carruthers rejects the assumption that "media simply mirror a world 'out there.' By considering this as a naïve premise Carruthers argue that " regarding themselves often as mere 'mirrors' to reality, journalists deny what invariably distorts their reflections. They belong to socio-economic classes and ethnic groups; they are male or female; they have certain predispositions and views (even if they think they successfully suppress them)..." (Carruthers, 2000:15, 17, 18). This shows that in peace time too media operates under different interventions. Therefore " ... 'war should not be seen as a special case of how the media works' but rather as a magnifying glass which 'highlights and intensifies many of the things that happen in peacetime ...' "(Williams, 1992:15 cited in Carruthers, 2000:13)

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.1. Design of the Study**

Qualitative method has been used to conduct the study on The Ethiopian Government's information and media management during the Ethio-Eritrean War,1998-2000 whose main objective is to explore the information management system the government of Ethiopia exercised during the Ethio-Eritrean War.

Beyond just describing and analyzing information management through interview, content analysis of the themes of the editorials and news of three selected newspapers was carried out to assess the decisive variables that shaped information management.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

The study by and large was based on primary sources-interviews and editorials and news - in addition to reviewing literature on the subject matter.

Journalists from three news papers, Ethiopian Television and Radio, international media as well as the former spokesperson of the Ethiopian government have been interviewed. The interviews carried out with all the interviewees were face to face from May –July 2006 in Addis Ababa all in the offices of the interviewees except for four -Abdusamad, Demissie Tsige, -who were interviewed in a deliberate choice of venue.

The Amharic *Addis zemen* , *Tobia*, *the Reporter* and the English *Reporter* were chosen for this study. *Addis Zemen* is government owned daily (except Mondays) news paper that has been published for over 60 years and is known for being a pro government news paper. *Tobia* is a private owned publication which is popular for being critical to the government, which is banned now. *The Reporter* is a weekly private news paper which assumes a middle position between the two, *Tobia* and *Addis Zemen*. Thus, carrying out the study on these three news papers which assume different positions towards the government- including its foreign policy- would be of paramount importance to assess their stand towards the war from different stand points.



### **3.3. Sampling**

The analysis mainly focused on the interviews carried out with journalists from private news papers, government news papers and the international media and with the then spokesperson. Non- random sampling /purposive sampling technique was employed to select the editorials and news of three news papers namely *Addis Zemen*, *Reporter* and *Tobia* published a month before the war and two weeks after the war started. In addition, it included one week publications of the three newspapers after the international final and binding ruling by the boarder commission.

Purposive sampling technique was used to have a representative media outlook on and experience during the war. Failing to represent the media particularly the domestic ones which can be categorized in to three pro -government, critical to the government and middle ground news papers, would be failing to give the full picture of the media management. In addition, conducting semi structured interview with the journalists and the former spokesperson had an advantage of providing intensive insights into the media management during the war. With regards to the newspapers sampling, it was also important to distribute the samples over different stages of the war because taking all the samples at one point of the war may give a certain stance and practice of the media which may lead to hasty generalization.

## Chapter Four

### The Ethio-Eritrean War and the Ethiopian Media

#### Data Presentation

##### 4.1 Sources of Information

A spokes person office was established sometime after the war started which was non-existent before. The newly established spokesperson office itself had to set up a system of acquiring information by arranging focal persons in concerned institutions such as the Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The spokes person office did not have its own office and started operation based in Sheraton Hotel. Nor did the office have a structure as such. There were only six persons -the spokesperson, her assistant, initially one secretary and later another secretary, and two office cleaners. The employees including the spokes person herself were at first in the pay roll of their respective former government organizations. Its branch office in Mekele, the capital of the region where the war was going on, also functioned in a public hotel which it got for free. Later an emergency fund was allotted for running the office. The then spokes person Solome Tadesse regularly addressed government, private as well as international media by holding daily briefings; issuing written statements; responding to inquiries and arranging exclusive interviews as well as making her office available even after hours and by giving her personal mobile telephone number. The spokes person's office was the only official source of information on the war although other ministries such as Trade and Investment provided information on some issues related to the war such as goods in transit at the Eritrean port (Amare).

*I used to provide all the information I had except that which I withheld for the sake of national security such as the number of forces, the type of armaments, and the composition of forces. And even in that, I was telling the press that I knew the information but I would not tell for security reasons. However, I did not make up numbers or lied. Thus, this helped me develop trust and establish a very good relationship with the press. I did this because I learned quickly that when you tell the*

*truth, it creates trust because of which the journalists did not try to nail me on something I did not know (Solome).*

Even when something that might affect the relationship of the office with the press happened the spokesperson personally handled the problem by meeting the journalists when they got wrong the information the office provided them, such as misquoting or as in one case lying that the spokesperson defected when she went abroad for personal reason. For Solome this conveyed a negative message which affects national interest for which the news paper asked her an apology saying they did it to boost the sale of the newspaper as such kind of story attracts many readers (Solome).

Some of the news papers had already prepared their sources of information ahead of the war. The reporter had had very diverse sources of information- inhabitants in the nearby towns of the war front Tigray who phoned through information and supplied tip-offs and got modest payment just to cover their expense-they were mentioned on the newspaper as 'our sources'-; people in Eritrea mainly who had grievances with the Eritrean government and helped the paper willingly with out any payment; anonymous Ethiopian government officials including the military; experts and concerned people abroad. It made preparation and set up its network of information sources months ahead of the war because it foresaw war was imminent, for which reason the editor in chief went to Eritrea to interview the Eritrean authorities including the president Isayas Afeworki (Amare). Reporter's sources for the news also included official statements of both Ethiopian and Eritrean governments; opposition parties' statements; experts (*Reporter*, V.3 No37/142); professional associations; local media (ruling party radio)( *Reporter*, Vol. 3 No. 39/144; No. 40/145)and international media (Libyan news agency, Egyptian news paper (*Reporter* Vol. 3 No37/142), VOA, Reuters, BBC( *Reporter* Vol. 3 No. 39/144), The Washington Post(*Reporter* Vol. 3 No. 40/145); inhabitants along the boarder; eye witnesses(*Reporter* Vol. 3 No. 36/141; No.38/143); anonymous inside sources in the government(*Reporter* Vol. 3, No. 36/141);Ethiopian Prime Minister's press briefing given to foreign correspondents and Ethiopian government media journalists(*Reporter* Vol. 3 No. 39/144).

The reporter had ample sources of information. The editor in chief of the reporter Amare Aregawi said “our sources were reliable and got information on even what the Ethiopian military was doing against the Eritrean trucks supplying logistics.” One way the Editor in Chief of the *Reporter* got information was by guaranteeing its sources specially most Ethiopian officials the right to confidentiality as they are afraid of abuse of information they provide to the private press, coupled with their lack of understanding and the culture of reluctance to provide information as well as suspicion that the newspapers may not protect their right to confidentiality (Amare). However, the fact that he is a former member of the ruling party EPRDF has helped him win the trust of some officials whom he had known when they were comrade in arms during the armed struggle against the defunct Derg regime. Further more, he knew how to make the officials disclose information.

*Our officials are not willing to provide information on something one has no clue about but, when we tell them the information we have and that we are to publish it then they open up at least for the sake of amending it if we got it wrong or exaggerated as well as to vindicate themselves ( Amare).*

Another newspaper *Tobia*, a popular private paper which is critical to the government, had used inhabitant informants in the area some of whom were themselves victims of the war as they lived near the war front while others were teachers in the area. These sources gathered information from the local people and they themselves witnessed some of what was happening. They sent tip-offs to the newspaper by sending letters with travelers using public transportation as well as making phone calls. The then editor in chief along with his colleagues cross-checked information and did not take certain information from one source alone. Some of the people were already the news paper’s sources of information in peacetime and they carried out this task because they were willing and interested although the newspaper paid them modestly just to cover the expense incurred while carrying out the job. The editor in chief says “we already had developed trust and we never found the information they gave us wrong.” The paper also had its anonymous

sources within the military. Apart from having no access to war zone it required logistics and finance to deploy the news paper's journalists for which reason the newspaper did not send its correspondents.

The reports it published included information obtained from Ethiopians living along the disputed border; Ethiopian evacuees from Eritrea (*Tobia* Vol.5 No.6); TPLF party Radio (*Tobia* Vol. 5 No.10); Ethiopian diaspora ; prominent personalities in Ethiopia; statements of opposition parties to Ethiopian government ; opposition parties to Eritrean government (*Tobia* Vol. 5 No.7); various civil society associations (*Tobia* Vol. 5, No.9); inside sources in the Eritrean military (*Tobia* Vol. 5 No.8) and international media (The Washington Post, CNN (*Tobia* Vol. 5 No. 9), and VOA (*Tobia* Vol.5 No.8).

On the other hand, the government media had deployed their own journalists to the war front and got first hand information as they had access to the war front. The sources the government news paper *Addis Zemen* used were dominated by federal and regional governments' statements (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.203; No. 206; No.208; No. 209; No. 210; No.221; No. 222; No. 226; No.227; No.230); and official press conferences (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.210; No.211; No.230). It also included lay Ethiopian people(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.205; No.206; No.212; No.213); experts(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.213; No.220; No.222);statements of professional associations(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.210) and rarely presented Eritrean officials (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No. 205); Eritreans living in Ethiopia who demonstrated against the invasion and supported peace(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.209; No.213);Eritrean prisoners of war (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.231); and Ruling Party news paper(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.216).Unlike the *Reporter* and *Tobia*, *Addis Zemen* used Ethiopian News Agency and *Walta* Information Center as main providers of news.

Together with the government media the international media also had options to use the information sources they wanted in the area – locals, Eritrean captives, soldiers including military officials -as they too had access to the war front (Tsegaye; Afra).

## 4.2 Access, Transportation and Communication

The ones that were given access to the war front were the government media and international media but the private media were deprived of enjoying access. At the beginning ETV journalists-two reporters a cameraman and his assistant- who happened to be in the nearby town to cover another story had unlimited access at the front for nearly two weeks after the invasion until the government media TV, Radio and News Agencies organized a team of journalists and deployed them in the front. The team was about 10 in number and stayed and worked all together with the coordinator deciding where to go day by day and facilitating their works such as arranging interviews with the military officials. The unlimited access as described by one of the ETV journalists Michaelae Minassie, before the organized team of journalists came included contacting the militia in *Shiraro* about 20 kilometers from the invaded area *Badme* as there was no Ethiopian military deployed and any civilian fleeing from the invaded region *Badme*.

*I happened to be in the area to cover other stories. I had no idea there would be invasion. Then we moved closer to invaded area. There, I used to meet internally displaced people at Sheraro front which was partially invaded. There was no any Ethiopian army at the area but only militia who were mobilized from among the community. My colleagues and I were there with free access. It took about ten days for the Addis Ababa crew ranging from a driver to a cameraman to come to the front ( Michaelae Minase).*

However, following the deployment of the army to the front the process of getting access and information was centralized. Thus, interviewing a military personnel needed to get permission from the military and the military selected the interviewees which was done through a facilitator mostly assigned by the government. A journalist with the government *Addis Zemen* Girma Bogale said “although we had access to the war front we were not allowed to go where ever we wanted. But this was only for our safety. The area was full of mines and we had to follow the military when they show us the way otherwise they used to tell us that it would be on our own risk that we can go. So largely we stayed

all together in team.” Although Girma believes that the military was concerned about the safety of journalists an Ethiopian Radio journalist Abdusamad Mohammed, a survivor of an attack at a battle, opposes this. Abdusamad witnessed that he was made to cover a battle with out being given any safety orientation and with out being asked whether he was willing to cover the battle. For Abdusamad it was lack of concern for the safety of journalists that caused the incident that killed three of a 12 member crew of journalists of government and party media when attacked while covering the event in the middle of a battle. One of the three journalists who were killed during the battle was telling Abdusamad, on the eve of the day he died, that he was disappointed by the orientation given to him to take care of the camera in order not to lose the pictures he would be taking with out due attention to his precious life (Abdusamad).

The journalists who had access to the front used the military cars and got food from the military and even sometimes shared tents with the military. The government journalists used to send their reports to their respective media using the facilities of the regional administration in the nearby towns such as fax, and telephone. They also used to send video tapes by cars of the regional administration and the military which were going to the regional capital *Mekele* and other cities such as *Axum* and *Shire* from which the materials were sent to Addis Ababa by air or by available military helicopter.

*During my assignment as an editor for seven months at Badme front, I was filing stories using the military satellite phone. We even used the military cars to send the film footages by air using Ethiopian Airlines in the nearby town. We also sent it to Addis ababa even by military helicopters that were going to and from Addis (Michaele Minas).*

Although most of the time the reports and the tapes were sent by a sealed envelop Michaele states that they trusted the military and even if the military had looked at the materials they would not have known the kind of information that would have been of threat since as he described them did not have the understanding of how media operates (Michielle). This fact could be evidenced by an incident when the Ethiopian Television showed the pictures of the Ethiopian army fortress at the war zone. Such information

could have been helpful tip-off for the enemy because if the enemy knows what kind of fortress it is, it would be able to use appropriate weapon and strategy to destroy the fortress (Hadush).

The spokesperson office took the responsibility of providing the international media transportation by military airplanes when commercial flight was terminated and some used their own car for which the office gave them pass permit, while in Tigray region where the war was conducted the branch office of the spokesperson took the same responsibility for them. In fact, the government extended every possible cooperation to facilitate the works of the journalists. Safety was what restricted the journalists as the area was full of mines and had to follow the route only the military showed them to follow. With regards to communication facilities of foreign correspondents they used to send their stories and footages using their own satellite communication with no interference from the government (Tsegaye; Afra; Solome).

On the other hand the private press was discriminated and did not have such access. The editor in chief of reporter Amare Aregawi says:

*Our stringers had no access to the war zone as it required permission from the ministry of information which we were denied but they were able to go to the nearby towns and meet the people who used to go to and from the war zones. We were denied access not directly with a legal statement but indirectly, as the government said it had a pool system and takes us when it says so but not whenever we needed to go. And even there what you get was a formal press release from the branch spokes person office in the region which was not of interest as such, since we used to get a lot more information of greater interest than that. However, it is due to mainly the prejudice and sickness of the ministry of information that only 'its' [government] journalists who are trustworthy but not journalists of the private press. In general the government has a very big problem of providing us with information.*



The private newspapers like *Reporter* used indirect telephone communication to gather information from Eritrea via a third country when direct communication between Ethiopia and Eritrea was disrupted for sometime. This was for instance done by calling someone in the United States from Eritrea who then called the reporter to feed back the information (Amare).

### **4.3 Censorship**

The government did not publish any rules for the media to adhere to. Nevertheless, the editors as well as reporters including government appointees were given directions on how to cover the war. They were told to emphasize on the issues that unite the Ethiopian people—for instance interviewing military personnel from all regions of the country -; maintain the military's morale; and the war was against the aggressor Eritrean government not the people of Eritrea (Abdusamad, Michaele). Within this framework government reporters who had access to the war front needed to have their reports edited by editors mostly assigned by the government who edited manually before they were sent to Addis Ababa. Some of the editors as Hadush Kassu and Fitsum Saleh from the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) said the only reason they were assigned was to coordinate and facilitate with the military for the journalists to gather news, and what was edited was only the information that would have endangered the military operation by providing information to the enemy.

An editor with ETV Michaele who was in charge of editing reports for about seven months following the invasion received a guideline/orientation from the facilitators that the news should capitalize on the facts that Eritrea invaded Ethiopia; the area historically belonged to Ethiopia; Ethiopia wants peace and even if the Eritrean government claims it should be through negotiation; as well as avoided news that could foment hatred between the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea such as labeling Eritreans as invaders instead of separating the invading Eritrean government from the Eritrean people so as to alienate it from the people. Thus, he edited not only information that could have been helpful to the enemy but also made sure the news were written in line with these guidelines (Michaele).

*All government media news was edited at front except the local languages such as Oromifa which were edited at Ethiopian Television and Radio stations in Addis Ababa because they did not have editors at the front. We were editing according to the orientations given to us. It did not allow us to let mentioning the military personnel-commanders, generals- by name. Because the enemy could identify the kind of tactics a given commander uses and thus protect themselves. They can also launch appropriate attack. We were also told not to mention the type of contingents and units of the army; not to show the fortress of the Ethiopian army so as to prevent the enemy from using the appropriate weapon and strategy to destroy it; to present the aggressor Eritrean Government and the Eritrean people as separate; to stress the fact that the disputed boarder area belongs to Ethiopia; and the commitment of Ethiopia to peaceful resolution*

(Michaele).

Some of the journalists with the government paper *Addis Zemen* did not consider this as intervention in their works as their stories never faced heavy editing [content editing] and was not that different from peace time practice. Girma Bogale a journalist working for *Addis Zemen* said he wrote what he wanted and never faced heavy editing [content editing]. He said he was able to gather first hand information, meet and interview the Eritrean forces who surrendered.

But an Ethiopian Radio journalist Abdusemed Mohammed, who survived injury while three of his 12 member journalists' team were killed as mentioned above, said the censorship went even to the extent of not telling his injury after he came back to the capital Addis Ababa for reasons of maintaining the morale of the public and thus the military.

*I did not tell to anyone even my mom that I was injured in the middle of a battle. I told them that I was just sick. But my mom heard of it from another survivor who saw me lying on the ground when we were attacked. I even communicated with my family after I have been treated in a hospital for a month. People bothered me asking why I had injury for which reason I went back willingly to the front to cover the event for another four*

*months. It was also because I loved the people living in the war zone as well as the ordinary military as they were so welcoming and caring (Abdusamed).*

On the other hand, international media and private media did not face censorship (Tsegaye; Afra). While the government media were checked the private press was not censored and this was witnessed in the news and articles they published which did not indicate that they faced censorship (Amare; Taye). The press even published information that mentioned the fact that the Prime Minister of Ethiopia has Eritrean blood and related to Eritrean President Isayas which it said could play a key role in determining the relation between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, some of the private press employed self censorship to prevent the dissemination of information to the enemy not for fear of being accused of assisting the enemy or breaching the constitution but out of 'nationalism' not to help the enemy. *Tobia* particularly, claims to have had information -such as the number, names of commanders and composition of Ethiopian army- which it never dared to publish as it was the paper's belief that it would have endangered the victory of the national army (Taye).

#### **4.4 Patriotism**

Almost all Ethiopian media were engulfed by patriotism including those critical to the government. Far and above employing self censorship both the government and private media explicitly showed that they stood for the 'national cause.' One such example is *Tobia* which even expressed its stand of patriotism more than the government it self though it was known for being critical to the government. Its editorial on Vol.5, No. 8 is a case in point which criticized the Prime Minister's statement that said 'the government would go any miles to resolve the dispute peacefully although it did not abandon its demand that Eritrea should leave the territory it occupied'. The editorial on Vol.5, No.6 even went to the extent of setting a precondition that there should be no negotiation while the country was invaded and urged the government to be firm in its stand that Eritrea should pull out first. Ethiopia's stand as the paper indicated should be

‘Get out of Ethiopia, No negotiation!’ In addition, it stated what it considered as a basic issue that the government should do, which is making Eritrea abandon its claim over Ethiopia’s territory. The editorial had recalled with regrets that the news paper had been emphasizing on the importance of ensuring sovereignty and national interest after Eritrea became independent which the Ethiopian government failed to do (*Tobia* V.5 No.6). ‘We accept [prime minister] Meles’ statement that said ‘[the Eritrean force] should pull out with out any precondition. But we can not support his position to go any miles and seek peace. Ethiopia can not move any farther to seek peace while the country is invaded and the enemy is spread out in our country’ (*Tobia*V5 No.8).

Its reports dominantly conveyed a message of defending the sovereignty of Ethiopia, which was shared even by the statement of the Ethiopian Free Press Association published on the newspaper (*Tobia* Vol.5 No.9). *Tobia*’s reports included views of Ethiopians that stressed the importance of limiting and terminating the privileges of Eritreans as they were enjoying equal rights and benefits as Ethiopians, which they said was not appropriate because they have voted for political independence which should be paralleled by economic independence. These views in the news represented Eritreans specially those who were assuming high ranks in government institutions as threats to the national security of Ethiopia (*Tobia* Vol.5 No8). The news coverage included the sufferings of Ethiopians in Eritrea and the Ethiopian deportees (*Tobia* Vol.5 No.5). On the other hand, its news analysis contained though not much the views of few Ethiopians who were against this and provided information about Eritreans living in Ethiopia who demonstrated against the Eritrean government invasion and demanded its unconditional withdrawal (*Tobia* Vol.5 No.7). In addition, it presented the Eritrean Foreign ministry’s complaints over the measures the Ethiopian government took which affected Eritrea including its economy such as the use of another port while there is Eritrean port (*Tobia* Vol.5 No8).

*Tobia*’s front pages were dominated by Ethio-Eritrean War and related issues in its four weeks coverage (*Tobia* Vol.5 No.7; No.8; No.9; No.10) with the exceptions of Vol.5 No 5 and No.6. However, other pages well entertained other issues.

The editorials of *Reporter* on Vol.3 No. 36/141, No37/142 and No.38/143 stressed that Eritrea should pull out from the territory it occupied and pursue its claim peacefully stating the newspaper's position that it is not concerned whether it belongs to Eritrea or Ethiopia but its peaceful solution unlike *Tobia* newspaper which emphasized maintaining Ethiopia's territorial integrity. The reason *Reporter* gave for justifying Ethiopia's stand that Eritrea should first leave the area it invaded was that entering in to negotiation while one has already used force and occupied a given territory would be encouraging the use of force. The *Reporter* entertained views forwarded to expel Eritreans who assumed positions as in Telecommunications and Electric and Power Corporation who threatens the security of Ethiopia. On the other hand the reporter entertained views that criticized Ethiopian government's stand and remain staunch in demanding the Eritrean force to leave unconditionally and try to negotiate although this article on V.3 No37/142 was to be heavily attacked by another article on another issue. It also reported on the psychological suffering of not only Ethiopians residing in Eritrea but also Eritreans living in Ethiopia in addition to entertaining the Eritrean government's accusation of Ethiopian government of maltreating Eritreans in Ethiopia. Although the paper reported as heroic the achievements of the Ethiopian army -Eritrean death toll, captives and armaments taken by Ethiopian forces the reports also included the Eritrean army offensive on border Ethiopian town the Ethiopian war plane brought down in Eritrea; Ethiopian civilian casualties of Eritrean air bombing and invading force but still not the deaths of the Ethiopian army. Since a month before the war (V. 3, No. 36/141) up until two weeks after the war (Vol.3 No. 40/145) the *Reporter's* coverage particularly the front page was almost all dominated, more than *Tobia*, by issues of the Ethio-Eritrean War except Vol. 3 No.35/140 which dedicated only its politics page to Ethio-Eritrean issues –which presented the contradictory views of the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea-

The editorial of the government *Addis Zemen* remained silent in all its daily publications up until eight days after the invasion. In its editorial on the eighth day Vol. 57 No.208 it opted the peaceful solution saying neither of the people benefit from war yet bragged that Eritrean government should know Ethiopia is capable of defending itself from an

aggressor. The next day editorial Vol.57 No.209 called Ethiopians not to divert their attention from fostering development and continue to intensify their effort to ensure development. When the Eritrean government bombed civilians the editorial on Vol.57 No.224 condemned it and said it had exasperated all Ethiopians and the Eritrean government would for sure lose.

Not only the editorials but the reports of *Addis Zemen* were dominated by ‘mobilisatory’ ones that focused on the unison of the Ethiopian people; demonstration of people against Eritrean government (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.209; No.214; ); condemnation of the Eritrean government aggression by religious institutions, civil servants(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.207; No.231), by Ethiopian community abroad(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.207);Statements of regional governments and professional associations(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.206, 207), students of higher learning institutions( *Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No. 207; No.211), prominent personalities(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.208) and different sections of the society(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.223)that expressed readiness to join hands in defending the country’s sovereignty; contributions from across the country to the army and people displaced(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.211;No.219; No.223; No.224; No.227;No.228; No.229; No.230; No.231; No.232; No.233). It also reported on Eritreans in Ethiopia who were laid off, deported and arrested by the Ethiopian government as well as on Eritrean prisoners of war (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.223; 228; No.229; No.231; No.233). *Addis Zemen*’s overall message could be reduced to three: Ethiopians denounce the invasion; they support the Ethiopian government’s position; and they are ready to defend the sovereignty of the country. *Addis Zemen* was dominated by stories of the war particularly after the war started dedicating almost all its front page for news on the war. During the month before the war however, it very well entertained other issues on its front page with no domination of war stories except few publications (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.203; No.233).

*Addis Zemen* went to the extent of saying ‘our air force’, ‘our defense army’ when it reported about the Ethiopian military in the news. Three of the news headlines on three different issues read ‘Our air force attacked heavily the Eritrean air force base’ (*Addis*

*Zemen* Vol.57 No.223); ‘Our defense force is deterring the invading army in Badme front’ (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.226); ‘The people of Sheraro are extending food to our army’(*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.231). It further heroically colored the Ethiopian air force when it bombed the Eritrean warplanes and airport yet it also reported on the damages caused by the Eritrean force (*Addis Zemen* Vol.57 No.227). Girma Bogale a reporter for *Addis Zemen* said he would not have reported had he seen the Ethiopian army being defeated although he said during the time he was there he did not see the Ethiopian army losing. His reason for not reporting such kind of issues is that it was difficult to count and get the correct figure of death toll unless the military provides the information because the War front sometimes covered 30-40 kms wide area. But most importantly he felt he would be telling bad news *merdo* (an Ethiopian tradition of telling a person the death of his/her loved ones) to all the people who came all the way from South, South West, East and all directions to the towns near the war front to encourage and maintain the morale of the army. His editor in chief Demissie Tsige also had been influenced by patriotism.

*Our journalists including myself consider ourselves as cheerleaders. I myself wanted to go to the warfront to coordinate and cheerlead, but unfortunately my health status did not allow me to go. Objectivity is relative, see even the international media like CNN they take the side of their government. But this does not mean that we lied we never cooked up stories. It is just that what we focused was on the gallantry of our army. We wrote our achievements but never wrote on failure although there was not any. Fortunately our military did not attack civilians (Demissie).*

One of the editors with ETV who was at the front Michael Minassie said he was supporting the Ethiopian army because he believed it was the Eritrean government that invaded Ethiopia as he confirmed during his stay in the nearby town when he was there before the invasion of Badme and interviewed people fleeing from Badme and found out that there were only militia but not any Ethiopian army in the area.

*Tobia’s* editor in chief said:

*we were telling the public that it is a matter of survival to defend aggression. The military was gone to fight to defend the sovereignty of the country. The armed force constitutes the sons of the society so we had to support the military in war front by encouraging their family at home front and mobilizing financial and morale support. It is our responsibility to make the public aware of the threat to its country's sovereignty and integrity. Otherwise it is also endangering even journalists' own survival as individual citizens, so we were full of patriotism and thus partial. We could not put the issue of national security aside for we have differences with the government. We were rather referring to the historical facts that Ethiopians fought their enemies and won because of unity despite their diversity and differences.*

For the editor in chief of the *Reporter* the reasons why the paper was against the Eritrean government was because the facts were against it as it occupied Ethiopian administered territory by force but not the news paper.

*It is not because we wanted to support the Ethiopian government but that was the fact, the Eritrean government used force and occupied the area .Eritrea was an aggressor so we wrote that it is an aggressor and illegal and needed to pullout with out waging war and this was not patriotism but telling the fact. What the Ethiopian government was doing was to defend itself from an aggressor and we did not see evil in this. We saw evil in what the government has been doing concerning the economy and other sectors, we exposed that. But when it came to the war the evil was in the Eritrean government. I believe we were free, fair and objective in covering the war. It might appear that we attacked Isayas but it is the facts that attacked him not us. He crossed the border and occupied so we said he occupied; we did not change an angle into a devil. When in some battle the Ethiopian army was challenged like in the Tsorena front we wrote that but it did not provoke negative feedback from the society nor from the government as the news in general was overwhelmed by the upper hand military position of Ethiopia concerning the war in general. The feedback we used to get from the military was rather that of corrective like in the case of its advancement towards Assab which we said was to enter*



*deep into Eritrea but they gave us information saying it was a strategic move and had no intension of entering to Asmara the capital of Eritrea (Amare).*

On the other hand however, there were exceptions such as the Radio journalist Abdusemed who was against the war as he believed that it was a brother's war but wrote his reports the way his media wanted because it was his job.

How patriotic the media were is easy to notice in their position on the boarder commission's ruling. The government newspaper *Addis Zemen* reported on Vol. 61 No. 218 the statements of the government that stated Ethiopia emerged victorious in the ruling on the boundary dispute as the disputed areas were given to Ethiopia. Its reports were dominated by support to the ruling of different sections of the society including people living abroad who said it was a just decision. The editorial regurgitated the official view stating that Ethiopia was a champion both in the war and diplomatic arena.

On the other hand, the private press reporting was dominated by a completely different view that the ruling was in disfavor of Ethiopia which had not ensured its national interest. The *Reporter* Vol.7 No.28/346 criticized the statements of the governments of both Ethiopia and Eritrea for confusing people than clarifying the ruling. Its coverage included an article that emphasized that the newly independent Eritrea benefited the most as it got an internationally recognized boundary. But it made Ethiopia lose any legal ground to claim Assab (access to port) which the writer said is her right as it has evidences and as long as it pursues its interest peacefully opposing the Prime Minister of Ethiopia Meles Zenawi's statement that it is undemocratic to claim Assab. The news paper in its editorial criticized the government for disclosing only the areas it claimed and got but not the areas it claimed and lost. It also demanded the government which it said was confusing people to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth. It also criticized the government for denying information to the public who in support of the government gave away its children, assets and labor. So it made it clear that the government would be supported when it is open but not when it keeps secret.

Tobia's coverage was even more dominated by an outright rejection of the ruling. It mentioned opposition parties stand that Ethiopians can not abide by the decision which the people do not believe in and did not make deliberations on since it was not participatory. It stressed that the decision had not taken Ethiopia's quest for access to the sea and did not ensure the country's national interest for which reason it can not be popular. It reported the opposition of Ethiopian intellectuals in diaspora who were disappointed by the ruling saying it was undemocratic that put in danger the lives of Ethiopian people living along the border as well as threatens the country's sovereignty. The reason they gave was that the United Nations made the decision just based on the requests of the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments with out considering whether these governments represent the people. It reported that the intellectuals said the decision was made knowing that the Ethiopian government is a dictator and undemocratic and in the name of delineating border, the decision undermined the rights of the people living in the disputed areas which makes the organization liable to posterity. *Tobia's* reports included the views of the people living along the border that the government was lying and disseminating propaganda. It mentioned that they had submitted a letter of their position to the US State Department, OAU's Secretary General, EU's president, Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and the Border Commission's President. Its reports also included the position of opposition parties that claimed the government had forsaken the national interest of Ethiopia and that the public should demonstrate in opposition of the decision that was not participatory. The editorial even went further to incite people though peacefully to overthrow the government which is not there at all for ensuring the national interest and called all Ethiopians in and outside of the country to join hands and struggle against the government and do what they can internally as there seemed to be nothing to do about the ruling in the international arena (*Tobia* Vol.9 No.2).

#### **4.5 The Press as a Fourth Estate**

*Tobia* had stated about ten months before the war that the border issue could put the two countries in a contradictory difference. An article published by the reporter -about five months before the war on how Ethiopians were being treated in Eritrea and Eritreans in

Ethiopia invited readers to forward their views which was followed by a heated response, which indicated that the relationship of the two countries was already roughening. A week prior to this article, the editorial also dealt with the policy particularly economic which it said required the leaders of both countries to be wise and make the people understand it which otherwise would cause problems. In its editorial four months to Eritrea's invasion the *Reporter* further criticized the Ethiopian government for focusing only on development issues during the ruling party's (EPRDF's) third regular session undermining the issue of the Ethio-Eritrean relations which it said should be tabled for deliberations even in the parliament. Suspicious of the imminent war the reporter published the views on different issues of leaders of both countries Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and Eritrean President Isayas Afeworki clearly showing the difference they have on the Ethio-Eritrean relation mainly economic issues and encouraged readers to respond but it was just before a day Eritrea started invasion.

## Chapter Five: Analysis

### 5.1 Sources of Information

The unpreparedness of the Ethiopian Government for the war had affected the smooth flow of information for some time at the beginning as a spokesperson office had yet to be established as it did not exist before and it had to put in place a system of information gathering. The unpreparedness of the Ethiopian government was reflected in the absence of a spokesperson office until some time after the war broke out. The fact that it was a reaction is manifested in the closure of the office even before the whole process of the mediation was concluded as the Ministry of Information took over the task after it was established as ministry of its own, separate from the former Ministry of culture and Information.

That the government had rushed to establish a spokesperson office opened up an opportunity for the media particularly the private local press to get information as during peacetime there had not been such briefings to the private local press. Ever since Prime Minister Meles Zenawi took power in 1991 he addressed the private local press only two times the latest being in 2006 on top of other high government officials being almost inaccessible -specially Ministry of Information- except a few such as Ministers of Health, Trade and Industry, and Education. Thus, it was an opportunity war created for the press which it was denied of before the war and to be so even some time after the war.

Opening up more during wartime than peacetime makes the Ethiopian situation unique in the sense contrary to the arguments some writers forward. Perhaps that was also a way of managing the media to disseminate information about the war and commit citizens to war efforts as it was a popular war and Ethiopia had a military upper hand on top of fighting a “just ” war.

Although the establishment of the spokesperson office created a new opportunity,. some of the newspapers such as the *Rporter* and *Tobia* relied heavily on their own sources of information as they were less interested in the kind of information they got from the

office. Besides, the press releases from the office had already been aired on TV and Radio time and again rendering the information boring by the time the news papers published it because TV and Radio broadcast the information right away while the news papers had to wait until the day of their publication.

### **Conclusion**

Information from official sources was available not only for government media such as *Addis Zemen* but also for private newspapers the like of *Reporter* and *Tobia* as well as international media. This however, does not manifest the access of private press-*Reporter* and *Tobia*- to information from high level government officials as they had not been enjoying such access during peace time. Although official information was available for *Reporter* and *Tobia*, they relied heavily on other sources apart from government officials.

## **5.2 Access, Communication and Transportation**

As Carruthers stated, war time was an extension of government media relationship during peace time. The private media were not welcomed to enjoy access to the war front and the journalists working for government media have been edited by editors some of whom were government appointed which is tantamount to censorship. The fact that the private press was not welcomed and did not enjoy free access to the war front shows the antagonistic relation between the government and the private press which existed in peace time too. On the other hand, the wartime did not reflect how the government and the private media normally related during peace time as the private media had much better access to official information in the form of written statements , briefings from and interviews with government officials.

Unlike in the case of accessing official information from government officials at the beginning before the spokesperson office was established, the unreadiness of the Ethiopian government for the war created unlimited access to the Ethio-Eritrean boarder for the journalists of government media who happened to be in the area before the army started following a centralized flow of information

In contrast to provision of official information by the spokes person's office, the government discriminated private media against the government and international media. It allowed the government media and welcomed the international media while it was not as much welcoming to the private press. Yet, the media in the war front did not enjoy unlimited access to any location they wanted to go. Some of the government media journalists and the international media as well believe that the denial of access to where ever they wanted to go was for their own safety as the area was full of mines and was dangerous. Even in the case when the 12 journalists crew of government media had access to cover in the middle of intense fight it is a paradox that it was almost forced on them to cover it for their respective media. Abdusemed Mohammed, a survivor of an attack, for instance would not have opted to be in the area while the fight was taking on, had he been given the choice. As Abdusemed stated , the cameraman who was one of the three journalists killed during the attack told Abdusemed that he was not happy at all to cover that particular location where there was fighting.

An important impact of access to the war front for government media was that it became popular particularly the Addis Zemen though television and radio already had big audience mainly because there was no other option as the domestic broadcast had not been liberalized. The editor in chief of government *Addis Zemen* Demissie says "even the private press used our photographs although I don't know how they got it."

The government was supportive in terms of providing transportation to the international media to make their work smooth .The fact that the military and government offices provided the government media transportation and communication facilities at times when they were in need and also got food as well as shared tents with the military had created amicable relation between the military and journalists. The military treated the journalists well not for manipulative reason to manage the media. The military rather provided such a reception to the journalists out of concern that the journalists were not used to such hardship. The same was true with the regional government bureaus that were extending the necessary support such as transportation, telephone, and fax to the journalists. Above all, the government offices and the military did not need to manipulate

the journalists as there were already editors who would oversee the dissemination of 'unwanted information' both at the front and the capital Addis Ababa from where the information was broadcasted. Nevertheless, the effect of the close relationship between the troops and reporters was favorable for the Ethiopian authorities.

### **Conclusion**

Unlike access to information from the government, *Tobia* and *Reporter* had no access to the war front while the government newspaper *Addis Zemen* had. This denial of access to the war front manifests the antagonistic relationship between the government and private press during peace time as the private press had not been welcomed by the government. Even if the government media had access to the war front it did not enjoy an unlimited access. For the government media including *Addis Zemen*, which had access to the war zone the government, provided the necessary transportation as well as means of communication. The international media too used government's means of transportation as long as they paid for it while they used their own means of satellite communication which the government media did not afford to have. Such cooperation was extended by the government to facilitate the works of the media rather than to manipulate them.

### **5.3. Censorship**

Although the government did not publish any rules for the media to adhere to, it gave directions to government journalists on the manner they should cover the war. Even if the editors were of help in facilitating the works of journalists and they claim to have edited information that would have been of importance the enemy, they shaped the reporters focus in a manner the government wanted to disseminate information. In such a way the government made sure the reports focus on issues it wanted-foster unity among the Ethiopian people-for instance interviewing military personnel from all regions of the country -; maintain the military's morale; and that the war was against the aggressor Eritrean government not the people of Eritrea.

It is evident that the most important media in Ethiopia to reach the mass, television and particularly radio, owned and controlled by the government, disseminated the reports on

the war to the mass in the way the government wanted. Hence, the majority of the public which was vital in supporting the military materially as well as morally was informed about the war by the government. This however was not a new war time strategy but a continuation of the peace time practice that again proves Carruthers argument which she posed against the statement of Senator Hiram Johnson that ‘when war comes the first casualty is truth.’ For Carruthers “war should not be seen as a special case of how the media works’ but rather as a magnifying glass which ‘highlights and intensifies many of the things that happen in peacetime ...’ ”(Williams, 1992:15 cited in Carruthers, 2000:13).

Although stories were edited at the front by assigned editors before they were sent to the head offices, not doing this would not have had changed the nature of reporting as almost all journalists’ own feeling of ‘nationalism’ took control over it. This was true even for the private press that employed self censorship to prevent the dissemination of information to the enemy not for fear of being accused of assisting the enemy or breaching the constitution but out of ‘nationalism’ not to help the enemy.

Thus, the reasons why the media have refrained from exposing information that would assist the enemy was to protect the army and in the case where it did –for instance showing on Ethiopian Television the pictures of the Ethiopian army fortress at the war zone, which could have been helpful tip-off to the enemy- it was out of lack of understanding. What is more, ETV was not charged for showing the pictures except getting advice and warning from the military not to do such mistakes again.

## **Conclusion**

The government media were censored in the pretext of editing. The focus and theme of the war stories were decided by the facilitators of the works of journalists who indeed facilitated journalists’ works but at the same time edited the stories. The journalists were told to make their stories stress on fostering unity among the Ethiopian people-for instance interviewing military personnel from all regions of the country -; maintaining the



military's morale; disseminating information that the war was against the aggressor Eritrean government not the people of Eritrea.

On the other hand, the international media did not at all face censorship. Like wise the private press-*Tobia* and *Reporter*- which had not been censored. Nevertheless, the private media such as *Tobia* self-censored themselves to defend the 'national interest' out of patriotism.

## **5.4 Patriotism**

Contrary to what was witnessed during different wars the world witnessed, such as the Falklands where governments used patriotism as a tool to discipline dissident media, it was the journalists' own feeling of nationalism that controlled the Ethiopian media.

The journalists of both private and government media with some exception such as Abdusamad had supported the 'national cause' but the level and reasons differed from one journalist to the other.

For some, it was the responsibility of journalists to maintain the national interest and support the nationwide effort for the war. For others, it was also about ensuring their survival as citizens since the threat to their country is also a threat to their lives. While still for others, the justness of Ethiopia's engagement in war, and the aggression and inhuman deeds-bombing school children and civilians- of Eritrean government made them condemn the Eritrean government not because they wanted to but because the facts condemned the Eritrean government.

The post war position the media had clearly shows how patriotic the media were. In ensuring the 'national interest' of the country the private press appeared to have had even more patriotic stance than the government, which was reflected in the position they assumed on the ruling of the border commission which seemed to be in disfavor of Ethiopia.

On the other hand, the media in general exhibited indignation not against Eritreans but the Eritrean government and made note of the deep rooted peaceful relation of the Ethiopian and Eritrean people. However, the Eritreans were also represented as threats to be kept at bay from sensitive positions that might put the security of Ethiopia in danger.

Although most news papers were engulfed by patriotism, some were against the war which they considered as brother's war and did not support the 'national interest.' And there were others who were concerned about their profit by even making up their own story, which they think attracts readers to buy-as in the case of lying about the spokesperson defecting- whether or not it affected the national security as it was availing information which the Eritrean government could use for propaganda.

Thus, the government has labored in vain to limit the private media's access to war and censor government media as almost all media were engulfed by the tide of patriotism, which made them take part in supporting the army; defending the sovereignty of the country; and maintaining the morale of the army through making the public commit itself to the war efforts.

This shows that in the case of popular war the government did not even need to manage some of the journalists as the fog of patriotism itself had made them even go to the extent of self censoring .Although governments use patriotism as a tool to discipline media it was not imposed in Ethiopia as patriotism was deep in the blood of the media itself.

### **Conclusion**

Almost all the domestic media were engulfed by the tide of patriotism that made them take part in supporting the Ethiopian army; defending the sovereignty of the country and maintaining the morale of the army through making the public commit itself to the war efforts. Thus, Journalists own feeling of patriotism controlled the media rather than the government. Both the government and the private press *Tobia* and *Reporter* supported the 'national cause' although the reasons vary from one another. At times, *Tobia* appeared to be even more patriotic than the government in trying to defending the country's 'national

interest'. No matter how the newspapers were against Eritrean government's invasion, the indignation was however by and large against the war but not the people of Eritrea.

## **5.5. The Press as a Fourth Estate**

Although the private press was engulfed by patriotism once the war started it has been writing a lot to prevent the relationship of the two countries from culminating in war. The issues they dealt with range from questioning Eritrea's independence to determining the nature of the relationship of the two countries, encouraging public debate unlike the US press which failed to stimulate public debate during the Iraq War as stated by Lang and Lang.

The vibrancy of some of the press as compared to even the government's policy makers which were not prepared for the war, was manifested not only in their analysis of the relationship between the two countries but also in their preparedness of establishing a strong network of sources of information before the war broke out. No matter how vibrant some news papers were in criticizing the 'naive' foreign policy of the Ethiopian government towards Eritrea the government did not consider the press as a fourth estate. Thus, it failed to even prepare for the war let alone to take lessons from the press and amend its policies and try to avert the war, although some argue that the war was inevitable.

One of the reasons why the media did not play an effective pre cautionary role in alerting the public so as to influence the government's foreign policy was due to the antagonistic relation particularly the private press had with the government that the government did not seem to have headed to it. What is more the political system did not allow the public to assume such position unlike in the US as Lang and Lang mentioned.

This is a manifestation of the government's wholesale rejection of the private press as a fourth estate which is undemocratic characteristic that failed to even consider

constructive criticism of the press although some news papers including some of those who were vibrant in dealing with Ethio-Eritrean issue almost look like opposition party organs. In a press conference he gave to private and government media in 2006, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia Meles Zenawi has stated that the private press is yet in ghetto. He made the statement without making any exception which clearly indicates the government's negative attitude towards the private press.

### **Conclusion**

The private press *Tobia* and *Reporter* have been setting the agenda of Ethio-Eritrean relations long before the war while this was not the case for *Addis Zemen*. However, the media was not able to influence the government through informing the public due to the nature of the political system of the country which did not recognize the fourth estate role media could play. On the other hand, once the war started the media *Tobia* and *Reporter* did not serve as a space for public debate which was also true for *Addis Zemen*. The main reason for failing to serve as a public space was patriotism rather than government management of the media.

## Findings

- The wartime experience exposed partly what had been practiced by the government during peacetime while on the other hand it did not fully show what the practice had been.
- The Ethiopian case was a paradox in the sense that the war created an opportunity to the media particularly the local private press to have access to information from official sources which it did not have before.
- The private Press faced challenges to having access to the war front which was the continuation of the already existing practice of the government, exposing the antagonistic relationship of the government and the private press.
- Almost all the domestic media were engulfed by the tide of patriotism that made them take part in supporting the Ethiopian army; defending the sovereignty of the country and maintaining the morale of the army through making the public commit itself to the war efforts. Thus, Journalists own feeling of patriotism controlled the media rather than the government Patriotism made most of local journalists stand for the cause of national interest by even practicing self-censorship
- The government media were censored in the pretext of editing information that would be of help to the enemy.
- The private press and the international media did not at all face censorship.
- The media's fourth estate role was ineffective even if it -particularly the private press- tried to set the agenda of Ethio-Eritrean relations well ahead of the war.

## **Conclusion**

The Ethiopian government and the media forged together when they found an overarching unifying cause, defending Ethiopia's 'national interest.' Under a circumstance in which the war was by and large popular the government found it easier to manage the media. The government did not manage all the media- international, government and private- in a similar manner to control information flow during the war. The relationship witnessed during the war between the Ethiopian government and the Ethiopian media both government and private was partly a continuation of the relationship during peacetime. At the same time however, the wartime experience did not show the antagonistic relationship between the government and the private media. This is because of the anomaly that unlike during peacetime, the private press had access to official information from the government's spokes person.

The Ethiopian media did not serve as a public space for discussion on going to war or not, which is a major national issue. The main reason for not serving as a public space was patriotism rather than government management of the media. On the other hand however, before the war started the private press had been playing cautionary role by writing on issues of differences between Ethiopia and Eritrea well ahead of the war.

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