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The Press and Consolidation of Power in Ethiopia and Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Guerrilla commanders Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi seized power in 1986 and 1991. Both made press freedom a prominent and credible policy to differentiate themselves from their predecessors in seeking domestic and international support in their efforts to consolidate power. Nevertheless, each still presides over a highly centralized autocratic regime, with limited opportunities for political contenders to contest free and fair national elections. There are, however, important differences. In Uganda the press has remained vibrant and open despite 2006 election tensions, while in Ethiopia much of the private press was dramatically closed after the 2005 electoral contests. Why the press has evolved differently in Ethiopia than in Uganda and what the role of the press has been under the current systems are core questions to be addressed in this research. In neither country can the media be studied separately from politics. The analytic framework of the thesis therefore highlights four key political variables, as well as four key media variables. The selected media variables are: *the polarisation of the press; ideologies of journalists; institutionalisation of the press;* and *government interventions*; and the selected political variables are: *the ideology of the liberation movement*; *the process of state construction and the consolidation of power*; *reconciliation, trust and confidence building*; and *international dimensions*. Each case study also includes a brief history highlighting the differences in the earlier development of the press in Ethiopia and Uganda. Because of the dearth of existing literature, the thesis has built on comparative literature from other regions and has relied on extensive field research, including semi-structured interviews and oral histories with key political and media actors for what is one of the first substantial pieces of research examining the press in contemporary Ethiopia and Uganda. The argument that emerges from this analysis is that the press can play an important role in building peace, encouraging reconciliation and facilitating dialogue in the aftermath of civil wars. It primarily does so through providing a space for different elite factions to negotiate power, reconcile competing versions of history and build a common national vision. This process has developed differently in Ethiopia and Uganda and accounts for some current discrepancies in their political and press systems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

Part I
Ethiopia: A Divided Country and a Divided Press

ACRONYMS

AAPO	All Amhara People's Organisation (Ethiopia)
AAU	Addis Ababa University
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces (Uganda)
AU	African Union
CAFPADE	Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia
COPWE	Commission to Organize the Party of the Workers of Ethiopia
Derg	'Committee' the group within the military that assumed power under Mengistu after Haile Selassie's government
DP	Democratic Party (Uganda)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAEC	East African Economic Community
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
EFPJA	Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EMMTI	Ethiopian Mass Media Training Institute
ENA	Ethiopian News Agency
EPA	Ethiopian Press Agency
EPLA	Eritrean Liberation Army
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change (Uganda)
FEDEMU	Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda
Frelimo	Frente de Libertacao de Mozambique
Fronasa	Front for National Salvation (Uganda)
FUNA	Former Uganda National Army
GCIS	Government Communication and Information Service (South Africa)
ICU	Islamic Courts Union (Somalia)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army (Uganda)
MLLT	Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray
NIJU	National Institute of Journalists of Uganda
NEB	National Electoral Board (Ethiopia)
NRA	National Resistance Army (Uganda)
NRC	National Resistance Council (Uganda)
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda)
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front (Ethiopia)
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front (Ethiopia)
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (Ethiopia)
PRA	Popular Resistance Army (Uganda)
RC	Resistance Council (Uganda)
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
TFG	Transitional Federal Government (Somalia)

TLF	Tigrayan Liberation Front
TNO	Tigray National Organisation
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
TUSA	Tigrayan University Students Association
UEDF	United Ethiopian Democratic Forces
UFF	Uganda Freedom Fighters
UFM	Uganda Freedom Movement
UNC	Uganda National Congress
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UNLF	Uganda National Liberation Front
UPA	Uganda People's Army
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UPDA	Uganda People's Democratic Army
UPM	Uganda Patriotic Movement
USUAA	Union of the University Students in Addis Ababa
WPE	Workers' Party of Ethiopia

NOTE:

The Ethiopian calendar begins 11 September and is seven years behind the Gregorian calendar until 31 December. After this date it is eight years behind. I have referred to dates as documented- i.e. for Amharic newspapers the date will be as provided with (EC) for Ethiopian Calendar. All other dates unless noted otherwise are in the Gregorian calendar.

I have used the popular form for spelling Amharic and Tigrayan words in English rather than transliteration. In addition, Ethiopians do not go by family names but rather their given names so I have used this name as the primary name.

CHAPTER 1

Comparing Media Systems:

Ethiopia and Uganda

This is a thesis about nation-building and the role of the press. It focuses on Ethiopia and Uganda and asks why, in each country, the press has developed the way it has. While much has been written about the role of the press in nation-building since the 1950s, very little deals with the contemporary challenges facing troubled African states and there has been even less on Africa that is comparative for theory building and deciding difficult media policy.

My research explores the political and media system factors that contributed to the reversal of media freedoms in Ethiopia but not in Uganda. For countries whose political leaders are often described as similar, they reacted differently to comparable political challenges in the same period and international environment. The press after Prime Minister Meles Zenawi successfully seized power in Ethiopia in 1991[1] became deeply polarized but the same did not happen after President Yoweri Museveni forcibly took charge of Uganda in 1986.

Both leaders led successful guerrilla wars that defeated African dictatorships and since coming to power they have instituted ambitious political projects that have prioritised consolidating the power of their leadership and respective parties. This has also included some democratic reforms. In Ethiopia the process of change is referred to as 'Revolutionary Democracy' while in Uganda it is known as the 'Movement'. With the end of the Cold War and a shift in US and Soviet policy towards the continent, both leaders were hailed by international supporters as 'agents of change' who would bring peace to ethnically diverse and war ravaged populations along with a broader African Renaissance. Together, with Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Prime Minister Isaias Afeworki of Eritrea, they were seen as indicative of a larger trend that has at times included South African leader Thabo

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[1] Prime Minister Meles was the Interim President until he was elected Prime Minister in 1995.

Mbeki, Joachim Chissano from Mozambique and the former Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings.[2] These leaders, it was argued, were committed to changing the lives of their people and were applying state and nation-building[3] strategies that were appropriate for their particular contexts.

US President Bill Clinton and his Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, popularized the notion of a new generation of African leaders in the late 1990s and while neither publicly listed the leaders who were part of this group, Albright visited Ethiopia and Uganda in 1997 and Clinton followed with a visit to Kampala in 1998 in which he praised both Meles and Museveni. Academics also endorsed the notion of 'new leaders,'[4] as did foreign affairs commentators and the international media, though not without critics.[5]

Before long international disenchantment with these leaders became evident, notably in the US journal *Foreign Affairs*. In 1998 an article entitled 'Africa's New Bloc' argued that these leaders are "coalescing into a new political and military bloc"

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[2] OTTAWAY, M. (1999) *Africa's New Leaders*, Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment.

[3] The difference between nation-building and state-building is often muddled, particularly in post-war situations where both processes are often occurring. There is a rich and nuanced literature on 'failed states' or 'crisis states' in Africa that addresses the state and nationbuilding debates (See: FUKUYAMA, F. (2004) *State Building*, London, Profile, ROTBERG, R. (2003) *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.). It is, however, important to note that both nation and state-building are central to the political projects and the role of the media in Ethiopia and Uganda. Generally accepted definitions are offered by the authors of State-Building, Nation-Building and Constitutional Politics in Post-Conflict Situations: Conceptual Clarifications and an Appraisal of Different Approachs, when they note "*State-building* means the establishment, re-establishment, and strengthening of a public structure in a given territory capable of delivering public goods. Essential to state-building is the creation of sovereign capacities of which the fundamental one is the successful and generally undisputed claim to a 'monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force'" (p. 583). In contrast, "*Nation-building* is the most common form of a process of collective identity formation with a view to legitimizing public power within a given territory. This is an essentially indigenous process which often not only projects a meaningful future but also draws on existing traditions,institutions, and customs, redefining them as national characteristics in order to support the nation's claim to sovereignty and uniqueness. A successful nation-building process produces a cultural projection of the nation containing a certain set of assumptions, values and beliefs which can function as the legitimizing foundation of a state structure." (p. 586). BOGDANDY, A. V., HÄUSSLE, S., HANSCHMANN, F. & UTZ, R. (2005) State-Building, Nation-Building, and Constitutional Politics in Post-Conflict Situations: Conceptual Clarifications and an Appraisal of Different Approaches. IN BOGDANDY, A. V. & WOLFRUM, R. (Eds.) *Max Plank Yearbook of United Nations Law.*.

[4] OTTAWAY, M. (1999) *Africa's New Leaders*, Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment.

[5] ONYANGO-OBBO, C. (2004) Seeking Balance in a Continent Portrayed By Its Extremes. *Nieman Reports*, 58, 6-8.

and they "share the goal of ending the cronyism and instability".[6] In 2000, in 'Ending Africa's Wars' it was argued that these leaders had clay feet suggesting that they might not be the purveyors of peace as expected particularly since "currently all four "partners" are at war".[7] And in 2007 'Blowing the Horn' dramatically, but correctly, contended that the greater Horn, including Uganda, is "the hottest conflict zone in the world" and suggested that these leaders have not been held to account by Western states which "are like barking dogs with no bite".[8]

Meles and Museveni have ruled for nearly a generation and their record of governance offers opportunities for research into the nation-building process, which is complex and incomplete in both Ethiopia and Uganda, although current developments suggest that the Ethiopian state is in a significantly more precarious situation at risk of continued conflict and possible disintegration. The press under these leaders has both contributed to, and provides insight into, the dynamics of the political processes and experiments underway. Initially, both leaders made media freedoms a central part of their governments' new political agendas where citizens and journalists enjoyed unprecedented access to diverse media outlets. The situation, however, has evolved differently both politically and for the press in the two countries.

On 15 May 2005, Ethiopia experienced the most democratic elections in the country's long history. The media and the opposition enjoyed extensive freedoms during the campaign period and voting day was relatively free and fair. The following day, as preliminary results from the election suggesting unexpected and unprecedented gains for the opposition parties became clear, the situation for the press and opposition parties began to change. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi declared a state of emergency on May 16 while the opposition parties claimed widespread vote rigging. Due to extensive complaints of irregularities, the National Election Board (NEB) delayed the official announcement of the election results.

Despite a government ban on protests, discontent towards the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) party grew, particularly in the

[6] CONNELL, D. & SMYTH, F. (1988) Africa's New Bloc. *Foreign Affairs,* 77, 80-94. p.82.
[7] STREMLAU, J. (2000) Ending Africa's Wars. Ibid.79, 117- 132.p.124.
[8] PRENDERGAST, J. & THOMAS-JENSEN, C. (2007) Blowing the Horn. Ibid.86, 59-74. p.71.

cities where many of the opposition supporters were. On June 8, the original day the official results were to be publicised, government troops and the federal police opened fire on large gatherings in the Merkato and Piazza areas of Addis Ababa killing dozens of people and arresting hundreds of students.[9] In the months that followed, opposition leaders were placed under house arrest and reports were made of widespread persecution and arrests of suspected opposition supporters. In November the situation violently exploded again with dozens more killed during protests and tens of thousands arrested. Government troops could be seen going door to door in Addis arresting young men indiscriminately. While the exact numbers are not known, an October 2006 internal enquiry of the Ethiopian government was leaked and suggested that 193 civilians and six policemen had been killed, over 700 people wounded and more than 60,000 arrested during this period.[10]

Movement (NRM) led by President Yoweri Museveni with 59% of the vote in the February 23, 2006 elections.[11] The media played a key role in the political debate in the periods before, during and after the election. With two main newspaper groups, one of which is government-leaning but widely respected, and over 100 local radio stations, the candidates received wide and diverse coverage.

The election period was tense and marred by some violence but was significantly more peaceful than Ethiopia's. The election was controversial from the beginning as Museveni changed the constitution removing the two-term limit to enable him to compete, causing both national and international condemnation. In the run-up to the elections, Kizza Besigye was arrested in November on charges of treason, relating to links with the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda and alleged rape involving a family friend. The arrest of Besigye led to riots in Kampala by supporters who believed that the charges were levied to prevent him from contesting the elections. One rioter was shot dead by police.[12]

There were several instances of the NRM government shutting down particular media outlets temporarily, putting forward charges against journalists and not allowing international journalists complete access to the country. Nevertheless, Uganda today continues to enjoy over 100 private radio stations, as well a variety of television stations and papers. The media are widely considered vibrant and open.

Uganda provides a contrasting history to that of Ethiopia, but there are sufficient similarities that the pairing lends itself to useful comparative study of the question posed at the beginning of this thesis: Why has the press developed the way it has? And how, in each context, has it contributed to the nation-building process and, vice-versa, what has been the role of the state in shaping the press system?

1. Comparative case studies: Ethiopia and Uganda

It is difficult to find answers to these questions in the existing literature. Africa has long been neglected in academia and even more so in studies relating to the

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[11] 26 February 2006 , "Ugandans relieved at calm poll".
Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4753238.stm.
[12] 15 November 2005, "Uganda police shoot rioter dead".
Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4438090.stm.

media. In particular, there is very little work that probes into the complex relationship between the media and the state or seeks to understand why the press has evolved the way it has in Ethiopia and Uganda.

Much of the current information available looks at the media either from a normative perspective of how free or un-free the media are compared to Europe or North America or from a descriptive assessment of how many radio stations and newspapers exist. While both of these dominant approaches purport to provide insight into the media within these countries, such indicators provide little understanding of what journalists are doing in these places and why, and similarly how the state and political sphere has actively been intervening to shape the media system. In media freedom rankings generated and publicized by advocacy groups politics is exogenous. For Ethiopia and Uganda, countries emerging from conflict and still struggling to resolve internal and external tensions, understanding the press is equally a process of understanding the political space where issues such as reconciliation,[13] trust-building and the negotiation of political power, particularly among elites, are key factors.

Since comparing case studies allows researchers to identify factors and variables that they might have overlooked, a goal of this thesis is to offer an alternative comparative framework of analysis to provide greater insights into press systems in complex conflict/post-conflict environments. Explanatory variables can be deduced and illuminate greater systematic understanding of the above stated research questions. Since little scholarship exists comparing African media systems, the

Ethiopia and Uganda both fall into the undesirable category that Paul Collier has labeled "the bottom billion".[14] While many of the world's developing countries have conditions that are steadily improving, Ethiopia and Uganda are among those where the situation is worsening and conventional international interventions have been ineffective. Collier lists four "traps" that countries in the "bottom billion" can fall into. Although neither Uganda nor Ethiopa have had to overcome the trap of vast mineral wealth, to varying degrees they have had to grapple with the other three. Both have experienced large-scale deadly internal conflicts, they have histories of poor governance under autocratic rulers and they are land-locked with bad neighbors. Ethiopia's Horn of Africa neighborhood is in perpetual turmoil and Uganda is next to the crisis-ridden Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The two countries have significant demographic differences.[15] Ethiopia is the most populous country in Sub-Saharan Africa after Nigeria and has a population close to 77 million while Uganda has less than half that with around 30 million people. The GDP per capita of Uganda is almost double that of Ethiopia at 1,900 USD while in Ethiopia GDP is 1000 USD. In Uganda there is a higher literacy rate with 66.8 percent of the population able to read while in Ethiopia only 42.7 percent is literate. At the same time there are many similarities. The structure of the labour force is relatively similar in both countries with approximately 80 percent of the population engaged in agriculture and 12 percent in services and the remainder in industry. Poverty rates are also similar with roughly 36 percent of the population in both countries living under the poverty line. Ethiopia's substantially larger population mediates some of the larger disparities where Uganda seems to be a bit further ahead such as in the rate of literacy. In Ethiopia, for example, there are approximaftely 32 million people who can read and 20 million in Uganda - an absolute number which has a narrower gap than the disparity between the percentages of literate persons.[16]

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[14] COLLIER, P. (2007) *The Bottom Billion: why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it,* New York, Oxford University Press.

[15] All data in this section comes from the Central Intelligence World Fact Book on Ethiopia and Uganda. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html and https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ug.html. Accessed on 15 November 2007.

[16] Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the significant language differences as most literate Ugandans read English, thus connecting them to the more global outlets of news and literature whilst for most Ethiopians they are more likely to read Amharic which is far more limiting.

1.1 Politics

While managing differences and similarities in comparisons is always complex, there are important historical, societal and political differences that make this study perhaps even more interesting whilst at the same time slightly more complicated. Uganda was a British protectorate (which made British intervention less intense than if it were an actual colony as Kenya was) that was formed through the integration of regional chiefdoms and territories. There are three major ethnic groups in Uganda: Bantu, Nilotic and Central Sudanic. The Bantu are the most numerous and include the Baganda and the Banyankole from the Southwestern area.[17] Residents of the north are largely Nilotic and comprise the next largest group.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, has more often been a colonising than colonised state.[18] It was occupied by a western power, Italy, for only a short period, between 1936 and 1941. Ethiopia is one of the oldest states and historians often trace the modern nation to the arrival of Sabaeans around 800 BC. Today the state is highly diverse with over 82 languages. The Oromo, who in the past served as slaves for the highlanders, are the largest ethnic group with 32%. The Amhara, the traditional rulers, represent 30% while Meles' group, the Tigrayans, are 6% of the population.

The NRM and TPLF liberation struggles have Marxist roots and when they came to power both implemented some version of federalist governance partly to address the complexities of having such multi-ethnic populations. The Ethiopian federalist constitution is more ambitious and devolved power to regional states to the point of self-determination up to secession. Since Eritrea's secession, however, the devolution of power has been more in theory than in practice. Nevertheless, regional states have autonomous governments, which are considered, in principle, to be equal to the federal government. The Ugandan federalist system differs in that it consists of two levels of government each of which controls the same territory and citizens. Regional governments are responsible for more local issues while the national government addresses larger issues. The underlying rational for these systems was different: in the case of Ethiopia it was to address complex issues of power and ethnic

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[17] President Museveni is from the Southwest.

[18] HOLCOMB, B. K. & IBSSA, S. (1990) *The Invention of Ethiopia*, Trenton, Red Sea Press.

relations, whilst in Uganda it was seen as a means of engaging people at the local level and increasing their stake in the political process.

The differing approaches to federalism are also indicative of divergent approaches towards the state and ethnic communities. Ethiopia has granted ethnic communities full rights (in theory though not in practice), but Uganda's strategy has been to encourage ethnic sentiments to be expressed through cultural loyalties.[19] As will be explained later, these policies have been reflected in the press.

1.2 Wars and transitions

Ethiopia and Uganda are often described as 'transitioning' or 'post-conflict' but neither term is accurate. For the purposes of locating the countries within a comparative context, in 1994 the countries were both categorised in Bratton and Van de Walle's typology "Transitions Outcomes, Sub-Saharan Africa, 1994" as 'flawed transitions' (as opposed to 'precluded transitions', 'blocked transitions' or 'democratic transitions').[20] Similarly, in 2007 both Ethiopia and Uganda were ranked as 'partly-free' by Freedom House's Freedom in the World report.[21] Although they may be 'transitioning', as the term is often employed it suggests that they are on a particular trajectory towards democracy. Just as ranking countries according to how 'free' or 'un-free' their press is can obscure serious analysis of the complex political and media systems, similar rankings of how 'democratic' or 'undemocratic' countries are can also cloud the bigger picture and imply inaccurate assumptions of democratic processes that these countries are "somehow on the road to democracy and that they have simply been stalled or delayed".[22] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to predict future political developments, and current evidence of political reform is inconclusive; at present, however, neither Meles nor Museveni could be called democrats but they also have both delivered the most open system that *some* of their people have enjoyed in generations.

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[19] YOUNG, C. (2001) Uganda under Museveni. *African Studies Review,* Vol. 44, No. 2, 207-210.
[20] BRATTON, M. & WALLE, N. V. D. (1994) Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa. *World Politics,* 46, 453-89.
[21] FREEDOM HOUSE (2007) *Freedom of the Press 2007: A Global Survey of Media Independence,* Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
[22] HERBST, J. (2001) Political Liberalization in Africa after Ten Years. *Comparative Politics,* 33, 357-74. pp. 358-359.

While the EPRDF and NRM have brought peace they have not brought an end to violent conflicts both internally and with their neighbours. The use of violence has been a clear strategy on the part of both parties as a tool for the consolidation of power. In Uganda, a major war in the North with the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) has raged with no resolution for the past twenty years suggesting that the NRM has the power to stop it but has rather chosen to prolong the violence for political and financial benefit. On the international front, Uganda has also been involved in a controversial war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and previously in the war in Rwanda. Ethiopia has been involved in more violent conflicts. Since the EPRDF came to power, there have been a number of ongoing secessionist and liberation movements fighting the central government. Ethiopia recently intervened in Somalia and its troops continue to occupy Mogadishu and surrounding areas in the

ONLF fighters and government troops are currently engaged in combat. Ethiopia and Eritrea also fought the bloodiest conventional war of the late twentieth century over the tiny border town of Badme. The findings of the UN Border Commission

access and listening at least occasionally. Government owned and run Uganda Broadcasting Corporation has the largest reach and broadcasts in several local languages. Television penetration is substantially lower: according to the 2002 census only 4.5 percent of the population own televisions sets. Apart from the government UBC television station there are a number of private stations. *The New Vision* and the *Monitor*[24] are the two dominant newspapers and are published daily; *The New Vision* leads with an estimated daily circulation at 35,000 while the *Daily Monitor* is around 20,000.[25] *The Sunday Vision*, which is the Sunday edition of *The New Vision*, has the largest circulation of any paper with 40,000. Local language papers are also popular and *Bukedde*, owned by *The New Vision,* has a daily circulation of around 15,000.[26]

Radio and newspaper penetration is lower in Ethiopia where approximately 19.6 percent of the population owns a radio. It has only been within the past year that the government licensed private radio stations, and the two stations licensed so far are both aligned with the government. Television is limited to the government programming and only around 0.6 percent of households have television sets[27] (with 2.8 percent of the population having access to TV) and are primarily in urban areas.[28] For over a decade newspapers have been the sole independent media outlet apart from the vibrant web-based magazines and blogs, which are largely run by members of the diaspora. Most of the papers remain weekly. Two of the three dailies are government owned while the other, *The Daily Monitor*, is not overly political and largely compiles reports from the government and wire services. Prior to the elections there were many weekly papers. During the elections, their circulation often doubled or tripled - at points reaching 90,000 - and some papers would publish almost daily. Sustained circulation for publications varies. At present *Addis Admass*, published in Amharic,

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[24] Over the years the *Monitor* changed its name to *Daily Monitor* and *Sunday Monitor*. To avoid confusion and for the purpose of this thesis I will simply refer to the paper with its original founding title, the *Monitor*.
[25] As across much of Africa one newspaper copy is usually read by a number of people.
[26] World Newspapers Association (WNA) (2003) Circulation: A 'visionary' approach to boost sales in Uganda. Available at: http://www.rap21.org/article18817.html. Accessed on 23 January 2007.
[27] Abebe Chekol, "Ethiopian Free and Open Source Software Network". Available at: http://www.globaliswatch.org/en/node/460. Accessed on 3 February 2007.
[28] UNESCA "Ethiopia, NICI Infrastructure". Available at: http://www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/country_profiles/ethiopia/ethioinfra.htm. Accessed on 3 February 2007.

has the highest circulation, around 40,000 copies, while the Amharic *Reporter* and English *Fortune* are around 5,000.[29]

Linguistically, Ethiopia is far more diverse than Uganda. While this thesis is focused on elites and their role in the press and politics, in Uganda where English is more widely used the population has greater access to the international media and the English press has a broader readership across the country. In Ethiopia, the press remains limited to urban areas, and primarily the Amharic and English speaking population. Nevertheless, the press in both countries, as this thesis will argue, is highly influential in the nation-building and political process.

There are, of course, numerous potential explanations to account for the differences of media systems. Cultural attitudes towards the press, reading habits, historical perceptions of newspapers, expendable income, costs of reading papers (both direct and indirect), and language, etc., could all be considered but are beyond the scope of this dissertation. The factors to be highlighted within these cases will illuminate the characteristics that are particularly influential in answering the research questions posed and will focus on the complex relations between the media and political system.

2. Elites and the press

The press is the focus of this research for reasons particular to poor countries in Africa. In Ethiopia and Uganda, I argue during the course of this thesis that the press, however it is characterised in terms of being "free and independent," has served as an important forum for processes of elite negotiation of political power, reconciliation, historical consensus and envisioning the future of the country. I am skeptical of some of the broad-based claims linking a free press alone with good governance and economic development[30] without including the functions of negotiation I have just described. Later, I will look at accountability, in its broad and narrow meaning and its links to the status of the press in society. There are certainly

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[29] Statistics, Ethiopian Ministry of Information, Addis Ababa. Personal communication.
[30] WORLD BANK DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (Ed.) (2002) *The Right To Tell: The Role of the Mass Media in Economic Development,* Washington DC.

select examples of instances where the press does promote accountability,[31] but the salience must be examined. There is also not a consensus from Africans themselves that the press matters in this way.[32] More audience research is required to fully investigate these arguments. The claims of accountability will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2 during a review of the mainstream literature.

In addition, Ethiopia and Uganda as 'bottom billion' countries face different challenges in the media environment than some of their developing country counterparts, or even those 'bottom billion' countries which are not post-conflict. This, I argue, makes the traditional press particularly relevant in nation-building. While South Africa, Mauritius and their neighbours in North Africa may be flooded with the competitors of foreign media outlets, particularly satellite television, such competition matters far less in countries with small middle classes and restricted outlets for reception. Thus while new media may challenge state power and national sovereignty for many countries, it matters far less for poor African countries which may not have the markets, infrastructure or the businesses to be wholly part of the new system.[33]

Independent radio stations are transforming the media landscape across much of Africa in interesting ways and the importance of this is undeniable. This is particularly true for some countries with high rates of illiteracy.[34]. But when the NRM and EPRDF came to power, this transformation had not occurred and even now, Ethiopia has been excluded from this trend. Since this thesis is primarily concerned with the transition from guerrilla war to the present government, it is the press that is the focus of this analysis. And more contemporaneously, national news still matters and the press continues to be the principle medium in generating this. In Ethiopia and Uganda after the civil wars it has been the newspapers that have the resources for original investigative reporting and it is the newspapers that set the

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[31] BESLEY, T. & BURGESS, R. (2002) The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1415-52. COLLIER, P. (2007) *The Bottom Billion: why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it,* New York, Oxford University Press.

[32] AFROBAROMETER (2003) Freedom of Speech, Media Exposure, and the Defense of a Free Press in Africa. *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper*. 10 December 2007, World 'divided' on press freedom. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/7134918.stm.

[33] PRICE, M. E. (2002) *Media and Sovereignty*, Cambridge, MIT.

[34] FARDON, R. & FURNISS, G. (Eds.) (2000) *African Broadcast Cultures*, Oxford, James Currey.

agenda and largely continue to do so to this day. In Uganda, for example, where there are over one hundred radios stations and radio talk shows are growing in importance as forums for dialogues with the masses,[35] radio stations can still seldom afford to have their own correspondents but rather rely on the dailies for the news. They often take the material from the newspapers and either read it out verbatim, summarize it or sometimes translate it into local languages for particular radio programmes. Thus while radios may spread the message the fastest, it is the print journalists who are most often setting and defining that message.

Charles Onyango-Obbo, a founding editor of the *Monitor* newspaper in Uganda, argued that in his country it is the print media that really matters because:

> In print you have the policy debate. In Africa you cannot have policy debates in any sensible way in the broadcast media. For call-in shows in Uganda and a lot of Africa their function is for people to vent. People go home after they have vented. They don't actually call so their point of view can form the basis of government action but they call spur-of-the-moment. It is not recorded. But the people that write in the media are very meticulous, they do their research, it is the intellectual forum.[36]

The press, as Onyango-Obbo implied, remains the realm of the intellectuals and elites. Print journalists in Ethiopia and Uganda have also had substantially more freedoms than their electronic counterparts and were very active during and post-liberation transitions. Thus this research builds upon the experience of the press as a forum, both effectively and ineffectively utilised, for the negotiation of power between different factions, elites and, importantly (and often overlooked), the government.

African studies has long been interested in the influence of 'personal rule' or the role of a few key individuals (elites) to affect change in politics[37] and more recent studies have been looking at the role of elites in shaping democratic consolidation or transitions.[38] Villalon and VonDoepp, for example, focus on several case studies of

[35] MWESIGE, P. G. (2004) "Can You Hear Me Now?": Radio Talk Shows and Political Participation in Uganda. *Communication.* Indiana University.
[36] Interview: Charles Onyango-Obbo.
[37] JACKSON, R. & ROSBERG, C. (1982) *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prophet, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant,* Berkley, University of California Press.
[38] VILLALON, L. A. & VONDOEPP, P. (Eds.) (2005) *The Fate of Africa's Democratic Experiments: Elites and Institutions,* Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press.

countries that have been the most successful in transitioning to democracy, and argue that it is key politicians (governing and opposition) that have shaped democratic rule.

A major issue to be explored throughout this thesis is the contrasting ways elites in Ethiopia and Uganda have used the press. This also provides some insight into why papers were either tolerated or forced to close by the government. In Ethiopia, the press has largely been used by elites to argue for alternative visions of what the Ethiopian nation should be. The press came to reflect some fundamental disagreements about key policies, including the new constitution, that the EPRDF was implementing. In Uganda, the press was sympathetic to the NRMs nationbuilding project and was more critical about its implementation rather than the movement system itself. In both Ethiopia and Uganda, where the commitment to multi-party politics is questionable, journalists have emerged as an important section of elites and as individual political players.

There has been some research into the effects of the press compared with other mediums. For example, a recent study by the Afrobarometer suggests that newspaper readership, in comparison with other media, is the most important medium for cultivating democratic attitudes and practices.[39] It also proves to be the most significant motivator in reinforcing popular commitments to free speech, the emergence of opinion leadership, the reduction of political fear, and open criticism of national broadcasters'.[40] Such studies on the influence of the media on audiences have also indicated that the printed word is commonly regarded as more legitimate and truthful partly because one can go back and refer to something in print. This argument was corroborated in a number of interviews during field research, particularly in Ethiopia where significant value is placed on the written word and it is often believed that to be true, things have to be written down.

Focusing on the print media also has benefits for conducting research. As the press has been and continues to be the freest medium, there is the greatest space for allowing research into understanding how the media may be used as a tool in the nation-building process. The printed press is also an important record of history, and

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[39] AFROBAROMETER (2003) Freedom of Speech, Media Exposure, and the Defense of a Free Press in Africa. *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper.*
[40] TEMIN, J. & SMITH, D. (2000) Media Matters: Evaluating the Role of the Media in Ghana's 2000 Elections. *African Affairs,* 101.

for some countries that have less of a tradition, or scarce financing, for academic scholarship, this is a very valuable and important source of documentation. It also gives researchers the added opportunity to take an historical perspective and is the easiest medium to verify. The stories told by journalists were inevitably the stories of the press in their societies. Some of what they say can be corroborated and the work that they do is also available for examination and further study. In both Ethiopia and Uganda, I found that the press reporting of the press itself (or of the media in general) gave the richest perspective of the media environment, albeit sometimes with a self-interested bias.

In addition, much of the literature on comparative media systems and on the media in poor countries has focused on the press. As Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm state in the first paragraph of *Four Theories of the Press*, "by press, in this book, we mean all the media of mass communication, although we shall talk about the printed media oftener than about broadcast or film because the printed media are older and have gathered about them more of the theory and philosophy of mass communication".[41] For the above reasons and since this thesis also tries to address the major research challenges put forward by such authors, limiting the present study to the press in Ethiopia and Uganda seems a natural starting point.

3. Key political and media variables

As there is little literature on comparing African media systems, or on comparing media systems in poor countries, this thesis will have to draw on broader literature. The differences in the development of the press systems in Ethiopia and Uganda, for example, are very much at the heart of the research questions Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm posed in *Four Theories of the Press* in 1956. In this international communications text, the authors asked, "in the simplest terms, the question behind this book is, why is the press as it is? Why does it apparently serve different purposes in widely different forms in different countries?"[42] In the past fifty

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[41] SIEBERT, F., PETERSON, T. & SCHRAMM, W. (1956) *Four Theories of the Press,* Urbana, University of Illinois Press. p.1.
[42] Ibid. p. 1.

years, there has been little progress in addressing these questions and even less so in relation to the press in Africa.

This central question, which most recently Hallin and Mancini in *Comparing Media Systems* attempted to revisit, gets at core questions in the relationship between media systems and political systems.[43] It probes variations in the structure and the political role of the news media and asks why these variations occur. While their work is Western-centric, the texts of Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm or of Hallin and Mancini suggest key questions and possible experiences of devising analytical frameworks for understanding the relation between politics and the press in Africa.

The strength and applicability of Hallin and Mancini's work lies not in the typologies or models they define but in the analytical process, of both political and media factors, that led to their argument. While the political and media variables they identified are helpful in understanding why the media in North America and Western Europe "are the way they are", they do not directly correspond to the conflict/post-conflict situation in Eastern Africa. Thus new, more context appropriate, variables have been developed for the purpose of this thesis. The media variables include: *the polarisation of the press; ideologies of journalists; institutionalisation of the press;* and *government interventions.* The political variables include: *the ideology of the liberation movement; the process of state construction and the consolidation of power; reconciliation, trust and confidence building;* and *international dimensions.* Together, these variables provide important context, are imperative for understanding the press and political environment and to allow for an effective case study comparison they will provide structure for specific chapters. The variables will be elaborated, including the rational for their selection, in Chapter 2.

These variables will be employed within an historical context and case study perspective. For both Ethiopia and Uganda, the history of the press is briefly traced to locate particular influences and developments. In the case of Uganda, the growth of the two major newspapers, the *Monitor* and *The New Vision*, are explored while in Ethiopia three newspapers, namely *The Ethiopian Herald*, *The Reporter* and *Tobiya* (which after an internal split became *Lisane Hezeb*) are analysed. The papers have

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[43] HALLIN, D. & MANCINI, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics,* New York, Cambridge University Press.

been selected as representatives of dominant and particular perspectives. In Ethiopia, for example, there are three such categories: strongly pro-government, 'gray zone' but government leaning, and strongly anti-government. In Uganda, there are two main categories: government leaning and opposition leaning. There are other papers that fall in between these categories but they have generally been less influential. These papers can be represented along the flowing lines where the far left side represents strongly pro-government and the far right side represents strongly anti-government publications. It is also important to note that by no means should these publications be considered as located in static categories. The model below is a snapshot and indicative of general placement of the papers under the NRM and EPRDF. As will be elaborated in the coming chapters, for example, the *Monitor* has been moving to the left, as has *The Reporter*.

UGANDA

| *The New Vision* | *The Monitor* |

ETHIOPIA

| *The Ethiopian Herald* | *The Reporter* | *Tobiya/ Lisane Hezeb* |
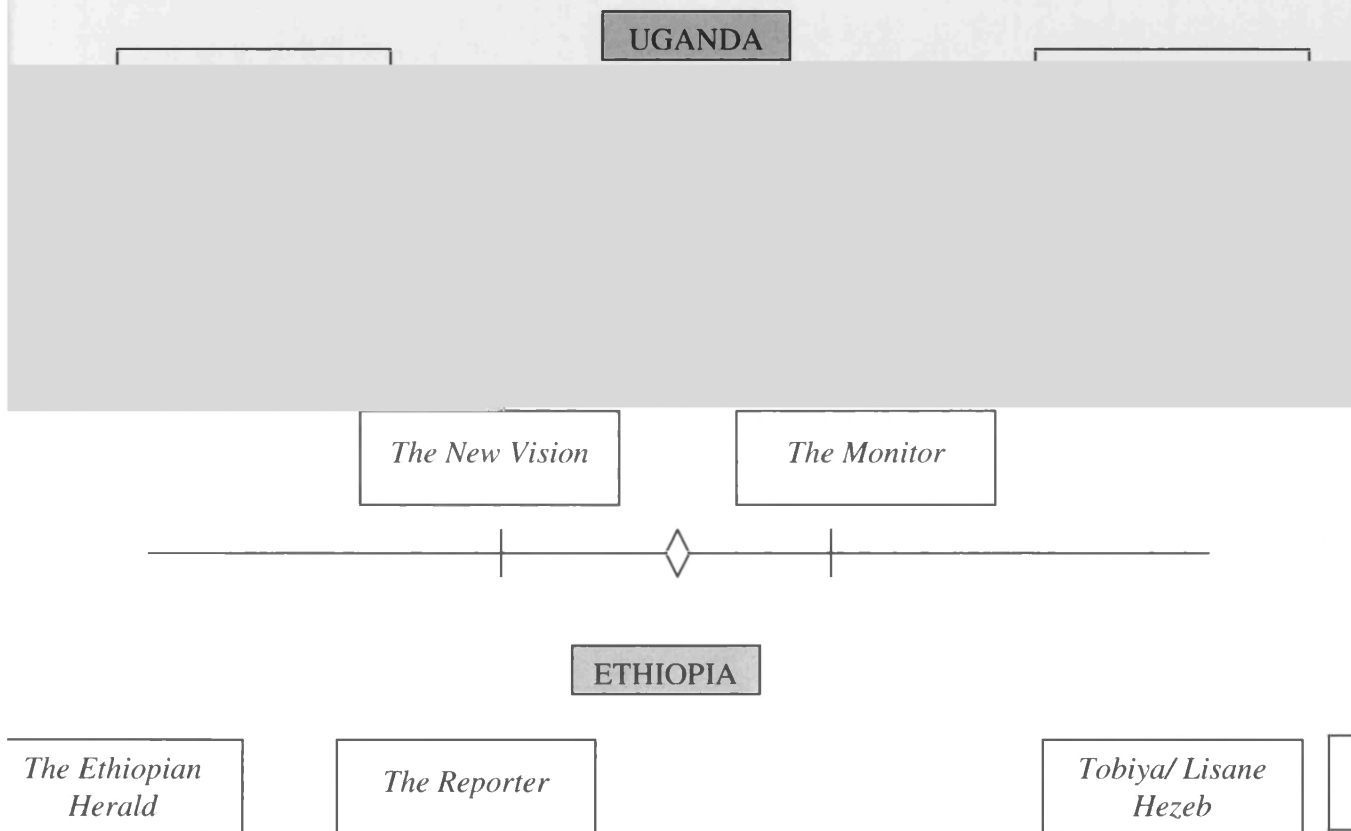
Looking closely at the development and agenda of these particular papers during the period since the NRM and EPRDF provides insight into their role in the political processes and their contribution to society.

4. Field research

The methodology employed to answer the research questions is multidimensional and different tools have been used to show the complex international, political and media dynamics at play. At times in this dissertation I will write in the first person. This is partly because of the nature of the research and the difficulty of taking the researcher out of the context since I was often an active participant as the data was collected.

This research builds upon previous work experience in 2001-2002 in Addis Ababa at *The Reporter* newspaper. During this period I wrote the weekly features article and I also spent time working at a weekly entertainment newspaper. The year spent writing for the media in Ethiopia was for providing contacts in an environment that is often distrustful and difficult to penetrate quickly.

Formal data collection for this thesis began during the East African Fellowship Programme organised with the Stanhope Centre for Communications Policy Research and the LSE's Crisis States Programme in 2005. Fourteen journalists from seven Eastern African countries (including Ethiopia, Somaliland, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Sudan) spent six weeks studying politics and economics in London. There was a week follow-up meeting in Addis where we looked at issues relating to the region and the African Union.[44] A subsequent meeting was organised by the Fellows in Khartoum, Sudan as part of the newly established Eastern African Professional Journalists Association. Throughout the programme in London I led regular focus groups with seven participants at a time. We would discuss a particular issue related to the media in the region for an hour. These semi-structured focused group discussions and the comprehensive notes have been very important in providing data early on in the research. It also provided a basis for employing a comparative methodology.

An outgrowth of the East African Fellowship Programme has been the research and writing of a book on Oral Histories of Eastern African Editors that I

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[44] This project also grew out of my experience working for *The Reporter* in Addis. There was an abundance of short training programmes- either very issue specific (HIV/AIDS) or basic training. There was very little opportunity for journalists to learn to contextualise and think critically about the issues they were covering.

have been pursuing simultaneously with my thesis research. More then 30 in-depth interviews with the most prominent journalists and editors in the seven countries represented in the fellowship programme have been collected and transcribed. This research seeks to address what the role of journalists is in war and guerrilla movements as well as post-war transitions, including how they often perceive their work in different ways from journalists in the West. While some of the material and data collected during this research is applicable to my thesis, the book of oral histories diverges in a number of ways, including methodology, scope and the use of theoretical frameworks. Since my thesis focuses on Ethiopia and Uganda, the oral histories project has also allowed me to bring in the experiences of other countries in the region. The research for this work was carried out between January and August 2006 through research trips to neighbouring countries while I was based in Ethiopia.

The majority of the data included in this thesis comes from over 150 semi-structured interviews carried out in Ethiopia and Uganda (or, as in the cases of some informants from both Ethiopia and Uganda, in Kenya) and a number of oral histories. For sixteen months I used Ethiopia as my base and spent substantial time researching in Uganda, among other places. Given local political events in Ethiopia and the culture of secrecy I found it significantly more difficult to establish contacts and get reliable information than in Uganda, which thus necessitated much more intensive and time-consuming field research. In both Ethiopia and Uganda I succeeded in gaining access to prominent journalists and policy makers. As there has been so little written about the press in these two countries (and particularly Ethiopia), semi-structured interviews and oral histories are the most effective way to get the necessary and relevant data. Discussing issues of the press and media remains a sensitive issue in most societies in the region, and Ethiopia is more extreme than Uganda where the debates are particularly complex and nuanced. This issue will appear later in my thesis when I argue that much of the debate and discussion in Ethiopia surrounding the press and the journalists who are in jail has less to do with the media itself but with ideological clashes and struggles for political power, some of it very personal, that go back decades. Thus it is essential for media research to be contextualised in a broader political and historical setting.

A substantial part of this research has also entailed trawling through newspaper archives. Given the contemporaneous nature of the study, and the fact that the media in both Ethiopia and Uganda is under-researched, the newspapers themselves held some of the richest data for understanding the role of the press - and media in general - and why it has evolved the way it has. Of course there is a slight tendency with the press to pursue their own self-interests when writing history, but I have been sensitive to this and tried, when possible, to corroborate events with outside sources as well. While there are countless articles that informed the analysis and material presented here, I have only cited an article when explicitly referred to or quoted.

5. Outline of the thesis

This introductory chapter has sought to outline some of the major issues and central research questions to be explored in the coming chapters as well as to provide a brief overview of Ethiopia and Uganda and the methodology.

Chapter II considers the comparative case study framework and builds upon previous studies comparing media and political systems as well as the literature on media development and conflict and the press in Eastern Africa. Chapters III through VIII present the case studies. Chapter III examines the history of the press in Ethiopia and then focuses on the development and role of *The Ethiopian Herald, The Reporter* and *Tobiya/ Lisane Hezeb*, Chapter IV considers the media system in Ethiopia with the media variables outlined. Chapter V focuses on the political system in Ethiopia and how it has shaped the media system along the political variables. A similar pattern is repeated for the case of Uganda with Chapter VI considering the history of the media in Uganda, with a particular focus on the often-neglected development of the African press and an examination of the development and role of *The New Vision* and the *Monitor*. Chapter VII looks at the media system followed by Chapter VIII's analysis of the political system and its impact on the media in the Uganda case. The final chapter, Chapter IX, concludes by drawing out the major differences as to the development of the press and its role in the nation-building process in Ethiopia compared with Uganda, connecting the arguments made in Chapter II with lessons

from these case studies and suggesting new ways of attempting to understand the complex relations between the state and the press in conflict/post-conflict African countries.

CHAPTER 2

Bridging Theory and Practice:

Understanding and Comparing Press Systems in

Conflict/Post-Conflict Countries

We still have a lot of problems with Amnesty [International] and IPI [International Press Institute].
It is not a question of not wanting to help, I think it is a question of ideological vision.
I don't agree with their vision of the world especially with a free flow of information....
Free flow of ideas are only coming in one direction,
all the ideas are coming from the West.
They are not taking in ours....
If I have any idea about democracy, it won't reach you in London.
-- Veteran Kenyan Journalist Philip Ocheing[45]

Philip Ocheing's criticism is not new. In the existing academic, advocacy or policy literature it is difficult to find answers as to why the press has developed the way it has in Ethiopia and Uganda, or what its role has been in the nation-building process under Meles and Museveni. Ever since countries have been ranked according to how free or unfree they are, and Western scholars have been waxing about the modernising effects of a liberal press, critics and many Africans have argued that context and politics is seldom sufficiently taken into consideration.

1. Comparing African media systems

The strongest contributions on the media in African studies largely focus on the unique experience of post-apartheid South Africa or the dynamic media in Nigeria, and comparative case study research remains rare. Nevertheless, interest in this field appears to be growing and in the past ten years there have been rich contributions with cases from across the continent.[46] These publications have been

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[45] Interview: Philip Ocheing.

[46] FARDON, R. & FURNISS, G. (Eds.) (2000) *African Broadcast Cultures*, Oxford, James Currey. HYDEN, G. & OKIGBO, C. (2002) The Media and the Two Waves of Democracy. IN HYDEN, G., LESLIE, M. & OGUNDIMU, F. (Eds.) *Media and Democracy in Africa*. New Brunswick, Transaction. NYAMNJOH, F. (2005) *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*, New York, Zed Press. BOURGAULT, L. M. (1995) *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press. ERIBO, F. & JONG-EBOT, W. (Eds.) (1997) *Press Freedom and Communication in Africa*, Trenton, Africa World Press. RONNING, H. & KUPE, T. (2000) The dual legacy of democracy and authoritarianism: The media and the state in Zimbabwe. IN CURRAN, J. & PARK, M.-J. (Eds.) *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. New York, Routledge.

important in moving the field forward[47] and contributed to the development of this thesis. Uganda has been significantly more researched than Ethiopia, largely because of an interest from British scholars in their former colony, the history of British journalists in the country and the fact that many of the papers are in English.[48] In contrast, Ethiopia, with little colonial experience apart from a short occupation by the Italians and few English publications, has been far less researched.[49]

When it comes specifically to comparing African media systems, comparative research remains predominately focused on the colonial experience or comparing African countries along a stratum as to 'how free' they are.

The colonial comparison is a historical legacy. For example, one of the landmark publications on the news media in Africa is by William Hachten (1971). Typical of his time, Hachten places countries in colonial categories. He argues that "the historical background, which determined the path the press of each region followed, sets the scene for the primary concern with the news media's activities in the first decade of African independence".[50] Another influential book of that period by Dennis Wilcox (1975) opens with an examination of the colonial legacy arguing, "the nature of press-government relationships in Africa today is, in large part, due to

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[47] Most of the early work on the media in Africa is from the 1960s and early 1970s. This is not surprising given the political realities of the 1970s and 1980s making research extremely difficult particularly on the independent media. For the foundation of the general studies on media and Africa see:
BAKER, G. (1964) The Place of Information in Developing Africa. *African Affairs*, 63, 209-220, AINSLIE, R. (1966) *The Press in Africa*, London, Victor Gollancz, STOKKE, O. (Ed.) (1971) *Reporting Africa*, Uppsala, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, WILCOX, D. L. (1975) *Mass Media in Black Africa: Philosophy and Control*, New York, Praeger.

[48] See, for example, TABAIRE, B. (2007) The Press and Political Repression in Uganda: Back to the Future? *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 1, 193-211, MWESIGE, P. G. (2004) "Can You Hear Me Now?": Radio Talk Shows and Political Participation in Uganda. *Communication*. Indiana University, GARIYO, Z. (1994b) The Press and Democratic Struggles. IN MAMDANI, M. A. J. O.-O. (Ed.) *Uganda: Studies in Living Conditions, Popular Movements and Constitutionaism*. Vienna, JEP, GARIYO, Z. (1993) The Media Constitutionalism and Democracy in Uganda. IN PUBLICATIONS, C. (Ed.) Kampala, Centre for Basic Research, KAYANJA, R. D. (2002) The Current State of Media Reform in Uganda. IN PRICE, M. E., ROZUMILOWICZ, B. & VERHULST, S. (Eds.) *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State.*

[49] There are, however, some excellent contributions by the following: BONSA, S. (2002) The State of the Private Press in Ethiopia. IN ZEWDE, B. & PAUSWANG, S. (Eds.) *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*. Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, BONSA, S. (2000) *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991-1999*, Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies, PANKHURST, R. (1962) The Foundation of Education, Printing, Newspapers, Book Production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia. *Ethiopia Observer*, STYAN, D. (1999) Misrepresenting Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa? Constraints and Dilemmas of Current Reporting. IN ALLEN, T. & SEATON, J. (Eds.) *The Media of Conflict*. London, Zed.

[50] HATCHEN, W. (1971) *Muffled Drums*. Ames, Iowa State University Press.

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the legacy left by colonial administrators and governments".[51] Yet Wilcox acknowledges "today's national leaders are now the prime decision makers who will decide whether to continue that legacy or initiate new press-government relationships".[52] Forty years later, however, colonial history and regional geography continue to have a prominent role in the literature on comparing African media systems. Festus Eribo and William Jong-Ebot's edited volume on *Press Freedom and Communication in Africa* (1997) took a historical look at the developments and influences of countries on the continent. By grouping a series of chapters into Anglophone, Arabic, Francophone and Lustaphone speaking countries readers are provided insight into the colonial influences that have shaped the media in different regions of the continent. The authors rightly argue that too often media in Africa is discussed without equal consideration of both the internal and external factors that have affected it. Their desire to move beyond the normative analysis and with the rejection that the Western media should be the "guiding light for all other media systems" is also well placed.[53] Nevertheless, by the nature of their comparative framework, Eribo and Jong-Ebot discount the effects of local actors and more contemporary media policy decisions and developments. While colonial experience is a factor in shaping the media systems, this thesis will argue, through the comparison of Uganda, a colonised country, and Ethiopia, a mostly non-colonised country, that other influences are more important in understanding contemporary media issues.

Other cases of applying comparative methodologies to African media systems have been part of an effort to describe or locate particular media systems either in relation to others on the continent, or more frequently, along a global strata of how 'free' or 'unfree' they are. Freedom House is probably the most well known ranking of this kind, although there are others produced by organisations such as Reporters

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[51] WILCOX, D. L. (1975) *Mass Media in Black Africa: Philosophy and Control,* New York, Praeger. p. 1.
[52] Ibid. p.19. Wilcox develops several themes about how the press is employed- for promotional goals, namely as a vessel for the government to explain to the people its objectives and policies; as a nation-builder assisting in national development projects and promoting national unity and consciousness; a facilitator of mass education and as a provider of constructive criticism providing what African leaders to deem to be responsible and helpful commentary and suggestions.
[53] ERIBO, F. & JONG-EBOT, W. (Eds.) (1997) *Press Freedom and Communication in Africa,* Trenton, Africa World Press. p. xi.

Sans Frontiers. They are largely constructed by gauging the 'impressions' of outsiders or an accounting of the press freedom violations that are collected by groups such as the International Freedom of Expression Exchange.

While they have taken on a new role in a post-Cold War world where they are often considered as indicators of democratisation, press freedom indicators are nothing new.[54] And just as they were criticised in the 1960s for their normative and seemingly forgone conclusions, they continue to be susceptible to the same attacks. As journalist E. Lloyd Sommerland noted in the 1960s:

> It is inappropriate to judge governments and press in Africa by the same criteria one would apply in the United Kingdom or the United States.... Africa is in a transitional state, experimenting with new forms of democracy and building new political structures. In the West, the very idea of government publishing newspapers in anathema - it is incompatible with the independent, objective, critical role of a free press. But in the new nations, it is considered a logical and proper function of governments to produce newspapers, no different from conducting a broadcasting service which is widely recognised as falling within the area of public confidence.[55]

And as early as the 1960s there were discussions and attempts to revise the rankings to take into account Sommerland's criticisms, though seemingly with little success.[56]

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[54] Raymond Nixon, for example, in the 1960s suggested: "the higher the level of socio-economic development in a country, the greater the likelihood that press freedom will exist; the lower the level of development, the greater the chance that press control will be found".
See NIXON, R. (1965) Freedom in the World's Press: A Fresh Appraisal with New Data. *Journalism Quarterly*, 52. Most researchers at the World Bank today would turn this around to fit the democracy and development agenda by saying that the media are the independent variable and the level of poverty the dependent variable. Perhaps the most problematic aspect of Nixon's article, however, is the methodology for the rankings. The world rankings for all 117 countries were decided by four judges (2 from the US and 2 from Europe) and sometimes with the assistance of 1 rotating judge from the region concerned. It is difficult that these judges had the expertise to successfully understand the complexities and reality on the ground of the majority of countries involved.

[55] SUMMERLAND, E. (1968) Problems in Developing a Free Enterprise Press in East Africa. *Gazette*, 14. p.77.

[56] The 'Africanist' response to Nixon was initially made by both Wilcox and Lowenstein. Lowenstein attempted to involve more local judges and sent questionnaires to individuals in each of the countries involved. Responses were erratic and Wilcox attempted to develop a set of more comprehensive categories and a more thorough methodology. He developed 25 categories ranging from newspaper ownership to the extent of supervision over broadcasting personnel. Using these factors (either yes or no), Wilcox ranked countries along a continuum and then developed 5 groups from minimal control (0-5), low control (6-10), medium control (11-15), high control (16-20) and total control (21-25). He solicited responses to his questionnaire to over 200 individuals throughout 34 countries and African embassy personnel in Washington, DC- this type of research would be even more difficult now given that virtually every embassy employee from Africa would tell a researcher that their media are entirely free and fair.
See NIXON, R. (1968) Factors Related to Freedom in National Press Systems. *Journalism Quarterly*, 37, 13-28. "Freedom in the World's Press: A Fresh Appraisal with New Data," Journalism Quarterly

In general, however, the African studies literature on the media has set standards of tempered idealism with acceptance of different cultural realities that contrast with the more ideological literature of the media and development or democratisation fields. Nyamjoh's book *Africa's Media: Democracy and Politics of Belonging*, along with some chapters from Fardon and Furniss's *African Broadcast Cultures*, makes more nuanced arguments that are influencing the field. While Nyamjoh uses Cameroun as a case study and does not engage in comparative research or directly address Ethiopia or Uganda, he nevertheless has strongly considered the political and cultural dimensions of the media in Cameroun and argued for example that

> If the law on Freedom of Communication has made it difficult for the private press to operate freely and to contribute to the democratisation of society, the private press has on its part compounded that difficulty with its unprofessional journalism. Ignoring or downplaying the latter, as some over-sympathetic analysts and media scholars have tended to do, is either dishonest, paternalistic or both. It does not help the democratic aspirations of ordinary Africans, as it tends to play into the hands of opportunistic or mercenary journalism. Again, these shortcomings on the part of journalists and the media point to shortcomings in liberal democratic assumptions about Africa.[57]

Nyamnjoh's work has been critiqued by scholars such as Guy Berger who questions "on just whose side he is".[58] But at the same time Nyamnjoh's research is encouraging for its objectivity, contextualisation and consideration of the complexities of the media in Cameroun and it is a relief that he is not taking sides as much of the literature on media in developing countries does.

2. Media and development

There is a long history of more general literature both on the role of the media in the developing world and on efforts to develop the media in such countries.[59] More

42 (Winter 1965): 3-14, 118-19. LOWENSTEIN, R. (1970) Press Freedom as a Political Indicator. IN FISCHER, H. D. & MERRILL, J. C. (Eds.) *International Communication* New York, Hasting House.

[57] NYAMNJOH, F. (2005) *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging,* New York, Zed Press. p. 185.

[58] BERGER, G. (2006) Review, Francis Nyamnjoh. Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging. *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 32, 642-644. p. 642.

[59] This is a broad literature and there are many ways to cut it: media and transitions; media and democratisation; media and peace and conflict; media development; and media and development.

recently there has been a growing number of studies looking at the specific role of media in violent conflict and building peace some of which is particularly relevant for Ethiopia and Uganda.

Closely connected to the geo-political issues of the day in the 1950s the central debate was on how the radio could 'modernise' developing countries.[60] While this approach has been highly controversial for decades, with critics arguing it was merely a form of colonisation,[61] it remains influential and its legacy can continue to be seen in many NGO and IGO media development projects.

Today, however, the discourse and literature on media development strategies in the developing world have largely become synonymous with democratisation. Much of this agenda and the current research are being pushed by the media development industry that has market-driven interests and often lacks serious political analysis or contextualisation. The focus is generally on what donors and international non-governmental organisations can do to 'improve' the media in poorer countries.[62]

While there is not the space to examine all of this related literature here, media and development is perhaps the broadest way of framing this to encapsulate many of these issues. Given the recent history of Ethiopia and Uganda particular focus in this section is on media and conflict.

[60] LERNER, D. (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East,* Glencoe, IL, Free Press, LERNER, D. & SCHRAMM, W. (Eds.) (1967) *Communication and Change in the Developing Countries,* Honolulu, HI, East-West Center, BLAKE, C. (1979) Communication Research and African National Development. *Journal of Black Studies,* 10, 218-230, SCHRAMM, W. (1964) *Mass Media and National Development,* Stanford, Stanford University Press.
Daniel Lerners' *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* is perhaps the most referenced contribution to this field. Lerner argues that societies can move from being 'traditional' to 'modern' through stimulating the growth of five variables including urbanization, literacy, mass media exposure, wider economic participation and political participation. Similarly, Everett Rogers in 1962 built upon Lerner's research with a diffusion of innovations theory that essentially argued that the 'persuasive powers' of the communications media to change beliefs and behaviours could be an essential tool in increasing productivity within communities. Another classic of modernisation theory was Wilbur Schramm's *Mass media and Development: The Role of Information in Developing Countries* which argues that "underdeveloped countries have underdeveloped communications systems" (p.41) but the mass media can work to bridge the gap between rich and poor by facilitating social transformation and national development efforts.

[61] By the 1970s the modernisation agenda fell out of favor and was criticised for its top down approach and for suggesting the ignorance and lack of agency of those being studied. Critics noted that linear pre-structured approaches to modernisation failed to take into account local realities that may not even need to be entirely destroyed for modernisation to occur. Additionally, the suggestion that somehow Europeans or Americans can come in and teach others, via the radio, to be Western or modern was seen as not only patronizing but arrogant.

[62] The African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) survey by the BBC World Service Trust of seventeen sub-Saharan African countries is the most recent initiative and is indicative of the publications within this field. The country reports, while lengthy (some number around 100 pages) are largely descriptive providing readers with information such as how many television stations or newspapers there are as well as the overall legal environment. While it is an important step in documenting this information for comparative study, there is little or no analysis and contextualization

Much of the current discourse of media and democratisation is a product of the post-Cold War period[63] emerging out of the transitions and Central and Eastern Europe and expanding into a field with a strong advocacy and aid agenda.[64] Theories on the stages of media reform in transitions have been elaborated in multiple forms by different authors.[65] One frequently cited example is scholarship by Beata Rozumilowicz that builds upon literature for the democratic transition process and argues that there are four stages of media reform including pre-transition, primary transition, secondary stage and late or mature stage.[66] Much of this literature is problematic when applied to Ethiopia and Uganda for several reasons.

Firstly, assumptions made about the trajectory and transitions between and within these stages are not entirely appropriate for countries engaged in, and emerging from conflict. Models of media and democratisation often assume that there is a path towards normative democracy as we understand it in the West. This is not the case for Ethiopia and Uganda, which have crafted their own 'democratic' systems, namely the Movement system in Uganda and Revolutionary Democracy in Ethiopia.

of the media in broader political or social dynamics is almost entirely lacking. The focus on "training and capacity building exercises" and the role of the international community in delivering these services rather than local governments or local efforts at media reform is indicative of the normative focus the media and development sector has in general.

In the case of the AMDI report for Ethiopia, for example, the author was the Deputy Director of AAU's School of Journalism and a well-known (for those that work in Ethiopia) member of the EPRDF. See GEBRETSADIK, G. S. (2006) Ethiopia. Research Findings and Conclusions. *African Media Development Initiative.* London, BBC World Service Trust. It should thus not be surprising, that in this ninety-three page report there is virtually no mention of the widespread persecution faced by the journalists after the 2005 election. There are similar issues for the report on Uganda and Kenyan Blogger Ogova Ondego offers a critique of the Kenya report here: 5 April 2007, "BBC Wastes World Bank and Bill Gates Money on African Media 'Research'". Available at: http://www.artmatters.info/?articleid=283. Last accessed 02 January 2008.

[63] While debates on the role of the media in democracy have changed recently in the past twenty years there is a rich and dynamic history of academic research on the role of the media in the modern nation state ANDERSON, B. R. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism,* London, Verso, GELLNER, E. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, HOBSBAWM, E. J. (1990) *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780,* New York, Cambridge University Press.

[64] MILTON, A. (2001) Bound but Not Gagged: Media Reform in Democratic Transitions. *Comparative Political Studies,* 34, 493-526.

[65] JAKUBOWICZ, K. (2005) Post-Communist Media Development in Perspective. IN INTERNATIONAL POLICY ANALYSIS UNIT (Ed.), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, SPARKS, C. (2000) Media theory after the fall of European communism. Why the old models from East and West won't do anymore. IN CURRAN, J. & PARK, M.-J. (Eds.) *De-Westernizing Media Studies.* London, Routledge.

[66] ROZUMILOWICZ, B. (2002) Democratic change: A theoretical perspective. IN PRICE, M. E., ROZUMILOWICZ, B. & VERHULST, S. G. (Eds.) *Media Reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state.* London, Routledge.

In both countries a free press has at times served as an important part of single-party rule, international legitimisation, and a façade to cover the hallowing out of other institutions.

Similarly, models of transition often appear to make assumptions about the particular 'good' role of so-called media 'reformers' and the democratic intentions of the journalists as actors encouraging transition to an ideal of media that is free from "interference from government, business or dominant social groups" so it "is better able to maintain and support the competitive and participative elements that define the concept of democracy and the related process of democratisation".[67] As this thesis will elaborate, conflict/post-conflict transitions are seldom on a normative-linear trajectory but are rather more complex and muddled. In this case it is important to heed the warnings of a number of African scholars including Guy Berger from South Africa who notes the dangers of "lifting concepts like media and democracy from Western conditions and applying them unthinkingly to Africa".[68] This should not, however, be interpreted as a call for cultural relativism but rather a note of caution that such concepts can have significantly divergent interpretations even across the African continent, just as they certainly do between Ethiopia and Uganda.

Thirdly, the focus on the rule of law, as Rozumilowicz, for example suggests as the key agent of media reform can be problematic for countries emerging from conflict. This argument is made within the expectations for reform during 'ruptured transitions' (which are part of the 'primary transition' phase and most closely analogous to something that Ethiopia or Uganda have experienced). As Rozumilowicz describes "ruptured transitions classically occur through revolutionary overthrow of the previous regime". Appropriately, she acknowledges examples from Central and Eastern Europe but the application of such frameworks are regularly attempted for countries like Ethiopia and Uganda. As Chris Ogbondah notes in a chapter on "Media Laws in Political Transition" from Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu's

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[67] Ibid. p. 12.
[68] BERGER, G. (2000) Theorizing the media-democracy relationship in African conditions. Available at http://guyberger.ru.ac.za/Research/Democracy/theorise.htm. Accessed on 24 November 2007. Many researchers, politicians and journalists have long warned of such issues, including as previously quoted in this chapter, Summerland. See SUMMERLAND, E. (1968) Problems in Developing a Free Enterprise Press in East Africa. *Gazette*, 14.

book *Media and Democracy in Africa* the transition of countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea or Uganda leads to a different type of political transformation:

> The civil war that preceded this turn of events in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda cost these countries a lot in terms of human sufferings, but when the ·pervious leadership was defeated, it created a tabula rasa, that is, a situation where the incoming leadership could begin reshaping the political system quite radically. Thus it is no coincidence that these countries have not only introduced a drastically different constitution but also carried out a broad-based review process to arrive at these new principles.[69]

In conflict/post-conflict environments the many models of media and democratic transition with their recommended reforms do not sufficiently account for the often more urgent priorities of the consolidation of power, nation-building and reconciliation or the reality that governments can lack real control over the state itself.

As will be elaborated in the coming chapters, in nation-building projects that are the products of long and protracted civil wars, it is equally, if not more important to be aware of the parallel media systems running alongside the official government one and to understand this historical legacy. The politics and media policies of guerrilla struggles often have a more important legacy than the autocratic nature of the previous government. Analysis within the 'transitional' framework is rarely set up to account for such multiple historical factors.

More recently academics and practitioners have begun looking specifically at the media and conflict much of which is more relevant for the cases of Ethiopia and Uganda. Of course there is a long history of studies on media and propaganda in wars, particularly since the Second World War, but more recently there have been attempts to understand the unique issues of media reform and transitions to peace in conflict/post-conflict countries. During the mid to late 1990s interest in this field grew partly as a product of the Rwandan genocide and the concurrent civil war in the Balkans. Much of this literature offers greater insights and is more appropriate for understanding the press in Ethiopia and Uganda than the previously mentioned research on transitions because it is more concerned with issues of an enabling

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[69] OGBONDAH, C. (2002) Media Laws in Political Transition. IN HYDEN, G., LESLIE, M. & OGUNDIMU, F. F. (Eds.) *Media and Democracy in Africa*. New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers. p. 71. While this is a useful book, it is particularly relevant for studying the more peaceful transitions of the post-cold war era rather than those that emerged from civil wars such as Ethiopia and Uganda.

environment, reconstruction, peace-building and reconciliation. These studies are also often sensitive to the reality that when new governments come to power after wars, many institutions simply do not exist or function and thus cannot always be 'reformed' but must be built.

At the same time, however, the emphasis within this field is on the role of IGOs and NGOs in looking at what the international community can do and has done. Comparative research, for example, focuses on the reconstruction and state-building processes in Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo. More recently, Iraq and Afghanistan have dominated research. While this work, particularly that of Monroe Price,[70] is valuable in suggesting issues that should be considered neither Ethiopia nor Uganda experienced an international peacekeeping force after their civil wars that was involved in national reconstruction.[71] There were, and continue to be, strong international dimensions to the processes of ending their wars and nation-building but it is very different to having a UN broadcaster or internationally sponsored and supported media commission as was the case in Kosovo, Iraq or Afghanistan.[72]

Important contributions to this field have also centred on how journalists can contribute to peace-building or exacerbate conflict. Allen and Seaton in *The Media of Conflict,* for example, have focused on reporting during conflict and the role of representations of ethnic violence in the media.[73] Representations of conflict

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[70] PRICE, M. E. (2000) Restructuring the Media in Post-Conflict Societies: Four perspectives the experience of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. *UNESCO World Press Day.* Geneva, PRICE, M. & THOMPSON, M. (Eds.) (2002) *Forging Peace: Intervention, Human Rights and the Management of Media Space,* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press. THOMPSON, M. & PRICE, M. E. (2003) Intervention, Media and Human Rights. *Survival,* 45, 183-202. KRUG, P. & PRICE, M. E. (2003) A Module for Media Intervention: Content Regulation in Post-Conflict Zones. New York, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. For work indicative of that done by NGO's see: BAJRAKTARI, Y. & HSU, E. (2007) Developing Media in Stabalization and Reconstruction Operations. *Stabalization and Reconstruction Series* Washington D.C., United States Institute for Peace, ROSS, H. (2002) An Operational Framework for Media and Peacebuilding. IN IMPACS (Ed.), IMPACS, JOURNALISTS, T. N. A. O. (2002) The Role of the Media in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding. The Hague, The Netherlands Assocication of Journalists.

[71] The United Nations Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) is along the northern border in Ethiopia although it has not been involved with internal political development.

[72] PUTZEL, J. & ZWAN, J. V. D. (2006) Why Media Templates Do Not Work In Crisis States., for example, remind readers of the importance of context specific interventions.

[73] ALLEN, T. & SEATON, J. (Eds.) (1999) *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence,* London, Zed Books. Other contributions, for example, looking at the role of journalists in conflict and peace (though not on reporting ethnic conflicts) include WOLFSFELD, G. (1998) Promoting peace through the news media. IN LIEBES, T. & CURRAN, J. (Eds.) *Media, Ritual and Identity.* London, Routledge, JAKOBSEN, P. V. (2000) Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point: The Real Media Impact on Conflict Management is Invisible and Indirect.

contribute to internal understandings of history and consequently national reconstruction.[74] In addition, the scattered research within the broad field of media, democratisation, transitions and conflict that has focused on the reforms that came largely without international assistance and the political aspects of media reforms has been particularly interesting for this thesis. Such contributions include research that has highlighted the importance of looking at local representations of ethnicity in conflict in Northern Uganda,[75] the role of local commercial stations (rather than international NGO initiatives) in peace-building in Sierra Leone[76] and the media of guerrilla struggles that ran parallel to official government media in Sudan.[77]

3. Re-thinking the role of the press

In 'An agenda for researching African media', Tawana Kupe suggests the need to "revisit the debate about the institutional roles of the journalism, media and communication structures in our context by more critically and rigorously interrogating the fashionable liberal notion of media and democracy".[78] The challenges raised by the development of the press systems and nation-building projects of Ethiopia and Uganda suggest that the press plays a rather different role than often assumed. Discourse related to freedom of the press is often reinterpreted or employed for different purposes. Similarly, local ideas on the media from both the government and journalists are often insufficiently explored and understood, as are the ways in which the broader public receives and processes the media.

Implicit in the theoretical frameworks within much of this field are assumptions on the role of the media in promoting accountability. While detailed debates over definitions of democratisation are beyond the scope of this thesis, such

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Journal of Peace Research, 37, 131-143, HANITZSCH, T. (2004) Journalists as Peacekeeping Force? Peace journalism and mass communication theory. *Journalism Studies,* 5, 483-495.

[74] LEOPOLD, M. (1999) 'The War in the North': Ethnicity in Ugandan Press Explanations of Conflict, 1996-97. IN ALLEN, T. & SEATON, J. (Eds.) *The Media of Conflict.* London, Zed.

[75] Ibid.

[76] RICHARDS, P. (2000) Local Radio Conflict Moderation. IN FARDON, R. & FURNISS, G. (Eds.) *African Broadcast Cultures.* Oxford, James Currey.

[77] JAMES, W. Ibid.The Multiple Voices of Sudanese Airspace. IN FARDON, R. & FURNISS, G. (Eds.).

[78] KUPE, T. (2004) An agenda for researching African media and communication contexts. *Ecquid Novi,* 25, 353-356. p. 353-4.

arguments are elaborated in a range of publications from The World Bank's book, *The Right to Tell*[79] which emphasises the link between a free media and economic growth to Amartya Sen's famous quote "no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press".[80] The media development NGO Internews encapsulates this ideology when it argues:

> Media play a critical role in fostering transparency and accountability in governance and society. They serve a crucial watchdog function, providing citizens with the information they need to keep the public and private sectors accountable. In many countries, however, repressive legal environments inhibit the media's ability to play this role. Moreover, some journalists lack the skills to conduct the in-depth investigative reporting that is essential to accountability. Beyond traditional forms of media, people's access to information via the Internet, cell phones and other communications technologies can be stifled by a restrictive or monopolistic regulatory environment.[81]

In some instances a free press certainly can adopt this role but in many cases it does not and it is difficult to see that there is a direct correlation between a free press and less corruption in the least developed countries. For example, if these arguments were largely the case, why do Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria have the most vibrant media on the continent but also some of the highest rates of government corruption? Yet some countries that have the most restrictive media environments have relatively low levels of corruption.[82] And in Northern Kenya there has been a widespread and devastating famine but even if the media reports on it many Kenyans seem unconcerned. Answers to these questions are difficult and require more extensive research particularly on audience attitudes, however, the assumptions implicit in this discourse will be considered throughout the case studies and these particular

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[79] For a critique on The Right to Tell, see STREMLAU, N. (2002) Groundbreaking or more of the Same: the World Bank's claim that a Free Press leads to Economic Growth. London, SOAS. In this MA dissertation, it was argued that the causal link of corruption between a free press and economic growth was weak and insufficient to draw the widespread conclusions that were made in this book. Subsequent studies have been carried out by LSE that provide more conclusive evidence using the case study of India. It is, however, unlikely that theoretical generalizations could be made from this single case. For more on the normative perspective see for example, WARRAN, C. (2006) Transparent, Accountable, Non-Corrupt Government and Media. *World Press Freedom Day.* Colombo, Sri Lanka. Available at: http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:L3ZRxaz_QkgJ:portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/22025/1147264198 1Warren_colombo_speech.doc/Warren%2Bcolombo%2Bspeech.doc+media+accountable+developing +world&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&client=firefox-a. Last accessed 10 October 2007.

[80] SEN, A. (1999) Democracy as a Universal Value. *Journal of Democracy,* 10. p. 7-8.

[81] Global Issues, http://www.internews.org/global/gov/default.shtm. Accessed on 24 November 2007.

[82] Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2007. Available at: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007. Accessed on 22 October 2007.

arguments will be addressed in the conclusion after the two case studies have been analysed.

In Chapter 1 it was argued that the focus of this thesis was on the press because not only was it the primary producer of news, which the electronic media later picked up, but it was also the most free and open space through which different perspectives could be aired. These perspectives are primarily of elites, which is not surprising. But without sufficiently analyzing the nature of the state and different constituencies it is very difficult to suggest that the primary role of the media are to hold governments to account by the masses.

The above-mentioned media and development literature that emerged from the Eastern European experience in the 1980s starts with an assumption about the role of the state, civil society and how power is organised. It tends to be more ideological than historical and it is presumed that the civil society that exists in Africa is similar to that in Europe and that this drives democratisation.[83] But the colonial legacy in Africa (Ethiopia included as Haile Selassie could be considered a 'coloniser'[84]) left a different kind of state with substantial portions of the population that did not partake in civil society activities, of which the press is part. Here Mahmood Mamdani's important work on the nature of the contemporary African state is useful for rethinking the relationship between the media and nation-building process and particularly the consolidation of political power under the EPRDF and NRM. As Mamdani argues

> No nationalist government was content to reproduce the colonial legacy uncritically. Each sought to reform the bifurcated state that institutionally crystallized a state-enforced separation, of the rural from the urban and of one ethnicity from another. But in doing so each reproduced a part of that legacy, thereby creating its own variety of despotism.[85]

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[83] MAMDANI, M. (1996) *Citizen and Subject,* Princeton, Princeton University Press. p.13. There is a rich literature on civil society and Africa. See for example: CHABAL, P. (1998) "A Few Considerations on Democracy In Africa", International Affairs, 74 (2), 289-303, LEWIS, D. (2002), "Civil Society in African Contexts: Reflections on the Usefulness of the Concept", Development and Change, 33 (4): 569-586, MW MAKUMBE, J. (1998) "Is there a civil society in Africa", International Affairs, 74, 2, 305-317.
[84] HOLCOMB, B. K. & IBSSA, S. (1990) *The Invention of Ethiopia,* Trenton, Red Sea Press.
[85] MAMDANI, M. (1996) *Citizen and Subject,* Princeton, Princeton University Press. p. 8.

And this bifurcated state, according to Mamdani contained

> two forms of power under a single hegemonic authority. Urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, customary power pledged to enforce tradition.[86]

Thus,

> the rights of free association and free publicity, and eventually of political representation, were the rights of citizens under direct rule, not of subjects indirectly ruled by a customarily organised tribal authority... the colonial state was a double sided affair. Its one side, the state that governed a racially defined citizenry, was bounded by the rule of law and an associated regime of rights. Its other side, the state that ruled over the subjects, was a regime of extra-economic coercion and administratively driven justice. No wonder that the struggle of subjects was both against customary authorities in the local state and against racial barriers in civil society. The latter was particularly acute in settler colonies, where it often took the form of an armed struggle, but it was not confined to settler colonies.[87]

Reforming this state was a challenge and while independence usually succeeded at deracialising the state it did not have the same effect on civil society but rather, as Mamdani argues,

> historically accumulated privilege, usually racial, was embedded and defended in civil society. Wherever the struggle to deracialise civil society reached meaningful proportions, the independent state played a central role. In this context, the state-civil society antagonism diminished as the arena of tensions shifted to with civil society.[88]

Thus, Mamdani concludes, "no reform of contemporary civil society institutions can by itself unravel this decentralised despotism. To do so will require nothing less than dismantling that form of power".[89]

Though certainly not without his critics, the impact of Mamdani's argument on the development of the press in much of Africa is important.[90] Without considering the nature of audiences and the state itself, it cannot simply be assumed that the media or journalists will hold governments accountable for the masses. In both Ethiopia and Uganda, as in many other countries in Africa, the divide between

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[86] Ibid. p. 18.
[87] Ibid. p. 19.
[88] Ibid. p. 20.
[89] Ibid. p. 16.
[90] A few scholars have touched on related implications. See, for example, WEST, H. & FAIR, J. E. (1993) Development Communication and Popular Resistance in Africa: An Examination of the Struggle over Tradition and Modernity through Media. *African Studies Review*, 36, 91-114.

citizen and subjects is still very much an issue and effects not only who participates in the media but who is impacted by it. Too often postulations are made about the nature of the state and the political order when in fact there are often parallel spaces within states that have very little to do with each other. In the case of Uganda, for example, there is the excluded North or the Karamojong.[91]

Additionally, the ways in which this normative discourse on the role of the press and freedom of expression is reinterpreted by journalists and those in the government is rarely considered. Journalists are typically considered to be 'good' and 'watchdogs' serving as checks on the state while governments are uniformly seen as 'bad' and 'repressors'.[92] As will be explored later in this thesis the reality is more complex as both journalists and the state often have their own priorities as to what role the press might play in the nation-building process. Such ideas, however, are rarely considered or viewed in historical context.

It is helpful to recall that there is a long history of African ideas on the media. For example, running parallel to the media and development discourse in the 1960s there was an emergence of African nationalist leaders talking about the role of the media in their nation-building projects. Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, along with some of Africa's greatest post-colonial founders were journalists themselves and held passionate views on how the power of the media could be harnessed for the challenges they faced particularly unity and integration.[93] Nkrumah described, for example, that the press was a central tool in supporting individual freedoms in a one-party state.

> Because we want strong and yet democratic governments in our African Revolution, we must guard against the dangers inherent in governments whose only opposition to tyranny and abuse lies in the folds of the ruling party itself. A ceaseless flow of self-criticism, an unending vigilance against tyranny and nepotism and other forms of bribery and corruption, unswerving loyalty to principles approved by the masses of the people, these are the main

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[91] HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2007) "Get the Gun!": Human Rights Violations by Uganda's National Army in Law Enforcement Operations in Karamoja Region. New York, Human Rights Watch,, KNIGHTON, B. (2005) *The Vitality of Karamojong Religion,* Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
[92] Some scholars, such as James Curran have effectively argued the 'limits of the watchdog perspective'. Curran, for example, argues that it is "quixotic to argue it should be paramount and determine media policy". Speaking largely of the western press, he argues that in the twentieth century media increasingly focuses on entertainment and has become itself a 'big business' thus challenging this old liberal notion. CURRAN, J. (2002) *Media and Power,* New York, Routledge. p. 219.
[93] Benjamin Mkapa, interviewed for this thesis was also a journalist with Nyerere and later went on to serve as Tanzania's President from 1995-2005.

safeguards for the people under one-party rule. Who is best able to exercise that vigilance, to furnish the material for self-criticism, to sound warnings against any departure from principles, if not the press of Revolutionary Africa?[94]

While the ideas of Nyerere and Nkrumah are no longer complementary to the prevailing geo-strategic order of the day, they have continued to have some resonance with African leaders, and with Museveni in particular.

The cases of Ethiopia and Uganda suggest that the press can play a crucial role in countries emerging from civil wars but often it is a role that is not sufficiently considered in the media and development or conflict discourse. By serving as a forum for elite negotiation of political power, reconciliation, historical consensus and envisioning the future of the country the press provides an important outlet for promoting peaceful dialogue rather than continuing or starting violent conflict.

4. Analytical framework

The challenge for the rest of this chapter is to elaborate how countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda can be analysed to bring out the nuances of both the press system and the political system. As this chapter has argued so far, much of the media and development literature often prescribes certain ways of analyzing the press and obscures deeper understanding. It tells us how journalists should act, what the roles of the government and press should be and what they should aspire towards. Often these assumptions and ideal statements are made without sufficient knowledge of the political environment or the complex realities on the ground.

There is a need for a different approach or model of analyzing the press in African countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda. A greater focus should be on why the press is they way it is at a particular time, the process of transitions and the varying alliances and dispositions of key actors. Understanding these fundamental questions will also help to understand the 'trajectory' the press is on and why in some cases it is shut down. Such analysis can also provide substantial and new insight into political developments.

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[94] NKRUMAH, K. (1965) *The African Journalist,* Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Publishers. p. 87.

4.1 Comparing press systems

The interest for this thesis in comparative methodologies for African media systems has less to do with the actual development of typologies or rankings but the process of analysis. Case study comparisons have long been a central tool of social science research and thus the methods used here draw upon a long lineage of academic discourse.[95] I have attempted to heed the warnings to avoid the extremes of comparative national research: the 'universalist' approach, which risks over-generalisations and the 'culturalist' approach which may over-specify. I thus take Hantrais's suggestion of pursuing a 'societal' approach. I agree that contextualisation is very important in such comparative studies and that an "in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural, economic and political contexts in which social phenomena develop is a precondition for successful cross-national comparative research."[96] Nevertheless, I would lean towards the cultural argument emphasising the importance of understanding the social reality within the particular contexts from which it emerges rather than the universalists who excel at producing generalisations (often from the US experience).[97] But I also hope to be able to make some generalisations about the role and development of press systems in conflict/post-conflict African nations. And in line with JS Mill's methods of agreement and difference, the cases of Ethiopia and Uganda, which share many similarities aim to understand the nature of the causal factors that have led to the differences of press system development.

In my research, I have chosen to limit my comparison to two nations,[98] both because of logistical constraints but also to allow sufficient depth of analysis and

[95] DURKHEIM, E. (1964) *The Rules of Sociological Method,* New York, Free Press, WEBER, M. (1949) *The Methodology of the Social Sciences,* New York, Free Press, LIJPHART, A. (1975) The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research. *Comparative Political Studies,* 8, 158-77, LIJPHART, A. (1971) Comparative Politics and Comparative Method. *American Political Science Review,* 65, 682-93, SKOCPOL, T. & SOMERS, M. (1980) The Uses of Compartive History in Macrosocial Inquiry. *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 22, 174-97, COLLIER, D. (1993) The Comparative Method. IN FINIFTER, A. (Ed.) *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II.* Washington DC, American Political Science Association, GEORGE, A. (1979) Case Study and Theory Development: The Method of Structured Focussed Comparison. IN LAUREN, P. G. (Ed.) *Diplomatic History: New Approaches.* New York, The Free Press.
[96] HANTRAIS, L. (1999) Contextualization in cross-national comparative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 2, 93-108. p. 94.
[97] Ibid. p. 93.
[98] Nation is obviously a loaded term in the context of Ethiopia and Uganda with such diverse populations, on-going conflicts and governments that are clearly having some difficulty in 'nation-

because of the uniqueness of the governments and state in Ethiopia and Uganda. Given the complexities of comparing two multifarious situations I reduced the number of variables or explanatory factors (sometimes referred to as 'data reduction')[99] to eight. Rather than using predetermined or normative variables, I developed the variables during the research and process of analysis through extrapolating what the key explanatory factors were in the cases of Ethiopia and Uganda.

Difficult choices had to be made in identifying which variables were most important and relevant for the research questions and in this I took some direction from comparative political communication. Unfortunately, there was little substantial contribution in this direction from existing comparative research on African media systems or the media and development/ conflict literature. While comparative political communication is Western focused, it helped in providing some direction and structure to the study of Ethiopia and Uganda just as some of the western literature on media and politics has.[100]

After *Four Theories of the Press*, there were a number of studies that outlined political and media variables that are useful for addressing and understanding the development of press systems. In the 1970s Blumler and Gurevitch elaborated the links between the media and politics and proposed a framework for analysis that included a number of dimensions by which political communication arrangements[101] and their effects[102] could be understood. Further efforts have been made at developing understanding of comparing media systems through case studies, though

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building'. Nevertheless, it appears to offer the most obvious unit of analysis for the study at hand and I have tried to be sensitive about the very important differences within the nations.

[99] GEDDES, B. (1990) How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics. IN STIMSON, J. (Ed.) *Political Analysis*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, COLLIER, D. (1993) The Comparative Method. IN FINIFTER, A. (Ed.) *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*. Washington DC, American Political Science Association.

[100] CURRAN, J. & SEATON, J. (1997) *Power Without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain*, London, Routledge.

[101] These dimensions included "(1) degree of state control over mass media organizations; (2) degree of mass media partisanship; (3) degree of media-political elite integration; (4) the nature of the legitimizing creed of media institutions". See BLUMLER, J. & GUREVITCH, M. (1995) Towards a Comparative Framework for Political Communication Research. IN BLUMLER, J. & GUREVITCH, M. (Eds.) *The Crisis of Political Communication*. London, Routledge. p. 62.

[102] These dimensions included "(1) the valuation of politics as such; (2) degree of partisan commitment; (3) degree of consensus over society's agenda of political issues" Ibid. p. 67.

much of it remains rooted in the United States.[103] While there are some indications that this is slowly changing, comparative research has mostly been extended to Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia, and much less so Africa.

Given this lack of non-Western comparative research I have continued to draw upon this Western literature. Most recently, Hallin and Mancini employed comparative analysis in an effort to "develop a framework for comparing media systems and a set of hypotheses about how they are linked structurally and historically to the development of the political system..."[104] In their publication, they created a framework that they believed to be useful in comparing the media systems in Western Europe and North America and this was also complemented with a framework of dimensions useful for comparing political systems. A set of hypotheses was developed from the ways in which these variables may be connected emphasising the co-evolution of variables rather than strict causal ordering. Hallin and Mancini offered models that are empirical and based on the historical development of media systems as institutions within particular political settings.

This research has naturally been of great interest to my own work but it is not appropriate for comparing the media in developing, poor states that are grappling with violent conflict and nation-building. Nor is it sufficient for addressing my primary research questions concerning the role of the media and the consolidation of power in nation-building. There are dramatically different influences, constraints and issues at play in Ethiopia and Uganda than the US or Italy. Hallin and Mancini's scholarship does suggest key questions about the political and media systems that should be asked when trying to understand why the press is the way it is and its role. I depart from their framework of analysis significantly but it has nevertheless been an important starting point.

Like the authors of *Four Theories of the Press*, Hallin and Mancini offer distinct models of media systems. There is certainly something very appealing about viewing the world's media through neat models. While these models may be useful in understanding the media in developed rich countries that are at peace they are not

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[103] BLUMLER, J. G., MCLEOD, J. M. & ROSENGREN, K. E. (Eds.) (1992) *Comparatively Speaking: Communication and Culture Across Space and Time*, London, Sage.
[104] HALLIN, D. & MANCINI, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*, New York, Cambridge University Press. p. 5.

entirely relevant for poor countries struggling with violent conflict and messy transitions. The models that Hallin and Mancini describe do not necessarily require that the media be static and un-evolving, as they acknowledge that the media in the 1960s was very different in the United States then it is now and that there may be many different journalistic cultures, but they do require a certain level of stability and continuity of the state.

In May 2007, I presented my research at a conference focused on the book *Comparing Media Systems* in Wroclaw, Poland entitled 'When East Meets West'. Almost all of the fellow participants were presenting papers on how Central and Eastern European countries could fit into the typology that Hallin and Mancini elaborated. There was a sense of exclusion and part of legitimising themselves as having modern European media systems would be to be included in the typology. Both Hallin and Mancini, who were present and participated in the panels, stressed that more benefit from their research was to be gleaned from the process of analysis rather than the glamorisation of the models. I strongly agree with this and in my comparative analysis I do not attempt to start offering typologies but rather seek to identify the most productive variables for understanding the process of press and political change in countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda. I draw on Hallin and Mancini as a starting point because I think their process suggests what types of questions should be asked.

4.2 My comparative analysis

Since Ethiopia and Uganda are both engaged in a process of nation-building they cannot be examined through static variables but rather the nature of these changes must be identified and the media as an actor in a process that is not only in motion but is often unpredictable and complex and must be understood. As this thesis focuses on the relationship between the state (particularly those in power) and the media, the variables I have selected concentrate on these aspects. Following the lead of previous scholars who have convincingly argued that political and media variables are closely tied together, and both are imperative for understanding the development of press systems, I use four media variables and four political variables. Chapters 4

and 7 on Ethiopia and Uganda, respectively, are structured along the media variables that follow and Chapters 5 and 8 are similarly structured along the political variables.

4.2.1 Media variables

Hallin and Mancini outline the following as their four major dimensions for comparing media systems:

> (1) The development of media markets, with particular emphasis on the strong or weak development of a mass circulation press; 2) political parallelism; that is, the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties or, more broadly, the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society; 3) the development of journalistic professionalism; and 4) the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system.[105]

The media variables I have identified draw on those outlined by Hallin and Mancini and include: *(1) political parallelism and polarisation; (2) the ideology of journalists; (3) the institutionalisation of the press; and (4) the degree and nature of state intervention.*

Political parallelism and polarisation refers to the polarisation in the media or the degree to which it is characterised by strong alignment with political parties or particular ideologies.[106] Journalism is never neutral but the extent to which it is objective or free of political values varies between and within different societies. In some countries it is quite possible to map out the loyalties different media organisations have and rate them along a political spectrum of left to right, such as in Italy. In the United States, for example, the situation is a bit more ambiguous and while biases are clearly evident it is more difficult to reach a clear consensus on where exactly some media would be situated along such a spectrum. This section will examine the degree and nature of that parallelism and polarisation and how it has shifted or evolved over time. Given the importance and the divergent outcomes of the recent elections in both Ethiopia and Uganda, this variable focuses on this period as an indicator.

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[105] Ibid. p. 21.

[106] Political parallelism as addressed by Hallin and Mancini refers to the political advocacy dynamic of the print media only have newspapers been established to further the political agendas of political parties but they have also been an important implement for those wishing to influence public opinion

The *ideology*[107] *of journalists* or the intentions and role of journalists as actors in the transition is, in some respects, a counterpart to the political variable of looking at the ways in which the leaders or ideology of the new government serves to shape the media environment. This is related to 'professionalisation', or 'professionalism', which has been argued to be an important indicator reflecting the nature of the media and society in general.[108] In Ethiopia and Uganda it is interesting and instrumental to trace the development of ideas of the role of journalists and to consider why these individuals are journalists, how they think about the work they are doing and for what motive or purpose. Oftentimes these journalists have reinterpreted the normative Western human rights discourse or employed it selectively. In some circumstances journalists can see their work in radically different ways and this is particularly the case in less institutionalised media and political spaces. The impact of these perspectives must be considered.

I address some of the concerns Hallin and Mancini raise through their factor of the development of the mass press through my concept of the *institutionalisation of the press*. For Hallin and Mancini, the development of a mass press is an obvious distinction among media systems and they emphasise a historical perspective examining not only quantity but also the nature of the newspaper including its role in a broader social and political environment. Interestingly, they note,

> so far as we know, no country that did not develop mass circulation newspapers in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century has ever subsequently developed them, even if its levels of literacy and pattern of political and economic development have converged with those of the high-circulation countries. And we will argue that the presence or absence of a mass circulation press has deep implications for the development of the media as political institutions.[109]

[107] The term ideology is used to denote a comprehensive approach regading the profession- a certain ethical set of principles and ideals, much of which in the context of Ethiopia and Uganda is political. It considers how journalists believe media and political power should be used and to what end. More broadly it touches on what ways the society should develop. For a more general debate on the ideology of professional journalists in the west, see: DEUZE, M. (2006) What is Journalism? *Journalism,* 6, 442-464.

[108] For Hallin and Mancini a developed journalistic profession consists of a high degree of autonomy for actors, distinct professional norms and a public service orientation. They argue that political parallelism and professionalism are interrelated and as differentiation theory suggests where there is a high level of professionalism there is a lower level of political parallelism. Thus, with a lower level of professionalization there is a higher level of instrumentalisation of the media where outside actors or political parties co-opt the media.

[109] HALLIN, D. & MANCINI, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics,* New York, Cambridge University Press. p. 24.

Given this claim, what does the concept of either the media as a political institution or a 'mass circulation press' mean for countries like Ethiopia and Uganda? By looking at how the press has developed as an institution or an actor it takes into account the youth of the press in the countries being considered. Compared with the press in European or North American countries, the press in Ethiopia and Uganda is extremely young. With the exception of *The Ethiopian Herald*, all of the papers I will be considering in the coming chapters are less then twenty years old and some are less than ten. Given the youth of the publications researched there is a level of volatility and transformation that must adequately be taken into account. Thus, strategies and factors that institutionalise the media (both on the part of the government as well as journalists and outside actors such as donors or foreign governments) are considered.

The degree and nature of state intervention is important because as with any state building project the state has been involved in shaping the media environment not only through legislation, but also through their own propaganda and interaction with the independent press. The press can serve as an important forum for elite negotiation but this also entails effective government participation.

While for more developed countries the existence of a public broadcaster may be central in considering the state involvement with the media, in poorer countries where the public broadcasting component is less developed and more complicated to reform, the state attempts to insert its message into the competition of ideas through alternative means. This could mean state involvement in the production of media or ensuring that particular information that is disseminated by certain news outlets. Other factors to be considered include the legal approach to media regulation (and the independence of the judiciary), access to information and government-journalist interaction.

The philosophy of the government-media relationship also matters- in Western countries, such as those that Hallin and Mancini compare, the major diversions are between relatively liberal countries such as the United States where the primacy of the first amendment is the overriding driving force behind state-media interactions and the social-democratic governments such as the northern Scandinavian countries where the government is often involved in a host of issues relating from

regulation to ownership and funding. For countries that are in the process of state construction and governments that are attempting to consolidate their power, this variable is of particular importance. Thus, through looking at the type of media environment that the government has either intended, or not, to construct, insight into the political development of the country will be gleaned.

4.2.2 Political variables

To complement the media variables, Hallin and Mancini developed a set of variables adapted from political sociology and comparative politics literature that include:

> (1) The relation of state and society, and particularly the distinction between liberal and welfare-state democracy; (2) the distinction between consensus and majoritarian government; the distinction, related to consensus and majoritarian patterns of government, between organised pluralism or corporatism, and liberal pluralism; (3) the development of rational-legal authority; and (4) the distinction between moderate and polarised pluralism.[110]

The political variables that I have identified as most useful to understanding the press in Ethiopia and Uganda include: *(1) the ideology of the liberation movement; (2) the process of state construction and consolidation of power; (3) trust, confidence building and reconciliation; and (4) international relations.*

The political variables as defined by Hallin and Mancini are not entirely appropriate for the circumstances that apply to Ethiopia and Uganda. In Western Europe, the distinction between liberal democracies and welfare democracies is a clear differentiation and can help to categorise many parts of Europe in relation to countries like the US. The historical tradition of an active state in Europe- funding everything from higher education and health care to cultural events contrasts with the US where such services are not fully provided by the state- and is evident in the media as well. But this is not the case in states whose leaders are struggling to consolidate power. Similarly, the factor of majoritarian or consensus government is also not one of the most definitive factors in shaping the media systems in Ethiopia and Uganda- for countries that are questionably democratic this is of less importance.

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[110] Ibid. p. 65.

Given the democratic reality (or lack thereof) and power issues at play, the variable *ideology of the liberation movement* provides insight into the nature of the transition and attitudes of the leaders towards the media. As the nation-building process and the consolidation of power is still underway, the ideology of the party during the guerrilla war is important and often significantly more personal than in more institutionally developed countries that have greater checks and balances within their systems. Thus factors that will be considered in this variable include examining what the strategy was like for the guerrilla fighters in the bush and how this experience shaped their political thinking towards civil liberties such as the media. These movements also had complex information strategies and media projects during their struggle that will be examined. Their ideas of media policy did not start when they came to power but rather evolved prior to, and during, their struggle. It will also question how their policies were implemented when the movements first came to power and who was most influential in defining this strategy.

The *process of state construction* includes a number of major factors including institutionalisation, the development of rational-legal authority[111] and crucial processes of nation-building that have influenced national reconciliation. This seeks to identify the ways in which the governments of Ethiopia and Uganda have embarked on consolidating the power of the state while promoting or ensuring the peace that they promised when assuming power. Issues of federalism, representation and democracy will be considered in this context.

The variable of polarised pluralism has been extended to focus on the *process of trust and confidence building and national reconciliation* which is more reflective of the evolving nature of a transitioning society. The process through which the state, press and society built or failed to engage in reconciliation will be discussed. A key

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[111] Public administration and the establishment of an autonomous bureaucracy with a strong civil service is a defining feature of rational legal authority and a key differential of a clientist system. A strong and independent judicial system is also an integral part. Much has been written about clientelism in Africa and Ethiopia and Uganda are certainly no exception to its prevalence. Hallin and Mancini argue that in Europe and America "where rational-legal authority is strongly developed, these institutions [public broadcasting systems, agencies that regulate private broadcasting, allocate press subsidies] similar to other public agencies, are likely to be relatively autonomous from control by governments, parties and particular politicians, and to be governed by rules and procedures." (Ibid. p. 56). Rational legal authority is also related to a whole host of other characteristics that have been mentioned including professionalisation (which is more common) and instrumentalization (which is less common) with high levels of rational-legal authority.

variable identified by Hallin and Mancini and adopted from literature on comparative politics relates to moderate vs. polarised pluralism. For the comparison of Ethiopia and Uganda that I am undertaking, this distinction is critical. Polarised pluralism, according to the Italian political scientist Giovanni Satori reflects a society where "cleavages are likely to be very deep... consensus is surely low, and... the legitimacy of the political system is widely questioned. Briefly put, we have polarisation when we have ideological distance...."[112] While Hallin and Mancini only note a couple of examples in Western Europe where anti-system political parties have existed, their prevalence may be significantly more common for conflict countries in the developing world. Ethiopia, as will be described later is a vivid example of this. Hallin and Mancini make the connection that "the underlying distinction between systems in which ideological polarisation and diversity are relatively great or more limited is much more broadly useful... for understanding the development of media systems".[113] For the countries they are examining, they can only draw upon primarily the historical differences and the legacy of polarised pluralism. The pattern of political development in countries that have experienced polarised pluralism can be associated with high levels of political parallelism and partisan journalism. Thus, on the other side, in countries with high levels of polarised pluralism, politically neutral journalism is less plausible as the media are regarded as a critical tool for the political struggle or conflict underway. Neutrality is not always deemed an adequate weapon for those struggling to defeat a particular system or ideology.

The final factor I will consider is the *international dimensions* of media development in the media system. The way in which I have used it is particularly unique to poor countries. Monroe E. Price, for example, has elaborated a convincing argument about how the global information revolution is challenging state power and proposes a framework for analyzing media globalisation.[114] But for a select number of countries that comprise the 'bottom billion' the international competition for loyalties of Ethiopians and Ugandans in the global media environment are not as relevant as the international dimensions affecting state construction and political

[112] As quoted in HALLIN, D. & MANCINI, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics,* New York, Cambridge University Press. p. 59.
[113] Ibid. p.61.
[114] PRICE, M. E. (2002) *Media and Sovereignty,* Cambridge, MIT.

sovereignty. Both Ethiopia and Uganda have economies that are roughly the size of a 40,000 person US town and government budgets that receive over 50% of direct budget support from donors. A free press is a symbol of respect for human rights and a signal of democratic credentials. But just how much this matters is debatable. Current events in Somalia, for example, where Ethiopian troops are fighting a proxy war for the US, make it appear that little could interfere with this strategic relationship. Nevertheless, there is international pressure, and often intense intervention from media development groups and international human rights advocates, that can influence a media system. This can also effect the media's conception of its role in the democratic debate as well as expectations on the part of the audience sometimes leading to greater polarisation.

The framework I have developed for use in my comparative analysis is empirical, not normative. Rather than comparing the media in developing countries to the 'ideal' British or American model the framework I have developed seeks to understand the media within the particular context of poor countries emerging from civil wars but continuing to face protracted violent conflict. It provides insight into the role that the press is actually playing in society, how and why it has developed to play the particular role it has and how it relates to other social and political aspects of the state. This type of broad comparative analysis is challenging and not straightforward. By focusing on Ethiopia and Uganda and avoiding the development of typologies, I hope to steer clear of some of the political pitfalls that *Four Theories of the Press* faced by comparing different countries in such a clearly ideologically biased way.[115] Hallin and Mancini similarly averted some of these problems by focusing on systems that are relatively comparable in terms of economic development, culture and political systems.

In 1975 Blumler and Gurevitch posed a fundamental problem in comparing communication systems by suggesting that researchers are unsure of what to look for and what is relevant to be compared. This challenge continues today- for Hallin and Mancini it was the development of one set of factors to understand the media in the

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[115] *Four Theories of the Press* is seen as epitomizing times of the Cold War where the libertarian system of the United States was the ideal and all other systems subordinate, particularly the communist system of the Soviet Union.

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Western world. My research has required the development of another set of factors, some of which draw upon their framework but are clearly unique to the region and issues I am studying. Similarly, I would expect that researchers seeking to understand other parts of the world or countries in a different political or economic situation would find parts of my framework useful but it may have to be adapted. At the same time, there are likely to be some natural extensions and applications of the framework developed here, particularly to countries that have a similar experience with guerrilla wars such as Eritrea and Rwanda. Researchers in other conflict/post-conflict situations are also likely to find the framework useful in understanding media development.

PART I

Ethiopia: A Divided Country and a Divided Press

Ethiopia serves as the first case in this comparative study and is addressed prior to Uganda because it allows the reader a chance to see a less successful example of political reconciliation and media reform before moving to a case with more positive developments. It is also assumed that readers are likely to be less familiar with Ethiopia than Uganda because the literature is less substantial.

Together the next three chapters analyse the complex situation of the press and politics during Ethiopia's political transition and exercise in nation-building. They focus on the period from the guerrilla struggle through the aftermath of the 2005 elections (ending 2006). It may have been simpler to develop these chapters chronologically along, before, during and post- transition periods. However, for answering the research questions posed in the beginning of this thesis, it is more important to pull-out the comparative distinctions between Ethiopia and Uganda using the political and media variables to focus on the role of the press and politics in nation-building.

Press systems are not often what they seem at first glance. In Ethiopia several dominant events and movements have shaped the system. The 1970s student movement, for example, looms large and continues to have a strong influence on politics and the press. Similarly, the length, nature and ideology of the Tigray People's Liberation Front's (TPLF) guerrilla war has been defining and continues to play a role today. More recently, the issue of reconciliation that never came, the federalist constitution and the secession of Eritrea have shaped the political dynamics of the press system.

Ethiopians historically have had a complex relationship with authority and often have been distrustful of each other and outsiders. Such cultural factors have an important legacy and are also evident in the ideology of journalists. As actors in a broader nation-building project, these individuals hold differing perceptions and values that underlie the work they do and how they choose to interact with the government. Journalism, and the development and role of a press system, is a very

human process and it is thus important to illuminate as fully as possible the actors that are driving it.

The portrait that emerges from the three chapters in this section is one of a highly polarised press and a divided country. The press is easily closed down by the government, lacks institutionalisation and reflects competing political agendas, albeit sometimes with questionable constituencies beyond elite groups. Partly because the government has refused to fully engage with the arguments presented in the press, the press has provided a forum for elites to vent but it has not been able to provide a space for mediating or negotiating power. Rather, the press has come to reflect a society that has not reconciled a complex transition and that contains many groups that feel disenfranchised, are angry at the present situation and are pushing competing agendas for the future of Ethiopia. Particularly among elite groups, for example, there are the Amhara elites that long for a return to the days when their group was the hegemonic power, the Oromo elites who hold a dream of an independent Oromo nation and the Tigrayan elites that desperately want to maintain their present monopoly of state power. And then there are the numerous guerrilla and liberation movements, such as the Ogaden Liberation Front (ONLF), engaging the already over-stretched Ethiopian armed forces. Given the political realities, genuine reform of the media and press will be difficult unless fundamental political issues are addressed.

Through the comparative framework, this section addresses some of these issues that are often missed in more chronological narrative approaches but there are also limitations. In the first chapter on Ethiopia, the historical development of the press system is elaborated with a focus on the key government and independent publications, specifically *The Ethiopian Herald*, *The Reporter* and *Tobiya/Lisane Hezeb*. The subsequent chapter will examine the press system along the key media system variables. While there are many aspects that could be included such as issues of language and the economic factors of distribution of papers and market size; the focus is on the aspects of the press system that are not only most important for understanding the development and role of the press during the period of transition until the present but that also provide the richest comparative material for a contrast with Uganda. The media variables include issues of political polarisation, institutionalisation of media outlets, competing ideologies of journalists and

government intervention as these are the most salient for understanding the unique characteristics that both define and drive the press system as well as how the press itself has been shaping the industry and the political space in which it operates.

Similarly, the political system variables, which are addressed in the final chapter of this section on Ethiopia, are limited but they nevertheless focus on the core and important ideas that shaped the liberation movement, drove the struggle, and characterised the politics surrounding the transition, especially the process (or lack of) of reconciliation. International factors are included to emphasise the reality that Ethiopia and Uganda are forced to operate in the international context of political norms and pressures particularly stemming from their heavily aid-dependent economies.

In order to link these three chapters, and the following three on Uganda, as well as craft a coherent case study, each chapter will have a short conclusion followed by a more comprehensive conclusion at the end of each part. This structure will be applied as well to the case of Uganda, allowing for comparisons to be drawn.

CHAPTER 3

A History of the Press in Ethiopia: 1902-2005

This chapter will provide an overview of the development of the press in Ethiopia from its earliest days through to the current situation under the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). As there are few existing studies on the media in Ethiopia, this chapter is ambitious in scale.

The first part will consider the history of the press and challenge common understandings about how it evolved. When I was conducting my field research in Ethiopia, many Ethiopians were surprised by the comparison of Ethiopia and Uganda. It was frequently argued that because Ethiopia was not colonised by a Western power or the press was 'newer' in Ethiopia, it could not be compared with Uganda.[116] First, I will argue that despite Ethiopia's lack of a Western colonial experience,[117] there were still external influences during the colonial period, particularly that of the United States, shaping the press. Second, it is commonly argued that Ethiopia's experience with freedom of expression and the press began under the EPRDF. This is not entirely the case; while Ethiopia has certainly experienced the greatest amount of freedoms under the current government, there were earlier periods when independent and critical publications emerged, particularly at Haile Selassie University (now Addis Ababa University). Third, as mentioned in the introduction, the EPRDF's media system is often asserted to have begun when the guerrillas actually seized power in Addis. In fact the TPLF had a media system that ran parallel to the Derg's and provided some space for the struggle to formulate ideas about the role of the media and its relation to political reforms. This historical section is important for the comparison with Uganda and suggests that the historical development in the two countries exhibits some similarities and thus the central focus on the present role of

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[116] I would suggest that these comments were often partly motivated by a feeling of exceptionalism and superiority for not having been colonised and a belief by some that Ethiopians are not Africans. There was also an apparent insecurity among some with the fact that Uganda, a black African country, has a far stronger and more sophisticated press despite the difficult periods of Obote and Amin.

[117] The Ethiopian state itself has been regarded as a colonizing power by some, particularly the Oromos who have been the 'colonized'. See HOLCOMB, B. K. & IBSSA, S. (1990) *The Invention of Ethiopia,* Trenton, Red Sea Press.

the EPRDF and the NRM in shaping the media systems of their countries is correctly emphasised.

The second part of the chapter will focus on the press under the EPRDF and, in particular, key papers from the three broad areas of the press including the government press, the anti-state press and the gray zone press. Rather than simply providing an overview of the technicalities of the media system (e.g., the number of private papers), this study is crafted to provide readers with insight into how these sections of the press operate and for what purposes.

This chapter will argue that the Ethiopian press under the EPRDF has been vibrant yet polarised. On the one side, the independent 'anti-state press'[118] represents a portion of the population (mostly urban dwellers and elites although their constituencies include some in the middle and lower classes as well) that is deeply opposed to many of the policies of the present government and sees little scope for acceptable reforms as long as the EPRDF remains in power (Chapter 5 will further this discussion through analyzing some of the underlying political developments that have contributed to this particular perspective). Since the 2005 elections, these 'anti-state' papers are no longer publishing: some closed due to the arrest of key journalists while others simply found it too difficult to continue in the present situation. On the other side, the government press, when under pressure, has been extraordinarily pro-government which has encouraged other papers to counter its assertions more boldly. There is generally little scope for papers that seek to mediate a middle ground. Those that have continued in the post-election period (after November 2005) have supported the government more aggressively.

This chapter cannot purport to comprehensively map the press system in Ethiopia as many interesting and important factors have been excluded due to space constraints. Nevertheless, the breadth and nature of the analysis provided here lays a solid foundation for the coming chapters on political and media variables.

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[118] It is referred to as the anti-state press because this is what the government has publicly labeled it to be. The journalists that were arrested in 2005 faced 'anti-state charges' such as attempting to overthrow the constitutional order.

1. The development of the press in Ethiopia: A historical perspective

1.1 The first papers: an effort in modernising the empire

There is substantially less known about the early days of the press in Ethiopia compared with other sub-Saharan African countries. Because Ethiopia was not colonised by a western powers, it did not attract the European or American researchers who pursued studies of European colonies. Similar to the lack of research on media published in indigenous African languages, the Amharic language has also traditionally served as a major obstacle to researchers pursuing in-depth analyses on the press. Additionally, despite the significant attempts by Professor Richard Pankhurst to develop a collection of early newspapers at the Institute for Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa University (AAU), historical research is difficult because the Ethiopian archives are in a dilapidated state.

The press and the newspaper first started in Ethiopia under Emperor Menelik II. As the Emperor expanded his rule into non-Amhara areas, he facilitated the introduction and use of communications technology as part of an effort to centralise power and through connecting Addis with the different regions to bring vast territories under government control.[119] The first telephone was established between his finance office and the imperial palace and the first telegraph was used between Harar and Addis in the late 1800s. This priority of using the media to consolidate power domestically is different than Haile Selassie who emphasised communicating with the outside world.

The earliest publications, like those across much of Africa, centred on religious texts and, in the case of Eritrea, news for and by the colonial power in Italian.[120] The government paper *Aemero*, established in 1902 by a Greek and meaning 'intelligence', is credited as being the first Amharic newspaper in Ethiopia.

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[119] GARTLEY, J. (1982) The Role of the Media in Revolutionary Ethiopia. *Ethiopia Conference.* Washington DC.

[120] Publications such as *Corriere Eritreo*, founded in 1891, and *L'Eritreo* and *Bollettino Officiale della colonia Eritrea*, founded the following years were also available in Ethiopia. Several papers in French also appeared contemporaneously in Ethiopia at the turn of the 20th century including the *Bulletin de la Leproserie de Harar*, which soon became *Le Semeur d'Ethiopia*, was published in Harar by the French Franciscans and edited by the Priest. The paper was mostly in French with a few items in Amharic. PANKHURST, R. (1962) The Foundation of Education, Printing, Newspapers, Book Production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia. *Ethiopia Observer.*

The first copies, of which there were 24,[121] were handwritten. A copying machine, however, was soon obtained and 200 copies were published. The first printing press did not arrive until 1906, several years after Emperor Menelik agreed to provide one to facilitate the production of the paper. While *Aemero* was certainly not clear of government control, an editorial on March 11, 1907 (EC) suggests that the paper did aspire to some sort of independent editorial policy: "[S]ince its very origin, the paper has maintained a non-partisan stand and does not promote the interest of any one group. This freedom is used to serve the country and not to publish anything I like."[122] Some have even suggested that by the mid- 1930s *Aemero* was acting as "a reactionary or opposition organ to the Regent's papers".[123] Nevertheless, demand for the paper was initially slow and mostly driven by the government as part of a modernisation process.

In 1923, as part of this broader process of modernising the state, Haile Selassie established Berhana Salem ('light and peace') printing press, which still operates today and is the major printer in Ethiopia. Since its founding, Berhana Salem has been responsible for printing books, newspapers and government gazettes. In the same year it opened, a paper bearing the name of the press was printed. It is estimated by 1925 there were at least three weekly papers being published in Addis: *Aemero*, *Berhana Salam* and *Courrier d'Ethiopie*.[124]

By the time of the Italian invasion in 1936 there were seven printing presses in Addis Ababa and at least an equal number of newspapers, four of which were in Amharic, two in French and one in Italian. There were a number of other publications that attempted to gain a foothold in the small market during this period, particularly in the Greek community.

With the invasion and occupation, the newspaper industry ceased to expand and existing publications were suspended and replaced with the production and distribution of fascist propaganda. In some places, such as Harar and Jimma, printing

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[121] Though Gartley suggests there were only twelve. See GARTLEY, J. (1982) The Role of the Media in Revolutionary Ethiopia. *Ethiopia Conference.* Washington DC. p. 92.

[122] BONSA, S. (2000) *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991-1999,* Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies.

[123] C.F. Rey, quoted in PANKHURST, R. (1962) The Foundation of Education, Printing, Newspapers, Book Production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia. *Ethiopia Observer.* p. 271.

[124] Ibid. p. 271.

presses were destroyed or taken over by the occupying forces. Whatever slight budding of independent papers that had begun in Ethiopia was completely replaced with propaganda published in both Italian and Amharic and including titles such as *Corrier dell'Impero*, *Corrier Eritrea*, *Somalia Fascista*, and *Ye Qesar Mengist Meliktagne*, among others (and in some cases imported from Italy such as *Difesa della Razza*).

Since there was no space for dissent within Ethiopia, a number of vibrant and influential publications were established internationally to challenge the fascist occupation. These were primarily in English and were intended to galvanise international support against the Italian occupation and improve understanding of the Ethiopian people and cause. The most famous of these publications was the *New Times and Ethiopia News*, which was published by Sylvia Pankhurst, a well-known British suffragette leader who later moved to Ethiopia and became a close confident of Haile Selassie.[125] Pankhurst used strong rhetoric and propaganda centred on the anti-fascist struggle. Although she was usually responsible for writing most of the articles in the weekly magazine, it soon developed a pan-African role as its articles were reproduced in countries from South Africa to Nigeria and it hosted contributions from emerging leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta.[126] Initially, the *New Times and Ethiopia News* proved awkward for the British government as it included interviews with Haile Selassie who was in exile in the UK and the British wanted to downplay his presence to prevent further damage of relations with Italy. Despite that the magazine appeared on a stop-list of publications in the UK, it had an important role in focusing international attention on the situation in Ethiopia.[127]

Haile Selassie was soon reinstated as Emperor with the help of the British after Italy entered the Second World War on Hitler's side. After regaining control of Ethiopia, the Emperor went about significantly trying to expand the newspaper industry both to reap the powers of propaganda as well as to use it as a tool of modernisation (and similarly to demonstrate a 'modern' Ethiopia). The radio in

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[125] In 1956, *New Times and Ethiopia News* became *Ethiopia Observer*, which was published by S. Pankhurst in both Ethiopia and Britain.

[126] Interview: Richard Pankhurst, Ethiopian scholar and founder of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University.

[127] PANKHURST, R. (2003) *Sylvia Pankhurst: Counsel for Ethiopia*, Hollywood, Tsehai Publishers.

particular was a new tool for his empire and for the first time many of his subjects were able to hear his voice. The idea of a central, powerful state grew, as he was able to communicate directly with remote parts of a vast and mountainous country.

Haile Selassie also set about expanding the press that he had begun to cultivate before the Italian invasion. In 1941 the government established *Addis Zemen* that was published weekly by the Ministry of Pen, what was later to become the Ministry of Information. *Addis Zemen* was followed by its English counterpart *The Ethiopian Herald* in 1943. One of the first editorials in *Addis Zemen* illustrates the motivations behind the papers:

> This newspaper [*Addis Zemen*] was established with the permission of His Imperial Majesty to explain to the people about what they should do for their country, for their king and for His government. Its duties are defined in three terms: truth, service and freedom.... Service refers to the paper's responsibility to serve the government of the beloved king of kings who has sacrificed and suffered so much for his country and his people in a way no man had done before.[128]

Both the press and the radio served as important tools in asserting and publicising the Emperor's power after the devastating occupation.[129]

1.2 American Influence

While the media infrastructure did not have the same intensive international involvement of many of its colonised counterparts, there was still substantial financial assistance from the UK and US for purchasing equipment, training journalists through organisations such as the Thompson Foundation, and sending North American and British journalists to work temporarily in Ethiopia. *The Ethiopian Herald*, for example, was established in 1943 and was first edited by Ian H. Simpson from England who was praised for bringing 'editorial elegance' and 'writing to a new level of excellence'.[130]

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[128] BONSA, S. (2000) *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991-1999*, Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies.

[129] Despite two changes in governments, both these papers are still around and today and have not changed dramatically in either layout or quality of content.

[130] WOLDE-MARIAM, Y. (2003) *Brief Autobiography and Selected Articles*, Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Enterprise. p. 84.

Most significant, however, was the American interest in Ethiopia, both strategically and sentimentally.[131] Because Ethiopia successfully resisted colonisation, a number of African Americans took a particular interest in the country and traveled to Addis ready to assist. Dr. David A. Talbot, an African American, took over the position of editor-in-chief of *The Ethiopian Herald* in 1945 and stayed until 1960.[132] During this period several other key positions were also held by African Americans and, according to Yacob Wolde-Mariam, a journalist at *The Ethiopian Herald* at the time, the paper became "a mirror image of its American counterparts, particularly on issues of international relations".[133] In the 1960s a number of Americans served as advisors and those in the Ministry of Information even started a short-lived magazine critical of some of the government's policies called the *Addis Reporter*.

The United States Information Service (USIS), the American Embassy and the Peace Corps were also involved in shaping the media. A representative from USIS, for example, would regularly visit *The Ethiopian Herald* and bring news and reports the agency thought should go in the paper. Peace Corps volunteers were also involved through either submitting their own articles or training journalists to write articles that were favorable to the American way of life or the 'free world'. And the US Ambassador would have regular 'fireside chats' for Ethiopian journalists where the US position on issues would be explained. Some local journalists went so far to refer to *The Ethiopian Herald* as the *'American Herald'* for its strong connections and pro-US leanings.[134]

1.3 Journalism education in America and expanding the circle

At the same time, some journalism students were sent abroad to study by the Emperor to create a foreign-educated intelligentsia that would modernise his bureaucracy. Many of these journalists went to the United States and returned

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[131] In 1943 the US established a military listening station, Kagnew, in Eritrea. It was one of the most important intelligence bases for the US during the Cold War and was a reason why the US supported the incorporation of Eritrea into greater Ethiopia as they believed that this station would be more likely to continue its important operations with the loyal support of Haile Selassie. The station was closed in 1973. For more information and stories from those that were stationed at the base, see http://www.kagnewstation.com/

[132] William Steen, another American briefly edited the paper for a year after Simpson.

[133] WOLDE-MARIAM, Y. (2003) *Brief Autobiography and Selected Articles,* Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Enterprise. p. 73.

[134] Ibid. p. 92.

supportive of the American political agenda. But they also returned with new ideas about journalism and political reform. Negash Gebre Mariam, for example, studied journalism at Montana State University and returned to take up a position at the Ministry of Information in 1953 (EC). He was one of the first editors of *Addis Zemen* and, in an environment where pre-publication censorship was mandatory and the paper was aimed at glorifying the Emperor and explaining his policies to his subjects, Negash struggled to implement the ideals of journalism he had learned in America. Under Haile Selassie's rule *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald*, like Radio Ethiopia, were also dominated and controlled by priests. He thus had to struggle with a staff that was largely comprised of "priests who spent most of their time glorifying the Emperor".[135] The Orthodox Church felt so strongly about the power the news media could have over the population that they had even argued that they should be given the power to completely run the radio station.[136]

At the same time, however, Negash found some space for introducing new ideas, albeit very slowly. As he describes:

> You couldn't criticise the government at all. You could criticise the provincial officials or you could criticise a few smaller people but not the real problems to do with the policies - important agricultural [issues, or the] court systems.... But I was the editor and as an editor I was supposed to be given a certain chance to select what we write. They let you write it but then you had to show it to the censorship office and if the man looks and says no, this is not good, you can't do much. You can't be angry and leave because there is no other press. There's only a government press, and you are making a living so you had to work together. But...little by little you can nibble if you like...
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> For example, when I got there I was told you cannot put an article on the front page that is reserved for the Emperor, but it was not actually a solid story, just commentary: the Emperor has done this and that, the Emperor has been at this and that school.... Nothing else should be put there except the Emperor's photograph. This was the policy so when I came there I was puzzled- unless you put a few good articles that people can read on front page, unless you put some impressive photographs, how can you attract readers? How can you communicate? So I said OK, I'll put my editorial on the front page although according to my training in America, you have to have the editorial, your opinion on another page and put the important news on the front of it. But I started by putting the editorial there, then.... eventually, slowly I started putting a little news at the bottom. You have to build slowly.[137]

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[135] Interview: Negash Gebre-Mariam.

[136] GARTLEY, J. (1994) Control of Media and Concept of Image by Haile Selassie I. *Societe Francais pour les etudes Ethiopiennes,* 1, 649-654.

[137] Interview: Gebre-Mariam.

While Negash talks of slowly widening the circle, other journalists of this period have argued that "the advent of real censorship of the Ethiopian mass media did not come into existence until 1961".[138] There certainly was censorship prior to this, but using this small space to slowly and delicately expand the circle would prove to be a significant differentiating factor between the media under Haile Selassie's regime and the subsequent military government of the Derg.

1.4. The student movement

While journalists like Negash were trying to expand the space for free debate in the government media, universities, particularly during the period of the student movement, were providing an alternative space in which new publications could emerge, students could experiment with different arguments and where there was a relative tolerance of free expression.[139] The arrival of African scholarship students from across the continent facilitated the growth of the publications as these students had some experience with critical and vibrant student publications in their own countries and encouraged the Ethiopian students.[140] Many of the Ethiopian students, however, were concerned with negotiating the thin cultural line between 'criticism' and 'insult', which were often regarded as the same. The intelligentsia also supported the idea that criticising someone's ideas was essentially attacking the individual.[141]

In 1959 Kenyan scholarship student Omogi Calleb started the first critical and outspoken publication, *Campus Star*. This paper did not survive long but challenged the authorities and argued that the Ethiopian student body was too apathetic. The Ethiopian-run official student paper, the *Newsletter*, soon accepted this criticism and

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[138] 1961 was the year of an attempted coup. WOLDE-MARIAM, Y. (2003) *Brief Autobiography and Selected Articles*, Addis Ababa, Artistic Printing Enterprise. p. 85.

[139] The first student magazine was published in 1952 but was shortly discontinued because of lack of interest. Students complained that they were already overburdened with work and did not seem to feel that there was a need for a student paper. As, Balsvik argued: "It was acknowledged that college students should have a paper, but the purpose of such an undertaking was far from clear, and the students only had vague ideas of what it should be" BALSVIK, R. R. (2005) *Haile Selassie's Students: The Intellectual and Social Background to Revolution, 1952-1974*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press. p. 71.

[140] This was part of Haile Selassie's project relating to the Organization of African Unity and an effort to make Ethiopia, and Addis Ababa, the capital of the continent.

[141] BALSVIK, R. R. (2005) *Haile Selassie's Students: The Intellectual and Social Background to Revolution, 1952-1974*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press. p. 74.

began including a section of "news and views" referring to the "most important duty of a paper—that is, the expression of one's thoughts and ideas".[142] The *Newsletter* believed that the authorities should have the right to monitor and oversee the paper and that a free and unregulated press would lead to chaos.

The students did not really support 'free' publications until the well-known *Struggle* magazine in the late 1960s that was published by the Union of the University Students in Addis Ababa (USUAA). *Struggle* is one of the most important magazines in Ethiopia's history, although relatively little is known about it and copies are not readily available. It carried some key articles that spurred the student movement and encouraged dissent against Haile Selassie's government. The purpose of the magazine was to debate political and social issues and to continue

> condemning injustice, oppression, feudalism, semi-colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and all the rest of the social evils wherever and whenever they exist... we cannot afford to be indifferent in such a society as ours which is engulfed by all the social problems of a stagnant society.[143]

Due to administrative constraints and controversy among the faculty advisors, the magazine was published erratically and closed in 1969. Nevertheless, it set the trend for the papers that followed and encouraged both academic freedom and the idea that the student movement should be "responsible for the political education of the masses".[144]

After the failed *coup d'etat* against Haile Selassie in 1960, the student movement developed into the core of national dissent and adopted a strong Marxist-Leninist ideology favoring the experiences of Bolshevik Russia and Maoist China as well as the lessons of Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara. Debates centred on land rights and the 'nationalities question' including issues of 'self-determination up to secession'. The students argued that a revolution was needed to transform the imperialist feudal state and replace it with a modern system capable of functioning in the present day. Within the student movement a substantial group believed that class interests had to form the basis of the struggle against the imperial regime, while there were a number of groups that placed ethnic struggle at the centre of their agenda.

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[142] Ibid. p. 75.
[143] Ibid. p. 168.
[144] Ibid. p. 178.

The Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), along with a number of other ethnically based insurgencies, emerged out of the student movement.[145] While at university, Tigrayan students had the opportunity to compare the situation in their native region with the living standards in other parts of the country and increasingly were convinced that the situation in Tigray was the most dismal. The Tigrayan students formed a number of groups including the Tigrayan University Students' Association (TUSA) and the Tigrayan National Organisation (TNO) that focused primarily on debating political ideology as well as mobilising intellectuals and students in Tigray. Their commitment to a dynamic role in the effort to overthrow Haile Selassie's regime had less to do with restoring Tigrayan political hegemony than with issues of cultural hegemony and environmental degradation, as well as social and political problems.[146]

A number of publications were circulating at this time, many of which were aligned with particular ethnic or political groups.[147] In Addis, for example, TUSA established a number of newspapers to communicate its agenda including *Etek* (To arms!) and *Dimtsi Bihere Tigray* (Voice of the Tigrayan Nation). They were distributed free of charge and had a role in increasing agitation for change and broadening engagement, primarily among the literate class. The students also organised demonstrations and encouraged protest songs and slogans among the peasantry. Popular songs were sung on special occasions such as weddings or religious holidays as well as routinely during farming. These songs communicated the ideas of the forthcoming struggle and expressed deep anger towards the difficult conditions across the region.

Many of the TPLF's future leaders were from the student movement and were involved in the propaganda campaigns. As the regime of Haile Selassie began to

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[145] Aside from the TPLF, other prominent groups emerged during Mengistu's time and from the student movement including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). They often had mixed objectives regarding issues of sovereignty: the EPLF was fighting for Eritrean independence whilst the OLF was divided over greater representation within Ethiopia and independence.

[146] BERHE, A. (2004) The Origins of the Tigray People's Liberation Front. *African Affairs*, 103, 569-592.

[147] Markakis and Ayele have an interesting discussion on some of the publications that contributed to the 1974 revolution. Leaflets were popular in Addis Ababa and were often targeting the soldiers in an effort to encourage a rebellion. For more on this, see MARKAKIS, J. & AYELE, N. (2006) *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, Shama pp. 103-116.

decline, it was through popular action that students and the intelligentsia succeeded in establishing a new space for the print media primarily as a vehicle for anti-government discourse and opposition politics.

1.5 The Derg's press

The February Revolution of 1974 swiftly overturned the Emperor, disbanding the feudal system and monarchical structure and replacing them with the Derg, a military regime led by Mengistu Haile Mariam. During this transition many of the student papers continued publishing and flourished.[148] In some respects this period is analogous to what is often referred to as 'the golden age' of Ugandan journalism, the period immediately after colonialism. The lifting of censorship in Ethiopia encouraged a vibrant press, including titles such as *Democracia*, *Labader*, *Struggle*, *Goh* and *Ye Sefiw Hizb Dimts* that dynamically contributed to debates on issues of democracy, governance and economic development. The majority of the papers at the time, however, primarily catered to particular political groups and sympathisers.

These publications did not survive long as Mengistu's attitude towards the independent press proved harsher than Haile Selassie's. Independent papers were largely eliminated, although a few survived periodically as underground publications and some began publishing from the diaspora.

However, the effects of the debates that occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s have had extraordinary longevity and continue to play themselves out in current political clashes and ideological divisions, including in the newspapers. Current leaders, from the opposition and the government, as well as many prominent journalists were members of the student movement. And there were some trends put in place under Haile Selassie that would carry through to Mengistu's time. Like Menelik and Haile Selassie, Mengistu was concerned with the nationality question and used Amharisation as a solution for dealing with the country's diverse population. Establishing Amharic as the language of unity and education was a major priority for the Emperor and something for which he sought to harness the power of the media.

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[148] Similar to the ways in which the present EPRDF government has sought to disrupt student mobilization at the universities, the ruling regime would shut the schools and colleges in an effort to disperses the students and weaken their resolve with little success.

While Gartley notes that this agenda was less articulated than the more precise and central objective of projecting a positive image of the Emperor within Ethiopia and to the outside world, utilising the media for education and fostering a united sense of Ethiopianess was a project that was continued more explicitly and earnestly under Mengistu.[149]

Within the government media initially there was little change except that journalists were expected to shift their discussions from the Emperor to the Derg's political agenda and were 're-educated'. Ato Negash, head of Ethiopian Radio at the time, recalls that

> The existing problems, they continued to exist. Instead of saying the Emperor has done this and that, it was the Derg has done this. They would come and tell you in the office, now look, you are following different ideology. This is socialism, no longer feudalism, in socialism, we give importance to the proletariat, to the peasant and you have to say that the government is being run by the proletariat now.... Some of the programmes they didn't change, like the musical programme, except they added slogans and...some political jingles. They also used to have a discussion club. Every week, in some places even more, a government officer would come and talk to you about what socialism is, what its principles are, how the people live ...what the role of the rich is.[150]

There was also a shift from looking to the US to the USSR for guidance in running a paper. Students began going to the USSR for further education and to learn how the media worked there. Similarly, Russian journalists would come to Ethiopia and explain how a newspaper was supposed to operate. Negash describes the change:

> The Russian officials used to make speeches when they were invited to come. They were not teachers to teach you Russian journalism. During Haile Selassie's time there were trainers...some people who'd come from the United States mostly [which] would send 4 or 5 people for 6 months - one person teachers how to be a reporter, and other how to write commentary... and on ethics. But the Russians they didn't come in and do this thing, they simply made speeches.[151]

At the same time, the journalists who were returning from Russia were often trained in everything but journalism. Amare Aregawi struggled to work with these journalists after the fall of the Derg and noted that

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[149] GARTLEY, J. (1982) The Role of the Media in Revolutionary Ethiopia. *Ethiopia Conference.* Washington DC.

[150] Interview: Gebre-Mariam.

[151] Interview: Gebre-Mariam.

> Nobody was going to the West to learn journalism because they were the enemy of the government. There were some people who were going to the East. They would come back with a Masters degree in journalism from Russia or Yugoslavia. They spent seven years in the Soviet Union to get a Masters degree in journalism, but for two years they would learn Russian, one year they would learn political economy, another year they would learn Marxism, Leninism. They would spend two years in Uzbekistan but they didn't learn journalism... and they've earned a Masters degree![152]

As is often the case, the relationship between the government and journalists was complex. Some journalists supported the Derg, but others were not quite clear or chose to be ambivalent.

Mairegu Bezabih,[153] for example, edited *Addis Zemen* until he was removed after he had problems with the Minister, and while he admits "it was hard because anything could be misinterpreted" he also acknowledges that

> We were all enthusiastic that a new event was unfolding. I was editing the largest national newspaper.... At the revolution the social outlook was transformed. The question was could one fit into the revolution; if they couldn't, they left. I stayed to see how things would develop and I don't regret it. During my university days we were exposed to Marxist-Leninism and what it means to be a Marxist journalist. We didn't like some things that were happening but everyone was enthusiastic. Marxist journalism was socialist-oriented journalism. We were just serving a system that was more socialist oriented.... Class analysis was the major issue so we had to look at everything from a class perspective.[154]

Mairegu, like most of his colleagues, many who were active in the private press until recently, now strongly condemns the Derg's destructive violence. But it took time for the atrocities to become clear. During the Derg, the situation often appeared muddled, complex and the real brutality of the government was not always obvious, particularly in the countryside.

For many journalists, along with much of the society in general, survival became the key, overriding concern. Journalistic ideals and aspirations (if they ever existed), or the desire to change things slowly as Negash described, were often secondary. Partly this was because of the strict punishment for errors, as Negash explains:

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[152] Interview: Amare Aregawi.

[153] Mairegu assumed the editorship of *Addis Zemen* after Negash, and similar to Negash he studied abroad. His first degree was in politics from Johns Hopkins, USA and he studied journalism with the support of the Thompson Foundation in Cardiff, UK.

[154] Interview: Mairegu Bezabih.

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During Haile Selassie's time, if you commit a mistake and this happens very often in the paper, either intentionally or without knowing, you could be pardoned. But during the Derg there wasn't such a thing. You make a mistake, you will be shot. There was no middle way. During the Emperor's time you couldn't commit mistakes because there is censorship, but if you did, a Minister intervened. If you were an editor they'd say, 'oh this fellow does a good job, but it was a mistake you know', so the Emperor would pardon him. At the worst, he could be removed from the government, radio or television but you could hardly be shot.[155]

Many Ethiopians, and journalists, felt trapped during the Derg. If you tried to get out of the system, you raised suspicions so the most you could do was wait it out and hope not to be killed for some reason, perhaps unbeknownst. As Negash describes:

My sole training was in journalism. Getting a job was not so easy for me. I don't know business. I don't know any other thing really, and I have a family, and I couldn't have done it really. I didn't want also to... raise a flag.[156]

But Negash was soon forced out.

They called and told me, as of next month you are retired, you'll get a retirement pension. I thanked them; they gave me my small pension, I took that and I left. The important thing was you got out of this revolution, you had to survive that Holocaust, whatever happened.... [But] I was only fifty-two when they did this, so what to do? I would go out and go around and ask some churches whether they want to put out a magazine for a holiday to get a little money. I used to work for other people now and then and so I survived with a little bit and then I taught in a private school.... So I would get my daily bread by doing that sort of thing for some time. It was bad. But I lived. The only thing is I survived. It could have been worse.[157]

Just as working under Idi Amin was the most difficult period for Uganda journalists, the Mengistu period was the worst for Ethiopian journalists. If the Derg did not kill you, you struggled to survive unless you were a strong party member.

1.6 Media of the liberation front

Parallel to the government and party media during Mengistu's time was the media of the rebel groups including that of the TPLF and the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF). One way of understanding the development of the press

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[155] Interview: Negash.
[156] Interview: Gebre-Mariam.
[157] Interview: Gebre-Mariam.

system under the EPRDF is to examine the way in which the guerrilla leaders in the bush thought about the media.[158]

The TPLF had a strong propaganda arm that took lessons from the EPLF. Amare Aregawi was central to the media efforts in the bush, although characteristic with the ideology of the struggle, he downplays his contribution and individual efforts. Amare joined the struggle during the student movement along with many of his colleagues. After being imprisoned by the Derg for a year, he decided that it was too dangerous to stay in Addis and left for the bush. He did not have experience in the media but enjoyed writing so he soon shifted from working on the TPLF's political agenda to the media.[159] Building upon their experience as students at AAU, the TPLF leadership made newspapers the first medium to announce their war. The targets of the propaganda throughout the struggle were both domestic and international.[160]

The newspapers started in the late 1970s and the message was clear. As Amare describes:

> More or less you'd say it was propaganda.... To be honest at the time it was not a question of balance. This way or that way, you have to tell the bad things of the Derg: it's a military government, a fascist government, no democracy, no freedom, you can't talk in your language[161].... The papers would try to take the people out of the government and then to organise them against the Derg and so you... generally would focus saying the Derg was bad, the Cubans were bad, the Soviet Union is bad, everybody must fight for democracy.[162]

The papers attempted to be as realistic and accurate as possible as to what was going on in the bush in an effort to gain the confidence and trust of their readers and, eventually, listeners. Despite this, however, they were not aspiring to western journalistic norms - it was considered to be the time for propaganda.

Until 1985, the TPLF shared the EPLF's radio station, but after a political disagreement the TPLF started its own station, *The Voice of the Rebellion*, and the radio became the centrepiece of its propaganda strategy. From its base in Tigray it

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[158] Too often the media environments in countries under study are looked at in a uni-linear way (e.g. the media under Mengistu led to the media under Meles ignoring the formation of both the media as instruments and media policy that the new government was pursuing simultaneously to the government media).

[159] Interview: Aregawi.

[160] STYAN, D. (1999) Misrepresenting Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa? Constraints and Dilemmas of Current Reporting. IN ALLEN, T. & SEATON, J. (Eds.) *The Media of Conflict.* London, Zed. p. 294.

[161] Referring to the Derg's Amharicization policy.

[162] Interview: Aregawi.

had a reach across much of the country, with clear reception in Addis and Nazareth, and even parts of Southern Sudan. The radio programmes were initially broadcast only in Tigrinya, but as the struggle gained momentum they were also broadcast in Amharic and Oromifa.

TPLF supporters contributed money to buy the station and its generators. The entire propaganda system had to be protected within caves. As Amare describes "We would build houses inside the mountains and not only for the radio station. We were working on the newspapers and printing our newspapers inside of the caves...We had a printing press and we had computers."[163] Running a media outfit in the bush was extremely difficult but it is characteristic of the struggle and how the TPLF fought one of the longest guerrilla struggles of this period. A lengthy comment by Amare captures some of this:

> The most interesting and challenging thing was to run a radio station... because there were planes that would come and bomb you... so you always have to move the radio station. But since we had the radio station, [despite that] there was a lot of bombing it never stopped... it was never interrupted.
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> You wouldn't say [the radio station was] portable, but we made it portable ourselves. Whether it was by donkeys or camels it had to be portable. You know what we used to do was for example we had two metre bands and (I don't think that the Cubans or the Russians even understood it) when there was a big campaign coming, [the Derg] would gather some information through personal spies or maybe technology - where the radio waves are coming from, so they would target that area to destroy the radio station. What we used to do was, out of the two-meter bands, we would take one of the metre bands out and we would install it again in a very safe place somewhere, where we would plan to go when the enemy comes. .... So when that one starts, this one stops and then we take back this one on the camels and donkeys again. When the enemy comes, they thought the radio station was here but still they are here and still the radio works. They think they were wrong, but they were not wrong, it was there. They never thought we would separate the two metre bands.
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> Sometimes we had a problem with the antenna. So for example in the Simian mountain station area, there are some very long straight hollow plants, so we had to put the antenna inside those plants. So out of 1000 plants, it is very difficult for the enemy to know in which plant the antenna is.
>
> In some places, for example, at one time, we had to go to the mountains where there is snow and it's cold, we had to wear gloves, we looked like Eskimos. It was amazing. It was a new experience for us. We were going to turn on the radio station at seven o'clock in the morning. We had to get up at three after midnight and start a fire, you had to heat the generator first, keep it warm. So for two hours you had to warm the

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[163] Interview: Aregawi.

generator and the generator would work and then after an hour you'd have the radio station.[164]

The TPLF was skillful and had substantial access to external technical support and international supporters. Sometimes these supporters would send materials and equipment or provide opportunities for training. British photographers, for example, visited and provided training to aspiring journalists.

In contrast to the technical advances of the TPLF in the bush, it was surprising how little progress the Derg made. After becoming the new head of Ethiopian Television under the EPRDF, Amare noted the extent to which the TPLF was technologically superior,

> When I was at Ethiopian television I couldn't find a single new videocassette... There were no computers ready.... So the television was running on erasing other tapes. That had never been an issue for us out in the bush.... We had so many videocassettes from all over the world. We had lots of copies, lots of printing facilities, videos, and generators...[165]

The TPLF also sought international support for their war by bringing journalists from Africa and elsewhere to Tigray to report back. Many foreign journalists had difficulty placing their articles on the struggle in papers since the Western press was preoccupied with famines and the role of international NGOs. It is now obvious that during this period there was a great lack of political analysis and understanding of the liberation front in Tigray as well as the underlying factors that were contributing to the conflict.[166] Many both inside and outside Ethiopia were not expecting the success that the TPLF had in managing to defeat the largest army in Africa that enjoyed Soviet support. In 1991 the EPRDF came to power and brought with it new media policies influenced by its time in the bush.

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[164] Interview: Aregawi.
[165] Interview: Aregawi.
[166] YOUNG, J. (1997) *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. pp. 5-7.

2. The press under the EPRDF

When the EPRDF arrived in Addis, and the transitional government took over, the media environment was almost immediately liberalised. Similar to the situation in Uganda under Museveni, the EPRDF wanted to show that it was different from its oppressive predecessors but the liberalisation was also taken in response to internal and external pressure. Just as the Derg had begun to realise in 1987 that it had to adapt to the changing environment and adopt a new constitution,[167] the EPRDF on its way to Addis was told by the Americans that its brand of Marxist-Leninism would not be advisable. The EPRDF also recognised that if it wanted to have a form of Revolutionary Democracy,[168] space for dissent would help legitimise it.[169] Despite critics who argue that the EPRDF really did not believe in the principle of an open media, Bereket Simon, the former Minister of Information,[170] argued

> We wanted the people to feel free, to believe in themselves. To see that governments can be criticised if it's well founded [and] to show that governments are accountable to the public and that they are bound to be criticised if they make mistakes. We wanted to show we were a tolerant government.[171]

To clamp down on freedom of expression in the early stages, Bereket argued, would "be a risky choice. If we restricted them, people wouldn't feel free".[172] In 1992 the government passed a press law that allowed for substantial and significant new freedoms for the media.

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[167] Under significant pressure by a faltering Russia and discontent population, the Derg had been forced to draft a new democratic constitution for the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Freedom of the press was inserted as article 49 in 1987, but it was never implemented.

[168] This is a central political philosophy of the EPRDF and has largely been elaborated by Meles. It will be further explained in Chapter 9.

[169] In 1992, Dima Noggo, the first Minister of Information for the Transitional Government noted that "A country's democratic tradition, and a government's democratic credentials, are today being measured by how much the press and the media in general are free." Noggo appeared acutely aware that press standards are key indicators of democracy for rich countries who provide acceptance and legitimacy. NOGGO, D. (1992) Keynote Speech. *Seminar on the Role of the Press in a Democratic Society.* Addis Ababa.

[170] Until 2005 Bereket Simon was the Minister of Information. He is a close confident of the Prime Minister and controversial Member of Parliament from the Amhara region (in the first election results he lost his seat but in a re-vote he regained it). Bereket is now head of the EPRDF Political Department but he continues to wield tremendous influence over the government media structure as a whole. He remains Chairman of the Board of the Ethiopian Press Agency.

[171] Interview: Bereket Simon.

[172] Interview: Simon.

The government did not anticipate the response it received.[173] Bereket notes they were "surprised that it wasn't people that were against the previous regime but it was Derg leaders, etc... that they found their way to control the private press".[174] Despite Bereket's claims, it was not only 'Derg leaders' that began private newspapers. A significant part of the population, particularly in the capital city, was wary of the ethnically grounded EPRDF and skeptical of their democratic claims; thus some of these individuals also entered the press.

The media strategy (to the extent that one did exist) was heavily influenced and driven by political objectives. This was in part because the government did not have a clear strategy, but it was also due to incompetence and the inherent difficulties in reforming a large bureaucracy such as the Ministry of Information. Additionally, the government ended up approaching the independent press in a similar way that it did the arguments of its critics, the calls for national reconciliation conferences and the critiques of the proposed constitution -- by ignoring it. The government's strategy will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5 but as background, the following sections will probe into the development and role of three sections of the press: the government press, the anti-government press and the government-leaning 'gray zone' press.

2.1 The Ethiopian Herald and Addis Zemen

While the propaganda strategy the TPLF employed in the bush was effective for its purposes, the continuation of such propaganda has proved counterproductive, particularly in recent years. The two major government dailies, *The Ethiopian Herald* and *Addis Zemen*, have a small circulation and are unanimously regarded as failures (including by their staff). *The Ethiopian Herald* and *Addis Zemen* are similar and

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[173] Tellingly Minister Noggo argued:
> Today the mass media in America is a... very powerful institution. It makes and unmakes leaders, and has tremendous influence on public opinion as well as the government. It's becoming so powerful has to however be worrying, for any powerful institution has reasons to protect its power and corporate interests, from others. In the end freedom must be jealously protected and guarded from the powerful. There is the saying that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". Hence if the press itself becomes too powerful, it may also abuse its power. For now and in our case, this danger does not exist. Ours is a struggle to implement principles which are taken for granted in many parts of the world... NOGGO, D. (1992) Keynote Speech. *Seminar on the Role of the Press in a Democratic Society.* Addis Ababa. p.10

[174] Interview: Simon.

many articles from *Addis Zemen* are simply translated into English for *The Ethiopian Herald*. According to Wondimkun Alayou, editor-in-chief of *Addis Zemen*, the objectives of his paper are:

> (1) to serve the public, the political parties and the government.... (2) to make consensus on development issues. We ask leaders and entertain different ideas on development issues. We don't have a business agenda but a development agenda. In private newspapers you don't find articles on the MDGs. (3) to allow the public to express their opinions through letters to the editor; and (4) to serve civic associations.[175]

The objectives of *The Ethiopian Herald* are similar and the content focuses on issues about development and includes topics from tourism and investment to women.

The four government papers, including the weekly *Al Alam* in Arabic and *Barifa* in Oromifa, are under the supervision of the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that is headed by Kefyalew Azeze, an EPRDF cadre and political appointee. The EPA has a board of ten members that is elected by the parliament every five years. Bereket Simon is presently chairman of the board and was also chairman while he was Minister of Information. Technically he is accountable to the head of the Parliamentary Committee on Information and Culture, although the extent to which this actually happens is debatable. This has been a contentious issue at the government papers because there is a consensus that the papers legitimately do aspire to be independent and to be led by independent bodies, but this has been hampered by the present structure.

Kefyalew is directly responsible for the editorial content of all the newspapers and the editors are accountable to him. He ensures that all articles are within the editorial policy. If a government official wants an editorial, then he or she will approach Kefyalew. Journalists at the papers take their cues from his office. During the elections, for example, Dejene Tesemma the editor of *The Ethiopian Herald*, noted a point that was reiterated in many interviews, that criticism of the government or supporting the opposition

> would not be accepted if it was printed. It was not explicitly said not to print the other views but you know. There is no apparent policy but every Friday an editorial comes from the Ministry of Information that explains the government stand on current issues. In these they use certain adjectives. Once the legal process started we refrained from the adjectives. But before

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[175] Interview: Wondimkun Aleyou.

we used lots of adjectives. We used it because it reflects the government views. When they use these words, we do. It's not journalistically fair and right but journalists want to please the officials.... Ownership matters.[176]

Despite government ownership, journalists from these papers face great difficulties getting information from the government.[177] In some cases they have to wait three months before they can get the information requested from a government ministry even when Kefyalew tries a 'top down' approach of telling the Minister that the journalists want to have access to interview someone in their department.

2.1.1 Reforming the government press

The difficulty of increasing circulation and improving the quality of the papers stems in part from the organisational structure of the EPA. Both papers are primarily distributed to government offices and embassies and are available for sale only in a limited number of shops. There are some private subscribers most of which are businesses interested in the government tenders that are advertised. The revenues of the papers go directly back to the government. During interviews, both editors of *The Ethiopian Herald* and *Addis Zemen* were unaware of how much profit they earn although they believed that the money they made through advertisements exceeded the printing costs. This arrangement is problematic: the editors do not have the right to invest profits and the only way they can access funds is to ask the parliament for an increase in the annual budget, a request which is rarely accepted. But, as the case of the Ugandan paper *The New Vision* will suggest in Chapter 7, even for government papers generating a profit and having the opportunity to re-channel that money into either the shareholders or improving the quality of the publication is important, particularly in volatile environments.

Staff morale at government papers is low and the lack of enthusiasm is obvious in even the shortest visit to the office. Wondimkun readily admits that they recently held a three-year review at *Addis Zemen* and 'no one is happy'. Many of the

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[176] Interview: Tesemma.
[177] The journalists at the government papers are from similar backgrounds as their colleagues in the private press. Most studied Amharic, English or theatre at school, the only difference being that some have also received training from the school that is almost exclusively for government journalists EMMTI. Similar to the problems throughout the Ethiopian press, few journalists have received training in a particular subject- such as economics or law, as most of these graduates are drawn to more lucrative employment at the UNECA or other business opportunities.

journalists (he estimates around forty percent) 'just want the bread'. He realises that "we're not readable, we know our weaknesses, we need a fundamental change. All national papers across the world are in colour…. The government also wants to change it, they are not satisfied."[178] But the will to change is questionable. Dejene argues that he is "not sure if the tradition can change. It has been the same under all the regimes, the will needs to come from the owner".[179] Staff rarely does investigative reporting and most of their work is to compile the newspaper with material from the internet, the international wire services, the Ethiopian News Association (ENA) and the Walta Information Service, a TPLF party-affiliated company.

The situation for the government press deteriorated the most during the 2005 election period. Bereket has been sharply criticised for not effectively gauging the effects that government propaganda would have on the public during sensitive times

to the people and recognises that "we need to develop a platform where we engage".[182] It is not clear that there is either the commitment or vision to change the government's communication strategy and the way in which it uses the newspapers to communicate. Kefyalew Azeze was exceptionally frank when he noted that "the Ethiopian government has no vision - there is no communication strategy. They have a development strategy but the media are not mentioned. They talk about the information laws but you need the vision."[183]

Few Ethiopians have suggestions how the government press or the media in general could be improved, but the head of EPA and the editors of *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald*, as well as the Ethics Officer at the Ethiopian News Agency, are all in the process of implementing the Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) strategy developed by Dr. Michael Hammer and is part of a wider government-led public service restructuring project. BPR claims to be a 'radical' strategy for redesigning companies and the way in which they interact with one another. The programme advocates significant downsizing and 'wiping the slate clean'. While they all seemed to have a photocopied edition of this book from the 1990s, there was little indication that it was either fully understood or ready to be implemented.[184]

Transforming organisations with the bureaucratic history of the newspapers under the EPA is bound to be a challenge, but it was also not clear what the end result should or would be. The editor of *Addis Zemen* spoke of his desire for his paper to be read regionally, and compete with the newspapers in Kenya or serve as a point of reference for others including the BBC and Reuters. This seems unrealistic given that *Addis Zemen* is published in Amharic and the readership is by default selective and virtually limited to Ethiopia and the diaspora. Nevertheless, it seems hard to fault the editors when a vision, strategy and delegated authority appear to be lacking.

2.2 The anti-state press

Until November 2005 there was a strong press that was deeply critical of the government. The government attempted to de-legitimise it by calling it 'anti-

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[182] Interview: Simon.
[183] Interview: Kefyalew Azeze.
[184] Interviews: Tesemma, Gebrewold Woldesenbet and Aleyou.

constitutional'. In many respects this press was indeed strongly opposed (and not entirely without reason) to fundamental constitutional and political issues the EPRDF supported.

The papers that emerged soon after the EPRDF came to power had greater influence and support than the papers that later tried to operate and develop in a 'gray zone'. The first publications that appeared in 1991 were primarily magazines including *Ifoyta*, *Ruh* and *Tobiya*. These were soon followed by several private newspapers, including *Iyita* and two papers published by Tamrat Bekele, *Addis Tribune* and *Addis Dimts,* that became particularly influential. These first papers and magazines had multiple aims: making money, challenging the government on key issues, and for some journalists, doing a job that they enjoyed. Shimelis Bonsa notes that an excerpt taken from the first issue of *Iyita* one of the first private newspapers published on *Ghinbot* 10, 1984 (EC) is illustrative of these intentions

> ... to make profit, to educate and disseminate information relating to current political, economic and social issues for the benefit of the people, to help the people improve their reading culture and promote publishing and journalistic experience among the wider public.[185]

For almost all the papers, however, the political objectives tended to be markedly more important than implied in *Iyita*. Most papers took a strong, consistent and clear line against the EPRDF and opposed a number of the government's most important policies. The issues that these papers raised in the early 1990s include many that either the same or similar papers were raising fourteen years later. This not only suggests that there is a strong constituency for the arguments and that they represent real grievances among some of the population, but also that the government has ignored or been ineffective in addressing the issues.

Many of the journalists that started *Tobiya* and some of the other papers spent substantial time during the Derg at *Addis Zemen*, *The Ethiopian Herald* or working for the party paper. The founders were mostly seasoned journalists from the Derg, including Mulugeta Lule, former editor of the Derg party's[186] magazine and Goshu Mogus, who ran the censorship office for the Derg. Some of those who worked in

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[185] BONSA, S. (2000) *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991-1999,* Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies. p. 24.
[186] The Commission to Organise the Party of the Workers of Ethiopia (COPWE).

prominent positions during the Derg were imprisoned or accused of involvement in the regime's crimes.

For example, Mairegu Bezabih, another founder of *Tobiya*, spent a year and a half in jail on charges of genocide for having executed 300+ people but the government could not prove the case.[187] Mulugeta Lule, who left Ethiopia for America after being imprisoned several times for his articles in *Tobiya*, has also had substantial accusations leveled against him including having been a Derg spy and responsible for the death of Ethiopia's most famous novelist of the Derg period, Baalu Girma. These accusations have been dismissed by some as government propaganda to discredit *Tobiya*.[188]

The background of many of these journalists is key to understanding the role a substantial portion of the press has played in Ethiopia and why the present government has expressed so much hostility towards these journalists. Just as the

for example, charges that "*Ethiop* was political hooliganism in practice. It was always supporting the CUD, it didn't balance and the editor is interested in politics not media".[190] In many respects, the government continued to see him as a member of the Derg and was wary of what it perceived to be his efforts at de-legitimising the EPRDF.

Not all papers that were opposed to the state were run by former Derg journalists. According to Bonsa, more than 40% percent of the papers that followed in what he calls 'the second phase' were run by journalists with little or no experience in journalism.[191] The papers were less institutionalised than *Tobiya/Lissane Hezeb* and did not have the same kind of access to informants. The same news from the radio, TV, or government newspapers was reinterpreted and represented in a more sensational manner in some private papers.[192] Many of these journalists also relied on news and commentary that were published by the diaspora, particularly in the US, on websites such as ethiomedia.com. For example, *Menelik*, *Asqual* and *Satinow* were prominent papers that were edited by Iskinder Nega[193] and drew heavily on material from the diaspora websites. Iskinder was also deeply critical of the government, yet was younger than his colleagues who might have been involved with the Derg. He clearly argued in his papers that he supported the political party All Amhara Peoples Organisation (AAPO) and wanted to restore Amhara political power. More recently, however, he has been supportive of federalism, which the AAPO has opposed.

2.2.1 Tobiya

Tobiya is indicative of the 'anti-state' press and can be regarded as the trend-setting and pioneering paper that most others followed. Soon after the establishment of the magazine, *Tobiya* launched a paper and had an amount of start-up capital that

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[190] Interview: Aregawi.
[191] BONSA, S. (2000) *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991-1999*, Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies. p. 31.
[192] Ibid. p. 36.
[193] Iskinder spent significant time in the US and returned when the EPRDF came to power. The period in the US affected his desire to create change in Ethiopia and when he first returned he thought that the time was ripe for this. With the fiancial resources and international connections he also had more flexibility than some of his colleagues.

substantially exceeded that of its competitors making it quickly one of the strongest, most institutionalised and professional papers.[194]

Derbew Temesgen, a longtime media lawyer and founder of *Tobiya,* described the start-up:

> The first motive to establish the paper was because most journalists - 52 were laid off. They [the EPRDF] dismissed those that worked with the previous regime.... But they [the journalists] had to eat and work. They had to do their profession so some organised a company to start a weekly paper. *Tobiya* is a traditional name for Ethiopia. They named it after the first short story (novel) that was called *Tobiya.*[195]

These journalists were generally well trained, had experience working for a newspaper and were able to produce their publications professionally and quickly. The paper had its own office and even staff dedicated to advertising and administration. While the journalists tend to talk of the editorial agenda of the paper, there was also a business side that contributed to its success. As a project of the Atbia Kokeb Publishing and Advertising Company (AKPAC), the paper succeeded in attracting advertisements thus helping to make it sustainable.

At the same time, the political agenda was fueling the work and passions of many of the staff. The editorial policy of the paper was clear. According to Derbew "in the editorial policy it was against ethnic politics and against the separation of Eritrea. Ethnic politics is not good for the unity of the country".[196] Indeed, early editorials and articles emphasise this line. The following two examples of editorials illustrate the arguments that were common in the early months of publication:

> The attempt by the fascist Italians to divide the people and the country was not successful, but now it is getting rooted thanks to the current regime. The people of the country are being divided along ethnic lines... The 1991 Charter follows and adheres to the secessionist ideology of a few Eritreans. It seems that the Charter was prepared to facilitate the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia....The attempt to view unity as a marriage is very simplistic and incorrect. The people of Ethiopia are connected by history, nature, culture and psychological make-up.... We also think that no group should be allowed to disintegrate the country. In the new Ethiopia, the unique and terrifying term is "unity". The charter is not in favor of unity. It also seems that the constitution fears the same term. It rather pronounces and emphasises the phrase "self-determination up to secession".... The regime supports the

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[194] According to the Mass Media License Registration and Control Department, it was founded with 90,000 birr but in an interview with Derbew he noted that the paper had 50,000 birr.
[195] Interview: Derbew Temesgen.
[196] Interview: Temesgen.

> division and disintegration of the country and we think this is the first
> national government to do such a thing in the world.[197]

The second example, entitled "Against History," argues:

> We understand that we are living in a time when some are deliberately and
> full-heartedly involved in distorting the country's history; and of course,
> destroying it.... They say Ethiopia has colonised Eritrea and some other
> nationalities... this is treason, history will pass judgment on the doers of
> such acts.[198]

The early *Tobiya* papers and magazines consistently argued against the right to
succession and often accused the Ethiopian government of allowing Eritreans to
intervene in, if not overtly control, local affairs.[199] The paper would also argue for
reconciliation or a new spirit of forgiveness[200] as well as suggest that the current
government should be held as accountable for current violations of human rights as it
was aspiring to do for former leaders of the Red Terror.[201]

Unity was and remains a key word. As the reader can note, it appears several
times in the above quotations and continued to be used in papers like *Tobiya* until
they closed. It has also been a word of choice for the opposition. The Derg used
'unity' repeatedly as its mantra of why it was fighting. During the guerrilla war it
used the press to refer to the TPLF war as being "activities of anti-unity elements who
are engaged in destructive activities in the name of democracy"[202] or would argue that
"anti-unity elements seeking to dismember the country have persisted in carrying out
acts of destruction resulting to immense loss of life and damage to property".[203] In the
corner near the mast of every government paper there were two slogans 'in unity lies
our strength' and 'peace is the basis of progress'. Under the title of the paper was the

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[197] 24 February 1986 (EC), Editorial, "A serious threat faces the country more than ever", *Tobiya*, p.2
[198] 19 January 1986 (EC), Editorial, "Against history", *Tobiya*, p.2
[199] 13 January 1994, Editorial, *Tobiya* (as quoted on 20 January 1994 in *Press Digest*, p.4).
[200] For example, an article on 21 July 1994 argued "there is a need for a spirit of forgiveness which is a
prime requirement for reconciliation and reconstruction. In Ethiopia, the government is actively
advancing enmity between the peoples of Ethiopia through the media and has also been living in the
past in the last three-and-a-half years. Such dishonest and politically dangerous ways are pursued in
order to monopolise power. This country's future rests not on any one dominant group but on every
Ethiopian. (as quoted on 25 July 1994 in *Seven Days Update*, p. 6).
[201] A reporter from *Tobiya* argued "the crimes of the past are to be exposed soon and the criminals to
be sentenced in public. Yet, there is no proof that the very same crimes are not being repeated today.
Human rights organizations repeatedly lament of the growing violation of democratic and human rights
indicating that the country is moving from one era of darkness to another. (as quoted 28 November
1994 in *Seven Days Update*, p.6).
[202] 21 February, 1991, Editorial, "For still greater determination", *The Ethiopian Herald*, p.2.
[203] 08 January 1991, Editorial, "Persistent Peace Effort", *The Ethiopian Herald*, p.2.

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Derg slogan 'Ethiopia Tikdem' meaning 'Ethiopia First'. While it may seem benign, the slogan was and continues to be laden with meaning.

2.2.2 From Tobiya to Lisane Hezeb

In 2003, after twelve years, some of the journalists from *Tobiya* left to start another paper, *Lisane Hezeb*. Both papers continued publishing until just after the 2005 elections when they were closed. *Lisane Hezeb* is the focus of the present analysis because most of the key journalists left *Tobiya* including Mulugeta, Derbew and Kifle Mulat. Derbew argued that the intention was "not to make money but to have as many forums as possible to strengthen the media".[204] Nevertheless, the journalists clearly left over internal disagreements. As one informant argued, "*Lisane Hezeb* was the strong part; it had the editor, publisher, columnists. The other part [*Tobiya*] became infiltrated by the EPRDF".[205]

Lisane Hezeb was started under the newly established Addis Alem Press, which literally means 'the new vision press'.[206] According to a published announcement launching the paper,

Addis Alem Press claimed its intentions to be a neutral forum for all political

that began when the paper was first launched continued until it was

. Excerpts from the following three editorials in *Lisane Hezeb* during

ion period are indicative of the main political and editorial line of the

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long-standing problem. Today, even a national reconciliation may not solve the problem....[208]

Secondly, deep frustration with the TPLF as a minority party was regularly expressed:

> A self-imposed EPRDF and political parties trying to liberate the people are fighting a peaceful war that is gradually progressing.... The TPLF has always been destroying the country, dividing the people. Since it captured state power, it has been ruling the country... with an undefined and inconsistent revolutionary democracy.[209]

Thirdly, issues of land rights and accusations about the activities of 'ex-Derg elements' were discussed. In this particular editorial, the argument relates to what was raised in a recent televised debate before the elections.

> EPRDF says ownership rights should not be given to the peasants while the oppositions say they should be entitled to that right. The opposition says EPRDF's claim that the peasants would sell its land... is not grounded because the peasant has its own wisdom and traditional knowledge... if we see the case neutrally, saying that land can be sold doesn't mean that it should be sold. One of the manifestations of democracy are ownership rights. It is when the peasant owns land that his full rights will be respected... The EPRDF representative was accusing the CUD of mobilising dangerous vagrants and the ex-regime soldiers against the incumbent. What makes people vagrants or dangerous remnants is unemployment and such people didn't create the unemployment problem...It is the same with the ex-regime soldiers. These soldiers are not soldiers of the "Derg" regime but of Ethiopia. Do we say the current soldiers are soldiers of EPRDF if the party loses power? The ex-regime soldiers have come to the rescue of Ethiopia when Eritrea launched its aggression and sacrificed their lives. So, is it right to label them anti-people?[210]

These arguments have all been deeply controversial and are topics on which the government would prefer not to engage.

Debating press laws or criticising the way the government hospitals are run are within a circle of debate that the government can tolerate because it does not challenge the fundamental tenets of the EPRDF. Nebiy Makonnen of *Addis Admas* explains this space: "At *Tobiya*, they are almost all from the former regime, but it's not to be hated. There is a need to express the view."[211]

As will be elaborated in the coming chapter, one of the major political issues in Ethiopia, and one that has often preoccupied journalists, is the failure on the part of

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[208] 4 February 2005, Editorial, *Lisane Hezeb*, p. 2.

[209] 25 February 2005, Editorial, *Lisane Hezeb*, p.2.

[210] 14 April 2005, Editorial, *Lisane* Hezeb, p.2.

[211] Interview: Nebiy Makonen.

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the government to engage and debate these critical topics as part of the process of reconciliation and nation-building.

2.3 'Gray Zone' papers

There are a number of so-called middle ground papers. The papers that have attempted to occupy this space between government and anti-state publications have been a mix of English and Amharic papers. This task has been markedly more difficult for the Amharic papers.

2.3.1 The English papers

Of the five weekly English papers that occupy this space; namely, *The Reporter,*[212] *The Daily Monitor*, *The Sub-Saharan Informer,*[213] *Fortune*[214] and *Capital,*[215] the latter two are business papers with a political bent. They have chosen to publish in English to make the papers accessible to the diplomatic and international business community and they target well-educated readers.

2.3.1.1 Capital and Fortune

Capital and Fortune, both of which are published on Sunday,

executive, was made managing director. *Fortune* has attempted to angle itself with a strong business focus along with political analysis while *Capital* has emphasised social issues with long interview sections and has a strong arts and culture section with regular contributions by the scholar Richard Pankhurst.

As with every paper in Ethiopia, the editor is a defining, and perhaps the most influential, factor in determining the agenda and characteristics of a publication. Tamrat is unique because he is relatively young; he was trained in journalism in the US and can be seen as part of a new generation. He is too young to be in the student movement and apparently has succeeded in forging relationships with journalists of all persuasions as well as politicians.

Tamrat started his career from little and began by contributing to some of the magazines during his university days that were blossoming including *Heber, Addis Dimst* and *Addis Tribune*. With a loan from a publisher, he started a weekly paper, *Tomar,* which was an instant success with its loud headlines. He stayed with this paper and wrote several articles that landed him in jail, including one criticising Prime Minister Meles for closing roads from the airport to the palace when he passed. In the article, 'Does Meles hate us or is he afraid of us?' Tamrat argued Meles was scaring and alienating people. Ethiopians tend to have a complex relationship with authority and this article was seen as provocative. After an investigation and several weeks in jail, he received a sentence of 15,000 birr that was later appealed and cut in half.[216]

Tamrat's initial journalism experience was working with former military men that worked for the Derg and had recently started papers. As he notes, "I was one of the only civilians involved". Eighteen months later he won a fellowship to work in the US and returned changed arguing that

> I had a complete transformation. The way we were operating wasn't a reflection of society but a reflection of our own heads. We used to read the *[Ethiopian] Herald*, form our own views and then write. We used to not question or ask but would just publish the news as it was, we wouldn't crosscheck or follow journalistic perspective.[217]

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[216] Interview: Tamrat Giorgis.
[217] Interview: Giorgis.

Tamrat argues that he is now in a position where "I don't need to have an ideology. I don't need to promote Ethiopia's unity or diversity. I can tell the truth and criticise it".[218] He acknowledges that he tries to have his paper fall in the middle by

> giving readers timely accurate, neutral, objective stories and to allow conflicting views and give them the platform to express their views. The form of journalism the government wants is development journalism, but it's propaganda. Most journalists are that kind but from the other side - they talk in the same way about Ethiopian glory, etc. They see themselves as guardians of this ideal of Ethiopia.[219]

Tamrat's paper is the only paper in Ethiopia to have an editorial code. It is the most professionally published in the country and with the help of a British copy editor has fewer typographical errors than other publications.

Since his return to Ethiopia from his training in America, Tamrat has joined the EPRDF's political elite. His success is very much his own as he did not come from a privledged background. For an editor serious about his newspaper this can be seen as an essential means of gathering information and ensuring his business interests. But critics argue that he has significantly compromised any possibility of objectivity. He is friendly with Bereket Simon and has reportedly forged close relations with others in the government. United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) opposition leader Merara Gudina pointedly claims "Bereket owns *Fortune*. Even Amare Aregawi is more independent".[220] Anecdotally, some Ethiopians do see *Fortune* as one of the more neutral papers but it is generally viewed as government-leaning. For example, while the paper will report powerfully about government violence during the 2005 elections, it does not leave the realm of tolerable criticism to challenge the ideological or ethnic basis of the EPRDF. The willingness to be somewhat critical while remaining in good favour with the government has given him a certain authority and status with the international community and consequently greater access to international trainings and conferences as well as the ear of diplomats- significant perks that are not to be overlooked.

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[218] Interview: Giorgis.
[219] Interview: Giorgis.
[220] Interview: Merara Gudina.

2.3.1.2 Other English papers

Other English papers, including *The Sub-Saharan Informer* and *The Daily Monitor,* operate on the periphery yet are still notable particularly because they are among the few papers that continue to publish.

The Sub-Saharan Informer has ambitiously tried to be a newspaper for the continent using Addis, with the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), as a focal point for continental policy issues. The paper has had many financial difficulties despite a significant sum of personal financial capital as start up. Logistically, it has been difficult for *The Sub-Saharan Informer* to coordinate offices from Ghana to Kenya in terms of both distribution and the production of content.[221] The paper operates largely on the periphery of debates, and the government has been tolerant of the fact that the editor and owner is Sudanese (the paper is, however, registered in his Ethiopian wife's name), which is a violation of the press law. Published in colour and costing four birr, double the price of other papers, it is simpler for the government to tolerate it than to bother closing it.

The Daily Monitor is the only daily English paper as the other four are all weeklies. *The Daily Monitor* primarily publishes newswire reports. It used to take a strong editorial line, but due to pressure from the government it began publishing its editorial in the form of a cartoon and writers only occasionally leave the office to get stories.[222]

2.3.2 The Amharic papers

It is significantly more difficult for the Amharic papers to operate within this 'gray zone' space. The government is more concerned with what they say and their readership is also often more critical and demanding. In the post-election period to the present, *Addis Admas*[223] has been the largest paper in Ethiopia with a circulation of 30,000, a level that has remained relatively stable for the past several years. During the election it peaked at 75,000. Nebiy Makonnen, a founder and the current editor-in-chief, calls the area in which he operates 'the gray zone' (hence the title for this

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[221] Interview: Joseph Aboulfaki.
[222] Interview: Kidau Abera.
[223] Available at: http://www.addisadmass.com.

section) and explains that *Addis Admas* was founded because the private press was either pro- or anti-government and did not give sufficient attention to education, social or cultural issues. In *Addis Admas*, politics are predominantly on the first page and the rest of the paper focuses on cultural and educational issues. For Nebiy, culture and arts serve to expand the gray-zone as they can be 'culturally political'. "In transition periods" he notes, "politics is wanted. But if it stabilises, culture and arts is wanted more".[224]

Addis Admas' editorials are well-known for skillfully providing guidance and critiquing current political issues in a subtle and relatively lenient way. In contrast with the editorials of other papers that tend to give direct guidelines, the editorial starts with a proverb and then gives a short story or folklore and concludes with a paragraph of analysis. The proverb is chosen very carefully and attempts to tell exactly what is going on in the country. As Nebiy explains, "if you don't analyse the situation well you can't find a proverb."[225] Nebiy studied chemistry, but he considers himself to be a poet. He was a political prisoner for ten years under the Derg and his literary accomplishments, including translating *Gone with the Wind* while in prison, have been documented in Paul Throeaux's, *Black Star.*[226]

One other paper that must be acknowledged as part of this category, but which is no longer publishing, is *Meznania*. Abiy Tekle Makonnen began *Meznania* after two years at *The Reporter* and is significantly younger than many of the other editors. His background is in law and he recently earned an MA in Holland. Abiy also sought to mediate and work in this so-called middle area and had some success until he chose to close his paper after the election violence. Most of his readers were young, educated professionals. Negotiating this middle ground was very challenging and he was one of the few successful journalists of a new generation to work to carve out some new space.[227]

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[224] Interview: Makonnen.
[225] Interview: Makonnen.
[226] THEROUX, P. (2003) *Dark Star Safari,* New York, Houghton Mifflin.
[227] Interview: Abiy Tekle Makonnen.

2.3.2.1 The Reporter

The Reporter was started several years after the first wave of newspapers began. After coming to Addis with the TPLF, Amare was appointed head of Ethiopian Television and later head of the Ethiopian News Service. After several years in these positions, Amare decided to start *The Reporter*. He claims that he felt he could be of more service to the country by entering the private debate; however, his frustrations of working with the government media are also evident. His task of altering the vast bureaucracy of the media agencies was complicated by divergent visions of the media and clashes of personality and ideologies. The split between Amare and Bereket is evident, as the two have sparred publicly. But Amare's continued high-level contacts among those in the ruling party and his access to start-up capital (approximately 50,000 USD) made *The Reporter* a prominent paper very quickly. At first the public was unsure of what to expect from a former TPLF fighter and generally anticipated the paper would be propaganda. However, *The Reporter* soon won a strong following from various segments of society that appreciated its criticisms of the government and found it to be relatively balanced and objective. From Amare's perspective:

> There were other newspapers [but] *The Reporter* was... different from inception. We set a different norm in media. There were some private papers but there was a highly polarised situation between the government media and the private media. The government media was saying everything in this country is good, there is nothing bad. And some of the private papers said everything in this country is bad.... There was nothing for the public to call a spade a spade. So one of the reasons for the creation of *The Reporter* was: can't we have a balanced free and fair media in Ethiopia? Exactly when we started we were attacked from both sides.[228]

While *The Reporter* does not have a code of ethics, Amare argued that his code is clear and everyone on the paper is aware of it. He does not mind what political inclinations writers might have as long as they do not come out in their writings. At *The Reporter*, he argues,

> We have a development direction [and] we have a concept of democracy we believe that's good for the people. There are human rights values, democratic values, election values. *The Reporter* is not going to discover that. The EPRDF is not going to discover that... they're already discovered.

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[228] Interview: Aregawi.

> If everybody respects this, we praise them. If they violate them, we criticise them.[229]

Initially, *The Reporter* focused on criticising government policy. It was regularly charged with libel and contempt of court for critical reporting. Fortunately, the paper has a former constitutional judge on the staff that spends much of his time defending the newspaper from such charges and reducing crippling fines. *The Reporter* and its staff have avoided the harsher penalties many of the other papers faced for several important reasons. Despite falling out with some in the government, Amare was, and still is, a respected fighter from the struggle and he has maintained connections with people in power. The government also knows where his loyalties are: he is Tigrayan and has fought for the cause. He is not a former Derg cadre as are some of the other journalists.

The elections were very trying but also very revealing for all papers and this was particularly the case for *The Reporter*. Until the elections, *The Reporter* criticised the government regularly on a variety of issues from not allowing private broadcasting stations to freedom of information and the right to form legitimate associations. Several articles immediately before the election period highlight the general approach to critiquing the government. For example, an editorial argued

> The constitution guarantees freedom of association. But when it comes to implementation, the government has neither the conviction nor the desire regarding the creation of free associations.... The EPRDF always prefers to deal with the leadership of "friendly" associations and does not embrace their members. It thinks that if it has the leadership in its hands, everybody else will "fall in line".[230]

It is notable that *The Reporter* does not go as far as some of the other papers have in arguing that the associations are only fronts, or that the government's approach to these associations is merely reflecting the way the EPRDF uses political groups to present an appearance of a pluralistic party when it remains ruled by an elite. Crucially, *The Reporter* does not raise issues of the legitimacy of the ruling clique within the EPRDF.

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[229] Interview: Aregawi.
[230] 9 April 1005, Editorial, "Seizing presentable opportunities", *The Reporter*, p.2.

In another example of 'safe area' criticism, *The Reporter* is very vocal about the press law and has gone so far as to advocate closing down the Ministry of Information. Most in the government agree that there is a very poor information strategy and they at least give lip-service to the idea that there should be independent broadcasters beyond the two licenses recently issued. So while *The Reporter* has been critical of what it sees as Prime Minister Meles' hypocrisy towards issuing commercial licenses to private radio and television stations, it will criticise the failure to implement a policy or argue that a proposed law is too harsh rather than attack the government on fundamental ideological issues. While the editorials may sound critical, they are engaging within the 'democratisation or development' sphere of debate. For example, *The Reporter* asked, regarding Meles' participation on Tony Blair's Commission for Africa, "Why is it that the Prime Minister of Addis Ababa is different from Commissioner Meles Zenawi of the London-based Commission for Africa?" noting that

> In the report that was prepared in London and simultaneously launched in Addis Ababa and London, it is explicitly stated that African governments can assist media independence by granting commercial licenses for radio stations... PM Meles is a signatory of this report. So what prevented his government from issuing commercial licenses to private radio and television operators despite the enabling legislation being approved almost six years ago?... Incidentally such a divergence is not observed only between Addis Ababa and London, it also exists between Addis Ababa and Washington. In Addis Ababa, the government says privatising the sole state-owned telecommunications services provider is unthinkable. But in Washington it says that it is willing to do so. Similarly, in Addis Ababa the government adamantly declares that it would not restructure the biggest bank in Ethiopia, the state-owned Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, but to the IMF and the World Bank in Washington it expressed its commitment to break up the bank into four entities.[231]

Articles such as this led readers to argue initially that *The Reporter* was opposed to the government or at least very critical. But in contrast to newspapers such as *Tobiya*, *The Reporter* is being critical of the government but primarily on issues that the government is already discussing and in some cases has acknowledged the need for new policies or reform. This is an issue that will be developed further in the coming chapter.

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[231] 26 March 2005, Editorial, "Our policies" Which ones?", *The Reporter*, p.2.

3. Conclusion

For all papers, navigating the support of the government, journalists and readers is complex and unpredictable but rarely random. Building on primary data, this chapter has key developments of the media landscape in Ethiopia. Misperceptions about the historical evolution of the press have been challenged and the contemporary press has been elaborated in such a way to focus not on the mechanics but the role and the driving focus of these media outlets, which are different than what we might expect in the west and also are particularly context specific to Ethiopia. Just as is the case in Uganda, the media outlets discussed here cannot purport to represent the perspectives or cater to all Ethiopians. Many local ideas on the Ethiopian nation-state never make their way into the media as the country is both highly un-urbanized and diverse. Nevertheless, the views that are represented in the media are powerful and have strongly influenced the development of the media system and political system as a whole, which will be further explored in the coming two chapters.

Understanding the role of the press in Ethiopian society requires the breaking down of particular characteristics of the press system as well as the political dynamics that influence and shape these particular media outlets and their journalists. Turning quickly to the coming chapter, certain issues introduced in this chapter will be expanded and elaborated. Features that provide the most insight to the particularities will be addressed thus developing a more nuanced portrait of the Ethiopian press system. It will begin by continuing the discussion on the polarisation of the press in the pre- and post-election period.

CHAPTER 4:

The Ethiopian Press System

"To become institutionalised we need a new
generation with no nostalgia or enmity,
one that is free of hatred".
--Woldu Yemessel, General Manager, Radio Fana[232]

This chapter will build upon Chapter 3 and probe into the dynamics and complexities of Ethiopia's media system, focusing on the press and following the framework introduced in Chapter 2. By examining the press during the recent 2005 elections this chapter will begin by looking at one of the most evident features of the press in Ethiopia - the extent of polarisation. Closely connected to polarisation is the way in which journalists think about the work they do and how their publications contribute to political processes. In Ethiopia, this is a relatively broad spectrum.

The second half of the chapter will look into the process (or failed process) of institutionalisation of media organisations and the factors that have contributed to this, both from the state and from the media. The discussion will focus on the one hand on the efforts on the part of the Ethiopian state to structure or intervene in the press system, most typically through legislation, and on the other hand on the media's reaction to these interventions. Together with the previous chapter these four sections will continue to build a portrait of Ethiopia's press system focusing on the political, social and cultural aspects.

1. A Polarised Press

The press in Ethiopia is deeply polarised. These divisions are reflective of a number of factors including divergent visions of Ethiopian national identity, differences of political ideology and alternative perceptions of the role of the press in society. The 2005 election period was one of the most divisive periods for the media in Ethiopia's history. While before the election there were many positive indications

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[232] Interview: Woldu Yemessel.

of the role the media were playing in mediating different views, the situation took a sharp turn immediately after election day.

Some studies have argued that the media were relatively accessible to different groups prior to the elections. While a number of embassies did their own limited analyses, Dr Gebremedhin Simon of the Graduate School of Communication at Addis Ababa University also conducted a study that concluded,

> There were some very positive innovations leading up to, and during the run-up to the election. It was very evident in the public owned media where great improvement was seen. Secondly, there was success in granting the parties access to the government media. The quota of airtime given to all parties was met. But at times highly political and emotional attacks were launched on personalities. Thirdly, relevant authorities were flexible and gave significant interview space. The Ethiopian Television was very balanced.[233]

The media were enjoying the same degree of openness that was granted to the political parties for the first time in the history of Ethiopia. Unfortunately, much of this temporary success prior to voting day was lost in the aftermath of the election, which was characterised by violence and government repression. The following sections will briefly describe the role of the press during this period.

1.1 Government press

Before the elections the government press scored some bright points and many agree that in this period the government media in general were relatively balanced or at least gave a decent amount of space to the opposition. Dejene Tesemma, editor-in-chief of *The Ethiopian Herald,* calls this time 'exceptional' as his paper was

> So neutral... it was relatively liberal in the entertainment of views of other individuals. During the election, [there were] campaigns and debates [and] we would pick up the live transmissions, translate and print them in the *Herald.*[234]

This period did not last long as immediately after the elections the paper turned again to self-censorship.

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[233] The graduate school, of which Dr Gebremedhin Simon is now the Dean, is known to be supportive of the EPRDF. Nevertheless, a wide number of informants corroborated his argument that the media was relatively open before the elections. (2006) Gebremedhin Simon lecture, Workshop on Press Freedom, Hilton Hotel: Addis Ababa.

[234]Interview: Dejene Tesemma.

When the success of the opposition party Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) appeared to threaten the EPRDF's majority, the government's willingness to provide space for the CUD in the government media drastically diminished. The previous openness was replaced by the government's push for discrediting the CUD through propaganda, which made some government journalists feel uneasy. A journalist from the highest levels of Ethiopian Radio who asked to remain anonymous described his experience, the hard choice he had to make and the change of discourse in the government media:

> I spent most of my career in radio doing the news and current affairs. I stopped working there in June 2005. I resigned in September after I took a three-month vacation. I love broadcasting and didn't think of leaving the radio, it was my lifetime job but the situation was getting beyond what one could bear. We had to politicise things. Sometimes people push you to do things. Before it wasn't so recurrent but it started from the eve of the election.
>
> Before the election was the nicest time of my life. I received more than 300 calls on the day of the election. We followed every activity of polling stations with 22 radio reporters. We received news from ENA and Walta, everyone was so motivated and it was free.
>
> The next day everything was different. The TV announced that the EPRDF has won and then things got bad. The Prime Minister announced a one month state of emergency.... A few days after polling we were told we were 'back to editorial'. 'Back to editorial' meant we would no more accommodate opposition ideas. The ruling party considered it to be out of their generosity and charity that the opposition got to use the government media. It was a problem of attitude.[235]

The level of discontent among government journalists is striking, as is the willingness to discuss it openly, though anonymously. A colleague from the Ethiopian News Agency, who also requested to remain anonymous, described similar challenges at the English Desk of the ENA, particularly after the elections. At the ENA,

> Any sensitive political stories must be seen by a central manager. If it's a press release from the CUD, we say forget it, it's better to send a reporter to a development workshop. The opposition states their position formally and sends it to the state and private media. We don't cover it if the CUD calls for peace or anything positive. They [the government] want them to be hostile and violence promoters. I was frustrated but I don't dare to resign. Before if you would resign from the state media you could join the private media. It was an easy leap but now you can't. It was a deliberate move that they shut down so many papers so state media journalists can't go anywhere.... There was an immediate shift in *The Reporter*. There is no

[235] Interview: Anonymous.

difference from ENA and joining *The Reporter....* Working for the state media you start not to care, you are a typewriter.

At the ENA we have been compiling our reports from the election. The reporting is biased and you can visibly see the difference between pre- and post-election reporting.... The adjectives for the CUD came after polling day. For the city riots there was an established phrase 'the street violence that was instigated by the CUD'- everything started with this phrase. It has not yet been investigated yet we accuse them. Sometimes at the English desk we would add some words like allegedly. We wanted to get out of the situation and distance ourselves but at the Amharic desk [they did] not. If I consulted the GM [General Manager] he would have said no. The English desk is a particular case... we would also put stories from Reuters, etc., but the GM would select phrases from the stories that are against the opposition. He would order the Amharic desk to only translate those phrases, they were very selective phrases to paint a bad image of the CUD and make the international media look like it supports the ENA.[236]

These testimonies were common from journalists interviewed. Government propaganda is primarily aimed at people in the rural areas whom it views as its real constituencies. But in the post-election period, the government felt exceptionally insecure and it increased the tone of its propaganda, a move that quickly became counter-productive particularly among the private press and the opposition supporters whose messages it was trying to counter.[237] These groups became even more frustrated and angry towards the EPRDF as evidenced in both the rhetoric used on the streets and the criticisms in the newspapers. Blen Fitsum of Ethiopian Television contends that

People hate the EPRDF because of the lies the papers propagate. People want to have their views confirmed, but it's not changing the way people are

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[236] Interview: Anonymous.

[237] An editorial on August 13, 2003 in *Lisane Hezeb*, p. 2 noted that "the programmes are actually reinforcing people's hatred towards this media". And a lengthy editorial in *Lisane Hezeb* on 15 July 2005, p. 2 was dedicated precisely to this issue. Entitled "It is a Message" the article argued that:

The failure of the EPRDF's propaganda is one of the most serious problems the party faced. Most people lost trust in the government media and boycotted it. The media which is a public asset is functioning as the government mouthpiece. People prefer the Amharic services of Deutsche Welle and Voice of America radio stations to ETV and Ethiopian Radio. The regime and the whole system is imposed on the public through the power of the gun. EPRDF has no popular ground. Its media is also the reflection of the party and not trusted by the public. It has been trying to feed the public with lies and disguising facts in various political, economic and social reports.

The government media also acted illegally in declaring that the EPRDF won the election even before the counting was over.... EPRDF and its media has been working against the national interest and killing the hopes of democracy in the nation. We believe that the thin line connecting the EPRDF and the public is broken. The people are sick and tired of the government and its officials and is rejecting their media...

thinking. Now there's so much hatred in the public. People need to be ready to agree to disagree. ETV started lying three or four weeks before the election. They said that it was just the unemployed, etc., people that supported the CUD. It's so immature. People need to develop that culture of tolerance.[238]

The hatred towards the government media was also extended on a personal level to those working for the institutions. While Blen personally did not have much difficulty, the editor of *Addis Zemen* described how he and his family were harassed in their neighbourhood: some neighbours chose to ignore him while others would shout profanities.[239] The culture of tolerance and the space to agree to disagree is in even shorter supply now than after the elections.

1.2 Anti-state press

During the elections neither *Tobiya* nor *Lisane Hezeb* was particularly sensational. According to Derbew Temesgen who was working for *Lisane Hezeb* at the time:

> *Tobiya* and *Lisane Hezeb* were trying not to be sensational. We wouldn't break with a sensational story. We had providers of information or agents within the government. Other papers seem sensational because they get news from the opposition but not from the government... we also tried to get information from the government but they would decline.[240]

While some have tried to portray *Lisane Hezeb* as solely an opposition paper, Derbew notes that

> It did become a form of the opposition; but it [the paper] didn't have any means of providing information. We were criticising government policies and telling the government that the country needs a dialogue.[241]

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[238] Interview: Blen Fitsum.

[239] Interview: Wondimkun Aleyou.

[240] Interview: Derbew Temesgen.

[241] Ibid.

Indeed many articles within the private press were calling for dialogue. An editorial on 27 August 2005, p. 2, in *Lisane Hezeb* noted, "According to our assessment of the confusing political configuration in the country, both the EPRDF and the oppositions do not seem to be strong enough to establish a government unilaterally. That is why we have been repeatedly calling for discussions and compromises". And in a lengthier article addressing this issue entitled "The 11th Hour Message" published on 20 September 2005, p. 2, the article opens by noting

> Today our country is at a crossroad. If we discuss issues and compromise, the future will be bright. If we do the opposite, which is what is happening right now, then destruction awaits us. As we have repeatedly said, no single force can lead the country.... The TPLF/EPRDF has time and again asserted that its ideology would continue to be Revolutionary Democracy. It is the parties' right to choose its ideology but it cannot impose it on the people. Oppositions are willing to have

Their circulation increased during this period about 50% but did not reach the levels of *Menelik* or *Ethiop*. Neither paper was forced to close by the government, as were other papers that were accused by the government for using hate speech, but the printers, however, refused to print them contending that they had run out of paper or giving other excuses. In such circumstances the owners could not sustain the cost of the employees and the house rent, so they had to close.

Some papers were sensational and have been accused of exacerbating ethnic tensions and encouraging violence in the post-election period. While it is true that many papers referred to the EPRDF as a minority-led regime and expressed grievances with its ethnic basis, the government also sought to manipulate the ethnicity issue.[242] For the EPRDF, the separation of ethnicities has been an important part of ruling such a vast and diverse country. As Mamdani reminds us, at the end of colonialism, all nationalist governments reproduced the colonial legacy uncritically "each sought to reform the bifurcated state that institutionally crystallised a state-enforced separation, of the rural from the urban and of one ethnicity from another"[243] which essentially led to a new form of despotism. While the EPRDF is in fact multi-

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> discussions. The TPLF/EPRDF, however, is doing the opposite.... Our message at the 11th hour is, "Discuss, Let's Discuss". Let us all be the winner. Stop persecuting members of the opposition. We are at the 11th hour.

[242] For a general discussion on ethnic federalism in Ethiopia see
TURTON, D. (Ed.) (2006) *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, James Currey
More specifically, however, Kymlicka has argued that the problem with ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is that the "process of institutionalisation has not always been the outcome of peaceful democratic mobilization, but has rather been imposed from above and/or captured by local elites who do not represent the interests of the wider group." KYMLICKA, W. (2006) Western Models of Multinational Federalism: Are They Relevant for Africa? IN TURTON, D. (Ed.) *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford, James Currey. p. 58.
And Fiseha notes that
> In practical terms, however, the EPRDF controls all the regional state governments in the Ethiopian federation, either directly through its member parties or indirectly through affiliate parties.... This largely centralized party structure appears to contradict the division of power that is expected to exist in a federation. The party structure in Ethiopia undermines the federal division of power and subordinates the regional governments to the federal government.... inter-governmental conflicts are rare.... Party discipline, combined with 'democratic centralism,' has a great impact on decision-making within the party. The central committee of the ruling coalition generates specific plans of action, often through the chairman himself, which then form the basis of the EPRDF's five-year plan to be implemented across the country. FISEHA, A. (2006) Theory versus Practice in Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism. IN TURTON, D. (Ed.) *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford, James Currey. p. 156-7.

[243] MAMDANI, M. (1996) *Citizen and Subject*, Princeton, Princeton University Press. p. 8.

ethnic, the government also sought to manipulate the ethnicity issue during the elections with the media. As discussed in the previous chapter and as *Lisane Hezeb* noted in the debates "EPRDF's labeling of CUD as the Interhamwe of Rwanda is irresponsible".[244]

Much of the blame for facilitating a polarised environment and exacerbating tensions is placed on the government, or as Amare Aregawi noted, "they have the responsibilities because they have the gun"[245]. Similarly, Dejene Tesemma, editor of *The Ethiopian Herald*, agreed with Derbew and Amare in this way:

> *Ethiop* was so extreme because they couldn't verify information because all the government doors are closed. They couldn't verify what was true or not. The government should have made them friendly [as Museveni did]. It was up to the government to facilitate training centres, open forums and promote dialogue. Otherwise they resort to gossip and hearsay. It is up to the government to transform. In the absence of civic institutions, academic

However, the fact that the CUD, which clearly was a political party, was espousing a similar message and had members imprisoned for genocide makes Kidane's assertion unlikely. In addition, much of what these journalists were saying, and the position from which they were saying it, has characterised the Ethiopian media for a number of years. The message was not new; it was rather the timing and the conditions in the country that made the EPRDF perceive it as so dangerous.

1.3 'Gray zone' press

During this period there were some journalists who sought to operate in the 'gray zone' despite its complications and the significant drop in popularity suffered by their papers.[249] In the aftermath of the elections, readers bought newspapers that confirmed their perceptions. *Meznania*, for example, which was operating in this 'gray zone', did not take the line that the election was rigged. The editor-in-chief, Abiy Makonnen explains that

> Except for testimonies from friends and relatives, we did not have conclusive proof... *Meznania* said that the legitimacy of the elections was psychological. If people thought the election was rigged then the election wasn't good.[250]

One week when *Meznania* dared to criticise the opposition, circulation figures provided by the Ministry of Information show that its circulation notably dropped until several weeks later when it attacked the EPRDF and regained some readers.[251] Nevertheless, Abiy was careful about publishing items that might inflame the delicate

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[249] The situation was similar for foreign journalists operating in Ethiopia. They too had difficulty operating in neutral territory and were harassed not only by the government but also the opposition. Mohammed Adow, the BBC correspondent that was based in Addis before, during, and after the elections recalled that

> I was fortunate I left Ethiopia without being hurt. I was being followed, I had my phones tapped and sometimes people from either group were threatening me. I was being told I was being biased, that I was pro-government but then the government told me I was pro-CUD. It depended on whom I was reporting on the other day. I would carry a copy of reports and ask people to tell me what's wrong. You couldn't carry a middle line but I didn't take any bribes and I had no reason to be biased. Working in Ethiopia is one of the most hostile environments in the world. (Interview: Mohammed Adow.)

Navigating both strongly polarised sides of the political spectrum in Ethiopia is very difficult as Mohammed suggested. It remains to be seen how and if this will change with the recent release of the journalists. While the private journalists that were imprisoned have been told that they are allowed to resume their activities, the confidence in the tolerance of the government for them to do so is lacking.

[250] Interview: Abiy Tekle Makonnen.

[251] Personal communication, Ministry of Information, circulation figures and interview: Makonnen.

situation. He was concerned, for example, that by "calling it [the EPRDF] a minority regime, we may encourage violence. We didn't write that the government only represents a minority as it may bring unforeseen consequences".[252]

The Reporter also lost many of its readers for, some critics argue, becoming overtly pro-government. Many readers in Addis speak of a sudden change in the editorials, but in some respects it has been more of a revelation that *The Reporter* would not challenge the status quo in the same way some of the opposition supporters would. The paper did not, as others did, condemn the outcome of the elections as a total fraud but rather advocated accepting the rule of law and the National Election Board's (NEB) ruling. In an editorial entitled "Opposition should accept election results for the sake of democracy, unity and the people," *The Reporter* referenced what Al Gore had said about the US Supreme Court's ruling on the suit he initiated

public's concern that such a change occurred when he notes that Amare's change of course was the right one.[256] Shemelis contends that

> *The Reporter* changed course. Amare must be smart because he shifted gears and followed another course. Before Amare was calling for the public to establish a transitional government which was in flagrant violation of the constitution. He made various utterances that could have put him in the dock but he's rectified his ways....[257]

Amare maintains that his paper has been misunderstood recently. In response to the accusations that he has 'changed sides', Amare asserts:

> Never, never, never, never at all. We didn't shift because of any pressure. But the situation itself was a guide for us. Let me explain what I mean. We don't want to be pro-government and we don't want to be against the government either. We don't want to be pro-CUD, and we don't want to be against CUD either. Why should we be for or against? Our focus is, tell the truth. Anybody who enjoys telling the truth, they are with us. If they

> have listened to them. Because gracefully, they didn't go to parliament and disgracefully they are already in parliament.... Now they are asking 'give us more time, we will go to Addis'.... We said everything has to be done in June, now they are doing it in February. We were right. We are proud of our position. The people who were saying we have shifted are the people who have joined the parliament.
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> We haven't shifted; it is them who have shifted.... I believe in that one and the greatest mistake they have ever made is not going to parliament. My evaluation is, all right this is a party. CUD is a party that never misses an opportunity to miss an opportunity![258]

The question of whether the CUD should join parliament was a major issue of contention. In contrast with other papers, Amare advocated with a relentlessness that alienated many people. *Fortune,* for example, also urged the opposition to join parliament but it did not gain as much of a 'pro-government' reputation as *The Reporter.*

Amare, along with the government, was clearly shocked and taken aback by the widespread support that the opposition gained. As he noted in his editorial immediately after the elections:

> A political scenario which no one had thought of or prepared for is today unfolding itself in Ethiopia. The forecast for the outcome of the May 15 elections was that the ruling party would lose a few seats while the opposition would gain some. But the results convey a very different picture. Although one party contesting the election may have more seats than others, a situation has arisen where most of them have assumed the responsibility of government, albeit at different levels.[259]

While Amare was surprised by the results, there are several possible explanations for understanding the perceived change within *The Reporter.*

One explanation of the shift is a realisation on the part of the perception of the readership about the extent to which *The Reporter* actually challenged the status quo and was critical of the government. Ethiopian readership is also notoriously particular about people and newspapers that try to navigate the middle ground or appear to change positions. As Nebiy noted, "the public likes persistence, if you take different sides or vacillate, they don't like it. But if you always go straight, you earn respect".[260] Amare agrees that there was a bit of this, particularly in Ethiopia where people like to see you on one side or the other:

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[258] Interview: Amare Aregawi.

[259] 21 May 2005, Editorial, *The Reporter*, p.2.

[260] Interview: Nebiy Makonnen.

> When the opposition came they enjoyed our criticism of the government.
> When we started criticising them for not going to the parliament they were
> angry. They said 'why did you criticise us? We thought you were criticising
> the government'. We said yes we'll criticise the government if they make
> mistakes. Then we are criticising you because you are making mistakes...
> We don't care whether it's the government, the ruling party or the opposition.
> If they have got something wrong we tell them and they don't like us.[261]

Another possibility, which has not been substantiated by documentation, is an argument made by Gerard Prunier of the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies. He suggested that Amare could have been threatened by the government and was on a government list of potential persons to be shot. This list supposedly fell into the hands of some embassies, including the French Embassy. As a Tigrayan that had been critical of the government, Prunier alleges that Amare was doubly despised.[262]

The elections, for some Ethiopians, were an exercise of going back into the past, digging into history and bringing up arguments that were begun decades ago. The fact that Amare is Tigrayan and did fight with the TPLF also did not escape public attention. While many individuals were targeted, some shot and others imprisoned, in the aftermath of the elections, it can be argued that Amare had a lot to lose if the EPRDF lost power. He has substantial business interests apart from *The Reporter*, including a shop, the Horn of Africa Press Institute, and an import-export business. A change in regime, or a very destabilising political situation, could threaten these interests and his access to future business opportunities.

2. Ideologies of Ethiopian journalists

There are various explanations about how Ethiopian journalists see the work they do, particularly compared to countries such as Kenya or Uganda where the press is more institutionalised and journalists are better trained. While there are some that are working 'for the bread', the journalists that are having the greatest political influence are generally those working for the independent press and are primarily motivated by a desire to affect the political process.

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[261] Interview: Aregawi.
[262] Interview: Gerard Prunier.

For the ease of explanation and comparative analysis, there are three groups that characterise the prominent players of the press: politically aligned journalists, press freedom journalists, and gray zone journalists. There is, however, overlap among these groupings and some readers and journalists would certainly have different perceptions and dispute whether the below mentioned papers actually fall into the category listed.

All of these journalists are affected by the difficulties of having access to government information. From the government journalists and EPRDF sympathizers to their harshest critics, the lack of information has an impact on what journalists can report and what the newspapers are used for. There is not a culture of disseminating information but Ethiopians are also not accustomed to demanding it. Partly this is out of deference for authority and a respect for hierarchy but it is also out of fear of making oneself known to the authorities. It has only been the select few journalists with some ties to those in government- such as Amare, Tamrat and Zerihun that have been willing and able to get information from those in the ruling party.

2.1 Politically aligned journalists

In line with what has been discussed so far, many of the journalists that were deeply opposed or strongly supportive of the government were politically motivated to practice journalism the way they did. On both sides of the spectrum, journalists said that due to extenuating circumstances, they could not be balanced but were forced to argue their position in an effort to discredit what they perceived to be the inaccurate information of the opposing side. A brief mention of some of the ideological tendencies among different segments of the press follows.

2.1.1 Pro-government

The election was a particularly tense and exceptional period that magnified existing tendencies. On the side of the government and pro-government supporters, Kefyalew Azeze, General Manager of the Ethiopian Press Agency, maintained that

> Before the elections we were balanced, but after not. The editorial policy says in times of crisis look for options that bring solutions. After the election the scenario was totally different so we approached from the view of what the government thinks is happening. For two weeks we completely closed the

doors for the opposition. When we opened it up we tried to voice their concerns. But private papers were deceiving people so we had to give access to government perspectives.[263]

Those at the highest levels of the government media are political appointees and often former fighters of the TPLF. This is the case for the head of ENA, EPA and of course Walta and the party radio and newspapers. But their immediate subordinates, such as the editor of the *Ethiopian Herald* and *Addis Zemen* are not required to be party members and are appointed on merit. Many journalists in the government media are there simply for a job. Often they are graduates with few other opportunities, having studied subjects such as English or Amharic at university, which excluded them from alternative, more lucrative, careers in law or economics.

Independent journalists that are overtly pro-government are less common than those highly critical of the government but Zerihun Teshome of *Iftin* (the husband of the radio journalist Mimi Sebatu) is one example and is indicative of the few independent journalists that occupy this space. *Iftin* is a very pro-government paper that started publishing the day after the June post-election riots in Addis.

Zerihun was one of the forty-one academics dismissed from AAU one year after the EPRDF came to power because "the EPRDF didn't want to be criticised by people sitting in a university".[264] He was in the philosophy department and along with his colleagues, a number of whom were affiliated or active in the Derg, was politically active and concerned with issues of Eritrea and ethnic federalism. He soon left for the US where he became involved in opposition politics only, as he claims, to become disenchanted with their intolerance for Ethiopians of different ethnicities and alternative ideas.[265] Zerihun returned to Addis in 2000 and became close to some of those in the EPRDF.

Zerihun is clear where his loyalties lie and believes that "we have to take Ethiopian unity into the next century".[266] With no training in journalism, Zerihun started *Iftin* as a direct response to the elections because he believed that the "the time to fight is when we become terrorised" and that "the media are so dominated by

[263] Interview: Kefyalew Azeze.
[264] Interview: Zerihun Teshome. See also: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2003) Lessons in Repression: Violations of Academic Freedom in Ethiopia. New York, Human Rights Watch.
[265] Interview: Teshome.
[266] Interview: Teshome.

opposition ideals... I came out clean and clear; we stand for the country's constitution. We will be committed to peaceful and incremental change, if the EPRDF benefits, fine. We don't want chaos."[267] While Zerihun admits that in the beginning he was "90 percent on the side of the government," he now says he is attempting to move into the middle ground.[268] *Iftin* is strongly associated with the EPRDF[269] and it appears unlikely that his partisan reporting will be forgotten anytime soon.

2.1.2 Anti-state

There were a number of factors that motivated the journalists who were strongly opposed to the government. While many of the most influential editors and publishers were in prison at the time of this research, their positions were known publicly and most were open about their motivations for editing or running a newspaper. A number of their colleagues spoke anonymously about what drove these leaders of the private press. Most, it was argued, were at least partially driven by a

and impoverished it was hard for him to be neutral.[270] Tamrat Giorgis, a close friend of Iskinder's, elaborated:

> Iskinder never said he was a journalist. He used newspapers to promote his political objectives, namely Ethiopian unity and then self-determination for the Amhara. While the ruling party sees him as having blind hate, he is [actually] driven by idealism and power.[271]

It would also be a mistake to argue, as some have tried, that these journalists and editors did not know how to abide by professional norms of objectivity, a problem that is suggested to be correctable with more training. Most know what journalism ethics are, but they have defined other roles for themselves and they, just as Zerihun at *Iftin* did, are choosing not to use this approach at this time.

The editors and leading journalists of these papers were predominately from the middle and upper class and could be considered part of the intelligensia. In some cases, if they were not part of the Derg government, they spent significant time abroad and returned to Ethiopia after the EPRDF came to power.

2.2 Press freedom journalists

The press freedom journalists share many similarities with the previous group but are generally less prominent. Many of these journalists are no longer in Ethiopia; they have fled into exile mostly to Kenya but a number are also in the UK, US, Egypt, and Yemen among other places. These journalists worked for papers like *Addis Zena* and also for less popular papers, many of which stopped publishing a number of years ago such as *Goh*, *Aemero*, and *Moresch*. Through interviews with six of these journalists in Nairobi several common characteristics emerged to characterise this group.

There was an overwhelming desire on their part to get to America or the UK. Some were journalists for a short period in Ethiopia before they fled to Kenya to register for asylum and seek passage out of Africa. While some of these journalists certainly suffered government persecution during their time as journalists, it was difficult to tell to what extent they were actually targeted. By and large, they had a tremendous sense of self-aggrandisement, seeing themselves as *the* Ethiopian

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[270] Interview: Anonymous.
[271] Interview: Tamrat Giorgis.

journalists and fighters of freedom. They were, however, mostly young, university students who did not have the serious contesting relationship with the government that some other journalists such as Mairegu Bezabih, Mulagetu Lule or Goshu Mogus had. These journalists also had trouble articulating what exactly they were fighting for, although they believed they were in a fight. Usually they fell back on what they thought an international researcher would want to hear such as "human rights" or "I am writing to express myself". [272] Another said that when he wrote for *Wanchief* it was "to have an alternative media for the public and to write the truth" and a colleague noted that *Kibrit* newspaper "wasn't a business, the salary was sometimes 100 birr. But our aim was to tell people what happened".[273]

While this may be true, Charles Onyango-Obbo and Anthony Mitchell, who both worked to assist these journalists as refugees whilst in Kenya, noted that they were extremely difficult to help because they appeared to lack clear ideas of what they were doing and their role as journalists.[274] Some arguments were significantly off the mark. Kifle Mulat, for example, when interviewed in Uganda tried to argue that "because Ethiopia was never colonised, people know what freedom is" in comparison to Ugandans.[275] Given Ethiopia's history of slavery and subjugation of some ethnicities, this is obviously untrue.

Indeed, it was difficult to interview the journalists as they were very intense, passionate, and a bit theatrical. Similarly, there was almost a complete inability for self-reflection or even acknowledgement of alternative perspectives. Everything was black or white. And as one journalist commented in response to a question about what the weaknesses were of his news organisation: "we don't have any weaknesses as the press. We did our best as journalists. The restrictions of the government had us make mistakes... the total problem is with the regime".[276]

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[272] Interview: Kassahun Lemma.
[273] Interview: Tekle Woldemariam.
[274] Interviews: Charles Onyango-Obbo and Anthony Mitchell.
[275] Interview: Kifle Mulat. I have some hesitancy about placing Kifle among this group because of his background. While Kifle worked in the Ministry of Information during the Derg, most of the journalists in this group did not. Nevertheless, after two interviews with Kifle and seeing him give a lecture, he never succeeded in expressing arguments about his work as articulately as his colleagues such as Derbew or Mairegu both from Lisane Hizb.
[276] Interview: Anonymous.

While these journalists have, to some degree, become the face of Ethiopian journalists in exile, they have not been a significant force in shaping and defining the media. Many, in fact, were merely serving as a 'tapella' that refers to a practice that started after leading journalists were jailed repeatedly. Editors such as Iskinder Nega that have been jailed a number of times began to face harsher charges and as a repeat offender could be denied bail. Thus they began to have others register as the editor of the paper and many of these individuals are reflected in this category.

2.3 'Gray zone' journalists

More articulate, and clearly liberal, personal perspectives on their role as journalists were put forward by Amare Aregawi and Tamrat Giorgis. As previously discussed, both of these journalists were, and continue to be, supportive of the government and status quo. They also aspire to create papers that can be respected internationally and are competitive regionally. Amare describes his position in these terms:

> How we see it is that we don't discover a new job for our newspaper or a new policy. Newspapers are agenda setters.... Newspapers try to show the way. They don't force - they don't have the power. We are setting an agenda, whether they are accepted or not. Is this a discovery for *The Reporter*? No. *The Guardian, The New York Times, Washington Post, Figaro-* that's what they do and that's what we are doing....What are those agendas? The agendas are agendas of development and democracy and human rights endeavours. Do we discover them? No, they are there on the table. They are UN rules and values of human rights, economic development... They're already in the world. Ask the government, do you believe in free market? They say yes. Ask the opposition, do you believe in free market? They say yes. But when you criticise them from those values, they are angry. We don't care about Hailu Shawel, Berhanu Nega and Meles Zenawi when we write. If I have got some nights I don't sleep properly, it's when I feel we didn't give the right information to the public person. We shouldn't have done that. We should have waited or investigated it further, now that's what I feel. Otherwise I don't care about them.[277]

At the same time, however, Amare has been criticised for placing his political alliances and ideologies above this 'international' mission that he described. In the context of Ethiopia, however, it may be easier to articulate such 'universal ideals' rather than implement them. In addition, Amare, like a number of other journalists that seek international recognition for their work, is undoubtedly influenced by the

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[277] Interview: Aregawi.

messages that international diplomats and organisations have made clear they want to hear from journalists in the developing world.

Tamrat, in contrast, is of a younger generation and emphasises his desire to change the culture of media in Ethiopia. He sees this as one of his primary roles as a journalist. For him, the elections were a defining period and he has taken great pride in the fact that he preformed what would be expected of a journalist working for an international paper. While most papers in Ethiopia are largely commentary and there is little investigation or effort to go out and get a story (beyond going to press conferences or development workshops), Tamrat sees *Fortune* as having different ideas and building a new media culture:

> *Fortune* took enormous risks in coming out during the violence.... There was an argument about whether to come out, but it's hospitals and media that need to come out. We need to tell the story; it's the story of the decade. People need to tell the story that while you were in your house this is what happened. [I told my staff that we need] courage, interest and commitment. What we decide today is a life decision. Walking in town was dangerous, anyone could kill you anywhere. I took all my staff to their houses to pick them up and take them home. I was going in all the neighbourhoods and there was no one here to protect the office. I compare this decision with the decision to just let people go home; it would have been much easier and safer, but the issue wasn't regular. It was not about business but killings and mass-arrest. So we decided to write our own experiences. We violated our own third person rules to write in the first person. I was with my reporters in Merkato. We drove there to be there, to go deep into the epicentre of the crisis. We have a commitment to readers to do that.... I received calls from mothers to send their children home. At *Capital* the journalists said it wasn't safe to do their job. They wouldn't take that risk. To be there and dedicated to our readers took courage and commitment.
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> During the crisis in Gambella, no one sent reporters to Gambella. Amare can afford it. It's about how you see yourself as a journalist. It's your perception and role. [In Ethiopia, we do] McDonalds journalism- people just take the packaged things and give it to readers.[278]

Tamrat's perspective is unique, particularly because most newspapers use news from the internet or use it primarily to advocate a particular political perspective. It is difficult to see how the older generation could be involved in developing a new media culture and although *Fortune* is seen as being close to the government, Tamrat is trying to encourage a less ideological and new generation of journalism. However, its influence on the other papers that are more driven by ideology or politics appears inconclusive.

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[278] Interview: Giorgis.

2.4 Other motivations for journalists

The small, but significant, number of journalists that see themselves as aspiring to or participating in a broader global profession of journalism should not be excluded. Some of these journalists, who tend to be younger and work for the private press, have ideas about journalism that are similar to those of their colleagues across much of the world. Some of them work for the government media because they have a particular love of a medium. An example is Blen Fitsum, a news presenter on ETV who said she wanted to be a television journalist and since there were no private outlets she had no choice but to work for the government media.[279] The reality is, however, that young people with a university education are not inclined to join the private media. They can earn far more in other sectors and with less risk. When older journalists such as Amare speak of the need to engage a new generation, in the current political situation which is dominated by debates and politics going back decades, there is little space for younger people. The vast majority of young people joining the media are doing so for 'the bread' or they may have served as tapellas. Younger journalists motivated by either the 'watchdog' ideal or for political reasons are the exception.

Culturally, it is also important to note the historical motivations for becoming a journalist in Ethiopia- some of the country's greatest authors have also been journalists. A notable characteristic that appeared to stretch across journalists with varying ideologies, and relatively unique to Ethiopia in the region, was that journalists turned to the press because they wanted to be writers or poets but could not survive financially. In the past, these authors wrote for the Ministry of Information and published their books on the side, sometimes with severe consequences. Bealu Girma, for example, is the most well-known case. Bealu wrote for and served as an editor for a variety of papers including *Menen, Addis Zemen, Yezareyitu Ityopia,* and *The Ethiopian Herald,* but was killed by the Derg over a book entitled "Oromay" which means "henceforth." In this book he denounced the catastrophic situation of the war in the north. Berhanu Zerihun and Mamou Wodeney are other examples of former editors of *Addis Zemen* and employees of the Ministry of Information who

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[279] Interview: Blen Fitsum.

have been prolific writers. Mamou recently celebrated the publication of his fiftieth book.

Journalism as a profession has provided Ethiopia with authors and similarly much of the press has also played a role in providing people with something equivalent to books. While many cannot afford books, newspapers are more readily available and have a far larger circulation. The steady success of papers, such as *Addis Admas*, with the largest circulation (apart from election periods) and with its focus on arts, culture and literature (each week it publishes a short story), is indicative of the interest and respect for literature among Ethiopians.

Overall there are important differences among journalists' ideologies as to what the role of the press should be in Ethiopia's political development. Journalists and readers alike have notions of what the media 'should be like' that are usually in line with normative standards of the role of the press in conflict/post-conflict situations, although rarely do these seem to be operative in practice. Given that the institutionalisation of media companies is weak and few papers have editorial codes, there are often differing ideas among journalists about what the intentions of their paper are. Seemingly straightforward ideas of the media can also have multiple interpretations, such as 'development journalism'. Like 'unity', many of these words are loaded with alternative meanings that outsiders unfamiliar with their other usages miss. Similarly, the idea of 'watchdog journalism' can be interpreted differently. Blen Fitsum summed up an observation from many informants when she commented, "here there is a misconception of what the media are. The opposition thinks it's always to be against the government. They don't think the media should be balanced or fair." This, however, is also what the government has argued at times. The comment is reflective of the struggle between using the media for pressing political aims and trying to understand its intended role in conflict/post-conflict situations as argued by western development organisations. However, perceptions of the roles of the media and journalists are complex and almost never straightforward during times of transition and upheaval.

3. Institutionalisation of the press

Institutionalisation has been a significant problem for the private and government press in Ethiopia. Shimelis Kamal, the Federal Prosecutor and a former journalist describe the challenge in these terms:

> There have been calls for institutional change. The media failed to organise itself as a vibrant industry. There is a need to develop a vibrant media industry on the ideas of the market and the market will take care of itself. First is to create a legal framework... many papers were owned by a sole proprietor who was the publisher and the editor. This has retarded the growth of professionalism. There is a need to encourage periodicals to organise themselves as a business.[280]

The press has struggled to develop into a profitable and independent industry for a number of reasons, some of which originate with the government, others from the industry itself and still others are inherent constraints from within the society. This section will discuss the process of institution building and then briefly focus on those constraints emerging from the industry and the government.

In Uganda the government press, *The New Vision*, had a strong role in institutionalising and professionalising the private press, particularly the *Monitor*. This has not been the case in Ethiopia. Since most consumers of the government press are interested in the information relating to government programmes such as tenders and taxes, the private press does not regard the government press as serious competition. In contrast, the government press, particularly *Addis Zemen*, does believe that they should be competing with the private press. This is unrealistic

allocated to advertising, copy-editing and distribution. There is, however, regular turnover of staff and in many cases journalists work at a paper only for several months. Structurally, many news organisations have paid little attention to developing business models, proper accounting practices and clear journalistic principles that define their product. Only one private paper, *Fortune*, has an editorial policy that the editor could produce.[283] Most papers, including the large *Reporter*, admitted that they have not written such a policy.[284] At the same time, all papers had a clear idea of what they stood for - whether it be human rights, democracy or challenging the current government but in many cases it is unclear whether the staff has an idea of the paper's policies beyond the present opinions of the editors.

It is difficult to generalise about the structure of the papers in the private sector. *Fortune* is the most organised and well structured. The paper still attracts some of the best journalists and those that have a background in politics or economics. Expectations of journalists and reporting ethics are clear at *Fortune*. There are policies for what journalists may take from NGOs or the hosts of meetings or tours (a pen, for example, is acceptable but a t-shirt is not).[285] Such standards are unusual for Ethiopian papers. In a country with few financial resources, balancing what is acceptable and what challenges the integrity of the paper is difficult. Tamrat complains that

> The NGOs are giving people large per diems. Taking money is not possible but not taking transportation isn't realistic... the international NGOs pose a big problem: they take you to Nazret and give you a huge per diem. The national secretariat of an NGO wanted to take journalists to Nazret and offered them 1000 birr. We didn't send anyone. But almost all other papers sent someone; it's money that comes from overseas to help journalists. It's outrageous.[286]

Few papers have as much oversight on their staff as *Fortune* does. The establishment and growth of *Fortune* has been relatively recent, but the paper is an important entry into the market more for the example of how it is managed than for its content.

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[283] Interview: Giorgis.
[284] Interview: Aregawi.
[285] For more on the complex relationship between NGOs and journalists in Ethiopia see: STYAN, D. (1999) Misrepresenting Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa? Constraints and Dilemmas of Current Reporting. IN ALLEN, T. & SEATON, J. (Eds.) *The Media of Conflict*. London, Zed. p. 292.
[286] Interview: Giorgis.

At other papers, including for example *The Reporter,* which I worked for in 2001-2002, there is often less editorial oversight and structure. The English version was different from the Amharic, which had a much larger circulation and was more influential in defining the parent company, Media and Communications Centre (MCC). While there is significant overlap between the two papers, including a direct translation of one of the Amharic editorials into English, the Amharic paper is more closely monitored by the owner and editor, Amare Aregawi. The English paper generally gave journalists significant space to pursue the topics they chose. While recognising that as a foreigner my articles might be regarded as less threatening, nevertheless I would, for example, show up at the office with my article and give it to the person who was doing the layout for the paper. It was almost never edited and simply inserted on a page. While Amare usually checked the final copy before it went to press, by that time it was very late to make changes or pull the story without leaving a hole. Thus, at least in some cases, there was insufficient editorial oversight.

Given this setup, it is not surprising that papers are often referred to as 'Amare's paper', or 'Nebiy's' paper'. The editorial line is seen as a direct reflection of the personal views of the owner/editor rather than the paper as a whole. For example, when there was widespread discussion in Addis about how *The Reporter* increasingly criticised the opposition after the elections, it was regularly framed in terms of the personal attitudes of Amare. Because of the informal way that the paper was organised and his holding positions of both editor-in-chief and owner, Amare was able, in fact, to alter immediately the paper's editorial line.[287] It is common in Ethiopia for the owner to also be the editor and for other staff to serve multiple roles. As Bonsa describes:

> More often than not, a person, usually male, would act as proprietor, publisher, editor-in-chief, senior reporter, advertisement and circulation manger. This situation of overlapping duties was also applicable to chief editors, deputy editors, managing editors and reporters.[288]

While *Tobiya, The Reporter,* and *Fortune,* among others, had (and have) the luxury of having offices in a house, equipment such as computers as well as trained and

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[287] A number of journalists at the paper were frustrated with the abrupt change and seven left shortly after to find employment elsewhere.
[288] BONSA, S. (2000) *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991-1999,* Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies. p. 28.

experienced journalists that were, and are, committed to the profession, many other papers were simply small groups of people getting together to write and try their hand at publishing a paper.

Bonsa refers to this group as comprising the second phase of the proliferation of papers. The first phase included papers like *Tobiya* that were largely run by experienced journalists from the previous regime. Many of these journalists, however, soon fled into exile abroad due to government harassment. In contrast, the second group of papers that rose to fill the gaps generally had staff that had no journalism training[289] and were often in university or had recently graduated from high-school and were doing the writing on the side. Often these papers were started by someone who would get a major lead and come out with a very sensational story for their first copy. It validated their existence and provided instant attention. For many of these papers, however, the source or informant quickly dried up after a few issues and the paper collapsed because it did not have anything substantial offer. These papers seldom had long-term plans. Other papers, whilst they may have had long-term plans, often lacked a coherent business or development strategy. For example, a journalist who was involved with *Ethiop* and asked to remain anonymous, explained that

> We didn't have money but we'd sell the papers and then we'd give the money back to the paper. It wasn't started as a business; it was the role of democracy. In 1992 EC it started being profitable... we had a little bit of advertisements but we didn't want anyone to invest. A businessman would have an agenda.[290]

As previously discussed, the journalists at *Ethiop* had a political agenda which often predominated the paper's development agenda. In addition, the institutionalisation of the press has been affected by a lack of investment as well as issues such as the role of women in the press, training opportunities and the development of institutional memory.

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[289] Ibid. p. 31.
[290] Interview: Anonymous.

3.1 Women, university and journalism training, and institutional memory

In contrast with many other countries in Africa, including Uganda, where women regularly hold prominent positions and often report on politics, Ethiopian women journalists remain marginalised. They are almost always relegated to writing about culture or social issues and many male colleagues find it shocking to find a woman writing on political issues. I can attest that even being a foreigner at *The Reporter* did not help to dispel discontent amongst some male colleagues that I would be writing the weekly feature article on political and economic issues. Marginalising such a large proportion of the population, leaves media organisations all the poorer and with fewer intellectual and strategic resources.

Another major issue hindering the institutionalisation of the press is that journalists, particularly those from the private press, are rarely given serious training in journalism or related subjects. Excellent journalists of course come from different backgrounds, and often the best backgrounds are those grounded in a particular discipline, such as science, which can inform reporting. But many journalists in Ethiopia have not completed university and it is common for a newspaper to not have one person on its staff that has studied journalism or media management.

The Ethiopian Mass Media Training Institute (EMMTI), which was established in 1996 under the Ministry of Information, has been the central institution for training journalists but has consistently restricted its students to those of the government media. Journalists who were interested in working for the private media and desired training would generally study subjects such as Amharic or English at university and then try to take a class that was related to journalism or media studies. In 2000, however, the Norwegian government gave a large grant to start an MA programme in Communications at Addis Ababa University. While almost all students worked for the government, the programme was not explicitly restrictive.

A final but major issue facing the press is the lack of an institutional memory within most news organisations. Journalists rarely stay on beyond a year at many papers and there are hundreds of journalists abroad in exile. Some of these journalists have legitimate reasons to go into exile as they had been persecuted and imprisoned by the government. In other cases, however, people work only briefly as journalists to establish a case for an asylum claim. The Ethiopian Free Press Journalists

Association (EFPJA) has written many letters of support, often for journalists that have suffered little persecution, and has even been accused of selling letters to support asylum claims.[291]

While journalists in Uganda or Kenya often live a relatively middle class life and enjoy more institutionalised media organisations, many Ethiopian journalists do not have a similar perception of job security. Family pressures are usually such that if offered the opportunity to go abroad journalists will be letting down the family if they return to Ethiopia. Most journalists I encountered who had had the opportunity to go abroad for training, had decided to stay and many others I interviewed said that if given the chance to travel, they would not return. It is also notable that from the East African Journalist Fellowship programme that informed this research, only one out of three Ethiopian participants returned while the journalists from the other six countries all went back to their jobs. The Ethiopian fellows were not writing articles particularly critical of the government as they worked for *The Reporter* and *Capital* and were recommended by the UK Embassy.

This continuous exodus of journalists weakens the papers and provides little momentum to go forward and build upon. Charles Onyango-Obbo was part of a Committee to Protect Journalist (CPJ) mission to Ethiopia in 2006 to assess the situation of the media and the status of the imprisoned journalists. Onyango-Obbo criticised the ways in which CPJ urged journalists who were not in prison but could face persecution to flee to Kenya. In Uganda, he argued, there was a culture of challenging laws and fighting for space for the press as absolute freedoms were not something that could simply be given to journalists. Styan similarly argues that "Foreign liberals protesting at the arrest of editors overlook the facts that nowhere were the trappings of liberal democracy gained without struggle. If they are to be durable, civil rights such as freedom of the press have to be fought for, not simply acquired as a ready-made accessory from a foreign donor's presciption list."[292] Thus, if most or all of the journalists are out of the country, it is difficult to engage and challenge legislation and media policies. As Onyango-Obbo elaborated:

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[291] Interview: Harmut Hess and Anonymous.

[292] STYAN, D. (1999) Misrepresenting Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa? Constraints and Dilemmas of Current Reporting. IN ALLEN, T. & SEATON, J. (Eds.) *The Media of Conflict.* London, Zed. p. 300.

> Ethiopia had one of the freest medias in the Horn of Africa...the challenge now is not with the free press because even a half-free press is a victory. Even a half-bad newspaper is better than a nonexistent one. Because you have to go through the period where journalists come up then they get cracked down. If you don't and they just leave, there is no institutional memory. You have nothing to build on. You have to start from scratch all the time.[293]

With most of the private papers shut down, and journalists out of the country, much of the recent progress the private press made has been lost.

As this section has argued, one of the major factors missing from the Ethiopian media landscape are strong papers that can serve as a model or an example, encouraging and pushing the other papers to compete with it professionally. The government media has not succeeded in setting an example (and has rather done the opposite) and in the current political environment, the institutional development of the private media looks tenuous in the immediate future.

4. Government intervention

Despite democratic rhetoric on the importance of freedom of association and the role civil society, the Ethiopian government's attitude towards all civil society bodies is that they need to be controlled.[294] This is reflective of the 'revolutionary democratic' process of transition that Prime Minister Meles has outlined and that will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Despite subscribing to constitutional protections of freedom of thought, opinion, expression and the press,[295] as well as the ratification of international declarations protecting such rights,[296] since the EPRDF came to power there has been a history of regularly arresting and persecuting journalists. Journalists are often

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[293] Interview: Charles Onyango-Obbo.

[294] ABBINK, J. (2006) Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and Its Aftermath. *African Affairs*, 105, 173- 199. And for a less critical analysis on civil society groups in Ethiopia see RAHMATO, D. (2002) Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia. IN ZEWDE, B. & PAUSWANG, S. (Eds.) *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*. Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

[295] Article 29 of the Federal Constitution guarantees these rights under Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression.

[296] In 1993 Ethiopia ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In 1998 Ethiopia ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which guarantees the right to freedom of expression in Article 9 and it also adopted the Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa in October 2002.

heavily fined and imprisoned for periods ranging from days to years. Many who work for the private papers have been in jail several times.[297] In recent years Ethiopia has earned the dubious distinction of being Africa's worst jailer of journalists after Eritrea.

The period after the elections was particularly difficult for press and government relations, as dozens of journalists were jailed at different times. The courts brought up old charges, some dating several years back, and also charged some journalists with having a role in the post-election violence. A number were directly linked with politicians and were charged with treason and attempted genocide under the penal code.[298] Shimelis, the Federal Prosecutor, explains the logic of the charges and the case against the journalists that were not charged under the press law:

> It can appear we are charging them for opinions they hold but the editorials aren't opinions but pure incitements. Most editorialised the CUD views and openly called for the violence or actions that the CUD leadership

government forms a new constitution they would allege a new uprising or popular insurrection. The demands were unconstitutional. They were not asking for a coalition government but for the suspension of the constitution and a transitional government. And they were demanding it under threat

themselves in this court. They expressed themselves with the CUD. If they are mere media owners, then why do they and the CUD side? It's a clear indication that they are working and conspiring together.[299]

Over the years, the private press has been very concerned with press freedom and a substantial amount of column space has been dedicated to debates about this issue since it began publishing. Much of this has been about the press law, which since 1992 Ethiopia's journalists have ostensibly been accountable to.

The government has long been discussing the need for media reform and legislation was at the core. In 2008 a new press law was passed by parliament. This law was drafted numerous times and since 2003, when it was first prepared, it has had significant input from international organizations. Organisations such as Article 19 and International Press Institute, issued critical comments arguing that the penalties were too strong and some clauses restricted freedom of expression.[300] In 2005 the government removed some of the most controversial aspects of the press law and put them in the penal code. The law is regularly referred to as 'draconian' and not surprisingly local journalists are highly critical. It often appears that it is those journalists in the 'grey zone' that are most enraged over this legislation since they are the ones likely to feel the greatest impact.

Amare Aregawi, who over the years has fought publicly with Bereket Simon, has been particularly active in engaging and challenging the government over the draft press law. But for journalists that are the most critical of the government, they will, in many respects, continue to be governed by an alternative legal system- one that operates more at the will and whim of the EPRDF and Prime Minister rather than an independent legal and judicial system. These journalists are acutely aware of this reality and they are often less outspoken on the press legislation than Amare but they

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[299] Interview: Kamal.

[300] The draft press law, and the current 1992 law, is often described as 'draconian' for requirements ranging from citizenship to requirements to submit a copy of the publication within 24 hours to the Ministry of Information. The MOI has been quite strict about papers publishing who the editor in chief is and the editor or the address of the paper cannot be changed without the approval of the MOI.
For an analysis of the press law, albeit slightly problematic one because it appears to be largely cut and pasted from a template see www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/ethiopia-note-may-2004-draft-press-law.pdf. See also, http://www.freemedia.at/cms/ipi/publications_detail.html?ctxid=CH0057&docid=CMS1141814166586

also refused to have legal counsel during their 2005 trial claiming that it was impossible for them to have a fair hearing.

4.1 A need for more legislation?

The government's strategy of focusing on addressing what it views to be problematic reporting primarily with legal tools and intimidation poses many challenges. Without engaging journalists, or attempting to shape the media in alternative ways, there is little change to the discourse it finds so threatening. The approach also exacerbates conflict between what the government views to be opposing perspectives. While the government does encourage self-censorship, it does little to cultivate appreciation of its own views and make journalists sympathetic.

At the same time, as has been the case with the recent press law, the debates on issues surrounding press legislation allow the government to distract attention from the real problems. The EPRDF has been notorious for commissioning reports and analyses from international governments and donor agencies, then stalling on the implementation of their findings and later re-commissioning similar reports just to look like they are open to change.

The situation is clear enough that even Kefyalew Azeze, a party member and head of the Ethiopian Press Agency, argued that it is not legislation that is needed but a change of commitment and culture:

> There is talk of a law on freedom of information but it is not the law that will guarantee you the access. It's not the existence of the law but it's a change of attitude needed within government offices to sell themselves. We are trying to write in papers that people in government offices aren't giving information. We have to use the newspaper, we believe the more you use the paper, people will respond if we say this man isn't giving information.[301]

Other members of the government, including the influential former Minister of Information, Bereket Simon, still choose to emphasise the role of legislation in shaping the media, while adding that the government was looking to "open access to government information, interviews, press conferences. We need to develop a platform where we engage so they won't complain for lack of information".[302] And in

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[301] Interview: Kefyalew Azeze.
[302] Interview: Simon.

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response to the widespread imprisonment and closure of newspapers after the election, Bereket argued that

> Journalists have been the instruments of this colour revolution. They've transgressed the law of the land. Let the judiciary respond, it's the only viable solution....We hired experts from other countries to decide what to do. They looked at the existing laws, there are plus sides, and limitations. They'll propose some areas; we'll discuss these issues with the opposition and other stakeholders.[303]

Bereket's view prevails and for the foreseeable future the focus will remain on legislation.

As long as the enabling environment, particularly the judiciary, for the press is not strengthened and the judicial system continues to operate the way it does with such little transparency, journalists will have scant confidence in the system. This is a marked difference with Uganda where journalists have the confidence to challenge the government in court. But in Ethiopia, where the most serious cases, or those that are strongest critics of the government (such as many of the journalists jailed in 2005) are penalized under legislation with the possibility of harsher punishment such as the penal code and the courts are transparently unfair, the press laws matter less. Thus, the debates on the press law in Ethiopia will continue to serve as an illusion to help divert international attention from the underlying issues that are more difficult to reconcile.

4.2 Difficulties in challenging the government and expanding the circle of operation

Journalists regularly expressed confusion and frustration with the seemingly unsystematic way the government chooses to press charges against particular articles. For the past fifteen years journalists have been brought before the courts but no judicial precedent has been set to empower journalists to make decisions. It simply appears that it is EPRDF leadership that says what is tolerable and by whom.

Joseph Aboulfaki, editor-in-chief of the *Sub-Saharan Informer (SSI)*, describes, for example, a situation that worried him because he was unsure as to whether the government would come after him:

> A reporter was going on Monday to the US and they put in a story that the government was running out of money to pay the police. I didn't read the

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[303] Interview: Simon.

story properly but he said his relatives were in the Ministry of Finance. Nothing happened but I was scared... maybe it was true but I thought the government was going to come but they kept quiet.[304]

Similarly, Joseph is impressed that he has not yet been targeted for being Sudanese. Under the Ethiopian press law foreigners are not allowed to be involved with media organisations. Bereket and Meles know Joseph is Sudanese but choose to allow him to continue. It is only the heads of some ministries that give him problems and say that foreigners support the SSI. Joseph contends that ministers call him in over things that appear minor. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, for example, accused him of misquoting the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Fraser, and once he used a photo of Ethiopians demonstrating in Washington DC which, according to the Minister, was inaccurate in making it look like there were hundreds of people there rather than a smaller crowd. In general, the justice system has not articulated where incitement begins or ends or even what it means. For journalists, it often appears as though there is not a legal starting point from which they can begin to challenge legislation as charges usually seem to be issued according to the whims of the court.

The government picks its battles and many times it is personal. If a minister feels particularly aggrieved or offended by a specific article, he or she may choose to attack the news outlet for this. This personalisation of government and media relations is particularly difficult as many of the ideological clashes and personal relationships go back to the student movement in the 1970s. Both sides have found it difficult to separate the past from current disagreements. For example, after the elections when a number of journalists were in prison and the government seemed to be hesitating about arresting more, a meeting was called for the independent press at the Ministry of Justice. In what seemed to be a pre-orchestrated background agreement, the Minister of Justice and Zerihun Teshome, editor-in-chief of *Iftin,* announced a plan whereby all old charges (many from a number of years ago) would be dropped but future mistakes by journalists would be punished strongly. Goshu Mogus, formerly head of the censorship bureau under the Derg, told the Minister of Justice sarcastically that he does not know how to run a censorship office; he could

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[304] Interview: Joseph Aboulfaki.

set one up for him. Shimelis, the Chief Prosecutor, replied by saying that they had given him the freedom for him to say that. Soon after the meeting Goshu was arrested by the police. There are two stories about how events unfolded.[305] According to Shimelis, he was charged with clandestine criminal activity and was found with explosives and firearms under his bed.[306] Derbew Temesgen, a lawyer that has regularly defended journalists particularly from *Lisane Hezeb* for which he was working, was providing legal defence for Goshu. His version is significantly different:

> Armed police came at 6pm and took him [Goshu] away. They returned to his home, closed his family in another room and put a knife, grenade and pistol in his bedroom. They acted if they were searching the house but they are doing this to all opposition members.[307]

Derbew believes that even if journalists or the opposition are being framed, it is still important that they should be defended in court, at least to make a record. But most

of the journalists and CUD leaders in the 2005 that declined to be represented in court arguing that it was impossible for them to get a fair trial and therefore any representation would further legitimize a fundamentally flawed system. Derbew argues that he "was ready to defend them" and "even if they are framed they should have a defence and make a record".[308] In this context, where one "side" is so distrusting of the other and believes the judiciary to be so fundamentally flawed, the court does little in building up a sound environment in which the media can operate.

Given the vagaries of Ethiopian justice, many journalists find it easier to self-censor, including foreign journalists. In January 2006 Anthony Mitchell,[309] an AP reporter who had been working in Ethiopia for several years, was deported. According to the Ethiopian News Agency, Anthony's reporting was "tarnishing the image of the country" and was "repeatedly contravening journalism ethics", and "disseminating information far from the truth about Ethiopia," among other charges.

[305] For the public version see: www.ethiopianreporter.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=1446. Last accessed 15 December 2007.
[306] Interview: Kamal.
[307] Interview: Temesgen.
[308] Interview: Derbew Temesgen.
[309] Tragically, on May 5, 2007 Anthony died on the Kenya Airways Flight KQ507 that crashed in southern Cameroon. He was returning to Nairobi where he had relocated with his family to continue covering Ethiopia from afar and also report on other regional issues.

Anthony's experience reporting in Ethiopia is similar to that of many other foreign journalists and researchers, a number who have also been asked to leave or been denied entry.[310] Anthony describes the pressure to self-censor:

> They [the government] would call us up and threaten us journalists. They would say that they are watching me. In November they called me in and said it was a final warning, they called me a human rights activist... They try to scare you so you don't write the stories. Tsegaye, the Reuters Ethiopian guy, wouldn't report some stories. In January I saw someone being shot. If there's a sensitive story, you call everyone and I called Tsegaye and he said don't run it: the government said that guy was shot in the countryside. Tsegaye's close with Bereket... When we went to cover Hailu Shawel's house arrest, the AP photographer got beat up and Bereket told me we would be wise to stay away from these things.[311]

For Anthony, and most of the other journalists, the most frustrating thing is "that you can't prove anything. If you can't confirm you can't write. Maybe we have good sources but the government says it's total rubbish, so how do we confirm anything?" Clearly the complicated relations between the journalists and the government are not simply limited to local journalists but also indicative of broader systemic problems affecting foreign journalists as well.

5. Conclusion

Before turning to issues of the political system, I wish to briefly summarise a few features of the press system that will stand in contrast to the case of Uganda. The Ethiopian press itself is divided, weak and conflicted over its purpose. The tendency among Ethiopian publications has been to focus on the government as the enemy and to blame it for the dismal quality of the private papers. While the government has undoubtedly done tremendous damage to the press, and essentially silenced all voices after 2005, at the same time there has been a surprising inability on the part of many private journalists (mostly the anti-state ones) to objectively evaluate their products and self-reflect. Most journalists adopted the discourse of international human rights NGOs that claim journalists are heroes battling a horrible government. While to some

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[310] Chris Albin-Lackey, for example, researched atrocities in Gambella and was later refused entry into Ethiopia.
[311] Interview: Anthony Mitchell.

degree that is true, Charles Onyango-Obbo made an interesting comment from the Uganda perspective when he noted:

> He [Museveni] sees our [*Monitor's*] attitude as hostility. He realises that he cannot escape from it so he says to us that it is important to understand the nature of the state and the recourses that the state has. The state basically has the laws and the power of coercion. So therefore it is natural that the state would resort to the laws. You might think it is undemocratic repression but that is the law and he says that the state will use those laws to dominate and shape the public space and dialogue.... By the same token, the journalists must also fight their corner. You must protect your side of this bargain. Therefore you shouldn't expect the state to make your job easier...the state's job is not to make it easier for people that are contesting its power to function: no, it's your job if you are journalist or a civil society activist. Don't expect that your opponent will help you win the game.[312]

So far, Ethiopian journalists have largely cast themselves as 'victims'. The press system as a whole remains weak, without unity or institutional foundations and lacks leadership.

Of course challenging the system and working to 'expand the circle' takes a certain confidence in institutions. In Uganda, Onyango-Obbo and his colleagues could feel confident that they would get a relatively free trial from a reliably independent judiciary, which has not been the case in Ethiopia. As the coming chapter will discuss, government engagement and ideologies of nation-building are also key factors in the development of the press system.

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[312] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

CHAPTER 5:

The Political and Social Structure that has shaped

Ethiopia's Media System:

Guerrilla War, Political Experience and Practical Calculations

Is it not simply Amhara and to a certain extent Amhara-Tigre supremacy?
Ask anybody what Ethiopian culture is? Ask anybody what Ethiopian language is?
Ask anybody what Ethiopian music is? Ask anybody what Ethiopian religion is?
Ask anybody what the national dress is? It is either Amhara or Amhara-Tigre!!
To be a "genuine Ethiopian" one has to speak Amharic, listen to Amharic music,
to accept the Amhara-Tigre religion, Orthodox Christianity, and to wear the
Amhara-Tigre Shamma in international conferences.
In some cases to be an "Ethiopian" you will even have to change your name.
In short to be an Ethiopian, you will have to wear an Amhara mask (to use Fanon's expression).[313]
--Walleligne Makonnen
Struggle, 1969

The above quotation is from a provocative article entitled "On the Question of Nationalities" from *Struggle*, the student publication at Haile Selassie University, in which Walleligne Makonnen called for a revolutionary war against the Imperial state. Expressing a key argument of the Eritrean independence movement, Walleligne argued that every ethnic group should have the right to self-determination and succession from Ethiopia. Indicative of the historical complexities between the press, student movement and politics, this article is regarded as a turning point in the student movement. The government responded by censoring all student publications.

The process of nation-building in Ethiopia has had a strong impact on the press, but at the same time the press has taken very active part in this process. Literature on the Ethiopian state abounds,[314] but the complexities of relations between

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[313] As quoted in GUDINA, M. (2006) Contradictory Interpretations of Ethiopian History: the Need for a New Consensus. IN TURTON, D. (Ed.) *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective.* Oxford, James Currey. p. 123.

[314] OTTAWAY, M. (1990) *The Political Economy of Ethiopia,* New York, Praeger Publishers, CLAPHAM, C. (2006) Ethiopian Development: The Politics of Emulation. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 44, 137- 150, CLAPHAM, C. (1988) *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, SORENSON, J. (1993) *Imagining Ethiopia,* New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, PAUSWANG, S., TRONVOLL, K. & AALEN, L. (Eds.) (2002) *Ethiopia Since the Derg,* London, Zed, LEVINE, D. (1974) *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, ZEWDE, B. & PAUSWANG, S. (Eds.) (2002) *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below,* Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, TURTON, D. (Ed.) (2006) *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective,* Oxford, James Currey , GUDINA, M. (2005) Ethiopia: A Transition Without Democratization. Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, ABBAY, A. (2004) Diversity and Statebuilding in Ethiopia. *African Affairs,* 103, 593- 614. ZEWDE, B. (1991) *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855- 1974,* Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press.

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the press and political development gets very little attention. Historical research has focused on Ethiopia as an empire, as a coloniser and more recently as the only state on the continent to give birth to a new federal arrangement. Ethnic politics in Ethiopia has also been of interest to scholars; some regions and groups, such as the Amhara, have been extensively studied and researched while others, such as the Somali-Ethiopians in the Ogaden, have been largely ignored.[315]

In order to understand the current press system it is important to examine the process of transition from the Derg to the EPRDF and the guerilla war that endured for over two decades. This chapter looks at the political and social structure that has shaped Ethiopia's media system including issues such as ethnic dimensions, the political strategy of the TPLF, and the ways in which the EPRDF sought to rebuild the state and consolidate political power.

The first part of the chapter analyses the TPLF's ideology, its struggle to establish a dominant position in Ethiopia politics and the application of lessons learned whilst fighting in the bush. While during the struggle the TPLF exhibited some democratic practices, it believed there was a greater need to demonstrate progress and policies rather than explain them. This attitude has continued to some

party.[317] Since these beliefs and attitudes are rooted in the past, and the EPRDF shows no inclination to move beyond them, continuing tension between journalists who oppose the regime and the government appears inevitable.

The second section of this chapter considers the consolidation of power, specifically the federalist constitution that allows for the secession of states. This has been a controversial and recurring theme in the private press and is one that polarises Ethiopians. There is a tendency for outsiders to take the government's democratic rhetoric at face value rather than explore some of the Prime Minister's writings where he has elaborated his theory of Revolutionary Democracy. As will be elaborated, this ideology does not necessarily have the same principles regarding freedom of expression that are often assumed in democratic states. It will be argued that from the government's perspective, a free press is a privilege and a tool to be exploited when beneficial for consolidating power.

The third section discusses reconciliation and trust in Ethiopian society. The EPRDF has done little to improve trust between the people, the government and the press, a failure that has had important consequences on the latter. Also examined is how the government handled the transition of the media (particularly the Ministry of Information) from the Derg to the EPRDF. It will be argued that by failing to incorporate Derg supporters into the new government, the EPRDF isolated them and created a stronger opposition that came to dominate the private press. The EPRDF did not see reconciliation as either necessary or a priority. Many of the issues that have divided elites since the days of the student movement have continued and have regularly surfaced in the private press. By essentially ignoring these issues, the government hoped that they would go away, but they have gained currency in recent years.

Finally, Ethiopian politics is located in a global framework. Ethiopians have a fierce sense of independence and are unwilling to be pushed around by more powerful countries. Partly because of Ethiopia's international standing as a close US ally and a frontline state on the war on terror, the EPRDF has been able to withstand substantial internal discontent and perpetrate extensive human rights abuses that would have

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[317] CLAPHAM, C. (2006) Ethiopian Development: The Politics of Emulation. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 44, 137- 150.

otherwise brought about exceptional condemnation and pressure. Thus, as long as Ethiopia continues advancing US policy in the region including, for example, maintaining troops in Somalia to prop up the Transitional Federal Government and fight the Islamic Courts Union, real external pressures for democratic change seem unlikely.

Competing historical narratives

Before moving to the areas of analysis, it is useful to have a brief illustration of the competing ideas and visions of Ethiopia, which are held by some Ethiopians[318] and reflected in the press. One of the most interesting ways of understanding competing visions and the ideological underpinnings since the EPRDF came to power is though the recitation of Ethiopia's recent history by different stakeholders. During the course of this research, which included recording people's oral histories and extensive semi-structured interviews, the historical context was crucial in understanding competing visions of contemporary events. Bereket Simon, for example, provided a version of Ethiopian history and the changes the EPRDF has implemented through the following excerpts:

> Ethiopia passed through two types of autocratic governments in which the political economy was based on using state power to grab land from the farmers. Political power was a source of wealth.... Both regimes were based on the domination of many nationalities and they both evicted farmers and then turned them into tenants. Seventy-five percent of the population was affected by a national oppression, which led to seventeen armed rebel movements. There was a national movement. Either you address it boldly democratically or it disintegrates.
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> After the EPRDF overthrew the military [government], Ethiopian and the world mentality both thought that we had to move in a particular direction and that the democratic avenue should be opened as well as pursued.
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> We had a fundamental restructuring of society. We dismantled a command economy. Espionage institutions and the private sector became the engine of growth. We introduced national equality, which is the only savior of this country. We reorganised the society along new lines and confronted the national issue in a bold, progressive manner....
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> This radical restructuring has been a cause for some people to feel aggrieved. They felt that we've come to dismember Ethiopia.... They felt it a

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[318] GUDINA, M. (2006) Contradictory Interpretations of Ethiopian History: the Need for a New Consensus. IN TURTON, D. (Ed.) *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective.* Oxford, James Currey.

threat to the old Ethiopia. The old guards from the old status quo... they used it to amass wealth but the old days are gone forever.[319]

For Bereket, the EPRDF initiatives were drastic and unusual as they introduced "new thinking" and had to "restructure the state and society radically" which, in his opinion, is "different from Uganda where Museveni has not fundamentally restructured it".[320]

In contrast, for Berhanu Abebe, an intellectual who used to be in charge of the railways for Haile Selassie's regime, the current EPRDF has misunderstood history and presented a negative vision for the country. Berhanu argued:

> They [the TPLF] are ignorant of history, their vision of the outside world is negative and limited. The elimination of Mengistu was a negative exercise. Once in power they have continued this negation. It's a negation of history and the past. They don't have a clear concept of continuity; their mind still works in terms of revolution. Philosophically, this is horrible. In South America, Marxism is just rhetoric, here it is a lack of another intellectual resource.[321]

For Berhanu, the EPRDF misunderstands ordinary Ethiopians and what they fought for during the Derg period. He argued it has been too easy for the government to dismiss the 'old guard' as supporters as the Derg, and cast themselves as the liberators. Rather, Berhanu argues, the Derg was essentially being destroyed for the superpowers in an effort to defeat the USSR and the TPLF was just one of a number of insurgency groups that were involved in the struggle to overthrow it. The TPLF has failed to

> analyse the position of Ethiopians during the Derg. The TPLF intervened when the Derg had lost the battle with the people. Ethiopia has never been communist... Those that collaborated with Mengistu have cards - there were about 250,000 people but the TPLF considered all of Ethiopia pro-Mengistu.[322]

Berhanu suggests that some in the west have also been insensitive and ignorant of this period, giving the example

> In Hard Talk, when the British journalist asked Hailu [Shawel] what he was doing for the Derg. There is this thinking that if you supported the Derg, then you are opposed to the current government.... But the BBC and the British have lost respect of [many Ethiopians] for that comment. [It was an insult to]

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[319] Interview: Bereket Simon.
[320] Interview: Simon.
[321] Interview: Berhanu Abebe.
[322] Interview: Abebe.

all Ethiopians who fought Mengistu silently - that lost their children, their careers. A Briton comes and during one of the major programmes dismisses Ethiopians who fought Mengistu. People suffered for Ethiopia's survival during Mengistu.[323]

Additionally, he notes that for the US and EU supporting "a military group that fought against Ethiopian integrity isn't the best way to make friends". For Berhanu, the impact of the EPRDF is clear, "we have been sold off ... the damage they caused is worse than Mengistu. They have deprived a country its access to the sea." He concludes that the current government is not in a position to criticise 'the old guard' because "he who fought Ethiopian integrity cannot advocate and accuse".[324]

History is extremely important in Ethiopian politics and the press. These passionate views, which are elaborated in this chapter, partly explain why the Ethiopian state, and the current government, is in such a fragile position and political positions are entrenched and not easily reconciled.

1. Ideology of the liberation movement

Guerrilla movements have arisen in many different environments and contexts, from Southern Sudan, a region that was long regarded as 'stateless', to Ethiopia, which has the oldest and most centralised government on the continent. The TPLF was one of the longest fighting guerrilla movements and is rooted in the historical formation of the state. Its background is important in understanding the current fundamental disagreements about the Ethiopian constitution as well ethnic divisions within society and the sense of entitlement that the EPRDF projects. These issues manifest themselves not only in the debates within the press but also in the way in which the government interacts with the press.

In 1974 the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, who claimed Solomonic lineage and a direct ordination from God, was overthrown by the military Derg[325] regime after years of student opposition. During this period of upheaval, there was a substantial proliferation of regionally based liberation movements that were at odds

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[323] Interview: Abebe.

[324] Interview: Abebe.

[325] Derg is Amharic for 'committee' and refers to the group within the military that seized power.

with the Derg's efforts to nationalise land and ensure the state retained its predominantly Amhara character.

The TPLF was one of these movements.[326] It was ethnically, historically and geographically rooted in the northern region of Tigray. The Ethiopian state traces its origins back to the Kingdom of Axum that flourished in Tigray in the third century A.D. and has been regarded as one of the world's earliest advanced and dynamic civilisations with its own script, number system, and calendar. The empire adopted Orthodox Christianity in 340 AD, and the current city of Axum claims to be the birthplace of the Queen of Sheba as well as hold the Ark of the Covenant.[327] By the seventh century, the Axum state was losing its central control and consequently allowed the emergence over the following centuries of local kingdoms that vied, often violently, for supremacy. It was not until the mid-1800s that Kassa Hailu, later crowned Emperor Tewodros, from Gondar, established some semblance of a unified Ethiopian state. Kahsay Mircha from Tigray, crowned Emperor Yohannes, succeeded Tewodros in 1872. Both of these leaders based their state on the legacy of Axum yet were unable to bring peace or stability. Local wars raged and international interventions were a regular occurrence and because of its strategic location in the North, Tigray bore the brunt of these conflicts and at the same time was also affected by a number of devastating famines.

Both Menelik II and Haile Selassie, the leaders who succeeded Tewodros and Yohannes, cared little about the people in the Tigray region and their suffering, which encouraged the rebellion that served as a precursor to the later insurgency led by the TPLF. In 1942-43 the Tigrayans revolted.[328] The revolt registered some success in the beginning and became known as the Woyene, but the subsequent intervention of the British army, particularly the aerial bombardment of Mekelle on behalf of Haile Selassie, proved too great a challenge and the revolt soon broke down. Thousands of

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[326] FUKUI, K. & MARKAKIS, J. (1994) *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa,* Oxford, James Currey, YOUNG, J. (1997) *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

[327] Orthodox Christianity has changed little in Ethiopia over the years and some academics have argued that this has had a profound impact on political development. The church in Ethiopia, for example, still does not accept the Hippocratic oath but rather believes that Christ was of both man and god.

[328] It was largely a peasant movement demanding an end to state interference and seeking relief from what they saw as unfair treatment from the central government while dissident nobles who supported it were looking instead for a greater share of state power. It was a significant threat to state stability and Haile Selassie's rule when he returned from exile.

civilians died and the Tigrayans were punished for their disloyalty; land was confiscated and passed to those loyal to the central government and the government imposed a new heavy tax.

The situation in Tigray continued to decline. Tigrayans dispersed across the country in search of better conditions. At the same time resentment towards perceived systematic ethnic discrimination grew and the legacy of the Woyene became a rallying point for ethno-nationalism. Small rebellions continued by armed groups opposing the national government, including in Eritrea, until the famine in 1972-74 that severely affected half of Tigray's population. Haile Selassie's Showan-Amhara dominated- government ignored the devastation not only in Tigray but also across much of the country.[329] When the Derg came to power it continued the policies of the previous regime regarding assertive ethnic-nationalities.

During the student movement[330] at Addis Ababa University (AAU), a small group, the Tigray National Organisation (TNO), emerged within the Tigrayan University Students Assocaition (TUSA). In a small café in Piazza, the central commercial district in Addis, the group produced a declaration that included the following statements:

> The strategy of the movement is the formation of a democratic Ethiopia in which the equality of all nationalities is respected; a national armed struggle should be waged that would advance from the rural areas of Tigray to the urban areas; and the movement should be led by an urban-based organisation known as the Tigrayan National Organisation until such time as the armed struggle could begin.[331]

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[329] It is this same feeling of neglect and mistreatment by the central government that is presently fueling a number of ethnically-based insurgency movements across the country from Oromia, to Gambela, to the Ogaden. The situation of ethnic disenfranchisement has yet to be solved.

[330] As will be explained later in the chapter, it is some the same people arguing about similar issues that were on the table forty or so years ago. Passions run deep. There were divisions among the students particularly among those that were favoring a revolution based on class struggle. There was, for example, a split between those that supported the policies of state ownership of land as later adopted by the Derg- this group became know as the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (Meison)- and the group Democracia, which later became the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) that supported individual land ownership. Meison proved instrumental in providing political ideology and direction, as well as filling a number of key government posts, for the Derg after they came to power. Excluded from the Derg, the EPRP continued to push for its vision of revolution until 1978 when it was targeted and severely weakened by the notorious Red Terror. Since the EPRDF assumed power, these groups have formed various political alliances- notably in 1991, they established a major opposition party- the Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF).

[331] BERHE, A. (2004) The Origins of the Tigray People's Liberation Front. *African Affairs*, 103, 569-592. p. 579.

The TNO was charged with developing a strategy and preparing the Tigrayans for the insurgency. This included cultivating leadership among high school students, teachers and other leaders within the community so all would be well versed on the ideological underpinnings of the armed struggle including knowlege about other guerilla movements such as those in Algeria, Eritrea, Cuba and China. As these efforts were complimented by increasing dissent among the peasantry that was fed up with the discriminatory and prosecutorial approach of the central government.

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)[332] proved critical in the formation of the TPLF in two respects: firstly, they shared important logistical and local experience since many of the students had not been in Tigray for a long time; and secondly, they trained the students in guerrilla warfare. The EPLF also encouraged the widespread recruiting of peasants which gave the newly formed TPLF army greater strength.[333] Legese Zenawi, who was given the field name Meles, was among the first group of recruits, several of whom now have prominent positions in the government.

Thus, even before the struggle led by the TPLF, Tigrayans not only had a long history of grievances with the central government and Amhara domination but also a strong sense of pride and entitlement partially stemming from the history of Axum as heart of Ethiopian civilisation. Such perspectives shaped a sense of entitlement to rule, hostility towards those that disagree and commitment to a ruling Tigrayan clique, that has affected political calculations as how to deal with dissent and the press.

1.1 The TPLF in the Bush

The TPLF began operations February 18, 1975 in Dedebit, western Tigray. The hierarchy among the leadership of the TPLF was established on academic standing at university. There have only been three leaders: two, including Meles and

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[332] During the preparatory work for initiating the armed struggle, the TNO also sought out links with the Eritrean fighters of which there were two main groups, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). At the time there was already an existing liberation front operating in Tigray, the Tigrayan Liberation Front (TLF) that was fighting for the independence of Tigray and shared some of the more nationalist objectives of the ELF. A relationship was eventually forged with the EPLF.
[333] Ibid.

Sebhat Nega were sons of lower nobles whilst Aregowi Berhe was the son of an influential judge.[334] The TPLF did not replicate the existing hierarchical structures prevalent in highland (Amhara/Tigray) culture and early on there was a conscientious effort against creating personality cults or an over-dependency on a particular leader. In an effort to combat this tendency, which is prevalent in many guerrilla struggles, there was a regular peaceful transfer of power between Sebhat and Aregowi.[335]

The TPLF gained momentum throughout the countryside for its effectiveness in articulating widespread grievances.[336] By continuing to persecute the peasantry through forced removals to Southern Ethiopia, closing schools under the pretense of accusing the teachers of being TPLF supporters and indiscriminant killings, the Derg increasingly became the major recruiting force for the TPLF. In addition, with its atheist leanings the Derg also sought to undermine the church, a move that did not sit well with the devoutly Christian population. In contrast, the TPLF managed to successfully incorporate priests into the TPLF framework and filled the gap in education by establishing schools in rural areas that would not only educate the peasants but also allow a forum for teaching the TPLF's political ideology.[337]

The TPLF also sought to differentiate its governance from that of the autocratic imperial and subsequent Derg regimes by facilitating a certain degree of self-governance for peasants through the organisation of mass associations. These were primarily based on interest groups and while their central task was to raise consciousness about the struggle rather than to implement policies, they were a

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[334] YOUNG, J. (1988) The Tigray People's Liberation Front. IN CLAPHAM, C. (Ed.) *African Guerrillas*. Oxford, James Currey. p. 38.

[335] However, as Meles has led the EPRDF for decades now, this concern has become a reality as Meles has created an internal personality cult and those within the party that challenge his leadership are expelled. Publicly, however, rarely does Meles 'sell' himself as a leader, or even speak directly to the people or the press.

[336] The Derg initially largely underestimated the effectiveness of the TPLF and saw the other insurgency movements including the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), that was receiving support of the CIA as well as the Sudanese and Saudi governments, to be the real threat. In contrast with the TPLF, the EDU articulated similar grievances but was more conservative and had a feudal orientation. The TPLF fought the EDU in the west in the late 1970s and suffered serious defeats which forcing the TPLF to develop both militarily and politically though analysis of their weaknesses, failings and the systematic study of military strategy. The TPLF then had to fight the EPRP in the east. With funds from students in the diaspora, the EPRP was wealthier than the TPLF but was not successful ingratiating themselves with the peasantry partly because of their conduct but also because of their position supporting a multi-ethnic Ethiopia rather than the more national approach that the TPLF articulated. YOUNG, J. (1988) The Tigray People's Liberation Front. IN CLAPHAM, C. (Ed.) *African Guerrillas*. Oxford, James Currey. pp. 39-40.

[337] Ibid.

successful contribution to rural governance. Relatively autonomous from the TPLF, Baitos, or councils comprising approximately eleven villages, were established after provisional administrative councils had gained enough experience which was usually after a couple of years of guidance by the TPLF. An evaluation system, called *gim gima* and inspired by Marxism-Leninism, was similarly established as a tool to assess the effectiveness of the TPLF in relation to its commitments to the community, thus fostering greater accountability between the TPLF and the peasants.[338]

As part of the strategy for ensuring peasant support and loyalty, as well as in response to the Derg's attempts to persecute Tigrayans by restricting humanitarian and economic assistance, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) was established by the TPLF in 1978. The deliverance of clear, tangible and concrete benefits and reforms were an essential part of convincing the peasantry that they had more to gain by joining the struggle than not. The establishment of REST also facilitated international relationships and funds for the TPLF as many government and international aid organisations were willing to engage with a local development organisation but not an armed front. REST was highly effective in producing tangible development and winning hearts and minds.[339]

This strategy can continue to be seen today. In the recent elections, for example, the EPRDF invested relatively little effort in persuading people to vote for the party as it was assumed that because of its success in achieving high rates of economic growth, it would win support. This attitude is similarly evident in the government's approach to the private and government press as the EPRDF continues to prioritise demonstrating its relevance rather than defending or explaining it.

1.2 Social Ideology

From strategic initiatives such as REST or the *gim gima* evaluation system, the focus of the TPLF was on the peasantry. During the struggle the fighters were careful not only to lead an existence similar to that of the people they were fighting

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[338] Ibid. p. 43.
[339] YOUNG, J. (1997) *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. pp. 121 and 131-134.

for but also to treat civilians with the utmost respect. This influence continues today and affects the press.

During the war, the TPLF was egalitarian and material possessions were shared. There was no personal property and as a demonstration of their work and political ethos, the TPLF cadres would live with peasants and share in their hardship. Compared with other liberation movements, the TPLF cadres had a relatively impoverished existence and they demonstrated a high level of personal behaviour and commitment. As Amare Aregawi recalls:

> One of the habits of the struggle was that nobody says 'me'.... One guy writes so many things and nobody knows where he's writing from. We don't talk about our individuals.... There was a group thinking. In a way it was good and in a way bad... you don't know anything about private property...there is a jacket here, when you are cold you wear it. And when someone brings something we don't ask where it came from. There is no house, nobody's been using a house, there is no money, nobody says, this is my money or that's my money. Nobody says this is my food, not your food, and nobody says this is my writing not your writing. Nobody thinks in terms of 'me'....
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> There is a concept called the cause that is voluntary. People are going there from their house for the cause.... But this is why everybody is leaving his village, his children, his office and his house - for our common cause. You didn't go there because you were hungry because you were leaving food in your house and going to where you don't find food. You are leaving the house and you are going out into the cold. You have sacrificed that much and you would care about it.... Already you're committed. You know that you are going to be killed, you know you are going to be wounded, you know they are going to be bombed, you know you are going where a snake might bite you and you die of mosquito malaria, you know that.
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> When you are in the bush if there is a dangerous mission − [for example] we have to transport, this generator or this radio station from this place to that place - everybody volunteered to carry it. And [the land is] very mined in this area, and unless we could cross that mine [we cannot get there] so they calculated the area, the mined area, and they decided if we cross here or clear it, it could explode, but I'm volunteering to die now.... It's very common. People fighting, 'no, me, me, me', to die. You just cannot believe.[340]

This feeling of unity extended from the bush to when the TPLF first came to power. The central idea was that everyone had to take whatever post was assigned to him and try to make it work. At one point, Amare pointedly said that you

> can't underestimate the one-eyed person leading in the land of the blind....
> When I became the television head, I didn't feel I am a television head because I am good enough to be a television head. It's just an assignment.

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[340] Interview: Amare Aregawi.

> I'm not good at being a television head as I've never been working in a
> television. I know radio; I know newspapers, magazines, videos. I know
> television itself but I had never even seen a television station... so I could not
> say, I am a television person because tomorrow I could be assigned as head
> of a hospital.[341]

This social philosophy has been less sustainable in the political world of Addis Ababa.[342] There is, however, a continued recognition of sacrifice among the former fighters. The current government appears to feel entitled to its leadership positions and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has even made off-the-cuff remarks to those challenging him that they ought to go to the bush for two decades to overthrow this government. After believing that its members have given decades of sacrifice, the EPRDF sees little need either to negotiate with the press or tolerate the intelligentsia that criticise it.

During the struggle the TPLF worked hard to publicise its cause particularly to outsiders by inviting foreign journalists to spend time in the bush, a tactic similar to that used by the NRM during the war in Uganda. Yimane 'Jamaica' Kidane who was in charge of Foreign Affairs for the TPLF coordinated these visits, which were often highly effective in gaining international support and publicity particularly in presenting the struggle as unique and laudable especially in its ideology and treatment of the peasants and ordinary civilians.

Alfred Taban from the *Khartoum Monitor*, a Southern Sudanese paper, was one of these journalists who had the opportunity to be invited to Tigray by the TPLF to witness the struggle[343]. He describes an experience when

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[341] Interview: Aregawi.

[342] This is corroborated with the accounts of John Young, among others. See: YOUNG, J. (1997) *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, HAMMOND, J. (1999) *Fire From the Ashes: A Chronicle of the Revolution in Tigray, Ethiopia, 1975-1991*, Lawrenceville, The Red Sea Press, Inc.
In describing the problems of shifting this philosophy to the realities of Addis Ababa, Amare noted that this caused some difficulty because

> now we cannot share one jacket, now there is something called a house, my house,
> my jacket, my property, my car. [Now there can be] corruption, mismanagement,
> greed, That's why... the people you know, you see them now and you [see] that they
> are different. Conditions have changed, the issue of mine has come, private property
> ownership has come and the character has changed. (Interview: Amare Aregawi)

[343] This visit was of strategic interest for the TPLF since the SPLA in Southern Sudan that was an ally and provided access through Sudan to all fighters and visitors that were entering Tigray. Jenny Hammond was another journalist that was also invited to the TPLF controlled region. She went on to write an extensive book chronicling her experience and that of the revolution, see HAMMOND, J.

> Because of the bombings we were traveling at night.... We found a small town at 2 pm where they said we should sleep. It was very cold, they threw us some blankets, [I said] are you going to sleep here in this cold? [They said] yes it is very late so we cannot wake up these people at this time of the night. I was shocked because my only knowledge of guerrillas was not like that. They were people that would throw away any people at any minute [at] will. Take the SPLA; they wanted the best things for themselves at the expense of the citizens.[344]

As Taban illustrates, the TPLF went to great lengths to respect the peasantry and live with them as one.

Even today the government continues to regard the peasantry as its core constituency.[345] In the aftermath of the contested elections in 2005 rather than turning to those that were supporting the opposition in the cities, the government launched a large-scale campaign for the support of peasants in the countryside. Bereket Simon explained, that the push was to enroll farmers in the party. Before the elections only 600,000 were members, now there are more than two million and the EPRDF is expecting another two million to join the party which will bring their total up to four million.[346]

The EPRDF's emphasis on the peasantry is also evident in their reluctance to allow private radio stations and television stations that would reach the masses. Their willingness to tolerate the private press with dissent and debate among intellectuals

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(1999) *Fire From the Ashes: A Chronicle of the Revolution in Tigray, Ethiopia, 1975-1991,* Lawrenceville, The Red Sea Press, Inc.

[344] Interview: Alfred Taban.

[345] Meles has elaborated this in a draft of his book *African Development: Dead Ends and New Beginnings* arguing that:

> A coalition that covers much of the rural and urban population but is firmly based on the rural base, that includes all those that have very little to gain from patronage and rent-seeking, a coalition that includes the vast majority of the population and hence can guarantee continuity through the democratic process would be a solid base for a state that is both democratic and developmental. Such a state would in effect be one form of the so-called dominant party or dominant coalition democracy.... Technically policy stability and continuity could be achieved even when parties regularly replace each other in governing the country. But this can be so only where such a solid consensus among politicians and the population on fundamental policy has been achieved and where politics is confined to dealing with trivialities and personalities. Such a situation is very unlikely to emerge in a developing country. In addition politics based on personalities can easily degenerate to patronage politics. (p. 14) www0.gsb.columbia.edu/ipd/pub/Meles-Extracts2-AfTF2.pdf

Indeed patronage and rent-seeking has not been as great of an issue in Ethiopia as in other countries, including Uganda. Most agree that the government is relatively uncorrupt when it comes to siphoning funds for their own self-enrichment- if it is done it is for the party as a whole.

[346] Interview: Bereket Simon.

and those in Addis Ababa stemmed from a belief that these were not their constituents in any case, so there was little need to bother repressing them or engaging.

1.3 Political ideology

Political ideology within the TPLF, particularly during the struggle, has always been heavily debated and taken seriously. The TPLF was solidly Marxist in the bush and this continues to influence political ideology. The EPRDF is not like the NRM, or Museveni who, along with many other African leaders of his time, quickly abandoned socialism when it was no longer fashionable.

On a number of occasions during the struggle the TPLF leadership expressed admiration and support for Enver Hoxha of Albania. As Patrick Gilkes argued,

> Albania was attractive for the TPLF because they stood up and said 'we'll do it our way'. I don't think they [the TPLF] cared about how cruel it was. In the Marxist/Leninist framework human rights are different - the right to food, shelter, work, etc. Everything else is subordinate.[347]

Given the TPLF's frustration with the Soviet-backed Derg, it concurred with the Albanian arguments that the Soviet Union was "social imperialist" and an enemy of the oppressed. As late as early 1990, Meles is reported to have expressed admiration for Hoxha although by the time of the formation of the EPRDF and peace negotiations, Meles publicly argued that his group had abandoned Marxist-Leninist ideology. This was partly a pragmatic response[348] to American pressure and also an effort to attract greater aid funds for reconstruction. Not surprisingly, western governments were pleased with the democratic liberal discourse Meles was espousing, giving confidence to many that the vision of Ethiopia he was proposing to implement under his leadership was one they could partner with.

Less acknowledged, however, is that some of the current leaders, Meles, Seyoum Mesfin, Abay Tsehay and Sibhat Nega, represented an ultra-nationalist segment of the TPLF that initially diverged from the broader TPLF's position on the issue of autonomy for Tigray within Ethiopia, in support of possible secession. While they backed down on this almost immediately, a similar group, including Meles, was

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[347] Interview: Patrick Gilkes.
[348] The TPLF demonstrated throughout its struggle to be extraordinarily pragmatic- in its earliest days it called for the establishment of an 'independent democratic republic of Tigray' which it soon abandoned in favor of Tigrayan autonomy within Ethiopia.

behind the 1985 formation within the TPLF of the ultra-left Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT) in an effort to preserve the ideological integrity of the movement. The TPLF recognised that it needed to develop ethnic satellite parties for the EPRDF but was afraid that its doctrine would be corrupted. For leaders who so passionately believed in doctrine that they would kill each other over slight doctrinal differences in the 1960s and 1970s, political ideology was a sensitive issue. Thus, the MLLT members saw themselves as orthodox defenders of Marxism-Leninism and the 'vanguard party for the TPLF'.[349] Gerard Prunier describes it as "the inside of the Russian doll and the keeper of the ideology".[350]

While the EPRDF claims that the MLLT no longer exists, most politically minded Ethiopians suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, this ideology has been something that the TPLF never felt it could share with the masses or even the intellectuals. It was never explained to the people or debated and discussed. According to the TPLF, the media were for developmental issues - not political philosophy. This secrecy has also led to the EPRDF being misunderstood or, simply, not understood. It is also indicative of a party that is unable to effectively reform. With a culture of secrecy so ingrained and committed ideologically, it is hard for the TPLF to open up. Trusting journalists with information, providing access to information for citizens and offering genuine explanations of the rational behind political policies are difficult political changes that are not yet occurring and which are affecting the development of the press system.

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[349] As Medhane Tadesse and John Young argue, "...the MLLT also served as a vehicle for Meles to pursue his leadership aspirations. Thus, he pressed for the dominance of the Political Department, which was closely linked to the MLLT. The Political Department in turn increasingly gained dominance over the foreign mission (of Seyoum Mesfin, currently Ethiopia's foreign minister), the military committee (of Aregawie Berhe, the TPLF's first leader), and Meles' major political challenger, Gidey Zeratsion (then deputy leader of the TPLF). It was also against this background that he began to develop a close cooperative relationship with Tewolde, whose own considerable assets served to advance both the party and the more politically ambitious Meles." TADESSE, M. & YOUNG, J. (2003) TPLF: Reform or Decline? *Review of African Political Economy,* 97, 389- 403. p. 398.
[350] Interview: Prunier.

2. State construction and the consolidation of power

By 1989 the TPLF was killing or capturing tens of thousands of Derg soldiers. The end of the Cold War, the reluctance of the Soviet Union to continue the extraordinary military support it was providing to Mengistu, and growing pressures from the EPLF and TPLF all contributed to a sharp turn in the fortunes of the Derg. Major famines and the manipulation of them by Mengistu to intentionally starve the TPLF of peasant support during the mid 1980s also lost him local and international support.[351] In an effort to stave off this growing dissent, the Derg introduced a multi-party system. By this time, however, it was too late and the TPLF was in the process of establishing a post-Derg government through the formation of the EPRDF, which included other opposition and guerrilla movements.[352]

During the final years in the bush the TPLF began to sketch out policies they would introduce when they assumed power. Amare describes, for example, the internal debates that went on in the TPLF regarding a media strategy:

> About two or three years before coming to Addis, we started talking, OK, we get Addis, what are we going to do with the media? Actually it was a discussion in every aspect. We go to Addis, what are we going to do about the bureaucracy? Does anybody know about the bureaucracy? We go to Addis, what are we going to do with this and that, so this [discussion] was for almost one year. I would say even the Derg regime was extended by one year because we discovered nobody was ready, so we had this discussion: if we go to Addis, who is going to run the radio station? How are we going to speak to journalists? We don't know how to run it, we don't know how to manage it, so we have set up a school of learning how to manage it how to...have reporters, in case the journalists don't want to work with us. So we have to learn - we would bring many books from Europe about journalism.[353]

While the EPRDF's media policy was relatively ad-hoc it was largely driven by the other policy and political objectives for which it fought. Upon coming to power there were several priorities for Meles including: to implement constitutional reform in line with ethnic and federalist objectives; to consolidate power across the vast and populous country through regional representatives; and to consolidate his personal

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[351]Again, it is interesting to see that the EPRDF if using a similar tactic with the fighters of the Ogaden Liberation Front at present.

[352] In February 1991, the TPLF with the assistance of the EPLF launched a final onslaught against the Derg. By May it was clear that the Derg could no longer sustain the campaign and Mengistu fled to exile in Zimbabwe.

[353] Interview: Aregawi.

power along with that of the TPLF, a process that has been done through his theory of Revolutionary Democracy.

2.1 From Transitional Charter to Constitution

After assuming power in Addis, the EPRDF knew it had to address issues of nationalism particularly since it was ethnic nationalism that had spurred the struggle. There was a rational basis for seeking to implement a federal arrangement. Since Tigrayans are a small minority that fought a centralised government partly in an effort to overcome Amhara domination, a state with multiple ethnically based parts would allow for control and by default dilute the Amhara character and influence.[354] Thus, the Transitional Charter, which was adopted in July 1991 at the Peace and Democracy Conference, recognised the right to self-determination.[355]

This was implemented almost immediately as Eritrea was quickly given its independence without a national referendum or consultation. The secession of Eritrea was almost a foregone conclusion because the EPLF had been instrumental in helping the TPLF to power and it is widely acknowledged that there was an agreement that should the TPLF reach Addis, it would support the EPLF struggle. Not ceding to the EPLF would have dragged the conflict on. After decades of fighting, the TPLF was looking for a peaceful settlement. However, the speedy secession and the willingness of the EPRDF to facilitate the process with little national debate took many Ethiopians by surprise.

The government established a constitutional commission to draft the new constitution and arranged broad consultations with the public. Like the Eritrea question, the most contested issues of the constitution, including land and the federalist system, were essentially foregone conclusions. Even if Ethiopians were given enough information to make informed evaluations and decisions on the

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[354] TURTON, D. (Ed.) (2006) *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective,* Oxford, James Currey .

[355] As the Transitional Charter states, "the rights of nations, nationalities, peoples to self-determination is affirmed. To this end, each nation, nationality and people is guaranteed the right to: (a) preserve its identity and have it respected, promote its culture and history and use and develop its language; (b) administer its own affairs within its owned defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom and fair and proper representation; (c) exercise its right to self-determination of independence, when the concerned nation/nationality and people is convinced that the above rights are denied, abridged or abrogated". *Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia,* Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 1991, p. 2.

proposed issues (which they were not), the government was clearly pushing its agenda and framing issues in such a way that the participants felt compelled to provide the answers the interviewers expected.

The right to secession was entrenched in the Constitution as Article 39 and was part of the establishment of a broader federalist system in which the ethnic regions would be given greater autonomy and take responsible for their economy, education, security, etc. In an immediate way, culturally speaking, this was a great relief for many groups that were now able to use their own language. Politically the situation was more complicated. Article 39 provided for self-determination up to succession but made the actual requirements to do so extremely difficult, if not impossible, without the strong support of the central government.[356]

2.2 Centralising political power: federalism, EPRDF satellites and controlling information flows

The groundwork for the federal political arrangement was made during the transitional period by expanding the initial coalition that began before the TPLF seized power. The TPLF made it clear that it planned to continue to control the executive committee and also entrenched its power ethnically within the military as at least 50% of the fighters were drawn from Tigray.

The constitution guaranteed these groups 'equitable representation in state and federal government'. In theory, ethnic movements and groups would be freely elected and have a strong role in the administration of the country including national governance. Not all opposition groups were eager to join the coalition and many groups became disenchanted quickly. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), for example, was a strong partner that initially joined an alliance with the EPRDF, but it soon felt marginalised and frustrated with the EPRDF's creation of Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPODO), an Oromia based party that served as a front for

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[356] Article 39 states: The right to self-determination, including secession of every Nation, Nationality and People shall come into effect: (a) when a demand for secession has been approved by two-thirds majority of the members of the Legislative Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned; (b) when the Federal Government has organised a referendum which must take place within three years from the time it received the concerned council's decision for secession; (c) when the demand for secession is supported by majority vote in the referendum; (d) when the Federal Government will have transferred its powers to the council of the Nation, Nationality or People who has voted to secede; and (e) when the division of assets is effected in a manner prescribed by law.

the EPRDF. Such organisations were created so the TPLF could avoid real competition yet still appear as a multi-ethnic coalition. These groups, however, have largely been dismissed as puppet organisations filled by individuals seeking personal power and a willingness to provide a façade of regional support for the central government.[357]

In *Ethiopia Since the Derg*, Pausewang, Tronvoll and Aalen explained how during elections legitimate groups have been denied victory in the place of the preferred partner of the EPRDF's choosing.[358] And when the OLF withdrew from the 1992 elections the EPRDF expelled it from the party and outlawed it for not renouncing violence.[359] Other ethnically based opposition parties, such as the All-Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO), have chosen not to participate in the political process and remain outside the EPRDF.[360] Abbay contends that

> Those who come to power, at both regional and federal levels, are not the real winners of elections; they are the handpicked 'compradors'. Nor do they have any autonomy. Their accountability remains solidly to the central government, not to the people whom they are supposedly representing. Consequently, in what appears to be a neo-patrimonial system, the prime minister maintains power through personal patronage and clientelism.[361]

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[357] This de-legitimizing or dismantling of local political organizations has proved to be a common approach throughout the government's approach towards civil society as well. Prominent organizations that often had significant support and expressed reasonable criticisms towards the government would be dismantled through the arrests of the leadership, threats towards members of the staff or financial and/or infrastructural sabotage. Even if the 'threatening' group was not dismantled entirely, the EPRDF would establish a group with a similar, if not the identical, name in its place. The new group would be closely tied to the government but attempt to act as a stand in, a process that often initially confused donor and aid organizations as well as the population. Some of the most prominent examples that have been targeted are the Ethiopian Free Press Journalist Association, The Ethiopian Teachers Association and ERCHO.

One example of this common confusion was on International Teachers Day in 2006, UNESCO organised a conference and accidentally invited the government's Ethiopian Teachers Association when they intended to invite the independent Ethiopian Teachers Association. They had not yet realised that it had recently been banned for being too critical of the government and a government organization with the exact name set up in its place.

[358] PAUSWANG, S., TRONVOLL, K. & AALEN, L. (Eds.) (2002) *Ethiopia Since the Derg*, London, Zed.

[359] The OLF is currently one of the most dynamic opposition groups in Ethiopia though it is forced to operate publicly from the diaspora as it has not denounced the use of violence and still advocates armed struggle to liberate the Oromos. It is not recognised as an opposition party but is rather labeled a terrorist organization by the EPRDF.

[360] The All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) is one of the most vocal and active agitating against the right of 'self-determination' and was deeply angered with the secession of Eritrea accusing the EPRDF of dismantling the country. Despite invitations from the EPRDF, the AAPO declined to participate in the Transitional Government, the drafting of the constitution or any elections, arguing that the constitutional process was undemocratic and dominated by the TPLF.

[361] ABBAY, A. (2004) Diversity and Statebuilding in Ethiopia. *African Affairs*, 103, 593- 614.

This argument has also been extensively articulated and advocated in the private press, which has come to reflect the political divisions of some disenfranchised ethnic groups. *Tobiya*, for example, typically asserts, "Literally all political organisations outside of EPRDF are termed as 'anti-peace and anti-charter'. Disguised and open measures are instituted to prevent their free and legal political participation in the country's political life."[362]

Just as the government has sought to control political activities representing particular regional or ethnic interests as part of its effort to consolidate power, it has sought to do the same for information flows.

With the UN and foreign embassies based in Addis it is difficult for the government to hide events such as the violent post-election clashes in Addis, so coverage of such events is tolerated. It is surprising how seldom, if ever, journalists leave Addis to get stories. Journalists in neighbouring Kenya, Uganda and Sudan regularly travel around their countries and the region, including to places as sensitive as Darfur. Part of why this is less common in Ethiopia has to do with journalistic culture, but the practice also reflects the strong reactions from the government to those that do seek news beyond Addis Ababa.

From the current military operation in the Ogaden to previous and continuing operations in Gambella and Oromia, the EPRDF has been notoriously intolerant of rural dissent and criticisms. Similarly the government has extensive methods of monitoring citizens, from teachers to the civil service, and is deeply sensitive about what information it will allow to emerge and enter these regions. Thus it is not surprising that many journalists are wary of traveling outside Addis to cover stories.

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[362] The article goes on to argue: "Only one political organization, namely EPRDF, controls, directs and uses for its own ends the country's mass media, state institutions, the police force, the country's economy and defence force. Democracy entails the creation of free political parties and their right to free political movement. Democracy means to get a viable alternative. But political parties outside of EPRDF are prevented by legal obstacles and illegal means to grow and develop into viable alternatives. No political organization or party is allowed legal presence and movement in Region 1 (Tigray) outside of TPLF/EPRDF. No political party or organization is allowed legal movement and activity in Region 4 (Oromia) outside of OPDO/EPRDF. The same is true in other regions. In general the situation is not conducive to the free movement and existence of independent political parties." 2 June 1994, *Tobiya* as quoted on 4 June 1994 *in Press Digest*, pp. 7-8.

Those who do try are often explicitly told that their security cannot be guaranteed.[363]

Many papers also argue that they do not have the funds to send reporters in the field; while this is certainly the case for some, the papers that do have the funds are those that are operating in the 'gray zone' and they are less willing to push or upset the government.

The private press relies on the Walta, a TPLF-affiliated news agency and ENA for news outside the capital or major cities. A prominent journalist who works for the ENA and asked to remain anonymous made important arguments including the difficulties even the ENA has in reporting events outside of Addis; how politicised such reporting is; and the imbalance between the role of the government media in Tigray and the other regions. As he argued:

> There are thirty-eight branches of ENA across the country. In some branches there is one journalist; in a few branches there are two. There are twelve branches in Oromia, seven in Amhara, seven in the Southern Region and six in Tigray. The rest of the regions have one each. All are accountable to the regional desk and they send their news stories through telephone or the computer. Thirteen branches are connected with the internet, the others have no computer. In Tigray they [the journalists] are only from Tigray. In the other regions they are assigned regardless of their ethnicity, in the Somali region there's an Amhara. During the past regime most journalists [were] Amhara so there is a scarcity of the human power but now they are starting to recruit from the other regions.
>
> The problems have started with the assigned general managers; they are all key members of the ruling party and are assigned not because of their competency. The ENA General Manager has only a grade twelve education but he was a soldier in Tigray. He has no diploma....
>
> It is believed that if you report conflicts such as the police against a boy it aggravates the conflict or that reporting on such events makes the events transfer to other areas. Individuals may report to the human rights organisations but there is no mechanism to report to the country. The journalists give us the crude information and we tell it to our bosses but we don't report it....
>
> In Tigray there is local radio but no need for independent media. The party radio and paper is working for the Tigrayans. But the party papers in the other regions works for the mobilisation of people behind the ruling party. It is basically propaganda. In Tigray it mobilises people for development, to prevent disease, to keep people in touch and unified. In other regions it is simply propaganda.[364]

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[363] This was the case when Tsegaye Tadesse (Reuters) and Anthony Mitchell (AP) wanted to go to Gambella to cover the violence there. These journalists were both working for international news agencies so were in a slightly privileged position. For local journalists, the families are often reliant on the salary of the journalists as a critical contribution to the household income. Without insurance their families would not be compensated if they were killed or injured.

[364] Interview: Anonymous.

While this comment reflects this informant's opinion, and was corroborated with other journalists interviewed, they also signal the discontent that was commonly expressed with the ways information flows were controlled and politicised. This journalist claims that his appointment was founded on experience and he had qualifications similar to those of the editors of *The Ethiopian Herald* and *Addis Zemen*. Despite some merit-based promotion, all three of these prominent journalists reflected discontent and frustration with the constraints on performing their jobs. As an Oromo, for example, one journalist claimed that he was regularly passed over for international trainings and workshops. While many of his colleagues have left because of this discrimination, he argues that he continues to stay because he believes it is important for Oromos to be represented and continue fighting from within.

Almost from the very beginning those outside the EPRDF's select umbrella felt excluded from the constitutional debates and the transitional government's consultations on peace and reconstruction. Girma Beshah posits, " the very structure of the party [the EPRDF] elicits hatred. It's a party of the Tigrayans. They have exacerbated ethnic tensions and generated a degree of hatred as they are seen as a conquering ethnic group."[365] The government did little to challenge this idea by ignoring competing ideas and continuing to privilege Tigrayans over others.

Issues of regionalism, therefore, have affected the development of the press system in two ways. First, information about what is going on outside the capital city is not readily available and the government discourages journalists from getting access to it. This encourages a divide between the peasantry and intellectuals/urban poor. Secondly, the press reflects the issues of ethnicity in a way similar to the difficulties faced by ethnic federalist politics. As the press is largely representative of elite groups, many feel disempowered, and until recently the press was one of the few outlets available to represent their perspectives and through which they could express their discontent.

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[365] Interview: Girma Beshah.

2.3 Revolutionary Democracy and single party rule

From the beginning there have been discrepancies in what different parties or groups mean by democracy. Much of the debate has played out in the press. All actors - international, government, opposition, media, NGOs - have been strong on rhetoric, but often talk past one another. Just as some journalists adopt the human rights rhetoric, the opposition and government may profess a questionable belief in Western-style democracy.

The TPLF's approach to economic development is based on market liberalism but its political ideology has not been as liberal.[366] While the government has claimed it has abandoned its Marxist roots in favor of democracy, others have argued this is not the case.[367] As Gerard Prunier commented:

> Robert Hudock, of the National Security Organisation in the US said that Marxism is dead. But this is a different world. Here they still cling to outdated beliefs... Meles will lie through his teeth... the World Bank and EU think these are dead ideas but not for these guys.[368]

Once in power, driven by its ideology, the TPLF began implementing its vision of Revolutionary Democracy.

This theory has been articulated in a number of different places including an extensive book by Meles titled *Revolutionary Democracy* and another in progress, *African Development: Dead Ends and New Beginnings,* in which he outlines the economic and political arrangements he deems most practical for achieving development.[369] His vision of a developmental state is clearly critical of the neo-liberal paradigm and supportive of the process states such as Korea and Taiwan have instituted. It also supports an idea of democracy where there is some scope for criticism but essentially within the framework of one party rule. Opposition voices

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[366] As mentioned, this is most clearly expressed in their approach to the national question of ethnic diversity that has followed Stalin's theory closely regarding ethnically dividing the country and giving each region the right to self-determination.

[367] As Clapham noted that while Meles has "officially adopted market liberalism as an economic ideology, his approach to politics is thoroughly Marxist." CLAPHAM, C. (2006) Ethiopian Development: The Politics of Emulation. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 44, 137- 150. p. 147.

[368] Interview: Gerard Prunier.

[369] Sections of this book have been published in *The Reporter* newspaper and can also be found on the web at www0.gsb.columbia.edu/ipd/pub/Meles-Extracts2-AfTF2.pdf. Last accessed 20 December 2007.

and parties are tolerated so long as they are not a serious distraction from allowing the ruling party to get on with its central goal of economic development.

Meles has expressed admiration for the ruling coalitions that have remained dominant in Scandinavian countries and Japan. As he notes,

> The ruling coalitions in these countries have had regular, free, open and fair elections, and the basic political and human rights have been respected. They thus fully qualify as democratic regimes. But they have won elections repeatedly and have been in power for long-stretches. In the case of Japan the ruling coalition has been in power for almost 50 years. A critical issue is therefore can such a stable, democratic and at the same time developmental coalition be established in a developing country.[370]

Consolidating single party rule with the TPLF as the core of the EPRDF is evidently the EPRDF's democratic vision. And even though Meles argues that,

> There is every reason to suggest that if a developmental state were to also be democratic the "hegemonic" nature of its development project would be achieved faster and held more deeply because it would emerge from free debate and dialogue.[371]

It is also clear through his arguments on defining 'fundamental policies' that debates are to centre around issues of development, not the constitution or issues of succession, federalism, or land.[372] As described in the prior chapter, during interviews editors of the government media it was repeatedly emphasised that the agenda handed down to them from the government, particularly after the election, was to address issues of development rather than politics.

The EPRDF has now been in power for over fifteen years and the vision of the party, or the state, is increasingly Meles' vision. Or as Yemane Kidane, one of the

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[370] www0.gsb.columbia.edu/ipd/pub/Meles-Extracts2-AfTF2.pdf, p. 12. Last accessed 20 December 2007.

[371] Ibid. p. 14.

[372] While the system of land tenure has experienced dramatic changes in the past several decades there was little change from Derg policies to the EPRDF. The present government still maintains a statist system, as the Derg did that is characterised by the following: a) land is held by the government on behalf of the people; we have, in other words, state ownership of land; b) each household has only use rights over the land in its possession c) land cannot be sold, mortgaged, or transferred to others on a long-term basis. At present the household may lease the land to others on a short-term basis; this was not allowed during the Derg; d) in order to ensure rights of use over land the land user has to reside in a rural kebele. A household cannot have access to land in more than one kebele. RAHMATO, D. (2000) Land Tenure in Ethiopia: From the Imperial Period to the Present. IN OLIKA, T., ARSANO, Y. & AADLAN, O. (Eds.) *Towards Research Agenda in the Framework of DPSIR-NIHR Research Programme (1998-2003)*. Graduate School of Addis Ababa University, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Addis Ababa University. This policy was entrenched in the constitution.

individuals purged from the government during the 2001 split over Eritrea,[373] complains: "now it's a one man show. People who used to challenge him are out, so within the party he is a personality cult; he's undisputed. Now the power, feudal and Marxist-Leninist elements are influencing the process".[374] Yemane summed up the current predicament for the TPLF when he noted that Meles believes "you can have democracy as long as you don't take power from me".[375]

Criticism of the EPRDF's style of democracy, especially by the press, is not new, particularly because Revolutionary Democracy, according to the EPRDF, differs from liberal democracy by the protections it offers through group rights in addition to individual rights.[376] This has affected the government's approach to media policy. The tolerance of press freedoms, for example, is part of a utilitarian policy rather than a firm belief of the party cadres.

If the opposition voices were in a similar position as the EPRDF, it is unlikely they would be more democratic, particularly as some of the leaders were Derg cadres and only recently adopted their present democratic discourse. Nevertheless demands

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[373] There was a split in the TPLF in 2001 over issues relating to the Eritrean war- some wanted to push for a conclusive Ethiopian victory in Asmara, while others, including Meles were sensitive to international pressure to conclude the conflict as soon as possible. Senior members of the TPLF's leadership were jailed and forced to leave the party, but Meles came out on top and was consequently forced to address the underlying causes that promoted the fracture.

At the same time, however, the 2001 split was also a competition over power, and power shifted from the broader TPLF central committee to Meles himself. Underlying issues of how individuals had changed from the revolutionary days where spartan impoverished living was the norm to the luxuries and temptations of Addis Ababa were also issues. Many of the purged cadres were charged with corruption but it was also more likely charges of moral corruption the EPRDF would have liked to issue if possible. After the initial purge, a number of other party members and the leaders of satellite parties were also purged and replaced by individuals that were more agreeable to whatever the Prime Minister advocates. (STREMLAU, N., *Janes Intelligence Files*, Ethiopia, 2007)

[374] Interview: Kidane.

[375] Interview: Kidane.

[376] This frustration has always been present in the press and continued until the papers were closed after the 2005 elections. As the newspaper *Andinnet*, affiliated with the AAPO, argued, the democratic theory the EPRDF espouses is undemocratic in and of itself. As

> no democratic country has ever embodied the right to secede in its constitution...and that the respect of human and democratic rights- rights comprising a set of civil, political and economic rights, is what is customarily and practically known in all developed western democracies... the respect of individual rights, *ipso facto*, means the respect for any nationality to use its own language, develop its culture and to administer its affairs... the concept of group/nationality rights is not given precedence under current international law... [thus] when such a right is used in place or in opposition to the fundamental individual rights, it becomes a ploy used to dismember a country in the name of freedom and 'national' liberation" (8 December 1994, *Adinnet,* as quoted on 8 December 1994 is *Press Digest*, p.8).

for participation, reconciliation and dialogue are understandable and continue today with a focus on attacking the process of consolidating power and nation-building.

3. Reconciliation and building trust and confidence

When the EPRDF came to power it allowed freedom of expression but also made a very common but crucial mistake and one that many occupying and warring forces have made: it disbanded many of those involved with the previous regime, from the Ministry of Information to the Armed Forces. Girma Beshah, for example, was Mengistu's former interpreter. He spent several years in jail after the EPRDF came to power until he was considered to no longer be a substantial threat. As he describes:

> When the TPLF first came they didn't know who was who. They locked us all up. A new order was unfolding. It was not a new government but a new order, a new era. Everything of the other regime was gotten rid of.... Sensitive places were taken over... [they] didn't want any interference or to coexist with anyone. That was the aspiration of communism and Lenin's [theory of] political cleansing - getting rid of the Tsarists. The EPRDF wanted to get rid of these people so they couldn't have any feelings of the past, unless they were indispensable people.[377]

The EPRDF often took action with little knowledge of whom they were acting against. As a result, journalists that were fired from the Ministry of Information set up their own independent newspapers. Initially, some of these journalists may not have been particularly opposed to the EPRDF, but the way in which the EPRDF handled the situation exacerbated a delicate situation. Girma notes that

> All of us that came from that time worked with that government and when it was overthrown we didn't mourn the death. We thought better times had come. With freedom of the press we were happy and wanted to see it develop. But the new government did nothing to capitalise on it. They had suspicion... the media operators came from that time. Many of them lost their jobs in the state media. The government sent others to retirement. So people thought it's not a new government, but a new ethnic group.[378]

With its newly found freedom, the private press immediately entered the debate criticising the EPRDF and arguing for 'reconciliation'. An editorial in the independent paper *Tomar* echoes the call of the times:

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[377] Interview: Girma Beshah.
[378] Interview: Beshah.

There is a considerable confusion over the meaning of democracy, peace, justice, prosperity, etc. There is also a consensus that clash may be inevitable if people try to translate and apply these concepts in their own ways....Still the TG [transitional government] insists there is peace in the country and that it sees no ground for a peace conference in a peaceful country. It is, after all, drafting a constitution. It is at the thresholds of an elected government, hence the reluctance to listen to calls it can afford to term as mere interference. And this at a time when some signatories of the Transition period have made common cause with non-signatory groups and raised together questions of crucial significance. Those in power and their opposition should sit down and talk in the interest of the people, for it is the people who must decide in the final analysis. The ultimate objective of all the parties concerned should be the building of an Ethiopia to be governed by the general will and for the general will of the people.[379]

Even some government journalists were outspoken on this issue. Dejene Tesemma, editor-in-chief of *The Ethiopian Herald*, reasoned that

The problem is that the government came to power through violence. There needed to be reconciliation and free elections that included every group, even Mengistu's regime. Your defeater cannot be your judge. [It must also be understood that] circumstances can compel you to be involved. Not everyone should go to jail. [I] wish we had reconciliation.[380]

The government, however, has only engaged in reconciliation to the extent it deemed necessary and on its own terms. In a 1991 interview Prime Minister Meles stated his views in these terms:

We believe in a democratic and peaceful transition. But the WPE [Workers Party of Ethiopia] rejected peace until the last minute and suffered a defeat in the end. I don't think there is any reason why we should extend an invitation to a party, which, after fighting against peace and democracy and one that was defeated and buried, to come out of the grave and make an attempt to participate in restoring peace and democracy.[381]

After the long struggle from Tigray to Addis, the EPRDF felt little need for genuine reconciliation or negotiation and did not have a strategy for bridging divisions. This is also clear in how the EPRDF lacked a strategy for using the media to encourage reconciliation rather than exacerbate tensions. Amare notes that

Even a year before we came to Addis there was an idea of stop the war, stop the guns and form a Transitional Government even with the Derg. There was a discussion in Rome about this issue, the Americans were mediating to set

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[379] 17 December 1993, Editorial, *Tomar,* as quoted on 22 December 1993 in *Press Digest,* p. 3.

[380] Interview: Dejene Tesemma.

[381] 7 June 1991, "Ato Meles Zenawi Replies to Questions by Reporters", *The Ethiopian Herald,* p. 5.

up a Transitional Government with every party in the country.... But that didn't work. The Transitional Government was formed with other parties minus the Derg. So when the transitional period came the idea was, you know, give a chance to all parties. Let the opposition have their say.... How exactly do the media play a role in creating peace, in creating democracy? It was always trial and error. We didn't have time to develop an approach to it because we ourselves were students of the media. As you know, in Ethiopia there wasn't any tradition of democracy, there is nothing you can learn from the bureaucracy - it doesn't tell you.[382]

Contrary to what Amare argues, the government did not let the opposition entirely have their say and the lack of a strategy, along with the overall suspicion that the government had of much of the population, did not help in finding a middle ground, compromise or space for negotiation.

In an effort to draw attention to their desire to participate in the political discussions, as well as express concern, if not outrage, at the federalist arrangement, many groups came together for the Conference on Peace and Reconciliation. The government, however, refused to engage saying that these individuals were 'anti-peace' and there was no need for a 'peace' conference in a country that was already at peace. As the editorial in *Waqt* noted:

> The upcoming Conference for Peace and Reconciliation is just around the corner. But the head of the conference's host country, and the main participant at that, is behaving like the head of a household who doesn't wish to be disturbed at mealtimes. And this is at a time when even America has become somewhat flexible on the issue of the conference.[383]

The conference proceeded as planned, with significant participation across the country and internationally. It reached a number of recommendations and conclusions and established the Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE), which was the first opposition coalition. In addition to critiques of the EPRDF "weakening the unity and integrity of the country", and calls for a new transitional government with dialogues on the process of reconciliation and peace-building, the conference ominously argued they were:

> convinced that the drama aimed at giving a single political organisation legal authority for its undemocratic and dictatorial activities through a great document like a constitution should be stopped and that the constitution should be drafted by representatives of the people elected by an overall

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[382] Interview: Aregawi.

[383] 20 December 1993, Editorial, *Waqt,* as quoted on 22 December 1993 in *Press Digest*, p. 1.

> participation of political organisations. Contrary to this, stifling the operation of political organisations and endorsing a constitution drafted by a commission set up one organisation in the face of popular opposition to it will have a similar result of un-acceptability as in the case of past constitutions because it didn't originate from the people. Hence, the Council of Alternative Forces will ardently struggle and stand with the people to straighten up the process.[384]

The government was not willing to recognise the conference or the recommendations and dismissed it as a demand by a "limited number of intellectuals".

Outside observes have also been critical although it has mostly been academics that closely followed the developments. Christopher Clapham is one of the most experienced and insightful scholars on Ethiopia and early on he publicly expressed reservations regarding the political process. He noted in one article that while the opposition parties may legitimately be criticised for being divided and weak, they have

> condemned the process of constitution-making in no uncertain terms. And there is no sign of a process of dialogue between the government and the opposition groups.... The constitution making process to the exclusion of these other powerful undercurrents would be as fruitful as worrying about the rearrangements of the deck chairs of the Titanic.[385]

Clapham was writing in 1994 but Ethiopians, and the press, have continued to articulate these grievances.

Woldu Yemessel, the General Manager of the TPLF Radio Fana, put the issue succinctly when he said " these are long political debates. It has been a thirty years powers struggle. It is individuals. The Ethiopian media should transform and begin fresh... the MoI's [Ministry of Information] are fighting, it's the current one vs. the old one".[386] The argument that there is a need for 'new blood' or a younger generation is something that many Ethiopians expressed, including Amare. He too sees the current political divisions going back to the days when the political debates over Marxist-Leninism were first held and explains that

> Ethiopia had the strongest student movement in the 1960s. It was leftist and looked towards Mao, Lenin and Stalin. Everything now still seems to come from the Ethiopian student movement. Now the right to secession can be

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[384] COUNCIL OF ALTERNATIVE FORCES FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY IN ETHIOPIA (1994) Press Release. Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
[385] As quoted on 22 December 1994 in *Press Digest*, p.4.
[386] Interview: Woldu Yemessel.

seen from the universities forty years ago. Land ownership as well. The ruling party and opposition still have the student movement in mind. There is no new generation coming into politics. The ruling party is younger than the opposition- they're in their forties and fifties. The opposition is in their sixties and seventies. Ethiopian politics need to be modernised, We need to put an end to the leftist student politics.[387]

For the many private journalists from the intelligentsia and the days of the student movement, national identity is a single Ethiopia that was built by the imperial regimes. The EPRDF's deconstruction of this idea has been deeply disturbing and something that they continue to address.

3.1 Trust in the society

Reconciliation is further hindered by the lack of trust that pervades many different aspects of Ethiopian society, including the press. As elaborated in Chapters 1 and 2, neither democracy nor a free media are necessarily a 'natural state' but rather an ideological conquest that requires a certain environment and the space to trust your enemies. The roots for cooperation and tolerance must be there and these democratic roots are lacking in Ethiopia. Issues of trust and suspicion for other groups pervade many political and media issues and interviewees repeatedly came back to the underlying causes. Numerous academics and even casual visitors to Ethiopia have commented on the evident hierarchy, Ethiopians' complex relationship with authority, and the suspicion that is prevalent in the political and social culture.[388]

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[387] Interview: Aregawi.

[388] A partial explanation for this distrust of others stems from the Solomonic myth of the nation that Ethiopians are descendants from Sheba and Solomon and is thus god's chosen people. But Ethiopians have also historically seen themselves as a pillar of civilised Christianity in a sea of Muslims and pagans, this legacy continues to this day and is a major political issue both domestically and internationally. And as highland Christians were endowed with lighter skin and finer features many continue not to consider themselves to be Africans, an irony given that the African Union is based in Addis Ababa.

At the same time, Amhara feudal culture was extremely hierarchical and traditionally most Ethiopians have demonstrated a continued deference for leadership and governments. Many Ethiopians also hold a strong suspicion of governments which is not surprising given the past of governance in the country including: the tradition of feudal lords vying for control over territories; a politically powerful highland culture that has been partially closed off from the rest of the world, yet also repeatedly invaded; the more recent history of Haile Selassie's imperial government; Mengistu's Red Terror rule; and perhaps more controversially (most agree that it has been a marked improvement) the Revolutionary Democracy of the EPRDF.

This culture of suspicion pervades virtually all aspects of society, political, social, and civil society. The TPLF itself could be seen as suffering from a persecution complex and there is a great deal of suspicion within the government as well. Within the small TPLF political team, loyalty is prized but even this has been tenuous. Meles has excelled with political infighting and coming out on top. Over the years of the struggle he has systematically defeated challengers, and while not doing so personally has had many of the others that created the TPLF with him killed (Aragaye Berhe escaped to Sweden).

During interviews, informants regularly cited the common sentiment "don't trust your enemies". This has been magnified given the recent political events but has been a longstanding characteristic. During a focus group organised by the NGO election group Eris in the immediate post-election period, a consensus arose from the student participants that Ethiopia does not have a political culture that compromises – it's either 'a' or 'z'. There is nothing in the middle. Compromise, they agreed, makes you look weak. Older interviewees regularly mentioned that a problem of the current political crisis is that no one wants to be in the middle. If you are in the middle, you can be misinterpreted. Rather everyone wants to know exactly where someone stands so people typically choose one side or the other.

The distrust also applies to outsiders; for example, the motives of researchers are constantly questioned. Sensitive, or even insensitive questions are regularly evaded and it is difficult to gain trust. It is problematic to access officials and members of the government and a number of times I was sent with minders. The situation is even more difficult for Ethiopian journalists. Even if journalists are granted access to government officials or organisations, there is a general feeling of nervousness about having to interact with the system or appear on anyone's radar, and thus become a target.

Teguest Yilma, the editor of *Capital* newspaper, noted that it is hard for her to get her journalists to corroborate stories with the police because "they simply do not want to be in a position to speak with the police. Journalists feel as though they are always a suspect and that they could be blamed for something; therefore, they prefer

to just stay away".[389] It is usually only the editors with the highest connections in the government who would feel comfortable pursuing information from government sources. This also poses challenges for debates on access to information or freedom of information laws. If citizens are unwilling or afraid to approach the government for information, it is unlikely that legislation will make much difference.

The present government has done little to change this situation and restore trust. It did not have a strategy when it came to power and it still does not have one. As Zerihun Teshome, of the pro-government newspaper *Iftin,* noted

> There is discomfort for Ethiopians in the gray area; this is a country of slogans. We say we will do it... but it's difficult to bring stakeholders together. This government is scared of being fingerprinted as being a push behind something. Good projects get dumped, so they try to look uninterested.[390]

The few small steps towards reconciliation the government has taken, have been on its own terms.

But by failing to take seriously comments within the independent press or to meet with journalists and respond to their commentary or questions, the government has done little to improve this lack of trust. And by attempting to de-legitimise opposing arguments by suggesting that they are so peripheral and radical not to warrant engagement, they have reinforced the notion of an autocratic party with little genuine interest what others think. This attitude, combined with the continued denial of access to information, encouraged some segments of the private press to become even more opposed to the government, thus further polarising the press system.

Finally, we turn to the international community, a major source of strength for the EPRDF, and one that has allowed it the space to deal with the press as recklessly as it has, turning away when press outlets are closed and journalists silenced.

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[389]Interview: Tiguest Yilma.
[390] Interview: Zerihun Teshome.

4. International dimensions

Ethiopia's present international relations are an integral part of understanding the nature of the Ethiopian state and how it impacts the press system. With increasing conditionality and pressures to respect human rights and democratise, Ethiopia has escaped condemnation relatively easily because of its strategic importance and a general lack of understanding by outsiders about the country and government. The EPRDF, however, faces serious political pressures from the diaspora.

4.1 Strategic priorities

Strategically, Ethiopia has always been an important regional power but its influence has been increasing in recent years as it has closely aligned itself with America's war on terror and has become a strategic partner in a volatile region. The US's relations with Eritrea are steadily deteriorating over the failure to force Ethiopia to adhere to the border ruling. At the same time, Somalia's chaos makes for a difficult alliance, Djibouti's small size is unlikely to wield influence and the US's relations with Sudan are also deeply strained; thus Ethiopia is the lynchpin for American foreign policy in the region. This was most notably demonstrated when Ethiopia invaded Somalia, along with the US, to overthrow the Islamic Courts Union and reinstate the Transitional Federal Government in December 2006. This preferred status has had an impact on domestic and international politics effecting government media policy.

One outcome of this preferential status with the US is that the EPRDF feels relatively emboldened to pursue its domestic strategy as it pleases, even if that means suppressing most opposition voices and imprisoning tens of thousands of people. Much of the international community, led by the US, has demonstrated its willingness to prioritise strategic concerns over human rights or other issues. One example that Ethiopia has learned from is the unwillingness of the US to pressure Ethiopia to implement the UN border ruling giving the town of Badme to Eritrea, despite Eritrea's intense protests.

In addition, the EPRDF managed to deflect the international political fallout after the post-election violence of June and November 2006 remarkably well.

Ethiopia receives over half its budget from international donors and is one of the largest recipients of foreign aid in Africa. While governments such as the UK announced that they intended to slash aid, particularly direct budget assistance, international aid including from the UK has actually increased significantly since the violence.

Part of Ethiopia's success in managing international perceptions of its domestic crises is due to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. He makes himself available to talk to international journalists, even when he refuses to meet with local ones, and willingly interacts with diplomats. He is regarded as extremely smart, and even his critics acknowledge that he has an excellent grasp of policy issues. The EPRDF has been praised for it's handling of the economy: there has been a solid rate of growth and international financial organisations such as the World Bank have been supportive of the present government.[391] Meles is known for publicly and privately espousing that Ethiopia is solidly on the democratic path, albeit a bumpy, non-linear one[392] and those who do not agree, such as the European Union's head of the election observation team, Ana Gomez, are sidelined.

As a whole, the EPRDF has been pragmatic in recognising what policies would be internationally acceptable and which ones would not be, as witnessed when the TPLF en route to Addis had their shift from Marxist-Leninism to espousing some of the principles of liberal democracy. There was, at least in the beginning, a real desire on the part of the TPLF to set itself apart from its predecessors and this was partially achieved through sending a signal to the rest of the world that the new government would tolerate some degree of dissent. As Girma describes: "A lot of the writing the government put up with, was something no other government had. The government put up with it because they were less consolidated but also they wanted to impress the world and make them think they were new. Meles wanted to create an image".[393]

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[391] STIGLITZ, J. (2003) *Globalization and Its Discontents,* London, W.W. Norton and Company.

[392] Nevertheless, Meles has also pointedly argued to the western media that "to impose democracy from outside is inherently undemocratic". See January 25 2008, Interview with Simon Tisdall, *The Guardian.* Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/25/1

[393] Interview: Beshah.

The extent to which Meles has worked to create an image that is reflective of EPRDF realities is controversial and, as time went on, the need to differentiate from the past faded. In fact, the EPRDF has never seemed particularly concerned with developing a strategy to project a positive image of itself internationally, despite recognition from within the leadership that there is indeed a problem with managing its image externally.[394] Still, however, there has not yet been talk of establishing a centre similar to Uganda's Media Centre or to the related models in Kenya, Tanzania or South Africa.

4.2 Diaspora

The stronghold for the opposition has been the diaspora, which has also been an important source of material for media outlets critical of the EPRDF. In a telling move, once the CUD leaders were released from prison in 2007 they made a trip to America and Europe to garner support, sort out their disagreements over the power structure and thank their financiers.[395] In many cases the diaspora appears more fiercely opposed then Ethiopians within the country, a characteristic that is not unique to Ethiopia but is also often the case for other large diaspora populations.

Not surprisingly, this influence has also manifested itself in the media in several ways. The internet, particularly blogs, has been an influential source of information both within and outside Ethiopia.[396] The diaspora runs most of these and they focus on commentary and ideological debates over past and current policies. Since the election, all blogs have been blocked from within Ethiopia but prior to the election since many Ethiopians did not have access to the internet, Iskinder Nega would trawl the web and compile the most interesting articles into *Menelik,* a popular and influential newspaper.

This critical side of the diaspora also penetrated the Voice of America at many levels and influenced the reporting. Many of the journalists at VOA had fled to the

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[394] Interview: Simon.

[395] The Diaspora has been particularly active in the US, where there is the largest group of Ethiopians outside of Ethiopia and they have been intensely lobbying congressmen to tie security aid to human rights through H.R.2003. This bill has undoubtedly put some pressure on the EPRDF to release the political prisoners.

[396] The blogs are presently blocked from Ethiopia but some of the most well-known include http://www.ethiomedia.com; www.nazret.com; and www.ethiopianreview.com. The CUD website www.kinijit.org is also blocked from Ethiopia.

US after the EPRDF came to power and were opposed to the government. Along with the other journalists that were charged in the post-2005 election period, five VOA reporters were charged in absentia for treason and genocide. While the charges were later dropped, officials at the VOA acknowledged that there were some problems regarding balance and objectivity. More recently the Ethiopian government has been accused of blocking VOA's signal into the country, charges it denies.[397]

Despite the challenges posed by the discontent of the diaspora, the international dimensions of Ethiopia's nation-building process have helped the stability of the EPRDF and allowed it to pursue policies that not only violate international standards but also receive strong internal condemnation.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has put forward a complex argument of the political dimensions

has, several lessons emerge suggesting, for example, why the press was closed after the elections.

Here, as will be argued in the concluding chapter, the process of reconciliation is key. There is a long history of competing ideologies and visions of Ethiopia. Time has not proved successful in tempering this animosity and disagreements. The divisions and debates on key issues such as federalism, land tenure, ethnic identities, and language, remain similar today particularly as Marxism-Leninism continues to be an influencing ideology for EPRDF leaders. The press can contribute to the process of reconciling these divisions through providing a forum for elite negotiation but there also has to be a political will, engagement and initiative that must come from the government itself. By failing to engage in debate, respond to the arguments presented in the media, and have any real inclusive process of its own, the government hampered a much-needed national dialogue. It similarly exacerbated the situation by excluding journalists who previously worked for the Ministry of Information under the Derg from continuing in the government press, by maintaining that the peasantry - not intellectuals and city dwellers – was its primary constituency, and by holding an air of entitlement to power that came after decades of fighting in the bush.

It is important as well to examine the motivations and agendas of all actors. Particularly in societies where there is a smaller elite, the relationships tend to be more personal and complex, compared to societies, such as the UK, where there are thousands of journalists. Chapter 4 focused on this issue stemming from the press system, and journalists in particular, while Chapter 5 looked at it from the perspective of the political system.

Journalism is often reinterpreted by its practitioners in different contexts. The diverse, and sometimes self-interested and political, motivations of Ethiopian journalists, have strongly affected the press system. While at the same time, the political leadership in Ethiopia remains secretive and paranoid and pressure to make information public or to explain policies and motivations are rarely answered and appear unlikely to change in the near future. Underlying both these issues is historical memory. The debates from the student movement which the current older generation that is in power participated in, as well as inter-ethnic relations going back hundreds of years, have all impacted the press and remain very much alive today.

As the press serves as a reflection of political developments, unless the Ethiopian state becomes more stable, it is unlikely that the press will become either more institutionalised or less polarised. The social and political ideology that made the TPLF a successful guerilla movement had to change when it came to power. The inability to adapt and be a government for 75 million people has made it less effective than it might otherwise be. While the Ethiopian government may espouse Western-style democracy publicly, a further look suggests that Ethiopia is probably not on such a linear path of political transition. Despite internal discontent and the strength of the diaspora, the political situation is unlikely to change significantly partly because of the international environment. The Ethiopian state, however, is fundamentally weak and the status quo is unsustainable in the long-term. I now turn to Uganda, a case that is also complex and un-democratic, but slightly more encouraging both in political developments as well as the dynamics of the press system.

PART II

The Ugandan Press:

A Fading Forum for Consensus Building and Constructive Criticism

The risk of placing the Ugandan case next to the Ethiopian case is that it can suggest Uganda as an example of a success. As the coming three chapters will elaborate, this is not entirely the case. The press in Uganda is continuing to evolve and its role is changing. No longer is it as politicised, a process that has partly been connected the departure of the papers founders, President Museveni's third term project and its present ownership by the Nairobi-based Nation Media Group. Many of the dominant actors that were most influential in shaping the press have left and the government has had some success in diminishing the role of the press it once sought to encourage. While even the so-called 'opposition' press never fundamentally opposed the single-party Movement system the change in the constitution President Museveni imposed to allow him to run for a third term received widespread condemnation, including by the Managing Director of state-owned newspaper *The New Vision*, William Pike.

The following three chapters follow a pattern similar to that employed to analyse the Ethiopian case, beginning with an historical chapter followed by an analysis of the press system variables (polarisation of the press; ideology of journalists; institutionalisation of the press; and government intervention) and then of the political system variables (ideology of the liberation movement; process of state construction and consolidation of power; reconciliation and trust-building; and international dimensions). This section largely focuses on the press in the early days of the NRM's nation-building project presenting a complex but coherent portrait of the press and politics during this period of transition.

The press in Uganda has played an important and key role in providing a forum for debate, participation and dialogue. Just as was the case in Ethiopia, however, press systems rarely are what they seem at first glance. Individuals and personalities have weighed in heavily shaping the press.[398] In Uganda, most of the

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[398] In an effort to fully develop the ideas and dimensions of certain individuals I have focused on their development and role more than others.

journalists have long and continued connections and engagement with those in State House, which shapes the political and press environment differently than in Ethiopia where relations may go back to the student movement but have diverged for decades and now are deeply polarised.

Several key events and issues have influenced the portrait that follows. The ideology of the NRM's guerrilla movement is a unique and innovative blend of democratic ideals with single party pragmatism that was deeply influenced by the experience of organising and bringing peace to parts of the country during the civil war. In the beginning, regional experiences, particularly from Tanzania, strongly shaped the struggle yet, in contrast with the TPLF, the NRM largely dispensed with Marxist ideology when it fell out of favour internationally. A strategy of Resistance Councils (RCs) and constructive criticism, which began in the bush, shaped the political organisation of the Movement government and deeply impacted the press. Similarly the unique development of the government owned *The New Vision* newspaper cannot be underestimated. It had a strong and important role in positively shaping the press environment as a whole for which the government deserves much credit.

Historically, Ugandans enjoy a proud history of hosting Africa's strongest university at the time of independence as well as influential publications such as the magazine, *Transition,* which emerged from Makerere University during the 1960s. Decades of brutal rule by Idi Amin and Milton Obote have not smothered enthusiasm for debates and the general interest in politics. Museveni's populist style is natural for Ugandans and contrasts sharply with the more authoritative and detached stance Meles prefers.

The portrait that emerges from the next three chapters is of a government and a press that during the period of transition managed to have a significant portion of the population unified behind the nation-building project. Journalists and the press, both government and independent, bought into the system and were a part of it. While supportive of the NRM, they nevertheless forged a strong forum for critiquing government policies, serving as an important voice of dissent in a one-party state and were crucial in keeping it on track as much as possible (or until Museveni decided to unilaterally go ahead with his third-term project). The press helped to build

consensus on key issues, including historical ones, and actively assisted in the process of reconciliation. It is a credit to the independent journalists as well as the government for without *The New Vision*, the *Monitor* would have unlikely been as strong and vice-versa.

Recent political developments around the 2006 elections, however, do not appear encouraging. While the media in Uganda has been rapidly expanding, there are now over 100 private radio stations, and has grown more professionalised Museveni's cling to power has been slowly eroding the influence of the press. The press served an important role in a unique one-party Movement system and political transition but has been less able to find its role in a more institutionalised, competitive yet traditionally autocratic environment.

Just as I acknowledged in the introduction to Part I on Ethiopia, the following three chapters exclude aspects of the press and political system. This cannot be a comprehensive analysis but the chapters will elaborate a portrait that contrasts significantly with that of Ethiopia thus illuminating how the role of the press has differed so greatly between the two countries and why.

CHAPTER 6

A History of the Press in Uganda: 1900-2006

The press during the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), has been vibrant but dominated by two powerful media houses: *The New Vision* and the *Monitor*. They have strongly influenced each other in bringing the debate to the centre, encouraging professionalism and institutionalisation. Their role has been key in the political and nation-building process. At times, for example, the *Monitor* has functioned as an opposition, while *The New Vision* has presented the government's positions and policies in a relatively objective way facilitating trust and communication between the government and society.

This chapter will explore the press in Uganda from its earliest days through the current environment under the NRM, an approach similar to the structure of Chapter 3. The first section will focus on the historical development of the press until the period when Museveni came to power. While much of the literature dwells on the influence of the colonialists, this section will focus on the often neglected but strong role of the African press beginning in the 1930's and 1940's. This press was instrumental in challenging colonial rule and advocating a political agenda of change.

In Uganda, there is a tradition of debate over what the role of the press should be in nation-building, particularly in a single-party state. Inspired by the Tanzanian experience, Ugandans have long discussed the virtues of freedom of expression at the possible 'expense' of social cohesion. In contrast with Ethiopia, the debate throughout society on media policy issues has been more dynamic and Ugandans more willing to use the media to challenge authority. Nevertheless, there are a number of similarities in the history of the press in Ethiopia and Uganda. The student press at Makerere University in the mid to late 1960's was active and instrumental in sparking debate, just as it was at Haile Selassie University. The student movement in both countries also provided much of the intellectual spark for the struggle. The dark days that followed under Idi Amin, analogous to that of Mengistu, created a similar group of 'survivors', though the subsequent government under Obote was slightly more tolerant of the press. And while the NRM was fighting in the bush for a shorter period

than the TPLF, it too developed a media and communications strategy, which impacted its later policies of propaganda and constructive criticism.

The second section will focus on the media under the NRM and in particular, on two key papers from the government press and the private press, *The New Vision* and the *Monitor*. Both papers are significantly more professional and institutionalised than their Ethiopian counterparts. This, however, has not always been the case. The growth and maturation of the *Monitor* and *The New Vision* has played an important role in the nation-building process in a number of ways including serving as a forum for elites to dialogue and forge consensus on issues.

1. The history of the press

1.1 Challenging the colonial system

Missionaries and churches started the first papers in Uganda as they did in Ethiopia and across much of the continent. In 1900 *Mengo Notes*,[399] a newsletter by the Church Missionary Society, was published and in 1907 another newsletter, *Ebifa mu Buganda* (in 1934 *Buganda* was changed to *Uganda*), appeared in Luganda. It was later published in English in the late 1950's as *New Day*. *Munno*, which was started in 1911 by the Roman Catholic White Fathers, was the longest published paper in Uganda and only recently ceased publication in the 1990s.[400]

The first commercial paper was the *Uganda Herald*. Published thrice a week in English it was aimed at Europeans and planters. The paper tolerated a vigorous debate by African correspondents on issues of land, education, labour and wages. There were also the beginnings of a debate on the existence and legitimacy of the colonial order. Daudi Bussedde, one of the most influential commentators at the time,

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[399] In 1902 it changed its name to *Uganda Notes*.

[400] GARIYO, Z. (1994a) The Press and Democratic Struggles. IN MAMDANI, M. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) *Uganda: Studies in Living Conditions, Popular Movements and Constitutionalism*. Vienna, JEP. p. 410.

Munno remained largely a-political until the 1950s when it started commenting on political developments. This commentary continued throughout its publication and had a wide readership because *Munno* was known for being the most effective news source for gathering information from around the country. While other papers struggled with sending journalists to remote regions, *Munno* relied on an extensive network of priests to provide news.

astutely used the paper to launch his radical campaign on behalf of the Bataka, the former ruling class in Buganda, over land appropriation.

In the 1920s the political African press came into its own and was driven by a few strong intellectuals such as Bussedde who became the first editor of *Sekanyola* (1920), a Lugandan monthly that was the first paper to be owned and edited by Ugandans. It was published in Nairobi by a group of Bugandan clerks, teachers and printers who were critical of the ruling Bugandan chiefs who had agreed to accept the British protectorate government in exchange for land. From the outset *Sekanyola* proposed to be different from the church papers and focus on "African grievances" which were neglected in the press. In his first editorial Bussedde argued that the newspaper was to stress:

> The issues affecting Buganda... and having seen how rulers and chiefs treat the poor people who work without pay under laws which seek to drain them of blood... I have come to the conclusion that there are some countries which are happy to see the suffering of the poor people (bakopi)... my role will be to highlight these issues so that we can understand them and learn from those experiences.[401]

Reaction to *Sekanuyola* was hostile, particularly on the part of the Buganda Youth Association, which was comprised largely of the sons of the chiefs.

For the most part the press was not seditious and the British government was uncharacteristically lenient.[402] Charges were brought against the editors but Justice Guthrie Smith argued that he did not want to cripple or discourage "such a laudable enterprise as a Native newspaper". He articulated the classic British justification of a free press in a democratic society arguing that the press:

> is entirely legitimate even though it may involve attacks on the policy of the government and Public Officials. The law recognises the full liberty of the

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[401] Ibid. p. 413.

[402] There were times papers such as *Sekanyola-* which later became *Gambuze* in 1928, *Munyonyozi* (*The Explainer*, also edited by Bussedde in 1922) or *Dobozi Ily Buganda* (*Voice of Buganda*) among others, did exacerbate tensions between groups. The Indian community was a particular target and encouraged the Indians to forge an uncomfortable alliance with the Young Buganda that responded to the arguments presented in *Sekanyola* with an article in the *Uganda Herald* supporting the Indians as an integral part of Uganda's development. Despite urging by the *Herald* and other communities to charge *Sekanyola* with sedition there was little that could be done as long as Bassude remained in Nairobi. At the same time, however, there seemed little inclination to bother pressing charges. The first time an East African newspaper was charged with libel was in 1926 when Bassude and his colleague Joswa Kate Mugema were found guilty for criticizing the Buganda treasurer for inefficiency and urging his replacement with someone that was familiar with economics. SCOTTON, J. F. (1973) The First African Press in East Africa: Protest and Nationalism in Uganda in the 1920's. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 211-228.

> subject to comment on and criticise the conduct and motives of public men, and it cannot be doubted that this is an advantage to the community and that, although injustice may often be done and though public men may often have to smart under the keen sense of wrong inflicted by hostile criticisms, the nation profits by public opinion thus freely brought to bear on the discharge of public duties.[403]

This ruling helped to set a precedent for press freedoms as it suggested that, at least for the time being, a free press was justifiable in a colonial situation.

Towards the end of the 1920s and throughout the 1930s a more anti-colonial and militant African press emerged. By the 1940s several independent organisations that were opposed to colonial rule were also involved in publishing newspapers to put forward their arguments.[404] Growing pressure on the Buganda Government from the intelligentsia and increasing tensions between the colonial regime and the Buganda government led to a series of grievances and demands made by the Kabaka in 1953 including the end of the East African federation; the transfer of Buganda's affairs back to the colonial office from the foreign office; a date for the self-government for Uganda; and the cessation of Buganda representation at Legco. The colonial government responded by forcing Edward Muteesa, the Kabaka, into exile until 1955 while the newspapers vigorously condemned this 'arrogant' action. This move, however, also galvanised the intelligentsia into pressuring for Africanisation of the civil service and papers such as the *Uganda Times*, established in 1956, led this protest.

During the late 1950s greater divisions within the press appeared as the struggle for independence intensified. Nationalist politicians often based their factions on religion or nationality and newspapers followed suit mirroring similar divides. Communism, the church and the Bugandan struggle for an independent state were all

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[403] Ibid. p. 219.

[404] The Ugandan Growers Co-operative run by Daudi Mukubira published *Buganda Nyaffe*, a newsletter in which he argued that that the colonial regime was re-enslaving Africans. During the workers strike and the agrarian agitation in the 1940s, newspapers played an important role in articulating the demands of the strikers. There was also an increasing tendency among a growing intelligentsia and middle class to confront the colonial government over social and political issues that affected them specifically- whether it be having access to European only bars or not being discriminated in government posts- rather than a project of emancipation for the Ugandan population as a whole. Soon after, the *Uganda Post* and the *Uganda Express*, published in English by JW Kiwanuku, began to put forward the arguments for self-rule. GARIYO, Z. (1994a) The Press and Democratic Struggles. IN MAMDANI, M. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) *Uganda: Studies in Living Conditions, Popular Movements and Constitutionalism.* Vienna, JEP.

political forces that not only impacted the development of political parties but the press as well.

The Uganda National Congress (UNC) led by Milton Obote, which emerged from a split with the United Congress Party (UCP), was particularly adept at using the press to advocate its political agenda. *Emambya Esaze*, edited and published by Paulo Muwanga and Damulira Mukiibi, attacked the colonial regime and advocated a pan-African agenda. *African Pilot*, with which Muwango was also involved, published similar articles demanding immediate independence. Both papers strongly pushed for the resignation of the Buganda representatives and criticised non-Buganda members of the Legco 'foreigners' dividing people along ethnic lines. In addition, the press sustained the 1959 consumer boycott which was directed largely at Asian dukawallahs. While some papers and political parties such as the Democratic Party (DP) (and thus *Munno*) opposed the boycott, many of the papers such as *Uganda Empya* and *Emambya Esaze* were supportive.

Buganda nationalism also fractionalised the press.[405] The Catholic Church, which supported the DP, used the press as a way to further its interests.[406] As independence and the first election neared, the Church was able to put its vast organisational network behind the party it supported. Through papers like *Munno*, the *West Nile Catholic Gazette* (which was published in Gulu and circulated in the Northern and western Nile provinces), *Lobo Mewa* and *Agetereine*, the Church attempted to divide the nationalist struggle further along religious lines. *Munno*, in particular was critical of other nationalist group, such as the Uganda People's

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[405] *Munno*, the *Uganda Express* and the *Uganda Argus* also became involved criticizing the Buganda publishing strong commentary. The *Uganda Argus*, which was started in the mid-1950s, was part of the influential Eastern African newspaper group, including Kenya's *Standard*, that was generally opposed to the African's political struggles. There were of course nuances in all of the arguments these papers were putting forth- it was not simply for or against but each one was supporting the vested political interest of its supporters over this complex issue. Ibid.

[406] The Catholic Church, for example, certainly contributed to the victory of Benedicto Kiwanuka, a Catholic member of the DP party, who won the first general election by beating Obote, a protestant, of the UPC. Indicative of the discourse within the press at the time, an article in the catholic paper, *Leadership*, noted:

> The leader of the beaten party, Mr. A. M. Obote, well known to our readers ascribed the overall majority of his opponents to the active participation of a religious domination. The explanation lies in the open attacks which Mr. Obote made in Northern Province (sic!) against the church. No wonder now if Catholics want to defend their faith and their institutions and they have done it with the ballot.
> As quoted in Ibid. p. 447.

Congress (UPC) arguing that they were leaning towards communism and had contacts with countries such as Russia or China. The Catholic papers were primarily circulated within Catholic schools and warned voters against the non-Catholic parties.[407]

It is difficult to assess the contribution of the press to democracy in the run up to the first general election. It was divided and exacerbated factional tensions. The intelligentsia and middle class, who were the nationalists, used the media to advocate for their immediate goals and desires, which were often different from those of the peasant and working classes. The political agenda diverged from the economic one and was clouded and distorted in the press as it was often each faction just seeking to rid the colonialists to pursue their own privileges. Within this environment the media entered independence and the post-colonial period. The trends of the 1940s and 1950s when the press was vibrant and dominated by the church, political activists and politicians, continued to some degree, but almost all of the papers that had appeared during this period faded by the mid-1960's.

1.2 Debating a new role for the press in the post-colonial period

In 1962 Uganda gained independence and Milton Obote became Prime Minister. As this was the first period Obote ruled Uganda, it is usually referred to as the Obote I government. Hyden and Okigbo refer to this period as the 'first wave of democracy',[408] as it provided sufficient space for some of the continent's most dynamic magazines like *Transition* to appear.

During the first few years of the Obote I government there were major debates in parliament as to what the role of the media should be. The *Uganda Argus* followed these discussions and would regularly update readers on the different sides. Much of the debate sounds familiar to the discussions that occurred when Museveni first came to power. On December 11, 1964, for example, Mr. Alex Ojera, Minister of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, was quoted by the *Uganda Argus* as saying

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[407] Ibid.
[408] HYDEN, G. & OKIGBO, C. (2002) The Media and the Two Waves of Democracy. IN HYDEN, G., LESLIE, M. & OGUNDIMU, F. (Eds.) *Media and Democracy in Africa*. New Brunswick, Transaction.

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> Many times the government had allowed the press to criticise what it was doing: it did not mind criticism as long as it was true and constructive, but when it was aimed at destroying the unity which had been built in the country, or when it tried to divide people on tribal or religious grounds to boost a political party it would not be allowed in Uganda.[409]

It was, however, the government that was to judge what could be considered 'constructive'. Reflective of the times, the government also argued that the press should focus on issues of modernising the country and thus development reporting should take precedence over politics.[410]

An article in the *Uganda Argus* also raised the question of whether a free press should have a role in a one-party state. Jenkins Kiwanka reported on answers to this question during a debate that occurred during this period:

> The answers ranged from counter questions as to what the questioner meant by a 'Free Press' to a suggestion that the press in Africa should always compromise on 'national issues' if it were to continue to exist under a one-party system. A member of the panel asked what sort of newspapers the African public wanted to read. "Are they interested in such papers as published in countries like America and Britain?"
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> "We cannot afford at this stage of our development to have newspapers of the type published in Western Europe," replied one of the participants. "Our governments are engaged in economic reconstruction and should not be bothered with undue criticism," said another. One of the Ugandans at the seminar pointed out that he was convinced Africa could afford a free press, but that what was required of the press was to be 'responsible'. When the question of who defines 'constructive criticism' was raised, the answer was, 'the government'. But politicians the world over with their sensitiveness to criticism could hardly be expected to give a fair judgment....[411]

While initially there was some scope and relative freedom of the press under Obote I, in 1966 a state of emergency was declared and Uganda became a one-party state with Obote as President.

During this period, however, within the government there was also the unique emergence of *The People* newspaper, a commercial paper started by Obote's UPC with a mandate to support the party's ideology and foster a sense of nationalism. Because of its connections, the paper had extensive news coverage. The interesting issue around *The People* is the extent to which it was editorially independent from the

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[409] SSEKEBA, D. (2006) The Press in Uganda, 1900-2000. Kampala.

[410] TABAIRE, B. (2007) The Press and Political Repression in Uganda: Back to the Future? *Journal of Eastern African Studies,* 1, 193-211.

[411] SSEKEBA, D. (2006) The Press in Uganda, 1900-2000. Kampala.

government and, as will be elaborated later in the chapter, the extent to which it may have served as a 'model' for *The New Vision*. Some argued that it was tightly controlled but others held that neither the UPC nor Obote intervened in the editorial content. Eventually it criticised the UPC government as well as members of parliament and senior public officers. The most prominent editor of *The People* was Daniel Nelson, a British journalist who had been working for the *Uganda Argus*. He took up the post after the first appointed editor failed to take up the position and the second one, Fred Kakembo, a lawyer, left for a magistrate position. Nelson stayed until 1969 and the paper declined after Idi Amin came to power in 1971.

1.3 The university press

At the same time, there was sufficient space during the Obote I period to allow for some of the best publications in Africa to evolve and flourish, particularly among students. Perhaps the best academic institution on the continent at the time, Makerere University was a dynamic environment for visiting scholars as well as young, progressive and outspoken students and journalists. In 1961, Rajat Neogy, a Ugandan of Indian ancestry, returned from his undergraduate studies at the University of London and started *Transition*. This magazine characterised the enthusiasm and optimism of the times. *Transition* drew on other examples of vibrant African publications addressing the process of decolonisation, including *Drum* in South Africa and *Black Orpheus* in West Africa. The combination of literary commentary and political writing was, however, a new approach for a magazine on the continent. Neogy emphasised that the present was a time for social integration and the acceptance of all races - European, African and Indian. The first few issues focused on this topic of race. But soon articles started focusing more on themes such as the relevancy of the one-party state to African democracy and the role of liberation parties, written by prominent figures such as Julius Nyerere. Within a few issues *Transition* became the most influential magazine on the continent and a platform for debate and discussion from contributors of different nationalities. It was a forum for communicating between Africa's intellectual and political leaders. Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thoing'o as well as American writers such as Martin Luther King Jr., James Baldwin and Langston Hughes all contributed

influential pieces. From the beginning, the future President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, was an associate editor and contributor.[412]

Transition flourished until 1968 after which the Ugandan press declined steadily as journalists were imprisoned and tortured and the media was restricted. Beyond Obote's state of emergency from 1966 to 1968 there were ominous signs of political repression across the continent, including the coup against Kwame Nkrumah and the Biafran war which did not bode well for the future of publications such as *Transition* that were continent-wide forums for debate and dialogue.

In the 32nd edition of *Transition* there were several articles directed at the Ugandan government that pushed Obote too far. Two articles particularly irritated the government, the first was by p'Bitek who noted that "the most striking and frightening characteristic of all African governments is this: that without exception, all of them are dictatorships, and practice such ruthless discriminations as to make the South African apartheid regime look tame".[413] The second, by long-time Uganda nationalist Abubukar Mauyanja even received a direct response from the head of Obote's secret police. Mauyanja argued that Obote's new constitutional proposals were "illiberal, authoritarian, and dictatorial…. They provide for the concentration of excessive, autocratic, and dangerous powers in the hands of one man."[414]

October 18, 1968 was the last issue from Uganda. The government had been growing increasingly autocratic for years so the closure of the magazine and arrest of Neogy on sedition was no surprise. When Neogy was released from prison he moved to Ghana, where KA Busia had recently been elected, in an effort to continue publishing. However, when Busia's government was overthrown in 1972 Neogy decided to relinquish control of the magazine to Wole Soyinka rather than risk another round of incarceration and persecution. For numerous reasons the magazine unfortunately did not survive long. [415]

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[412] VAZQUEZ, M. C. (1997) An African Dilemma. *Transition*, 6-15.

[413] As quoted in Ibid. p. 11.

[414] Ibid.

[415] Henry Lewis Gates Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah re-launched *Transition* in the US in 1991. Wole Soyinka serves as chairman of the editorial board. The magazine draws on the tradition of *Transition* and publishes on international issues ranging from poetry to politics. As stated on their website, there is a strong focus on contributions from people of colour. See http://www.transitionmagazine.com.

Another major blow to *Transition* came from abroad. Unbeknownst to Neogy, the Paris-based Congress for Cultural Freedom that had been financially assisting the magazine was in fact receiving funding from the CIA. While some critics of *Transition* had all along seen the magazine as indicative of the American liberal democratic ideology, in contrast to a communist one, this confirmed suspicion that the contributors were pushing an agenda. Nevertheless, the legacy of *Transition* was an important one and certainly inspired later generations of African journalists and writers. As Wole Soyinka commented, *Transition* was "Africa's first forum of intellectual and artistic eclecticism".[416] And importantly it engaged governments and politicians. Nelson Kasfir, an academic at Makerere who previously had written for *Transition*, noted that "everybody was talking about it and, therefore, it received much greater audience than even its circulation would indicate. It generated comments in newspapers, politicians responded. It did what a magazine should do: excite debate on issues".[417] This engagement between the press and politicians set a precedent that later emerged during Museveni's time when journalists and society expect politicians to respond both to and within the press on criticisms and government policy.

1.4 Dark Days

After seizing power in a military coup in 1971, Idi Amin ushered in the 'dark days' for Uganda in almost everyway - including for the media. Hypocritically, a reason he gave for seizing power was that Obote did not respect freedom of expression and he wanted to re-establish a space for the independent media. While he suspended much of the constitution, he did initially retain the portion about freedom of expression and the press. Amin even established a School of Journalism. The new Attorney General argued that the previous government had fallen because it had stifled the expression of opinion such that it "ceased to be in touch with the needs and aspirations of the people", arguing that "Uganda's journalistic history is at a turning point" and that the previous government only tolerated reporting that it wanted to hear

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[416] As quoted in TABAIRE, B. (2007) The Press and Political Repression in Uganda: Back to the Future? *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 1, 193-211. p. 196.
[417] As quoted in Ibid. p. 199.

which led to dull reporting.[418] These ideas of a free press clearly did not come to fruition.

The same year, the Asians were expelled from Uganda and the *Uganda Argus* was nationalised for endeavouring to explain why there was no sugar in the country and how the shortage was connected to the factories that were unable to meet production targets. The paper was accused of working for imperialist interests and being in conflict with the needs of the government; after being nationalised it became the *Voice of Uganda*. Amin soon took over the role of Minister of Information and banned all newspapers for 'a certain period or indefinitely'.[419] The journalists at the *Voice of Uganda* became government employees and were ordered to print every word of Amin's speeches. It was common to find Amin's photo a dozen times in the same paper and if he gave the same speech twice in one day, it would appear exactly that way - twice. Amin even went so far as to suggest that television editors or news readers be dismissed if they presented shortened versions of his speeches.[420]

1.5 Surviving

By 1973 the few British journalists that remained were quickly ordered to leave the country and the last independent papers were closed. The editor of *Munno*, Father Clement Kiggundu, was murdered, and the government shut down the paper for being 'a confusing agent'. *The People* was also closed for not following the strict guidelines of Amin's propaganda campaign. Journalists that continued to operate during this period can be described as 'the survivors' similar to the journalists under Mengistu. Like their Ethiopian counterparts, many of these journalists were trained overseas and highly qualified.

Ben Bella Ilakut was a prominent journalist during this period. In the following extensive excerpt from his oral history, of which the length is essential in doing justice to understanding the difficulties typical of his generation, he describes his experience as editor-in-chief of the government paper, the *Voice of Uganda*, under Idi Amin:

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[418] SSEKEBA, D. (2006) The Press in Uganda, 1900-2000. Kampala.
[419] Interview: Ben Bella Ilakut.
[420] Ibid.

I was the editor-in-chief, but I ran into a lot of problems because... what we call the splash, the main story in the newspaper, was all about Idi Amin. And if you made any other story the main story in the newspaper, you had a lot of problems. My colleagues fled. Some of them were killed. Others just disappeared. We didn't know where they went. So it was very, very trying during Idi Amin's time.

The Uganda Argos became Voice of Uganda. It was nationalised...either in December or in...November 72, when the announcement was made that we have gotten rid of the imperialists and we have taken over and the Uganda Argos' new name is Voice of Uganda, the voice for Ugandan people to speak out here. We didn't... know at the beginning [what it meant] but if you have a rough idea of about Ethiopia, you know what it means to be ruled by a military dictatorship. We didn't. Obote had become intolerable so people welcomed him [Idi Amin].

[In 1974] I was now the full editor of Voice of Uganda. There were very critical times between Uganda and Tanzania because Obote was living in Tanzania, and Idi Amin was always talking against Tanzania and President Julius Nyerere.... So one day, the main story had come from the Ministry or from the office of the President, they used to send stories direct form the office of the President and then we were not supposed to edit anything. You had to put it the way it had been. So... the story came and in the morning there was a bit of an error saying that Idi Amin yesterday raped Nyerere. We liked to use the word rapped – R-A-P, means to criticise, to attack, but when it was in the ...in the past tense, you have to have double P, rapped. If you have single P, it means raped. So the story came out that Idi Amin yesterday raped Nyerere. My God! Somebody drew Idi Amin's attention to the spelling. They said that you raped Julius Nyerere! So he said, what does that mean? They said you slept by force with another man called Julius Nyerere. My God! They say...go and get the editor <u>NOW</u>. That was between five and six in the morning. So they came to my house not very far from here, and I'm not married at that time, so they knocked at the door and when I looked I saw some people peeping, and they had caps, the army caps. I had a girlfriend who had come the previous day and she said, 'I think we are in trouble'. I said, 'Can you go and open the door, and if they ask for me, you say I'm in the bedroom', so she went and opened the door, and then they said, 'we want Ben Bella, is he around?' She said 'yes, he's inside, you know, he's still sleeping'. 'Tell him to get up, the old man wants to see him', meaning Idi Amin. So she came and whispered this to me. So I told her 'go and tell them that I'm going to take bath'. But they said 'he should not take bath he should get dressed right now'. So I dressed in a white suit and a white shirt and a white tie, and black platform shoes. At that time the fashion was platform shoes, you become taller. I'd just come back from the United States remember so I came with a number of pairs of shoes... I was more or less a teenager, although I was some thirty years old, and I liked a bit of fashion. So I wore these things and there were nine cars that escorted me to the office of the President.

So we went. We were using a lift to go to the fourth floor, there were only two lifts: one for the President, the other for the regular people. So we were in the big lift and we went in. And I was passing by the secretary's office, and I saw somebody who knew me who was my teacher in Secondary School. So he asked me in my language, 'what is the problem?' Before I

could answer, Idi Amin was at the door. Idi Amin was dressed in old medals and an air force cap.

When I entered the office of the President there were only two people. Idi Amin and another man- the hatchet man. The one who'd shoot at you without... producing a word, without shutting his eyes. So when I looked and ...a thought ran through my mind that I think I'm in trouble. So when I arrived he said, 'you are the editor?' I said yes, 'I'm the editor of *Voice of Uganda*'. 'Thank for you for the appointment', I said quickly. He said 'you are in trouble'. I said, 'what trouble?' because I have not read the paper. It was too early, we used to send copies later for me to look through. He said, 'now you're saying that I raped Nyerere'. I said 'no, not raped, it should be rapped. It is a mistake if it is rape'. He said...'look at what you say', they had underlined the word 'raped'. So what they did was they got a low stool, and they put the newspaper there, ...I think they had organised it as they were coming for me, but just put the newspaper on a low stool and then as I was looking started shouting at me at the top of his voice. 'How can you say that I raped Nyerere? You think I have got four wives and so many others all the Ugandan women are my wives, and you say that I raped Nyerere?'

So he is now here. So he is Idi Amin, the most feared man in the whole world, talking to me, Ben Bella, alone, while the other guy at the other corner is the hatchet man, the man who shoots at anybody. He killed the Archbishop at that particular time of Uganda. Who else have they killed in the office of the President? So I remained there, I could not get up, because Idi Amin was there. How can you get up with a killer hovering over you? So I remained like this for roughly one hour. But I was there and...then it clicked that this means you ... might not leave this place alive. Then the old stories of people being killed in the office of the President were in my mind. I thought I heard Idi Amin laughing over me because, remember I've got two Masters degrees from abroad, very high qualifications those days in Uganda. He was a guy who went to only one year at school. He went to... primary school, a year, never went anywhere beyond one year. The other guy is toying with the gun, I thought I'm dead. So... there is a connection between stress and your bowels, then I had diarrhoea. My stomach turned. I tried to squeeze myself so that I did not... release myself into the white suit...Remember I'm wearing a white suit! ... Then after some time it passed open, there was nothing I could do now, it was diarrhoea. And it came into these platform shoes over the white trousers, and when you have diarrhoea, you must also pee, it was a combination of these things. So I was like that for one hour. So he now told me that you can go, but I did not hear it, because my brain... during the torture so I could not hear anything. They have told me, you can now go, but I did not hear. Then he touched me, and I fell, the glasses flew, because I thought the bullet had hit me...I thought I saw Idi Amin laughing at me like a wizard. I think it was a part of the torture. Yes. I will never forget that.

....So my girlfriend heard them saying that we are going to the office of the President, and then she came and waited for me outside at the tree, so when ... later they helped me to get on my feet, he told me that you can now go, and I did not have my glasses, but I started walking.... I did not know what to do because the brain was not there any more. So I stood there. Now there were some military people sitting by the lift... bodyguards of Idi Amin. The stories were that if you missed to be killed in the office of the President,

you'd be killed in the lift, you'd be strangled in the lift, in the big lift by the soldiers, then they'd put you into a sack starting with the head. So ....I thought now this is the time when I'm going to be killed. So I remained there [in the elevator] with the door open nobody can kill you with the doors open. So when the other people pointed at me ...I thought that they were going to shoot at me. Remember, I've just come from torture, my brains had been hit, so I'm like a child. So they said, press the button for the doors to close.

That was the longest journey for me when I was alone in the lift. But then I happened to arrive on the ground floor. And I started to walk and...there was nobody. Now my girlfriend was calling me, here Ben, Ben, Ben. I thought I recognised that voice but I was a zombie, I was my own world. I'd gone through a lot of humiliation. Totally humiliated. The stains of the waste, the mucus.... Total humiliation. Remember, I'm [educated] so for me I knew I was learned. Most of the people were not. Idi Amin had not gone to school, so there is that.

...But I had that girlfriend of mine say, go to Kenya, go to Kenya, follow the railway line. So I started walking towards the railway station. Then I followed the railroad towards the Kenyan border, and I spent seven, eight, nine days, I don't even remember walking on the railway line. But I had to get away from the main road because there were times when Idi Amin used to release people, then they would follow you...grab you and you would disappear. So I have to follow this because you cannot go on a railway line with a car, because of the rail. So I followed that... in my suit. But when I got some way after two or three days my mind was restored. Then I got to remove the underpants and throw them away, at least because of the smell and stench, the poo-poo. After some time, on the other side of Kenya, on the Kenyan side I have my fellow tribes-people, so I told them of my story, they say OK we need to go to Nairobi and maybe that is where you are going to get a job or something to learn how to survive, because they had all heard about Idi Amin, So there was a girl, a friend of a friend from Makerere who booked a job for me at another Lonrho company in Kenya, the one they call now the *Standard*, and that's where I spent the next six years as a senior editor.[421]

Ben Bella has since returned to Uganda and is currently a trainer at *The New Vision* and teaches in the journalism department at Makerere sharing with his students his impressions of what it was like to work under Amin and Obote. His story resembles that of Negash who told of attempting to survive as a journalist under Haile Selassie and Mengistu. This survivor mentality, or at least the suffering that many journalists had to endure has undoubtedly affected the older and middle generation of journalists. At the same time, Ben Bella also acknowledges the benefits of hindsight in assessing the media during this period. He does not blame Idi Amin for what he was doing arguing:

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[421] Interview: Ben Bella Ilakut.

Idi Amin was fighting for his own survival. But I don't blame him for that. Especially when his tormentor…Nyerere of Tanzania had been mentioned in this story. And how do you explain to people who do not know about journalism that the errors are not intentional. So I don't hold him for anything, I mean those are the hazards of being a journalist. And so that's what I went through.[422]

And just as Mairegu Bezabih discussed the difficulties in understanding the nature of the Mengistu regime, Ben Bella argues that

Even when I was in London, Idi Amin had overthrown the government. You know, we didn't know what it meant at the time, especially in London, but then…when you are in a place like this, you really do not know, like how people here do not know what is happening in northern Uganda. You hear that there are so many peoples' houses being burned, children dying, I mean, children die every day, people commit suicide and that sort of thing. It is when you come to face this issue that you say…that is the truth. So it did not dawn on me, before this encounter with Idi Amin. When you are editing the story, you don't know what is real. For example, they used to say that people used to eat slippers, they were being fed slippers if they found you wearing slippers in the city centre, they would just get hold of that then they would make you eat the slipper. The reporters would get the stories. You talk about it, but it did not…it didn't click.[423]

That it took time for the violence and destructiveness of a regime to become clear is not unique to Ben Bella's case. Working in oppressive conditions shaped a generation of journalists. However, in the case of Uganda, compared to Ethiopia, a significant number of journalists were able to go to Kenya to practice their trade and continue growing in an environment less oppressive. They later returned with important skills gained in this more open media system.

1.6 Some light and ambiguity

It was not until 1979 that the independent press re-emerged. The period immediately after Amin's government was chaotic with a number of coups until the elections of December 1980 that Museveni claimed Obote stole and was one reason for going back to the bush. Just three days after Amin was thrown out of office, the *Uganda Times,* a continuation of the *Voice of Uganda*, was published. Many of the civil servants from the *Voice of Uganda* remained in their positions but members of the new government replaced much of the editorial staff.

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[422] Interview: Ilakut.
[423] Interview: Ilakut.

According to most informants and the observable improvement of press freedoms, the second Obote period was not as bad as Idi Amin's days (though Drake Ssekeba and other journalists have said it was almost the same). A number of political papers began publishing in support of different factions. *The Economy* and its sister, the Luganda weekly, *Mulengera,* for example, emerged to support the post-Amin administration but were soon banned. Similarly *The Citizen,* an official publication of the Democratic Party, was started to support the party's political campaign. While *The Citizen* was banned after the elections, *Munnansi,* which included both English and Lugandan articles, re-emerged and survived. *Ngabo* was one of the most well-known papers that started right after Amin was overthrown and managed to persevere through the Obote government. *Ngabo* was started solely by journalists and was the leading paper for a number of years. In 1984 Ssekeba, a journalist who returned from self-imposed exile in the UK to become one of the most prominent journalists during this period, started the *Star* in English. Both the *Star* and *Ngabo* were strongly associated with the Kabakaship.[424] It was, however, during this period that a number of the journalists that were to become most active under the NRM first started working in the media or became re-engaged (as was the case for Ssekeba).

While Obote's government was relatively more tolerant of the independent media than Amin's, the arrest, torture and murder of suspected rebels or NRM sympathisers was regular and had a chilling effect on the press. Charles Onyango-Obbo, for example, was a young aspiring journalist at the time who worked for the *Weekly Topic* from 1980 until Obote banned it in 1982 and later went on to found the *Monitor* and become one of the most prominent journalists of the NRM period. Onyango-Obbo described how he was rounded up in 1983:

> [In] the beginning of 1983 soldiers raided the house where we were living and they shot up the place and beat us up and they took us ... in a bus to this playground. At this time the war was going on, Museveni's war, so what they would do was they would line you up because they were trying to find either rebels or supporters among the population. So they line you up and then get these rebels or suspects from prison. So you would all file past the rebels and you would look them in the eye and shake their hands and then if a rebel decided that Charles was a sympathiser, he holds your hand and says 'he is one of us'. You are in this field of 500 or 600 people. And the most

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[424] Interview: Ssekeba.

frightening thing about this was that... if it was to be the end without a suspect pointing someone out they would take him back to prison and torture him, so these guys were really in a terrible state. That was a very bad experience, I really got disillusioned at that point and I just knew I had to leave.[425]

The situation was clearly difficult for journalists but some continued to struggle despite the publishing environment. It was challenging for commercial papers to sell news that solely praised the government, yet at the same time clearly supporting the NRM was not possible. As Drake Ssekeba describes:

> We were not that opposed... our aim was not to oppose the government. Our aim was to build the country and deliver the message of the masses, of the people, of the society. But whenever there was something good from the government, we'd highlight it. Now there came a time when actually it was difficult because... Museveni goes to the bush to start fighting the government.... Now there is a trend here, a funny trend: when you publish a newspaper and you only support the government, people will not even listen to you, even if you are a radio station, they won't bother. They will not read you... they will not buy. So we had a problem. First of all, of course, we didn't want to be a mouthpiece of the government, but at the same time we didn't want to be a mouthpiece of the people that were fighting against the government but we would balance.[426]

At the same time, just as Amin and the Obote governments gathered supporters by criticising the existing government's tolerance of dissenting voices and freedom of expression, when the NRM was fighting in the bush it regularly chastised Obote for his treatment of the press including both foreign correspondents and local journalists.

1.7 The National Resistance Movement (NRM) media in the bush

Apart from the government media and the few independent papers in Kampala, the NRM started its own publication, *The Uganda Resistance News*.[427] Eriya Kategaya, currently the Minister for East African Affairs, was coordinating the External Wing of the National Resistance Army (NRA) during the war. This branch was working on publicising the message of the struggle regionally and abroad. Part of the NRM strategy was to bring western journalists to the region, but it was also to

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[425] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[426] Interview: Ssekeba.
[427] Selected excerpts from the *Resistance News* are available in the publication Mission to Freedom. NRM SECRETARIAT (1990) *Mission To Freedom,* Kampala, The New Vision.

publish the positions and agenda of the NRM and offer an alternative system of governance by criticising the Obote government's policies. Kategaya explains:

> In the beginning, when the NRM was underground we didn't have a clear media strategy or public publicity. The first bulletin issued was in June 1981 just to announce that there is a war. In 1982 a group of NRM leaders went to London where they met Allison Miller from the *Times of London* and gave her an interview about what they were doing, what areas were controlled by the NRM. She was the one to coin the term the 'Luwero triangle' and was the first journalist to give the NRM exposure. Soon after, the *Resistance News* was established and published in Nairobi, and smuggled into Uganda. This publication carried a number of articles explaining why they were fighting and the rationale behind their armed struggle.[428]

While Kategaya was operating in the liberated zone, *The Uganda Resistance News* was not solely his responsibility. His colleague Matthew Rukikaire was based in Nairobi, where *The Uganda Resistance News* was published, and was on the fourth sub-committee of publicity and propaganda which was responsible for publicising the struggle and getting international support.

Concern for the liberation struggle's image and for the ways to employ the media to shape it, is not new; many guerrilla groups felt the same including the TPLF. However what distinguishes the NRM was the particular influence exercised on its leaders by ideologies of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa they were exposed to during the period they spent in Tanzania. The emphasis in *The Uganda Resistance News* included two important issues for the press system: the reproduction and referencing of articles specifically on the NRM struggle that were published (particularly in the West) during this period and the persecution of journalists under the Obote regime.

The journalists who visited the NRM in the bush were seen as a crucial conduit for disseminating information about the NRM struggle. William Pike, who later became editor of *The New Vision*, was one of a number of foreign journalists who not only was sympathetic to the struggle but also became an important ally for the NRM. Eriya Kategaya elaborates, "We contacted some people to come and be there physically... if you were in the bush you can give your stories and it is best to get someone independent to sing your song- its more credible."[429] Accuracy or

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[428] Interview: Kategaya.
[429] Interview: Kategaya.

understanding was not necessarily the strong suit of these journalists and it is interesting that despite the NRA's criticisms of inaccurate reporting recently, these articles were embraced. Some publicity was considered better than no publicity as illustrated by an article from 1983 that was given prominence in *The Uganda Resistance News* despite serious criticism of the journalist having misinterpreted the struggle:

> Sometime in the first quarter of this year, a foreign Correspondent visited the Liberated Zones of the National Resistance Army, the second foreign Correspondent to do so. His impressions were given wide coverage in numerous subsequent Articles in German Newspapers, including the following Article which appeared in *'Die Veld'* (The World), one of Federal Germany's biggest newspapers on April 22, 1983, at the very time that the Obote Regime was busy claiming to have "finished" the guerrillas. We reproduce here below, lock, stock and barrel, the Article of Hans Jorgen Germani...[430]

Despite the German correspondent's misinterpretation, his visit was still regarded as an important development. *The Uganda Resistance News* notes:

> Given Hans Germani's background, it is understandable that he should see the Uganda situation almost exclusively in terms of ethnic rivalry between natives. However, this traditional mould, so beloved of "anthropologists" decades ago, does not fit the Uganda situation. Therefore, while reproducing the Article in full, we have to state clearly that the struggle in Uganda is not between Bantus and Nilotics. It is a struggle against: fascist oppression, wanton murder, rape and other abuses of the democratic and human rights of Ugandans.[431]

At the time, the NRM was forgiving of what it views as the misinterpretations of international journalists, a stark contrast to more recent government expressions of hostility towards the supposedly false representations of the Ugandan political environment by foreign journalists.

International journalists within Uganda covering the Obote government were also seen as important in galvanising international support against him. Throughout *The Uganda Resistance News*, international articles where the correspondents may not have visited the movement in the bush are cited, critiqued and embraced as their own. In a *Uganda Resistance News* article in 1983 it is noted that "International News media are reporting daily occurrences backed by eyewitness' reports of

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[430] NRM SECRETARIAT (1990) *Mission To Freedom,* Kampala, The New Vision. p. 156.
[431] Ibid. p. 157.

atrocities by the Obote regime." They proceed to "quote some of the latest reports appearing in the Foreign Media, which are some of the proven cases of Obote's brutality". To take one example, *Uganda Resistance News* cites a *Times of London* article on 21 August 1983 reporting 'A huge influx of refugees is continuing to flow across the borders from Uganda, into southern Sudan's Province of Equatoria- in flat contradiction of the Kampala Government's claim to have "pacified its strife-torn Northern Region".[432] Regional newspapers, particularly *The Nation*, as well as African focused magazines such as *Africa Now* and *African Business* were also often cited for their important articles but priority was usually given to articles from the European press which were often reproduced in their entirety. It is evident that the NRM was clearly gathering strength from the idea that the international community was somehow aware of the 'human rights abuses' of the Obote government.

Tactically, Amin, Obote and Museveni found it useful to base part of their platform on condemnation of the previous leader's restriction of freedom of expression despite that they have then been guilty of similar actions themselves. That they would do so is significant and follows Francois de la Rochefoucauld's expression- 'hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue'. One example is particularly pertinent given the recent parallels with Canadian journalist Blake Lambert who was denied a re-entry visa for his reporting on the 2006 Ugandan elections and the NRM's current criticisms of the foreign media's reporting. The following extract from *The Uganda Resistance News*, under the title 'Obote Gags the Press', highlights the NRM's criticism towards the way Obote sought to silence international correspondents

> On Sunday, 13 of September, 1981, a Kampala-based Canadian journalist, Cameron Morton was put under house arrest in the suburb of Nakulabye... the official reason given by the Obote government is that Morton was a *persona non grata* according to a 1976 deportation order signed by Amin's government! Since Morton has been living in the country for the last 2 ½ years, nobody has been deceived by this smokescreen as to the real reasons behind his deportation. It is now common knowledge that the journalist had recently been aggressively and successfully investigating mass murders and atrocities committed by the Obote regime, particularly at Wakiso and Namanve in which scores of innocent civilians were brutally murdered.... Thus his deportation is clearly a crude attempt to gag the press and prevent information on Obote's atrocities from reaching the outside world. ... Morton

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[432] Ibid. p. 186.

is not the first foreign journalist to be sent packing out of the country by the Obote clique. Vice President Paulo Muwanga, while head of the Military Commission government, kicked out several correspondents including Nick Warall, Christabel King, June Dector and Robert Dietz, all of whom had been boldly reporting on UPC's gross manipulation of the stages leading to elections... Then when he [Obote] has shut up everybody, he will find and pay hirelings in foreign media to white-wash his murders; and he is already at work on this.[433]

The article goes on to give examples of the Obote government paying foreign journalists to misrepresent military activities.

In a later article, also in *The Uganda Resistance News* entitled "Obote's Contempt for the Press", Obote is accused of being "an absurd contradiction" full of "inconsistencies" as "he attacks and is critical of the foreign press but [he] is equally hostile of the local press". The article cites several newspaper articles from the *Daily Nation* in Kenya, concluding that

Ugandan President Milton Obote said that two American reporters who were beaten at an army base last week had failed to heed a warning...of course the Uganda People's Congress Government does not like foreign journalists.[434]

The following day's paper notes that at a political rally in Bushenyi, Obote said of the Western mass media "Western journalists coming to Uganda have biased views and in their writing distort the real state of affairs in Uganda". In *The Uganda Resistance News*, these incidents of persecution of foreign journalists and hostility towards their presence by the Obote regime are clearly condemned. The same editorial opens by arguing:

The story on the relationship between Obote's regime and the Press is a long and disconcerting one. It is a story of constant conflict- conflict generated as usual by the unpopularity of his regime and *non-partisan* World Press.... there is a tendency for the said government to refer to everything that appears in the Press about Uganda as 'Foreign Imperialist Propaganda' or as out-right 'Anti-African'.[435] (emphasis added)

Today, the NRM is sensitive to the reporting of foreign journalists usually arguing it is anything but 'non-partisan' and has established the Ugandan Media Centre in an effort to exert some control over the reporters.

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[433] Ibid. p. 36.
[434] Ibid. p. 102.
[435] Ibid. p. 102.

The Uganda Resistance News also highlighted the plight of local journalists criticising the Obote government for shutting down and censoring six newspapers. While there is an element of propaganda in *The Uganda Resistance News*, at the same time the NRM saw it as a sign of weakness that Obote's government was treating journalists so harshly. This would be a way, when they took power, to differentiate themselves from the UPC.

The NRM was soon to have this chance. On 27 July 1985 Bazilio Olara-Okello led a surprise coup that toppled Obote and installed Tito Okello as the leader of the new government. While Okello asked Museveni and the NRA to join a government of national unity and despite ongoing peace talks in Nairobi between the NRM and the government Museveni sought a military solution and continued his offensive towards Kampala. On 25 January 1986 the NRA overthrew Okello and the Museveni years began.

2. Press under the NRM

When the NRM came to power, one of the first things they did was suspend political parties and peaceful assembly.[436] The NRM, however, tolerated an independent press for several reasons: to provide some space for feedback and criticism as a check on public opinion; to allow opposition groups to feel a part of the process rather than going to the bush to fight; and, as a symbolic gesture, to suggest both domestically and internationally that the NRM was not as autocratic as its predecessors but represented a fundamental change. A final, important reason was the NRM's belief in the development of a civil society and open media as part of the Movement's style of democratic change.

The remainder of this chapter will elaborate the recent history of the press by focusing on its more influential segments such as the private *Monitor* and the government *New Vision*. Particularly in the early days of the papers, commentaries were the most important part of the newspaper where elites would increase their influence or status and even be appointed to key policy jobs. Newspapers have served

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[436] Legal Notice No. 1, Uganda Gazette, 1986.

as interpreters of political developments and the forum for elites to dialogue and, if not reach a consensus, at least have their perspectives heard.

2.1 The Government Press

2.1.1 The New Vision

As a government paper that has been relatively independent, *The New Vision* is an exception in Africa where dry press releases from Ministries of Information are the norm. Despite the important role it has had in shaping the Ugandan media and political environment, recent changes in leadership of the paper have threatened its status and are indicative of a worrying trend of government harassment towards critical voices.[437] Nevertheless, the influence of *The New Vision* has been, and continues to be, important.

The New Vision Corporation emerged from a cabinet meeting in early 1986. It was a manifestation of the NRM's belief that it was bringing a fundamental change or a 'new vision' not only to Uganda, but also to the entire African continent. The editorial policy was established by a legal statue that specifically stated that the paper should be national and publish criticism of the government without being an institutional opponent of the government. It is also clearly stated on the paper's website that "*The New Vision* is under no directive to publish praise of government."[438] *The New Vision* was intended to be like the BBC, that is a public institution rather than a government mouthpiece. As William Pike, the former Managing Director of *The New Vision* for twenty years, noted "I think it was part of the whole concept of fundamental change, that you could have an [independent] media, including a government newspaper, because after all the BBC's independent so why shouldn't an African newspaper be independent".[439]

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[437] William Pike, along with his colleague David Sseppuuya, have recently been forced out by the government for not aligning the paper closely enough with the government. These changes do not bode well for the future of the paper and will be elaborated later in this section. The role of *The New Vision* under Pike's leadership has been an essential dimension in shaping the media system under the NRM.

[438] Available at: http://www.newvision.co.ug/V/
Editors and Managing Directors have sometimes been asked by the government to guarantee this in writing, as was the case for William Pike in his appointment as CEO. More recently Els De Temmerman made a similar request for her appointment as editor.

[439] Interview: William Pike.

Pike arrived from the UK at the request of the Ugandan government and became the Managing Director in July 1986. This was several months after James Tumusiime and his colleagues, including the controversial Teddy Sseezi-Cheeye, launched the paper.[440] Pike was not the government's first choice as an editor. Bakulumpagi Wamala, an elderly cadre who served as the National Secretary for Information and Public Relations of the NRM was first offered the position which he declined to accept the post of Ambassador to the UN instead. He was ill, however, and passed away by the paper's eighth issue. The second person approached was Wafula Oguttu but he refused saying that a government paper could never be independent. Oguttu later went on to start the *Monitor* newspaper. Pike was the government's third choice. He had met Museveni and the other NRM leaders in the bush while he was reporting for a magazine based in London and had worked hard to be a friend of the Movement by providing exposure and coverage to British and European audiences. Pike embraced the request to return to Kampala. He found intellectual solidarity between the agenda of the NRA/M and the magazine he was working for in the UK that was attempting to be a 'third world *Economist*' with a liberal developmental agenda.

The beginnings of *The New Vision* were humble: a few desks, some Russian computers, one telephone line and no money to pursue stories. The journalists had to walk everywhere. The first copy of *The New Vision* was eight pages and came out under intense political pressure as parliament had decided that there was to be an independent government paper and the Ministry of Information subsequently demanded it to be produced very quickly.

2.1.1.1 The Agenda of The New Vision

Only one copy of the first *New Vision* is known to exist which is held in the Corporation's library. The first editorial of Volume 1 set the agenda of the paper, which did not change much in the months after Pike took over. It is entitled "We will contribute to this change" and declared that

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[440] Sseezi-Cheeye soon started one of the most notorious muckraking sheets, *The Uganda Confidential*, and has also been associated with various controversies both in and out of government. Sseezi-Cheeye was also part of the group that founded the *Monitor*.

"New Vision" has been chosen as the name of the paper at this point in time because our motherland has undergone a fundamental change following over two decades of brutal regimes, economic stagnation and social and political upheavals as well as corruption, inefficiency and neglect in the highest reaches of administration.... At this time when we enter the threshold of renewed hope, *"The New Vision"* will count on the goodwill of all Ugandans in its contribution towards national unity, reconciliation and patriotism. Since the main problems which beset us in the past were man-made, it should not take us too long to solve them if we adhere to the NRM political programme. Indeed this may well be the last chance in a lifetime for every mature Ugandan to contribute to our nation's stability, development and prosperity.[441]

The editorial also emphasises ideas of human rights and freedoms by arguing that that while it is important for an "individual to exercise his human rights in a free and peaceful atmosphere" it must be done "without losing sight of his obligations to ensure that freedom is not lost again."[442]

The first *New Vision* edition attempted to explain the NRM to the public. The headline was "Government to Curb Inflation" and there was a front page article explaining the ban on political party activities, including the issuance of press and public statements, wearing colours of political parties and displaying party flags, and other symbols. It claimed that actions were necessary to create a grace period in which the government could develop a government of national unity.

Subsequent early editions tended to focus on government propaganda while promoting unity and consensus. The second edition, for example, had a lengthy article prominently placed on page three arguing how the Ten-point programme was "A simple cure for a deadly disease".[443] The third paper's editorial led with a "Hats off for the NRA"[444] congratulating and saluting the Movement for its successful liberation in a propagandist tone. There was also a front-page advert from the editors and staff of the paper congratulating the NRM/A for "liberating the whole country from the fangs of allied fascist armies" and telling them that "The blood you shed for this noble mission should remain a bond to unite all Ugandans against any dictators and advocates of disunity".[445]

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[441] 19 March 1986, Editorial, "We will contribute to this change", *The New Vision*, p. 4.

[442] Ibid.

[443] 2 March 1986, James Tumusiime, "Ten-point programme: A simple cure for a deadly disease", *The New Vision*, p. 4.

[444] 2 April 1986, Editorial, "Hats off for the NRA", *The New Vision*, p. 4.

[445] 2 April 1986, Advertisement, *The New Vision*, p. 1.

Despite the pro-NRM propaganda, *The New Vision* represented a new start. The editors did not have to struggle with reforming a large bureaucracy such as Radio Uganda or Uganda television. As a self-accounting and profit-oriented company there was a strong incentive to increase revenue through reaching new readers. It was also a completely local, self-sustaining initiative. As Pike notes "the beauty of *The New Vision* was that it started from scratch, started with nothing, literally nothing. We had a Russian printing press that we inherited and that really was our only asset but we managed to get going".[446] But crucially, as Pike points out

> the newspaper was created from nothing so [the government] didn't have any vested interest in how it was run whereas going back to 86... or 85 when there was the coup... What do you do in a coup? You rush to take control of the radio station. You announce that there has been a coup... you wouldn't have given up control of radio but a newspaper wasn't such a big deal.[447]

Thus, it was relatively easier for *The New Vision* to fulfil its stated goal of being "a forum for public debate and dialogue on the affairs of the country"[448] rather than a large bureaucracy run by civil servants.

2.1.1.2 Independence

Throughout its history *The New Vision* has demonstrated an ability and freedom to criticise the government within certain bounds. The degree to which *The New Vision* is independent from government influences is debatable and is contested by many, including journalists that work there, and had long been an issue before Pike was forced to leave. The paper has often been accused of being a government mouthpiece, not least by the political opposition and other business competitors such as the *Monitor*. There have also been concerns expressed by international media rights groups about the freedom of the paper and diplomats regularly approach Pike to ask whether or not "the press in Uganda is free" and his paper in particular. Pike's usual response is

> What story do you think should have been in the paper, not just *The New Vision*, but all the newspapers, the totality, that has not been in the paper? What stories do you think we should have covered? And sometimes they say, well we think you should publish more criticism of Museveni, and I said—

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[446] Interview: William Pike.
[447] Interview: Pike.
[448] 19 March 1986, Editorial, "We will contribute to this change", *The New Vision*, p. 4.

but you see, that's opinion. What factual stories? And then they struggle to come up with things... so most things come out now....[449]

David Mukholi, editor of *The Sunday Vision* says that "total independence would be far fetched"[450] and most people agree that there are a few areas that are deeply sensitive with the government, particularly Museveni's personal life (especially his wife) and military activities including the war in the north and the Ugandan army's involvement in the DRC. According to *The New Vision* editor-in-chief David Sseppuuya, the government and different ministers do call up to suggest handling a story more sensitively or to deny allegations, but he claims that the only time a story did not run was a 1992 report about a CIA listening post in the west of Uganda when the Mobutu regime was collapsing. The Americans had phoned and asked for the story not to be published and the paper complied.[451]

For many years *The New Vision* enjoyed unusual independence for a government paper and some journalists, such as Maurice Ssekawungu, associate editor of *The New Vision*, have argued it is freer than most private papers in other countries. It has been suggested this is because William Pike, as an expatriate, has been able to function above the fray and deflect government intervention. James Tumusiime, editor of the *Weekly Observer* argued that "if it had been in the hands of a local it would have been different". And Wafula Oguttu, has noted: "The only reason *The New Vision* is independent is because William is a foreigner. William convinced Museveni that if he wants propaganda, it has to be believable". In terms of political coverage, Pike argues, this is not necessarily the case.

> What I've noticed about the *Monitor* is that a lot of the problems they have are due to recklessness... they were at one point closed down and it was essentially over a story of a helicopter that they claimed had crashed, yet it had not crashed. Now, after you know it is very clear that no helicopter had crashed, why don't they just apologise? But they didn't want to apologise, they wanted to kind of rough it out, so to me, you see, their problem was not that the editor Wafula, at that stage the Managing Director, was a Ugandan. The problem was that they didn't apologise... there were certain kinds of mistakes, basic mistakes. If you have made a mistake, apologise. The faster you do it, the better.[452]

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[449] Ibid.

[450] Interview: David Mukholi.

[451] Interview: David Sseppuuya.

[452] Interview: Sseppuuya.

But in terms of editorial political bias, being an expatriate has had some impact, mostly for the better. As Pike elaborates:

> In terms of corruption, Ministers or politicians feel embarrassed to try to pressure you to give them kickbacks... because we run this place. We don't get government subsidies, and it's a very profitable company. We don't get squeezed financially by Ministers.... A couple of times Ministers did try but they've always backed off and haven't pushed us very far and I think that is an area where a Ugandan might have had problems.[453]

Similarly, being an expatriate has provided some protection against regular accusations of tribalism or malicious intent although he has been occasionally accused of both:

> People can sometimes misread your motives if you're Ugandan. Like if you dismiss someone they say it's tribalism. I've been accused of tribalism but obviously I'm not tribalistic, but if you are a Bugandan and dismiss an Acholi journalist or printer or someone who's been stealing, then the Acholi can say 'ah, these Buganda'... that kind of thing is really a chronic problem. And similarly, if you run a story about a certain Minister having stolen money... if you do an investigation story, if the editor was Ugandan they might attribute it to malicious activity.[454]

At the same time, however, journalists have noted that Pike was in a very privileged position. He basically operated at the level of government which allowed him substantial access as well as protection. Undoubtedly the fact that Pike was a foreigner affected how the paper was viewed but the idea behind *The New Vision*, and the media in general, as having a unique role in the single-party system had ideological depth beyond Pike himself, as the following chapters will show.

2.1.1.3 The future of The New Vision

Since this research was conducted in mid-2006 there have been substantial changes at *The New Vision* that do not bode well for its future. William Pike, who had been with the paper for the past twenty years, was recently forced to resign and his departure was joined by his very experienced editor-in-chief, David Sseppuuya. Robert Kabushenga, formerly of the Uganda Media Centre, has replaced Pike and Els De Temmerman, a Belgian journalist previously working with abducted children in northern Uganda, has replaced Sseppuuya.

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[453] Interview: Sseppuuya.
[454] Interview: Sseppuuya.

For many years Museveni was critical of *The New Vision's* coverage of certain issues and believed it was not favourable enough to the NRM. The February 1999 headline in the *Sunday Monitor* "Vision chief Pike's job on the line" is indicative. In this article, Andrew Mwenda argued that "Pike whose two year contract has been regularly renewed since 1989 is facing a lot of hostility from certain Movement bigwigs over the paper's perceived liberal policy towards reporting on the government".[455] The article goes on to suggest that Pike had fallen out with Eriya Kategaya (at the time Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Pike had been asking for a pay rise. At the time of this interview, Pike acknowledged that his position was in jeopardy and he has caused some controversy. He explained that

> There's a mixture of pride and then some people feel that, you know, it [*The New Vision*] should be reined in and it's our asset and why can't we use it

control...[456]

Finally, in a 2006 Independence Day speech Museveni publicly said "I am sort out *The New Vision*. *The New Vision* has been very useless for a very lon

journalist Blake Lambert.[458] During his tenure at the Uganda Media Centre, which is discussed in the coming chapter, Kabushenga was charged with improving the image of the NRM government - essentially a propaganda position. De Temmerman has a similarly sympathetic background with the NRM as she has been outspoken on the war in the north solidly supporting the NRM's military strategy there. Together these two appointments can be seen as steps in turning around *The New Vision* to fulfil Museveni's two major criticisms with the paper: the lack of positive coverage of the government and, what he regarded to be, the inappropriate coverage of LRA and government military activities in the north.

It is too early for a definitive verdict on the direction of the paper but there are other ominous signs. Kabushenga is a polarising figure. Gossip within the newspapers and on the radio have theorised on how he apparently came to crave power with suggestions ranging from neglect of his father to the unfaithfulness of his wife and consequent self-esteem problems.[459] Kabushenga had previously been stopped from writing political columns in *The New Vision* along with several other journalists over commentary critical of the government during the election in 2000.[460] After this period he made every effort to become closer to Museveni, a task that was not difficult because he is reportedly very close with Museveni's sons.[461]

What is clear, however, is that Kabushenga has escalated *The New Vision's* attacks on anyone who criticises the government. There is substantial risk that what was one of the most professional government papers on the continent will lose credibility. One example of the sort of debate and discourse Kabushenga is leading is an article he authored in *The New Vision* on May 10, 2007 entitled "Mayombo: There is More to the Mwenda, Kalyegira Bashing". Aside from referring to Andrew Mwenda and Timothy Kalyegira as "two leading opposition writers" he goes on to say "… this desecration dance is the usual lies and extremism of certain elements that pass for opposition politicians and commentators. All this, of course, in the *Daily*

[458] LAMBERT, B. (2006) Kabushenga Appointment Bodes Ill for Free Press in Troubled Uganda. *World Politics Review.*
[459] 9 March 2006 "Robert Kabushenga—the NRM's barking dog", *Radio* Katwe
Available at: http://www.radiokatwe.com/manenoyakabushenga031106.htm and interview: Illukut.
[460] MUCUNGUZI, J. (2000) New Vision Staff columnists banned. *The Monitor.* Kampala. P. 1-2
[461] Interview: Teddy Sseezi-Cheeye.

Monitor, a mouthpiece of the Forum for Democratic Change." Even more unprofessionally, Kabushenga goes on to say:

> There have been some questions, both in public and private about the sanity of these two. I suggest that we stop insulting people with mental health problems. People with mental health problems have no control over their actions. If and when they recover, they regret the social consequences of their unintended actions. These two are in full control of their faculties and have made a conscious if malicious choice to be bad and negative. Diabolic is perhaps a better description of who they are.
>
> Yet those who pay them have found it very useful to grant them sufficient space to do damage. Ordinarily, people with mental health problems are removed from society and confined or given medication to restrain them from causing problems. In this case, our two friends have carte blanche in the pages of the pro-FDC the *Daily Monitor*. It can only be because the decision makers in Kenya agree entirely with what they do and say. Nothing else explains why they are unrestrained in their extremism and lies. You will never see or hear from anyone else on such matters.
>
> I have therefore reached the conclusion that the people who commission this kind of expression actually have a different agenda, far from a journalistic one. Their real purpose is to sow discord in the politics of Uganda.[462]

Articles like this set an unprofessional, aggressive and polarising tone and are new ground for *The New Vision* by the Managing Director. There is dissent, however, from within the paper. On May 15, 2007 reporter Jasper Mpiriirwe responded in *The New Vision* arguing:

> Kabushenga states that the *Daily Monitor* is FDC mouthpiece. If Mwenda and Kalyegira are wrong in their columns (which I read), so is Kabushenga because he seems to attack and reduce a rival newspaper to a party pawn. I don't think that *The New Vision* is a government mouthpiece. Such judgments should be left to readers.
>
> One wouldn't expect a Chief Executive Officer of a leading newspaper, regardless of the degree of anger, to stoop so low and use the same method he seems to denigrate.[463]

While Pike is gone, his legacy is at least slowing down some of Kabushenga's attempts to convert the paper to more overt propaganda.

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[462] 10 May 2007, Robert Kabushenga, "Mayombo: There is more to the Mwenda, Kalyegira bashing", *The New Vision*
Available at: http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/459/564519/Kabushenga.
[463] 15 May 2007, Jasper Mpiriirwe, "Kabushenga, Mwenda, Kalyegira are the same", *The New Vision*
Available at: http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/459/565234.

2.2 The Private Press

A number of private papers have emerged only to disappear since the NRM came to power. The *Daily Topic* closed in November of 1994, along with others during this period including *Munno, The Star, New Mirror, Express Post, The Citizen* and *Financial Times*. The spate of paper closures largely had to do with financial difficulties, rising costs of newsprint and mismanagement.

As the most influential private paper, the *Monitor* has provided an important space for elite negotiation and engagement and set a precedent for other papers. After addressing the *Monitor*, and related papers,[464] this section will briefly mention a few of the more controversial papers that are part of the mix of the independent papers.

2.2.1 The Monitor

The *Monitor* was a paper that set the tone for the private papers of the NRM period in the same way that *Tobiya* served as a model for the private papers of its generation in Ethiopia. The development of the *Monitor* begins with the *Weekly Topic,* the paper from which the seven founders left to embark on the *Monitor*. The *Weekly Topic* was started after the fall of Idi Amin in August 1979 but was soon banned under Obote's UPC government primarily for refusing to formally welcome Obote back from exile and congratulate him on his electoral victory. The *Weekly Topic* was a leftist paper that focused on global and social issues.

A number of the *Monitor*'s key journalists such as Charles Onyango-Obbo first started their journalistic careers with the paper during this period. For Onyango-Obbo, this was during his university days, but not for long because, like many at the time, he was rounded up by the Obote government and consequently realised that it was necessary to leave Uganda. In 1985 Onyango-Obbo was visiting Uganda from Cairo where he moved when the coup by Tito Okello against Obote occurred. The owners of the *Weekly Topic* decided to start publishing again and invited Wafula Oguttu and Onyango-Obbo to come back in the positions of editor-in-chief and deputy editor. The two were the only former contributors in the country at the time.

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[464] Due to space constraints greater mention of politically influential religious papers, such as the *Weekly Message*, is excluded though they too have played important, and sometimes controversial, roles under the NRM government.

Circulation quickly rose to its 1979 level of 25,000 and the paper maintained its critical perspective.[465]

The three owners of the *Weekly Topic*, Bindandi Ssali, Kintu Musoke and Ali Kirunda Kivejinja, were involved with the NRM and not surprisingly the paper faced difficulties with Okello's government as they were accused of supporting the NRM's war. But this is also what made the paper influential as the owners were all part of the student organisation that was associated with the Movement. As Onyango-Obbo noted

> A lot of guys that owned this newspaper used to be radicals, independent activists and young people so the newspaper succeeded... and became so influential... you couldn't do anything and you couldn't function in Uganda without courting, without having them on your side.[466]

Not surprisingly the NRM worked very hard to court them and when the NRM seized power, the owners were all given prominent positions in the government: Ssali became Minister of Local Government, Musoke was appointed Prime Minister and Kirunda was Minister of Works, Transport and Communications. With these political appointments, the journalists at the *Weekly Topic* found it difficult to be critical of the government or maintain editorial independence. As Onyango-Obbo describes

> So the irony at that point *The New Vision*... had more freedom to cover the news than the *Weekly Topic* which was an independent paper. If *The New Vision* ran a story their motives were not in question but if the *Weekly Topic* ran a critical story the President would ask these guys in the cabinet how can you run a critical story about the government which you are a part of. They would never believe that these guys had nothing to do with the newspaper.[467]

Nevertheless, the editorial team fought to maintain their independence and continued to publish a number of stories that were critical of ministers or friends of the owners, despite pressures to avoid such topics. It was in this context that Oguttu was fired. He says that he "saw it coming" but perhaps the defining event was an editorial that he wrote criticising the president for merely lamenting corrupt members of the government when it was in his power to fire them.[468] A number of his colleagues decided to leave as well. As Oguttu describes:

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[465] Interviews: Oguttu and Onyango-Obbo.
[466] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[467] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[468] 23 July 1993, Onapito-Ekomoloit and Kyazze-Simwogerere, "One year later I feel satisfied-Wafula Oguttu", *The Monitor*, p. 8.

> When I announced that I was leaving they asked me what I was going to do. I told them that Charles Onyango-Obbo (then on a course at Harvard in the USA) and I had been discussing the possibility of starting a newspaper but nothing concrete was on the ground. Then I learnt that three of them, Richard Olal Tebere, James Serugo and John Kevin Ogen Aliro had, since the Serugo crisis in March, also had been thinking of starting a newspaper and that they had actually written some sort of editorial policy for it. So I said fine and we just fitted in.[469]

The *Monitor* was born in the following weeks and, according to the journalists, it was not necessarily designed as a political opposition paper as it is often portrayed but as new space for independent debate. In Onyango-Obbo's words,

> ...it was basically, in fact a long-term struggle for independence because at that point it was clear that ... it was really necessary to have a newspaper which was not holding political interests... some of the divisions in Uganda were really beginning to emerge... the division was getting deeper, corruption was on the rise and ... at that point the democratisation process was going a little bit too slowly and this non-movement thing, I mean the movement was actually... taking root as a conventional one party dictatorship... so we needed democratic ideas and in fact that's probably the best way to describe it.[470]

The six journalists from *The Weekly Topic*, along with Teddy Sseezi-Cheeye of *Uganda Confidential*, became the owners and sole shareholders. This was a relatively novel idea of ownership in Uganda and rumours circulated as to who the 'real' owner could be when the paper first started up. UPC tried to argue that it was owned by the Internal Security Organisation, while others claimed it was funded by the NRM Secretariat, but at the same time there were also rumours that it was close to the UPC.

The founding journalists claim they went out of their way to maintain editorial independence by not accepting any financial contributions, no matter how generous, from outsiders unless they were in the form of purchased advertising space. As Oguttu explains:

> When we started, Sudhir [of the de-licensed Crane Forex] wanted to come in with us and we almost let him or anyone else who wanted. Then we realised I would again cause us problems of accountability and political or economic pressure as at the *Weekly Topic*. It would be just going back to square one... yes many people wanted to come in and help us start up. But we didn't wish to be exploited again at some future date.[471]

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[469] Ibid.

[470] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

[471] 23 July 1993, Onapito-Ekomoloit and Kyazze-Simwogerere, "One year later I feel satisfied-Wafula Oguttu", *The Monitor*, p. 8.

So rather than starting with substantial capital, the owners agreed to go without pay for several months and recruited a group of students at Makerere to do internships with them to build the workforce. Through friends they managed to find a small room in a basement with a couple of desks and chairs from which to start working. In addition, as this group of journalists was the most prominent in the country they also successfully managed to recruit advertisers with payment in advance for the coming three months before the paper published.

The mission of the *Monitor* was partly political but it must also be seen in the context of the experience this group of editors had had at the *Weekly Topic*. Thus, in the first paper published on 31 July 1992 Oguttu summarised and introduced the mission statement of the new paper in his "A word from the publisher" on page one:

> The guiding virtues in our work shall be democratic practice, observance of human rights, unity of Ugandans in diversity, a clean environment, social welfare of all groups of people in Uganda, protection of the rights of minorities and the underprivileged like women, children, the disabled etc. and the promotion of all activities that contribute to the process of national development. We shall all the time stick to getting truth from the facts and we shall play the game fairly according to the rules and ethics of responsible journalism.
> We shall steer the *Monitor* free from any business and political manipulations aimed at serving narrow or selfish interests.
> We shall be independent of government and of all social, political, religious or economic groups or any individual.
> While the *Monitor* may hold its own position on any issue, it will allow all schools of thought and views to contend in debates as part of a national growth towards tolerance, respect for other people's opinions and greater democracy. We believe there must be room for every body to co-exist peacefully with others, irrespective of one's faith or ideological beliefs.[472]

This desire for independence was unanimous among all of the founding journalists but navigating the complex political relationship with the NRM was difficult especially as the *Monitor* soon came to be seen as 'the only opposition' in a one party state.

This was further complicated because in the beginning the *Monitor* was accused of ethnic bias. A number of papers were affiliated with political parties, which are often aligned with ethnic groups, and the *Monitor* was accused of being an 'O' affair. Names beginning with O are typically associated with the Nilotic people

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[472] 31 July 1992, "A word from the publisher", *The Monitor*, p. 1.

and when the journalists, including Wafula Oguttu, Charles Onyango-Obbo, Richard Olal Teberer and Kevni Ogen Aliro among others, broke away from the *Weekly Topic*, some perceived that this was because this group of people were no longer supportive of the NRM. These accusations recurred so often that Oguttu felt the need to address them in an interview in his paper. He argued,

> Some of us don't even think about 'Os'. These are very brilliant people. A fine crop of journalists.... Even when I was recruiting them in the *Topic*, I never considered the "O".... If you take me, for example, I have very few "O" friends, even from my nationality. My great political friends are not even Samia. So these things are said but there is nothing you can do about them.[473]

He went on to note that both William Pike who provided the first print runs on credit and Kassam Mumtaz who helped to find the premises for the *Monitor* were not 'Os'. The current ownership of the paper by the Aga Khan, and the fact that most of the founders have left the paper, dispels many of these accusations of the early days. While there may have been some tendency to have a number of 'Os' involved in the paper, it was actually owned by Easterners, Northerners and Baganda. The group did not include any Westerners (the region where Museveni is from and the group that is accused of having privileges to public contracts and jobs). Oguttu claims that this diverse ownership helped it to avoid having to directly support a particular party.

2.2.2 The Monitor, The Nation Media Group and a New Generation

Soon after the Nation Media Group, which is owned by the Aga Khan, purchased the *Monitor* in 2000 the owners and founding journalists of the *Monitor* left for new challenges. Their reasons for leaving varied. For some it was partly that did not have much else to prove since they had developed such a successful product in a short period of time. But it was also the personal sacrifice and external pressure that encouraged journalists like Charles Onyango-Obbo to move on. As he describes:

> Too many people had paid too high a price, my mother had fallen sick because of the problem... you know it's hard to have your child denounced in the media everyday... when you went to court, you know... too many people weren't free to come and stand bail, so you had to call on very close friends and family. For me it helped me, it brought me fame and all these things- my career. But to everyone else it was a liability...and then

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[473] 23 July 1993, Onapito-Ekomoloit and Kyazze-Simwogerere, "One year later I feel satisfied-Wafula Oguttu", *The Monitor*, p. 8.

people get the sense that you're probably using it to be a celebrity. Because they are not in your shoes, you know they don't understand what's going on.

But what actually did it for me was, because of what I'd become in the *Monitor* actually it had become a disservice, in the sense that the *Monitor* had really lost the ability to fight other fights. I fought the war… If I didn't take a stand, the *Monitor* didn't take a stand. If I didn't stick my neck out they didn't stick their neck out. So my success in the sense that I'm an editor became a failure… because then you start to look around you and you say, how many people would fight this fight if I'm not there?[474]

It was also made clear to the Nation Media Group that if the *Monitor* got rid of Onyango-Obbo, the *Monitor* 'problem' would be solved. By 2005, all of the founders were gone.

On reflection the *Monitor* has changed from when it initially started, but the change happened not because Nation Media Group bought the paper but after all of the founders left (although the two are related). The *Monitor* has grown into a business and transformed itself into a profitable company rather than the passionate instrument for change that its founders idealised. As Joachim Buwembo, the current editor-in-chief, notes " the original *Monitor* had very fired up people. They weren't as concerned about running the paper in a strict commercial sense with hierarchies….

The original *Monitor* would have a headline like "Government Must Talk with

growth in politics can only take you so far. Museveni is here for the next five years, we can only devote so many pages to why Museveni is wrong".[477]

Under the ownership of the Nation Media Group the leadership of the paper also became more regional. Joachim Buwembo, for example, was the founding editor of *The Citizen*, also owned by the Nation, in Tanzania and the head of Features, Ms. Wayua Muli, came from *The Standard* in Kenya.

2.2.3 Monitor spin-offs

The influence of the *Monitor* on other private papers is most evident in two offshoots of the paper, *The Crusader* and *The Weekly Observer*. Former *Monitor* journalists, often after leaving with some controversy, founded the papers using a similar style and model as the *Monitor*.

In 1995, for example, a group of ten scribes left the *Monitor* over demands for a 100% pay increase and frustration with the top management's responsiveness to their concerns. The journalists were largely mid-level and were known as the Ultimatum Group in the media. At the time, Wafula Oguttu was out of the country so the journalists focused their attack on Charles Onyango-Obbo arguing that in the past year the *Monitor* denigrated into a business where "a bag of cement for the new building was more important than a top-notch journalist's work".[478] Their concern was not unfounded as the government's advertising ban forced the *Monitor* to focus on constructing a new building and buying a printing press, both at great expense. Nevertheless, the departure of the journalists was a great shock and ushered in a difficult period for the *Monitor*, just as it was trying to grow and transform itself into more of a business rather than a group of passionate social commentators. Onyango-Obbo describes one reason why he thinks the *Crusader* journalists split off:

> One of the lessons I learned at that point is that when a newspaper is full of too many talented people you have too many prima donnas, it's impossible to run. You know, everyone thinks that they are too important to go and do the court story, the accident story, they'll only interview the President and so you

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is primarily regarded as a service the company is obligated to provide. The *Monitor* Business Directory is also seen as an important aspect of the company and does generate revenue. At present it is the only directory in the country and has been successful in garnering advertisers.

[477] Interview: Buwembo.

[478] 7-10 December 1996, Kyazze Simwogerere, "The story of the Crusader", *The Crusader*, p. 10-11.

had the most talented group of journalists in the newsgroup... everyone wanted to do the big story.[479]

While the *Crusader* was not successful in the long term, some of the journalists continued to have an active career in the media. Peter Mwesige, for example, at the time was a reporter and part of the Ultimatum Group. He later returned to the *Monitor* as editor-in-chief and is currently head of the journalism department at Makerere University.

The Weekly Observer,[480] started in March 2004 as an outgrowth of the *Monitor* and continues to publish today with a relatively low circulation of 16,000. It too is owned by ten journalists, most of whom quit the *Monitor* after internal disagreements, and are motivated by the conviction they can do a better job than the *Monitor*. According to managing editor James Tumusiime, they still see their job as one of public service and holding officials to account. They also believe that their analytic approach is better than the *Monitor's* but they are primarily regarded by customers as an elite paper. Tumusiime recognises that the paper is very political which means a narrow market but part of the rational behind the *Weekly Observer* is a perceived need to diversify debate and include broader perspectives, such as opinion pieces by former presidential spokespersons or army colonels to contribute to the nation-building process.[481]

2.2.4 Courting controversy

Perhaps the two most controversial papers in Uganda have been the *Uganda Confidential,* which is no longer publishing, and the *Red Pepper*, which has become a bit more moderated than when it first came out in June 2001.

Uganda Confidential, with its colourful founder and editor Teddy Sseezi-Cheeye, is the most politically controversial publication to have emerged under the NRM. Sseezi-Cheeye, who was part of the NRM in the bush, helped to found the *Monitor* and later went on to start *Uganda Confidential* leading with articles on

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[479] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[480] Available at: http://www.ugandaobserver.com.
[481] Interview: James Tumusiime.

corruption and murder in the Museveni family.[482] Sseezi-Cheeye himself has been accused of numerous shady dealings and corruption. He is now back with the NRM and has been appointed Director of Economic Affairs and Monitoring in the Office of the President. While *Uganda Confidential* was the first and most famous scandal sheet, the *Red Pepper* has also attracted similar controversy, yet over less political subject matter, and has been extraordinarily successful.

Following the model of journalists as owners set by the *Monitor*, the *Red Pepper*[483] was started by a group of five young men who wanted jobs for themselves after they graduated from university. Richard Tusiime, editor-in-chief, did a degree in Journalism and his entire team had experience in journalism at either *The New Vision* or the *Monitor*.

The paper began as a weekly with the intent of being research based. The founders claim to have set out to answer the 'why's' or the 'story behind the story' but they soon discovered a new niche, supposedly unintentionally. According to Tusiime, "we found a problem with youth and immorality among school children. They were having group sex on the beach so we extended the campaign to bars and adults. We became the moral police, the feared ones"[484]. Over a short period of time, the *Red Pepper* gained a large number of readers and now boasts a fancy new building outside Kampala that houses over 200 staff. Whilst they may have thought that they were 'fighting the vice of immorality,' a scandal sheet of gossip and shocking pictures became the norm and, according to Tusiime, people bought it to read about their friends: "We'd capture people having bush sex, at weddings etc., but now we don't target anyone. In the beginning we wanted to target elite but they're not a big part of society. Elite find copies in their office... here you need a broad audience."[485] Tusiime also argued that "sensational wasn't a strategy but it happened

admitted that when the team was thinking of a name for the paper they wanted "something new but also eye-catching - hot social and political sleaze". The *Red Pepper* no longer sees itself as the 'moral police' as they claim that "people have reformed, there is no kissing in the street. When the crusade ended, we needed another form of identity" so they are now attempting to position themselves as conveying insider government information. To do this, they pay people working in the ministries a regular salary of 600,000 to 1 million USH[486] a month to provide information.[487]

The church and the international community[488] have reacted strongly to the *Red Pepper* and the Christian community largely shunned the paper. Despite that the *Red Pepper* is rumoured to be owned by Salim Saleh,[489] Museveni's half-brother (these allegations began from the opening ceremony which he attended) the paper has regularly had cases in the courts, particularly over charges of pornography. Despite these run-ins, the *Red Pepper* journalists generally feel as though the laws are not restrictive, the media environment is open and they have been able to operate a media house the way they want to.

3. Conclusion

Tracing the developing of the press from its earliest days through the period of colonisation, post-colonial repression and the current Movement system, this chapter has provided valuable context for the coming chapters. Several key issues were raised here, including the importance of focusing not simply on the press of the colonisers but the initial African press that began to emerge during the colonial period while at the same time recognising that this period was influential in offering Uganda's first legal classic justification for a free press. The African press, through vibrant publications such as *Transition* set a high standard of debate and dialogue

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[486] Approximately 290 GBP.

[487] Interview: Tusiime.

[488] International press and observers have been critical of their naming and shaming of gays and lesbians saying that it is homophobic. See, for example, 13 September 2006, Peter Tatchell, "Uganda is the new Zimbabwe", *The Guardian*. Available at:
http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/peter_tatchell/2006/09/uganda_gays_are_the_problem_no.html.

[489] Ibid.

from the media. Historical debates over the role of the media in single-party rule was also highlighted as were discussions over the rationale of constructive criticism, both of which will be addressed in Chapter 8 on the influence of the political dynamics of the NRM on the press. The underlying different mentalities and approaches to the press, including by the most experienced journalists who could be considered 'survivors' such as Ben Bella has laid a foundation for later discussions.

This chapter has also importantly sketched out the development and role of the two major media houses- *The New Vision* and the *Monitor*. These media houses have defined the NRM media environment and have been important in the political and nation-building project. While the changes at *The New Vision* appear ominous, the Corporation continues to expand and remains the paper of choice for many Ugandans. Similarly, the present developments within the *Monitor* are also complex. While it is growing at an impressive rate, including recently establishing a TV station, ownership by the Aga Khan makes its future role in the democratic developments of Uganda unclear. As we turn quickly to the next two chapters, these papers will continue to be the focus of analysis as certain aspects are probed more deeply.

CHAPTER 7

The Ugandan Press System

This chapter will build upon Chapter 6 and further analyse the complexities of the press system and the major factors that characterise its role in Uganda. Using the framework of media variables elaborated in Chapter 2, and employed in the analysis of Ethiopia, this chapter will begin by looking at the degree to which the *Monitor* is really an 'opposition' force, the ways it might play this role and how it has been shaped by *The New Vision*. The changing ideologies of Ugandan journalists across the generations will then be probed to further understand how and why the press is evolving. The second half of the chapter begins by examining the extent to which media organisations have become institutionalised and why and what has driven this process. In the final section the role of government engagement with the press, both formally and informally, and the response of journalists to these interventions, will be considered.

1. Politically aligned media and media as 'opposition'

The *Monitor* and *The New Vision* are largely fighting for the same space and readership, but while surveys conducted by the New Vision Corporation indicate that Ugandans tend to trust *The New Vision* for government affairs such as budget issues, these surveys demonstrate that *Monitor* is more trusted for politics, particularly by the opposition.[490] Neither paper is at the end of the spectrum, either vehemently anti- or pro-government, and both have been brought to a centre position. Who influenced whom to come to the middle is a matter of debate and certainly both have played a constructive role. Despite usual assumptions, from the beginning the *Monitor* was not

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[490] This can vary somewhat between districts. The New Vision, however, does regular high-quality national readership surveys and overall the findings indicate the above-mentioned preferences for the two papers. See for example: "National Readership Survey", *The New Vision*, 12-15 April 2001 and "Results of the New Vision Readership National Survey", *The New Vision*, 19 November- 15 December 2004.

uniformly opposed[491] to the government just as *The New Vision* was not purely propagandist.

In the recent elections there appeared to be few policy issues of great substance or divergence between Museveni and his challenger Kizza Besigye of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), at least compared with differences between the party platforms of the CUD and EPRDF in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, there were major issues including Museveni extending his term as President and the government's treatment of Besigye, who was imprisoned just before voting day.[492]

An analysis of media coverage during the election period conducted by the Democracy Monitoring Group suggests that the press was generally more balanced in its coverage of the candidates than the electronic media (TV and radio). Both *The New Vision* and the *Monitor* were considered to have provided relatively fair coverage. Within The New Vision Corporation, *The New Vision* was more balanced than its sister papers *Bukedde* and *Etop*.[493] During the elections the circulation of the *Monitor* continued to grow. Readers appear to trust *The New Vision* for providing updates and insights into government policy but, as acknowledged by David Mukholi in the previous chapter, there are additional pressures on *The New Vision* during the election period that affect the balance of its coverage. The *Monitor*, on the other hand, is seen as providing insight into the opposition and a more accurate assessment of the political process and debates.[494]

An additional factor affecting the *Monitor* during the recent elections was the position of Wafula Oguttu, the founding editor, as the spokesperson for Kizza

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[491] There are a number of groups that want to overthrow the Movement, but they have tended to operate more on the periphery and did not mobilise the intelligentsia or gain widespread support for their newspapers. The LRA in the North proposes a different state, not just a change in government but a change in the constitution built around the Ten Commandments and they have been unsuccessful in selling their view to the majority of Ugandans. While many Ugandans initially supported Museveni and believed he should be given a chance to bring peace, those that want change now are primarily advocating for new leadership (as opposed to Ethiopia where many are arguing for a new government and even constitution).

[492] See for example 9 January 2006, Gerald Rulekere, "Uganda Elections 2006: Besigye Strong Contender for the Uganda Presidency". Available at:
http://www.ugpulse.com/articles/daily/homepage.asp?ID=264.
or 22 February 2006, Will Ross, "Bitter Rift dominates Uganda poll", Available at:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4740180.stm.

[493] (2006) Uganda Media Coverage of The 2006 Elections. Democracy Monitoring Group.

[494] "Results of the New Vision Readership National Survey", *The New Vision*, 19 November- 15 December 2004.

Besigye. The government enjoyed claiming that the *Monitor* was biased towards the FDC, as Minister Buturo argued:

> The *Monitor* did a good job for the FDC. The NRM is strong in the countryside so we haven't been affected by the *Monitor*'s limited influence. We don't harass them and have no desire for retribution. We have no time for the *Monitor* but it keeps us focused. Ugandans are learning to manage differences and argue. It is a new situation. The media has helped us realise there is another side to our side- that there are other views. It helps us to keep it in mind that there is opposition so we weren't surprised by the opposition.[495]

The previous chapter analysed the relationship of *The New Vision* with the government and the degree of independence it enjoys. As it is usually the *Monitor* that is charged with being the 'opposition' press and the more polarising of the papers, this section will focus on the *Monitor* as such an actor and examine the interaction of the two papers.

1.1 Differing perspectives- how much of an 'opposition press'?

Charles Onyango-Obbo has complained that he has been described as "editor of the opposition *Monitor* newspaper" not only by the Uganda government but by international observers as well. He argues that this is unfair because "an American or British newspaper almost never referred to a newspaper as an "opposition" publication simply because it was critical of the Clinton or Blair governments." [496] But the founding journalists claim that the *Monitor* did not set out to become a paper of 'opposition' despite that they are widely perceived as the government 'opposition'. Maurice Ssekawungu argues there was a turning point in this perception:

> Before the first elections there were efforts for a new constitution. This is where divergent views started to emerge. The *Monitor* chose the other side, they highlighted angles critical of the government...that is where the *Monitor* became opposition and when they started having problems.[497]

Onyango-Obbo responded to a question about the *Monitor* serving as the opposition in a non-party system affirmatively, acknowledging, "the *Monitor* was very, very strong in our critique of the system". As Oguttu noted,

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[495] Interview: Nsaba Buturo.
[496] ONYANGO-OBBO, C. (2004) Seeking Balance in a Continent Portrayed By Its Extremes. *Nieman Reports*, 58, 6-8. p. 9.
[497] Interview: Maurice Ssekawungu.

> The *Monitor* did not want to be seen as opposition but the *Monitor* filled the gap. It was seen as opposition because it gave a forum for those that criticised the government.[498]

However, the founding journalists argue that they have rather always been driven by a fierce desire for independence, which partially led to the perception of it as opposition.

The birth of the *Monitor* out of the *Weekly Topic* provides some insight into this argument. When the NRM came to power, the owners of the *Weekly Topic* were appointed as ministers in the new government. In an argument that was corroborated by other informants, Oguttu suggests that

> Museveni did it to control the paper. I was editor and Charles was deputy editor. We were very critical but the president didn't want us ... to talk about corruption... I wrote an article saying the president should stop denying corruption. The owners were coming at night and changing the stories... [we] didn't start the *Monitor* with the idea of being an opposition force but wanted a forum for discussion and we didn't want to be controlled.[499]

Thus the commitment to independence, to choose and defend positions on national policy, has been a recurring theme for the *Monitor* and something that clearly all the founding members agreed upon while also disagreeing on particular issues.

Beyond this commitment to independence and debate, there is certainly no uniform '*Monitor* perspective'. Onyango-Obbo, for example, has spent his entire career in journalism and speaks of how he was motivated as a child to become a journalist by listening to the BBC with his father. Despite having to leave the *Monitor*, and Uganda, he has not considered another occupation and now works for the Nation Media Group in Nairobi. Oguttu, on the other hand, has always been the most politically motivated of the *Monitor* founders. "The others don't vote. I'm the only one who votes," he said. But he does draw a distinction between politics and journalism noting, "I first left journalism and then went into politics".[500] Nevertheless, in the beginning of the NRM government, he was transparent about his support of the NRM. He even admitted that he had been offered several jobs in the

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[498] Interview: Oguttu.
[499] Interview: Oguttu.
[500] Interview: Oguttu.

administration including an ambassadorship. Similarly he was open about his dislike of the opposition in parties, commenting in a 1993 article:

> Our view is that government should allow freedom of association. I as an individual, I definitely support multi-party politics. But I don't like DP and UPC. That one I have never hidden. I have a problem with DP and UPC because they have refused to tolerate each other and co-exist peacefully.... I say why don't we give NRM another five years so that at the end of that, we shall say time has come.[501]

While Oguttu was also clear in his support for the NRM, nevertheless, the *Monitor* had long been accused of supporting opposition parties before the FDC. When accusations were running high in 1993, he responded directly to the arguments in a *Monitor* editorial:

> One of the most common complaints about the *Monitor* has been bias against the political parties. On reflection, we did not always report the activities of the political parties as fairly as we could have. This criticism concerned us because the *Monitor* set out to be an obsessively independent publication, and on the question of whether Uganda should be a multiparty or no-party (Movement) state, we do not have a side.[502]

Oguttu goes on to argue that "on this, we can say we think the NRM is a great improvement over all the regimes Uganda has had in the last 25 or so years. We feel for example that there is sufficient freedom of press for us to make all the legitimate comments we have wanted to make".[503]

How can the fact that the *Monitor* is often described as the 'opposition' paper be reconciled with the reality that the founding editor regularly expressed support for the NRM? Oguttu was involved with the NRM from the early days in Tanzania and thus his situation is probably not that different than the one shared by his colleague Kizza Besigye. Until he formed the FDC opposition party prior to the 2001 elections, Besigye was a high-ranking minister for the NRM, served as a senior military advisor to the minister of defence, and married Museveni's former girlfriend, Winnie Byanyima. In the case of the *Monitor*, however, it was in the paper's interest to be seen as a critical independent voice. It burnished its anti-establishment credentials using government banning of advertisements and various charges as testaments to its

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[501] 23 July 1993, Onapito-Ekomoloit and Kyazze-Simwogerere, "One year later I feel satisfied-Wafula Oguttu", *The Monitor*, p. 8.
[502] 23-27 July 1993, Editorial, "Forgive us our Sins", *The Monitor*, p. 3.
[503] Ibid.

independence or as symbolic awards of excellence for probing, critical journalism. Similarly, it was also in the government's interest to be able to claim that there was an independent and vocal press and thus bolstering its argument that it was genuinely bringing about a new change and democracy to a unique one-party system.

An article by Wilson Ogolla in the *Monitor* illustrates the complexities of this debate and the divided interpretations of Ugandans. Ogolla questioned the idea that the *Monitor* was really anti-NRM or anti-Museveni. Ogolla argued that the *Monitor* has a complex role in Museveni's politics:

> The *Monitor* is a creature of NRM politics, and it is an essential strategy in the overall scheme of Museveni clinging to power and sanitising the fact that he is a militarist who grabbed State House by force of arms. This is important, because the *Monitor* never questioned the legitimacy of how Museveni came to power, to them his five-year guerrilla war was a revolution which was made through the 'sacrifice' of peasants' blood.[504]

The war in the North against the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) has been cited as an example of how the *Monitor* took sides. The paper regularly chose the centre path calling for peace talks or diplomatic engagement with the Sudanese rather than calling on the NRM to curb its actions and alleged atrocities. Ogolla argues that the relationship between Museveni and the former editor Wafula Oguttu was a rivalry where

> They might clash on the field during the match, and have acrimonious rivalries off the field, but at the end of the day they are both interested in the survival of the football league. That's why the one-party Movement allows the *Monitor*, which always pretends to play in the centre, which actually means eating from both the Movement and the Multi-partyists, to exist.[505]

Not surprisingly, some in the *Monitor* respond harshly to such accusations. Henry Muwanga-Bayego, for example replied that Ogolla's assertions were 'insulting' and just because 'bringing down the NRM government has never been its grand agenda' it does not necessarily imply that it is pro-NRM.[506]

Andrew Mwenda, an outspoken *Monitor* journalist, however, agreed that the *Monitor* is pro-NRM leaning but also impartial because there is no deliberate editorial

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[504] 6 September 1996, Wilson Ogolla, "Monitor, Museveni are enemies by day and lovers by night", *The Monitor*, p. 3.
[505] Ibid.
[506] 20-23 September 1996, Henry Muwanga-Bayego, "Monitor, a product of NRM intolerance, never been lovers", *The Monitor*, p.3.

policy at the *Monitor* to support or oppose the government. Nevertheless, it is perceived as being pro-Museveni by omitting to extend as much fair coverage to the critics of the NRM as it does to the government. Mwenda also argued,

> Who cannot see that at the editorial level, the paper never questions Museveni's capture of state power by the gun? Why are we so blind to the fact that criticisms in the paper do not, by any stretch of imagination, question Museveni's competence as a leader but do say Ssemogerere is not fit to rule?... The *Monitor* never supported federalism at all. On the question of multi-partyism, it NEVER supported an immediate and unconditional return to political pluralism which the opponents of the regime were calling for.[507]

Thus, perspectives on the extent to which the *Monitor* was an 'opposition' paper diverge yet most agree that within certain limits the *Monitor* was at least a self-restrained critic of the government and has served as an important critical voice in a single party state.

1.2 Bringing the debate to the centre

The *Monitor* and *The New Vision* have also influenced each other in fostering public debate and defining a centre space in which debates could occur. Pike was pleased when the *Monitor* appealed to him for support in printing the paper. His newspaper owned a printing press and agreed to print the *Monitor* on credit for two weeks. In some respects it seems counter-intuitive that the CEO of the country's largest paper would assist the development of what could possibly be a major competitor. While Pike may have underestimated the potential strength of the *Monitor*, just as the *Monitor* journalists themselves were surprised by their own success, there is also another factor. Onyango-Obbo suggested that Pike

> Wanted a strong independent political newspaper because that determined his face. So long as there was a newspaper that was more critical of the government than *The New Vision* then he could write without pressure, but as soon as there was no other newspaper then he would become [pressured]. He needed... a newspaper that was critical of the government in order that he could place himself in the centre position.[508]

A number of informants concurred with Onyango-Obbo and while there was little indication that the *Monitor* was going to become an "opposition paper" many of the

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[507] 20-23 September 1996, Andrew Mwenda, "Monitor serves as NRM pray", *The Monitor*, p.4.
[508] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

Monitor journalists had been critical of some of the NRM's policies. Thus for Pike the *Monitor* could help his publication by serving as a strong government critic to balance out the debates. This position would allow *The New Vision* to take the middle ground and participate and cover certain issues and debates raised by the *Monitor* that *The New Vision* might not otherwise address due to government pressure.

From the *Monitor*'s perspective, *The New Vision* was also something it could position itself against. While *The New Vision* tried to cater to a broader portion of Ugandan society, the *Monitor* was able to frame itself as the independent voice and largely sought readers who were politically inclined. At the same time, *The New Vision* had a strong role in bringing the *Monitor* to the centre politically. To remain competitive the *Monitor* had to address some of the large issues *The New Vision* was covering and engage with the debates and agenda it was setting. As the *Monitor* wanted to compete with *The New Vision* for readership, and with a large proportion of the population generally willing to give the NRM a chance, to have been too radical would simply have meant that readers would choose *The New Vision* over the *Monitor*.

The *Monitor* has continued the trend of moving towards the centre, with much movement occurring recently partly in response to multipartyism. As Oguttu explained,

> When parties were formed 1.5 years ago, the *Monitor* wanted to be more objective. The government put a lot of pressure.... When multipartyism was restored the paper changed.... It was no longer as necessary for the paper to be the constant dependable critic of the single party system.[509]

But the *Monitor* has also been moving to the centre because of a number of other factors including a younger, less political, generation of journalists and growing business interests. In addition, closely related to the negotiation of political space between papers such as the *Monitor* and *The New Vision* has been the process of institutionalisation.

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[509] Interview: Oguttu.

2. Institutionalisation of the Press

As has been made clear so far, the press in Uganda is significantly more institutionalised and advanced than its counterpart in Ethiopia. While historical factors account for some of this difference, contemporary developments have been the most influential, including strong competition, an emphasis on training a new generation of journalists and the overall business interests of investors in the media companies. Paradoxically, it can be argued that state intervention, including the withdrawal of government advertising to a paper such as the *Monitor*, also encouraged the greater institutionalisation in Uganda.

2.1 Media management

Journalists and editors regularly talk about mismanaged media enterprises - owners and editors who misappropriate funds, fail to invest to improve or stabilise the press and engage in corrupt dealings for self-enrichment. *Star* and *Ngabo*, for example, are one case in which the journalists aspired to 'build an empire'. Despite having some of the best journalists in the country, the English and Luganda papers only lasted from 1980 to 1996. *Ngabo* started as a weekly and was the first paper published after Idi Amin was deposed. The paper was extremely popular but the owner, without the consent of the editors, registered the company in his own name so that they became his employees. The paper was making money but the journalists were not given regular salaries while the owner, according to Maurice Ssekawungu, the founding editor, was squandering profits on women. Ssekawungu attributed this failure, in contrast to the success of *The New Vision's* corporate structure, to "an African management system". In 1993 Ssekawungu left the *Star* and *Ngabo* to start a competing paper in Lugandan at *The New Vision*. Although it is a government paper, he prefers his current position because he claims it is easy to know the rules and expectations. [510]

The New Vision has strong institutional and organisational structures for which the leadership of the former Managing Director, William Pike, has been key. David Mukholi, editor of the *Sunday Vision,* suggests a contrast with the *Monitor,* "at *The*

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[510] Interview: Maurice Ssekawungu.

New Vision we aren't built around individuals. If William Pike goes on holiday, no one notices."[511] In the previous chapter, it was discussed how, for Charles Onyango-Obbo, part of the need for him to move to Kenya was because the *Monitor* had become too personalised. He was the one fighting all the fights, a situation that had become a liability for the paper. With the first generation of the *Monitor* journalists gone, the company has become more institutionalised.

For Ssekawungu *The New Vision* helped to bring 'great sanity in general' to the press as a whole. Others, from the *Monitor* as well, agree. Peter Mwesige, a former editor-in-chief of the *Monitor* and now head of the School of Journalism at Makerere, described how the partisan media was not viable and not fulfilling the need to attract sustainable audiences. Prior to the 1990s it was not possible to talk about the institutionalisation of the press until *The New Vision* came into its own and changed the environment.

> It wasn't just a party hawk, it didn't just push the party line but it was very important that the paper was okay economically. *The New Vision* drew other papers to professionalise. If *The New Vision* was run the way other government papers were run, the *Monitor* would not have had the pressure to professionalise. Journalists at the *Monitor* were more into making a political case and were pushing certain ideas and issues but now this has changed.[512]

Similarly, David Ouma Balikowa, one of the founders of the *Monitor* and now Managing Director of Timeline Communication, argued that "we were journalistically driven. Soon after we realised we had a big business, we [were surprised]. We weren't concerned about the finance, we wanted our stories to make an impact."[513]

The case of *The New Vision* is also unique, particularly for a government paper, as it has been very profitable and is among the top income generating businesses for the government - 80% of the stocks are owned by the government and the remaining 20% by private individuals (5% are *New Vision* employees). Pike mentioned that he would like to see another 20% listed on the stock exchange although since his dismissal this seems unlikely. *The New Vision* has been profitable and successful largely because it was a Corporation and therefore had a different

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[511] Interview: David Mukholi.
[512] Interview: Peter Mwesige.
[513] Interview: David Ouma Balikowa.

accountability structure than Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, for example. As Pike explains:

> We are self accounting, and we made a small loss in our first year of operation, which was three or four months but since then we've been in profit. I was with the Prime Minister the other day and he was saying 'what's your salary?', and he asked what is our editor's salary and he was shocked because ... the Prime Minister's salary would put him at about the level of a middle editor here... So we're self accounting, so we don't need money from the government, whereas Uganda Broadcasting was actually a department, part of the Ministry of Information, or part of the Office of the President, and as such, they got a subvention from the Treasury. A lot of the money was in fact embezzled, but they didn't have proper accounting processes. There was no incentive to increase your revenue, increase your listenership, and increase your market penetration. It didn't make any difference, you know, you still got the same subvention from the government. Actually therefore the government was your customer rather than the listener....
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> We have to put headlines on the front page that the public wants to buy. If we don't produce the product that the public wants to buy we'll collapse. We'll go out of business, whereas Uganda Television or Radio Uganda, well if they get money from the state and the money they collect doesn't go to them, it returns to the state, they have no incentive.[514]

This government-business model is an important indicator suggesting that reform may be more difficult than developing an independent institution from scratch. With a close eye on the competition, and the flow of journalists between media organisations, the productive and profit-oriented culture of *The New Vision* clearly set the tone for the industry as a whole. In an effort to expand their market they have also sought out the masses and the readers beyond the political class and consequently forced the *Monitor* to do the same.

The *Monitor*, however, has also influenced *The New Vision* as well. A number of people would dispute Peter Mwesige's comment noted earlier about *The New Vision* having the larger impact on the *Monitor*. For example, in terms of innovation James Tumusiime of the *Weekly Observer* and former *Monitor* journalist argued

> It is the other way around. The *Monitor* forced *The New Vision* to become more professional. *The New Vision* had to keep up. In the late 1990's the *Sunday Monitor* was leading *The New Vision*. Look at *The New Vision* in the early 90s and now, it's an entirely different product. Competition forces people to get on their feet.[515]

Similarly, Balikowa argued,

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[514] Interview: Pike.
[515] Interview: James Tumusiime.

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> *The New Vision* simply reported the news. It was us who shaped *The New Vision*. Pike always came to talk to us at the *Monitor*, *The New Vision* had already established itself. It was a newspaper that reported the events, it couldn't venture into the analysis. It couldn't do investigations and actively report on corruption.[516]

It was also noted by the *Monitor* journalists that *The New Vision* still had typewriters when the *Monitor* began with computers. And similarly, the *Monitor* was the first to go to colour in 1996. Thus while *The New Vision* led the competition in corporate development, the *Monitor* contributed by innovating, risk-taking and embracing technology. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the *Monitor's* more hard-hitting reporting has allowed *The New Vision* to take a more critical and centre position than is usually possible for a government paper.

2.2 The Aga Khan and an unpredictable business environment

Two other factors, in addition to the way *The New Vision* set the standard for media management, have strongly influenced the institutional development of the *Monitor*. The first, and less obvious one, is the banning of government advertising and the second is the buy-in of the Aga Khan.

The banning of government advertising encouraged the development of a solid business strategy. About a year after the *Monitor's* founding, the government banned all departments and parastatels from advertising causing the paper a twenty-five percent drop in advertising revenues. The *Monitor* thus shifted towards attracting ads from small companies and generally began increasing its support for liberal politics and free market economics. These companies proved to be more profitable even though they often took out smaller adverts. They paid for their advertisements up front with cash, however, while the government often took more than six months to pay. According to Onyango-Obbo, the ban proved to be a blessing in disguise as it forced the *Monitor* to rethink its business strategy as a whole, beyond finding viable advertisers. As he explains:

> In 1993, I think it was around August, we had for two weeks been running stories which were based on leaks from the cabinet. Something about which the government got very upset and they placed an advertising ban on the *Monitor* so that no semi-state institution was allowed to advertise in the paper. At that point before the age of privatisation, there was no private

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[516] Interview: David Ouma Balikowa.

sector, so the effect of that is that we lost immediately about 80% of our revenues. But it was a very important thing in the sense that it was the best thing that happened to the *Monitor*. If that hadn't happened then the *Monitor* would have collapsed and we wouldn't be here by now because we had never really understood the vulnerability of the business because at that point we were renting the office from a businessman who was dealing with the government. He had government tenders to think of. Only then we realised that we have this office... and we were using a commercial printer... We realised we need to have two things: we need to have our own building and we need to own our printing press.... It was at this point we made the decision that we are going to begin saving ...and do all the things that we need to do to get money to build our own office and build our own printing press.[517]

More recently, the style and management of the *Monitor* was deeply affected by the buy-in of the Aga Khan and its incorporation into The Nation Media Group. From William Pike's perspective,

We took the centrist position... and the *Monitor* emotionally was happiest to be out on a limb as the opposition paper. So when the Aga Khan bought the *Monitor* ... gradually he's been pushing it to the centre and when they got rid of Wafula and the old guard three years ago they made a much more active effort to come to the centre and then they started publishing corrections and apologies and trying to... publish stories from the government.... Some stories that the *Monitor* wrote were really crazy and unsubstantiated... there were all sorts of stories, without going into details about them, but so they've actually moved much more to the centrist position. [518]

The Aga Khan, like other large investors, wants to protect his investments, which helps to keep the paper in the political centre. As Oguttu notes, however, this is not always entirely transparent:

In 2002 when the Nation came in they cared more about money. The Aga Khan has large interests in Uganda. He has a hotel and a dam. Museveni gives it [to him] as leverage over the *Monitor*.[519]

Similarly, Andrew Mwenda, along with other journalists, argues that the threat to media freedoms is not the government but rather businesses that are often sensitive to maintaining government favour.[520]

Media ownership is a contentious issue and has not been fully addressed in Uganda's National Information and Communication Policy. Big companies are

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[517] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[518] Interview: Pike.
[519] Interview: Oguttu.
[520] Interview: Mwenda.

prominent and demanding advertisers and have growing influence over the media particularly as *The New Vision* and the *Monitor* increasingly dominate the landscape. At the same time these companies have provided the papers with secure revenue and thus brought greater stability to a precarious media environment. The challenge, however, is for the papers to find a way to remain true to their initial objectives and their dynamic founders.

2.3 Talent and capacity building

A major characteristic of institutionalisation is the development, recruitment and retention of talent. In this realm, the *Monitor* and *The New Vision* have both been successful, although in different ways. With idealistic motives, but also in pursuit of their own self-interest, the leading editors of the *Monitor*, who were initially with the *Weekly Topic*, started a journalism programme at the University of Makerere. As Onyango-Obbo describes: "when we started the *Weekly Topic* a second time, there was absolutely no talent in the country, no journalists." When the *Weekly Topic* started there were two things that they initially sought to do: make money and train new journalists. A colleague of Onyango-Obbo's that was already working at Makerere agreed to market the idea of a journalism course if the team at the *Weekly Topic* put together a curriculum for the degree. Surprisingly, the University Senate passed the proposal.

Onyango-Obbo and his colleagues taught on the programme for five years, four of which were unpaid. This benefited the *Monitor* because the paper was able to recruit the best graduates and the quality of the students was consistently improving. For Onyango-Obbo

> ... some of the best people started to emerge, I mean these were young people coming up in the media and we had to show that we cared about what we are doing so a lot of the best people then came to work for the *Monitor* which had all the best young students, because I was teaching there daily.[521]

At the same time, however, *The New Vision* has set the pace for training through its in-house programme which is run mainly by Ben Bella who works with the younger journalists several days a week. *The New Vision* also makes an effort to send at least one staff member to the UK a year for extensive training through the Thompson

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[521] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

Foundation or a related programme. As the media houses have grown and their resources have expanded, this commitment to staff training has been a key part of institutional development.

There is significant exchange of journalists and ideas between *The New Vision* and the *Monitor* but there are still discrepancies in how the two news organisations are run. Both recruit each other's journalists and both pay top price for the best. But there is greater order to the way *The New Vision* operates, expectations are clear and the possible path to promotion is evident. In contrast, many journalists tell of how they were recruited by the *Monitor* for a prominent position, and offered a significant pay increase, but when they moved to the *Monitor* they languished in the newsroom with little to do and no direction for assuming their new position. This has discouraged journalists, such as David Mukholi, editor of the *Sunday Vision,* to switch to the *Monitor* despite repeated offers with promises of a substantial salary raise.[522]

In sum, the process of institutionalisation was affected by multiple developments. In the near future, media businesses will continue to be profitable and are likely to become increasingly influential. Challenges posed by business and advertiser interests, and the leverage the government has over these companies, will continue and grow thus threatening editorial independence. Much of the future influence of these factors, however, will depend on how successfully journalists challenge them as is also the case in the coming section on the role of government intervention.

3. Ideology of journalists

Journalists in Uganda have differing motivations for working in the newspaper industry and divergent understandings as to what their role should be in the nation-building process. Sometimes they choose to define an identity for themselves, but in other cases it has been externally imposed. So far, for example, it has been discussed how journalists at the *Monitor* were seen as critics of the government, while their

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[522] Interview: David Mukholi. Yet in my visits to the *Monitor* newsroom I observed curious and helpful journalists. The newsroom appeared more spontaneous and energizing than that of *The New Vision.*

colleagues at the *Red Pepper* were regarded as part of the 'moral police' (despite however immoral they may have been in some cases such as in their targeting of homosexuals). In Uganda, however, the media are increasingly less defined by personalities or political allegiances but rather divergent ideologies can be seen across generations. This is different than in Ethiopia and was not so much the case in the early days of the NRM as it has evolved slowly. On the one hand it can be viewed as part of the process of institutionalisation and strong cohort of young rising journalists but it can, and must, also be seen as part of the NRM's process of consolidation power. As Museveni pushed forward with his third term projects, the factions within the media that were most critical of it were pressured to leave gradually. No longer is the press, to the same extent, serving the role it did when the NRM first came to power as a space for elites and political factions to dialogue.

At present there is a tendency to reflect and say that the 'golden days' are over. Many of the older journalists are complaining that the current generation is apathetic and does not have the same passion for the profession that the previous generation had. At the same time, for many the 'struggle' has changed. So for journalists like Charles Onyango-Obbo who spent much of his time in Uganda fighting to have the space for journalists expanded and enlarged, the nature of the fight may have changed for some younger scribes—despite the ominous political developments such as the 2006 electoral process.

3.1 The older generation

There is an older generation that is still active in the media and includes well-known and respected journalists such as Ben Bella Ilakut, Maurice Ssekawungu and Drake Ssekeba. As described in the previous chapter, many of those from this group struggled to survive as journalists during Idi Amin and Obote's time. Their work as journalists was often about continuing to pursue a craft they were genuinely passionate about, but it was also a struggle during a time when so many were suffering and being killed.

Today, few of these journalists are involved in overt political activities. Drake Ssekeba is working as a television presenter while Ben Bella, renowned for his sense of humour, spends as much time telling stories of Idi Amin or his current raw

vegetable diet as he does training journalists at *The New Vision.* While interviewing, Ssekawungu comes across as a distanced and reflective journalist with perspective. This is also a reflection of age. Similarly, during interviews with veteran journalist Philip Ochieng in Kenya, who was one of the most outspoken and controversial journalists in East Africa for several decades, he too took a more tempered approach and colleagues said that his mellowed and patient approach to life has been a recent development.

Drake Ssekeba presents a perspective that is indicative of those from his generation. For Ssekeba, objectivity and the idea of 'guiding those in power' are the most important roles for journalists. It is a less confrontational strategy than what Onyango-Obbo would regard as his role and is also different from what many of the younger journalists believe their role to be. As Ssekeba describes,

> We journalists, and I've told my friends in politics... for us journalists, we come to serve people. We don't serve ourselves. When politicians come to government, they are actually pretending that they are serving you but actually they are serving their own interests. You see, when I come to write a story, I don't expect a reward from the public, no, I just expect word from my employer who gives me a salary at the end of the month or the week.... You see we are like judges. You are there to report what is good for the society, yes, that is why we don't lose face. Because we know why people are suffering in area A and B and we see what can be done. A politician knows what's happening but he wants to use his political gain to do other things.... We journalists are there... to guide the nation.[523]

While less politicised than the journalists who started the *Monitor,* for example, this generation has set a tone of objectivity and professionalism. They remain involved and influential in the press by conveying their experience and lessons through continuing to practice their trade and train the current younger generation.

3.2 The Monitor Legacy

Journalists such as Wafula Oguttu, Teddy Sseezi-Cheeye, Charles Onyango-Obbo and William Pike are from a period of the struggle where the press played a role in consolidating the power of the NRM. Some of the journalists during the early days of the NRM or the late Obote I period saw themselves operating as 'opposition'

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[523] Interview: Drake Ssekeba.

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in single-party rule and most regarded themselves as an important part of the Movement's political and nation-building process.

The emphasis, particularly for the private journalists, was less on building a strong business or holding to professional standards as Oguttu recognised in a *Monitor* editorial,

> Journalism is not a popularity contest. It is part of our job to annoy people who don't want to be criticised; to humble the arrogant; to expose the plunderers of public wealth; and to uncover political charlatans. Someone has to do this job. Since it is our business, we shall do it. Forgive us our recklessness, overzealousness, and even sloppiness...[524]

Despite efforts to suggest otherwise, from the government's perspective the *Monitor* journalists were highly political. William Pike remembers "Charles [Onyango-Obbo] once telling me that the mission statement, he didn't use that word, mission statement, but the mission of the *Monitor* was to be a thorn in the side of the government". And Minister Buturo clearly sees Onyango-Obbo as a political actor:

> The editors [of the *Monitor*] are political. [Charles Onyango-] Obbo is really a politician who is a journalist. When you report politically you've taken a position. [The *Monitor*] has had editors who are politicians and it's made them extremist.... During the Movement there were many politicians that didn't agree with it. The Movement didn't take away the opposition.[525]

William Pike, as editor, similarly expressed a certain conviction of pursuing particular goals, given the nation-building project, including a commitment to objectivity and factual reporting that could be trusted by a variety of constituents, thus helping to create consensus on the past and the present. As Pike argues:

> My mission was always to provide factual news, a variety of opinion and a factual and comprehensive news of all key issues... and with a variety of opinion to act and allow people to contribute letters and debate in the paper as a consensus building exercise to create consensus in society.... [*The New Vision*] is playing its role providing facts, being a newspaper of record... that's where we've helped and wanted to do because it helps to build consensus by getting agreement on what actually happened. Because that is the starting point for consensus.[526]

Forging consensus and journalists seeking a middleground has been key in nation-building. As elaborated in the previous chapter, articles from *The New Vision*

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[524] 23-27 July 1997, "Forgive our sins", *The Monitor*, p. 3.
[525] Interview: Buturo.
[526] Interview: William Pike.

explaining the NRM, its policies and ideology have been important in familiarizing and including Ugandans in the political process. Oguttu, Onyango-Obbo and Pike were among the most influential editors during the early period of the NRM government and are representative of a generation that is largely no longer active in the media. While many of their objectives have been replaced with the priorities of a younger generation, the influence, particularly of the *Monitor* founders, continues among some.

Ben Bella, who can look at the current situation with a bit of detachment, has argued that Andrew Mwenda is one of the few remaining journalists who still has the critical spirit that Oguttu or Onyango-Obbo had. Younger than either of them by ten or fifteen years, Mwenda has worked closely with Onyango-Obbo and currently is host of the most popular call-in radio show, *Andrew Mwenda Live* on KFM. Mwenda sums up his journalistic drive: "I just want to express myself. I do what I believe is right and I don't want to be enslaved but I just want to be free."[527]

While Mwenda may have a passion reminiscent of the *Monitor* founders, there are also some younger journalists striving to model themselves after the 'original' *Monitor* group. James Tumusiime, a former *Monitor* journalist felt, for example, that the *Monitor* had become too soft and Kampala was in need of a more hard-hitting and political paper. Tumusiime started the *Weekly Observer* in March 2004 with a group of journalists that quit the *Monitor* for a variety of reasons including low pay and the conviction they could do a better job – a story reminiscent of the beginnings of the *Monitor*. At the time, however, Tumusiime's explanation of his goal as a journalist emphasises objectivity,

> We see our job as a public service and holding the government to account. The emphasis is on balance and accuracy. We don't consider the *Observer* to be opposition. We want to be middle of the road and do not want to be associated with one side or the other. We decided that we don't need to be allied, partly because the readership is small – 16,000 weekly.... [*Weekly Observer*] is really seen as an elite paper.[528]

It is difficult to know if the *Weekly Observer* will succeed in penetrating the market in the same way the *Monitor* did but it appears unlikely. They do not have the political clout or constituency to have the same role in politics and negotiating with the NRM

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[527] Interview: Mwenda.
[528] Interview: James Tumusiime

that their colleagues had at the *Monitor*. With papers seeking to attract more readers, advertisers having increasing influence and a new generation of journalists that has been brought up under a system emphasising 'professionalisation', it seems as though the environment has changed along with the journalists.

3.3 A new generation

Today the newsrooms are filled with a younger generation of recent graduates that do not have the connections with those in power that Oguttu and Onyango-Obbo had nor the same idea of a mission. This generation was not in the bush with the NRM nor part of the early days of the Movement. They have been trained to be journalists, spend time on the internet, and see themselves as part of a global profession rather than freedom fighters. Many have also adopted the discourse of the international media development agenda: they talk about 'being watch dogs', 'checking the state' and 'informing people'.

Some older journalists see this younger generation as having a lack of professionalism or passion. As Drake Ssekeba argues:

> There is a problem with journalists today. They don't have the professional ethics we used to have... it is rotten today, a lot of corruption. People come into journalism because they don't have jobs.... People come from everywhere because they have nothing to do.... Even in journalism, people used to go into professions because they loved the professions.... Today it is not like that.... So professional ethics has been diluted.[529]

In response to a question on the impact of professional journalism training, Ssekeba commented that a major problem was that journalists still do not know the questions to ask: it isn't so much the process of actually writing the story but understanding the issues.

> Most of the people today are young in age and they don't have adequate training, they don't have experience.... You see if I were to ask a question, I'd ask a real question... because I would know what I am asking about. Before I come to ask you I have my own answers. I have made research, however little it may be, but I've done research. But today people don't know that, people who are in journalism today, a few of them know, but a lot of them don't. That's why they can't raise the issues.... There are some people here who are called very good journalists, they are good journalists but actually when they come to argue, I hear them, you know on the radio,

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[529] Interview: Ssekeba.

> they are without we call it, ink, without documentary evidence. They just argue...[530]

While this is true to some degree, conversely, it can also appear this way to older journalists who are used to a paper focusing on major advocacy issues (e.g., supporting the Kabaka, pushing for a particular political party or furthering the nationalist agenda) because when papers turn more generalist, as is the current trend, reporters are expected to cover a variety of issues on which they might not have expertise.

Charles Onyango-Obbo argues that the current generation is the most 'trained' group of journalists the country has seen. While many of his generation received training abroad, this group has passed through Makerere University's Department of Journalism. Contrary to popular perception and the days when, as Onyango-Obbo said, "no half respecting man would allow you to marry his daughter if you were a journalist", the journalists now are often some of the best students. But Onyango-Obbo also expressed disappointment about how journalists have changed:

> The point was that journalism had a social purpose and the social purpose was to better society. And we had a kind of class prejudice that to be a journalist you needed to have a radical or working class background and that if you were too bourgeois... you would not be able to empathise with the downtrodden and the poor.... In the third year of the programme there was hardly anyone from the working class. By the fourth year, to enter the journalism programme required the highest marks of any subject in the university. [531]

Nevertheless, following a theme that has been elaborated in previous analysis in this thesis, Wafulu Oguttu, laments that the current generation of journalists are not setting the agenda the way he and his colleagues had done at the *Weekly Topic* or in the early days of the *Monitor*.

> In the current elections, the media didn't set the agenda. Politically the media was stronger before. Charles and I had a larger name in the eyes of the politicians. The leaders were of my generation and they cared what we said. The leadership is older than the journalists and they don't take young people as seriously. It's also culture. In the 1970s and 80s we were disregarded, the politicians didn't care about us and now it is coming back slowly. Professionally, journalists aren't unified. Their integrity isn't as high as

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[530] Interview: Ssekeba.
[531] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

> when we were there. Before you were there for the profession. Now journalists are bought.[532]

Professionalisation has also been an issue for the government (albeit in a slightly different way). Uganda has tight definitions of professionalism and what it means to be a journalist. For example, when the journalists from the Stanhope-LSE East African Journalist Fellowship wanted to set up a journalists' association, it was the Ugandan members who pushed to have the word 'professional' in the title of the association. The members debated what it meant to be professional and for the Ugandans in particular it was a sense that what they are doing is a trade, something not just anyone can do, but a job for which you must acquire skills similar to becoming a doctor or teacher.

This stance stems from the Press and Journalist Act of 1995 that attempted to professionalise journalism through establishing a professional body by law, the National Union of Journalists, and through prescribing an academic qualification for practicing journalism in Uganda. From the perspective of the Fellows, this was not problematic and many of their colleagues agreed that it was also a way of justifying what they do and separating themselves from pontificators. The Fellows chose similar standards for who could join the new association.

Ugandan journalists are not the first address such regulations regarding professionalism, but the extent to which they have embraced the rules as their own is interesting.[533] It is difficult to identify why Ugandan journalists to subscribe to or at the very least remain complacent about this legislation.

Professor Frederick Juuko from the Law Department at Makerere University has suggested that this urge to professionalise, even on the part of journalists, has to be seen in the context of the Movement which all Ugandans were compelled to join. Because of this pressure, it is natural for journalists to feel compelled to join a professional body.[534] While all journalists certainly do not feel this way, a viewpoint

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[532] Interview: Oguttu.

[533] In 1996, this type of law was tried in Zambia but the journalists there organised against it and the high court ruled it as unconstitutional. In Costa Rica there was a similar attempt to pass this type of law but the journalists there went to an Inter-American Human Rights Court and the law was thrown out because it contravened Article 13 of the Inter-American which assert the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of association. Journalists, it was argued, are exercising a fundamental right and requiring them to be licensed violates that right. (Interview: Frederick Juuko).

[534] Interview: Juuko.

captured by Andrew Mwenda's comment earlier about journalists 'just wanting to be free', they have not effectively organised themselves into a union or association that would unite in opposition against such legislation.

This younger generation may yet, however, become as politically active as their predecessors. As Museveni extends his rule indefinitely, discontent among many journalists is palpable and could lead to a renewed energy and the same sense of mission that shaped the early days of the *Monitor*.

4. Government Intervention

The state has sought to influence the development of the media in a number of ways including enacting media legislation, establishing government-sponsored media outlets or information sources, imposing censorship or encouraging self-censorship, and facilitating politician and government engagement with journalists. The ways in which laws are implemented and journalists respond to such pressures are also important determinants of the effects government intervention has in shaping the press system.

4.1 Legislation

Despite being signatory to international[535] and national covenants,[536] the Uganda government employs legislation and other tools to limit freedom of expression. This is not unique as even the most restrictive governments may ratify international agreements.

The 1995 Press and Journalist Statute, the 1996 Electronic Media Statute, the 2005 Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Act and the 2005 Access to Information Act are reflective of the current legal tools used by the government to regulate the media. The 1995 Press and Journalist Statute replaced the Newspapers and Publications Act that was repealed in 1995 and had numerous restrictions, many of which were added

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[535] In 1995, Uganda ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Uganda is also a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights In addition, in 1986 Uganda ratified the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and is also a member of the African Union which requires it to uphold the October 2002 Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa.
[536] In 1995 the Ugandan parliament passed a new constitution that provided for the guarantee of both freedom of speech and the press.

in Idi Amin's time. The new law professionalises the practice of journalism through the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda (NIJU) and establishes a Media Council. The NIJU has the objective of training and maintaining professional standards of journalists as well as setting educational standards including qualifying examinations. Journalists have generally accepted the NIJU, but it is the Media Council[537] that has been more controversial.

The Media Council has been ineffective and has been rendered so by the government itself. It is under government control and despite independent appointments of respected and prominent journalists and academics, the Chair is from the government. When the Council has intervened it has rarely ruled positively for the media. Paul Mukasa, Head of the Council, notes that part of the problem is "the government doesn't usually refer cases to the Council. People prefer to use courts of law".[538] He argues that one reason why people do not use the Media Council is a lack of knowledge: "they aren't aware the laws exist and the perception among journalists in the region is that journalists should regulate themselves".[539] Nevertheless, the Media Council has been involved in a number of cases on its own, including censoring a controversial play, the Vagina Monologues, and working with the Uganda Media Centre in accrediting foreign journalists and accepting referred complaints.

Since the NRM came to power, dozens of journalists have been arrested[540] and charged with crimes ranging from libel to sedition often under the penal code and criminal code. The government is also known for directly intervening and shutting media outlets down. In the recent elections, for example, its closing of KFM radio station (part of the Monitor group) was very controversial and there have also been smaller, less publicised cases particularly outside of the capital. While the government now shuts down the press less often than radio stations, it has been the

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[537] The Media Council, which has "the Director of Information or a Senior Officer from the Ministry responsible for information, who shall be the Secretary to the Council", is given a number of functions as outlined in statute (10) including: to regulate the conduct and promote good ethical standards and discipline of journalists and to arbitrate disputes. The Media Council is also responsible for registering journalists and publications. The Media Council and Broadcasting Council are responsible for issuing licenses.
[538] Interview: Paul Mukasa.
[539] Interview: Paul Mukasa.
[540] These cases are well documented on websites such as Reporters Without Borders www.rsf.org, Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org and Committee to Protect Journalists www.cpj.org.

print journalists that have been the most influential in challenging legislation and forcing reforms.

4.2 Expanding the Circle

For years Andrew Mwenda and Charles Onyango-Obbo dominated headlines and international alerts from press freedom agencies because they sought to challenge directly the courts and rulings. The government has often charged editors and journalists at the *Monitor* for the publication of false news. Every time, however, the journalists have been fully acquitted. Some at the *Monitor* have almost embraced government persecution, regarding it as a natural political development and part of the process of building the country. As Onyango-Obbo recalled:

> I remember one time I wrote something and he [Museveni] was sufficiently moved by it that he sent me this email explaining why he thought the article was important... He sees our [the *Monitor's*] attitude as hostility. He realises that he cannot escape from that so he says it is important to understand the nature of the state and the recourses that the state has. The state basically has the laws and the power of coercion. So therefore it is natural that the state would resort to the laws. You might think it is undemocratic repression but that is the law and he says that the state will use those laws to dominate and shape the public space and dialogue. The state has other resources. By the same token the journalists must also fight their corner. You must protect your side of this bargain. Therefore you shouldn't expect the state to make your job easier. It is the job of the journalist to fight for their corner.
> Don't expect that your opponent will help you win the game. From pure intellectual honesty I could not disagree with him because he was correct. That is the thing about Museveni, he will respect you if he sees you believe in something and he will argue with you profoundly.[541]

Onyango-Obbo demonstrated his willingness to 'fight his corner' a number of times. For example, an article in the *Monitor* in 1999 featured a picture of a woman whose head and pubic hair was forcibly shaved by a soldier in Northern Uganda.[542] Onyango-Obbo was at first reluctant to run it as he knew there would be consequences, but he faced the opposition of his staff. He explained the dilemma in running it:

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[541] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[542] 11 May 1999, photo, *The Monitor* and story 17-23 May 1999, Charles Onyango-Obbo, "The Naked Woman And The Cover-Up" *The East African*
Available at: http://www.charlesobbo.com.

A recent hire at the *Monitor* happened to be the girlfriend of a military officer and she witnessed a fight in the military barracks in Northern Uganda and managed to capture it on camera. A fellow military officer had a girlfriend, and he also had a wife. So the wife came and found this woman there... they had a fight. When the man came back he sided with his wife and then he started beating the [girlfriend] and he called his friends to help him subdue her. So then they grab her and drag her to a field and they shaved her head and pubic hair... so this photograph comes to *the Monitor*. By that time I was not in the country, I was in Ethiopia. So the guys [at the *Monitor*] take a look at this, they want to run the story but then they say no, let us wait for Charles to get back, this is too hot. So I return and they showed me the photos of the story. I told them, you know this one is too hot, we can't run it. So they said no. They said Charles, you know, if the *Monitor* can't run this, then we have lost the reason why we founded this paper. We founded this paper because stories like this never used to get published... [543]

The story was run and had a huge effect.[544] It divided public opinion. The government arranged truckloads of people to demonstrate outside the *Monitor*'s office and burn effigies of *Monitor* staff. Onyango-Obbo was well aware of the impact and knew he would be arrested, but he still was willing to publish the story. As he describes:

The government had met and had decided that it was my handiwork... and they said we should take him and torture him to tell us where he got the story and to give us the details. So my friend told me, and another Minister told me, Charles this time they are going to set out to kill you. You should escape... I said I am not going to escape, I just sat around and waited and I was arrested.... People believed that I was the one who had done it. They arrested me, our MD [Managing Director] and the editor of the paper... the police... they fingerprint you... and then they start recording your statement. But then I noticed they kind of kept me away. They recorded the statement of our MD and editor and they kept me behind. I think their calculation was that both the MD and the editor would say I took the decision and they would release them and keep me. So the story that they wanted to keep me and probably torture me or something, you know was actually correct.. But then... both of them [the MD and editor] said they had the still photo and they said Charles was not in the country, we just used this photo. So they [the police] were very... disappointed when they recorded my statement and they were asking me all these questions. I said I don't know, I don't know because I wasn't there. But the only thing I could not say was that I had opposed the publication of the photo. So again, we were taken to court.[545]

This was just one of many court battles but until October 2002 the *Monitor* had never been shut down. Under these circumstances, Onyango-Obbo demonstrated a similar

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[543] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

[544] See for example, 14 May 1999, Anne Mugisa, "Monitor Cheifs Charged over Nude Picture", *The New Vision's* p. 1.

[545] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

willingness to engage and challenge the system in an effort to 'expand the circle'. As he describes:

> In October 2002 we had run this story about a helicopter crash...a government helicopter had crashed in the north and implicit in the story was that it might have been brought down by rebels. The story didn't say so explicitly but I can understand that someone could get that meaning out of it. So the government said that it was demoralising the troops because it showed that the rebels were very strong and had the capacity to bring down a helicopter so it was going to be encouraging the enemy. We knew that there was going to be trouble over that story but we didn't know what kind of trouble.
>
> We didn't imagine at that point that they would close down the *Monitor* ... but we misunderstood the extent of the crisis in the military over their inability to control the conflict.... Around 6:00 my cell phone rings and the guy says the security people have surrounded the office and they are not letting anyone in and they are not letting anyone out. They... have started confiscating our communication. So I said, okay let me come. Museveni's minister, he's been aware that the government can get nasty, so he panics and said Charles you cannot go back to the office, you have friends who can arrange for you to get out of this country tonight, in 4,5,6 hours you are in Kenya, Rwanda or Tanzania. I said no. He said by the time you get to the office it will be dark, if they sent armed guys and they have surrounded the office what do you think you are going to do? At least wait and go in the morning. I told him our MD is in West Africa, it is my responsibility. I have always stepped up to the plate in these situations; I am not going to stop now. So I left, I called the guy that called me and I asked him to pass by my house. I thought that they would have security people at my gate but they didn't. So I said bye to my family I told them that I am going and I don't know how this will end, what will happen. And I drove to the office. You could see these guys in military coats with these guns and they had blocked the roads so nobody was passing through. So I said it was me, so they let me through. The government people had come, there were over 20 cars lined up. You had 60-100 heavily armed people surrounding the building. You could see the gleam from the guns. It was very interesting when I walked in, the reaction of everybody. First the staff was very relieved seeing it. But the security people just couldn't comprehend that I knew what happened and I had run back into it. They were puzzled. But immediately it kind of gives you an edge and you win their respect. It is not that I didn't have an opportunity [to get out of it or leave], given our old networks that we could still activate, but I didn't.[546]

Onyango-Obbo was charged and later left, under much pressure from the government, for a new position at the *Nation* in Nairobi.[547] Nevertheless he continued coming back to Uganda for the trial:

> At that point I used to go back to Uganda every three weeks or so to go to the trial for the helicopter story. When I would come, people would say why do you come back, you are a free man? Why do you come back? I said because

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[546] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

[547] 13 December 2002, Feliz Osike, "Monitor's Obbo moves to Kenya", *The New Vision*, p. 1.

> if I stop the guy wins, if I lose the case I'll just stay in a Uganda jail, I'll
> serve my term and then go back to Kenya. I made that trip for about a year to
> attend the court.[548]

Onyango-Obbo's court battles were also the focus of much news coverage in both the *Monitor* and *The New Vision* which made them all the more effective.

Andrew Mwenda similarly engaged the law in an effort to create more space for journalists. During a much-publicised arrest in August of 2005, Mwenda was jailed for several days for criticising the Ugandan government for sending Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) leader John Garang home on an unsafe helicopter. Museveni responded personally in a public speech to Mwenda's accusations so it was not a surprise when he was later arrested. Through Mwenda's jail diaries that are made public on the *Monitor* website, one can clearly see that not only did he use the opportunity to take advantage of covering a new side of Uganda - his fellow inmates - but he also resisted efforts by his friends to release him early. As he notes

> The last visitors that evening were Capt. Francis Babu, then Minister of State
> for Housing, and later Maj. Gen. Kahinda Otafiire. Both wanted to discuss
> with the President the possibility of my release. I told them I wanted the law
> to follow its course.[549]

Mwenda could easily have lobbied to be released but instead he chose to set the legal system in motion and use it as a new pulpit for advocating greater media freedoms.

The importance and logic in facing the justice system was part of expanding the circle, testing the limits and forcing formal recognition and definition of the space in which journalists could operate. With new governing structures, these spaces are less defined and tested. The efforts of these journalists have been successful. For example, in 2004, the *Monitor* successfully pushed for the Supreme Court to rule that section 50 of the criminal code that allows for two years imprisonment for "false news" conflicts with article 29 of the 1995 constitution guaranteeing freedom of expression. Onyango-Obbo and Mwenda were charged under this section in 1997 for their article entitled "Kabila paid Uganda in Gold".[550] The *Monitor* has effectively

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[548] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

[549] http://www.themonitor.co.ug/specialincludes/mwenda/index.php. Last accessed 16 December 2007.

[550] In 1997 Obbo and Mwenda were charged for the publication of false news in relation to a story alleging that Laurent Kabila, who at the time was struggling to oust DRC dictator Mobutu Sese Seko

worked to have this code removed and currently has a number of other cases in court challenging existing codes that it argues penalise the press unduly.

Partly this willingness to challenge the system comes from a belief that journalists will get a fair hearing and that they do not have to run away but rather can face the laws and prosecutors fairly, with well-trained lawyers. It also stems from a belief that greater freedom is possible and that some freedom already exists. As Onyango-Obbo noted:

> You have to have the freedom before you abuse it. The test of whether you have a free press is how much you can annoy the powers that be, or abuse the freedom and have only public criticism, a legal suit or an advertising ban slapped on you as opposed to a total ban of the paper or possibly being shot.[551]

Particularly at the *Monitor*, there was the notion of 'keeping things in perspective".

> Whatever one says, there is a fundamental difference between the NRM government's attitudes toward the press and that of other governments. It is true they get angry and punish newspapers like they did with the advertising ban and have arrested journalists. Journalism is not a bed of roses, you have to get these pricks, but the NRM government's first instinct is not to close down newspapers.[552]

At times Onyango-Obbo has also argued

> It sounds perversely ironical for someone like me who is often critical of government to say this. The NRM government is corrupt and has distasteful discriminatory practices towards Ugandans from some parts of the country, but on the press they score 7 out of 10.[553]

Simlar arguments were reiterated in interviews with many journalists from Onyango-Obbo's generation. Without downplaying the courage of journalists such as Onyango-Obbo, many of the most prominent journalists that have been willing to challenge media restrictions have enjoyed ties with State House from either the days of the struggle, family or friends. Museveni has also been willing to engage with these journalists informally, it is commonplace for the President to call journalists and

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from power, paid both the Ugandan and Rwandan army gold for their assistance. Several years later the journalists were acquitted but in 1999 Wafula Oguttu, Charles Onyango-Obbo and Deputy Editor, David Ouma Balikowa were charged with criminal libel and the publication of false news again.

[551] 22 July 1994, Kalenzi, "A two year old Monitor counts the beans", *The Monitor*, p. 1.

[552] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

[553] 22 July 1994, Kalenzi, "A two year old Monitor counts the beans", *The Monitor*, p. 1.

to respond to their articles in their paper, which has been important in building confidence between the government and the press.

Andrew Mwenda is one example of a journalist that seems to have a particularly complex relationship with the government as he comes from Museveni's region. It would be naïve to think that the personal side does not also play out in the media.[554] He has elaborated this complex relationship with Museveni's family in his jail diaries:

> My relationship with the Museveni family and government has always been a confusing one. I am always critical of the president and his government. Yet Museveni personally has always given me audience to talk to him - on phone or going to see him at state house. Even in our meetings, which are always of an intellectual nature, we disagree a lot but sometimes find areas of agreement.
>
> Museveni's young brother Salim Saleh is a close friend. Indeed, my love for Saleh is my worst disease as a journalist. I always pray that something doesn't happen to him, yet Saleh has an incredible propensity to stir up trouble for himself. Possibly it is because we share this common trait that we are close friends.[555]

And when Mwenda was imprisoned and Museveni's son came to visit him in prison:

> We hugged with Muhoozi and laughed at each other. We were supposed to have dinner that weekend. Now we couldn't! He said although he totally disagreed with what I said on radio, and thought I had run mad, he still felt as a friend he should come and sympathise with me.
>
> He called Saleh on phone and I talked to him. I had thought Saleh would say, "Be strong." Instead, he acted in a way uncharacteristic of him and expressed profound anger with me. This is the second time Saleh expressed his anger to me in spite of my many provocations; the first time being when Museveni delayed to meet me at State House on a scheduled appointment and I stubbornly walked away in protest - only to find my phone in the car ringing. And who was on the line? Maj. Gen. Joseph Kony![556]

Personal relationships are often complicated to decipher but matter greatly in looking at the way in which the government has intervened in the media system. Museveni has been skilful at co-opting critics but criticism by the older journalists with whom

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[554] This is especially the case if it involves the President's daughter who Mwenda is rumoured to have dated (Mwenda insists she was the one to ask him out). Interview: Mwenda.

[555] http://www.monitor.co.ug/specialincludes/mwenda/mwe08181.php. Last accessed 16 December 2007.

[556] Ibid. Joseph Kony is the leader of the LRA. He is extremely elusive and rarely gives interviews to journalists.

he shares a more personal relationship with is often nuanced.[557] Kampala, however, is not Uganda and while most journalists are based there the situation is different in other areas of the country.

4.3 Beyond Kampala

Journalists in Northern Uganda, in particular, are regularly targeted by media legislation which the government selectively applies. The NRM is particularly sensitive to reporting on the army and is often used as the rationale, particularly during debates in parliament on the role of the press in nation-building, for restricting the press. In the late 1980s this issue was debated extensively in relation to the Penal Code Act amendment bill in 1988. Arguing in support of a section amendment James Tumwesigye illustrates the common perspective of the government:

> There is no unlimited freedom... all these freedoms have got some limitations. But somehow, some people do not understand this. They think that freedom is unlimited and they have the right to say anything irrespective of the harm that this may do to other people and the society as a whole. In this respect I would like to note some examples where our newspapers have been guilty of excesses.[558]

Among a number of examples, Tumwesigye cites:

> There have been reports in the local newspaper discouraging the peace talks that have been going on between the government and UPDA [Uganda People's Democratic Army]. Now, what interest does such a newspaper serve? We have insecurity, we have conflicts and when two parties sit together to create harmony, the newspaper comes out and says, this is no good, the talks will fail; this and that and that.... [559]

The amendment was passed by parliament criminalising the publication of anything about the army unless explicitly approved as not jeopardising national security.

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[557] It is also important to note that Museveni is deeply sensitive about reporting on his family. As Oguttu notes

> There have been issues of corruption relating to Janet, the first lady as well as the wealth of Museveni's children. If you publish about it, they'll arrest you. You can't write that Janet was involved in two murders....Museveni is giving away state land to mistresses - you can't write that (Interview: Oguttu).

Sseezi-Cheeye notoriously opened his first edition of *Uganda Confidential* with the news that Museveni's wife was involved in a murder; not surprisingly he was arrested for this. But nevertheless he remains close to those in power and is currently a Presidential advisor.

[558] HASERT, 13 July 1988. Bills, second reading the penal code act amendment bill, 1988, p. 83

[559] Ibid.

Activities included under this would be about the movement or supplies of the army or the enemy as well as specific operations.

Not all journalists are willing to face charges or readily provoke the government, particularly in territory that is notoriously controversial such as national security. Many journalists avoid security issues and those that are assigned to report on the war in the North or other related military activities, such as Uganda's intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, tread with great caution and often self-censor. Most journalists agree that there is one set of rules for reporting in Kampala and another set of rules that journalists must abide by in the countryside or particularly in the North.[560] As James Oketch Bitek, the *Monitor* Bureau chief in Gulu explains:

> Reporting in a war zone isn't easy. If you report government losses with the rebels they aren't happy. For self-survival you need to analyse things on your own.... When we report on government forces we are summoned. When the war was quite serious it was more problematic though.... There have been a lot of changes. We [the *Monitor*] may not be as vigorous as in the past. Our reporting style has changed. Most of the managers now agree with the government, they have their own style. We at the grassroots level may have to change; if you write a very hard-hitting story it can be altered so you learn to write that way. For now we can go ahead with the new style.[561]

Bitek also highlighted what he believed to be the differences between *The New Vision* reporting and the *Monitor* reporting:

> *The New Vision* does some propaganda for the military officers: if there has been no serious fighting they might write and say that a lot of people were killed. For the *Monitor*, we demand to be taken to the scene. We want to witness the result of the battle, unless it's in Sudan but even we've been going there. Before you write the story you look at the impact, then you see if you can put it right. If not, you leave it. For example, the President [Museveni] made a statement that was sort of nasty. *The New Vision* went with it but the BBC and we abandoned it. *The New Vision* had to write retracting the whole story because it would endanger the relations between Sudan and Uganda and the local people. You have to abandon it for the good of society.[562]

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[560] The government's sensitivity to reporting outside of the capital is also illustrated by the ban imposed by the Media Centre on foreign journalists in the run-up to the election stating that they must stay within 200 km of the capital.

[561] Interview: James Oketch Bitek.

[562] Interview: Bitek

Particularly in the North, an opposition stronghold, navigating the election period highlighted the difficulties in reporting there.[563]

Younger journalists who lack the network of connections with those in power, as well as the journalists operating outside Kampala, have to tread more sensitively than their more prominent and politically connected colleagues. As the older generation has gradually been less influential, and thus the strategy of informal media engagement Museveni cultivated has been less possible, the government has adapted by formalising the government-press interaction.

4.4 Formalising state- media interaction: The Uganda Media Centre[564]

A notable development in the shift to more formal methods of dispensing information and engaging with the media is the establishment of the Uganda Media Centre. It was established prior to the 2006 elections and until late 2006 Robert Kabushenga served as director. The Media Centre is located in a small house in Kampala and has the look of a well-funded NGO rather than a government ministry. This is indicative of a lesson from *The New Vision:* it is easier to start from scratch than to reform an existing complex bureaucratic ministry.

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[563] Choice FM, for example, was shut down during the recent elections allegedly for failing to follow the codes outlined by the Media Council including recording and maintaining records of broadcasts as well as for not renewing its license. Journalists Sam Lawino, the editor, and Obol Nelson, the Manager, argued that the Broadcasting Council came, took away all their documents and then they just disappeared leaving them with no way to prove that they had the proper license and documents.

In Northern Uganda, Mega FM and Choice FM are the two largest stations (there are others, including King Radio and Radio 4, but they are smaller with less reach). Mega FM, for all of its virtues and important contributions in promoting peace in the region, is pro-government. Choice FM was the station of choice for the opposition during the elections and there were some very heated debates with opposition leaders including Besigye. While the government certainly didn't like what Choice was broadcasting, as with much in Uganda, there is another dimension that Lawino and Nelson mentioned. Much of politics and the media is personal and on air during a debate between the incumbent and challenger for municipal elections, Gulu Resident District Commissioner Walter Ochora became furious and used vulgar, obscene language abusing Norbert Mao (the challenger). Without being asked directly, however, during an interview Ochora denied having any contact with Choice FM saying "I never listened to Choice before it was closed. Mega was preferred because of the wide coverage." He also said that "They [Choice] would get opposition candidates to air their view- why they should be voted and then they went beyond- they started insulting and provoking the other side." (Interview: Walter Ochora). Since decisions to close or restrict particular media outlets are often made locally legislation is often employed in an ad-hoc and inconsistent way.

These journalists seldom have the connections with those in power in Kampala that the influential print journalists have. The role of informal engagement on the part of the government cannot be underestimated and certainly has limited the ability and opportunities for journalists working outside of Kampala to effectively challenge legislation or ensure it is applied consistently.

[564] Available at: http://www.mediacentre.go.ug

The mandate of the Uganda Media Centre is similar to that of a Ministry of Information. According to Kabushenga, the changing media scene with its multitudes of media outlets necessitates a shift away from just ownership to engagement. No longer is it simply enough that the government owns both *The New Vision* and Radio Uganda: it needs to have a public diplomacy strategy of managing information in a systematic way. Thus Kabushenga saw his mandate as not merely a presidential spokesperson but as the director of the government's communication strategy that must reach all the people in Uganda, manage Uganda's reputation abroad and harmonise the voices of the government.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Uganda Media Centre is that it has been directly modelled on South Africa's Government Communication Information Service (GCIS).[565] Kabushenga and his colleagues simply went to the GCIS website

While Museveni has been accessible to journalists, the blossoming of over one-hundred radio stations has made it difficult for one person, no matter how charming and accommodating, to engage with all journalists and make his arguments public. Thus, in an effort to insert the government's perspective into this more decentralised public debate a government representative is provided to go on the radio. The Uganda Media Centre helps by giving pro-government or sympathetic members of parliament key information to be used in the debate. This is also part of an effort to harmonise ministries as it is common for individual ministries to have their own communications strategies to benefit the minister, serving as "a platform for prominence and to show that they are more hardworking then everyone else".[567] The Uganda Media Centre has tried to put forward a unified line through regular press briefings and restricting the public remarks of individual ministers.

Managing the country's reputation abroad has also been given new emphasis. The South African GCIS focus on coordinating the message of their embassies has proved particularly instructive. As the international community has focused on the re-writing of the constitution and the continuing war in the North, Museveni's government has been under increasing pressure to control this information and counter it.

In sum, the Uganda Media Centre is essentially seeking to disseminate propaganda and control information both within the country and internationally. And just as the Media Centre was strategically established before the 2006 elections, current efforts of government propaganda are in anticipation of the 2011 elections. As Kabushenga explained,

> In the last elections we were totally missing a communication strategy. I want to have the firefight now and have a consistent argument using the media. It is easier to do that than be repressive, it is cheaper.[568]

From experience prior to, and during, the 2006 election, many journalists are sceptical and wary about the Uganda Media Centre as they consider it to have been intolerant and restrictive towards both local and international journalists. Thus, if the Centre

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weeks, and we called in those people to come and study our scheme here... (Interview: Benjamin Mkapa).
[567] Interview: Kabushenga.
[568] Interview: Kabushenga.

wishes to gain the sort of acceptable reputation that the GCIS enjoys, there is a good amount of work to be done building bridges and repairing the damage by Kabushenga.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has put forward some new ways of beginning to understand the press system in Uganda. It has challenged prevailing notions about the *Monitor* as 'opposition' press and has thrown into question what exactly it means to be 'opposition' in such a complex and politicised environment. As will be elaborated in the coming chapter, the *Monitor*, as both a product and critic of the NRM has played an important role in nation-building and providing a forum for debate and reconciliation. Similarly, the unique role of *The New Vision* as a government paper in encouraging consensus on the national project and encouraging institutionalisation of the stands in contrast to that of its counterpart in Ethiopia, *The Ethiopian Herald/Addis Zemen*.

In addition, the importance of journalists in challenging and engaging with the government, and vice versa has been discussed. During the nation-building process, the boundaries were not always evident and thus it has rested on both sides to engage in defining them through legal precedents and the process of 'expanding the circle'. However, actors that could engage in this are slowly becoming less influential and active and are rather being replaced by a group of more 'professionalised' and even 'objective' journalists. As the founders of not only the *Monitor*, but also *The New Vision* are being replaced, so too are the papers' objectives and the space for factions to meet, debate and dialogue is also evolving. It is on this note that we turn to the final chapter of this part to examine the political and social structure that has shaped the press environment and contributed to its development and the current trend.

CHAPTER 8

The Political and Social Structure That Has Shaped

Uganda's Media System:

Guerrilla War, Political Experience and Practical Calculations

No one should think that what is happening today is a mere change of guard;
it is a fundamental change in the politics of our country.
In Africa, we have seen so many changes that change,
as such, is nothing short of mere turmoil.
We have had one group getting rid of another one,
only for it to turn out to be worse than the group it displaced....
Past regimes have used sectarianism to divide people along religious and tribal lines.
But why should religion become a political matter?
Religious matters are between you and your god:
politics is about the provision of roads, water, drugs in hospitals,
and schools for children.
Don't you see that people who divide you are only using
you for their own selfish interests?
Our Movement is strong because it has solved the
problem of tribal and religious division.

-President Museveni
1986 Inauguration

The recent history of the press in Uganda must be understood within the context of the NRM's claims to bring unity, reconciliation and peace to the nation and the extent to which it has been successful. The NRM has been Uganda's most democratic and effective government. Even Museveni's harshest critics concede that the country has experienced unprecedented levels of economic growth and widespread peace and security, particularly in the south. In most parts of Uganda poverty has been reduced, though this has been affected by HIV/AIDS rates and population growth. Nevertheless, the government has recently embarked on ambitious social programmes such as free universal primary education.

Uganda appears strong, stable and relatively progressive compared to Ethiopia but it is not a complete success story of advancing peace and justice. The ongoing rebellion in the North with the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) has impoverished and marginalised a significant portion of Ugandans, as has the war in the West against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Uganda is also currently involved in the war in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and there is systematic discrimination towards other groups within the state including the Karamojong.[569]

There is substantial literature on political development from the colonial period to the contemporary. Academics have been particularly interested in the impact of colonialism,[570] land policy,[571] the Lords Resistance Army,[572] democratic movements and the structure of governance,[573] including the Resistance Councils (RCs)[574] established by the NRM. The process of nation-building has had a strong impact on the press and the press has also contributed to political developments.

Following the framework of analysis for the political variables, the first section of this chapter will begin with the NRM's nation-building process focusing on the NRM's ideology and the liberation war. Several factors relating to the development of the press system will be elaborated including: a) the early focus of the NRM on regional liberation struggles which has endowed the current government with a regional focus and mediated some initially strong Leninist leanings; b) Museveni's leadership and personality as it sets the tone of the present government and plays a key role in government-press relations; and c) the emphasis the NRM placed on persuading people in the bush which was carried over into the government and impacted not only their own press, but the way in which they engaged journalists.

The second section considers the consolidation of power specifically addressing the role of participation, the Resistance Councils, and the unique one-party

[569] HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (1999b) Hostile to Democracy: The Movement Systme and Political Repression in Uganda. IN WATCH, H. R. (Ed.) New York, Human Rights Watch, MUGAJU, J. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) (2000) No-Party Democracy in Uganda: Myths and Realities, Kampala, Fountain Press, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (1999a) Hostile to Democracy: The Movement System and Political Repression in Uganda. New York.

[570] MAMDANI, M. (1996) Citizen and Subject, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

[571] BAZAARA, N. (1994) Land Policy and the Evolving Forms of Land Tenure in Masindi District. IN MAMDANI, M. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) Uganda: Studies in Living Conditions, Popular Movements and Constitutionalism. Vienna, JEP.

[572] ALLEN, T. (2006) Trial Justice, London, Zed, BEHREND, H. (1998) War in Northern Uganda. IN CLAPHAM, C. (Ed.) African Guerrillas. Oxford, James Currey.

[573] OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (1994) Judicial Power and Constitutionalism in Uganda: A Historical Perspective. IN MAMDANI, M. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) Uganda: Studies in Living Conditions, Popular Movements and Constitutionalism. Vienna, JEP.

[574] DDUNGU, E. (1994) Popular Forms and the Question of Democracy: The Case of Resistance Councils in Uganda. IN MAMDANI, M. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) Uganda: Studies in Living Conditions, Popular Movements and Constitutionalism. Vienna, JEP, BRETT, E. A. (1994) Rebuilding Organization Capacity in Uganda Under the National Resistance Movement. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 32, 53-80.

Movement system. The press has been an important tool for creating consensus, explaining the NRM to the public and fostering a forum for elites and factions to debate. Museveni has also sought to consolidate his power through less democratic means, including patronage and war. This early process of nation-building, particularly the first ten to fifteen years, has been definitive in government-press relations.

A third section on reconciliation and trust and confidence building extends the analysis to include the process of incorporating former opposition elements and civil servants, including those from the former Ministry of Information, as a means of developing and presenting a new vision of Uganda. The government also facilitated and allowed a national debate, within certain bounds, for which the press served as an important forum for discussion on what the country's new agenda should be. With a new style of 'populism', Museveni's role in building trust between the population and the government, engaging critics and conveying the impression of listening to the concerns of his people, has been important in the development and role of both the independent and government press.

The fourth section addresses the international dimensions of the political process and argues that while the NRM appears particularly sensitive to donor and international concerns on governance, it is also willing to take risks when it comes to silencing critics. A key feature of the NRM, particularly in comparison with Ethiopia, is its regional and outward focus. Not only does Uganda aspire to be a leader within the East Africa Community but the NRM also compares itself to regional standards, including of the press, in neighbouring Kenya and Tanzania, both of which are more democratic.

Together these four sections will argue how the unique ideology of the liberation movement, along with the substantial and generally successful process of reconciliation, consensus building and consolidation of a national agenda has been instrumental in shaping the press system as it is today. At the same time, the press has been important in providing a forum for elites and factions to meet, debate and discuss the national project. Unfortunately, however, this progress seems to be very much in jeopardy at present as the NRM increasingly appears to be proving right

those critics who argue the Movement is nothing more than a cover for a single party autocracy.[575]

1. Ideology of the guerrilla movement

1.1 Lessons from Southern African insurgencies and nation-building projects

The NRA/M was the first African guerrilla insurgency to defeat an incumbent African regime and establish a successful and enduring post-insurgency government.[576] As an exceptionally effective and stable movement, the revolutionary ideology and methods of insurgency warfare that Museveni elaborated impacted post-insurgency governments and movements across the region including Ethiopia and Eritrea as well as Rwanda, Zaire, Sudan and Somalia. The commitment of the NRA to achieving non-coercive and non-sectarian civilian support for the guerrilla struggle was unusual[577] and impacted government strategy towards the press.

In 1967 Museveni went into exile and joined Dar-es-Salaam University where he was active in radical student politics. President Julius Nyerere's progressive leadership was a major draw and influence for Museveni and other liberation fighters, as it served as not only an ideological beacon of liberation but he was actively supporting movements across the continent. Museveni made contact with Nyerere who was assisting Obote against Idi Amin, and obtained the Tanzanian President's support with the condition that all the opposition groups would gather under Obote's leadership. While there was some attempt on Museveni's part to do this, there was fundamental disagreement as Obote insisted that all the resistance be under his leadership as president.[578]

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[575] MUGISHA, A. (2004) Museveni's Machinations. *Journal of Democracy*, 15, 140-144, OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (2000a) New Wine or New Bottles. IN MUGAJU, J. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) *No-party Democracy in Uganda: Myths and Realities.* Kampala, Fountain Publishers, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (1999b) Hostile to Democracy: The Movement Systme and Political Repression in Uganda. IN WATCH, H. R. (Ed.) New York, Human Rights Watch, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (1999a) Hostile to Democracy: The Movement System and Political Repression in Uganda. New York.
[576] CLAPHAM, C. (Ed.) (1998) *African Guerillas,* Oxford, James Currey.
[577] MAMDANI, M. (1996) *Citizen and Subject,* Princeton, Princeton University Press.
[578] NGOGA, P. (1998) Uganda: The National Resistance Army. IN CLAPHAM, C. (Ed.) *African Guerillas.* Oxford, James Currey.

In response to being unable to find common ground, the Front for National Salvation (Fronasa) was formed in August 1971 and became a precursor to the NRM/A. Underlying the choice in pursuing a liberation struggle was a belief, following the Frente de Libertacao's (Frelimo) experience, that it could give birth to a new society founded on equality and non-ascriptive politics.[579] Frelimo, at the time, was fighting an insurgent war against the Portuguese colonialists in Northern Mozambique that emphasised support of the people as an imperative for winning a war. As a student, Museveni had organised a trip for a student group to visit Frelimo in the liberated zones and after Fronasa was established cadres were sent to Mozambique to be trained with Frelimo.

The attempts to overthrow Amin in 1972 were unsuccessful and resulted in hundreds of casualties. Fronasa worked to establish resistance cells within Uganda, but these soon failed as the plot was uncovered and the members were publicly executed. In 1978-1979, the Tanzanian army led a successful invasion, with the assistance of a number of exile groups including Fronasa, to overthrow Amin and install Professor Lule as President. Museveni served as a minister in this government and competed during the 1980 democratic elections under the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM).

While in Tanzania Museveni and his colleagues learned much from the Tanzanian example of the media's role in nation building and liberation struggles. As former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa explained, Tanzania's strategy during this period was:

> First we gave voice to the movements. We gave voice. Oh yes, we gave pages to them. We would interview them, we would reproduce their manifestos, we would publish their press releases which would give them a great deal of confidence. [This was done] to educate our own people so that they didn't lower their support for the liberation. And particularly with regard to the radio...they were given special time which was beamed to all Southern Africa, so that helped them to carry the message...[580]

In response to a question about *The Uganda Resistance News* in particular, and the importance of an international media strategy as well as Tanzania's interest in this, Mkapa explained:

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[579] Ibid.
[580] Interview: Benjamin Mkapa.

The liberation movements tried to have a press wing, a press officer, whose job was really to scan through the newspapers, at the time we had no internet of course, but to focus on them, to direct comments.... It was very important particularly for the outside world.... Reuters would pick up whatever it was... and put it on the international news. But in our country it was really in making sure that there was no flagging in the support for the liberation movement... among the population. Although we did not suffer as much as Zambia, for instance... nevertheless we made lots of sacrifices. You see, we would have rallies and these people would volunteer... clothes for the refugees and stuff like that... so you had to uphold that support and it helped to tell the people how effective the liberation movement was.[581]

As will be elaborated in the coming sections, Tanzanian support and the example set by their government was important for the NRM in providing both lessons in liberation strategy and the potential role of the media during a guerrilla war.

1.2 The political and social ideology of the NRM in the bush

The 1980 elections marked the birth of the NRM.[582] In that year, with the support of Nyerere, Obote claimed to have won the elections though they were probably rigged, particularly in Southern Uganda since Obote's supporters were mostly in the North. Because of the presence of the Tanzanian army, Museveni and his allies realised that removing Obote by a coup d'état would have been impossible. The environment was conducive instead for a guerrilla struggle, an action that complemented the NRM's political ideology.[583]

According to its doctrine the NRM needed time to educate and organise people as well as to establish the structures that could replace the weak state that currently existed. From the start, political education was central throughout the struggle and succeeded in helping the NRM to develop a strong political base. The NRM was influenced by Mao Tse Tung's argument that political mobilisation is the crucial starting point for any insurgency and it also drew on Che Guevara's foco

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[581] Interview: Mkapa.

[582] In 1981 when the war began, the NRM was initially known as the Popular Resistance Army (PRA). It did not adopt the name NRM/A until merging with Professor Lule's exiled Uganda Freedom Fighters (UFF). The UFF contributed little more than Lule's name to the struggle as he became the nominal head of the organization though he passed away during the struggle formalizing Museveni as the head of the NRM/A.

[583] NGOGA, P. (1998) Uganda: The National Resistance Army. IN CLAPHAM, C. (Ed.) African Guerillas. Oxford, James Currey.

theory that the government's repressive reactions to insurgencies would mobilise support among the population.[584]

This theory, also shared in Ethiopia by the TPLF, had momentum early on in the NRA's struggle as the United National Liberation Army (UNLA) was loathed in many parts of the country, particularly in Buganda where Obote was despised for his treatment of the Kabaka in 1966 and in West Nile where the population was being attacked for supposedly continuing to support Amin. Young people turned to the NRM as an alternative after experiencing torture at the hands of the Obote regime or being persecuted as a possible NRM sympathiser. Tutsi refugees from Rwanda in exile in Uganda were also a major target for persecution because many had previously supported the DP against the UPC. Obote also tried to portray Museveni as a Rwandan interfering in Uganda's internal affairs. This accusation, combined with the attacks on the Rwandan community, provoked support and by January 1986 a quarter of the NRA was of Rwandan origin.[585]

The repression of the Obote regime increased as the NRA became increasingly successful. Thus just as Mengistu was the best recruiting tool for the TPLF, Obote did the same for the NRA; and both guerrilla movements were careful about maintaining good relations with civilians by avoiding unnecessary pressures or harassment.

In the early days of the struggle, the NRA paused for several months to consolidate lessons learned from their initial hit-and-run operations and also to go underground for a period to recruit further members and strengthen connections with the local population. The NRA was operating solely in Buganda in the area northwest of Kampala, an area known as the Luwero Triangle, situated between the roads that went North from Kampala to Gulu and northwest from Kampala to Hoima and the Kafu River. The NRA was unique in that there was virtually no outside assistance given; the single contribution came from Libya although it amounted to no more than a small cache and they relied mainly on capturing weapons from government forces.[586]

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[584] Ibid.
[585] Ibid.
[586] Ibid.

During this period Museveni also went abroad for several months to garner international support. At this time it became evident just how dependent the NRM was on his personal leadership - very little could happen when he was away. After wide-ranging discussions within the Movement it was concluded that they could not be so reliant on the leadership of a single individual so the organisation structure was reformed. Despite this, the NRM today continues to a degree of dependence on Museveni as his unique form of democratic populism has continued to characterise governance in Uganda.[587]

During the struggle, the NRM developed a political system in pyramid form that was a precursor to the Resistance Councils, which later became institutionalised when it came to power. Influenced by Lenin's principles of democratic centralism, the National Resistance Council was the head of this structure and sought to develop a commitment to the central organisation and give peasant communities self-government without constraining the central leadership. The novelty of the system was also its emphasis on community rather than individual rights.[588] Museveni was head of the National Resistance Army Council (NRAC) and High Command, which were responsible for setting military policy and leading the insurgency. In an effort to reduce reliance on Museveni the NRAC included commanders of all battalions and heads of administrative departments. Policy and Administrative Committees were established to advise the commanding officers.

A Political Commissar was also established to ensure that all Movement supporters and fighters were fully indoctrinated in the rational of the struggle. Soldiers were encouraged to engage in constructive criticism as they were permitted to criticise commanding officers as long as it was done in good faith and openly. This was regarded as an important part of the process and later had an impact on the NRMs approach to the press and tolerance of debate.

The fighters had a strict code of conduct for which some offences were considered to be 'Category A' which could lead to the death penalty and included crimes such as murdering a civilian and treason. 'Category B' crimes were less

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[587] CARBONE, G. (2004) 'Populism' visits Africa: the case of Yoweri Museveni and no-party democracy in Uganda. *Crisis States Research Centre's Annual Workshop.* Delhi.

[588] MAMDANI, M. (1996) *Citizen and Subject,* Princeton, Princeton University Press. p. 201.

serious and included theft, encouraging tribalism and claiming group victories as your own; punishment was less severe and could include suspension, demotion or imprisonment.[589] The Movement took great care to ensure that tribalism did not become a problem and promotion was based on achievement rather than education and induction training was uniform regardless of background.

The National Resistance Council (NRC), as the main political organ, was broken down into several committees including the External Subcommittee which was tasked with mobilising support internationally primarily from Ugandans in exile. It was based in Nairobi and headed by Matthew Rukikaire whose remit also included publishing the *Uganda Resistance News* which, as discussed in Chapter 6, was a key component of the public information strategy. The Political and Diplomatic Sub-committee[590] was headed by Museveni's deputy in the NRA High Command, Eriya Kategaya, and was responsible for informing the international community and organising the Resistance Councils in the liberated zone

Political education of the fighters and the population was key as the people were seen as an ally in the struggle and campaigns. As Kategaya describes:

> I would encourage fighters to read the history of Uganda. We also looked to Mozambique, Vietnam for their armed politicians and South Africa, Cuba so officers could appreciate other armed struggles. We saw ourselves as part of this broader community.[591]

In addition, he notes that

> The NRA invested heavily in persuading people. They had a political and military wing, they'd go and educate people in the village to be mobilised, they'd talk and explain the cause. It was modelled after the Maoist, Chinese movement. Maoist movements invest in persuasion, political debate. Guerrilla movements that were supported by Soviets cared more about the military. Regarding freedom of expression, you can't mobilise support without feedback.[592]

This emphasis on persuasion is a key characteristic of the NRM that has influenced the way it sees the role of the press and as discussed earlier, specifically influenced *The New Vision*.

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[589] NGOGA, P. (1998) Uganda: The National Resistance Army. IN CLAPHAM, C. (Ed.) *African Guerillas*. Oxford, James Currey.
[590] There was also the Finance and Supplies Committee which, as its name implies, coordinated supplies for struggle and managed the organization's finances and was headed by Zak Kaheru.
[591] Interview: Eriya Kategaya.
[592] Interview: Kategaya.

Whilst in the bush, the NRM also developed a clear political agenda to mobilise the people in support of the values and objectives for which it fought. This plan, known as the Ten-Point Programme was implemented as the political agenda when the NRM came to power. The introduction to the programme states that:

> The Ten Point Programme or areas which the Movement pledges to cover in the programme are democracy, security, unity, independence, economy, social services, misuse of public office, displaced persons, regional cooperation and strategy of the mixed economy by the Movement and acts as a guide in the people's struggle against the neo-colonial regimes.[593]

The Ten-Point Programme is a fundamental part of the ideology of the NRM and the process of political transformation it has attempted to implement. The programme describes why Uganda is 'stagnant' economically and how the points could form "a basis for a national coalition of democratic, political and social forces, that could at last, bring some motion".[594] The first point of the programme emphasised the "establishment of popular democracy" that included three elements- parliamentary democracy, popular democracy (the resistance councils) and a decent level of living for every Ugandan. The second point addressed the "restoration of security" allowing for the disappearance of state inspired violence and the protection of private property. The 'consolidation of National Unity' was the third point, noting that one of the principal causes of strife in the country has been sectarian violence and that this has hindered groups working together for national development causes.[595] The Ten-Point Programme was later replaced by the Fifteen-Point Programme and also set the precedent for the Eight-Point Programme that the Rwandan Patriotic Front implemented when it came to power in Rwanda.

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[593] NRM (undated) *Ten-Point Programme of NRM* Kampala, NRM Publications.

[594] Ibid.

[595] The fourth point looks at 'Defending National Independence' which points critically at the interventions of international actors in Amin and Obote's time- particularly of Westerners and argues that Ugandan interests must come first and absolute independence from all external actors is key. Point five extensively outlines "Building a National Economy" and notes that this is "probably the most important point of the whole programme" and advocates a mixed and integrated economy that is not dependent on external actors but is self-sufficient. The sixth point advocates for the Restoration and rehabilitation of Social Services including health, education, and access to clean water. Elimination of corruption and misuse of power is the following point followed by the resettlement of the displaced people is point eight. Point 9 looks at regional cooperation and human rights that primarily advocate for regional collaborations. The final point is on following a strategy of mixed economy- a rejection of the laissez faire of pure capitalism but a system in which the state takes over particular sectors to guide the economy while the majority of economic activities will be carried out by private entrepreneurs. (Ibid.).

The NRM's particular style of democratic populism, with a strong investment in persuasion initiated during the struggle, not only influenced the way in which the NRM consolidated power after taking over the state but it has also affected the way in which the government and press relate. In contrast with the EPRDF's emphasis on convincing the population of its cause through demonstrating progress, the NRM's persuasive strategy requires the leadership to debate and argue its case, while accepting criticism, thus making government and press relations important.

2. The process of state construction and the consolidation of power

The Obote regime was eventually overthrown by an internal coup d'état in July 1985 and replaced by the weak government of Tito Okello. In December 1983, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) commander Oyite Ojok died in a helicopter crash and the UNLA proved unable to function without his leadership. Disputes over his succession also arose between the Acholi and Langi groups further weakening an already delicate situation. The NRA used this period to consolidate gains and attract large numbers of troops that defected from the UNLA. It succeeded in gaining control of the entire southwest of the country. While President Moi of Kenya brought together Okello's government and the NRA for peace talks in Nairobi, the NRA merely used them to buy time, as it did not need to negotiate with a military victory within reach.

NRA troops seized Kampala on 26 January 1986. While there are many factors this success can be attributed to, some have argued that none have been more influential than Museveni himself. When Museveni emerged from the bush in the 1980s few Ugandans knew who he was but were pleasantly surprised with the charismatic intellectual that led the war.[596] As Patrick Ngoga notes:

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[596] There is a small body of literature that addresses the personality of Museveni and his role in shaping Uganda, including works by the author himself. See for example, OTTAWAY, M. (1999) *Africa's New Leaders*, Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment, AMAZA, O. O. (1998) *Museveni's Long March from Guerilla to Statesman*, Kampala, Fountain, MUSEVENI, Y. K. (1992) *What is Africa's Problem?*, Kampala, NRM , CARBONE, G. (2004) 'Populism' visits Africa: the case of Yoweri Museveni and no-party democracy in Uganda. *Crisis States Research Centre's Annual Workshop*. Delhi, KASSIMIR, R. (1999) Review: Reading Museveni: Structure, Agency and Pedagogy in Ugandan Politics. *Canadian Journal of African Studies/ Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines*, 33, No. 2/3, 649-673, MUSEVENI, Y. (1997) *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in*

> But one critical variable in assessing not only the success of the NRA during the insurgent war, but also the achievements of the post-insurgent government, was the strong and visionary leadership of Yoweri Museveni, which is readily obscured by an emphasis on more general variables such as 'popular support'. Although any effective insurgency requires a combination of leadership and support of the people, there may be considerable variation in the significance of each.... Museveni remained its [the NRA's] military and political pillar. This in no way implies that his leadership was the sole determining factor in the NRA's success, but it does suggest that it was the single most important factor.[597]

Today, twenty years later many question whether the Movement can survive without him. Nevertheless, the process of state construction and the consolidation of power were advanced by resistance councils, constitutional revisions and more contentious means such as patronage.

2.1 A single-party system: participation and persuasion

When the NRM came to power, party politics were banned, partly because the leadership feared the largely unknown NRM might not win. The NRM also believed that it was party politics that had been dividing and destroying the country and the pluralist democratic model was inappropriate for the current stage of Uganda's development. Underlying the argument for single-party rule was the concern that in the West political parties represent the class interests of industrialised societies while in Uganda, because it is pre-industrialised, parties may only represent ethnic or religious groups thereby accentuating divisions.

The NRM argued that the Movement system differed from regular one-party systems because everyone could participate and elect representatives. The Resistance Councils (RCs), which were started during the war, have been the most unique and illustrative manifestation and have been a central part of the NRM's strategy to consolidate its power and bring peace to the country. RCs were initially established up as rebel support structures during the struggle as a means of directing food and supplies to NRA fighters. After coming to power, RCs were established in every

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Uganda, London, MacMillan, MUSEVENI, Y. (1990) The State of the Nation. IN MUSEVENI, Y. (Ed.) *Consolidating the Revolution*. Kampala, NRM Publications.

[597] NGOGA, P. (1998) Uganda: The National Resistance Army. IN CLAPHAM, C. (Ed.) *African Guerillas*. Oxford, James Currey.

district and since the 1996 elections have been referred to as Local Councils.[598] There has been fascination with the RCs by political scientists and African scholars, many of whom initially praised the RCs as an innovative model.[599] In 1988 Eriya Kategaya, at the time First Deputy Prime Minister, argued the important role of the RCs in creating unity:

> Because for the first time people are meeting in RCs regardless of their political belief in one organisation which has never been there before. Before, our people were fighting through parties. Even brothers who are in different parties would not meet to discuss their problems but now through RCs, all members of the community at the village level meet and discuss their problems..... People can sit down and talk together, discuss their problems in the village, look for solutions to those problems regardless of their political beliefs, even religion. ... During the struggle... the lesson we learnt is that when people are having a common objective, they will really unite regardless of tribe and religion.[600]

In line with creating this unity, the RCs were also regarded as a liberating force for women by giving them a voice as there was a requirement for each committee to have a woman representative.

The RCs were also seen as a way for people to practice democracy. Some might argue they were a way to keep people sufficiently amused with the pretence of democracy whilst the leadership indulged in patronage and authoritarian tendencies, but consistent with the view of Museveni as 'the teacher', RCs were regarded as a "big school" for teaching appropriate democratic habits. According to the NRM, these habits were not natural but have to be practiced. As Kategaya elaborates:

> I hope that through the RCs we shall teach our people to accept and handle different points of view and even when there are differences to regard each other as Ugandans first and foremost. The holding of different views does not make you less of a citizen than the other and this has been a problem in this country where you find that somebody loses a job because he is reported

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[598] There are five levels of the local councils (LCs). LC1 is responsible for the village, LC2 is the muluka, LC3 is the gombolola, LC4 is the saza, while LC 5 is responsible for the entire district. Problems are to be presented at the lowest level and make their way through the levels until the problem is sufficiently addressed or resolved. Similarly, directives are channeled down through the levels until implemented at the appropriate local level. All LCs are elected directly by the people and the national government represents itself through Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) at the district level. The relationship between the LC5 Chairman and the RDC can sometimes be complex and it is difficult to decipher who is more powerful but it can also vary between districts.

[599] REGAN, A. (1998) Decentralization Policy: Reshaping State and Society. IN HANSEN, H. B. & TWADDLE, M. (Eds.) *Developing Uganda.* Oxford, James Currey, BRETT, E. A. (1994) Rebuilding Organization Capacity in Uganda Under the National Resistance Movement. *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* 32, 53-80.

[600] HASERT, 7 June 1988, National Resistance Council, p. 160.

to you as having voted a wrong party. Now what does engineering got to do with voting?[601]

The democracy the NRM believed it facilitated was also more direct and active than parliamentary democracy where voters might vote once every several years. Part of the rational behind the RCs was that Ugandans would have to be concerned and participate on a daily basis and this involvement was a way to strengthen internal security. By attempting to provide a framework through which conflicts could be resolved and justice executed, it was the NRM's hope that fewer people would resort to violence; much in the same way that the press can serve as a forum for elite negotiation.

The development of the press must also been seen in the context of the Resistance Councils and the policies of constructive criticism. When the NRM first came to power, they did not have a coherent strategy for approaching the media. The extent to which *The New Vision* was strategically planned by the NRM to alter the discourse in society or to shape the media environment is debatable.[602] It did not necessarily anticipate how it would evolve and *The New Vision* has been more dynamic and professional than most expected. When William Pike was asked whether the paper was a clearly articulated part of the new government's strategy he replied:

> No, they didn't choose to, it was an accident. I think they just set up the newspaper, got us to do it, and we did it and you know, built up our own track record.... I don't think it was a policy.... You know there were so many problems then and everyone was chipping in and everyone was trying to do what they could and so we were trying to do what we could and other people were trying to do what they could and it was like re-building a country... I don't think that they were consciously thinking that the radio was different or the TV was different to the newspaper.[603]

Even if the beginnings of *The New Vision* were characterised more by the initiatives of single individuals, it was the RCs and the policies of constructive criticism which

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[601] Ibid. p. 162.

[602] Justus Asiimwe, an engineer involved in setting up the Russian printing press for *The New Vision*, said that the original plan for the paper was actually created during the Obote II regime and was to develop a far-reaching paper called the *National Mirror*. The printing presses were to be distributed in Kampala, Mbarara and Soroti but were sitting in Kampala and not yet functioning because the project was being stalled with each change of the government. And similarly, there was the example mentioned earlier of *The People* newspaper under Obote I.

[603] Interview: Pike.

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set the pace for these initiatives to emerge and to build a dialogue with the public. For Kategaya:

> *The New Vision* was a new thing, the idea that you could have a government paper free enough to have opposition views. In 1986 we tried to bring together new and different forces. We created a broad administration so we needed a new press.[604]

While the paper initially was used for explaining the NRM, its tolerance for debate also stemmed from a belief that it was an important part of the process as well as confidence that the NRM was secure in its leadership position and *The New Vision* would only bolster its case for the Movement. As Minister Buturo argued: "*The New Vision* has come from growing confidence; we can easily connect with the population. We have regular elections and enjoy support throughout the country. *The New Vision* can write like any paper."[605] And in founding editor James Tumusiime's words: "People embraced *The New Vision*. It was new thinking with a new government. It was something you didn't have before. A government paper that reports a drunk minister—people gained faith and that Minister was sacked."[606] Thus, as the government was seeking to consolidate its power it represented a shift from the status quo and facilitated a debate between different factions.

2.2 Constitution building

The emphasis on participation was also important and exceptional in the crafting of a new constitution. Few other countries in the world have embarked on such an ambitious process of consultation which was, by most accounts, widely inclusive, thorough and relatively transparent.[607] This also stands in significant contrast to the case of Ethiopia.

In 1989 Museveni established a special Constitutional Commission under the leadership of Supreme Court judge Justice Ben Odoki that was tasked with consulting the people and preparing a draft for approval by a constituent assembly; fresh presidential and parliamentary elections were then to be held under this constitution which was approved in 1995. The primary issues for the constitutional commission had to do with federalism versus centralism, the reinstatement of monarchies, and

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[604] Interview: Kategaya.
[605] Interview: Buturo.
[606] Interview: James Tumusiime.
[607] BUSSEY, E. (2005) Constitutional Dialogue in Uganda. *Journal of African Law*, 49, 1-23.

whether the Movement system should continue or multipartyism should be reintroduced. A unitary system was chosen while it was decided that the Movement system should continue indefinitely. There were widespread community consultations and while most citizens lacked the information, skills and education, to assess and evaluate the constitution, there was nevertheless, a general acceptance of the document. At the same time, however, the government has also used other means to consolidate power.

2.3 Consolidating power through less democratic means

The greatest challenge for the constitution and the Movement system came from Museveni himself and his advocacy to repeal Article 105(2), which limits the terms a President can serve to two, in a 2005 constitutional referendum thereby allowing him his current term. The controversial referendum was extremely divisive and many have regarded it as a sign that the Movement has lost its way, though some also argue that democratic talk has never been more than a façade.[608]

Ministers who opposed Museveni's third term project were initially forced to resign and even after the election this remains a sensitive issue. For example, it has been suggested that William Pike was forced to resign as CEO of *The New Vision* because he was fundamentally opposed. Kategaya, is one person, however, who has survived in Museveni's government as a Minister despite his public criticism and a period with the opposition. He suggests that "changing the constitution creates a credibility gap. But it would be okay, if there was a need for changing the constitution." However, his time with the opposition left him unconvinced of the alternative. He felt that the opposition needed to "sit down, build the party first-attacking Museveni isn't a programme."[609] So Kategaya returned to the NRM and currently serves as minister of the East Africa Community.

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[608] MUGAJU, J. (2000) A Historical Background to Uganda's No-Party Democracy. IN MUGAJU, J. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) *No-Party Democracy in Uganda.* Kampala, Fountain, OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (2000b) New Wine or New Bottles? Movement Politics and One-partyism in Uganda. IN MUGAJU, J. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) *No-Party Democracy in Uganda.* Kampala, Fountain.
[609] Interview: Kategaya.

Museveni has sought to consolidate power in other ways beyond changing the constitution. There have long been accusations that the NRM violates human rights and intimidates opposition supporters. And there is widespread acknowledgement that corruption has also been part of Museveni's strategy for consolidating power and fulfilling desires of public gain. Museveni has been tolerant and even facilitated access to resources for leading elites as part of an effort to keep them within the ruling party and loyal. A complex system of patronage has become entrenched within the system that the newspapers appear to have had little effect in curbing.

For example, the issue of ghost soldiers fighting the LRA has been a very publicised scandal as it has been estimated that 25 million USD was being lost every year to pay soldiers who did not exist.[610] While some in the UPDF have been sacrificed as an attempt to demonstrate that the problem was being tackled, arguments have regularly been put forth about the extent to which the NRM uses the war in the North as a means for continuing to inflate the defence budget and gather resources to maintain the system of patronage. Given that donors are deeply involved in overseeing and managing parts of the budget in other areas (such as health and education), the defence budget is the most accessible for manipulation. Foreign aid also has had a role in allowing the current system of patronage to grow and has facilitated Museveni's consolidation of power. As Mwenda and Tangri have strongly argued,

> Large amounts of aid have enabled the government to ensure law and order and address basic needs including education, health care and infrastructure. Foreign aid has also enhanced the popular legitimacy of the Movement regime. But it has also sustained the patronage of that regime. Large aid flows, which have been channelled through the state, have expanded the public resources available to the government.[611]

Given such systemic examples, it does not appear that corruption is likely to decline in the near future but is instead becoming increasingly entrenched, particularly in the media as Museveni continues to buy-off critics. As Andrew Mwenda argues "Museveni can be very intolerant but he respects debate.... But if you live off him

[610] TANGRI, R. & MWENDA, A. (2006) Politics, Donors and the Ineffectiveness of Anti-corruption Institutions in Uganda. *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 44, 1, 101-124.
[611] MWENDA, A. M. & TANGRI, R. (2005) Patronage Politics, Donor Reforms, and Regime Consolidation in Uganda. *African Affairs,* 104/416, 449-467. p. 453.

financially, if he pays or bribes you, he makes you silent."[612]   While dissent and debate have been important tools in demonstrating the uniqueness of the single party Movement system, patronage has had a role in keeping the debate within certain bounds.

Despite the clear shortcomings of its strategy to consolidate power, the NRM has been effective in creating the strongest state in Uganda's history. The RCs have been a way to involve the masses in the Movement and essentially consent to the process. The emphasis on participation has also shaped the press and political environment in several important ways. A vibrant civil society has emerged which debates and discussions are conducted on critical issues from human rights to development. Non-governmental actors have been encouraged by the government, engaged and have had a stake in political and social processes.[613] While not everyone agrees,[614] many Ugandan seem to have largely put the past behind them and are focused on future goals and development.[615]

3. Reconciliation

The process of reconciliation has not only been key in consolidating power within the nation-building process but also in encouraging the press system to develop the way it has. The government has had to work hard to gain the trust and confidence of all sectors of society, including the media, which has been an important forum for creating consensus. This section probes into issues and the process in greater depth.

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[612] Interview: Mwenda.

[613] Though it has been noted that NGO's in themselves have not necessarily increased political participation DICKLICH, S. (1998) Indigenous NGOs and Political Participation. IN HANSEN, H. B. & TWADDLE, M. (Eds.) *Developing Uganda.* Oxford, James Currey.

[614] MUTUA, M. (2007) Beyond Juba: Does Uganda Need a National Truth and Reconciliation Process? *Buffalo Human Rights Law Review,* 13, 401-414.

[615] Charles Onyango-Obbo, for example, argues that it is precisely because Uganda has had such an unstable history that there is more peace now, particularly in contrast to the recent events post-election violence in Kenya. Uganda, with nine leaders since independence, has given the chance for different leadership from various regions or tribes to have control of the central government thus, over time, fewer communities have been excluded from power. In addition, the violent and chaotic past, has allowed fro more national issues to be dealt with (as has also been the case in Rwanda). This has not been the case in either Kenya or Tanzania. 2 January 2008, Charles Onyango-Obbo, "Election mess, is Uganda now better than Kenya?", *Daily Monitor,* p. 3 Available at: http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/Charles_Onyango_Obbo/Election_mess_is_Uganda_now_be tter_than_Kenya.shtml.

3.1 Incorporating civil servants and opposition

When the NRM came to power, there were a number of different groups fighting the central government including the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA), Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU), Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) and the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM). The NRM attempted to reconcile and integrate those that it defeated both militarily and politically.[616] Militarily, as Museveni argued,

> ...we use principled reconciliation, not cover up. By the 24th of January 1986, for instance, we had 12 brigades of our resistance army, which we used to defeat the last faction of the neo-colonial dictatorships. However, by the end of 1986, we had added another 10 brigades, mainly, from the forces we had defeated. By effecting national reconciliation, we were able, within one year, to cope with Sudanese aggression on our own. Eventually, we gained the upper hand over both Sudan and their protégés in their destabilisation of Uganda. Reconciliation, however, must be principled not opportunistic

> must be delved into and addressed. Otherwise, you are postponing problems.[617]

...ad to bring these different factions together. The state was weak and if ...hting continued, peace would be impossible.

...NRM justified the insurgency as necessary to overturn the fraudulent ...1980, but when it came to power it did not call for immediate elections. ...irst had to create a broad based, but not a coalition, government which ...existing parties (the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), Democratic Party ...ervative Party (CP) and Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM)). The ...was framed in such a way as to give people a sense of belonging, ...that not every part will be equal, nor will it necessarily be democratic, but ...ryone will be represented. The press also played a role in allowing an ...eating consensus. James Tumusiime, the first editor of *The New Vision*, ...because the "government was broad based and had ministers from DP, ...sues of policy/ideology were minimised to policies of the day." Thus, in

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IN MUGAJU, J. & OLOKA-ONYANGO, J. (Eds.) *No-Party Democracy in Uganda.*
...tain.
...er 2005, Museveni, "History of Uganda", Available at:
...tehouse.go.ug/news.detail.php?newsId=699&category=Major%20Speeches

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this environment, *The New Vision* saw its role, at least initially, to "emphasise facts and be a newspaper of record. We didn't have any problems until 1987 when the war in the North intensified and I was threatened to be sacked for reporting on this."[618]

The NRM was also careful not to exacerbate these different factions by dismissing civil servants who were serving under previous governments including those working for Radio Uganda or UTV. Kategaya recollects that in the immediate aftermath of the NRM coming to power,

> In the political history of Uganda, one group comes and sweeps everyone out. We said we must have a stop to this. If he worked for Radio Uganda maybe he didn't believe it but he survived. Our main concern was to let everyone settle down, not feel harassed. We had 500,000 refugees in Sudan, we told them to walk back. We wanted to make sure everyone was comfortable in the country and show that you are new group, you have different thinking.[619]

The retention of civil servants contributed to the general feeling that Museveni was indeed bringing the peace and security he promised. Former Minister of Information Nsaba Buturo notes that in the Ministry of Information,

> This government didn't go about dismissing those they thought were unfriendly. Those that wanted to continue working could. If you are to get stability you don't interfere.... Stability can only be when you carry-on with everyone so there have not really been arrests either. [Uganda] has a turbulent past so achieving stability only happens when you involve everyone.[620]

Jack Turyamwijuka, Head of Radio Uganda during the transition from Obote to Museveni, corroborated this when he noted that:

> No one was fired when the Movement came to power.... People were civil servants but now they are independently recruited. For our editorial policy, having the other independent radio stations makes little point in restricting government radio because if you don't say it, others will. Radio Uganda now has a board of directors. Most are former civil servants but there are business people as well. ... No one was sacked during the transition. Civil servants were not affected by change of power.[621]

In contrast with Ethiopia, this inclusive process helped to build confidence in the NRM and win over sceptics. A point reiterated in many interviews was that this strategy also kept potential critics of the government close and part of the system.

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[618] Interview: James Tumusiime.
[619] Interview: Kategaya.
[620] Interview: Nsaba Buturo.
[621] Interview: Jack Turyamwijuka.

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These organisations with large bureaucracies are difficult to reform but working with the existing journalists, even in the context of starting an entirely new media enterprise could reap valuable results. Crucially, *The New Vision,* which importantly was a new start in many respects, hired some of the journalists from the recently collapsed *Uganda Times.* Incorporating the *Uganda Times'* journalists was difficult because as James Tumusiime pointed out,

> Most of the journalists were used to propaganda and advancing a particular cause. They couldn't imagine they could write openly... the nucleus team going to run the paper was far from cohesive. A climate of suspicion hung over the paper as old political beliefs simmered below the surface. Many of the recruits who came in from outside thought that those they found there were moles of the old regime. This kept the latter on the defensive.[622]

But at the same time it provided a valuable opportunity for beginning to create consensus. These journalists necessarily had a different perspective of the recent changes in Uganda and one had to create consensus or mutually accepted facts before it would be possible to report on the new directions Uganda was heading. Pike describes one of his first initiatives when he arrived twenty years ago and people could rarely agree on basic issues.

> The journalists in *The New Vision* were essentially, at that stage, the journalists from the old government newspaper. They completely denied that people had been killed in Luwero so one of the first things I did after a couple of months was hire some buses and go out to Luwero and start kicking bones around in banana plantations. And then they were very shocked but there was a complete mismatch [on issues]. I think there are some issues now, you could see this argument about Kony now, and should Kony get amnesty? Most Northerners... are accepting that Kony committed atrocities. I mean it's not disputed.... The government also committed atrocities but actually the key facts are mostly agreed on. The motives of the government might be disputed, but key facts are accepted whereas in '86 even key facts weren't accepted. So I think the media as a whole, not just *The New Vision,* by providing comprehensive information has really helped to build that kind of consensus.[623]

Gradually a new team was built, journalists were trained and the paper was able to carve out its own independent direction.

This process has been an important component of nation-building. In contrast with Ethiopia, where the former Ministry of Information officials under the Derg were forced to resign and consequently channelled their bitterness and opposition to

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[622] Interview: James Tumusiime.
[623] Interview: Pike.

the government into private papers,[624] keeping the former Amin and Obote journalists as part of the system and engaged reduced the necessity for them to seek employment as opposition. They were also less likely to be as deeply opposed to the changes as they had vested interests in the new system.

3.2 Engaging with opposition ideas and forging a national agenda

The NRM allowed political space for dissenting voices thereby inhibiting the development of insurgencies. Dr. Ssemwogerere, Second Deputy Prime Minister, argued this rationale in parliament during a debate on the Penal Code Amendment Bill in 1988:

> Mr. Chairman, we talk of human rights. The fight- verbal on paper or in the bush or wherever, against Obote One, against Idi Amin, against Obote Two, etc.; fundamental arrests on the fight for the preservation of human rights in this country.... you must accept that Uganda is mature enough to contribute to this culture of human rights in Africa. And that is why we must dismiss from our minds- and I pray earnestly- once and for all any temptation to make the same mistakes, which have been made by many people all over the world over generations with the same results....
> And the question is: 'what is the ultimate cause?' And we know that many of them are fighting because there is no political space for organised defence. They go underground.[625]

Tolerating some political space and engaging with opposing voices can keep enemies close and operating within a particular national agenda. Compared to the radio, *The New Vision* had a relatively limited reach, which allowed the government to test out its ideas of extending constructive criticism to the public while being careful of its potential impact. Pike notes that *The New Vision* developed from what the NRM was practicing in the bush where

> They used to have rallies or parades where the soldiers were allowed to criticise the officers, as long as it's done openly in good faith.... And the rule was that you would never get in trouble as a soldier for practicing the principle of constructive criticism. So really the newspaper was an extension of that.... They came out, they were a guerrilla army but as a guerrilla army

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[624] It also parallels the way in which the NRM and TPLF handled the government armed forces when they came to power. The broader lessons of reconciliation and incorporation within these institutions are evident and have most recently been demonstrated in Iraq where the US occupying forces made the grave error of dismantling the Iraqi army- only to have them re-emerge unemployed as various insurgencies.

[625] HANSARD, 12 July 1988, The penal code amendment bill, pp. 68-69.

they'd supported free speech, constructive criticism and that kind of thing so they wanted that to continue in the newspaper.[626]

This argument is corroborated with Haserts reporting discussions in parliament, such as by Dr. Ssemwogerere, during the early days of the NRM government. The background is also further outlined in an article in the fourth *The New Vision* paper quoting Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Abu Mayanja. The Minister is reported as saying that

> The newspaper should not censor any honest opinion but that instead it should encourage debate on matters like security, economy, politicisation and other issues which affect all Ugandans...Ugandans who have strong cases to argue... use the newspaper for that purpose... no single individual or group has all the answers to our problems... let us encourage positive criticism because we as a government are not enemies of the people.[627]

While criticisms of some policies were tolerated, attacks on the NRM were not always welcomed by the public as a whole. The anti-state press, for example, gained little traction in Uganda. When the NRM came to power *Munnansi* and *The Citizen* were published by the Democratic Party and the Uganda People's Congress published *The People*. But these papers offered few alternatives to NRM policy, frequently were inaccurate and failed to appropriately gauge the mood of the country. They would, for example, repeatedly refer to the NRM as a 'dictatorship'. Charles Onyango-Obbo describes one such incident:

> When *Shariat*, [in about 1995], called President Museveni an adulterer, murderer and a mad man, it thought it would sell highly in Gulu where the government is unpopular. However, it got the shock of its life when it sold only five copies in this town where the government is most hated. The government paper, *The New Vision*, in contrast sold 300 copies on that issue.[628]

Much of the population was looking first and foremost for peace and security, which also suggests why *The New Vision* was so popular with its debates happening within a certain framework of tolerated dissent. As Onyango-Obbo argues,

> Museveni's war resonated a lot...it was not going to be just a change of government but... it was going to be a remake of the whole character of Uganda as it had been from the time of 1900 or the First World War. So to the extent that intellectual space in Uganda had for a long time been dominated by the South and Western elites, when Museveni came to power

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[626] Interview: Pike.

[627] 9 April 1986, "Vision role spelt out", *The New Vision*, pp. 1 and 8.

[628] 24 July 1999, Onyango-Obbo, "To cry or not cry for the independent press", *The Monitor*, p. 3.

there was no dissent from the very beginning.... The strength of Museveni was massive.[629]

Nevertheless, Onyango-Obbo was one of the first people to write a column in the *Weekly Topic,* and later the *Monitor,* criticising him. While the publishers and the editors of both papers thought the Movement was 'a good thing', Onyango-Obbo expressed his concern that

> Africa doesn't have a good experience where you get democracy through a dictatorship [and] Uganda should get very used to a culture of dissent early otherwise we are just going to create a big man and someone that is uncontrollable.[630]

Onyango-Obbo also argued that he

> Didn't support the economic policies of the day, they tended to be statist... and once you monopolise the economic space... it means you have controlled all space for any other possible social action. So all that happens is that a government grows but a society atrophies.[631]

But as Onyango-Obbo admits at the time "no one else really shared those views".

Criticising the Movement system also immediately pigeonholed someone to be seen as opposition. While today Onyango-Obbo might feel somewhat vindicated by how the political process has unfolded, he argues that at the time, perhaps his criticism of the Movement was

> A mistake, in the sense that people were not ready for that. In a way it was based on simple persuasion rather than the evidence because people were saying okay, where is the evidence that he [Museveni] is going to become a dictator and all these terrible things are going to happen. All you could point to at the time was historical precedents. So in many ways I think that we had a disconnect and because I did these things very early... when most of the country was still really in a euphoric moment you get straight jacketed.... You grow in the popular imagination of people of just someone who is dogmatically opposed.[632]

While the population may not have been initially particularly enthusiastic, the arguments did gain traction over time.

As discussed in the previous chapter, critiques such as Onyango-Obbo's were tolerated and even tacitly endorsed by the government as dissent and criticism was seen as a central part of the Movement system; thus the government not only came to

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[629] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[630] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[631] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[632] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

rely on the perception of the *Monitor* as opposition but even encouraged it (a trend that has been seen from the beginning through the 2006 election). The freedom to engage in debate separated the Movement from other single-party systems and Museveni needed papers like the *Monitor* to prove that the Movement system was indeed different. The paper might not have been perceived as an opposition actor to the same extent if it had been operating in a multi-party system but the fact that Uganda was "a virtual one party system was almost a fascination to some people", Onyango-Obbo said. He also argued,

> In Uganda, I think because of the one party thing it had this predicament. Museveni needed an alibi to show that there is this unique thing called the Movement system and it has all the attributes of a leader of a political system, except that you cannot run on a party platform, but you can run on leader merit. So they had to allow the press to try it. What they didn't foresee is that because the political state was fairly restrictive, that the independent media... any newspaper or radio, which had the courage, would eventually... come to capture the emotion of a lot of people as a platform by people who are trying to force the system. The Museveni government then came to rely [on the *Monitor*]... They used the existence of it- they would say, look at the paper like the *Monitor*. There are very few markers of a democracy and they would point to Tanzania and Kenya, which have newspapers which are critical, so then they say look you cannot therefore deny the fact that we have something special and unique happening here. So in many ways we also became a pawn of the regime.[633]

Thus for the government, having public debates and the *Monitor* as a critic or opposition was an essential part of validating the Movement system as a whole.

At the same time, however, the *Monitor* acting as an opposition force has been credited with contributing to the overall political maturation of the society as well as the national project. Maurice Ssekawungu, associate editor of *The New Vision*, strongly believes that papers, such as the *Monitor*, were helping to create checks and balances that restrain the government and foster public debate. Ssekawungu argued that US President GW Bush would be "a despot if he were running a third world country" which highlights the need for a strong system and that in Uganda,

> the opposition papers are helping to build up a system. The role needs to be taken on not only by the opposition papers but others. The opposition can support building the system because they have the freedom....[634]

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[633] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.
[634] Interview: Ssekawungu.

The question for Ugandan journalists and the press according to Ssekawungu is "how can we support systems to grow, how can we be willing co-partners? How do we make the politicians be co-partners and identify common objectives?" There has been a strong desire by many journalists to set or shape an agenda and in the one party system the media has been the most viable outlet. Crucially, however, the *Monitor* did not disagree with the fundamentals of the national project. Initially, at least, it was only critical of the execution of particular parts of it.

The government's engagement with opposition and critical ideals during the early period as the NRM was consolidating power was important not only in preventing the development of insurgencies, as Dr. Ssemwogerere, Second Deputy Prime Minister argued during the parliamentary debate on the penal code,[635] but also in making people feel empowered to contribute to what could be considered a national debate. This has been possible because of the willingness of the government, particularly the executive, to not only recognise such criticism to be valid but to directly respond to it.[636] In addition, this opportunity to use the press to vent frustration and anger at the government did, however, make retreating to an armed struggle less of a possibility for different factions. With space to continue their fight or struggle verbally, pursuing violence seemed a less appealing or necessary option. At the same time, the government was able to dismiss their arguments of ruling as a dictatorship by allowing the most press freedom ever enjoyed in Uganda since independence.

Finally, in the process of reconciliation personalities matter. As was elaborated in the previous chapter, Museveni's style of guerrilla fighter and intellectual has been very popular and has even been gaining traction in other countries in the region.[637] His mix of paternalism and populism, as both a teacher and a man of the people, proved powerful and particularly successful in the initial years of the NRM government. Since coming to power, Museveni regularly held court, often

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[635] As mentioned in his extensive quote several pages earlier.

[636] See for example, Museveni's notorious lengthy reply to Sseeyzi-Cheeye in the Uganda Confidential. 15 March 1992, Museveni, "President Museveni Replies to 'Uganda Confidential', *Uganda Confidential*, p.. 1. In the same paper, Eriya Kategaya, then First Deputy Prime Minister, also responded to accusations against him. 15 March 1992, Kategaya, "Kategaya hits back", *Uganda Confidential*, p. 7.

[637] Guerilla leaders in Rwanda and the DRC have adopted elements of his style.

inviting journalists to his Rwakitura ranch where he claims to know all the names of his hundreds of cows.

However, while the government has tolerated opposition views and built confidence among critics, reconciliation has not been straightforward nor is it a complete process. Museveni has been criticised for increasing ethnic and tribal tensions. Critics maintain that he regularly favours people from his group and the war in the North is seen as an example of his willingness to persecute Ugandans for his own political ends. Nevertheless, Museveni's unique style of democratic populism has arguably facilitated trust and reconciliation among many Ugandans and encouraged the growth of a press that has been relatively sympathetic to his initial vision of a national project.

4. International dimensions

The international dimensions of Uganda's nation-building project must also be considered as they have had a strong influence in the political calculations of the NRM. It is, however, different than in Ethiopia which is of greater strategic importance to countries like the US and enjoys more power in ignoring international pressures.

With fifty percent of the Ugandan government's annual budget coming from multilateral and bilateral assistance, the government is sensitive to donor demands for democracy and tolerance of an independent media. Museveni reportedly stated:

> The people who have opened their markets to us are the ones who want to open political space to multiparty politics.... We should not take decisions that will scare away investors because, if there is disinvestment, it will take years and years before we can convince them to return. So we need to make a tactical compromise in order to realise our strategic objectives.... China can afford to say "no" to them and get away with it. But we are a small and poor country. Here we are with both internal political agitation for multiparty politics and external pressure. So let us open up as a matter of strategy since we cannot face them like China, in order to let our economic transition continue undisturbed.[638]

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[638] 22 February 2003, Mwenda, "Museveni was firm as Movement diehards opposed opening up", *The Monitor*, p.3.

Donor contribution to Uganda significantly increased between 1989 and 1994.[639] During the Cold War there was less interest on the part of the donors in promoting democracy across the continent and Museveni's pronouncements of establishing a mixed economy were too leftist for many western governments.

Uganda has become an economic success story for donors and is praised for achieving high growth rates and being friendly towards businesses. During the early 1990's Uganda's GDP was growing steadily and rapidly and donors were reluctant to push political reform for fear of upsetting this strong performance. Western governments have also relied on Uganda as a partner to achieve their foreign policy goals and has proven itself to be strongly pro-US in its relationship with Sudan and has even provided the troops for the African Union mission in Somalia in 2007 - a mission that no other African country has released troops for, despite various pledges.

Not surprisingly, the Ugandan government is sensitive to the local and international media that influences the opinions of donor countries. As Minister Buturo argued, "the *Monitor* is a major source of news for the international community... we don't think they are balanced as they are a major source of negative perception."[640] It isn't only negative political publicity that the government is worried about but the more general image of Uganda is also a concern. Partly this seems to be an issue of pride- government officials expressed concern that papers run articles suggesting that the city is dirty or falling apart which discourages visitors.[641]

This government has also been willing to engage outsiders more than its predecessors did and it has been more open to providing access to information than many other governments on the continent. Access to Ministers, government officials and documentation is relatively easy and foreigners are treated with less suspicion than in countries like Ethiopia. This is, however, not to suggest that international criticism is welcome. While there are no cases that I have found where foreign academics have not been allowed into the country for a paper they have written (as a

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[639] For more on donor involvement see, HAUSER, E. (1999) Ugandan relations with Western donors in the 1990s: what impact on democratisation? *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 4, p. 621- 641.
[640] Interview: Buturo.
[641] The impact of the media (both local and international) on tourism has long been an issue for the NRM. 9 November 1999, Wa Mucoori, "Bad News! Tourists are staying away, minister blames the press...", *The Monitor*, p. 25.

number have been refused visas in Ethiopia), journalists have occasionally had more problems.

The most controversial, and relatively exceptional, case recently involved the Canadian journalist Blake Lambert who was working for the *Economist* and *Christian Science Monitor*. Lambert was denied re-entry to Uganda on 8 March 2006 after a short visit to South Africa. He had written a number of reports critical of the war in the North and the coming elections. The renewal of his press accreditation was an area of previous contestation; it had expired in January and Father John Mary Wiliggo, head of the Media Council, argued that it would be hard to deny accreditation to Lambert because the Council had "members who belong to various political affiliations and ideas" and "it is never easy to push them into one direction".[642] Thus, under pressure of the Ministry of Information and the Media Centre, Lambert was censored using the Immigration Code. Lambert was not alone in coming under pressure from the Media Centre; Will Ross from the BBC was also reportedly warned by Kabushenga that an extension of his accreditation was dependent on his reporting. Consequently, after he wrote a report on the death of seven civilians in a refugee camp, his accreditation was cut from one year to four months.[643] Restrictions such as an order forbidding international correspondents to travel more than 100 km from Kampala without the permission of the Media Centre prior to the 2006 elections were also imposed.

From the perspective of Kabushenga, the problem with Lambert's reporting was that it was tarnishing the image of stability that the government had worked so hard to build. In 1986, he noted, there were 60,000 visitors while today there are 600,000, and it has taken a long time to build up this confidence. The suggestion that Uganda is sliding back to Idi Amin's days, he argued, could encourage embassies to send out messages for their citizens to avoid the region. Kabushenga is not alone in believing that the region suffers from constant negative publicity; but for him this

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[642] 1 April 2006, Robert Menard, "How to kick a foreign journalist out of Uganda", *Daily Monitor*. Available at:
http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/opinions/How_to_kick_a_foreign_journalist_out_of_Uganda.shtml.
[643] 25 January 2006, Reporters Sans Frontiers report, "Government puts foreign press under close watch four weeks before election". Available at: www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=16267.

negative reporting in the name of democracy is apparently a cost not worth bearing.[644]

International pressure by NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, Committee to Protect Journalists and Amnesty International, appears to have been a consideration for government employees such as Kabushenga but has not been a defining factor. The quality of the research by these groups has generally been dismissed by the government. In response to the internal debate about whether Lambert should be denied entry, Kabushenga noted "We knew CPJ etc. [would respond], we weighed it, and it was better to suffer that".[645]

It is not only western demands that are putting pressure on Uganda for political reform. The progress towards multi-partyism in Kenya and Tanzania, Uganda's neighbours and strongest allies, is increasing momentum for change. The three countries share strong political, social and economic ties and are working towards establishing an East African Economic Community (EAEC). Eriya Kategaya is currently the Minister in charge of this portfolio but there have been rumours that if Museveni ever stepped down as President, becoming head of the EAEC is a job he covets. One-party rule in Tanzania began in 1961 and recently ended in 1992 when the country adopted a multiparty system and held competitive elections in 1995 and 2000 with a change in presidency. Kenya too made the shift in 1991 and held elections in 1992. In 2002, it became the first East African country in which a leader of an opposition party peacefully replaced the ruling party. Uganda not only feels the pressure from Western governments but also from its own neighbourhood- a factor that may well be even more important.

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[644] He also notes the irony that it is the same international newspapers that come to him in an effort to sell tourism or investment supplements to advertise Uganda's opportunities internationally.

[645] Overtime, the government came to see journalists as affiliated with the West. In a press conference Museveni gave for journalists in 1996, he noted this at least three times stating "I think we shall have to examine the rights of the newspapers. Of course now you say, that you are children of the Western countries- that if we touch you, the Western countries will cut off aid, this is how you can even insult people". He later referred to the Fredrick [Ebert] Foundation as "those sponsors of yours" and argued that "Although you think you have got an alliance with these Western countries which give us money- because that is how you can insult people, if it was not for tat you can be sure you would never insult some people here". 14-17 June 1996, Owachi, "Papers, police, northern rebels fighting me- Museveni", *The Monitor*, p. 9.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated the complex political dimensions of the press system tracing the development of the NRM's approach towards the press and broader processes of debate and engagement from the bush through the 2006 election period. While the NRM developed a media organisation during the guerrilla war, it was really their experience in convincing and engaging people to participate in the struggle that set a tone for later policies. A tolerance of dissent, debate and criticism continued into the NRM government helping to contribute to the uniqueness of the single party nation-building project. At the same time, Museveni and his colleagues proved adept in not only incorporating different factions into the government (at the same time he chose to engage some militarily as demonstrated by the war with the LRA in the North) but they also used the press as a tool for reconciliation. His personal style of populist leadership and a willingness to personally engage with journalists shaped a space for trust-building. In addition the role of *The New Vision*, a particularly exceptional enterprise as a government-owned paper, was important in engaging with the *Monitor* and creating a strong forum for debate and dialogue for competing factions.

Together with chapters 6 and 7 a nuanced portrait of the development and role of the press in Uganda has been developed. Chapter 6 focused on the press system while chapter 7 the political system. As these three chapters have elaborated, the press in Uganda has played an important role in the nation-building project and was largely driven by a generation of journalists that were very much a part of the NRM's struggles but succeeded in creating a unique and constructive press environment. As noted by William Pike's agenda for *The New Vision* there was an important role for the press to play in reconciling historical myths and creating consensus on the past, particularly among elites, so the country could move forward. At the same time, the *Monitor* effectively showed the government that there was another side that they must consider. The press in Uganda, however, adopted the role of an 'opposition' to some degree because it was clear that in the single-party government the outlets for dissent were relatively demarcated and clear. This is unlike Ethiopia where the government purported to be democratic and practice multi-partyism when it was evidently not the

case. This caused deep frustrations among factions that wished to compete with the EPRDF's political ideas but were unable to engage in dialogue with the government.

The elite press has been changing as the political system has moved away from its ideals when the NRM first came to power. Discontent with the nation-building process has increased significantly in recent years and some are suggesting the only way Museveni will leave power is through a coup.[646] Onyango-Obbo expressed concern about the present lack of a national agenda and has argued that it is not just a problem endemic to Uganda but is reflective of a broader political crisis that has affected the continent:

> If you look at the whole of Africa today you don't have what you call a national party.... Tanzania and Botswana are the last nationalist parties. What has happened since is there are regional parties or you have tribal parties... or as in Kenya, tribal coalitions, so the big national parties have actually died. The only national institution that has political influence in Africa today is the media. Whereas previously you could see the competition between the national media and the ruling party as giving two views of the nation. Today you have a contest between the media and the government, a contest between the national position and the regional tribal position.[647]

The fact that the media served as providing some semblance of a national agenda and debate in Uganda is an important differentiating factor from Ethiopia where the press has never been able to take on that role but has largely represented particular interests.

However, the important argument that Onyango-Obbo is making, and others have also suggested recently, is that the national agenda is being lost to Museveni's personal quest for holding on to power and thus the national dialogue is becoming increasingly localised. Slowly the influence and role of the media as a political actor in Uganda is also being eroded. Thus, while progress has been made in expanding, professionalising and institutionalising the media environment, its role as a nation-builder and mediator is declining. Turning now to the conclusion, Uganda will be compared with Ethiopia further highlighting the differences between the developments and role of the press and political system in the transitions nations after civil wars; thus distilling the unique role the press may play in such situations.

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[646] Interview: Esther Nakkazi.
[647] Interview: Onyango-Obbo.

CHAPTER 9

The Press, Politics, Nation-building and Elite Negotiation

The comparative study of Ethiopia and Uganda has illuminated when and how the press has a role in the complex nation-building processes of conflict and post-conflict states. By focusing on the ideas and strategies for political transition and transformation that began before Museveni and Meles came to power, and continuing the analysis well into their tenure, the origin and evolution of certain ideologies that still influence the present have been identified.

Why the Ethiopian government silenced the press while the press remains vibrant in Uganda is a key question raised in this thesis and points to the difficulties of reconciling the rhetoric and reality of leaders and regimes trying to win international support. As with democracy in general, press freedom is an ideological conquest against great odds; it took Europeans and North Americans centuries to develop the press systems that exist today, which are still seldom perfect or uniform. It requires acquiring skills and trust both of which come slowly, particularly for countries emerging from or engaged in violent conflict. And there are always divergent perspectives on what the role of the press should be at particular times in different societies.

Both Meles and Museveni faced internal and external pressures to democratise and liberalise the press. There were two main domestic calculations that they shared: first, because the TPLF and NRM used much of their propaganda to repudiate the government's of Obote and Mengistu for human rights abuses there was some obligation to differentiate themselves from these leaders with clear policy differences. Secondly, the NRM and EPRDF both believed that some space for dissent would help them to more effectively consolidate power by gaining the trust of critics and projecting a face of tolerance. In terms of extrernal pressures, when these leaders came to power, the USSR was no longer offering a viable alternative for ideological or strategic alliances and the new governments were eager to demonstrate to the international community that they were part of the free world. Since tolerating press freedoms was simpler and more immediate than fundamentally transforming their countries into democracies, allowing newspapers seemed a reasonable choice for

both. Their political ideologies did, however, differ significantly which has helped to account for the contrasting role the press has played in nationbuilding.

This concluding chapter will begin by discussing the ways in which the press has reflected the political processes of transition from the guerrilla struggle to creation of a national government. Secondly, it will argue that the major role for the press in Ethiopia and Uganda has been to serve as a forum for elite negotiation of political power, reconciliation, building historical consensus and envisioning the future of the country. And thirdly, the broader implications and future lessons this research suggests not only for further research but also for policymakers and practitioners working in this field will be explored.

1. From guerrilla struggle to government

Neither Ethiopia nor Uganda has succeeded, to use Mamdani's term, in creating a nation of 'citizens'[648] and the way in which they have attempted to consolidate their power and rule diverse populations is significantly different and has impacted the development of the press. Both Meles and Museveni claimed to bring 'fundamental change' and both did to some degree. Interestingly enough, each of the presidents' closest aides claimed that the other country did not change as fundamentally. As Eriya Kategaya, Uganda's Minister for East Africa, argued:

> Ethiopia hasn't gotten out of its monarchy/hierarchy. It is still a regimented, authoritarian state. Zenawi has taken it over but not broken it. Here we wanted to deliberately break it. Now people are asking if the state is weak because we can't order people about.[649]

While Bereket Simon, Head of the Political Department for the EPRDF, argued:

> In Uganda, Museveni has not fundamentally restructured the state. Here we've restructured it radically. Sections of the elite are aggrieved and people are not ready to come to terms with the new reality.[650]

In fact, both Bereket and Kategaya are correct in many respects. But Ethiopia and Uganda have struggled, and continue to struggle, with significant armed insurgency

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[648] MAMDANI, M. (1996) *Citizen and Subject,* Princeton, Princeton University Press.
[649] Interview: Eriya Kategaya.
[650] Interview: Bereket Simon.

movements within their borders. These countries are certainly engaged in unique nation-building processes but are not necessarily on a direct path of transitioning to Western-style democracy.

The Ugandan state is more stable than Ethiopia, which can be attributed to a number of factors including, importantly, the NRM's consolidation of power. In Uganda, Museveni is increasingly appearing as a 'traditional' dictator reluctant to give up power. There is talk of a fourth term, and with the predominance of the NRM, there has been a conspicuous lack of effort to groom a successor. This however, has not always appeared to be the case. Many of Museveni's critics, including some at the *Monitor*, were once his strongest supporters believing that the Movement was the best chance for bringing peace and democratic change to Uganda.

During a crucial window of opportunity when they came to power, the NRM established an unprecedented level of trust and reconciliation. Through including defeated political and military parties in a genuinely broad-based government the NRM was able to reduce the influence of its harshest critics and lessen the likelihood of them taking up an armed struggle. The NRM has continued to be shrewd about co-opting or buying off critics. Similarly, a mix of innovative participatory governance structures, such as the Resistance Councils, and political persuasion worked to build trust in the new government and a broader sense of peace despite continuing violence in the North.

Ethiopia, in contrast, appears precarious. Fundamental and divisive issues of political ideology among elites, many of which go back to the student movement, have yet to be satisfactorily resolved. Similarly, competing visions and demands for the Ethiopian state, including Amhara-elite yearning for a return to the imperial era, Oromo-elite demands for independence and Tigrayan-elite desire to remain the dominant power, are becoming increasingly contentious. While at this stage there seems to be no viable alternative to the federalist system, the ways in which devolution has been implemented have done little to encourage reconciliation or genuine participation. In addition, widespread dissatisfaction towards the secession of Eritrea and the continued overtly TPLF-dominated EPRDF make it unlikely that this party will be able to transform itself into what could be recognised as a broad-based coalition and thus move the Ethiopian state out of the present quagmire.

When the EPRDF first came to power, they squandered an important period of good will. Liberation fronts such as the Oromo Liberation Front initially participated in the EPRDF until they came to believe they were not being treated as a legitimate full partner, so they, along with others such as the presently more powerful Ogaden Liberation Front have continued their struggle violently. Similarly, as the new government failed to adequately respond or participate to additional reconciliation conferences many elites and intellectuals felt powerless and marginalised. The lack of dialogue and inclusiveness of former Derg civil servants and affiliates failed to reconcile visions of Ethiopia and promote a single nation-building project.

The EPRDF is not willing to relinquish power and there is little international pressure for them to do so. While these deep fractures are not easily resolvable, the current trend of internal and regional violence suggests that the present political situation is untenable in the long-run and, unless modified, can result in either widespread violent conflict or an overthrow of the ERPDF. In contrast with the NRM's critics that are arguing for a change in the presidency, the EPRDF's critics are arguing for a change in the constitution.

The media in Ethiopia and Uganda have come to reflect the different degrees of reconciliation that have occurred. Where the elites have been deeply polarised, as is the case in Ethiopia, the press reflects broad ideological gaps. In both countries, the majority of the responsibility for encouraging reconciliation and restoring trust between the government, people and the press has been with the government.

2. The role of the press in creating space for elite negotiation, reconciliation, building historical consensus and envisioning the future of the country

As has been explored inthis thesis, the press can play an important role in building peace and facilitating dialogue in the aftermath of civil wars *in certain circumstances*. It primarily does so through providing a space for different elite factions to negotiate power, reconcile divergent versions of history and discuss

possible future visions for the country.[651] Why it has been more successful in playing this role in Uganda but not in Ethiopia is a central question that has been addressed.

In both Ethiopia and Uganda we saw how the liberalisation of the press soon after the guerrilla movements came to power allowed groups (some of which were running parallel guerrilla or liberation wars to the NRM and TPLF) that opposed the new governments to argue their political agendas, vie for power within the new government and seek allies. Initially, this reduced the incentives for these groups to either return to the bush to continue their wars or initiate a new guerrilla struggle. Of course not all groups chose to engage the new governments in this forum: the LRA, for example, almost immediately began an armed struggle against the NRA. But the NRM succeeded in incorporating many other opposition forces into its government and tolerated their criticism within the press.

Building consensus about the nature of the revolution continues to be an important role for the press in both countries, particularly as newspapers are the medium of record. In Uganda, support for the NRM was widespread and the EPRDF also had solid constituencies across much of Ethiopia. But the ways in which the newspapers in Ethiopia compared with Uganda approached the recent past was

In Uganda, both the *Monitor* and especially *The New Vision* worked to build consensus about the NRM and the civil war. Their perspectives did not diverge significantly but as pointed out by William Pike in Chapter 8, and reiterated in many interviews was, "...in '86 even key facts weren't accepted, so I think the media as a whole, not just *The New Vision* has really helped to build that kind of consensus".[652] This has also been important in providing a basis upon which to envision the future of the country. Again while both the *Monitor* and *The New Vision*, until Museveni's third term project, shared a similar vision for Uganda, newspapers provided a forum for defining, elaborating and debating this vision. Engagement with both the government and critics was important and provided useful feedback for the government to not only test out the popularity of ideas but to gain a litmus test as to the mood and intentions of competing political elements.

In Ethiopia, divergent perspectives on Ethiopian history and unity are immediately clear when reading, for example, *The Ethiopian Herald* or the *Reporter* compared with *Tobiya*. These were important outlets for presenting these perspectives but the lack of dialogue or attempt to reach consensus has been the major failure of the press to serve as a forum for peacebuilding.

Much of this role for the press is dependent on the level of trust between the government, including the judiciary, and the press. It can be seen from several perspectives and as this thesis argues, it has developed differently in Ethiopia compared with Uganda. In any nation-building project there are bound to be disagreements on the extent of freedoms that should be tolerated. Each actor primarily advocates what is in his self-interest, which for the press is to have as much freedom as possible while for the government it is to limit criticism and threats to its power. The press, in both countries, has enjoyed sustained periods of relative freedom. But this space and the role of the press has also been very different. In Uganda, journalists have been less polarized and more engaged on holding politicians to account on the daily running of government. Ethiopian journalists were more divided- those of the government press enjoyed little freedom to criticize or participate in public debates (other than as a propaganda organ) while jounrlaists of the private press were more concerned with debates over political ideology. This was

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[652] Interview: William Pike.

partly a response to access of information, or the amount of information governments were willing to provide but it also reflected very different priorities. Ethiopian journalists reflected those that held an alternative vision of the Ethiopian state and the press was the most significant forum for this.

What is also different in the case of Uganda compared with Ethiopia is the confidence that the Ugandan actors had to engage in this struggle. In Uganda, Charles Onyango-Obbo and other informants spoke of 'expanding the circle' and of challenging the government to reform media legislation and provide more space to journalists. Museveni knew most of his critics in the press were challenging his policies, not the fundamentals of his Movement system project. And Ugandan journalists believed that the judiciary was sufficiently independent to hear their case and give them a fair trial. Unusually, some journalists even went so far as to embrace government legal action as a chance to change broader policies and set norms for the judiciary. But both sides saw the process as necessary and instrumental during a critical period of nation-building.

The New Vision also had an important role in setting the tone for government-press and press- press interaction. The paper helped to bring the debate to the centre, create consensus, promote the institutionalisation of media companies, and explain government policies and positions in a way more balanced than pure propaganda. In the process, it set a tone for dialogue that won the confidence of the majority of newspaper readers. Museveni also had an influential role in directly answering criticisms leveled at him within the press and providing access and regular information to all journalists- including some of his strongest critics at the *Monitor*, which thus contributed to reducing tensions and polarisation within the press.

In contrast, there is little trust between the government and the press in Ethiopia. The press in Ethiopia has been polarised since its earliest days; this situation was exacerbated by the 2005 elections and has contributed to the current protracted crisis, as there has been no space for dialogue and the mediation of competing ideologies. This is not for lack of a free press but rather because of failed engagement. With an aversion to criticism, a sense of entitlement and no effective means of communicating their positions, through a paper such as *The New Vision* or regular media briefings, much of the blame lies with the government.

By failing to engage with the arguments and the private press, the government has done little to create a political mainstream. As the EPRDF did not consider it necessary to explain their actions or policies domestically, Meles would seldom speak with or even acknowledge private journalists. Not only were they unable to write balanced reports but the exclusion also contributed to a deep level of frustration. The government press and propaganda has similarly increased tensions and polarisation and failed to encourage trust or reconciliation. Particularly after the 2005 elections, the government newspapers, reflective of the broader government media, took a staunchly pro-government position and set a tone of aggression that the private press responded to even more vigorously.

In addition, the process of testing the limits with the intention of 'expanding the circle' is not present in Ethiopia. Journalists have little confidence in the justice system and in a number of cases preferred to go into exile rather than continuing to face trials in their country. Journalists have typically expected unfettered freedom of expression seeing it in 'legal-absolutist' terms while the government has tended to portray such freedoms as a privilege or gift rather than part of the political process.

For both cases, however, a major issue that is often overlooked as driving press-government relations is personal relationships. Particularly in situations where the press is less institutionalised (as was the case when Museveni and Meles came to power) journalist-government relations are frequently characterised by past connections and events during the struggle in the bush or the student movements loom large. Even for journalists that provide the most liberal perspectives on why they are journalists - such as Andrew Mwenda or Amare Aregawi - this thesis has illustrated such argements are often are often more complex and nuanced.

3. Lessons and implications of this research

3.1 Re-examining the role of the press in countries in the 'bottom billion'

In the review of the literature on the role of the media in conflict/post-conflict situations and transitions in Chapter 2, it was argued that the mainstream arguments connecting press freedom to processes of democratisation focus too much on the media's role in holding governments accountable. Were this the case, there would be

fewer examples of extremely corrupt governments that tolerate some of the freest media in Africa. And why, despite Amartya Sen's claims, do famines still exist in countries with a free press?

The previous section argued that the role for the press in Ethiopia and Uganda, and possibly other countries in similar economic situations, is as a forum for elite negotiation. This should not be surprising for media scholars. While recognising the risk of appearing to theorize about a 'historical development pattern' for the press, which is not the intention here, Hallin and Mancini noted in *Comparing Media Systems* that:

> From the beginning of the print era, particularly from the time of the Reformation, political advocacy was also a central function of the print media, and by the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, when the newspaper began to emerge as a force in political life, this became its principle function.... The political journalist was a publicist who saw it as his or her role to influence public opinion in the name of a political faction or cause, and in many cases newspapers were established on the initiative of political parties or other political actors, or supported by them.[653]

They go on to argue the current model emerged in the late nineteenth century where

> the journalist was seen as a neutral arbiter or political communication, standing apart from particular interests and causes, providing information and analysis "uncoloured" by partisanship. This was often connected with the development of a commercial press, whose purpose was to make money rather than to serve a political cause, and that was financed by advertising rather than by subsidies from political actors. It was also often connected with the development of journalistic professionalism...[654]

The purpose of bringing up the issue of the historical development of the press is to stress a point that is often made by political economists but seldom found in the media and development literature which typically implies that developing countries do not have to pass through the same stages that Western countries have gone through when building their nations.[655] But too often expectations about what the media ought to be doing are divorced from political realities.

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[653] HALLIN, D. & MANCINI, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics,* New York, Cambridge University Press. p. 26.
[654] Ibid. p. 26.
[655] The economist Ha-Joon Chang elaborates this in much of his work when he argues that the pressures on developing countries by developed countries to adopt 'good policies' and 'good institutions', which include features such as a 'watchdog press', are often based on the assumptions that such policies were part of the development trajectory of the countries recommending them. See

The press can play an important role in nation-building and peace-building whether it manifests itself in the model that developed in late nineteenth century Europe or is more similar to that of the Reformation. Future research, policy and NGO activities should be based more on the reality of what the media are actually doing rather than on what outsiders mythologise them as doing.

3.2 Further research

A free press, or private press, requires trust in journalists on the part of readers, which is not easy to come by in countries emerging or involved in violent conflict. More research is needed on how the public in Ethiopia and Uganda (as well as much of Africa) receives messages and how opinions are shaped. In Ethiopia it is rare to find newspaper sellers on the streets of Addis with *Addis Zemen* or *The Ethiopian Herald* as they only sell private papers, while across Uganda almost every newspaper seller has both the *Monitor* and *The New Vision* prominently displayed.

Uganda has been more successful in rebuilding public trust than Ethiopia. Many newspaper readers have a preference for a particular publication, but there is sufficient regard for the institution itself that most papers are seen as acceptable to readers no matter their political allegiance. This differs from Ethiopia where there was almost no shared readership between government and the private publications such as *Ethiop* or *Tobiya*. Readers in Uganda and Ethiopia, however, often differ on what they expect the newspaper to provide for them. For Ugandans, it is typically a more balanced debate and they value objectivity more. Ethiopians tend to prefer publications that already confirm their political beliefs. The government press also has a role in setting an example as to what the role of the papers should be and shaping the expectations of readers. *The New Vision*, for example, has been more effective in creating a tolerant readership than *Addis Zemen*.

As argued here, the press can play an important role in mediating difficult political processes in conflict situations but it takes the cooperation of all parties, particularly journalists and the government, to restore the public's trust in the media as an institution. Government engagement with the press helps to legitimise the media

CHANG, H.-J. (2002) *Kicking Away the Ladder*, London, Anthem Press. CHANG, H.-J. (2007) *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*, London, Bloomsbury Press.

and make the voices it represents feel included in the debate. It is when the press is entirely ignored by the government that the greatest damage can occur. Journalists who are left to struggle with unsubstantiated stories do little to restore readers' belief in the role of the press in the nation-building process.

This thesis finds that the press provides an important forum for intra-elite negotiation. By the nature of the medium, direct reception is largely confined to the literate. Undoubtedly, language has also been a factor in why the elite press operates in a some-what different space in Uganda compared with Ethiopia. In both countries, publications in local languages are popular but Ugandan journalists and readership have greater access to English language media outlets, thus increasing competition between local and international media organizations. And in Uganda the debates can have a significant impact across the country as radio stations pick up stories and translate them into local languages. In Ethiopia, the local private press remains limited to Amharic and English speakers in Addis Ababa- a select group with limited constituencies but a strong voice in the nation-building process.

While this thesis has largely been interested in the transitional period from war to peace, the media environments in both countries, but particularly Uganda, have been changing significantly since this research began. Newspapers are becoming popular on the web connecting diasporas in new ways and perhaps for the first time international news organizations, such as Reuters, pick up stories in the local media. Despite these changes, the influence of the press remains for the reasons extensively outlined and argued throughout this thesis and the print medium is likely to continue to be a dominant source of news media for the foreseeable future.

In understanding the shaping of opinions in Africa, it is also important to extend research beyond the mediums of the press or radio. These other outlets, which often pick up or use the traditional media, have their own voices and momentum. Public debates within the Resistance Councils in Uganda, or the role of the Orthodox Church or local mosques in Ethiopia all have an influence in shaping opinions. In neighbouring Somaliland, for example, research I have conducted there suggests that it was the role of poetry that galvanised support and spread messages about the

struggle of the Somali National Movement's liberation war.[656] This area is under-researched but has many connections with the elite press. A promising area for future research on the media in Ethiopia and Uganda is on these more informal mediums of communication and their connections with elite power and audience reception.

3.3 The role of the state

As was argued in the case studies of Ethiopia and Uganda, government voice, such as through *The New Vision*, and interaction with the private press is a major defining factor of the role and development of the press. Recognising the state as an important agent of change, rather than something to always be restrained, is part of this.[657] Mushtaq Khan argues the need to create a political consensus or a national agenda/constituency on development. While international development organisations and many Western governments stress decentralisation or anti-corruption measures, he argues that there is a more pressing need for a strong state. Because many of the currently prescribed good governance reforms cannot be implemented in most developing countries, it is important to create an agenda for development. While China may be as corrupt as Uganda, the strength of the Chinese Communist Party allows for a consensus on development and thus the rents are being used more productively.[658] Consequently, a question for the media in Ethiopia and Uganda should not be how to weaken control of the state but rather how to contribute to the national project - in essence central questions that were asked by the African nationalists of the 1960s and that were effective in nation-building in Tanzania.

International human rights groups, in particular, often fail to acknowledge the potentially positive role of the state. An approach of legal absolutism tends to prevail and liberalisation is the consensus. While important, some of the work these groups do unfortunately shows little understanding of the real issues at play within particular contexts. Reports with factual errors and with parts cut and pasted from previous

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[656] Some of these war veterans have now become journalists and this has been corroborated in extensive oral histories with journalist and veteran, Yusuf Gabobe and the poet Garriyya.

[657] See for example KHAN, M. (2002) State Failure in Developing Countries and Strategies of Institutional Reform. IN BANK, W. (Ed.) *ABCDE Conference*. Oslo. FUKUYAMA, F. (2004) *State Building*, London, Profile.

[658] Mushtaq Khan lecture, The Stanhope Centre for Communication Policy Research, London, UK February 2004.

reports are common, illustrating a 'template' rationale where an argument is the same and universally applicable.

Despite claims to the contrary, international human rights and media advocacy organisations are also political. Arguments for freedom of expression are always seen through a prism where the state is the oppressor and the journalist is the champion of freedom. Their advocacy and interest is appreciated and valued for the international attention and support, which is often very helpful.

Yet these organisations can complicate situations when they endorse a particular individual beyond campaigning for his or her release from prison. The case of Kifle Mulat, head of the Ethiopian Free Press Journalist Association (EFPJA) is one example. In 2004 Kifle was awarded the Amnesty International 'Special Award for Human Rights Journalism under Threat'. Local journalists have complained that the EFPJA failed to have regular elections for the chairmanship, was not properly audited and generally did not function in a transparent way. Such criticisms at least raise the possiblity that Kifle Mulat's international support was more a function of his outspoken opposition to the Meles regime than for his commitment to good governance and transparency.

This legal absolutism or strong anti-government perspective on the part of international NGOs is having an impact within the media in developing countries and is possibly leading to greater polarisation. Democracy has begun to mean being opposed to the government and thus the independent press is expected to give that perspective. In this context, if a middle-ground newspaper has one article that mentions something positive about the government, its circulation can be negatively affected the next week. The journalists that present the strongest opposition pieces in the media are often held up by these international organisations as the bearers of democracy and many local journalists have become adept at manipulating the organisations and gaining undeserving support

In the discussion of 'professionalisation of journalists' and the ways in which journalists in Ethiopia and Uganda think about the work that they do, what motivates them was a central issue. The discourse of human rights advocacy groups has been adopted and reinterpreted by many journalists, yet in practice some often have different motivations and values. What is needed is more nuanced understanding of

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the complex roles journalists have in the nation-building process rather than what is normatively defined for them.

3.4 Analytic tool

Tawana Kupe argues in *An agenda for researching African media and communication contexts* that "a dialogue with our colleagues in the social sciences who theorize and research development paradigms would enrich us".[659] In an effort to move beyond assumptions of journalists as 'good' 'watchdogs' challenging a 'bad' autocratic persecutory government, a strong analysis of the publications and those that work for them can provide a more nuanced insight into the complex nation-building process. This requires a comprehensive political and historical analysis and is probably one of the greatest weaknesses within much of the existing literature and discourse. Prime Minister Meles, for example, has been exceptionally talented in manipulating the impressions of the international community and portraying himself as a peaceful democrat. But, as Gerard Prunier suggests, much could be understood about his approach to internal dissent from a look at his past.

> In 1978 Meles had the others killed, he doesn't kill himself. Most of the others that created the TPLF have been killed. He is very good with political infighting but most foreigners are totally ignorant of his past.... In the past twenty years there has been a total collapse of the degree of information about Africa.... People can't analyse politics.[660]

Understanding the politics, as has been argued in this thesis, is central to understanding the media environment.

The analysis in this thesis has focused on the process of transition from the civil wars. While researchers have asserted that the present media systems often reflect their past regimes, I have argued that it is the process of reconciliation, consolidation of power and nation-building that is central; thus prioritising the political ideology and approach towards the media of Meles and Museveni whilst in the bush more than the media environment of Idi Amin, Obote or Mengistu.

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[659] KUPE, T. (2004) An agenda for researching African media and communication contexts. *Ecquid Novi*, 25, 353-356. P. 354-5.
[660] For more on discipline within the TPLF, executions of errant members and competition among the leadership, see YOUNG, J. (1997) *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. pp. 140-41.

Similarly, while the colonial legacy is important, greater effort should be put into understanding more recent events, particularly those that have been less in the public eye during the guerrilla movements.

At a minimum, the framework of analysis presented suggests questions that should be asked when researching the press in other poor countries or those post- or engaged in violent conflict. Rather than focusing on the immediate closures of radio stations and newspapers, or the legal framework, asking questions such as: *how does the President (or Prime Minister) interact with journalists? What did the journalists believe and what were they doing before this government came to power? Who are the key players, why and what are their real objectives or intentions? What sorts of personal relationships do those in the government and press have and how far back do they go?* can provide greater insight. These questions are often more difficult to answer and take more intensive research than taking events at face value and looking at them through a normative lens. However, probing these underlying issues can reap rich rewards into the bigger picture of what is happening in complex environments.

These questions and the process of comparison also have broader lessons. Early modernisation theory in the 1950s proffered the notion that Western policy makers with the right plan and plenty of cash could rid developing countries of their problems. The planning has evolved but the underlying presumption too often still dominates. It is not unusual to encounter Western instigated and funded media projects reminiscent of those launched fifty years ago. In the Institute for Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, for example, one can go through the archives and find decades of policy papers relating to how the radio will bring literacy or other development projects. Mengistu had a number of big pushes to use the radio as a panacea for everything from literacy to health. While NGOs no longer plan information campaigns on the scale that the Derg regime undertook, similar work continues by multiple organisations at present.

The occasional 'big pushes', which are so characteristic of international aid, regularly fail despite trillions of dollars partly because the wrong questions are being asked. William Easterly, for example, suggests that there are two approaches, the planners and the searchers. The planner "already knows the answers; he thinks of poverty as a technical engineering problem that his answers will solve". Many media

developers follow this line: if a free media does not exist, one can be developed and this will lead to a democratic 'modern' country. A searcher, Easterly argues, in contrast

> hopes to find answers to individual problems only by trail and error experimentation. A planner believes outsiders know enough to impose solutions. A searcher believes only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be homegrown.[661]

It is my hope that the analysis offered here will provide searchers with more tools to understand the complexities of media environments and use these tools to shed light not only on the media itself but also on the political processes.

This analytic framework is most likely applicable for dictatorships and other non-democratic transitions especially where insurgencies have come to power. While Uganda's and Ethiopia's neighbours - Rwanda, Eritrea and Somaliland - would be the most natural extension because of their shared history of guerrilla warfare, other countries further a-field might also find insights with adapted analysis. It is clear for all countries, however, that the press can play a strong and constructive role in reducing violent conflict by not only serving as a forum for reconciliation and the peaceful negotiation of power, but it can also be an important indicator for understanding the political developments of a country.

Any analyst interested in warning signs for tensions that could possibly erupt in violence should take the debates and the extent of engagement between the government and the press seriously. However, it should also be remembered that while important, the press is a reflection of only part of the political process in countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda. By largely serving elites, there are substantial portions of the population that are not sufficiently represented or excluded, such as the Ugandans in the North and the Ethiopians in the Ogaden. By recognising the limitations, it is also easier to find the potential strengths of the press in peace and nation-building.

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[661] EASTERLY, W. (2006) *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* London, Penguin Press. pp. 5-6.

INTERVIEWS

Note the location of the interview is in parentheses

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Senior Communication and Public Information Officer,
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Senior Editor, *The Reporter* (Addis Ababa)

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Editor-in-Chief, *Press Digest* published by Pheonix Universal
Former interpreter for Mengistu Haile Mariam (Addis Ababa)

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Project Director, BBC Trust (Addis Ababa)

Dagne, Kumlachew
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Lecturer Department of Political Science, Addis Ababa University and UEDF party leader (Addis Ababa)

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Reporter, *The Reporter* (Addis Ababa)

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AP correspondent (Addis Ababa and Nairobi)

Mohommed, Zekeriya
ENA (Addis Ababa)

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Tumusiime, James
Managing Editor, *The Weekly Observer* (Kampala)

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Tusabe, Basil
Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (Kampala)

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Editor-in-Chief, *Red Pepper* newspaper (Kampala)

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Other interviews

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Editor of *Haatuf* (Hargeisa, Somaliland)

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Ocheing, Philip
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Taban, Alfred
Editor of *Khartoum Monitor* (Khartoum, Sudan)

Anonymous
There were several individuals interviewed in Ethiopia that spoke candidly about the media and government and thus wished not to be named in this thesis.

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