

**A Critical Socio-Historical Analysis of the Evolution of Freedom of
Expression in the Three Most Recent Governments of Ethiopia (1930-2014)**

by

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Abstract

This historical study analyses the holistic dynamics of Ethiopia, taking into account political, social, economic, cultural, religious, and media development aspects, with a focus on the three most recent governments (1930–2014), in relation to freedom of expression. The analysis indicates that the *Feudalist-Imperial system* was clearly the extension of centuries-old imperial hegemony which had used religious, cultural and patriotic hegemony to stifle freedom of expression. During the *Socialist-Military* regime every sphere of society, including acts of expression, were oriented towards the revolution and socialist political ideology. During the current ethnically based so-called *Revolutionary-Democratic* regime, freedom of expression has been stifled by means of legislation, government and party structures, complex surveillance, and social networks. While the instruments of repression have differed, relatively speaking, from government to government, the extent of repression has remained similar over a number of centuries. Threats to freedom of expression derive from rulers or governments, in which instances they are entrenched through policies, laws and bureaucracies, from religious and cultural hegemonies, from poverty and a related lack of education and access to information, and from conflicts, rivalry and wars. These threats have their origins in three main interrelated causal or determining factors, namely the *Certainty–Uncertainty Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary Thought* and *Narcissism*, which together form a pyramid beneath which freedom of expression in Ethiopia has been trapped. This pyramid is identified in the study as the *Social Pyramid*, or the *Pyramid of Repression Instruments*, and it in turn gives rise to an overall web of suppression, that is, the *Pyramid Trap of Repression*. The study concludes that the repression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia is likely to remain intact, insofar as the threats to freedom of expression and the factors giving rise to those threats persist. While limited gains concerning the right to freedom of expression are achieved periodically, these are routinely undone and rolled back, since the *Pyramid Trap of Repression* is not dismantled.

Key terms: *Freedom of expression, bottom-to-top perspective, threats to freedom of expression, religious and cultural hegemonies, poverty, law, rivalries and wars, Feudalist-Imperial System, Socialist-Military Regime, Revolutionary-Democratic Rule, Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma, Ethno-Luminary-Thought, Narcissism, Di-spiral of silence, Web of Repression, and Pyramid Trap Theory.*

Opsomming

In hierdie historiese studie word die holistiese dinamika van Etiopië ontleed, met inagneming van politieke, sosiale, ekonomiese, kulturele, religieuse, en media-ontwikkelingsaspekte. Daar word op die drie mees onlangse regerings (1930–2014) gefokus, ten opsigte van vrye meningsuiting. Die ontleding dui daarop dat die *feodalisties-imperialistiese stelsel* duidelik die uitbreiding van eeue-oue imperialistiese hegemonie was wat religieuse, kulturele en patriotiese hegemonie gebruik het om vrye meningsuiting te onderdruk. Gedurende die *sosialisties-militêre* regime was elke sfeer van die samelewing, insluitende dae van uitdrukking, georiënteer tot die revolusie en sosialisties-politieke ideologie. Tydens die huidige, etnies gebaseerde sogenaamde *revolusionêr-demokratiese* regime, is vrye meningsuiting onderdruk deur wetgewing, regering- en partystrukture, komplekse bewaking, en sosiale netwerke. Hoewel die instrumente van onderdrukking relatief gesproke verskil het van regering tot regering, het die mate van onderdrukking oor 'n aantal eeue heen soortgelyk gebly. Bedreigings vir vrye meningsuiting is afkomstig van heersers of regerings (en in sulke gevalle word hulle beveilig deur beleide, wette en burokrasieë), van religieuse en kulturele hegemonieë, van armoede en 'n verwante gebrek aan opvoeding en toegang tot inligting, en van konflikte, mededinging en oorloë. Hierdie bedreigings het ontstaan vanweë drie vernaamste kousale of bepalende faktore wat onderling verwant is, naamlik die *sekerheid-onsekerheid-dilemma*, *etno-voorligter-denke* en *narsisme*, wat gesamentlik 'n piramide vorm waaronder vrye meningsuiting in Etiopië vasgevang is. Hierdie piramide word in die studie as die *sosiale piramide*, of die *piramide van onderdrukkinginstrumente*, geïdentifiseer, en dit lei op sy beurt tot 'n algehele web van onderdrukking – die *piramidelokval van onderdrukking*. Die gevolgtrekking van die studie is dat die onderdrukking van vrye meningsuiting in Etiopië waarskynlik onaangeroer gaan bly, so lank as wat die bedreigings vir vrye meningsuiting en die faktore wat tot daardie bedreigings aanleiding gee, onveranderd bly. Hoewel beperkte suksesse van tyd tot tyd behaal word rakende die reg tot vrye meningsuiting, word sulke prestasies dikwels ongedaan gemaak, omdat die *piramidelokval van onderdrukking* nie afgebreek word nie.

Sleutel terme: *Vrye meningsuiting, bo-na-onder-perspektief, bedreigings vir vrye meningsuiting, religieuse en kulturele hegemonieë, armoede, wet, mededinging en oorloë, feodalisties-imperialistiese stelsel, sosialisties-militêre regime, revolusionêr-demokratiese bewind, sekerheid-onsekerheid-dilemma, etno-voorligter-denke, narsisme, di-spiraal van stilte, web van onderdrukking, en piramide-lokval-teorie.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGES
DECLARATION.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Opsomming.....	v
Table of Figures.....	xi
List of Tables.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background to the study.....	1
1.2 Brief historical introduction to Ethiopia.....	4
1.3 The research problem.....	9
1.4 The research question.....	11
1.5 Goal and objectives of the study.....	11
1.5.1 Specific objectives.....	12
1.6 The value of the study.....	12
1.7 Definition of key terms.....	14
CHAPTER TWO.....	16
2. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION.....	16
2.1. Introduction.....	16
2.2. Brief historical background, arguments and practices of freedom of expression.....	19
2.2.1 Some arguments on the importance of freedom of expression.....	23
2.3 Brief experiences on threats and restrictions on freedom of expression.....	31
2.4 The practices of media and freedom of expression.....	35
2.4.1 Normative media theories and the practice of media freedom in Ethiopia.....	36
3.4.1.1 <i>Authoritarian system</i>	38
2.4.1.2 <i>Libertarian or free press system</i>	40
2.4.1.3 <i>Social responsibility system</i>	44
2.4.1.4 <i>Soviet media approach or totalitarianism system</i>	47
2.4.1.5 <i>Development media system/ approach</i>	49
2.4.1.6 <i>Democratic participant media system</i>	53
2.5 Restricting principles and instruments to freedom of expression.....	55

2.5.1 Restrictions to freedom of expression.....	55
2.5.2 Guiding principles to limit freedom of expression	60
2.5.3 Regulating instruments of freedom of expression	65
2.5.4 Threats to freedom of expression.....	67
2.5.4.1 <i>Law and threats to freedom of expression</i>	70
2.5.4.2 <i>Culture and religion and threats to freedom of expression</i>	71
2.5.5 Some common theories related to threats to freedom of expression.....	82
2.5.5.1 <i>Muted group theory</i>	82
2.5.5.2 <i>Spiral of silence theory</i>	84
2.5.5.3 <i>Group think theory</i>	85
2.5.5.4 <i>Cognitive dissonance theory</i>	87
2.6 Summary and conclusion.....	89
CHAPTER THREE	92
3. REASEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	92
3.1 Introduction.....	92
3.2. The research approach	93
3.3 Research methods	95
3.3.1 The historical method.....	95
3.3.2 Discourse Analysis.....	97
3.3.3. Grounded theory	98
3.4. Data collection and analysis techniques.....	100
3.4.1 Sources of data.....	100
3.4.1.1 Documents	102
3.4.1.2 Observation.....	105
3.4.1.3 Oral data.....	106
3.4.2 Sampling techniques and selection of data	108
3.4.3 Data analysis strategies	112
3.5 Trustworthiness and authenticity of the study	115
3.6 The role of the researcher.....	119
3.7 Summary.....	120

CHAPTER FOUR.....	123
4. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE FEUDAL MONARCHY (1930-1974).....	123
4.1 Introduction.....	123
4.2 The process of socio-political reforms and practices of freedom of expression.....	126
4.3 Legal and constitutional frameworks and freedom of expression.....	133
4.3.1. Traditional laws.....	133
4.3.2. The 1931 Constitution.....	136
4.3.3. The Revised Constitution of 1955	141
4.4. Post-war Ethiopia: the desire to change and the practice of freedom of expression.....	146
4.4.1 Conservatism and liberal reforms, and the practice of freedom of expression	149
4.4.2 Counter centralization, the question of ‘nationalities’ and freedom of expression.....	153
4.4.3 The students’ movement and the practice of freedom of expression.....	157
4.5. Media landscape and practices to freedom of expression.....	161
4.6 Conclusion: A continued imperial hegemony and extended centralization.....	166
 CHAPTER FIVE	 170
5. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION UNDER THE SOCIALIST-MILITARY REGIME (1974-1991).....	170
5.1 Introduction.....	170
5.2 The 1974’s revolution, political change and the practice of freedom of expression.....	171
5.3 The struggle for power: a political massacre and an apex of suppression	174
5.4. The reign of socialist ideology: social unrest, civil war and freedom of expression	178
5.5. Socio-cultural changes: correlation of secularisation with modernisation.....	182
5.6. The illusion of nationalism: political and social tension and freedom of expression	183
5.7. Constitutional and legal frameworks and freedom of expression.....	189
5.8. The practice of media and freedom of expression	196
5.9 Conclusion: The <i>new Ethiopia</i> under old motto: aborted nationalism and patriotism.....	202
 CHAPTER SIX.....	 205
6. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION UNDER ‘REVOLUTIONARY-DEMOCRATIC’ REGIME (1991-2014).....	205
6.1. Introduction.....	205
6.2. The new socio-political set up: ethnic federalism and freedom of expression	208

6.3. ‘Revolutionary-Democracy’ and the practice of freedom of expression	214
6.4. The political landscape and freedom of expression after the 2005 election	218
6.5. Social, economic and cultural transformations and freedom of expression.....	225
6.6. Constitutional and legal frameworks and freedom of expression	228
6.6.1. The 1995 Constitution and freedom of expression	229
6.6.2. Restrictions and threats to freedom of expression in other government laws.....	234
6.6.2.1 <i>Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009</i>	235
6.6.2.2 <i>Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009</i>	239
6.6.2.3 <i>Telecom Fraud Offence Proclamation No. 761/2012</i>	242
6.6.2.4 <i>Press Proclamation 34/1992</i>	244
6.6.2.5 <i>Broadcasting Proclamation 178/1999</i>	246
6.6.2.6 <i>Broadcasting Proclamation No. 533/2007</i>	252
6.6.2.7 <i>Freedom of the mass media and access to information Proclamation No. 590/2008</i> ...	254
6.6.2.8 <i>The Criminal Code Proclamation No. 414/2004</i>	260
6.7 Media and the practice of freedom of expression	261
6.7.1 Print media	262
6.7.2. Broadcast media.....	268
6.8 Suppression of media and communication	273
6.9 Media and communication repression strategies and instruments.....	274
6.9.1 Prosecutions of media professionals, sources and publishers	275
6.9.2 Politico-economic pressures	279
6.9.3 Suppressing access to information.....	281
6.10 Media regulatory bodies.....	284
6.10.1 The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority	284
6.10.2. Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO).....	285
6.11 The emergence of new technologies and freedom of expression.....	288
6.12 Conclusion: The apex of ethnocentrism: partisan atrocity and the demise of freedom of expression	291
CHAPTER SEVEN	294
7. SYNTHESIZING HISTORY, PRACTICE AND THEORY	294
7.1 Introduction.....	294
7.2. Threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia	294
7.3 Evolution of freedom of expression in Ethiopia	296
7.4 Three key determining factors of restriction of freedom of expression in Ethiopia	299

7.4.1 Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma	300
7.4.2 Ethno-Luminary-Thought	304
7.4.2.1 <i>Di-spiral of silence</i>	311
7.4.3 Narcissism.....	315
7.5 The interconnectedness of the causal factors: the pyramid trap theory	319
7.6. Prospects for freedom of expression in Ethiopia	329
CHAPTER EIGHT	332
8. CONCLUSION.....	332
8.1 Conclusions, contributions and implications of the study	332
8.2 Summary and contribution of chapters	336
8.3 Main findings	340
8.4 Limitations of the study and proposals for further research	341

Table of Figures

Figure 6.1: The Organisational Structure of Government Communication Affairs Office.....	288
Figure 7.1 Structure of Ethno-Luminary Repression.....	312
Figure 7.2 Structure of Di-spiral of Silence.....	312
Figure 7.3 The pyramid Trap structure of repression.....	322
Figure 7.4 The web of the Pyramid Trap.....	329
Figure 7.5 Structure of the Total Burden of Repression.....	330

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Timeline of major events during the Feudalist-Imperial Reign.....	123
Table 5.1 Timeline of major events during the Socialist-Military Rule.....	172
Table 6.1 Timeline of major events during the “Revolutionary-Democratic” regime.....	208

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Freedom of expression is believed to be the basis on which democratic society is established and corrupt practices are deterred in public office. In addition, freedom of expression is believed to be an instrument for civil society, private organisations and governing authorities to live better informed lives, to be able to govern better, promote development and eliminate arbitrary abuse. Further, it is known that freedom of expression is a means to share and expand knowledge, experience and wisdom. More importantly, it is believed to be the basis on which to ensure the protection of human rights by creating transparency in bureaucracy and in the public.

Accordingly, this right is acknowledged in international agreements and conventions, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, and the *Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa*. Additionally, it is acknowledged in the constitutions of most African states, including the Constitutions of the three most recent Ethiopian governments (see sections (see 5.7, 6.6). Nevertheless, the practice of freedom of expression has not been evident in Ethiopia (Freedom House 2007, 2011, 2017) and the country has been bound by the chains of repression during its history (Delebo 1991; Marcus 1994). Hence, questions have been raised by citizens and human rights activists on the causes of such centuries-old repressions. The large majority of research and literature try to address the question by only examining limitations on freedom of expression imposed by the centres of power, mainly repressive or authoritarian governments. Therefore, different efforts have been exerted to solve the problem based on these research findings and literature. For example, governments have been changed, new political ideologies and policies have been introduced, or different constitutions and laws have been promulgated. However, despite changes of government and related political orientations, repression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia has remained intact for centuries. This historical study examines the reasons why such repression remains intact in Ethiopia despite various

changes of government, by assessing all contributing factors to such repression, including but not exclusive to government or state-led repression.

Therefore, this research project is designed to address the problem from a much broader and different perspective than previously government-focused studies. Rather, this research examines limitations on freedom of expression as the result of various factors which stem from different aspects of society, most notably from grassroots society. This research, thus, tries to look at the causes of repression from a perspective that is different from the normative perceptions or theories which view repression and control of freedom of expression from the top-to-down, that is, from authorities to grassroots society. This is because, firstly, traditional normative theories cannot address the specific problems of freedom of expression in Ethiopia. Secondly, it is clear that restrictions and threats on freedom of expression usually stem from a variety of interlinked sources and causal factors. Specifically, threats to freedom of expression originally emanate from the base of the social pyramid and evolve from the uncertainty of life, particularly the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* in social life (see 7.4, 7.5). That means, restrictions on freedom of expression are not simply a matter of government/state repression, and do not originally emanated from authorities and governments. This restriction is not only from the top-down; rather, it is a wide and multi-directional phenomenon that originally evolves from the bases/roots of the government, from the philosophical orientations and all round make-up of the grassroots of society. This study demonstrates that repression and the control of freedom of expression evolve from cultural norms and attitudes. These include: patriarchy, societal expectations from women, religiosity and religious hegemony; monarchic and dictatorial policies and rules; economic make-up, including land ownership; group thought, including social conservatism, nationalism and tribalism amongst other factors. All these have intersected over time and created a web of confining networks which deter the right to freedom of expression (see 7.5). This implies that the traditional normative theories are not fully applicable in the Ethiopian context and, thus arises the need to relook these theories and develop new theories to understand media in the Ethiopian context, and to address the problem of limited freedom of expression and media in Ethiopia and within other similar contexts particularly within the Global South.

As such, this study is not simply limited to an assessment of how the governments/states/authorities have impeded freedom of expression rights in Ethiopia; it stretches deeper to an analysis of the social, cultural, religious, economic, political and philosophical foundations of the whole public. That is, the authorities and the grassroots of society. Of course, the three most recent governments of the country were used as the foci of the study, as representative of three separate blocks of time and three separate socio-politico-economic features. Therefore, the three time-periods dealt with are 1) the *Feudalist-Monarchy* period, 2) *the Socialist-Military* period, and 3) the ethnic-based *Revolutionary-Democratic* period (Kebede 2003; Mengie 2015, Taye 2018). With regard to the most recent of the three government periods assessed, this study is delimited to the period between 1991 and 2014.

The historical narratives in this study do not deal with freedom of expression as it applies only to the press and media but also to the freedom of expression rights of ordinary citizens at the grassroots of society. This includes urban and rural, farmers and students, men and women, the secular and religious, the elites and the ordinary, the oppressed and the oppressor, the dominated and the dominant, and their interlink with media freedom. In doing so, this study aims to provide a holistic analysis of the restriction and suppression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia, with a special focus on the three most recent governments of the country.

Accordingly, the analysis starts, in Chapter one with introduction and brief description of the history of Ethiopia, in order to contextualise the study; that is, the historical period before the three most recent governments of Ethiopia (1930-2014). Chapter two thoroughly reviews and analyses related literature that shows the theoretical conception and practices of freedom of expression internationally, in Africa and, more specifically, in Ethiopia. In addition, in this chapter, common principles and instruments of restriction of freedom of expression, and international, regional and national laws guiding freedom of expression are discussed. Further, this section tries to briefly interpret normative media theories in relation to the study context. Chapter three deals with the research methodology or design, research methods and research strategies/techniques. That is, this research was conducted using a qualitative research approach; using three qualitative research methods: historical method, discourse analysis and grounded theory; using three data collection techniques: documents, participant observation and aural data;

and using three data analysis strategies: narrative analysis, critical discourse analysis and constant comparison analysis.

Documents were used as the main source of the research data, though they were augmented by observations made by the researcher and metaphors/proverbs/maxims relevant to the research topic used in Ethiopian society. Therefore, many primary and secondary documents that deal with the social, economic and political context of the country and are believed to explain the status and evolution of freedom of expression were selected and analysed. The researcher also incorporated experiences gained as a member of Ethiopian society, in relation to the suppression of freedom of expression. In addition, Ethiopian society's aural discourses about freedom of expression were also critically analysed. Further, due to the fact that freedom of expression is a multi-disciplinary concept, the researcher included different theoretical ideas, research methods and data from diverse fields of enquiry such as communication, history, politics, law and cultural and social theories.

Generally, this chapter shows how the research design, research methods and techniques used address the two fundamental research questions: what has been going on in terms of freedom of expression in Ethiopia; and why has this been occurring? Chapters four, five and six discuss and analyse the political, social, economic, legal, media, cultural and religious dynamics of *Feudalist-Monarchy*, *Socialist-Military* and *ethnic-based 'Revolutionary-Democratic'* governments within the framework of the practice of freedom of expression. In Chapter seven, the research synthesised history, theory and practice, and identifies the main threats to freedom of expression and the main causal factors of those threats in the country. Finally, in chapter eight, the research is concluded by providing the whole summary of the research process, indicating the outcomes of the research.

1.2 Brief historical introduction to Ethiopia

This research project was designed to critically assess the evolution of freedom of expression in the three most recent governments of Ethiopia, and has strived to identify the main factors that deter the development of freedom of expression in the country. The reign of the first government ranges from 1930-1974 and was a *Feudalist-Monarchy* led by King Haile Selassie I. The second

one, ranges from 1974-1991 and is commonly known as *Derg*, was a *Socialist-Military* regime which hijacked power after a mass revolution of 1974, and was ruled by Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam. The current government, which came to power in 1991 by overthrowing the *Derg's* rule after 17 years of civil war, is an ethnic-based regime that has styled itself as the '*Revolutionary-Democratic*' government. This regime has been ruled by the former guerrilla fighter Melese Zenawi, who died in 2013, and his successor Hailemariam Desalegn, who claims to continue his predecessor's legacy.

It is important to highlight the foundation of Ethiopia's history as it relates to these three governments because of the impact of history on the socio-political precepts of the governments. Historical documents have shown that, along with its long journey to modernity since the beginning of Ethiopian societal history, which dates back 10 million years, Ethiopia has gone through various degrees of freedom (Tolossa 2016:1; Adejumobi 2007:1). Tolossa (2016:158) specifically indicates that Ethiopia as a national state dates to around 2545 B.C. Since then, it has passed through a series of conflicts and bloody struggles for power and identity, and, hence, different dynasties including the *Cushitic Dynasty*, *Ethiopian Dynasty* and *Solomonic Dynasty* all emerged until 1974. Even smaller dynasties/ kingdoms emerged as branches of the larger, better recognised dynasties. Among these dynasties, the *Damaat/D'mt Dynasty*, the *Axumite Dynasty* and the *Zagwe Dynasty/Kingdom* are the most well-known ones. Indeed, from ancient history until about the 10th century, Ethiopia had strong kingdoms/dynasties. In fact, the reign of these dynasties had extended across Africa, the Middle East and Western Asia. At one point, the whole of Africa had been called *Ethiopia* and the oceans around the African continent had been called *Ethiopian Oceans* until the European 'scramble for Africa' (Tolossa 2017:43-48). According to Tolossa (2016:50), ancient Ethiopia, particularly during *Ethiopian Dynasty* and *Axumite Dynasty*, was more democratic and fostered greater freedoms than the middle and modern periods.

In the middle ages, from around the 10th century to the mid-19th century, the state had faced huge challenges from internal crises and external forces. These challenges include the expansion of Islam, the growth of religious rivalry among Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and religious related aggressions from outside world (particularly from Egypt and Turkey); the introduction of Catholic Christianity, the emergence of divisions in Ethiopian Coptic Christianity/Orthodox

Christianity and the resultant conflicts among Christian sects; an intense power struggle in the *Solomonic Dynasty*; and the re-expansion and the reclamation of power and dominance of the *Cushitic* people, particularly within the *Oromo* society. This period was characterised by societal divisions, religious rivalries and consistent bloody conflicts for power and supremacy. This was the period when the state was divided and ruled by local militants called *Princes* (Delebo 1991; Marcus 1994). Hence, freedom and freedom of expression had been completely unthinkable. But, this challenging period which resulted from social and ideological differences seemed to have come to an end by the middle of the 19th century.

Ethiopia's modern period, from 1855 to the present, has been represented by: 1) the *Feudalist-Imperial* reigns of five kings and one Queen: *Tewodros II, Yohannis IV, Menelik II, Lij Iyasu, Haile Selassie I and Queen Zewditu*; 2) the *Socialist-Military* regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam, commonly known as *Derg*; and 3) the so called '*Revolutionary-Democratic*', ethnic-based rule of Melese Zenawi. Tewodros II started the process of recreating a cohesive unitary state by incorporating self-governed provinces, which had been created by local militants during the age of princes, into his empire. Yohannis IV battled to keep Ethiopia free from foreign domination and the growing power of other provincial leaders. Eventually, Menelik II became emperor and used military force to expand Ethiopia to its current borders. He battled Europe's colonial powers, particularly Italy, Great Britain and France, and formulated the recent physical and socio-cultural stature of the country (Zewdie 2007; Tolossa 2016:151). After the death of Emperor Menelik II in 1913, the state was immersed again under a power struggle among the nobility, particularly Lij Iyasu, Queen Zewditu and King Haile Selassie. However, King Haile Selassie provided a stabilising force after about two decades of bloody conflicts and the deaths of both Lij Iyasu and Queen Zewditu.

These records indicate that current socio-political stature of Ethiopia is the result of the interaction of different social, cultural, religious, political, and economic factors in history. The interaction of those factors in history has also created a unique socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic context in the country. That is, the Ethiopian context has been very complex, complicated, and multi-faceted which cannot be put into a few simplifying statements and categories. The historical discourse of Ethiopia has been polarised in many aspects; the country

has a long history of religious conflicts, political tensions, and social and cultural turmoils. Specifically, Ethiopia has been a nation where ethnicity and religion usually play a significant role in mobilising conflict, rebellion, war, and supremacy (Delebo 1991; Marcus 1974; 1994; Zewdie 20007; Hassen 2000). Hence, Ethiopian rule has been characterised by dynasties and kingdoms that followed highly centralised and kin-based administrative systems which have claimed and maintained power by force (Tollossa 2016). For instance, there is no single record of succession with public choice or even with a peaceful transition. The ideologies and interests of the dominant have prevailed, and leaders have unlimited right to reign not only to the end of their life, but also to the end of their decedents' lives, that is, to eternity unless a powerfully forced from rule. Resultantly the standard life in Ethiopia is one of full of *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and the administration style is largely *Narcissistic* (Ruggiero 1995:66-67; Adejumobi 2007:8-9; Zewdie 2007:10).

Indeed, in its modern age, Ethiopia emerged as the dominant force against European colonialists in Africa in typical Ethiopian style, through centralisation and repression. In the 19th century, one saw the emergence of three prominent leaders, Tewodros II, Menilik II and Haileselassie I. According to Adejumobi (2007:3), the name Ethiopia in the modern world, had “emerged as a near generic term for the whole universe of dark-skinned people in Western narratives, including Shakespearean literature”. Hall (2003:32) also added that, in the 20th century, Pan-Africanists saw Ethiopia as the mother to all men, an ancient land of immense importance to human history. As Clapham (1988:14) reminds us, "The central goal of revolutionary leaders is to take over the state structure established by their predecessors and to use it, suitably adapted, as an agency for economic development, national integration, and the consolidation of their own power". This implies that the prevalent idea during the reign of many governments in Ethiopia was the idea of protecting the country from colonisers and creating a large and proud nation through any means, particularly force; hence, other ideas, thoughts and beliefs had no space. However, the aim of maintaining national integration and protecting national sovereignty meant that brutal and suppressive authorities have maintained their power, and freedom of expression has been repressed.

Generally, in Ethiopian history, power has meant might, supremacy has been the ultimate goal, and human dignity and human rights have been almost negligible or unthinkable. In the process of the struggle for power and dominance, each reign has used force and repression as the main means or instrument: rulers have conquered territories mainly by war, and they have destroyed existing ideological foundations and established their own on the ruins of the previous ones. The ruler's ideas have been *the* ruling ideas and there has not been space for new ideas, discussion, and compromise.

There is one common saying in Ethiopian society which reflects this situation: “yewega biresa yetewega ayresa” which literally means revenge is sweet and inevitable. Those who had been dominated and executed do the same when they get the chance to dominate after a long struggle or war. This shows that the country has passed through a vicious circle of war, execution, domination and repression. Rulers espoused the motto ‘*dominate or be dominated*’, whether this is religious, political or ethnic domination, and this motto has continued to be used today. Consequently, freedom, particularly the right of freedom of expression, has been disabled (Seyoum 2015, Tollossa 2016).

During the process of expansion and counter expansion, and domination and re-domination of different group of societies and religions, the political systems and cultural practices including language and religion of newly incorporated societies have been influenced and in some areas have been changed. Indeed, in some areas, dominated societies have been deprived of everything not only freedom, but also thought and expression. Every resource is the domain of the rulers, solely used for their wellbeing and dominance; they are rich and dominant in every aspect of life. However, the poor, devoid of all resources, are the dominated and have little or no say in almost every aspect of life, particularly in social and political decisions, including freedom of expression (Seyoum 2015: 193-201). Rulers have been considered as “the appointees of God” and they are gods themselves, they have the absolute power to allow or restrain anyone and anything (see 5.3).

Though modern media was introduced to Ethiopia towards the end of the 19th century, the system was authoritarian in that the media have usually been controlled by governments and government affiliated groups, and have advanced and supported the interests and policies of individuals, particular groups and governments. Hence, the ruling elites have guided the rest of society by controlling information and the means of communication. Consequently, freedom of the press and the rights to free expression has been curtailed (Shimelis 2000; Metaferia 2003; Alemu 2007; Gudeta 2008) Wondimu 2008; Meshesha 2014).

The modern history of Ethiopia has shown that the nation has gone through environments of repression of freedom of expression though the governments have promised to guarantee modernity and freedom. For instance, despite that the last two governments included the word *democratic* in the nomenclature of the state and the constitutions the implementation thereof seems void. For example, the *Derg* labelled the state the *Peoples' Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, and the current government has named the state the *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*. But the repression and restrictions to free expression seem to have been gaining momentum despite the governments' promises, the development of international freedom of expression principles and national constitutions and laws that guarantee freedom of expression.

While this study recognises that many of the socio-cultural, religious and political phenomena in the country of Ethiopia discussed herein have their origins and have been in effect for hundreds of years, it is not within the scope of this study to discuss the historical time period predating 1991. This study limits its scope to focus on the developments related to, and the oppression of, freedom of expression between the years 1991 and 2014 which coincides with the three most recent governments of Ethiopia (1930-2014).

1.3 The research problem

Ethiopia has a unique reputation in ancient and modern African history, at least with its social and political features. Socially, the nation is the home of ancient societies, cultures and civilisations. It has been known as an ancient society due to fossil records showing the origin of

humans within the country. In its old political history, the country, according to records, has about 5000 years of statehood and it is one of the oldest states in the world (Tollossa 2016; Adejumobi 2007; Marcus 1994; Ofcansky & Berry 1991). In modern political history, the country successfully resisted the 19th century *Scramble for Africa*, and became the only African country to defeat a European colonial power and retain its sovereignty as an independent state. Apart from this, the country was the first independent African member of the 20th century League of Nations and the United Nations, and it was the founding member of the African Union. Further, it has continued for centuries to be home to approximately 80 different languages and a variety of social and ethnic groups

Despite all these assets, the country has gone through various repressions. Throughout the country's history in general and during the reign of recent governments' in particular, the nation has been known to have very or absolute restrictions on freedom of expression. Governments usually harass, intimidate, detain, torture and even massacre those who try to express their views, have their own ideas or political ideologies. Along with this, they exert direct and indirect economic pressure, prevent private ownership of media, and set legal restrictions and penalties against freedom of expression and association. For instance, Ethiopia was one of the world's leading jailers of journalists in 2005, along with China, Cuba and Eritrea (CPJ 2005). According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) (2006), 20 journalists were "languishing in prison", and 100 journalists were in exile in August 2006 in Ethiopia. Similarly, thousands of civilians have been imprisoned and hundreds have been killed in recent years for their political ideologies or demanding citizen rights. These situations have been further confirmed by international human rights organisations such as Pen International, the Committee to Protect Journalists and Freedom Now (2013), Article 19 (2010), Human Rights Watch (2010), and the African Media Barometer (2010:9).

In addition to state persecution, different sectors within the country have been seen resisting ideas or views that they think new or odd to them. For example, it is common to see that part of society, particularly religious groups and ethnic groups, stereotype, marginalise, intimidate and even attack or persecute individuals or groups that are out of their domain or have different ideas or practices to their own (Ahmed 2001:190).

The persistence of these problems has been indicated by human rights activists, citizens and researchers. However, there is a very little information on the type of challenges or threats on freedom of expression, the underlying causal factors to those challenges/threats, the evolution of the right of freedom of expression along with the socio-political dynamics of the country, and the prospects of freedom of expression in the country. Thus, this research aspires to address these issues through a holistic historical analysis of the country, particularly examining the three most recent governments of the country.

1.4 The research question

The questions that are often asked are; what happened to such a politically and socially rich country to result in a repressive environment? or, how could a country with a long history of nationhood and a lengthened experience of administration promote such a repressive environment in the 21st century? Therefore, this research project tries to assess how the country's ideas, discourses, and social, cultural, political and economic practices, particularly in the three most recent governments, have contributed to the repression of freedom of expression. Hence, the following specific questions are addressed:

1. What challenges and restrictions to freedom of expression have been exhibited in Ethiopia under the three most recent governments?
2. Have political, economic, social, cultural, or religious factors played a role in the inhibition of freedom of expression in Ethiopia and can these be identified as ongoing threats to freedom of expression?
3. What have been the changes or developments in the practice of freedom of expression during those three most recent governments of Ethiopia?
4. How can the various challenges and restrictions to freedom of expression in Ethiopia be analysed in a manner which holistically accounts for the repression?

1.5 Goal and objectives of the study

The main goal of this study is to examine the practice of freedom of expression in Ethiopia through a holistic analysis of the dynamics of the country, particularly during the three most recent governments of the country. The analysis will identify the main threats to freedom of

expression, explore the main underlying causal factors to such threats of freedom of expression, show the evolution of the right to freedom of expression through the dynamics of the country, and indicate the prospect for freedom of expression in the country.

1.5.1 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the practice and evolution of freedom of expression in the three most recent governments of Ethiopia;
2. To evaluate the political, economic, social, cultural and religious interventions against freedom of expression and identify the main threats to freedom of expression in the country;
3. To explore the main underlying factors that threaten freedom of expression in the country, and
4. To develop a theoretical approach, and model or instrument, for the analysis of the inter-related challenges and restrictions to freedom of expression which incorporates all relevant factors.

These objectives have been met by a holistic analysis of the country, specifically during the three most recent governments, by obtaining data from primary and secondary documentary, oral discourses and observation; by using three data analysis strategies: Critical Discourse Analysis, Narrative Analysis and Constant Comparative Analysis; and by following three research methods: Discourse Analysis, Historical Method and Grounded Theory, all of which is discussed in more detail in the methodological chapter of this study.

1.6 The value of the study

Ethiopia has been criticised for the violations to freedom of expression, despite the fact that the country's constitutions, international human rights provisions and even 21st century development all provided or allowed freedom of expression. Arguably, thus, there must be underlying factors that deter freedom of expression in the country. Hence, the researcher has tried to identify the main historical threats to freedom of expression and the underlying factors that cause those

threats in the country's context, specifically for the last 85 years through three most recent governments.

As indicated above, the largest majority of research and literature try to address the research problem by examining the practice of freedom of expression with a focus on state authorities. Accordingly, different solutions have been recommended to tackle the problem. However, improvements in the practice of freedom of expression have not been attained. Therefore, this research follows a different perspective, in contrast to normative theories and literature. The researcher believes that restriction on the freedom of expression is not simply a matter of government/state repression, and does not emanate solely from authorities and governments. Rather, it is a wide and multi-directional phenomenon that originally emerges from the bases/roots of society.

This study views the problem from a much broader and bottom-up perspective. This implies that it tries to examine limitations on freedom of expression as the result of various factors which stem from different aspects and sectors of society, particularly from the grassroots of society. That is, restriction and control of freedom of expression originally emanate from the philosophical orientations and all round make-up of the grassroots of society: from cultural norms and attitudes; religiosity and religious hegemony; monarchic and dictatorial policies; economic rules and make-up of the country; group thoughts such as social conservatism, nationalism and tribalism; amongst other factors. All of these emanate from the certainty-uncertainty dilemma in life. The researcher believes that governments and authorities are contributors to the main threats to freedom of expression, but the real threats of freedom of expression are the result of the combination of all the factors that inherently emanate from society, and primarily from the grassroots of society.

Accordingly, this study identifies four basic threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia: *governments; religious and cultural hegemonies; poverty and related lack of access to education, media and information; and conflicts, rivalries and wars* (see 7.2). In addition, the study explores the way these threats to freedom of expression have also inherently originated from three underlying factors: *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma, Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and

Narcissism, all of which collectively form a *Pyramid Trap of Repression*. Further, the study explicates that these three factors are interrelated and causal to each other in the form of a pyramid. And, they create a web of repression with other factors which emanate from this pyramid: the *social pyramid* and the *pyramid of repressive instruments* (see 7.4, 7.5).

Hence, based on the identified threats and underlying causal factors, the researcher has developed a theory called the *Pyramid Trap Theory*, and models that elaborate this theory which the researcher has labelled as the *Structure of Ethno-Luminary Repression*, the *Structure of Di-spiral of Silence*, the *Pyramid Trap Structure of Repression*, the *Web of the Pyramid Trap*, the *Structure of the Total Burden of Repression* (see Figures 7.1-7.5). These models expose how freedom of expression is stifled in Ethiopia and in many similar contexts across the world, but particularly in Africa. The formulated theory and models imply that there is a need to re-examine normative communication theories and develop new theories that elaborate specific situations or could be fully applicable to specific situations or contexts.

Generally, the researcher believes that this study contributes to the discipline of communication, particularly to the problem of freedom of expression in a number of areas. The study critically analyses common or normative communication and media theories and indicates that they have a deficiency when applied in contexts such as Ethiopia. In addition, this study indicates new perspectives to understand the limitations of normative theories and to tackle the problem of repression on freedom. Further, the study exposes the causal factors limiting freedom of expression and reveals the features and extent of suppression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia. Moreover, the study tries to indicate the future prospects for freedom of expression in the country. That is, the study contributes to the field of communication by exploring perspectives on the limitation of freedom of expression, by exposing the causal actors of repression and by revealing how freedom of expression is usually repressed. All of which could provide a significant contribution to tackle the problem in Ethiopia and other contexts around the world.

1.7 Definition of key terms

The key terms for the purposes of this study are defined below. These terms are further interrogated and theorised in Chapter Eight of this study.

- **Ethno-luminary-thought:** The conception of absolute self-centeredness and complete supremacy of one particular position and thought, and the undermining/oppression and even execution of other or alternative, thoughts, positions and ethnicities.
- **Certainty-uncertainty dilemma:** A state of lack of understanding about the world's issues, at least controversial issues, or daily life issues, in relation to the infinite world or universe, and/or a condition in which one makes decisions without full information, knowledge, skill, and experience, capacity, ability, etcetera. For instance, one could not be absolutely certain on her/his/others' physiological condition, safety, social relationships, esteem, culture, religion philosophy, ideology, etcetera. So, while decisions are usually made under a perception of certainty, the individual nonetheless suffers perpetual uncertainty.
- **Di-spiral of silence:** A theoretical model that shows the restraint of the ideas of the majority and the expression of the ideas of the powerful minority. That is, the powerful minority will overestimate their influence and may become confident in their communication, but the ideas of the weak majority will remain in the background where their communication will be restrained.
- **Narcissim:** The highest form of egocentrism and ethnocentrism characterised by an extraordinary need for high recognition and admiration which is usually expressed by cynicism, force, brutality, disgracing, and discrediting knowledge, wisdom and experience which emanate from alternate groups.
- **The Pyramid trap structure:** A theoretical model that shows how all causal factors of the repression of freedom of expression are interconnected to each other as a pyramid and networked as webs that trap expression to a large extent.

CHAPTER TWO

2. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

2.1. Introduction

While there are varying theories related to understanding freedom of expression, the dominant paradigm is motivated by Western ideals celebrating individual human rights as an inalienable natural right. For instance, such ideas are manifest in First Amendment of the United States Constitution (ratified on 15 December 1791), which infers that religion and speech are ‘natural’ individual rights that preclude government authority. Similar language is used in the United Nations 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*. Article 19 of this declaration states that “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression...” The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1966, also states that “the right to freedom of expression includes, freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any other media of his choice”. Drawing on the same ideology, the 1950 *European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHRFF)* Article 9 (1) and Article 10 (1) declare that “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion” and “everyone has the right to freedom of expression”, respectively.

Similarly, *The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights* Article 9 states that “every individual has the right not only to receive information, but also to express himself and disseminate his opinion”. Similarly, the *African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights* at its 29th session resolved to adopt a *Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression* to elaborate and expound on the nature, content and extent of Article 9 of *The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights* drawing on international standards and interpretations. From the Preamble of this Declaration, freedom of expression is regarded as an essential attribute of human existence, and its role in human progress and development as well as in the maintenance

of democracy is recognised. Similarly, the current constitution of Ethiopia Article 29 (1-4) indicates that everyone has the right to thought, opinion and expressions without any limitations:

Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice. Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed. Freedom of the press shall specifically include the following elements: (a) Prohibition of any form of censorship (b) Access to information of public interest. In the interest of the free flow of information, ideas and opinions which are essential to the functioning of a democratic order, the press shall, as an institution, enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions.

In all these provisions, freedom of expression is viewed as a pre-existing human right (natural rights) that must be respected by political institutions. For instance, the phrases that are indicated in those provisions, such as “ideas of all kinds”, “regardless of frontiers” and “through any media of his choice” literally denote that any restriction to freedom of expression is principally unacceptable.

All these guarantees to freedom of expression by international and regional conventions and national legislation are, however, countered by the same conventions and legislation, and the right is usually seen bound to restrictions. Therefore, though there is a lot of disagreement on the scope or limitation of the right to freedom of expression, broad consensus seems to exist on the limitation or restriction of freedom of expression within international protocols and regional conventions. For instance, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), in Article 19(3), sets restrictions on freedom of expression “for rights or reputations of others” and “for the protection of national security or of public order or of public health or morals”. Similarly, *Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa* Article 2(2) confirmed that “restrictions on freedom of expression shall be provided by law”. In the United States of America, the framers of the Bill of Rights protected freedom of expression under the First Amendment which says “Congress shall make no law. . . abridging the freedom of speech”, however, Congress passed the Sedition Act of 1798, less than a decade after the amendment’s ratification, making it a crime to criticise the government.

The current Ethiopian constitution follows suite. Though the introduction of Article 29 seems to guarantee full freedom, the sub-articles 6-7 limits freedom of expression for the “well-being of

the youth, and the honour and reputation of individuals”, and those who violate those limitations are held liable (see 2.4 and 6.6.3).

One can, therefore, understand that freedom of expression has been conventionally conceived as the right to express ideas or thoughts or beliefs that are allowed by laws which are developed and ratified by some authority or by some groups or individuals. These groups and individuals are commonly trapped by their own interests that could be cultural, religious, ideological, economic, or social. Particularly in Ethiopia, these groups and individuals have been equipped with traditional knowledge, oriented with *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and characterised by a *Narcissistic* personality (see 4.2-4.3, 5.2-5.4, 6.2, 7.4). That means the laws are promulgated to serve the interests of those groups and individuals. Hence, the right to freedom of expression set in those conventions and the constitution are nominal. But, in Ethiopia, the suppression of freedom of expression and promotion of censorship emerged from *Ethno-Luminary* and *Narcissistic* orientations that emanate from ethnicity, culture, religion which are founded on the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* (see 7.2-7.5).

On the other hand, Scott (2006:152) defines freedom of expression from a political and societal perspective, stating that “the rights of individuals to express themselves without government censorship, punishment, or coercion”, and narrows the definition by limiting the punishment, censorship and coercion only from the government. However, these pressures do not always come from the government, but they also come from society. In developing countries, like Ethiopia, where individualistic culture is uncommon, pressure from families, communities and groups are tremendous.

Burns (2001:35) sees the terms *expression* and *communication* as interchangeable and states that the right to freedom of expression encompasses rights like freedom of speech and the activity of viewing, producing or being otherwise engaged in films, or public performances. The author acknowledges that freedom of expression is not just restricted to oral communication, but also includes symbolic acts such as picketing, pictorial or visual production and musical communication. Burns, hence, expands the scope of freedom of expression by encompassing non-oral expression for many would consider it as only freedom of speech. Still, Burn’s list lacks

details. Free expressions could be seen much more broadly than what Burns and Scott presented above. Freedom of expression could include any actions, any events and any practice in daily life. These could include feeding, clothing, worshiping or any way of life that could have some message to be conveyed or imparted. The concept of freedom of expression in this study, therefore, refers to any political, social, cultural, religious thought and practice that could be expressed by any means of communication: verbal (written or oral), non-verbal, rituals, ceremonies and other daily activities.

2.2. Brief historical background, arguments and practices of freedom of expression

Communication has been integral to the development of society since the very beginnings of humankind. Similarly, the claim for freedom of expression is believed to originate at the beginning of communication and, hence, the beginning of humankind. Evolutionary scientists have also indicated that the most distinguishing feature of human beings is their capacity for a complex language; although it is still not clear when this capacity was developed. Of course, the development of the first written language is believed to have emerged in the 4th millennium B.C. (4000–3000 B.C.). The first known users were Sumerians and Egyptians who used pictographic language or hieroglyphics, which coincides with the rise of the earliest human civilisations.

However, over time, forces opposed to the need to express ideas and opinions in written form arose, as did the desire by some to control free expression. For instance, the Greek epic poet Homer and the leader of democratic Athens, Pericles, supported free expression, but the first great lawmaker of Athens, Solon (630–560 BC), banned "speaking evil". Even after the Peloponnesian Wars, the Athenian Assembly ordered Socrates to drink poison as punishment for lecturing about unrecognised gods and corrupting youth by encouraging them to question authority (Freedom of Expression: History[sa]). Written documents later showed that in 6th century China, Laotzu spoke out for freedom. He believed that without law or compulsion, men would dwell in harmony, and he advised rulers not to interfere with the lives of the people. Aristotle also claimed the importance of the individual, the dominance of man's secular reason, and the affirmation of certainty and objectivity (Merrill, Gade, & Blevens 2001:6).

According to Collins (2010), the classic faith in a marketplace of ideas began with English poet and essayist John Milton's view in *Areopagitica* (1644), and latter John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859). Holmes (1866) expressed similar ideas which favoured a test of competing ideas: it is in the clash of ideas that we shall find the means of truth. However, the marketplace of ideas theory refers to minimal government regulation of speech and expression of ideas, theories, propositions and movements (Pinaire 2012); and one may raise questions on "minimal" government regulation for it varies from one socio-political context to another. For instance, 'minimal' regulation in the Global South could be regarded as very strict regulation in the Global North; the minimal regulation in Ethiopia could be considered strict in Europe or the USA. These differences emanate from underlying differences in the social, cultural, religious, economic and political make-up of the societies or countries. Indeed, the make-up themselves originate from their philosophical foundations and existing limited knowledge about this world or the universe.

Olson ([sa]:8) asserts that at almost no point in the history of the world, have people been entirely free from restrictions, particularly governmentally imposed or sanctioned restrictions on expression. Even today's supposedly most democratic countries such as Britain and America have not been free from repressive laws. For instance, legal restrictions were imposed in America in the 13th century. Those restrictions were set as defamation laws, in the form of a constant threat of fine or physical punishment to anyone who criticised the government or individuals who participated in the government such as judges and any officer of the crown. Rather than being diluted over time, the laws were re-enacted in 1765 by inserting the term "seditious words". Restrictions continue even in the laws proclaimed after that time by inserting word such as "seditious libel"- to defend any "criticism of the government, its forms, its constitution, officers, laws, symbols, conduct, policies..." (Olson [sa]:8). Even in recent centuries, the Supreme Court of the United States has recognised several categories of speech that are excluded from freedom of expression, and it has recognised that governments may enact reasonable time, place, or manner on the restrictions on speech. Some which are included in the restrictions are obscenity, child pornography, speech that incites imminent lawless action, and regulation of commercial speech such as advertising, protection of copyright, protection from imminent or potential violence against particular persons, restrictions on the use of untruths to harm others (slander), and restrictions on information which affect national security (American

Civil Liberties Union 2008, Congressional Research service 2006, Federal Negarit Gazeta 1995). In addition, restrictions or interventions designed to promote freedom of expression such as ensuring there isn't undue concentration of media ownership is recognised as reasonable. This shows that a large portion of daily life and activities are bound to restrictions, and rights may clash with other interests that need to be considered.

What we can understand from these restrictions is that many of them emanate from the socio-cultural constructions of the state or the society. Firstly, the time, place and manner of restrictions on speech are set based on specific social and cultural contexts within each society. As the natures of the cultural construction of different societies vary, each construction requires a specific time, place and manner. For instance, two different religions or two different cultures could not have the same manner and place requirements. For example, in Ethiopian culture, a child who speaks in front of elders and a woman that speaks in public places are considered as undisciplined or unmannered; kissing one's boyfriend or girlfriend in church is wickedness, and wearing short and tight clothes in public is levelled as indecency. But, all these practices are not considered in the same way in America or Europe.

In addition, the issues of obscenity refer to the accepted standards of morality and decency which are strictly linked to specific cultural contexts rather than being linked to secular and independent governments that could be considered relatively universal. For instance, morality and decency for atheists would not be the same for religious people; morality and decency in America would not be equated to immorality and indecency in Ethiopia. Let us take the perceptions of same sex marriage as an example; it is totally abhorred and could lead to being executed in Ethiopia, while it is legal in South Africa.

Moreover, the "restrictions on the use of untruths others" raises a question of 'What is truth?' In reality, truth is subjective and the result of some interaction in a specific situation or within a level of understanding. Hence, there is a high possibility that one's truth could be absolutely false to others. We can give a lot of examples from all walks of life: cultural, religious, social, or political to illustrate the idea. Let us take religious perceptions that usually ignite conflicts. For example, one's God could be another one's devil; one's sanctity could be another one's curse.

Another example is the Muhammad cartoons case in the Danish newspaper called *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005. The newspaper's satirical depiction of the Prophet Muhammad has been perceived by many Muslims as a notorious act of attacking Islam and harming followers of the religion; while conversely, it could be regarded as the need to challenge "an unreasonable fear of criticizing Muslims" (Tønder 2011:255).

Even the issue of national security and the restriction of freedom of expression should not be seen out of the socio-cultural and socio-ideological contexts and orientations. This is because these contexts and orientations could result in different groups and individuals who have different perceptions and interests that cause conflict, rivalries and wars. It is clear that these conflicts, rivalries and wars are at the root of the issue of national security. Indeed, as indicated above, even governments and laws themselves are reflections of the socio-cultural constructions of any society. These instances confirm that the underlying causal factors restricting freedom of expression originate from the socio-cultural foundations and philosophical orientation of society, though restrictions on freedom of expression are commonly manifested in the form of official government laws (see 4.3, 5.7, 6.6).

Though these restrictions seem to have a positive contribution to minimise harm on vulnerable individuals like children, they arguably contradict the essence of humanity; specifically, they contradict liberty and the natural urge to seek and share new ideas, knowledge and experiences. Further, these restrictions do not address the root of the problem; rather they try to create barriers to already established and developed problems. This is similar to treating the symptoms of a disease rather than the disease itself. Moreover, one of the main pitfalls in the process of restriction is the impossibility of finding a consistent and fair regulator/censor for limitations of knowledge and understanding. Pariticularly, the impossibility of finding an entity that can understand differences in orientation and inclinations, and differences in personal and group interests. For instance, in the Ethiopian context, regulators are usually government officials, religious leaders and community elders who are commonly affiliated with their political, religious and social group interests and philosophies.

2.2.1 Some arguments on the importance of freedom of expression

John Stuart Mill (1978), asserts that everyone has inalienable rights over their thoughts, and there ought to exist the fullest liberty of expression of any doctrine, regardless of how immoral it may be considered to be. According to Mill, humans are not humans unless they have liberty; as a human, one must employ all his faculties including reasoning and judgment. Accordingly, Mill claims a liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to one's conscience, and he insists that truth or value can only emerge through free trade in the marketplace of ideas, and censoring information destroys this value. Mendel [Sa] indicated that the right to freedom of expression is universally acknowledged as a foundational human right of the greatest importance: it is a basis of democracy, key to the protection of all human rights, fundamental to human dignity and a pivotal component of our individual development.

Pudaphat (2011:9) insisted that freedom of expression is crucial for three reasons. First, it is central to the realisation of our humanity because the ability to express ourselves in words, music, dance or any other form of expression is the realisation of our identity. Second, it is usually difficult to organise, inform, alert, mobilise, protect and attain other human rights and freedoms without freedom of expression. Third, basic economic and social developments are founded on open and transparent communication. Brink (2008:40-60) supports this idea by indicating his agreement with the importance of freedom of expression as a ground to exploit more general individual liberties.

Yong (2011:389) argues for freedom of expression based on two perspectives: arguments from "citizen participation in democratic self-government" and arguments from a "right to autonomy". The first perspective focuses on the importance of freedom of expression for democracy. That is, for democracy to function effectively there needs to be a high degree of freedom of expression. This implies that if political beliefs are restricted, it would strongly undermine the notion that citizens may participate in the democratic system freely and vote for whoever they want. Based on the second perspective, Yong (2011:392) argues that governments' restriction of freedom of expression is interference on one's 'autonomy'. Scanlon (1972:215) defines autonomy as being "sovereign in deciding what to believe and in weighing competing reasons for action". For Scanlon, somebody else must not forcibly interfere with our freedom to make decisions, which

includes preventing our access to ideas that might influence our decision in some way. According to Notung (2013), this interference affects sovereignty of both the speaker and the listener. That is, if an idea is prevented from being expressed, then those who do not encounter that idea are not at liberty to consider that idea. On the other hand, if an idea is suppressed and unheard, that idea could not be an option that one can weigh up when forming their beliefs.

Baker (2004:225) also argues that laws must respect one's formal autonomy by allocating ultimate control over a person's mind, body, and property, unless that person interferes with another person's legitimate realm of decision-making control. In addition, laws must not aim to eliminate or suppress people's freedom to make decisions about behaviour or values; hence, a person should be able to decide for herself/himself what to say. Such control of one's own behaviour is fundamental human nature, ensuring humans are a "non-coerced moral agent" who has his/her own thoughts and opinions or world outlook and wish to express his/her own terms (Baker 1997:1019).

In addition to these arguments, there are also several theories that have been advanced to justify the constitutional protection of freedom of expression. Four theories are usually explored. These are: individual self-fulfilment theory; the sound and rational judgment theory; the democratic process theory; and the balance between stability and social change theory (Burns 2001:35; Chomsky 1989: 349; Alfredsson & Eide 1999:394).

2.2.1.1 Individual self-fulfilment /self-realisation theory

This theory suggests that free speech is an integral aspect of each individual's right to self-development. Burns (2001:39) states that in order to achieve self-fulfilment, the human being has to develop his/her mind, and in developing his/her personality, a person has the right to form his/her opinions and to express them. Barendt (1985) insists that an unrestricted right to freedom of expression leads a person to achieve self-realisation. Restrictions on what a person is supposed to hear, say, read or write restricts the growth of his/her personality. According to this theory, there is a right to free speech even where the speech is not in the best interests of society. Richards (1999) adds that one of the attributes to human nature is the desire to communicate, to express feelings and thoughts, and to contribute to discussion and debate. To restrict this is to

deny an individual his/her basic dignity and autonomy as a human being. The above idea, according to Richards, derives from the notion of self-respect that comes from a mature person's full and untrammelled exercise of the capabilities central to human rationality. Free speech is, therefore, necessary for an individual not only to realise his/her potential but also to develop his/her character and personality to the full.

Barendt (1999) further identified two reasons why free speech is particularly important to a person's self-fulfilment, and why is there more emphasis on constitutional protection of free speech than other rights. First, freedom of speech is primarily a liberty against the state and due to this reason it is more capable of judicial interpretation. Second, communication is so closely tied to our thoughts and feelings, and suppression of communication is a more serious impingement on our personality than many other restraints.

The Ethiopian historical context shows that individuals have been forced to have the society's opinion as central to develop a personality that goes with the society. Society in Ethiopia is communal and strictly controlled by family bonds, religious dogmas, ethnic networks, and political affiliations. Children grow up under strict family controls filled with a family's ideals and equipped with society's values. As has been highlighted in the previous chapter and as we will see in detail in the following chapters, Ethiopia has been known for its war filled and repressive history. The country has experienced conflict after conflict, war after war, repression after repression since its emergence as a state. Accordingly, citizens have been forced to develop a warrior personality; every claim for power, economic prosperity, and even for love have been expressed and attained by force. Therefore, a warrior person is respected because winners in the war could be absolute leaders: they could exploit wealth, could have many wives and women, etc. This warrior and collective social consciousness is usually perceived as patriotism, and those who use force and win are locally called "wond", which literally means *self-confident, fearless and powerful*. Even, killing and revenge is common practice and this culture is known as "dem mememles". That is, if your relative is killed by someone, even if by accident, you have to kill the killer or any of his/her relatives. If not, you cannot live within the society, you cannot eat together with your friends and you cannot even talk with your friends and relatives, so that a vicious circle of killing continues. Some insist that the Ethiopian victory over Italy was the result

of such killing and the persistence of the warrior personality of Ethiopians. This is the seed that has been sowed for centuries before and has developed into a personality and identity. This study asserts that the consistent repression of freedom of expression rights in the country have emerged from and are in part as a result of this socio-cultural background and the collective social consciousness which views violence and repression as acceptable (see 4.4, 5.3, 6.2).

3.2.1.2 Market place of ideas theory

This theory was first advanced by John Milton in his speech on the liberty of unlicensed printing before the English Parliament in 1644. It was popularised by John Stuart Mill in his essay *On Liberty* (Mill 1859:230-260). Mill argued that the function of a society is to provide an individual with a framework within which the individual requires absolute freedom in order to express his/her ideas, no matter how unacceptable they are to society. According to Mill, having absolute freedom over one's body and mind is essential to being human, because he identifies the individual as self-ruling and "sovereign". Furthermore, each person knows what gives them pleasure. Thus, Mill believes that humans, by nature, will ultimately pursue this happiness, regardless of any directives. Mill adds that the suppression of expression harms the pursuit for truth. According to him, prevailing public opinion is not usually the whole truth; even if the suppressed opinion is false, it might still contain elements of truth. It is only through the combination of contradictory opinions that one may achieve a more comprehensive understanding of truth.

Mill further states that however true a proposition may be, if it is not fully, frequently and fearlessly discussed, it will be held as dead dogma, not a living truth. That is, human nature needs the opportunity to flourish without interference, to which successful ideas are the natural reward with flawed and ugly occurrences like racism and hate speech. Here, Mill is certainly optimistic about humanity's capacity to be 'rational'. He argues that individuality is paramount and people should at least have the choice to be irrational. In May 1866, Holmes engaged with John Stuart Mill's thinking and asserted it in *Abrams v. United States*, 250 U.S. 616 case dissent in 1919 that the ultimate good is better reached by free trade in ideas. Harold Laski's *Authority in the Modern State* in 1919 also indicated that truth is found in the clash of ideas. Of course, the direct words of the phrase '*market place of ideas*' were first used by William O. Douglas in the

1953 case of *United States v. Rumely* where it was argued that one “bids for the minds of men in the market place of ideas” (Collins 2010).

Mill’s argument on the importance of sovereignty and the relative nature of truth seems sound. The pitfall of Mill’s argument lies in the claim of the rationality of humans. In the existing world’s context, including in rich and developed parts of the world, self-interest has become the base of the philosophical foundations of humanity. Individuals, groups and even nations strive for the fulfilment of their own interests at the cost of others. Beyond individuals and groups, it is common to see highly *Ethno-Luminary* countries even today. We can take the 20th century direct colonisation efforts by European countries in the other parts of the world and the 21st century dominance (indirect colonisation practices) of America and China on the rest of the world as a simple instance that the world works irrationally to fulfil its own interests. This implies that self-interests always prevail at individual, group and international levels, and the world is under the consistent conflict of interest, rivalry, dominance and re-dominance. Hence, freedom of expression could not evolve in such irrational human nature.

Further, Brietzke (1997:651-669), Ingber (1984:1) and Pinaire (2012), criticised the market place of ideas for at least three reasons: the soundness of its economic analogy; the nature of input introduced to the market; and the essence of the output rendered through the course of these exchanges. Firstly, human beings in the economic market make choices based on taste and preference. However, in the market place of ideas, the same rational decision-making may not happen because humans are social animals and they are influenced by different interests, or they may not be fully aware of the influences skewing their selections and perceptions. Secondly, the nature, extent and potential of the input that is introduced to the market arena is important. For instance, for the full range of benefits to be achieved, consumers must willingly come to market easily and peddle their ideas. However, this may not happen in an increasingly complicated and global society. Citizens, for example, often lack a public or common place for meeting and exchanging ideas. In addition, there may sometimes be inputs that destroy the market itself, while the question of legitimising an intervention by the government may be raised to intervene in aspects unfulfilled by the market fulfil. That means, there may need to be government regulation of the market in the interest of promoting freer, fuller and safer exchanges of ideas.

Thirdly, the achievement of the final output, that is ‘truth’, cannot be guaranteed as there is no definite definition of truth, or/and the truth of one time, place and society may not be the truth of other time, another place or another society.

These arguments seem valid, at least where they relate to the existence of differences. Hence, the emergence of influence by different interests of society, and sometimes there may be some input from those different groups and interests that destroy the market itself. Each group and individual wants to fulfil its interest, and hence *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* evolves through the processes which lead to conflicts, rivalries and wars (see 7.2, 7.4.2).

However, though the market place of ideas would not be fully applied in this complex and complicated world, one could contest the criticism of Brietzke (1997:651-669), Ingber (1984:1) and Pinaire (2012) for two reasons. Firstly, tastes and preferences are not influenced only in the market place of ideas but also in the market place of economic elements. Choices of goods and services are not made solely by individuals’ tastes and preferences: they are influenced by the choices of the family, friends, and society generally. Because meaning, tastes and preferences, are merely the result of perception which, in turn, is developed by social interaction. Hence, both economic and idea markets are similar in this respect, in that both economic preferences and idea preferences are not free from social, cultural and/or religious influences.

As it is well known, culture is the result of interaction. Also, it is indeed clear that market failure may happen too rarely in the economic world, and government intervention may be needed to correct the market or to stabilize the market, but it is not to destabilize it. Therefore, to stabilize the market place of ideas we have to ask this question: “what kind of intervention?” Interventions in the economic market are completely different from interventions in the ideas market.

We can see from this experience that one’s intervention in the market place of ideas is limited by restriction. Restriction would not be a solution in the market place ideas, but expansion would be. Let us take a simple example of defamation and defamation laws, which form a serious threat to journalists in Ethiopia (see 6.6-6.8). If a journalist is accused of false reporting about some,

she/he will be jailed or fined. Why the law would do that? One could argue that if the story is false it would be more prudent to expose the journalist as lacking in credibility and let the audience expel her/him? In order to counter an idea that we think is false or bad, the best solution is to expose it rather than restrict or ban it. Truth might not have clear scope, as one person's truth may be another person's falsehood. Moreover, truth could be relative, or once perceived as true could be proved false, or there may not be truth or reality in the infinite world (see 2.4.1.2). So, is restriction the solution to find the definition of truth? Absolutely not, but exploration is!

2.2.1.3 Democratic process theory

The democratic process theory insists that freedom of expression is an indispensable condition for a free democratic society. It is commonly understood that an informed citizenry will yield a better government and political decisions compared to uninformed citizens. Members of a society are able to make informed judgments on matters of national and private interest where there is free propagation of ideas, opinions and information together with the process of open debate and argument. Burns (2001) also insists that communication is essential in a democratic system for without the right to expression of information and ideas there can be no talk of liberal democracy. In democratic states, free speech helps to curb government abuse and corruption not only in public sectors but also in private spheres. Governments that are not open to debate, scrutiny and criticism tend to be autocratic; hence, the core function of political speech is the protection of the democratic political process from the abusive censorship of political debate by the transient majority which has democratically achieved political power (Meiklejohn 1965). This theory is thus primarily concerned with the protection of freedom of political speech. According to Meiklejohn (1961:245), freedom should not be restricted to speech, which is necessarily required for people to participate in self-government. It is believed that government officials are mere representatives of the people and derive their power from them. It is, therefore, necessary that the people receive as much information as possible with no interference. The function of the press, according to Meiklejohn, is a democratic process function in which the press has the duty to inform the public. It has to impart independent information and provide a forum for public debate. This will enable the public to exercise their sovereign function in an informed and effective manner.

Other scholars criticise this theory, arguing that it trivialises free speech by restricting it to political speech, thereby excluding dissenting discourse outside the political mainstream. Baker (2000) states that freedom of expression as part of a democratic process for free debate about public issues will further democracy, and the process of free discussion is required regardless of whether the process leads to the truth or not. Therefore, the scope of democratic debate ought to be broadly interpreted which includes any matter that is of public interest and which does not relate to self-government. Barendt (1985) adds that the maintenance of a confident democracy is best guaranteed by protecting freedom of expression in all or almost all circumstances, because restrictions on speech may cause unrest. In modern societies, there is more to life than politics. Free speech must, therefore, not be restricted to politics. As indicated before, any form of expression is part of the human endeavour to explore the world; hence, unless it damages the defenceless, like children, any expression should not to be restricted.

One main question that could be raised here is whether or not democracy can be achieved without freedom of expression. It is argued here that it is not possible at all. Democracy is not only best guaranteed with the presence of freedom of expression, but democracy is impossible without freedom of expression. Democracy means administration by public choice, as such it is not possible for the public or an individual to choose what is unknown? On the other hand, choice is not limited only to politics; life is full of choices, and choice is entirely reliant on information so that restricting freedom of expression, in one way or another is restricting life: social, political, economic, cultural, religious, etc. Restricting life is also restricting the essence of humanity.

2.2.1.4 Balance between stability and social change theory

According to this theory, there is significant difference in approaches between seeking stability and social change. A failure to accommodate different social views is often a source of social instability. Those whose views are not accommodated may seek radical changes in existing structures to make their interests heard. Greenawalt (1989) believes that a good answer for many social problems depends on the accommodation of competing interests and desires. Van Niekerk (1987:32-33) indicates that freedom of expression is a method for achieving a more adaptable and a more stable community. At the same time, the process of open democracy promotes

greater cohesion in a society because people are more ready to accept decisions that go against them if they have a part in the decision-making process. Suppression of discussion substitutes force and makes a rational judgment impossible; suppression conceals the real problems confronting society and diverts public attention from critical issues. Similarly, suppression promotes inflexibility and stultification, and prevents society from adjusting to changing circumstances or developing new ideas. Freedom of expression thus provides a framework which is necessary for the progress of a society without destroying the society. It is an essential mechanism for maintaining the balance between stability and change.

Nevertheless, accommodation in this *Ethno-Luminary* world seems unachievable. Because, as indicated above, individuals, groups and even nations strive to fulfil self-interests in the process of struggling for survival and domination, commonly using irrational competition. Hence, societies, groups and individuals usually develop *Ethno-Luminary-Thoughts* and *Narcissistic* behaviours, and become non-accommodative and suppressive. Specifically, such accommodation in Ethiopian history seems have been null and void. Those who are in power always want stability, while those who are exiled or dominated insist only change. There is no middle ground in Ethiopian history. There have been only a winner and a loser. It is a vicious circle of wins and defeats, domination and being dominated, suppressing and being suppressed, etcetera. There is always a saying “You are either with us or with our enemies”. Hence, there has not been stability. Even if it has been perceived as there has been, it has been a superficial stability. If there is no stability, the right to freedom of expression is curved for reasons of national security and personal safety. That is what has happened in Ethiopia, and the cycle continually recurs (see 4.2, 5.3, 6.2).

2.3 Brief experiences on threats and restrictions on freedom of expression

At the global level, threats and restrictions to independent journalism and freedom of expression may emerge from different sources. Most commonly, governments usually use legislative means to control information (see 4.3, 5.7, 6.6); while armed groups can sometimes take potentially life-threatening action (see 4.1, 5.1, 6.1); and media owners may manipulate news coverage to serve personal or partisan interests (see 4.5, 5.8, 6.8-6.11). Additionally, social development and

societal orientations, which may be cultural, political, historical and economic, challenge free expression and media at the local level (see 2.4, 4.2).

At the same time, there is renewed global interest in the values of free expression because of a wave of abductions, violence and killings against journalists in different parts of the world, such as in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Syria and France. Those persecutions will have some impact on the struggle for freedom of expression (M'tiri [sa], CPJ 1998).

Further, threats to freedom of expression are also emerging from the web and some early signs are troubling. For instance, the government in France is considering new legislation to crack down on hate speech online. Similarly, South Africa is considering issuing the Cybercrimes and Cybersecurity Bill which allows mass surveillance of internet users to control “malicious communication”, posing a potential threat to free expression (Right2Know 2017). Empirically, the Ethiopian government launched anti-terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009 which is considered a ‘draconian’ law by different international human rights organisations including Article 19 (2010) and by national opposition parties.

Regarding the political and historical context of freedom of expression in Africa, throughout the continent, the majority of the societies had been subject to violent conflict and monarchical rule for centuries before colonisation. During colonialism, the entire continent had been rumbling in political agitation followed by violent repression and unrest. Consequently, in one way or another, the practice of freedom and free expression was absent or limited (Karikari 2007:10). According to Karikari (2007:11-12), the nature of free expression in Africa, particularly in relation to the media and media ownership, their character, outlook, their outputs and impacts, have been all the product of the societies that have formed and shaped them; so that the African media have varied origins and traditions. The main origins include the colonial states, the European settler colonists, the Christian missionary institutions, and the early African elites or the so-called intelligentsia (see 4.4-4.5).

Until independence, Africans only had control of newspapers, which were used as the sole mass medium in the struggle for independence. By the time of independence, the new national

governments inherited the old system, often resulting in one-party or military dictatorships or in some cases imperial feudal regimes. For instance, Ethiopia was controlled by a centuries-old imperial feudal order. Even then, it was plunged into an explosion of civil wars and strife ignited by the 1974 overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie by a self-proclaimed socialist military junta. Ethnic conflicts, heresy and suspicion after the withdrawal of the military junta further lengthened the civil war. Arguably, these situations created a repressive social and political environment (see 5.1-5.2, 6.1-6.2).

According to Karikari (2007:16), regardless of what ideological perception or political economic worldview governments proclaimed, or which side of the international political ideological camp those governments leaned toward, they abhorred dissent, organised opposition or alternative expressions of their political and economic management of society. Political pluralism was at its best discouraged. Abuse and violations of rights dominated the relations between the state and citizens. Horrific mass murders and criminality of regimes were common. Idi Amin in Uganda and Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia were good examples of such authoritarianism and brutality, though across Africa one sees examples of governments characterised by suppression, cruelty and stifling of freedom.

Consequently, the structure of ownership and operation of the newspapers were largely the same as they had been under colonialism. The overall picture of the newspaper scene was twofold. The one was that foreign or European settler capital controlled the large circulating newspapers that represented colonial interests. The second was owned by Africans. These were small newspapers, mostly with new or young industrial tradition of publishing and with limited circulation, but with tremendous cumulative political influence. They were largely characterised by agitation, partisan adversarial, crusading journalism, similar to that of the history of the press in Europe and America. Broadcasting was directly inherited from colonial authorities; the majority of cases introduced as a direct political and ideological instrument of the colonial state. Many of these remain under government monopolies which promote a generalised silencing of contrary viewpoints and of dissent. In many instances, media, particularly broadcasting, became the exclusive organ of the sole ruling party, and ultimately in the service of the leader of the party. Even broadcasting policy placed politics at the head of broadcasting practice (Karikari

2007:13-14). Similarly, since the emergence of broadcasting, the broadcast media in Ethiopia has remained the sole property and propaganda instrument of the governments or dominant parties (see 4.6, 5.8 & 6.7).

However, according to Olson ([sa]:16), restricting instruments of media use and freedom of expression are not static. They change together with the social, political and economic changes of any society or state; though elimination of all restrictions on expression is perhaps a philosophical ideal and should not be confused with practical facts. For instance, media and freedom of expression restrictions in the three most recent governments of Ethiopia have some differences though the objective and the outcome have been similar. While all the governments promised freedom of media and expression in their constitutions and officially adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, each one denied the practice of freedom of expression in various ways. Both the *Feudalist-Monarchy* and the *Socialist-Military* regimes restricted privately owned broadcast media by law. But, the current, so-called *Revolutionary-Democratic* government allowed broadcast media by law, though it was not practiced for 25 years (see 4.3, 5.8, 6.9).

With regards to print media, all governments permitted the publication and distribution of print media, but later imposed restrictions through systematic legislative means and/or other intimidating instruments. Indeed, the degree of freedom varies from government to government. For example, the current government has adopted laws which comparatively do more to enable freedom of expression in the preambles of different proclamations, but with more detailed restrictive provisions within the main text of the law than previous governments. Further, attitudes towards the media are not only evident in the executive, but society as a whole is fearful of media, which may stem from social experience or from cultural practice (see 2.5.4, 6.6). Ethiopian society has an illustrative saying for this: “Tor kefetaw wore yefetaw”, which literally means *rumour or propaganda is more destructive than war*. This shows that Ethiopian society is suspicious of media, relating it to propaganda. This is particularly true of traditional media.

2.4 The practices of media and freedom of expression

According to Article 19's study of freedom of expression and media in Singapore (2005:21-22) "the guarantee of freedom of expression applies with particular force to the media". That is, freedom of the press is one part of freedom of expression, and it is a means of discovering and forming an opinion and a means of giving everyone a chance to participate in free political debate. Freedom of expression cannot be a reality without the mass media. Therefore, to protect the right to freedom of expression, it is imperative that the media be permitted to operate independently from government and corporate control. Concerning the nature and importance of media Grossberg, Wartella and Whitney (1998:324-25), and Jarvis and Han (2009:749), indicated that free media should be more participative, more event centred and timely, more objective and less partisan, and the media, as a political instrument, should become a public forum and a means to facilitate political communication by exchanging information in the public. Graber (1989:27) posits that official control of the content of mass media in democratic societies is deemed unnecessary since tight control of the media can deter freedom of expression. However, according to Weaver, Buddenbaum, and Fair (1985:113), media freedom could mainly be affected by the political and economic levels of a country and its related policy frameworks. This means countries that have appropriate policy frameworks and economic systems would have more media freedom. They concluded that "the stronger the media are economically, the less likely the government is to control these media".

At the international level, the historical roles and functions of the media differ based on the nature of the social system under which the media operates (Ochilo 1993; McQuail, 1983; Siebert, Peterson & Schramm 1956). This shows that the concept of media freedom has evolved in parallel to the fundamental human rights of freedom of conscience and of expression. This freedom has gone hand-in-hand with the evolution of democracy, while the degree of control and censorship of the press and other media has been in direct correlation with the degree of totalitarianism. Similarly, the media in Africa, particularly after colonial administration, are a product of the political developments, histories of the continent and of societies which shaped the political history of each state (Barratt & Berger 2007:10).

As indicated above, African media have come about as the result of the continent's politico-economic foundations. The modern media in Africa were a creation of European missionaries and colonial administration; they were used for the dissemination of news and information among colonisers and for maintaining the status quo rather than as an instrument of political and social change (Ochilo 1993:20-21). According to Berger (2009:7), much of Africa inherited the British model, where a state-owned broadcaster, funded by public resources was supposed to produce public service media content defined in a paternalistic way. Post-independence Africa expanded this mission to include the delivery of development information. That is why many countries in Africa, including Ethiopia, claim to follow the developmental journalism approach or the Development Media Theory (See 6.7).

Ethiopian media have been also shaped by the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious history of the country (see 4.5, 5.8, 6.7). That is, the nature of the media has been driven by the inertia emanating from the country's background. The rise of an absolute monopoly of the media by the government, pro-government groups and individuals is commonly believed to be the result of suspicion of others with different ethnic, religious and political backgrounds that are assumed to oppose those in power. This suspicion has emerged from the experience of dominate or be dominated; repress or be repressed; exclude or be excluded. In addition, in the Ethiopian context, though it requires further research, economic capability is one main determining factor of freedom of expression, along with political and cultural influences (see 2.5.4, 7.2.2). For instance, the rural community accounts for approximately 85% of the total population, but reality shows that almost all of the rural population do not have electric power and could not access information on a television. In addition, a remarkable number of urban inhabitants do not have the economic capacity to access media outlets such as newspapers and magazines or media equipment like television sets. According to the Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS) Ethiopia Media Audience Survey of 2011, word of mouth was cited as an important source of information by 52% of respondents in rural areas and 36% of town dwellers.

2.4.1 Normative media theories and the practice of media freedom in Ethiopia

Mass media has been perceived and portrayed as a mediating institution with specific functions to perform. To look into how mass media operates, why and how it is restricted in a certain

system, it is necessary to look at different political-economic aspects and various social and cultural dimensions. These dimensions may depend on implicit political situations and theories (McQuail, 1983:84-85). These would include the prevailing socio-economic conditions in a country at a certain time, the strength and legitimacy of the ruling group, stability of the political system, the economic strength of the media, the presence of opposition groups and pressure groups of other kinds, and, above all, the laws governing the operations of mass media in the country. Accordingly, different approaches or theories to media and freedom of expression have been exhibited. The most common approaches/theories include the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, soviet communist, development and democratic participant theories. According to Fourie (2005:163) and Baran and Davies (2000:88), these theories provide a yardstick against which media performance, accountability and quality can be measured. These theories are also concerned with the roles that media ought to play in society; they describe the way things should be in day-to-day activities of media. In other words, they set out an ideal by which some principles or values could be realised.

McQuail (2005:162-165) further indicates that general obligations on the part of the media emerge from three different sources: within individual media institutions; from external expectations of a society; and from various influential institutions and individuals. Society usually measures media performance based on value judgments. McQuail (2005:162-163) identifies concepts such as freedom, identity, integration, diversity and information to illustrate this point. Such social responsibilities are motivated by different sources including governmental regulation of the media on behalf of society. McQuail (2005:165) argues that though the view of the public about what media ought to be doing has a more binding effect, the state as a source of obligation is an important authority to be considered. Ochillo (1993:21-22) agrees with this idea that there is a direct relationship between press freedom, the role of the media and the nature of the government in power. Influential institutions and individuals are mainly non-state players, which include religious and cultural organisations and business lobby groups with the capacity to exert tremendous cultural, economic and social influence. Such actors may need the media to further their interests in certain ways and to achieve their desired economic, cultural and social goals (McQuail 2005:164).

Specifically, media in Ethiopia have been used to fulfil the interests of some *Ethno-Luminary* groups and *Narcissistic* rulers. Hence, media and freedom of expression in the country have been stifled from different directions (see 4.5. 5.8, 6.7-6.11). In particular, they have been threatened by governments, cultural and religious groups; poverty and related lack of education and knowledge; and by the conflicts, rivalry and wars. These conflicts emanate from the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* of the whole society, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* of different groups of the society and *Narcissistic* behaviour of social, political and religious rulers and/or leaders. The following section will examine how each normative media theory has been practiced in Ethiopia, particularly during the three most recent governments of the country.

3.4.1.1 Authoritarian system

Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956:2) assert that this theory is the oldest of these normative theories which came into being in the authoritarian climate of the late Renaissance. In this system, the media advances and supports government policies, because in this system governments exercise full control over the press. Much like what happens in Ethiopia, either through direct means or implicit means such as legal action, licensing, or financial means. The ruling elite guide the rest of society, necessitating their control over information and the means of communication (see 4.5. 5.8 & 6.7-6.11).

This theory stemmed from the authoritarian philosophy of Plato (407-327 BC), who thought that the state was safe only in the hands of few wise men. This idea was supported by Thomas Hobbes (1583-1679), who argued that the power to maintain order was sovereign and individual objections were to be ignored. Rugh (1979: 224-27), in describing this system, says: "This system is based on the assumption that the truth is not the product of a great mass of people, but of a few wise men in a position to guide their fellows". According to McQuail, (1983: 66-67), the media in this system should not do anything to undermine established authority, should be subordinate to established authority, and should avoid offence to dominant moral and political values. Within this environment, censorship can be justified while unacceptable attacks on authority, deviation from official policy or offences against moral codes should be criminal offences (see 4.5, 5.7, 6.6).

The authoritarian media, therefore, were essentially closely allied to those powerful aristocratic regimes. Those regimes in turn used media as tools for communicating to those at the bottom of the social hierarchy; hence, the press of this ideology functioned from the top-down (Siebert et al., 1956:4). Freedom of expression tended to be seen as both an instrument of and a threat to the state. Obedience and order were higher values than freedom, consent and involvement (Walden 1992: 66). Siebert et al. (1956:2) assert that the permission for private ownership of the press, which was only allowed under special circumstances, could be withdrawn when the obligation to support those in power was considered to have been dishonoured. We can see as an example a number of newspapers banned or closed in Ethiopia since 1991 (see 6.6.2, 6.7-6.11). McQuail (1983:86) further indicates that though authoritarian theory operates particularly in pre-democratic, dictatorial and repressive societies, that is, in societies where there is military rule, occupation, and colonialism, "it would be a mistake to ignore the existence of authoritarian tendencies in relation to the media in societies that are not generally or openly totalitarian".

Similarly, each government in modern Ethiopian history took power by force and have entertained the interests of some political elites in each regime. For instance, all three of the most recent governments attained power and maintained power by force. Of course, these regimes constitute media freedom and freedom of expression in their constitutions and each government officially attested that they were/are the vanguards of democracy, freedom, and human rights. But, in practice, these principles and provisions have been demolished by force or by using intimidation, harassment, physical attacks, jailing, or by using derogatory laws to penalise the media. The *Feudalist-Monarchy* had tried to facilitate media though the whole framework had worked under the imperial sentiment. The *Socialist- Military* regime abolished free media, although there had been apparently vibrant media in the beginning of that era. The current regime has also slightly and systematically weakened free media, though there were hopes of an emergence and development of free media and freedom of expression at the beginning of the system in 1991. One can argue that, the level of freedom of media and freedom of expression has been declining from the Imperial regime to the ethnic-based *Revolutionary-Democratic* regime (see 4.5, 5.8, 6.6, 6.7-6.11).

As supported by many scholars and as Siebert et al. (1956:4) indicated, the authoritarian approach is viewed as a top-down system for the media, where media are usually seen closely allied to those powerful aristocratic regimes in power. However, one important thing we have to consider regarding the Ethiopian context, is that such regimes are the result or the reflection of the social, cultural, religious, economic and even philosophical make-up of the society. Hence, the media structure of a country cannot be seen separated from such foundations of society. That means, aristocratic regimes and their repressive media laws emanate from the philosophical foundations of the society. Hence, the features of the government and the media are inherently linked and originate from the society controlled by autocratic governments and their repressive law. Therefore, it is possible to argue that this approach is not solely top-down. Instead, it is a trajectory that first originates from the base, evolves or develops into the top of the social hierarchy. Put differently, it evolves to *Narcissistic* rulers, through *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and is then launched back to the bottom of the social hierarchy. Hence, to tackle the problems of media freedom, it is important to understand society from the bottom to the top in contrast to the usual top-down investigation. It is important to trim the problem from the roots rather than from the branches to achieve relatively long-lasting effects on freedom of media and freedom of expression.

2.4.1.2 Libertarian or free press system

The growth of political democracy and religious freedom, expansion of free trade and travel, and the general acceptance of free economics in the 18th century dealt a blow to authoritarianism and paved the way for libertarianism. This approach begins with the premise that power, including the power of government, is always hostile to individual liberty, and it considers man as a rational being that is able to discern between truth and falsehoods, and between different alternatives. This viewpoint is rooted in liberal political philosophy, which holds that liberty advances because people are free by nature and “ideas want to be free” (Siebert et al., 1956:3).

According to McQuail (1983:87), a central argument for libertarianism is that free and public expression of different opinions are the best way of arriving at the truth and exposing errors which hold the government to account. It has its roots in Milton’s denunciation of censorship and John Stuart Mill’s strong liberal statements. Milton (1644) asserts that:

Many there be that complain of divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force: God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence.

This implies that truth and the search for it should not be a monopoly of any one person, rather an inalienable natural right of every person; so the control of publications by the government is, in essence, the control over this inalienable right to free expression.

However, many opponents of this system, particularly the proponents of the social responsibility theory, argue that this system is obsolete and does not fit with the real context of the world. Some specifically insist that absolute freedom pushes the privacy and liberty of others and creates conflict. This is because the media and individuals might not always act responsibly, with good intentions and with ethics, and people do not always make rational judgments, so that media might challenge the security of the state. Accordingly, it is not possible for there to be absolute liberty in any aspect: political, social, cultural, religious, etc., let alone in the media. This notion seems to align with the situation in Ethiopia; that is, the impossibility of absolute freedom in all aspects of life. It is possible to say that such kind of liberty seems totally unthinkable in a state like Ethiopia for every aspect of life is subject to various restrictions. Ethiopia is a nation established on rigid cultural and religious foundations, and the minds of citizens are rooted in entrenched religious, cultural, social, economic and political thoughts (see 2.5.4). Hence, there is very little or no room for new thought and innovation out of these groups. That means Ethiopia is a country of much *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*, where the majority of the decisions are made irrationally or largely based on group interests. Hence, ideas or thoughts which are not aligned with the interests of each group are usually considered as threats to the existence of the group, or even are labelled as eternal enemies of the group and persecuted by *Ethno-Luminary* groups or/and by *Narcissistic* rulers. If one tries to breach those thoughts, there will be conflict, rivalry, and war (see 4.2, 5.2, 6.2).

However, government restrictions are not a guarantee for the absence of acting irresponsibly, bad intentions, irrational judgments, conflicts of interest, the misuse of power, immodesty and compromising national security. The reality is that all these acts could also be carried out by regulatory bodies or those in power, both dominant groups and individuals, because all these acts come naturally to all people. Of course, some people may think that there might be a slight difference between the so called 'wise' or 'ordinary' citizens in respect to responsibility, but the practice shows that these problems are commonly carried out by the so called 'wise' regulators. This shows that all these acts are natural and could be done by anyone. Assuming a regulator would act differently from the regulated is not a solution. Due to the fact that these problems come from human behaviour and are natural, the long-term solutions for these problems listed above, should also be natural. That is, free communication which can generate mutual understanding, transparency and accountability for everyone, because the majority of these problems are man-made and largely initiated and aggravated by a lack of information and communication.

Let us take national security, which has been commonly taken as a reason to restrict free expression and has created significant repression across the world, including in Ethiopia, as an example. Security threats usually come from inside or outside, that is, from different interest groups inside the country or from groups from other nations (see 7.2.4). History also tells us that conflicts and wars are common in this world. Similarly, practices show us that the majority of these conflicts and wars have eventually ended through conversation and negotiation, only after a significant cost to life and property. Moreover, it is common to see countries that had once been rivals become close friends or even become a united state other time; for example, among European nations, the example of East and West Germany. We can also see countries that had once been a united nation but later became separate nations and fierce enemies; for example, the cases of South and North Korea, India and Pakistan, and Ethiopia and Eretria. Domestic security issues are also often caused by an absence of democracy and equality, of which freedom of expression is central. This implies that the main roots of those conflicts, wars and national security issues have been a misunderstanding between conflicting groups which also emerged from a lack communication and information. What we should remember here is that even countries are the results of miscommunication; if there had been communication and

understanding, there would not have been such disintegration and the creation of more than 190 countries in the world. Rather, there would be fewer countries and perhaps even integration similar to what is evident in Europe and that has been proposed by one globalised world. This intention of integration and globalisation has been the result of communication and understanding emanating from the development of information and communication technology.

One specific example would be the current situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. These two nations had been part of one nation since antiquity and Eritrea had been the centre of Ethiopian civilisation before colonisation. Despite this, part of Ethiopia, later called Eritrea, had been occupied by Italy and remained Italy's colony, separated from main land Ethiopia since the 1890s. Later, Italy's defeat during World War II paved the way for Eritrea to reunite with main land Ethiopia. Unfortunately, the modernisation and freedom movements of the 1960s fuelled by foreign interests, particularly on the River Nile, raised questions of *ethnic nationality* and of *self-administration*, including *succession*. Both groups, the secessionists and the unionists, took repression and force as alternatives to achieve their goals rather than communication and dialogue. This aggravated the conflict and ignited a war that has claimed the lives of several hundreds of thousands of innocent people, has created instability in the region for more than half a century, and resulted in Eritrean succession. This incident has paved the way for other ethnic groups raising similar claims and in turn has created other conflicts and repression. However, the issue has come to end with conversation, negotiation and mutual understanding. If this conversation had been held at the beginning, all the extermination and destruction would not have occurred, and all security concerns and subsequent repression would not have been justified.

Another key motivation regularly used to justify the restriction of freedom of expression, as Reid (2017) indicates, is for the restriction of "child abuse content", more commonly known as "child pornography". While the monitoring and restriction of such content is necessary, this cannot be used to justify an absolute or overly broad restriction of freedom of expression. There are two reasons for this: first, such measures often result in arbitrary restrictions on legitimate and ethical expression, while doing very little to practically curb the distribution of child abuse content. Second, during social and economic world scarcity, restrictions create more hunger. There is an

Ethiopian proverb that illustrates this situation which says “yetsereke wuha yitafital”, which implies the *stolen water tests better*. This shows that restriction further aggravates the demand for child pornography. As Reid (2015) insists, restriction of communication based on justifications related to curbing “child abuse content”, is “a clever” but impractical and ineffective “moralistic guise of protecting children from harm”. Indeed, as Reid (2015) argues, the publication and distribution of “child abuse content” is often utilised by overly zealous regulators who appeal to a moral panic (limiting child abuse content) but whose real intentions have little to do with protecting children from harm, and more to do with imposing restrictions on legitimate expression.

Free expression could equip society with greater benefits such as the expansion of knowledge, wisdom and the means to exploration. One may argue that if freedom is restricted by a government or somebody to prevent temporary harm, the essence of humanity that is exploration and innovation would be curtailed permanently. The question here is, therefore, which benefits the society most? The answer may depend on the socio-political development of one country or community. For instance, about 30-40 years ago, in Ethiopia, modern education and science were considered satanic and those seeking formal education faced being marginalised by the society. Even when I was sent to modern school in 1982, my mother was threatened by society and religious leaders to terminate my education. In particular, my mother’s “Yenfis Abat” or Godfather ordered my mother perform long prayers, bowing and additional fasting when my family failed to terminate my modern education. However, that orientation has been changing and modern education has been getting recognition and being seen as enlightenment. The society has created a proverb “Yetemare yigdelegn” which literally means *I will die for the educated*. Hence, restriction could not be a long term solution for every activity and thought, but education is. Restricting one from searching new ideas in the infinite and unexplored world is short-sighted, and the effort to restrict what is unchangeable is just futile.

2.4.1.3 Social responsibility system

According to Siebert et al. (1956:4-5), in much of the Western world during the 20th century, media institutions were growing and media markets becoming highly monopolised and concentrated. Those with money were therefore owned and controlled the media. As a consequence, the libertarian “free market of ideas” was now in danger of being dominated by

only a few people. In these circumstances, protection from government alone could not ensure that all views are given space in the press given that media owners and managers had the power to determine which persons, which facts, and which versions of these facts should reach the public. This situation forced a new theoretical paradigm for the press to emerge called the social responsibility theory.

This theory had its origins in the American Commission on the Freedom of the Press (Yigzaw et al., 2010:50). According to Altschull (1983:180), the Hutchins Commission concluded that freedom of the press was in danger in the USA for three main reasons: the press had increased in importance and visibility; the few who ran the press had not provided a service adequate to the needs of society; and those few who ran the press had engaged in practices condemned by society which, if continued, would lead inevitably to government regulation or control. According to the Hutchins Commission, the public had a right to expect certain fundamental services from the press, such as accurate, comprehensive accounts of the day's news, a forum for exchange of comments, a means of projecting group opinions and attitudes to one another, a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of society, and a way of reaching every member of society (Altschull, 1983:181). Siebert et al. (1956) and Nerone (1995) argue that within the libertarian approach there is no established rule that guarantees the public's right to information or makes the publisher assume moral responsibilities. Therefore, there was need for the press to assume responsibility and the public was also expected to play an active role in ensuring that the press lived up to its responsibility to society.

The social responsibility theoretical approach, therefore, seeks to reconcile the independence of the media with its obligation to society. It also recognises that there are special standards to be established and followed by the media. McQuail (1983:90-92) firmly asserts that the social responsibility theory has to reconcile "divergent principles: of individual freedom and choice; of media freedom and of media obligation to society". To accomplish this reconciliation, the theory has favoured the development of independent institutions for the management of broadcasting, as it has been seemingly practiced in Ethiopia (see 6.10), and the development of professionalism as a means of attaining higher standards of performance.

According to this approach, the press has roles of: 1) serving the political system by providing information, discussion and debate on public affairs; 2) enlightening the public so as to make it capable of self-government; 3) safeguarding the rights of the individual by serving as a watchdog against the government; 4) serving the economic system by bringing together the buyers and sellers of goods and services through the medium of advertising; 5) providing entertainment; and 6) maintaining its own financial self-sufficiency so as to be free from the pressure of special interests (Siebert et al., 1956).

However, Nerone (1995:104) and Murdock (1990) assert that the emergence of new communication technologies may change communication structures and in turn create an abundance of information, amplifying the voices of the few. Overall, such a change would render the responsibilities of the old media redundant and obsolete. Further, Bardoel and d'Haenens (2004:5-25) have argued more straight forwardly that though there is greater urgency for social responsibility in the media given the on-going structural changes related to competition, commercialisation and globalisation, a single coherent theory of the media's social responsibilities does not exist. According to them, demanding responsibility from the media in an age when it is not even clear what the standard for service to society is problematic.

This system, as indicated above, tried compensating and compromising the two opposite poles of approaches to the media: libertarianism and authoritarianism or totalitarianism. This system may not be workable in the current context of Ethiopia, at least not until Ethiopian society and the leaders transform from rigid cultural and religious foundations, ignorance and group thinking that is from *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*, to relatively greater levels of enlightenment and rationality. This is because centuries-old group formation and thought has made Ethiopia a nation of cultural and religious oriented societies, and every expression has been viewed through these orientations and anything that is contrary to this is conceived as harassment or blasphemy and could trigger violence (see 2.5.4, 4.4.2, 5.6, 6.2). Accordingly, it seems that the media might be required to work with some sense of responsibility, at least during a transition for free media.

Nevertheless, a number of shortcomings have emerged within this system, in addition to those indicated above. Firstly, the solution provided is not a long-term solution and does not go with the entire formation of humanity and the infinite world. The essence of humanity is free will and choice, and humans are inhabited in the infinite world with infinite urges to search, which means it may not be logical to restrict human ideas? Who has the absolute authority and capacity to restrict humans other than the Universe or God? Even if the restriction was there, it is completely temporary. It is a matter of time before it will be changed; change is the only constant. Secondly, what is independent management? From whom or what they are independent: politics, culture, economic interest, social relations, religious affiliations, and physiological feelings, etcetera? Can a human being be free from all these factors? How can one identify such individuals? Hence, the notion of responsibility and regulation seem senseless when regarded with the mirrors of practical context and practice. This is because both the regulators and the regulated are the products of the same social, cultural, religious, economic and political contexts, which are also formulated from limited knowledge and understanding of the society and the related attitudes, beliefs, principles and philosophies. That is *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, which are working based on widely established *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and which are governed by hugely developed *Narcissistic* behaviour (see 7.4-7.5).

One seemingly important idea during the emergence of this theory was the development of media monopoly and concentration, and consequent danger to the libertarian “free market of ideas”. However, the best solution for such danger is expansion of the media, not regulation or restriction. Of course, as indicated above, the issue of monopoly has been resolved by the development of social media which provides everyone with relative equal opportunity and access to different media. Hence, the notion of this theory is basically obsolete.

2.4.1.4 Soviet media approach or totalitarianism system

This theory was developed out of the Russian communist ideologies as formulated by the leaders of the Bolshevik revolution. The theory states that “the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas” (Yigzaw et al., 2010:50). The first characteristic of this theory is that media should be controlled by agencies of the working class. The press has an important role to play in the formation of society, and, thus, the media has important functions in socialisation, mobilisation

and informal social control. The press or media in this system is also expected to submit to the ultimate control of the state and expected to be responsible and accountable to the public. Censorship and punishment are justified in this system (McQuail 1983:93-94).

Hence, this system is similar in character to the authoritarian system when considering freedom of expression. In the Authoritarian system, the bourgeoisie government controlled the media; in the communist theory the Socialist government maintains control of the media in the name of the proletariat. However, the fundamental nature of both systems is identical: media are used as an instrument of those in power.

In the Ethiopian context, the *Socialist-Military* and *Feudal-Monarchy* regimes seem to follow the Authoritarian system, because both governments possessed absolute media control. However, the degree of control in the *Imperial* regime was slightly less than the *Socialist-Military* regime for some private newspapers was published, though they mainly promoted the Emperor's interests (see 4.5, 5.8). The current government claims to be following the Development media system, however, control in the current *Revolutionary-Democratic* regime is too complex to identify. Though private print media seemed to be promoted at the beginning, the restriction and termination of publications has become common-place, and the intimidation and punishment of journalists and newspaper owners have been getting harsher. It has been clearly seen that existing publications are only pro-government, and radio and television channels are controlled by the government, ruling party and individuals who have affiliations to the ruling party (see 6.8). Hence, in this current government, only the ideas of the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), who have originated from one ethnic group and have been claimed as the liberators of that minority ethnic group, are the dominant ideas (see 6.2, 6.6-6.11).

All these indicate that the normative media in Ethiopia have only exhibited a change of name. The main features and the nature of the media have remained the same. They are controlled by and serve the dominant groups that are a minority. Hence, the ideas of the few are widely expressed, but the ideas of the majority are suppressed (see 7.4.2.1). Further, the nature of suppression has been getting more *Ethno-Luminaric* and more *Narcissistic*, specifically during

the current, ethnic-based *Revolutionary-Democratic* government, and the prospects for freedom of expression are getting gloomier (see 7.3, 7.4).

2.4.1.5 Development media system/ approach

The development media system or approach starts with the fact that in developing countries there are no conditions for the application of other systems. Those conditions include an absence of communication infrastructure, professional skills and cultural resources; dependence on developed world technology; and the primary national task or focus of these countries is economic, social and educational development (Elananza 2004:25).

Moemeka (1989:5-6) defines development communication as the application of the processes of communication in the social and economic development process of a country, that is, in transformation of a country in economic growth, modernisation, industrialisation, self-actualisation, fulfilment of human potential, and greater social justice. The World Bank, based on the Rome Consensus, also agreed to conceive development communication dialogue based social processes which seek change at different levels of society through listening, trust building, knowledge sharing, policy building, debating, and learning for sustained and meaningful change (World Bank et al., 2007:xxxiii). This implies that communication is not only creating awareness, persuading and changing behaviour, but it is also “listening, exploring, understanding, empowering and building consensus” and participation. Two-way communication is the key variable in new communication approaches to development. According to this theory, media and information technologies are not the backbone of development communication, that is, this approach is not media-centric (Moemeka 1989:6; Mefalopulos 2008:xii, 7, 20).

According to Moemeka (1989:6-9), development communication has “transformational” and “socialization” roles. That means development communication “seeks social change in the direction of higher quality of life and social justice,” and “... strives to maintain some of the established values of society that are consonant with development”. Therefore, communication is not only the exchange of problem-solving information, but also the “generation of psychic mobility or empathy, rising of aspirations, teaching of new skills and encouragement of local participation in development activities”.

It implies that, according to Moemeka (1989:6-9), the ultimate objectives of the new communication approach and the ultimate objectives of new development paradigm are similar, and communication should accomplish the activities of the provision of access to the communication systems, provision of horizontal and vertical (interactive) communication linkages at all levels of society, provision of local community support for cultural preservation, provision of relevant information and support for specific development projects and social services to effectively contribute to national development. Therefore, “communication activities in development must be inter-woven with other socioeconomic and political processes”.

Hence, McQuail (1983: 95-96) indicated that according to this approach, media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policies. Freedom of the media should be open to restrictions according to economic priorities and development needs of society, and the state has a right to intervene in or restrict media operations and can use devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control. This indicates that while development journalism does not reject objectivity, it still lacks the philosophical basis of an independent press, the experience with a democratic system, a strong economy that sustains the press system and journalists free from government pressure and control. This leads to the emergence of government-loyal journalists or servants of government who report the opinion of the government more than development projects (Napoli 2002:262; Edeani 1993:131-2).

Moreover, this theory is full of contradictions. Firstly, the founding ground of this theory was the notion that “without communication no development”, but in practice, it facilitates the control of the media by a state. Secondly, it claims to promote interactive communication, but it gives priority only to government development ideas. Thirdly, it takes economic growth, social development, modernisation and industrialisation as a priority, while it claims to preserve the established values of a society, which, to some extent, bear contradictions with these factors. The contradiction may arise due to differences between new development values and established cultural and religious values of society. For instance, in Ethiopian society, for Orthodox Christianity followers, the majority of working days, in addition to weekends, around thirty days in a month are occupied with religious festivities that strictly forbid daily secular activities. Hence, how can one attain the priorities indicated above while also preserving these highly

established religious values? This is because this societal value could have huge negative impact on productivity, on the reception of modern development ideas, on cooperation with other societies outside of this religious domain, and eventually on economic growth (see 7.2, 7.4.2).

In addition, this theory seems to suggest that development could better be achieved by governments. In reality, ideas of development may not be largely or solely generated by governments and government policies. If media are set to only promote only ideas of governments who are controllers of the nation in any aspect of life, particularly in non-democratic states of Africa, individuals' contribution for development will be largely curtailed. Specifically, in Ethiopia, where power is taken by small, powerful, autocratic and *Ethno-Luminary* groups, (see 4.1, 5.2, 6.1), the policies that are usually developed by these groups may not be aimed at development, though they are widely propagated by the media. Indeed, this is what has happened in Ethiopia during the reign of different governments. In Ethiopia, development policies have been introduced by consecutive governments, who have sworn that 'they work for national prosperity', and have been propagated widely by government controlled media, but development has remained only a dream (see 4.5, 5.8, 6.7). Therefore, one can argue that this theory indirectly stamps the legality of the old Authoritarian idea that "the idea of few wise men is the golden idea!" or, in the Ethiopian context, the idea that the ruling group is the ruling idea! (See 7.4.2.2)

So what do all these indicate? Only the perspectives of governments are guaranteed prevalence over others. As such, one has to ask how effective two-way communication can happen there? Simply, it is an act of indoctrination. In reality, development could be better achieved through a clash of ideas from a diverse media and perspectives. Arguably then, this theory denies the basic principle of development which is characterised by the expansion of knowledge by searching and sharing a variety of ideas and perspectives.

Though this approach was born with good intentions, the practice has shown that it has been used as a propaganda instrument, particularly in less democratic states. For instance, the media in Ethiopia today have been set to propagate exclusively the ideology of highly *Ethno-Luminary* ruling party, promoting this as a 'development idea'. Therefore, practice in Ethiopia shows that

this approach is more like the totalitarian or authoritarian system under a new guise (see 5.8, 6.9). Of course, the government claims that the country has followed a developmental communication approach. But, the country has been stifled by only one ideology for more than 25 years. As discussed in chapter five, society is overwhelmed by the idea of *Revolutionary-Democracy*. Often mediated ideas that are not in line with the ruling party are not only restricted or banned, but also labelled as anti-development, anti-people, anti-democratic, and even terrorist. This means that the basic and natural right of expressing ideas has been curtailed or blocked by the government in the name of development. However, the expected development could not be achieved; rather social, political and economic tensions have been on the rise. The tensions, in turn, have created conflict, rivalries and further cycles of repression. For instance, journalists, human right activists and politicians have been persecuted (see 6.6, 6.9-6.11).

Furthermore, the development communication principle of this government works in contrast to one key notion of this approach, that is, maintaining social values. First, one sees the destruction of social links among different groups of society, such as *Edir and Mahiber*, the erosion of community cooperation on different social phenomena like death, marriage, or natural disasters. Second, free media, which could play an educating and informing role, have been curtailed, and the entire ideological atmosphere has been overwhelmed by ethnic-based propaganda of the government by using policy documents and government-owned media. These situations have further led to the cultivation of conflicts and suppressions.

Based on this, in 2008, the government presented a draft policy document which established development journalism as the official reporting style for state media (Ethiopian Press Agency 2008). Skjerdal (2011) criticised the practice of development journalism saying that “The problems are threefold: ambiguity of development journalism as a concept and practice; the political inclination of the state media; and a lack of participation by the public”. Indeed, the introduction and practice of development journalism in Ethiopia has created a repressive environment in media and freedom of expression (see 6.7-6.11). However, as indicated before, the repression of media and freedom of expression in Ethiopia is not just related to government or government policies but goes much broader and deeper. Threats to freedom of expression emanate from different directions and causes such as the religious, socio-cultural, socio-

economic and socio-political make-up of the public, particularly the grassroots of society. Specifically, repression in Ethiopia emanates from the philosophical foundations of the society which germinated from the limited understanding of the society about the infinite world, *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, from only self-oriented interests of different groups, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought*, and from the highly irrational behaviour of rulers and/or leaders who are brought up in those dilemma and thoughts, *Narcissism*. That is why the nature of media and suppression of freedom of expression have not changed with the changes in government, political policies or changes in media approaches. The social hierarchy and related thoughts and bureaucracies, and all repressive regulations, laws, policies and media approaches evolve from those foundations. Of course, all the repressive instruments of government and dominant groups operate in collaboration with those causal factors to threaten freedom of expression, creating a highly interrelated network (see 4.5, 5.7, 6.7-7.11, 7.4-7.5).

2.4.1.6 Democratic participant media system

The idea of *democratic participant theory* emerged because of the dissatisfaction with other media approaches such as the *libertarian theory* and *social responsibility theory*. The central point of this system relates to the needs, interests and aspirations of an individual in a political society. It promotes the idea that there is democratic and professional hegemony in the media today and the media is totally commercial. This theory "rejects the necessity of uniform, centralized, high cost, highly professionalized, state controlled media", and favours "multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, deinstitutionalization, horizontality of communication links at all levels in society" (McQuail, 1983:97-98). This implies that individual citizens and minority groups have the right to communicate according to their needs, and groups, organisations and local communities should have their own small-scale and interactive media, whose contents are free from centralised political or state bureaucratic control. This implies that it is likely to initiate communication at the local level. That is, it is believed to conserve and revive local cultures by promoting the right to information, right to expression, freedom to take part in social actions, etc. Accordingly, it could encourage horizontal and bottom-up approaches in the media, and it could support democracy, socio-economic and socio-cultural development by supporting efforts in implementing policies. It could also develop a sense of equality, inclusion and equal access to

media, and help to eliminate marginalisation. The current concepts of community newspapers, community radios and televisions could be included in the concepts of this theory.

However, since it favours small local media and discourages the commercialisation of media, it is expected that governments should provide financial and technical support. Indeed, in Ethiopia, in addition to financial and technical support, governments control all aspects of media through registration, licensing, censorship, enforcing guidelines, and monitoring. Further, in Ethiopia, media are usually established by governments and administered by government employees who are largely party members or cadres of the ruling party equipped with *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissistic* behaviours. Hence, media have been expected to play a supportive role rather than a critical role toward governments. This undoubtedly limits the free flow of information. This media system has been practiced by so-called community FM radio stations in Ethiopia (see 4.5, 5.8, 6.7.2, 6.8-6.11).

However, those radio stations have only the name of ‘Community Radio’, but practically they have been launched by the government in different parts of the country to be used as diffusion instruments for government ideology. Moreover, this media system creates a sense of localism and aggravates differences and *Ethno-Luminary-Thought*, rather than creating a shared and well-linked society. This is because Ethiopia is a nation which has been divided into ethnic-based localities with already established unhealthy competition, suspicion and rivalry between them. All ethnic-based regions have their own media, particularly newspapers and radio stations. For instance, the Amhara ethnic group has *Amhara Mass Media Agency*, *Radio* and *Bekur* newspaper; and the Oromo ethnic group has *Oromia Broadcasting Network* (see 4.4.2, 5.6, 6.2, 6.7). These media have usually propagated only the political, economic, cultural and religious interests of the ethnic group to which they belong. In other words, they propagate purely *Ethno-Luminary* thoughts. For example, there is currently a high level of media propaganda on the border conflicts between the Amhara and Tigray, Oromia and Somalia, and Oromia and Benishangul gumuz ethnic groups. Arguably, the media in Ethiopia have been used as a propaganda and stereotyping instrument for different ethnic groups rather than being used as a source of information and knowledge.

In addition to these ethnic-based media, there has been a start to establish community radio based on Proclamation No. 178/1999. Article 2.1 of this proclamation defines ‘community’ as “an entity consisting of social groups that share similar interests and needs or that has settled in a given territory”. Accordingly, some community FM radio stations have been established. The reality is that all those ‘Community radio stations’ have been organised and financed by ethnic groups who rule that area. These media outlets have been used as diffusion instruments for the agenda of the government and ethnic-based groups. Hence, in the current context, small media development in Ethiopia has been used as an instrument for propagating stereotypes and aggravating centuries-old rivalries and conflict. These situations are instigating another cycle of repression by the government and other groups in the name of protecting peace, national security and public safety and/or in the name of preventing denigration or stereotyping and blasphemy. For instance, the government has already drafted a law, in addition to already established repressive laws, that is expected to prevent hate speech (see 4.4.2, 6.6).

The researcher, here, wants to remark that the main aim of this study is to assess threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia, and how these threats can be examined in a coherent and holistic manner that acknowledges the wide spectrum of interconnected threats of freedom of expression rather than focusing on only singular threats, one at a time; and to develop a new approach and model for the assessment of freedom of expression which holistically incorporates all relevant inhibiting factors which lead to the oppression of freedom of expression. However, even though a revision of normative theory is not the central purpose of the study, this study tried to make a brief summary of the theoretical understanding of freedom of expression, including normative press theory to situate the study theoretically, and how such theory is relevant within the context of Ethiopia.

2.5 Restricting principles and instruments to freedom of expression

2.5.1 Restrictions to freedom of expression

Although the right to freedom of expression is openly guaranteed by international, regional and national laws and conventions, the topic is one of the most contentious issues in all societies, this right is not absolute, and every system of law provides for some limitations on it. The invention of the printing press in Europe in 1450 seems to have been the cause for the emergence of press

regulation (Sterling 2013:4). Currently, every society places some limits on the exercise of free speech, and while many scholars express their ideas in favour of the restriction of free expression, many others argue against the restrictions.

Fish (1994) says that there is no such thing as free speech (in the sense of unlimited speech) because speech always takes place within a context of competing values. As Fish (1994:102), puts it, “free speech in short, is not an independent value but a political prize”. No society has yet existed where speech has not been limited to some extent. Haworth (1998) makes a similar point when he suggests that the right to freedom of speech is not something we have, not something we own, in the same way as we possess arms and legs. It only becomes necessary to talk of such a right within a social setting.

An additional consideration is that freedom of expression is not only a political prize but also a religious, cultural, social and economic prize. Swift (1989:87) criticised Mill’s argument of truth, human rationality and market-place of ideas theory and indicates that “freedom is one value among many”, and Mill’s single-mindedness neglects the wider idea that society should direct its citizens toward a paradigm. Marx believes that people, outside of society do not exist as individuals; famously declaring: “Working men of all countries unite!” (Marx & Engels 2008:39). These ideas indicate that freedom of expression depends of the values of society and the interests of different groups. It is also clear that values evolve from the beliefs and philosophical foundations of the grassroots of society from where repressive governments, rulers and/or leaders and laws emerge. The beliefs and philosophies of societies, groups and individuals also originate from the limited understanding of them about their environment or the unlimited world. Hence, restriction of freedom of expression is multi-faceted and a product of interrelated causal factors. Even, John Stuart Mill himself, one of the great defenders of free speech, summarised these points in *On Liberty*, suggesting that a struggle always takes place between the competing demands of authority and liberty. He claims that we cannot have the latter without the former. Free speech debate, therefore, according to Mill, can be limited for the public interest and/or national security, as well as for the protection of the privacy of individuals.

In addition, Burchell's (1998:14) opposing self-realisation theory, says that an individual's right to free speech is to some extent limited, hence, autonomy of speech does not exist. That means protection of expression is held if the conduct of the protected fosters the individual's self-realisation and self-determination without improperly interfering with the legitimate claims of others. Though Burchell did not explicitly indicate the legitimate limits to free speech, they vary according to the socio-cultural, socio-economic, socio-political make-up of a society or parts of a society. The legal systems of any country, including legal restrictions of freedom of expression, evolve from the socio-historical make-up of the country are directly linked to the philosophical foundations of a society (see 7.5).

Furthermore, some argue against marketplace of ideas theory, insisting that because not everyone would have access to the media in which they can communicate their opinions and ideas, there would not be universal freedom of expression. Those with the most money and/or influence will have the most access to media communications, but the non-privileged groups/non-elites will have less/no access. Chomsky (1989:35) states that, even in a well-functioning capitalist society everything, including freedom, becomes a commodity; one can have as much as one can buy. Those who own the media and those who occupy senior managerial posts in the media belong to the same privileged elite and have the same expectations and perceptions; hence, they reflect a certain class of interests. In the Ethiopian context, access to the media has been mainly limited to the elites, particularly government authorities; so that ordinary citizens are basically recipients of the elites' ideas through the media. For instance, media, particularly broadcast media, have been exclusively controlled by the government and only the ideas of those who in power are entertained (see 4.5, 5.8, 6.7, 7.2.2.1). Similarly, as the majority of citizens are illiterate, they cannot read printed documents, and they are listeners of the oral sermons of academic and religious leaders. In addition, as the majority (84%) of Ethiopian society is rural, there is no access to electricity; hence there is no access to watching television for they have no economic capability to buy a television (Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency 2007). Research by Reid (2017:1) on media freedom indicated that the Global South has faced widespread "challenges of meaningful access and accessibility to media communications".

Furthermore, Bevier (1978:299) argues that there may even be exceptions to the absolute protection of political speech because the exercise of free speech may in particular situations be contrary to public welfare. She identified, as an example, the advocacy to violently overthrow a government and the incitement to violent acts as exceptions. She indicated, as an instance, the United States Constitution Fifth Amendment, where protection is restricted to other types of speech, rather than political speech, in the interests of the welfare of the general public.

Above all, international, regional and national conventions and laws bear symmetry to these assumptions and set restrictions on freedom of expression for a variety of reasons. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) states “recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others...meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and general welfare in a democratic society” (Article 29(2)). According to the UDHR, freedom of expression may conflict with other rights: for example, the right to life, liberty and security of persons (Article 3). “All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination ...and against any incitement to such discriminations” (Article 7); “interference with privacy, family, home, correspondence, nor attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone is entitled to protection of the law against such interference or attacks” (Article 12). Similarly, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) states that Freedom of Expression “may be subject to certain restrictions.... for respect for the rights and reputations of others or for the protection of national security” (Article 19). Specifically, ICCPR (Article 19(3)) provides:

The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

- (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
- (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (order public), or of public Health or morals.

However, according to the above Article 19 (1-3) and Mendel ([sa]:3-5, 9, 13, 17), restrictions must fulfil the following:

Firstly, restrictions should consider key features of guarantees to the right to freedom of expression, such as the “absolute protection of opinions”. This includes the permissibility to think the most evil and depraved thoughts, although giving expression to them may legitimately

warrant a sanction; the application of the right to everyone without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, etcetera; its application “to information and ideas of any kind” which includes factually incorrect statements, opinions which appear to lack any merit; “the manner which communication is disseminated”, that is, the possibility to use any media; protection of the rights of both the rights’ of the speaker and the listeners; and the positive dimension of freedom of expression, that is, the states’ obligation to prevent private actors from interfering with the exercise of freedom of expression by others and the states’ direct contribution to the free flow of information and ideas in society, for example, by establishing a “system for licensing broadcasters which helps ensure diversity and limit media concentration” (Article19: 1-3 and Mendel [sa]:3-5, 9, 13, 17).

Secondly, restrictions should meet a strict three-part test: 1) the restriction must be provided by laws including administrative, civil and criminal laws and constitutions; 2) restrictions must be for the protection of a “legitimate and overriding interest,” many of them listed in Article 19(3) of the ICCPR – including the rights of others, public morals, national security and public order; 3) restrictions on freedom of expression must be “necessary” to protect the interest of test two. This test presents a high standard to be overcome by the state seeking to justify the restriction.

That means limitations on freedom of expression are made in the formal agreements on human rights drawn up by governments. The European Convention on Human Rights (1950), for instance, takes the wording of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights almost intact into its Article 10, but adds further important statements specifying a number of those limits. The European Convention on Human Rights, Article 10 clause two states:

The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

According to Mendel ([Sa]:1) “the grounds for restricting freedom of expression or interests which such restrictions aim to protect – are numerous, and that the contexts in which the need for restrictions is asserted are almost limitless”. However, the analysis above has focused largely on

the question of how states may restrict freedom of expression, if they wish to do so. A few provisions of international law, particularly, Article 20 of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights requires states to restrict freedom of expression to protect other rights or interests. Despite the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifying grounds for the restriction of freedom of expression, the application varies from country to country as a result of the socio-historical make-up and philosophical foundation, which are the bases of repression of freedom of expression, which differ from country to country.

According to the above explanations, while there would not be an argument for unlimited freedom of expression; the issue is how much value we place on speech in relation to other important ideals such as privacy, security, democratic equality and others. According to Fish (1994:104), there is nothing inherent to speech that suggests it must always win when in competition with these other values. Speech is part of a package deal of social goods: “speech, in short, is never a value in and of itself, but is always produced within the precincts of some assumed conception of the good”. Fish warns that it might be worth reconsidering what life would be like with no prohibitions on libellous statements, child pornography, advertising content, and releasing state secrets. The real problem we face is deciding where to place the limits, and a key question that may be raised here is what would be the basic principles that guide us to limit freedom of expression? The following are some basic principles that many have relevance in the limitation of freedom of expression. However, one can argue that restrictions on freedom of expression may not guarantee the expected outcome, rather restrictions on freedom of expression could initiate and exacerbate the situations required to be prevented, for instance child pornography and national security (see 2.4.1.2).

2.5.2 Guiding principles to limit freedom of expression

Different scholars and international, regional and national organisations set limits to freedom of expression based on different principles. The most common principle that sets limits to freedom of expression is John Stuart Mill's Harm Principle. Mill (1978) had a very strong defence of freedom of expression which says “absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral or theological” should be allowed no

matter how immoral it may seem to everyone else. He also suggested that we need some rules of conduct to regulate the actions of members of a political community (Mill 1978:11). This principle states that the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will, is to prevent harm to others (Mill 1978:9). If one accepts the argument based on the harm principle, the question that may arise here is what types of speech, if any, can cause harm? Mill distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate harm, and it is only when speech causes a direct and clear violation of rights that it should be limited. The harm principle suggests that only speech that *directly* harms the rights of others in an illegitimate manner should be banned. As such, simply finding materials that are offensive, obscene or outrageous is not sufficient grounds for prohibition for Mill.

The practical application of the harm principle is also contested. Ogunkoya (2011:523) asserts that Mill's harm principle is difficult to apply in real situations, where it may be difficult to allow an individual to act only in a way that his actions will not harm others, and to prevent him from acting only when his action will harm others. For instance, does a man who wants to insult her/him need to be, or could he be, prevented from doing so? Will his action harm others? According to Mill, (1947:80-81) and Ogunkoya (2011:524), it is almost impossible to prevent as the harm is directly to himself, but the insult may as well constitute problems for others, such as relatives. For instance, in the Ethiopian context, it may be taken as harm to one's ethnicity, religion or culture, because every thought and activity in Ethiopia is associated to groups and usually viewed with *Ethno-Luminary* mirrors.

As Jacobson (2000:277) notes, it is important to remember that Mill will not sanction limits to free speech simply because someone is harmed by the statements of others. The harm principle may include libel laws, blackmail, advertising, blatant untruths about commercial products, or advertising dangerous products to children (e.g. cigarettes). In most of these cases, it is possible to make an argument that harm has been committed and that rights have been violated. However, one can counter argue that there is no objective truth or reality. Further, a libellous act or speech for one may not be libellous for others, and a dangerous product for one may not be dangerous for others. Let us take a simple example of Chat/Khat chewing the case of Ethiopia. Chat/Khat is a dangerous product for some societies in the Northern part of the country, particularly for strict

Orthodox Christianity followers. However, it is considered part of the culture in the South-Eastern part of the country, particularly by some Islam religion followers. This implies that every thought, every system and every practice, including restrictions to freedom of expression, are the construction of interactions between individuals or in society based on their limited understanding of the environment.

The second common principle for limiting free expression is Feinberg's (1985) offense principle. Feinberg suggests that the harm principle cannot shoulder all of the work necessary for a principle of free speech, and there is a need for an *offense principle* that can act as a guide to public censure. The basic idea of this offense principle is that the harm principle sets the bar too high, and that we can legitimately prohibit some forms of expression because they are very offensive. Offending someone is less serious than harming someone, so the penalties imposed should be less severe than those for causing harm. Sometimes, there may be victimless crimes; hence, the punishment has to have a basis in the level of offence of the behaviour rather than the harm that is caused (Feinberg 1985:1). However, Feinberg suggests that a variety of factors, such as extent, duration and social value of the speech, the ease with which it can be avoided, the motives of the speaker, the number of people offended, the intensity of the offense, and the general interest of the community need to be taken into account when deciding whether speech can be limited by the offense principle. Therefore, the most common offense acts that should be prohibited, according to Feinberg, are child pornography and hate speech. On the other hand, when considering hate speech, Brink (2001:119-120) states that though egalitarian concerns may seem to require restricting freedom of expression as “hate speech is deeply offensive to its victims and socially divisive”, the correct response to hate speech is more speech. This idea seems reasonable. Hate speech is usually generated as stereotypes, and stereotypes commonly evolve from a lack of information on other groups. Hence, more speech could generate more information, more awareness and clarity which in turn could generate mutual understanding and less hatred.

The third and common limiting principle is the Democratic Value Principle/The Democratic Society Principle. These kinds of justifications for prohibitions on hate speech suggest that even if such speech does not cause harm or offense, it has to be limited because it is incompatible with

democracy itself. Fish (1994:126) indicated that speech should be more in keeping with the values of a democratic society, in which every person is deemed equal. He suggests that the task we face is not to arrive at hard and fast principles that govern all speech. Instead, we have to find a workable compromise that gives due weight to a variety of values. Accordingly, when we are discussing free speech, we are not dealing with speech in isolation; what we are doing is comparing free speech with some other good. For instance, we have to decide whether it is better to place a higher value on speech than on the value of privacy, security, equality, or the prevention of harm. That means we need to find a balance in which “we must consider in every case what is at stake and what are the risks and gains of alternative courses of action” (Fish 1994: 111). According to Fish, we have to ask whether speech is promoting or undermining our basic values. “If you don't ask this question or some version of it, but just say that speech is speech and that's it, you are mystifying” (Fish 1994:123).

As indicated previously, social values are the constructions of the interactions at the grassroots of society. This indicates that the experiences, tests, beliefs, attitudes and philosophies of the grassroots of society, which the values of the society evolve from, form part of the basis of repression of freedom of expression. That means the grassroots of society is the base cause of repression, or at least has a huge impact on the restriction of freedom of expression (see 7.4-7.5). Further, the right to freedom of expression can be guided by the interests of a particular society or group, and especially by the society/group from which rulers originate. If the values, feelings and thoughts of that society/group are protected, that influential society could become predominant over all others. Mill indicted this as the tyranny, not of the one or the few, but of the majority (CW xviii, 217–20).

According to Fish (1994:116) there is “[n]o such thing as free (non-ideologically constrained) speech; no such thing as a public forum purged of ideological pressures of exclusion”. Speech always takes place in an environment of convictions, assumptions, and perceptions, that is, within the confines of a structured world. As such, we should ask three questions, according to Fish (1994:127): “given that it is speech, what does it do, do we want it to be done, and is more to be gained or lost by moving to curtail it?” He suggests that the answers we arrive at will vary according to the context. For instance, free speech will be more limited in the military than it will

be at a university where one of the main values is the expression of ideas. Even on campus, there will be different levels of appropriate speech. Hence, according to him, the boundaries of free speech cannot be set in stone by philosophical principles. It is the world of politics that decides what we can and cannot say. He suggests that free speech is about political victories and defeats. The very guidelines for marking off protected from unprotected speech are the result of this battle rather than truths in their own right. This idea seems problematic because political victories can be achieved through mere propaganda, by short-term economic and political cost-benefit analyses like aligning to the U.S.A or China, by race or ethnic affiliations like in current Ethiopia, or by economic and military might like that of the U.S.A. and China whose political thoughts have dominated the world. All these victories have little relevance to the victory of thought or political ideology. Indeed, Ethiopian history shows that the experience of restriction is based on victories: the ideas of the victorious are “golden” and protected, but the ideas of the defeated are “garbage” and dumped out or buried. There is no place for objectivity, truth, and conscience. That is, the winners’ ideas are the ruling ideas and winning is gained by force (see 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.2).

The fourth guiding principle for limiting freedom of expression is the Paternalistic Principle. The argument here suggests that speech can be limited to prevent harm being done to the speaker. That is, the agent might not have full grasp of the consequences of the action involved (whether it is speech or some other form of behaviour) and, hence, can be prevented from engaging in the act. Mill (1978), for example, is an opponent of paternalism generally, but he does believe there are certain instances when intervention is warranted. The restriction here seems to depend on the likelihood of personal harm or injury; the more certain injury becomes, the more legitimate the intervention. According to Mill, prohibiting freedom of speech on these grounds is very questionable in all but extreme cases, because it is very rare that speech would produce such a clear danger to the individual. Brink (2008:42-43) explains Mill’s principle of freedom of expression as paternalistic and moralistic restrictions of liberty based on the harm principle. Therefore, firstly, restrictions are applied based on the benefits of the one who uses his liberty to express. Secondly, restrictions are applied based on moral or immoral acts. The first one refers to paternalistic liberty, and the second one refers to moralistic liberty. Such paternalistic kinds of limitations seem sound in societies that are extremely violent because of religious or ethnic

affiliations, like Ethiopia. In the current Ethiopian context people could easily be anxious and could take extreme measures when they feel their ethnicity or religious reputations are denigrated (see 5.2). In addition, it seems rather immoral and out of the very nature of humanity to attack defenceless individuals or groups instead of enlightening them about their deficits or ignorance. However, the word morality itself is not a universal principle, for it could vary across cultures. For instance, a moral act in non-conservative societies could be a relatively immoral act in culturally or religiously conservative societies. Moralities or immoralities are the construction of a societal philosophy or the result of the beliefs, attitudes and values of a society at the grassroots. The guiding principles of groups and the ruling laws of governments mainly evolved from those societal beliefs, attitudes, values, philosophies. Hence, morality could not be a standard principle to restrict freedom of expression (see 7.4-7.5).

2.5.3 Regulating instruments of freedom of expression

Regulating bodies of different countries, including Ethiopia, use different regulating instruments to restrict freedom of expression such as censorship, self-regulation, laws and journalistic codes of conduct. In this section, the researcher identifies different regulating instruments and analyses their application, specifically in Ethiopia.

According to Sterling (2009:272), legal restrictions are usually exhibited in the forms of defamation laws and censorship. Censorship has been a valuable tool for repressive forms of totalitarian governments that do not value or allow freedom of speech, expression, religion, or free news media. Here, governments assume a responsibility for reviewing and altering media content prior to publication. For example, in the common law of English tradition of making law through judicial decisions, as well as the United States Constitutional First Amendment framework, freedom of expression typically begins with the ideal that there shall be no prior restraint on speech or on the press, but restrictions and subsequent punishment on transgressions such as defamation are evident using other laws. Similarly, the constitutions of the three most recent governments of Ethiopia guarantee such a right, but punishment is almost always there for transgressions. Specifically, a number of laws have been used extensively in Ethiopia to restrict freedom of expression (see 4.3, 5.7, 6.6).

Censorship could be *prior censorship*, the prevention of an idea being expressed, which is the most typical in an authoritarian regime; or could be *post-publication censorship* and post-publication punishment. However, censorship could have a number of forms and could have passed a number of stages. For example, America has used different type of tests to determine censorship through time, though freedom of speech has been recognised as a constitutional right in America since 1791. These tests include, the *bad tendency test*, which focused on the tendency of speech to cause an illegal action; the *clear and present danger test* which asks whether the words used are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger; the *imminent incitement test* allows the government to punish the advocacy of illegal action only if the advocacy is directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action (Olson [Sa]:8-14, Historical Examination [Sa]:3-5). In the Ethiopian context, the type of tests have not been clearly identified, but pre-censorship, post-censorship and self-censorship have all been practiced by the media. Governments control content, focusing on their political ideologies by establishing censorship offices. The *Imperial* and the *Derg* regimes extensively used pre-censorship and the current regime extensively used post-censorship for publications and pre-censorship for dramas and films. However, self-censorship has been common under all regimes. Self-censorship cannot be taken solely as a state-induced problem, but “rather a combined production of state, business, religious, and other actors who want to silence or threaten the media, or dictate coverage on their activities” (Media sustainability index 2009:124). In Ethiopia journalists have been threatened to censor themselves for fear of harassment, physical attacks, abduction, financial and imprisonment. Further, self-regulation in Ethiopia largely emanates from cultural and social factors or *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* (see 6.9-6.10, 7.2, 7.4.2). Puddephatt (2011:12) identifies self-regulation as one instrument of restriction. As the media environment becomes complex and global as a result of the development of the Internet and digital platforms, self-regulation and journalistic ethical codes could benefit from the gap in regulation.

Media freedom is usually seen as the extension of free expression. The Windhoek Declaration of 1991, which aimed at applying Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* to African conditions, asserts that a free press is essential to democracy and a fundamental human right. According to Berger (2007:8), the media is one of the main tools through which different

publics speak to each other; communication is an individual entitlement of the right to free expression. However, the ownership and intervention of the media are the determining factors of the right of free expression. Puddephatt (2011:10-11) asserts that a media environment capable of supporting free expression will have the following characteristics: “it will be a diverse media environment, part public, part private and part community; a plurality of different media outlets; and a system that is broadly self-regulating...”. The general consensus on government intervention, according to Puddephatt, is that the state should stay out of regulating media because of its importance in supporting the human right to freedom of expression. There are exceptions in some situations, such as when there is a need to create media pluralism and to provide infrastructure. However, in Ethiopian media history, particularly the broadcast media, have been under the absolute control of the government and print media, which have been permitted private ownership, at least by law, have been under strict regulations since their emergence.

2.5.4 Threats to freedom of expression

Freedom of expression has not only faced restrictions, but it is also vulnerable to different threats, and has passed through different threats in its practice and history of development. The first and most serious threat is legal punishment by governments. Based on legal restrictions, the threat usually consists of a financial penalty and/or imprisonment. The second threat comes from social disapprobation which makes people refrain from making public statements because they fear the ridicule, moral outrage and physical attack of others, specifically from different *Ethno-Luminary* groups.

Although emphasis has been given to threats of physical and financial punishment, John Stuart Mill provides a strong warning about the chilling effect of social threats. Slagle (2009:239) summarises Mill’s idea of the threats to liberty as: the old and democratic. The old threat to liberty is found in traditional societies in which there is rule by one (a monarchy) or a few (an aristocracy). This is when *Narcissistic* rulers are politically unaccountable to the governed and they rule in their own interests rather than the interests of the governed (see section 8.4.3). In particular, they will restrict the liberties of their subjects in ways that benefit the rulers rather than the ruled. It was these traditional threats to liberty that the democratic reforms of the

philosophical radicals were meant to address. But, Mill thinks that these traditional threats to liberty are not the only ones to worry about. He makes it clear that democracies contain their own threats to liberty; this is the tyranny, not of the one or the few, but of the majority (CW xviii, 217–20). Mill sets out to articulate the principles that should regulate how governments and societies, whether democratic or not, can restrict individual liberties (CW xviii, 220).

In Ethiopian history, the old type of threat is a significant threat against freedom of expression as Ethiopia has not had anything other than autocratic, totalitarian or more specifically *narcissistic* rulers. As will be analysed the next chapters, among the three most recent governments of Ethiopia, the first one was a *Feudalist-Monarchical* rule led by Emperor Haile Selassie I, primarily concerned for his personal glory and the feudalists' interest. The second was a *Socialist-Military* regime led by an autocrat, Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam, who aspired only for continuity of his power. The current one is ethnic-based and the so called '*Revolutionary-Democratic*' regime led by autocrat Melese Zenawi (until 2012) who had been struggling for the superiority of his ethnic group and continuity of his power.

Other threats to freedom of expression, according to Ruggiero (1995:66-67), are *egocentrism* and *ethnocentrism* which refer to the centred or focused interest of oneself or one group, respectively. Sumner (1906), who was credited with the coining of the word and concept of ethnocentrism, defined as "the technical name for the view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it". According to Sumner, ethnocentrism often leads to pride, vanity, belief in one's own group's superiority and contempt for outsiders. These problems may occur from the dividing of societies into in-groups and out-groups. Geest (1995) and Messick, Bazerman, and Steward (2006) define ethnocentrism as the act of judging another culture based on preconceptions that are found in values and standards of one's own culture, especially regarding language, behaviour, customs, and religion. Ruggiero (1995:67) indicated that ethnocentric groups absorbed themselves into "... their race, religion... culture which they think is superior." For ethnocentric people, "what blends with their outlook is worthy, whatever differs from it is suspected threatening". "Egocentric people have difficulty seeing issues from a variety of viewpoints....This attitude make it difficult for egocentric people to observe, listen and understand". Similarly, egocentric groups absorbed themselves into "...

their race, religion. Ethnic group or culture which they think is superior.” For egocentric people, “what blends with their outlook is worthy, whatever differs from it is suspected, threatening”.

The Ethiopian case, as indicated before, is much more than *Egocentric* and *Ethnocentric*; it is *Narcissistic* and *Ethno-Luminary*. That is, rulers and groups are not only absorbed to themselves but also they want to shine in every aspect, including ideas, on the destruction of others and their ideas. What makes things worst in Ethiopia is that Ethiopian aristocracy is both *Narcissistic* and *Ethno-Luminaric* at the same time (see 4.4, 5.6, 6.2, 7.4).

Talk can sometimes be offensive and create unhealthy and unpleasant communication, and become a challenge for communication (West & Turner 2007:15). This is referred to as ‘the dark side’ of communication for it has negative components. These include sarcasm, manipulation, verbal aggression, humiliation and other verbal and psychological incidences that ridicule and torment others. In some cases, this can be racist, ageist, or discriminatory against particular populations and undermine communication processes. In the Ethiopian context, as a society composed of different ethnic and religious groups and classes, expressions are sometimes threatened by many of those groups and the lower class. Specifically, in the current ethnic-based administration, many expressions can be considered as derogatory to a specific ethnic group; many groups and individuals have been seen to ridicule on others using particular expressions. Many ethnic groups have been assigned pejorative characteristics. For instance, groups and individuals related to the current minority ruling group mock the *Amhara* ethnic group, who are assumed to be second largest ethnic group in the country, characterising them as home servants and guards in television dramas and stage theatres, in order to torment or to intentionally belittle them because the *Amhara* have been conceived as the autocratic rulers of country for centuries. This characterisation has been gaining concern in *Amhara* society and has developed into media campaigns against such expressions. Similarly, the *Oromo* ethnic group, presumably the largest ethnic group in the country, has been campaigning against some expressions and characterisations which have negative connotations to the group. For instance, the word *Gala*, which had been an official name of this group previously, is unacceptable to the majority of group members, and anyone who calls them this will be punished for it is conceived as *barbaric*. Some members of the ethnic group, the *Tigryans*, have been called “*Day light hyenas*” to

connote that they are *thieves and corrupted*, and members of this ethnic group find such expressions unacceptable.

In general, the most common factors that create threats to freedom of expression are ethnicity, culture, and religion, which in turn, create the threats to freedom of expression in the form of blasphemy and defamation. In addition are political repression or ideological hegemony, which usually emerge as laws and are justified according to arguments in favour of national security, stability and recently in the form of anti-terrorism, are ethnicity, culture and religion, which in turn, create the threats to freedom of expression in the form of blasphemy and defamation (see 6.6, 7.4-7.5). Though these problems could be international, the extent of them in Ethiopia seems more critical. An examination of how these factors influence freedom of expression follows below.

2.5.4.1 Law and threats to freedom of expression

The constitutions and legislations of the majority of nations promote freedom of expression and press autonomy, hence, freedom of speech could be relatively safe from legislative control. Nevertheless, additional and/or contradictory judicial restrictions are usually evident. Beginning from the end of 20th century, the press has been losing more and more of its freedom in different parts of the world, including Africa, apparently as a result of the emergence of terrorism threats and related restricting laws.

Particularly in Ethiopia, law has been used as a powerful restricting and repressing weapon of freedom of expression, apart from physical threats to journalists and other economic and social intimidation tools. The executive and judicial branches are getting more power than the legislature and are operating to limit press freedom. “Executive orders can control the press and have been used from time to time, and the courts are constantly meddling in press affairs, usually with the result of restricting press freedom” (Merrill, Gade, Blevens 2001:169, 181). They insist that “Court mandates reflecting citizen opinion increased and the press gave up more freedom. The press felt the blows of huge libel actions and its timidity increased”. In addition to legal restrictions which are launched to maintain order, responsibility and social harmony, the public sector formulates regulation that constrains free expression by creating bureaucratic hindrances

for journalists to control information flow). Specifically, the current government executes media and free expression using legislation. Despite this, Merrill, Gade, Blevens (2001:170) indicate that pressure from the general public, along with communitarians and public journalists sustain the press to “be more positive, more moderate, more socially helpful in its news and opinion”, many including the Ethiopian government argue that law would create healthy media. Therefore, they have formulated a number of laws that restrict freedom of expression and media. Even constitutions are used as Trojan horses for Ethiopian governments, particularly for the current government. It is argued that they guarantee freedom of expression in the constitution and preambles of some proclamations, but they break their promises using other regulations, laws, directives, rules and official order letters (see sections (see 3.3, 4.3, 4.7, 5.6, 6.6-6.11)).

2.5.4.2 Culture and religion and threats to freedom of expression

Alfred Schütz (1964:92) indicates that the life-world in which we live and act is always a social and cultural one, and culture is a cognitive and social phenomenon which helps us to interpret the world and take action towards it. It comprises the ‘mastery’ of nature, and people’s knowledge, ideas and meanings. Knoblauch (2001:24) adds that culture “involves the set of typifications of objects, ideas and actions, and a system of relevance which guides preferences for objects, ideas and action that are common to a certain group”. According to Cobley (2008:1129), culture is a product of social processes or broader social formations, institutions, organisations and ideologies, and generally connotes a process of educating and socialising people within specific webs of meaning, which may amount to a “colonizing process, complementing political and economic imperialism, or extending a national monoculture” (also see 7.4.2).

This socio-cultural life world or process is, of course, constructed through communication or by means of communicative acts. These are the performance of social actions in the use of language, as well as nonverbal signs, cultural objects and artefacts (Habermas 1988). Therefore, the relationship between culture and communication is clear. “Communication and culture are inextricably tied, and, communication is a situated practice, and process that is formative of social life ... and it is in some sense distinctive in its cultural scenes and communities” (Carbaugh 2008:1122). Albudaiwi (2014:432-433) asserts that “regardless of the type of country,

society, level of religious adherence or secular freedoms, people are influenced by their culture and religion”, and culture and religion influence how people perceive and practice freedom of expression.

Similarly, daily life in Ethiopia is affected by culture and religion, because Ethiopian societies are basically traditional and religious. According to the Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency (ECSA) population census report (2007:51,108), 100% of the country’s population is religious and 84% among this is rural. Accordingly, society is ruled under strict religious and social principles, and religious and community leaders play a key role in regulating societies’ opinions. Almost, every aspect of social life is controlled and led by these leaders, and almost none resist or oppose this situation. For example, here are some common proverbs of the society that illustrate this situation. The first one says “Semay ayitaress nigus ayikesess” which literally means the *as sky cannot be ploughed kings cannot be accused*. The second one says, “bemidir yetasere besemay yetasere yihonal” which implies that *priests have the absolute power to constrain one’s life, and one who deviates from the priests’ views is condemned or damned both on earth and in heaven*. Moreover, females and the lower class and their ideas are suppressed, and society accepts the system and explains it by saying “Min set bitawk bewend yalk” which literally implies *the final say comes from males in any decisions*. All these show that everyone is required to be obedient to his/her superior in rank, or position or status, and deviation from the leaders’ ideas and orders is punishable. This shows that freedom of expression is totally bound by the cultural system (see 4.2, 7.2.2, 7.4.2).

Culture, self-expression and silence

Self-expression is a notion that is closely associated with a group of positive concepts, such as freedom, creativity, style, courage, self-assurance; and freedom of speech symbolises one’s ultimate freedom to be oneself. However, different cultures value speech and self-expression differently. Speech and self-expression hold particular importance in individualistic cultures such as in Europe and America (Kim & Markus 2002; Kim & Sherman 2007). Thus, speech enjoys a special privilege in these cultural contexts, and freedom of speech is one of the most important rights of individuals in such countries. In contrast, speech and self-expression do not hold the same degree of importance in the more collectivistic cultural contexts, such as in African and

Asian contexts. Thoughtful and self-disciplined silence is often valued above speech, and speech is practiced with relative caution because the potential negative social implications of speech are more salient in these cultures than in the west. Thus, speech and self-expression are not commonly or routinely encouraged or emphasised in such cultures (Kim & Markus, 2002; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996). That may be the reason why government laws have become relatively more restrictive in Africa compared to the laws of the western world. This could be empirical evidence that shows that repressive laws evolve from the beliefs, attitudes, values and philosophies of the grassroots of society and from the values, guiding principles and thoughts of groups that develop from the grassroots of society (see 7.4-7.5)

These different cultural assumptions and practices influence whether and how individuals express their thoughts and feelings. There have been, in Ethiopia, a number of sayings and maxims about the importance of silence over the years. One of the most common is Epicurus's saying from round 280 B.C. which says that "God gave people two ears but only one mouth that they may hear twice as much as they speak". Hebraic and Biblical documents present similar statements about a higher order of silence (Bruneau & Ishii 1988; Bruneau 2007). Similarly, Ethiopians say that "Zimita work new" which *literally* means *silence is gold*, which refers the worth of being silent. In Ethiopia, one cannot express his/her qualities because if this is done, then this person is conceived as arrogant; people believe that only their works should declare their quality. That is, silence is considered as a symbol of wisdom and diligence. Bruneau (2009:881) confirms this idea saying that "silence does indeed exist as processes of traditional and religious practice and belief, as well as intrapersonal aspects of spirituality, contemplation, and meditation".

According to Bruneau (2009:884), there are grounds for silences in many cultures or in many socio-cultural groupings of the world. In some cultures or countries of the world speaking about sensitive subjects is punishable. Ethiopians have a good saying in relation to this which says: "Zim bala afe zimb ayigebam" which literally means *flies do not get in silent mouths*. There is also "Belfefu Yitefu" to refer to *the notion that speech triggers danger*. In concrete terms, there are many kinds of repressed expressions or silencing in situations of moral, social, and political taboos in Ethiopia. For example, women are absolutely forbidden from being able to

preach religious ideas and traditionally have been discouraged from speaking on public forums. There is one saying illustrates this idea. It says “set ina kes kess” which literally means *females and priests cannot be extrovert*. Similarly, children are not allowed to speak among elders. Zerubavel (2006) presented such repression of speech as a function of silencing by forwarding the idea of an elephant in the room, one that no one can see because people do not want to see it or have been simply blinded by a shared secrecy from seeing or noticing the elephant. The elephant represents a big issue, major conflicts, problems involving guilt and topics difficult to discuss. This implies there is always a clash between centrifugal and centripetal forces; that is between pressures of conformation and urges to breach confinement; or between the suppressors and the suppressed in society (see 7.4.2).

Religion and freedom of expression

Different international and regional human rights conventions make it clear that freedom of expression and religion are essential foundations of a democratic society. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America of 1791 was the first statement of individual rights and offers protection against the violation of those rights by government. It rejects an official establishment of any one religion by the government whilst protecting the practice of all religions. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18 also states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

This article protects not only the right to have religion and beliefs, a right to change religion, the right to persuade others to change their religion and public manifestations of religion or belief, including teaching, but also protects the views of those who have no religion and who may feel an antipathy to religion. Again, implicit in this article is that the process of persuading others to change will include communication that is critical or even derogatory to an existing belief. However, according to Albudaiwi (2014:440), the practices of many religious countries do not suit this principle. “A religious country would be impacted by their religious rules when it comes to defining and practicing freedom of expression more so than a secular country”. Such practices seem to have ruled in Ethiopia for centuries until the 1974 revolution. Ethiopia has been seen by

many as “an island of Christianity” and many have claimed that Ethiopia is a state where Islam is suppressed. Accordingly, any ideology other than the dominant religion seems to have very little space in political, social and economic realms, and processes of Christianisation and Islamisation were evident through the centuries. Hence, Ethiopia has been the centre of various religious conflicts. This situation has also created an environment of suspicion, conflict and bloody wars among different religions and sects of the same religion, and the legacy has continued to the present day. For example, churches and mosques have been burnt; individuals and groups have been executed in different parts of the country. In 2011, Muslims incinerated dozens of churches and homes in a Christian area in South-West Ethiopia after a Christian allegedly desecrated a copy the Quran by tearing it up (Sudan Tribune 2011). Ethiopia and Egypt’s conflict on the Nile River; and the slaughtering of Ethiopian Christians in Libya by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have also aggravated the suspicion among the two religions. During demonstration against Egypt’s interest on the Nile, some members of the demonstration took copies of the Quran and burned it in front of a mosque in the northern town of Axum, in June 2013(Chalachew 2013).

Those are some instances that illustrate how rivalry and suspicion among religions and sects of the same religion have a huge impact on the practice of freedom of expression. Generally, every thought and expression of one religion on the other is usually interpreted as attacking and as the desecration of the religion. In this context, critical religious comments are perceived to be dangerous. Hence, each religion is commonly restricted to comment on the other for fear of reactions.

Specifically, to show what has been happening to freedom of expression in Ethiopia in relation to religion, it is better to indicate a good example of the condemnation of such critical communication. In recent years, one can use the example of the expression of the prophet Muhammad in cartoons in the Danish newspaper called *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005. The newspaper’s editor, Fleming Rose, wanted to challenge what “he found to be an unreasonable fear of criticizing Muslims living in Denmark” (Tønder 2011:255). The cartoons contained satirical depictions of the Prophet Muhammad. The most notorious cartoon was of the Prophet with a detonated bomb in his turban. Islamic communities throughout the world gradually

became aware of the publication of the cartoons. This resulted in passionate expressions of distress and anger in the Islamic world.

The anger and distress, according to Sturges (2006:181), were based on two grounds: first, Muslim belief does not accept pictorial representations of the Prophet; and second, the cartoons associated the Prophet and Muslims generally with terrorism. Muslims launched public demonstrations in different parts of the world, directed mainly at the newspaper and the Danish government; some of them violent and resulting in the loss of life. In the interim, the cartoons were reprinted by a number of newspapers in other countries in solidarity with the original publishers. This publication and republication of the cartoons triggered a politico-religious crisis which had material costs and cost lives and then led to legal action against media and media workers in countries like Denmark, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, France, Ukraine, and Malaysia. Some journalists who published the cartoon were dismissed from their jobs or jailed (International Communications Association [sa].) This implies that group thought has taken the central position in religious thought and practice. Believers think that commenting or criticising someone who may be the leader of that religion is usually perceived as criticising the religion. It is even conceived as denigration of their 'God'. Accordingly, this group thought could have a chance to evolve to its higher level, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought*, as it has for centuries in Ethiopia (see 7.2, 7.4-7.5).

Although the cartoon was not published in Ethiopia, many Muslims in Ethiopia were angry with the incident, perceiving it as insulting the Prophet and fostering suspicion created between Christian and Muslim communities. Indeed, publishing such religious and critical material is forbidden by the Constitution Article 29(6), considering this the incitement of religious conflict. Indeed, this kind of religious orientation is not limited only to Islam in Ethiopia. Christians have similar attitudes towards ideas and incidents that seem to criticise their religion and religious leaders. What makes the Ethiopian context worse is that the nation is home to many religions, and the nation itself was established and has been maintained amidst bloody religious conflicts: between Judaism and Christianity, between Christianity and Islam, and among many sects of Christianity. This situation has continued to this day and has threatened freedom of expression to the extent that it is prevented by law. For instance, religious institutions have been banned by law

to own media (Broadcasting proclamation no 533/2007, Article 23). Moreover, religious comments are highly restricted and even preaching is highly self-censored.

Of course, different groups and individuals, particularly Western and Muslim communities, perceived the cartoons differently. Muslims in Denmark and around the world protested against the cartoons, claiming they were harmed by them. However, others saw the cartoons as a legitimate exercise of the right to free speech. Modood (2006:52) argued that the cartoons should have been censored (but not censored) because they incited ‘racial hatred’. Hansen (2006:16) and Post (2007:72), opposing this argument, did not see the cartoons as racial, and insisted the cartoons were perfectly legal, if not the desirable outcome of a liberal democratic framework. Similarly, the cause of the opposition, the anger, the tension and the clashes were viewed differently by different people. According to Jallal (2008), this tension is a clash of cultures or a clash of civilisations. For the International Communications Association [sa:3], the Muhammad cartoon’s controversy was not the clash of cultures or civilisations, but “it is the clash of mentalities and perceptions with respect to law regarding freedom of expression and respect to religion”. That means the controversy was the result of perceptions of law. All parties have their own views related to the role and place of religion in the national and international context. This association ([sa:9]) further indicated that the Mohammad cartoons affair and other controversies related to the place of religion in the public are based on the mind-sets or “established mentalities” of those parties towards the law. This idea prescribes that nations/states or international organisations could have their own conceptualisations or postures towards religion. The ideas of Ewald (1995) and Kerlinger (1986) explain this issue and argue that ethics are not universal and, therefore, different parties from different politico-cultural and social contexts could have different legal mentalities due to the different conceptualisation of the law regarding religion. Accordingly, there could be: *law-in-the-books*, international and regional treaties and conventions; *law-in-the-head*, conceptions of laws based on the politico-socio-cultural context which are subjective and have a “spurious, apocryphal and traditional quality”; and *law-in-action*, various rules, regulations, instruments and procedures of the legal process. It implies that there are tensions and conflict among “the letter of the law, the spirit of the law and the application of the law in concrete fact patterns” (Legrand 2003:244).

There are also positive and negative established mentalities. There are those states which have positive established mentalities that establish official state religions like the Church of England, the Established Church of Denmark, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (as it had been until 1974), Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan. While those with negative established mentalities prohibit official state religions like the USA, which declared the first amendment prohibiting the state's establishment of religion (International Communications Association [sa:7]). When governments set a state religion, the bureaucracy, in one way or another, could be influenced by that religious ideology and may not be inclined to entertain the ideas of the followers of other religions. For example, King Yohanes IV had ordered Muslims to convert into Christianity, and those who opposed to convert to Christianity were brutally executed (Zewdie 2007: 45, Marcus 1994:78). Though not officially recognised other governments following King Yohanes IV seemed to have inclinations towards Orthodox Christianity. Hence, the thoughts, opinions and interests of the followers of other religions may have been suppressed, either directly or indirectly. Indeed, the Muslim community in Ethiopia has complained that they have been marginalised from participating in the socio-political activity of the country. They insist that the Muslim communities have not been treated equally, including in leadership positions, as they illustrate that there has not been a single Muslim ruler in the country's history. Currently, although there is no official state religion, Muslims have been complaining that they are suppressed by the 'Christian state' and they have formulated a motto "Dimistachin Yisema!" which literally means *Let our voice heard!* Consequently, the leaders of this movement have been jailed (see 6.3).

According to Foucault (1994:721) such controversy was a power play in which the four types of power were deployed and manipulated in order to influence the public, as power relations are expressed through the dissemination of media. Those powers, as Braman (2004) identified, are instrumental power (military power), informational power (controlling behaviour by manipulating the informational base), symbolic power (controlling behaviour by shaping beliefs, perceptions and ideas), and structural power (controlling behaviour by shaping the social process using institutions and rules). Indeed, all these powers have been deployed in Ethiopia. All governments in Ethiopian history seized and maintained power by military force. the media have been under a government monopoly since its emergence; almost all institutions and

resources, including land, have been controlled by either those regimes or by religious organisations who have strong relations with the government and acculturation, religionisation and ideologisation have been common practices in Ethiopia. What is worse is that in Ethiopia the nature of acculturation, religionisation and ideologisation have occurred through the perception of *Ethno-Luminary* thought and by highly *Narcissistic* rulers (see 4.1-4, 5.1-5.5, 6.1-6.3,)

Significantly, when seen with the view of freedom of expression rights, religious pressure has got the momentum to seize the dominant ideological realm of even the 21st century. Let us take the Muhammad cartoons controversy again and look at the ideological response. The Muhammad cartoons controversy, ultimately, became a key agenda for regional and national organisations like the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Arab League, European Union and the United Nations. Each of these organisations had tried to balance the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of religion based on their politico-cultural context. However, the emotional reaction to the publication of the cartoons led those organizations and scholars to re-examination of the prominent human rights principle, that is, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly, freedom of religion and freedom of opinion and expression. Consequently, they declared the new international right of “Respect for Religion”. This new right of United Nations Human Rights Council General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of 2006 has declared “defamation of religion and incitement to racial and religious hatred as manifestations of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”. The council identified the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoon controversy as an indication of the ideological use of freedom of expression to defame religion. Therefore, religion becomes a threat to freedom of expression on a legal basis.

However, we can argue that defamation and blasphemy laws and accusations, and even all regulatory laws, are the result of a *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*. For instance, religious people claim that their God is the creator of the whole world, omniscient and almighty, able to defend His/Her reign, and even able to punish or vanquish everyone or wipe out everything with the blink of an eye. At the same time, they rage when their “God” is defamed, they arm themselves to defend their “weak god”, and violate the natural right of holding and expressing

opinion. Again, the Mohammed cartoon's incident and other religious related riots in Ethiopia can be used as an example to illustrate this idea.

The publication and republication of the cartoons triggered a politico-religious crisis and then led to legal action against the media and media workers in different countries (International Communications Association [sa]). We have also seen the destruction of copies of the Quran, Church burnings and killings in Ethiopia (Sudan Tribune 2011; Chalachew 2013). All these incidents were triggered by the mentality of wanting to defend their religion or protect their "God" from denigration or belittling. One may ask why these incidents trigger reactions from believers when it is believed that Allah/God knows everything and can defend it, and that the Bible argues that God clearly opposes revenge? For instance, in Romans 1:8 and 12:19 (Deuteronomy 32:35) it says: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of human beings who suppress the truth by their wickedness" and "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord".

Similarly, defamation laws and subsequent charges and verdicts in the secular world may have emerged from the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* of innocence. For instance, many charges against journalists in Ethiopia are set most commonly using Criminal Code, Proclamation No. 414/2004, which includes defamation (Article 613), attacks against the state (Article 244), and inciting the public through false rumours (Article 486). These charges against journalists are mainly defamation on the government and government officials. Nevertheless, one can argue here that if one is certain that he/she is innocent and claims that he/she is defamed, why not prove you innocent by disclosing the truth rather than heading to court? Specifically, in these contexts where government and government officials have enough access to media, defamation can be countered by disclosing rather than charging. But these laws are not usually used as protections for innocent people, rather they are used as threats for corrupt governments and public officials. Arguably, if there is the possibility to counter the libel or false rumour by disclosing information, one should not enact defamation laws. This is because defamation laws highly restrict the media and individual's rights to fight corruption, bad personalities of individuals and mismanagement by officials. Perhaps, one may argue that individuals may not

have the capacity and/or access to media to disclose the libel or defamation. However, this is not grounds to establish defamation laws for two reasons: One, individuals or groups who complain that they are defamed are mostly wealthy people and government officials or party leaders, who care about their reputations and who all have access to media and can disclose the defamation. Two, though the defamation incident may happen to poor and ordinary people, one should consider the cost benefit analysis: that the cost of restricting expression and information is much more than the harm caused by defamation. This is because defamation may only harm an individual who cannot counter the defamation by disclosing the reality, but suppression affects the whole society by violating the natural right to have information, knowledge and development. Arguably, defamation laws are usually designed to protect corrupt and dominant individuals and groups rather than the weak and the innocent (see 6.6-6.11).

Introducing such defamation laws, therefore, enhances this dilemma. The best remedy to ensure the protection of the basic urge of exploring this infinite world and holding and expressing explored ideas is not restriction, but expansion of media and access to media that initiates exploration and enlightenment. However, this new right of the United Nations Human Rights Council General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of 2006 is a shift from a 21st century plateau to a 12th century rift and needs to be reassessed.

However, these and other incidents, specifically the United Nations Human Rights Council General Assembly Resolution, show that suppressing and stifling laws enacted by states or governments originally evolve from the *experiences, tests, attitudes, beliefs and philosophies* of the grassroots of society. That is, though the repressive ideas, strategies and instruments are used by groups or individuals at the top of the social pyramid or by rulers, their repressive instruments, strategies and sentiments originally emanate from society, particularly the grassroots of the society. That is, the base of the society is the primary origin of repression factors and the centre of repression gravity, and repression instruments such laws and political ideologies and repressive forces such as governments and rulers are trajectories that are launched from the ground, and then fall back to the ground (see 7.5).

Therefore, the researcher believes that the normative practice of diagnosing the repression of freedom of expression as a top-down phenomenon, and viewing governments as the main source of repression of media and freedom of expression, is unsatisfactory in that it does not encapsulate the full spectrum of the inter-related causes of repression. Hence, this study tries to diagnose the problem of freedom of expression in Ethiopia from a different perspective by trying to analyse the problem from the bottom-up and trying to identify long-term solutions to this centuries old problem.

2.5.5 Some common theories related to threats to freedom of expression

2.5.5.1 Muted group theory

Muted group theory originated with the work of Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener, social anthropologists who were concerned with social structure and hierarchy. After the groundwork in developing the concepts of muted group theory established by the Ardeners, Cheris Kramarae (1981) built on the theory to focus more specifically on communication. Edwin Ardener (1975:19–27) noted that groups making up the top end of the social hierarchy determine the communication system for that culture or suppress ideas and discourses of subordinate groups in society. While, lower power groups, such as women, the poor, and people of colour, have to learn to work within the communication system that the dominant group has established.

According to Kramer (2009:667), the theory is concerned with “what and how much people with different social status speak, when and where they speak, with what words and concepts, in what modes or channels, and with what repercussions”. The theory suggests that an important way that a social group creates and maintains its dominance is by stifling the speech and ideas of those the dominant group has labelled as outside of the privileged circle. Kramer (2009:667) further indicates that “gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, caste, religion, country of origin, national identity, aboriginal status, immigration status, regional geography, and language have been used to constrain and devalue the talk and ideas of many speakers”.

Shirley Ardener (1978:20) noted that the subordinate group’s muteness is the counterpart to the dominant group’s deafness. The argument is that members of any subordinate group do speak, but their words fall on deaf ears, and when this happens over time, the dominated tend to stop

trying to articulate their thoughts and may even stop thinking them. Kramer (2009:668) confirms this idea that members of subordinate groups do not only, of course, speak, but people who are attached or assigned to subordinate groups may have a lot to say, but they may have little power to say it without getting into trouble. Their words (and interests and works) are often not considered understandable by those in dominant groups. This implies that the speech of those in subordinate groups is often disrespected and their knowledge often not considered sufficient in decision or policy making processes.

The notions of this theory are the exact description of Ethiopian society. From its establishment, this nation has been a nation of divisions, classes and diversity. Since the emergence of the *Solomonic Dynasty*, some groups have emerged with the absolute right to rule others without any criticism, while others have the obligation to be ruled without complaint. When we see the three most recent governments, the *Imperials* had claimed that they are the appointees of God, entitled to rule for eternity; the *Socialists* avert that they are redeemers of the mass proletariat from centuries-old autocracy and insist that they have to rule to the “new Eden”, Communism; the revolutionary democrats declare that they are the vanguards of ethnicities and that they have to rule as long as ethnicities exist. In the rule of these regimes, the only idea that has been propagated, disseminated and entertained is their ideology. Any different idea has been labelled, for instance, as satanic, bourgeoisie, chauvinistic, respectively, and repressed, excluded or destroyed. In addition, religious leaders avow that they are the agents of God and they argue that they have the right to bind on earth and in heaven. Hence, everyone has to accept and abide by their teachings; any question on the teaching is taken as blasphemy and anyone who questions them is denounced. As already illustrated, females, the rural and the poor have a little say in the society, but instead have been solely used as political instruments. Further, in the current Ethiopian context, ethnic superiority has played a huge role in stifling the ideas of others; the media is under the control of one dominant minority ethnic group while the majority of citizens have remained muted (see 4.2-4.3, 5.3-5.4, 6.2-6.3).

However, this theory views the causes of repression, as something which flows from top-to-bottom, placing the blame on those at the upper side of the social hierarchy, but it does not address the inherent causal factors of the repression and the multi-facet nature of the practice of

repression. In reality, the seeds of repression are often germinated at the grassroots of society, implanted by societies' tests, attitudes, experiences, beliefs and philosophies which usually evolve into repressive group values, principles and ideologies, and finally into repressive government or state or ruler's policies, laws and systems (see 7.5).

2.5.5.2 Spiral of silence theory

Spiral of silence theory argues that public opinion is a powerful force in contemporary society and it explains the role of the mass media in contributing to, and even magnifying, the effects of that force (Weiss 2009:927). Noelle-Neumann (1983:157–165) argued that the media will focus more on majority views, underestimating minority views. Those in the minority will be less assertive in communicating their opinions, but those in the majority will overestimate their influence and may become confident in their communication. She further indicated that people who believe that they hold a minority viewpoint on a public issue will remain in the background where their communication will be restrained, while those who believe that they hold a majority viewpoint will be more encouraged to speak.

According to West & Turner (2007:412), this theory uniquely intersects public opinion and media, in that media have a lasting and profound effect on public opinion and work simultaneously with majority opinion to silence minority beliefs. Fear of being socially isolated is the reason that makes the minority conform to what they perceive to be the majority view.

Although this theory has objective truth in religious contexts, the reality differs from this in the political context of Ethiopia. In Ethiopian history, particularly starting from the minorities in the *Solomonic Dynasty*, who developed their military force, have taken power and have suppressed the ideas of the majority (Tollosa 2016). The trend has continued to the current government and one ethnic group, who accounts for only 6% of the nation's population, has dominated power and been outspoken while the rest of the population is silenced for fear of exclusion from economic benefits or for fear of reprisals in one way or another. Indeed, those who tried to oppose this situation have been executed, imprisoned, marginalised, etcetera.

2.5.5.3 Group think theory

Group think is an occurrence where by a group comes to a unanimous decision about a possible action despite the existence of facts that point to another correct course of action. Irving Janis, in his book *Victims of Groupthink* (1972), explains what takes place in groups where group members are highly agreeable with one another. Janis contends that when group members share a common fate, there is great pressure toward conformity. Highly cohesive groups frequently fail to consider alternatives to their course of action. When group members think similarly and do not entertain contrary views, they are also unlikely to share unpopular or dissimilar ideas with others. Group think suggests that these groups make premature decisions, some of which have lasting and tragic consequences. According to this theory, some members take on the role of guarding the group from information that might call into question the effectiveness and morality of decisions made, and pressure is brought to bear against those members who disagree with the group, often through claims that such disagreements are indicative of disloyalty. Consequently, members do not voice dissenting or views that are contrary to the group consensus (Janis 1989:60).

Janis (1982) believed that three conditions promote group think: high cohesiveness of the decision-making group; specific structural characteristics of the environment in which the group functions; and stressful internal and external characteristics of the situation. Janis argued that cohesive groups exert great pressure on their members to conform to group standards. As groups reach high degrees of cohesiveness, this euphoria tends to stifle other opinions and alternatives. Adams & Galanes (2007) added that group members may be unwilling to express any reservations about solutions. And members even censor their own comments without being provoked. Structural characteristics of the environment refer to group insulation (a group's ability to remain unaffected by outside influences), lack of impartial leadership (when groups are led by individuals who put their personal agenda first) and lack of decision making procedures (failure to provide norms for solving group issues) (West & Turner 2010:246-247). They further indicated that external stress on the group may evoke group think, and a wide range of influences such as "age of group members, competitive nature of group members, size of the group, intelligence of group members, gender composition of the group, and leadership styles that emerge in the group" influence the expressive nature of group members. They further indicated

that culture influences group processes, for “many cultures do not place a premium on overt and expressive communication, some group members may refrain from debate or dialogue, to the surprise of other group members” (also see 2.5.4.2).

The Ethiopian historical context and the current context could best be explained by this theory. Ethiopia is a diversified and grouped nation, with Ethiopian society distinctively grouped by religion, ethnicity, class, race, and ideology. The religious and ethnic divisions have lasted for centuries along with tough conflicts, bloody clashes and wars; hence, suspicion and rivalry have reached their climax. The members of each group are thinking ethically or religiously, and the communications among the different groups in society are highly curtailed (see 4.2, 4.4.2, 5.6, 6.2). The political history of the two most recent governments has shown that members of the ruling groups have not been allowed to think outside of the groups’ ideology. In the *Socialist-Military* regime, if one member expressed thoughts contrary to that of a communist ideology, he/she would be executed. The *Derg* established the *Revolutionary Guard Army*, locally called “Abiyot Tibeka” that has absolute power to take any measure against anyone who opposes the *Derg*’s agenda (see 5.2-5.4). Under the current government, the grouping has extended further to ethnicity in addition to ideological groups. Religious groupings, political groupings and cultural groupings are more attracted to ethnic groupings. Specifically, the new generation, at least born under the reign of the current government, has been losing a common language because every ethnic group is forced to use its own language and hate other languages.

Above all, the nature and extent of group thinking in Ethiopia is unique, diverse and intense. All the incidents of group thinking indicate that *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissistic* behaviour have developed and expanded at alarming rates. Hence, the rivalries and conflicts have reached their climax, perhaps for the second time in the country’s history, and the suppression of freedom of expression is getting more diverse and more severe (see 6.2, 6.7-6.11). Society has even developed a maxim which says “kemalawkew meleak yemawkew seytan” which literally means *our Devil is better than another’s Angel*. This implies that each group or part of a society is very suspicious of others and their ideas, and there is no space for communication, negotiation and discussion.

2.5.5.4 Cognitive dissonance theory

According to this theory, the mind operates as an intermediary between stimulus and response. This theory asserts that when the mind receives information (a stimulus), it organises the new stimulus into a pattern with other previously encountered stimuli. If the new stimulus does not fit into the pattern, it creates discomfort. Leon Festinger called this feeling of imbalance (discomfort) cognitive dissonance. This is the feeling people have when they “find themselves doing things that don’t fit with what they know, or having opinions that do not fit with other opinions they hold” (Festinger 1957:4). The uncomfortable feeling motivates people to take steps to reduce dissonance. As Roger Brown (1965:584) notes, “A state of cognitive dissonance is said to be a state of psychological discomfort or tension which motivates efforts to achieve consonance. That is, *dissonance* is the name for a disequilibrium and *consonance* the name for equilibrium.”

The basic assumption of this theory, therefore, emanates from human nature. That is, it is concerned with stability and consistency. For inconsistent attitudes, thoughts and behaviours result in feelings of dissonance (incompatible beliefs and actions). This discomfort in turn brings about an unpleasant arousal which motivates a reaction to reduce or change that inconsistency. In this reaction process to avoid feelings of dissonance, one will ignore or restrain views that oppose his/her own or might change their beliefs to match their actions.

In Ethiopian society, dissonance could emerge from cultural, social and political factors. Culture plays a role in shaping one’s mind and regulates how to behave or misbehave, what to love and to hate, what to do and not to do. Accordingly, societies have developed some cultural establishments that govern their daily life: in feeding, clothing, talking, social relationships, etc. Therefore, societies dislike or feel discomfort towards actions, opinions and expressions that are out of the socially accepted establishment. For instance, in Ethiopia, eating on the sidewalks or while walking is still considered immoral, and talking while eating is regarded as bad behaviour. In the rural society when someone is called out while eating he/she says “Gimigna negn” which implies *I could not talk and walk*. In relation to clothing, the majority of societies have strict rules on how citizens dress, so that females, elders, and youth have specific styles of clothing. In Ethiopia, there is a strict religious rule which says “set yewond libs atilbes wondim yeset libise

ayilbes”, which literally means *females should not wear males clothing and vice versa*. For instance, females who put on trousers are abhorred, particularly in rural areas. In styles of speaking, women are highly restricted. They should talk slowly, with a low voice and talk very little. If a woman talks too much with a high voice, she is considered a ‘bar lady’ and one who talks with her feels discomfort. Social relationships are based on social norms. Individuals create communications and relations with others who have similar life experiences, who share the same type of food, religion, or even political ideology. Individuals or groups that have different experiences and ideas would not be allowed to entertain their experiences and ideas in society. For instance, one is taught about the importance of dog and donkey meat in Ethiopia and the notion of eating either is totally despised and condemned by God. Even the thought of eating such creates dissonance; and if one does that, he/she may be killed or be abhorred and absolutely detached from society. For example, there was a Chinese donkey meat processing and exporting company in the country’s capital Addis Ababa which created huge discomfort in society and was forced to close.

In addition to these, bad experiences in Ethiopia’s socio-political history have created dissonance and fear of new ideas. For instance, bloody religious conflicts among different religions have resulted in dissonance. One can see examples of this between Judaism and traditional Cushitic religions during the establishment of the *Solomonic Dynasty*; between Judaism and Christianity during the expansion of Christianity during the 4th century; between Christianity and Islam from the 7th century up to now, and among different sects of Christianity and Islam from their emergence up to now (Tollossa 2016). The fears and dissonance which emerged from the introduction of new political ideologies are identical to the fears and discomfort created by religion because religion and politics are intermingled, and the emergence of new political ideologies have resulted in a series of crises in the country’s history. For instance, the emergence of the *Solomonic Dynasty* based on the Judaize principles have created dissonance on the already established Cushitic administrative system established in 2545 B.C; and that rivalry has continued to the present (Delebo1991:28-29; Tollossa 2016:159), In addition, the centralised system of administration which had been established from about 1000 B.C. to 1769 A.D. was disrupted by the emergence of a decentralised system of administration during the age of Princes, which lasted until 1855 (Adejumobi 2007:8-9; Zewdie 2007:10). As a result of bloody

conflicts, the central system was re-established causing huge discomfort on the side of minorities. This led to centuries of conflict and ended with the ethnic-based political ideology in 1991. This, in turn, has created discomfort in the unionist camp and has immersed the nation in turmoil again. In the meantime, the emergence of the socialist ideology of the *Derg* created discomfort for the Imperial aristocracy and clergy as it was considered anti-religion and anti-God and ended with horrible incidents (see 5.4).

Though this theory indicates that inconsistent attitudes, thoughts and behaviours result in feelings of dissonance, and dissonance in turn creates a state of aversion that seeks assonance which could have some effect on freedom of expression, it does not address the causes of those established patterns. The circumstances that are indicated above and other cultural, social, religious, economic and political events and factors show that the majority of rivalries, conflicts and wars and the related suppressions of thought and expression are mainly the results of dissonance (see 2.5.4). Additionally, the established patterns which create dissonance are the result of tests, experiences, attitudes, beliefs and philosophies of the societies, particularly at the grassroots level. These tests, experiences, attitudes, beliefs and philosophies are also the result of the understanding of the societies about life and the infinite world. The understandings of the societies are limited and differ across each society according to the level of their exposure to the unlimited world. Hence, the patterns are constructed on those limited and different understandings, that is, *Uncertainty-Certainty-Dilemma*. Hence, two patterns would not match because their formations are different. Differences are also the foundations for group formation which in turn result in *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*. These are the two main factors leading to threats in freedom of expression besides the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*. Indeed, these three causal factors threatening freedom of expression work in a collaborative and interrelated way, making a web of repression which the researcher calls the *Web of Repression Trap* (see 7.4-7.5).

2.6 Summary and conclusion

As indicated in chapter one, the main goal of this study is examining the evolution of the practice of freedom of expression in Ethiopia, to identify the main threats to freedom of expression, to explore the main causal factors threatening freedom of expression, and to indicate the prospect of

freedom of expression in the country through a holistic analysis of the dynamics of the country through a historical analysis of the three most recent governments of the country. To achieve this goal, it was important to access the literature in the field and understand the principles in the practices of freedom of expression at the international level, across the continent and in Ethiopia.

Accordingly, this chapter tries to address a comprehensive literature search, including the international and regional conventions, guiding principles, and theories related to freedom of expression. The search showed that though freedom of expression is viewed as a pre-existing and fundamental human right by many scholars and human rights activists, and respected by international and regional conventions and national legislation, the threats and restrictions have always existed internationally and in Ethiopia. Of course, the limitations and the threats differ from country to country or from context to context, and there is a lot of disagreement on the scope or limitation of the right to freedom of expression among different interest groups.

The practice at the international level showed that freedom of expression has been mainly threatened by governments and political groups in the form of laws, regulation and in the name of protecting national security and sovereignty. Practice has also been impacted by cultural and religious pressures, and affected by group think. However, the literature does not explicitly and comprehensively address the problem or the causal factors of threats to freedom of expression in a holistic manner. This gap in the literature is caused by a routine approach of trying to assess the problem from the top-down - and an assumption that the main threats to freedom of expression emanate from the authorities. In addition, the literature does not address the problem according to the real context of the country. Therefore, the majority of the literature needs to be reformulated, or there is a need to formulate new theories that address the problem according to real contexts. Hence, this study tries to fill these gaps through a holistic analysis of the dynamics of the country, particularly in the three most recent governments of the country and by evaluating existing literature on freedom of expression. That is, the historical dynamics of the country are analysed in relation to the practice of freedom of expression and synthesised with existing theories.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As indicated previously, throughout its history and in the three most recent governments, Ethiopia has been known to have very restricted or an absolute ban on freedom of expression. It has also been believed that governments and their policies were the cause of the repression in freedom of expression in the country. However, the reality has shown that the trend of repression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia has remained intact though governments and their policies have changed through history. Hence, this study was designed to analyse the holistic dynamics of the country, particularly under the three most recent governments of the country, and to explore the threatening factors and underlying causes of repression.

Hence, the researching of such a controversial issue in such a broad context requires the appropriate research design or appropriate approaches, methods and techniques of investigation to achieve the set objectives and to address research questions. This chapter, thus, outlines how this study could be best processed using the qualitative research approach, methods and techniques.

Indeed, this explanatory and exploratory research necessitated the use of more than one research method and technique. As freedom of expression is an inherently interdisciplinary concept, the researcher took theoretical ideas, research methods and data from diverse fields of enquiry such as communication, history, politics, law, and cultural and social theories. Hence, this thesis is a comprehensive study that comprised multiple research methods; multiple data sources, multiple sampling techniques and multiple data analysis strategies and multiple related theories in order to maintain trustworthiness and authenticity (see 3.5, below).

This study was started with the critical explanation of the history of the country, to show the historical springboard of the study period. This explanation was accompanied with a thorough review of related literature that shows the theoretical conception and practices of freedom of

expression internationally, in Africa and more specifically in Ethiopia. Accordingly, international principles, and international, regional and national guiding laws on freedom of expression were discussed. In addition, different theories that are related to this right were analysed.

After that, the dynamics of the country under each of the three most recent Ethiopian governments, particularly the social, cultural, religious, economic and political contexts, are critically analysed along with widely accepted principles and established theories of freedom of expression. Accordingly, the developments or changes in the practice of freedom of expression for about 85 years are indicated; the main problems or threats that deter the practice of free expression under each government are identified; the main causal factors to those problems are explored; and based on these, theoretical models and a grounded theory that could show the centuries-old systems of repression are developed.

The exploration was not intended to identify only the underlying factors that deter freedom of expression in the country, but also aimed to indicate the prospects and potential future challenges on the right to free expression in Ethiopia. Why look to the future? The answer is provided by Berger (2009:7): “anyone driving a vehicle needs to look at the road ahead if they want to avoid going into a ditch”.

3.2. The research approach

According to Berg (2001:7), “the purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures”. Hence, as indicated above, this thesis had raised some basic questions that could address the problem of freedom of expression in Ethiopia (see section 1.4). Basically, it aimed to address two fundamental types of research questions related to freedom of expression in the country: “What has been going on in terms of freedom of expression in Ethiopia?” and “Why has this been going on?”. Therefore, the research approaches, methods and techniques need to be selected so as to address these general research questions, and, particularly, the specific research questions and objectives set in Chapter One. while taking into consideration the resources available. Accordingly, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach for this thesis. Why qualitative approach?

As this study is “a critical socio-historical analysis”, the research is highly linked to social settings. According to Berg (2001:7), qualitative research seeks understanding and pursues answers to research questions by “examining various social settings.” A qualitative approach prioritises explanation of social, cultural other phenomena, under real world conditions by “using multiple sources of evidence” or “variety of sources” (Berg 2001:7, Yin 2011).

A qualitative approach is used to explain a social phenomenon on contextual conditions, such as the social, institutional and environmental conditions within which people’s lives take place, by using existing or emerging concepts and theories (Yin 2011:6-7). This has been done on media, cultural, religious, economic and political institutions in this thesis (see 4.2-4.6, 5.2-5.7, 6.2-6.11). Through a qualitative approach, it is possible to assess how people or groups of people can have different ways of thinking; attitudes, behaviours and experiences, and how people are affected by the events and circumstances that go on around them. A qualitative approach is best for reports of experience or on data which cannot be adequately expressed numerically. A qualitative approach also gives the researcher the opportunity to use all available resources and techniques, which are not numerical in nature (Hancock, Windridge & Ockleford 2007:6; Lofland 1971:13). A qualitative study has a constructivist and interpretivist perspective to research which allows one to interpret and understand constructed meanings in society (Peshkin 2000 & Firmin 2008). Smith (2008:459) also insists that interpretive inquiry focuses on understanding of “the meanings, purposes, and intentions (interpretations) people give to their own actions and interactions with others”. Accordingly, the researcher interpreted socially constructed meaning in the system by employing various data from religious texts and dogmas, literature on culturally constructed wisdom, culturally derived and socially constructed artefacts, and other cultural practices that have shared meanings.

Above all, a qualitative approach is appropriate to describe and interpret social, cultural, political and economic situations, and suitable to evaluate an organisational process through a historical context (Hancock, Windridge & Ockleford 2007). In addition, qualitative research is appropriate in order to explain those historical events through existing or emerging concepts and increasing

opportunities, and to develop empirically supported new ideas and theories (Yin 2011, Conger 1998, Alvesson 1996).

Generally, as the merits of a qualitative approach matches with the contexts and the objectives of this research, the researcher adopted the qualitative paradigm as the main approach to describe and analyse the social, cultural, political and economic context and dynamics of the country in relation to freedom of expression. The researcher believes that these descriptions and analyses could help to identify the main threatening factors of freedom of expression, and would help to explore the underlying causal factors of those threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopian.

3.3 Research methods

As Daymon and Holloway (2011) indicated, qualitative research methods are a powerful means of gaining an in-depth, holistic understanding of the relationships among different perspectives and groups in society. Accordingly, the researcher adopted a unique technique to get a holistic understanding of the practice, evolution and nature of freedom of expression under the diverse Ethiopian society, to explore the real causes of the suppression of freedom of expression and to develop theoretical concepts on the suppression. This technique is an integration of different qualitative methods: a historical method, discourse analysis and grounded theory that can fit with the nature of this study. This was necessary because this study is a historical and holistic critical analysis of the discourse of Ethiopia which aimed to identify the main threats of freedom of expression and planned to explore underlying causes of those threats to freedom of expression.

3.3.1 The historical method

As indicated in chapter one, Ethiopian people passed through repressive environments which have persisted into the 21st century. Particularly, the freedom of expression environment under the three most recent governments has been hugely confined even though the socio-political environment seems to have changed and the legal environment seems to have improved. This shows that repression in Ethiopia has not been linked only to some periods or some governments, but has persisted for centuries.

Therefore, to explore why this has happened, it was essential to understand basic historical circumstances. Indeed, it is impossible to understand the present without understanding the past. Change cannot be imagined fully without a sense of what we want to change from, or how change has occurred in the past in similar situations (Ellis 2002). Hence, the researcher used a historical method. “Historical research refers to topics, events, or individuals existing in the past (or past experience); it is a narrative research when the topic or individual, or individual experience, is studied in the present” (Costantino 2008:401-402). Many researchers believe that historical methods of qualitative research describe past events in order to understand present patterns and anticipate future choices. Bryant, Black, Land & Porra (2013:4) insist that:

Without a history it is difficult to know who one is, where one comes from or where one is headed. It is difficult to belong or have direction. History is like a collective memory.... Having a history is important because what happened in the past profoundly affects all aspects of our lives and will affect what happens in the future.

Porra, Hirschheim and Parks (2014) argue that histories provide accounts of past events in order to explain what happened at the time, helps to make sense and explain contemporary phenomena, and to forecast the future by identifying repeated patterns in historical narratives. Histories include stories of social, cultural, religious, economic and political groups, people, rebels, protestors, radicals and even ordinary citizens. All these stories provide valuable clues to looming societal, social, cultural, political, economic, and technical changes (Fernández-Armesto 2002).

Philosophically, this method fits particularly well with the postmodernist, social relativist and interpretivist ideas that historical narratives are socially constructed. This means, that past social, cultural and political systems are constructions rather than reflections of reality (Munslow 1997; Burrell & Morgan 1979). Moreover, the historical method is adaptable to methodological conditions within communication science (Smith & Lux 1993, Golder 2000).

The employment of this method in this study was to interpret past events and to present the interpretations in relation to the current context. That is, the researcher followed and analysed the past social, cultural, economic and political circumstances which could have contributed to the

context of freedom of expression in the country today. This method was also adopted in the belief that the evolution of freedom of expression could be easily detected, and the factors that deter the right to freedom of expression could be identified by following the routes of history. Therefore, this method was selected based on its unique potential for understanding complex phenomena measured in terms of their scope and duration (Todd 1972; Shafer 1974; Porra, Hirschheim & Parks 2014; Leonard 2019). History demonstrates where people have faltered regarding certain rights and trends in the past, and assists in determining possible future trends so that future generations can then learn from such mistakes and avoid them. “The past if it can be located, contains the key to the present. Though today is different from yesterday, it was shaped by yesterday. Today and yesterday will probably influence tomorrow” (Sigh 2006:112). That means the researcher conducted the explanation based on the assumption that foundations of the three most recent Ethiopian governments have been linked to the social, cultural, economic and political history of the country. Hence, highlighting such factors in their historical context would reveal traces of the real causes of problems with freedom of expression in Ethiopia recently.

3.3.2 Discourse Analysis

The second method incorporated in this study was discourse analysis. This method was adopted as a methodological approach for this study because it can show diachronic changes in discourses of freedom of expression and connections to areas of social, political and economic life (Weninger 2008:146). Scheufele (2008:1350) also described this method as “qualitative empirical method of analyzing mostly recorded human communication”, and critical discourse analysis could be used in identifying different “negative rhetorics and describing and discussing them in a wider social and political context”. In addition, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:60) indicated that “Critical discourse analysis provides theories and methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains”. Further, Parker (1992:4) indicated that discourse analysis situates texts in their social, cultural, political, and historical contexts and interrogates the texts to uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions implicit within them. In analysing the discourse, the main focus is not only exploring content or meaning of the document but also explaining why it was said or done, and how it constrained freedom of expression in a particular context (Cheek 2004:1147).

Of course, there are diverse and numerous definitions of discourse. According to Weninger (2008:145), the term discourse is generally understood as “any instance of signification, or meaning-making”. Cheek (2004:1142) indicated that definitions of discourse could have linguistic orientations or social orientations which specifically refer to social practices. On the side of social orientation of discourse, Scheufele (2008:1351-1352) indicated that “discourses refer to political or social issues which are relevant for society or at least for a major group of people... and discourse can be conceived as a political or public debate... and discourses are processes of collectively constructing social reality”. Further, Cobley (2008:1346-147) presents discourse as ideology. And Cramer (2009:220) indicated that “discourse is an overall form of knowledge and an arena that delimits certain expression”. Indeed, discourse not only constructs social reality and delimits what can be communicated about an object but also produces the very objects of knowledge, and it is often used to exercise power (Foucault 1980; Weedon 1987:4; Cobley 2008:1346-147). All of the above definitions refer to discourse as ways of thinking or ideologies that create a specific reality. Cheek & Rudge (1994) asserted that discourses gain prominence over others as the result of socio-historical influences operating on them. Accordingly, this research focused on the social orientations of discourse and analysed social, religious, cultural, economic and political realities because it is believed that the practice of freedom of expression is the result of the interaction of the discourses of all these aspects.

3.3.3. Grounded theory

As indicated previously (see Chapter One), this study planned to identify the main threats of freedom of expression, to explore the causal factors of those threats in Ethiopia and to develop a theoretical approach, and model or instrument, for the analysis of the inter-related challenges and restrictions to freedom of expression. Accordingly, the research process was started by describing and interpreting historical events and circumstances, and by analysing the discourses related to those events and circumstances which have impacted freedom of expression. In the process of conducting this study, particularly during data collection and analysis, theoretical concepts started to emerge and the concept of grounded theory developed. Indeed, as it has been broadly agreed in grounded theory, researchers start with collecting data and then search for theoretical constructs, themes, and patterns that are ‘grounded’ in the theory (Anfara Jr. & Mertz

2006). Indeed, grounded theory studies are generally focused on social processes or actions, and why and how they happen (Blumer 1969).

Strauss and Corbin (1998:24) defined grounded theory as “a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon”. In addition, according to Corbin & Strauss (2008:143), data in grounded theory can be generated from “people, places, and events that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts”, and can be collected through interviews, documents, observations. Accordingly, this study used equivalent sources of data: documents, observation and aural discourses (see 3.4.2) that were used to generate data which were interpreted and developed into theoretical concepts, models and grounded theory.

As Watling and Lingard (2012) recommended for grounded theory, sufficient data was collected to gain an adequate understanding of the concepts and themes that have emerged. Furthermore, as grounded theory studies are developed by theoretical sampling which is established on some purposively gained data (Curtis, Evans, Sbaraini & Schwarz 2008), the themes and concepts first established from data that originated through different purposive sampling techniques were developed into models and grounded theory using the theoretical sampling technique.

Finally, grounded theory’s foundation in this study was reflected by use of *constant comparison analysis* (see 3.4.3), as data from different sources were interpreted, compared and contrasted to each other and organised into theoretical concepts, models and theories.

Generally, this study is a qualitative work which consists of systematic, flexible and multiple methods and guidelines for conducting inductive qualitative inquiry which results in theoretical models related to freedom of expression., These are the *Structure of Ethno-Luminary Repression*, *Structure of Di-spiral of Silence*, the *Pyramid Trap Structure of Repression*, the *Web of the Pyramid Trap*, and the *Structure of the Total Burden of Repression* named the *Pyramid Trap Theory* (see Chapter seven).

3.4. Data collection and analysis techniques

Identification of sources was a very important task in this study as there is no situation, no idea, no circumstance and no fact that can be made historiographically relevant in the absence of sources (Sager & Roser 2015). As this study is a critical investigation of historical events, the analysis was based on the availability of surviving historical data. Of course, though the study has contemporaneous and retrospective elements, they were often entirely related to the past and the data relied on archival materials, written records and other historical documents (Marwick 2001). Therefore, this study prepared available sources so as to explore meanings, beliefs and preferences from actions, practices and institutions. The process of identifying an appropriate body of primary sources was induced by considering what sources are most likely to answer specific research questions (Sager & Roser 2015).

3.4.1 Sources of data

One determining task in this study was deciding on the sources of research data. Indeed, the grounds for deciding on the sources of data were the context of the study, the research problems and the related research questions. Accordingly, the researcher was exploring the evidence or selecting sources entirely focusing on already formulated research questions, believing that evidence would contain some answers to the research questions (Gottschalk 1969; Todd 1972; Shafer 1974; Fogel & Elton 1983).

Accordingly, the researcher tried to identify data, focusing on primary sources (Marwick 2001; Grigg 1991). A source is primary when it gives the first information obtainable of the fact or event, or is the “raw material” of the study (Marwick 2001:26). They were sources that came into existence during the time period being investigated (Golder 2000). Archival sources have also been identified as primary sources, but historical literatures that rely on or derived from primary sources are considered as secondary sources (Smith & Lux 1993, Porra, Hirschheim & Parks 2014).

Based on this classification, the researcher collected a large amount of data from primary sources such as traditional laws such as *Fetha Nagast* and *Kabra Nagast*; four constitutions under the

three most recent governments of Ethiopia, that is constitutions of 1931,1955,1987, and 1995; specific government laws, rules and regulations related to media such as different broadcasting proclamations; lawsuits on media and journalists; governments' policy documents; official reports of governments related to human rights, freedom thought and media; reports of national and international institutions and organisations, such as CPJ, Human Rights Watch, on freedom of expression and media; documents that show government structures, such as government media and broadcasting authority of Ethiopia; religious dogmas and practices; political party programmes; historical records of different events and circumstances such as incidents of government changes; artefacts; written and oral discourse or maxims such as proverbs; daily cultural and religious practices of society; etcetera. Besides these, considerable amounts of data were taken from secondary sources such as books, research articles, and media outlets. Almost all those resources and data are more "static" in nature and are already "out there" where they are open to public scrutiny and criticism (Hexter 1971).

Generally speaking, this study relied on published material, archival material, artefacts, aural discourse and observed cultural practice (Golder 2000). This implies that documents were augmented by the real life observations of the researcher and aural data from society. Indeed, Marwick (2001) insisted that archival materials, written records and other historical artefacts could often be the sole source of information in this kind of historical research. Hence, the exploration of resources and the identification of data began with searching through archival documents, books, periodicals, media outlets, aural discourse and electronic databases. Along with this, an extensive search to identify oral discourses to complement those resources continued. However, the researcher was vigilant in focusing on relevant rather than merely interesting data (Eisenhardt 1989).

The deriving of data from such sources would have huge importance for such a comprehensive historical research. As Scheufele (2008:1351-1352) insisted, social and political domination is reproduced by speech, talk and discourse, and discourses can be analysed by studying "text corpora like party political programs, official documents, transcripts of parliamentary debates, or

historical sources”. Weninger (2008:146) also indicated that critical discourse analysis targets the political domain and “critique documents published by government agencies, institutions, or international organizations”. However, the analysis was done in conjunction with the context, that is, with other social surroundings like the economic situation, the participants and their social relationships (Weninger 2008:146). Gamson (1992) added that all knowledge is organised in the form of cognitive schemata, frames, or scripts which are usually taken as part of broader discourses emanating from different aspects of life including particular historical epochs. This knowledge is then applied to and transformed within social discourse. According to Cheek (2004:1145), texts could be “interview transcripts, newspaper articles, observations, documents, or visual images”.

3.4.1.1 Documents

As indicated above, documents were the main source of data for this study. That means many documents that deal with the social, economic and political context of the country and that were believed to be used to explain the status and evolution of freedom of expression of the study period were selected and analysed. That is, using documents, the researcher tried to study meanings that encompass shared group norms, beliefs, attitudes and ideologies on freedom of expression. These documents were produced by the public, private organisations and individuals in the course of their everyday practices and were geared exclusively for their own immediate practical needs. According to Bailey (1994) and Payne & Payne (2004), documents tell us indirectly about the social world of the people who created them.

Hence, the researcher used several documents in different disciplines and different aspects of life that were believed to be appropriate and that describe the situation of freedom of expression of the country, particularly in the period of the three most recent governments. That is, a considerable variety of primary data was taken from legal and policy documents, parties’ political programs and reports of government and non-government institutions.

In addition, considerable data was obtained from secondary sources such as religious and secular books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. That is, as beliefs, norms and ideologies of the society are largely disseminated and reproduced through elites for their privileged access; the researcher

used the products of the dominant parts of society, such as books, research articles and other media outlets such as magazines, newspapers, and videos as source of data.

One main question that might be raised here is the contribution of secondary data sources, which are usually the products of society's elites on a broad field of study (freedom of expression) that encompasses the whole society, including the grassroots or ordinary members of society. Or some may ask "How the views of elites could represent the views of ordinary citizens at the grassroots and how the works (outlets) of elites could be the main source of research data in the study of freedom of expression in the society?"

It is important to highlight the context of the study area. In the historical Ethiopian context, political and/or economic elites, religious and/or social elites and academic elites have played an instrumental role in shaping public discourse and in the production and maintenance of constraining practices, beliefs, attitudes and ideologies. On the one hand, one can say that the views/opinions of the citizens at the grassroots can be shaped by the clash of views/ideas of these three forces (elites). On the other hand, it is clear that the ideas of ordinary citizens, communities at grassroots and the broader media audiences are directly or indirectly reflected by elites. It is also clear that, though many elites in Ethiopian context originate and grown up in ordinary society and are equipped with ordinary citizens' thoughts, so ordinary citizens are also commonly governed and constantly shaped by the elites. This means that although the foundation of almost every thought is the mass of society, the ideas of some elites, who evolve from the mass of society, become the ruling ideas (see 7.5). Let us see some instances of this.

First, government policies, laws, regulations and rules are largely the reflection of the political and/or economic elites. In the Ethiopian politico-economic context, if one controls the politics, he/she will control the economy and vice versa and, hence, can control every activity within society using legal and political instruments (see 4.2, 5.3, 6.4). Second, social and religious norms and orders are mainly the result of commandments of religious leaders and elders in society. As the majority (84%) of Ethiopian societies are rural, and their life style is traditional and communal, and 100% of the population is religious (Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency 2007: 51,108), ordinary citizens strictly follow the views/ideas of their social leaders (elders) and

religious leaders (see 4.2 for how religion and social orders control the society). Third, the introduction of modern ways of life and of thinking, and new ideologies in Ethiopia has been the work of academic elites (see 4.4 and 5.2 for how academic elites introduced socialist ideology and reformulated the political and cultural atmosphere of the country).

Hence, in Ethiopian socio-political culture, the majority of the societies have been largely influenced by dominant groups or societies in one way or another. This can be through persuasion, propaganda or intimidation, in order to ensure they are made followers of the political, religious, political or academic elites. Specifically, government bureaucracy is an extension of authoritarian leaders or kings and, in turn, ordinary citizens are usually dominated or subjugated and assimilated or moulded by the views of the bureaucracy. The religious community is an extension of the religious leaders. The majority of society who are near modernity and urban society are largely reliant on academic elites. Communities at the grassroots are obedient to community leaders who are commonly representations of the bureaucracy or/and religious organs. Edwin Ardener (1975:19–27) noted that groups at the top end of the social hierarchy determine the communication system for that culture, or suppress the ideas and discourses of subordinate groups in society. Lower power groups such as women, the poor and people of colour, have to learn to work within the communication system that the dominant group has established. This does not mean that the grassroots of society are entirely submissive and are all adopters of the dominant ideology or that all the data collected was only from the dominant groups in society (see 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 for how data was collected from the ordinary society).

Hence the researcher believed that a remarkable amount of information could emanate from secondary sources, particularly historical books, political analysis documents, and analysis reports of different international, regional and demotic organisations and institutions.

As indicated above, this research was conducted using a historical research framework and involved a thorough description (critical explanation) of social and institutional frameworks in which freedom of expression has been embedded. Hence, historical primary and secondary documents were comprehensively analysed. In historical research projects like this, historical

documents can be used as the only or the main source of data by gathering enough and appropriate data, and addressing time and informant unavailability factors. Scott (1990) supports the idea that indirect access to data becomes necessary if past behaviour must be inferred from its material traces, and documents are the visible signs of what happened at some previous time. Indeed, extensive use of documentary sources and other official reports have been used by many social researchers. It was even adopted by Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim in the 19th century. Of course, some could be sceptical of its relevance to social research, but documents can have an independent existence beyond the writer and beyond the context in which it is produced, thus reducing subjectivity. Even original research can be conducted using old documentary data (Mogalakwe 2006:224).

3.4.1.2 Observation

Many researchers believe that to understand fully the complexities of many situations, direct participation and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method for it involves collecting impressions using all of one's senses, especially looking and listening. Qualitative observational research is an inductive reasoning and exploratory method that attempts to capture life as experienced by the research participants and often used with other methods such as interviewing and document analysis. That is, it is constructivist in approach, emphasizing meanings that the participants attach to activities and events (Adler & Adler 2000).

In addition, qualitative observational research is associated with a number of theoretical traditions including grounded theory and well suited to both the discovery of new information (theory generation) and the validation of existing knowledge (theory confirmation) (McKechnie 2008). Accordingly, the researcher believed that the incorporation of observational data could contribute significantly to the critical analysis of existing normative media theories and to the development of new communication models and theories (as it has been done in this study).

Therefore, the researcher tried to gather holistic data about many aspects of society that describe societal relations and cultural practices which have direct or indirect impact on freedom of expression. These include age, gender, class, religious and ethnic relationships, religious and cultural practices, orders and ceremonies, and artefacts such as clothing, music etc. In other

words, individual acts, social activities, circumstances and events that were related to freedom of expression and were in the memory of the researcher were included in the data set. Trends and patterns created through those acts, activities, events and circumstances that had relations were also included in the interpretation of data.

Accordingly, the researcher tried to explore relationships between people, both individually and within groups, between people and groups, and within organisations in an effort to identify broad trends and patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups and the public in relation to freedom of expression. Specifically, the researcher tried to answer questions like “what individuals, groups and people usually do and with whom and against who? What routines have been there? What personal and social meanings do they give to those acts and activities? Or how do people relate to higher social status or lower social status and outsiders? What attitudes and beliefs have been revealed through their activities and expressions?” In short, the researcher tried to make the data descriptive to clearly show what happened and how it happened in relation to the main research questions.

One point that must be clear here is that the researcher used many years of experience as a participant observer rather than planned and structured periods of observation. Indeed, McKechnie (2008:575) believes that observation is “suited to the study of social processes over time”, and as Lincoln and Guba (1985:304) indicated “prolonged engagement provides scope” and “persistent observation provides depth”, the full life-time membership and complete participation of the researcher was expected to generate deeper and more in depth understandings of the phenomena. Accordingly, the researcher used as much data as possible because it was the role of the data to describe the issue properly.

3.4.1.3 Oral data

Ethiopian culture is primarily oral. People communicate and learn informally, that is orally and aurally, throughout their life. They speak and listen daily while doing their business, express complaints, provide and accept orders, narrate stories and much more. If one is privileged

enough to be included in these daily conversations, he/she would witness elaborate expressions that can disclose what people think about life and how they think about it. They use those expressions to educate, to advise, to order, to warn, etc. One can say, therefore, that these expressions are the spice or/and salt of Ethiopian communication.

In short, these expressions are part of daily communication in life. Specifically, these special expressions are the means to express knowledge, virtue and wisdom, brevity and weakness, good and bad. Society itself further elaborates on the importance of these expressions using similar expressions. For example, “Teji bebirilie negere bemisalie”, which literally means that *as wine tastes better with an attractive wine glass, so communication is more effective with those expressions*. These expressions are called *Teretina Misalie* to literally mean *metaphors/maxims/proverbs/sayings/ironic expressions*; and *Somina Work* to literally mean *Seal and Gold*. These expressions, as they are part of daily communication, are believed to reflect the mind-set and philosophy of society, particularly regarding the issue central to this study. Specifically, one can easily see that ordinary people are widely silent or the ideas of ordinary people are usually expressed in some indirect form. For example, by using ironic and symbolic expressions, maxims or *seal and gold* expressions (see 2.5.5, 7.4.2). Hence, the researcher tried to include those expressions to explore the ideas of ordinary people on freedom of expression.

However, as the ideas of the dominant group usually prevail, the researcher primarily focused on these ideas as a source of a research data. Many of the maxims used were developed by the dominant groups and reflect the orientations of society, particularly the dominant ones. Let us see some common precepts/proverbs in Ethiopian society that illustrate this context. The first one says “Teketel aleqahin, temelket ilamahin”, which literally means *just follow your leader and not an astray*. This shows that everyone is required to be obedient to his/her superior in rank/position/status. The second one says “bemidir yetasere besemay yetasere yihonal”, which implies that priests have the absolute power to constrain one’s life and one who deviates from the priests’ views is condemned or damned on earth and in heaven. The third one says “yetemare sew yigdelegn”, which literally means *I will die for the views of the educated*. This implies that the views of the academic elites are usually taken as trustworthy or dependable. The fourth one

says “semay tekedede bilute ‘shimagilie yisefawal ale’”, which literally means *elders could fix even the torn sky*. This implies that all the views and judgments of elders are acceptable to everyone and any social problem can be solved by the wise managerial decisions of elders. Society believes that anyone who deviates from the elders’ decisions will be cursed. All these show that grassroots societies seem to be obedient and reliant on elites, and the views of society, by will or by social compulsion, are an extension of the elites. Hence, in the Ethiopian context, as the views of ordinary citizens at the grassroots seem to irrefutably reflect the views of elites, the works (outlets) of the elites can be used as the main source of research data.

The main point here is that social discourse can be disclosed by analysing those expressions. Hence, the researcher tried to insert those expressions as the primary data of investigation about the practice and philosophy of the society on freedom of expression. The researcher tried to include many expressions which are linked to the notion of suppression of freedom of expression.

3.4.2 Sampling techniques and selection of data

Every research project has to consider what data sources will be eligible for the study. However, the use of all data sources which are eligible to the study may not be manageable and, hence, samples are usually taken from the total eligible population. Sampling is the process of choosing actual data sources from a larger set of possibilities which consists of defining the full set of possible data sources (Morgan 2008). Hence, sampling is the process of systematically selecting data which will be examined during the course of a study.

In this study, the researcher followed a pragmatist approach to select the sampling technique and to decide how much and what kind of evidence should be pursued. Hence, the researcher’s own judgment was more pronounced in evidence gathering than typical data collection. Purposive sampling allows a wide range of sampling techniques (see below) which can provide researchers with the justification to make theoretical, analytic and/or logical generalisations from the sample that is being studied (Kuzel 1999; Patton 2002). Paton (2002) indicates that purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. This involves identifying

and selecting sources that are rich in information, knowledge or experience; or individuals, groups, organisations, or behaviours that provide the greatest insight into the research questions (Miles & Huberman 1994; Bernard 2002).

Therefore, in this type of qualitative historical research where all sources of data could not be accessed, purposive sampling was used as the means to choose sample sources of the research data. Accordingly, documents, artefacts, aural discourses and cultural practices that were available and relevant to the study (freedom of expression) were used as units of analysis. However, as indicated above, the selection of those sources of data were purposive or judgmental. That means, the researcher has selected sources that would answer the research questions and meet the study objectives (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009), and sources that have substantive significance or theoretical relevance to the issue of study (Dubé & Paré 2003). As indicated above, information from every document and/or individual that exists may not have been valuable for such a specific issue, and the time and means to access all the resources available were limited in such a long historical period (Allen 1971; Smith 1983; Tongco [sa]).

Indeed, the researcher used three purposive sampling techniques: Critical Case Sampling, Intensity Case Sampling and Typical Case Sampling, to select data sources that he thought would best answer the research questions and meet the set objectives or that have substantive significance and theoretical relevance to the issue of study. The data obtained using these purposive sampling techniques was not representative to the study population, and was not used to make statistical generalisations. Rather, the data was used to illustrate some events, settings and contexts and to make logical generalizations (Henry 1990; Baran 2016).

Critical Case Sampling is the process of selecting a small number of important cases, cases that are likely to "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge" (Patton 2001:236). Hence, the researcher believed in using critical case sampling to analyse some decisive factors or case contexts (Patton 2002:237), such as legal contexts, cultural patterns and power experiences, which can decisively explain the context of freedom of expression. The researcher selected primary and secondary sources, specifically legal documents

and practices, documents that show power transition practices, government policies that show economic and political establishments of the country, and cultural practices that show cultural patterns of the country.

Intensity Case Sampling is the process of selecting or searching for rich or excellent examples of the phenomenon of interest, or that provide in depth information and knowledge of a phenomenon of interest. As Patton (2001) pointed out, intensity sampling requires prior information and exploratory work to be able to identify intense examples. Hence, the researcher selected phenomena or cases, such as restrictive laws (particularly media laws), lawsuits, organisational structures, proverbs, amongst others, that can provide detailed information and that provided good examples in describing the extent of the suppression of freedom of expression.

Typical Case Sampling is the process of identifying common and key aspects of phenomena as they manifest under ordinary circumstances. In using typical case sampling, the researcher believed that analysing the discourse of some dominant groups would be illustrative. For example, as indicated above, it seemed that ordinary society usually reflected the ideologies of, or was influenced by, the political, academic, religious and economic interests of the country's elites (see 3.4). Hence, the researcher believed that studying some typical groups, for example the practice of religious and community leaders, the political elites and/or the thoughts of academic elites would illustrate the nature of freedom of expression in society. Therefore, the researcher tried to investigate elite outputs such as religious dogmas, community networks, political ideologies, programmes and philosophies, and tried to compare the findings from elites with the findings obtained from the study of the grassroots of society.

One key issue regarding purposive sampling is the size of the sample. Indeed, sample size is an important consideration in qualitative and quantitative research, but as Sandelowski (1995) points out, "determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgement and experience" and researchers need to evaluate the quality of the information collected. Typically, researchers want to continue sampling until obtaining a comprehensive understanding and/or until having achieved information saturation, the point at which no new

information or themes are emerging from the data (Miles & Huberman 1994). Therefore, the researcher did not determine the number of primary and secondary sources selected: the number of documents and the amount of aural data investigated and the amount of information emanated through observations, but he followed his intuition to check, in the iterative process of theoretical sampling, whether the issue was well illustrated by already gathered data.

Basically, the data search in this study was held within theoretical sampling technique. That means, after key themes and categories had been selected using data from the purposive sampling, the researcher continued to sample additional data until theoretical saturation was achieved in order to elaborate and/or refine the theories. This technique is used to generate theoretical insights by drawing on comparisons among samples of data from different circumstances, events, activities, or even time periods (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Indeed, throughout the data collection process, the researcher was assessing what the collected evidence was worth: that is, the researcher critiqued and evaluated all the collected evidence and identified what he thought unconvincing, irrelevant and incomplete. The researcher identified data by applying basic techniques or basic logic analysis such as determining the credibility of the sources (investigation), counting the number of times the same evidence is repeated (convergence), and assessing the overall coherence, that is, the degree to which it agrees with evidence accumulated from other sources. This would help to check the internal consistency of the evidence (Mason et al. 1997b:314-315). For instance, the researcher examined the origins of documents, determined authorship, place, and time of the document's origins (Langlois & Seignobos 1898; Gottschalk 1969).

This implies that the evaluation of sources and data was held to identify only credible evidence (Golder 2000; Gottschalk 1969). As the researcher is part of Ethiopian society, and, hence, in full understanding of the culture from where the research data emanated, the evaluation or interpretive criticism or determining what the author meant was not difficult (Elton 1967;

Langlois & Seignobos 1898). The researcher believed that this would hugely increase the validity of the research data.

3.4.3 Data analysis strategies

Collected evidence in its unprocessed state is of little value, but gains its meaning when it is interpreted. Pieces of evidence gain further meaning when organised into strands of a story that have a particular, appealing and easy-to-follow relationship (Munslow 1997:8). To accomplish this, first, the researcher tried to identify documents, using purposive sampling, as described above that could have data on events, circumstances, reflections, thoughts, insights or philosophies from different individuals and groups on issues related to freedom of expression. Second, he collected as many oral discourses (maxims, proverbs, sayings, and *seal and gold* expressions) as possible that reflect the thoughts of society on freedom of expression. Third, he listed all the researcher's experiences in relation to freedom of expression, in the family, in the community and in the public.

Of course, the source selection, the data identification, the coding of important information and analysis were iterative throughout the study process until the researcher believed there was no more data to describe, interpret, explain and analyse the nature of or practice of expression in Ethiopia, particularly during the three most recent governments of the country.

In order to identify significant information, the researcher went through all documents identified to get all analysed historical events, circumstances, ideas, thoughts, and philosophies identified and then listed aural discourses (maxims, proverbs and sayings) that dealt with freedom of expression. This also included accessing a script that depicts the researcher's life experiences on freedom of expression. The researcher then read all identified documents line-by-line, identified concepts and coded them. By synthesising all the coded data in each document, the researcher tried to create categories/ themes and conceptual similarities based on the research questions. All related information was sorted or segmented into analytical groups and orders which could be used to narrate the story step-by-step. After that the researcher tried to develop the story, focusing on the identified and categorised themes.

Of course, the evidence gathering and interpretation process of secondary resources was ascribed to a social relativist perspective which suggests that evidence is considered to be an interpretation of the events by the authors. Here, the researcher remained open to these interpretations or the reality that evidence provided (Munslow 1997; Marwick 2001; Howell & Prevenier 2001; Cannadine 2002) or interpretations of the actual events (Porra Hirschheim & Parks 2005). However, the researcher tried to interpret this evidence through theoretical lenses. Of course, writers themselves observe events and circumstances based on some theory whether acknowledged, understood or not (Giddens & Turner 1987) and even pure observation is considered to be all but impossible (Eldredge & Gould 1972).

Further, since this study is interpretive research, it focused on analysing the complexity of social practices and understanding phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them through social interactions (Klein & Meyers 1999:69). The interpretation was based on the natural context because it helps to understand the cause of events and their changes over time and to assess their relative importance to current and future events (Gottschalk 1969; Elton 1967; Smith & Lux 1993).

In this study, much of the evidence, analyses, and conclusions were presented in a narrative form because the researcher believes that this type of presentation enables a rich understanding of the events and circumstances (Golder 2000; Porra et al. 2005). The narration is presented in a manner that maintains the integrity and consistency of the evidence (Mason et al. 1997b:317). Hence, this study is an explanatory narrative which describes what happened, what changed and why and how they happened and changed in relation to freedom of expression (Smith & Lux 1993; Danto 1985). This implies that, as indicated above, this study was not mere assemblage and presentation of admissible and ordered facts, but also carried out interpretation, explanation and inferring the inter-logic of events. This study examined the causes that tried to address a ‘why’ question (Porra, Hirschheim & Parks 2014). This study was not only empirical but also philosophical and theoretical, for it explained not only what happened but also explored how and why it happened.

The final outcome of this study, therefore, is a comprehensive story that unfolds and illuminates the events, circumstances, personalities, philosophies and immutable forces that remained unchanged throughout the transformation in political ideologies and through the changes in government in Ethiopia that impacted freedom of expression (Mason et al. 1997b:315-317).

To come to this final outcome, the researcher critically analysed the data in the framework of predefined research questions which were posed to explain the nature of freedom of expression in the country and to explore the basic causal factors threatening freedom of expression. However, in the process of carrying out an inductive analysis of the data, the study developed into theoretical models of repression and a grounded theory (Holloway 1997). The analysis was, indeed, performed using different analytical strategies to transform the raw data into a new and coherent depiction of the central elements being studied.

The first strategy used was *Constant Comparative Analysis* where data from different sources was consistently compared in order to develop conceptualisations from possible relations between various pieces of data (Glaser & Strauss 1967). For example, data from documents was compared with other types of evidence, for instance, with aural maxims or sayings (aural data/discourse) to see whether there were any similarities or differences. Questions like “why is this similar or different from that?” and “how are these related?” were consistently asked by the researcher. Indeed, this strategy is well suited to grounded theory for it is specifically used to study human phenomena because fundamental social processes explain something of human behaviour and experience (also see 3.3.3).

The second strategy was Narrative Analysis. Narrative analysis is a strategy that recognises the extent to which the stories we tell provide insights about our lived experiences (Sandelowski 1994). This strategy encompasses generating, interpreting, and representing the publics’ stories in narrative form. Therefore, by narrating the history of the country, specifically of the three most recent governments of the country, the researcher tried to discover how the public understood and made sense of different aspects of their lives in relation to freedom of expression.

The third strategy was Critical Discourse Analysis. Of course, this method was used along with Narrative Analysis. As indicated previously, this research is not only an empirical study but also analytical and philosophical, hence, all historical narrations were interpreted to understand what was represented in that historical narration. The interpretation capitalised on the critical inquiry on historical accounts such as events, circumstances, etc. to uncover the underlying behaviour and thought of society (Boutain 1999).

Generally, as qualitative research encompasses a wide range of philosophical positions, methodological strategies, and analytical procedures (Morse 1994), this study involved comprehension of all the whole historical phenomenon of the country, particularly during the three most recent governments of the country (see chapters two, five, six and seven), synthesising different aspects of the phenomenon and their relations and linkages, theorising how and why these relations appear as they do, decontextualising or putting forward the new knowledge about phenomena (see chapters three, eight & nine).

3.5 Trustworthiness and authenticity of the study

Qualitative data analysis is the process of changing the collected data into rich explanations and the interpretation of situations, phenomena and practices into the understanding of reason, motivation and opinions, and providing insights into a problem. In spite of such rich lustre, this method is criticised for a number of reasons. These include the lack of ensuring validity and reliability, and the lack of explicit assessment criteria for quality, subjective or biased role of the researcher in the data gathering and analysis process, and the lack of rigour in qualitative study due to its reliance on perceived information rather than authoritative information (Thorne 1997).

However, some qualitative researchers object on philosophical grounds to traditional notions of reliability and validity in judging the quality of qualitative study. Hence, they suggest alternative criteria within the paradigm of the study for evaluating qualitative research (Seale 1999; Patton 2002; Given & Saumure 2004).

Accordingly, the terms trustworthiness and authenticity have been suggested as a qualitative measure for validity and reliability (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Similarly, the concepts of generalisability, internal validity, reliability and objectivity are reconsidered and suggested alternative terms for qualitative research are transferability, credibility, dependability, confirmability and respectively. According to Given and Saumure (2004:895), trustworthiness is thought of as “the ways in which qualitative researchers ensure that transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability”. Transferability reflects applicability of the result of the study beyond the scope of the study context. Credibility refers to the accurate and rich description of the phenomenon in question including research approaches and methods. Confirmability, on the other hand, reflects the need to ensure that the interpretations and findings match the data. Finally, dependability, which is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research, requires the application of adequate and relevant methodological information to enable others to replicate the study in similar contexts.

In sum, trustworthiness provides qualitative researchers with a set of tools by which they can illustrate the worth of their project (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Given & Saumure 2004). Credibility for validity, transferability for generalisability, dependability for reliability and confirmability for objectivity are considered as equivalent in qualitative and quantitative research. This study, therefore, aimed to incorporate these measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. Some of the measures adopted to ensure transferability, credibility, conformability and dependability are outlined below.

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) and Jenson (2008) transferability is context-based and could be achieved by guaranteeing a full picture of the whole research context, design to the readers (by thick descriptions) and by purposive sampling. Hence, the entire research process was comprehensively made clear and there is the potential that readers can assess the degree of transferability to their given context.

In addition, to ensure credibility of a study, the researcher comprehensively and clearly described the whole process of the study: the context in which the study was conducted and the phenomena

in which the study occurred, research approaches, methods and techniques, and the data analysis strategies (see 3.2-3.4). Further, to insure confirmability, all claims of interpretation and conclusions were supported by the data which have been cited and referenced properly.

It is also noted that credibility and confirmability can be improved by undertaking triangulation. Triangulation in qualitative research has come to mean a multi-method approach to data collection and data analysis. The basic idea underpinning the concept of triangulation is that the phenomena under study can be understood best when approached with a variety or a combination of research methods to reduce biases or deficiencies caused by using only one method of inquiry (Creswell 2003). In qualitative inquiries, researchers tend to use triangulation as a strategy that allows them to identify, explore and understand different dimensions of the units of study, thereby strengthening their findings and enriching their interpretations. That is why it is believed that triangulation originated from the navigational and land surveying techniques that determine a single point in space with the convergence of measurements taken from two other distinct points (Rothbauer 2008).

Hence, the researcher used a Triangulation-of-Triangulation (TOT) technique to assure the credibility and conformity of this study. Triangulation-of-Triangulation refers to the application of multiple triangulation techniques. That is, the researcher used three triangulation techniques: Triangulation of Methods, Triangulation of Data Sources and Triangulation of Theories.

Triangulation of Data Sources refers to the use of evidence from a variety of data sources to increase the credibility of their research findings. Accordingly, the researcher exploited data from different life sectors, such as political, economic, social, religious and cultural, and from primary and secondary sources. Conversely, the researcher used three different data sources: documents, observation and oral data. In addition, the researcher used his lifetime experiences to cross-check the huge amount of data exploited from primary and secondary sources or from other data sources. The data emanating from a lifetime of participant observation encompasses largely cultural and religious practices which has direct impact on freedom of expression.

Further, data from those two broad sources, that is, documental and observational data were augmented by oral data that depicted the discourse of society on freedom of expression.

The use of multiple data sources was believed to provide greater depth and breadth of understanding on the study issue. Each type of source of data would provide similar or different evidence that could be comparable or provide different insights regarding the practice of freedom of expression (Moran-Ellis, Alexander, Cronin, Dickinson, Fielding & Sleney 2006; Rothbauer 2008)

The second triangulation used in this study is Triangulation of Methods. This triangulation itself encompasses three techniques of triangulation. That is, the integrated use of: 1) three different research methods: *Historical Method*, *Discourse Analysis* and *Grounded Theory* 2) four data sample selection techniques: *Critical Case Sampling*, *Intensity Case Sampling*, *Typical Case Sampling* and *Theoretical Sampling*; and 3) three data analysis strategies: *Constant Comparative Analysis*, *Narrative Analysis*, and *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

The third triangulation is Theory Triangulation. Using this technique was believed to enable the research to address the limits of a single theory. Firstly, as the issue of this study, freedom of expression is a complex issue to be framed in a single theory and different theories would illuminate the phenomenon from a different angle or with a different lens. Secondly, the researcher assumed that this technique would lead to the development of theory by expansion, and/or clarification of those theories. Thirdly, as this study was interdisciplinary, the researcher believed that it would foster consciousness on those interdisciplinary issues. In addition, this technique was believed to be used to overcome the researchers' personal biases or ideological blinders, and used to examine "dissonant or anomalous data", and enable a deeper understanding of the research (Rothbauer 2008:893). Accordingly, the researcher tried to interpret the whole study process and data using a number of different communication and press theories.

Moreover, to make the result of this study dependable, the researcher tried to make all the research processes transparent, by clearly describing the research process from start to finish. However, Miller (2008) insisted that purposeful attempts to demonstrate reliability are counterintuitive because the interpretive and subjective nature of qualitative work is its defining hallmark. Miller (2008) further indicated that richness and meaningfulness of qualitative research is largely dependent on its creativity and originality, but repeatability is neither desired nor possible.

Of course, as Miller (2008) indicated, the researcher's background, interests, skills, and biases play unique roles in the framing of studies and in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. As qualitative work is highly interpretive and is conducted diversely in data collection and analysis, even the nature of the data may not be purely objective. That is, there is a chance that it might be affected by the biases of researchers. Hence, such historical research cannot be absolutely objective because data which emanated from secondary resources could not be absolutely free from bias. Berger & Luckmann (1967) also insisted that historians invariably influence the patterns they see in the evidence, and even accept that they are part of the stories they construct. In addition, according to Giddens & Turner (1987), every observation is made based on some theory whether acknowledged, understood or not, and pure observation is impossible (Eldredge & Gould 1972). Consequently, in such historical research, one cannot be sure that there will be absolute objectivity. However, efforts were exerted to attain maximum objectivity by being pragmatic and using empirical evidence.

3.6 The role of the researcher

As indicted previously, as this work is interpretative research, the researcher played a significant role, from designing the research questions to formulating theoretical concepts and making conclusions. However, throughout research processes, the researcher attempted to minimise researcher effects so as to make the research transparent, credible and dependable. That is, all the procedures of the study such as the philosophical approach, specific research methods, techniques of identification of data and data selection, and strategies of data analysis were made clear in a way that anyone can inspect them independently and in a way that others can follow. In

addition, all the interpretations and conclusions were made based on as much supporting evidence in the appropriate context, in an empirical way and in a way that anyone can judge.

However, one should also consider that there are advocates for the positive influences of subjectivity. Miller (2004:572) believes:

qualitative research in most cases ascribes to a notion of subjectivity... and subjective qualitative research marked by researchers' honesty, transparency, and contextualization throughout the research process, is valid in that it offers meaning, lends insight, and in some cases, leads to socially responsible action.

In addition, the constructivist version of grounded theory recognises that the researcher plays an active and vital role in the research process, particularly in developing dialogue between the researcher and data from which codes and categories, and eventually a grounded theory would result (Bryant & Charmaz 2007).

Even philosophers from the 20th century such as Immanuel Kant, Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Albert Einstein advocated for subjectivity. For example, Einstein claimed that “if science was limited by objectivity, then it would not be capable of fresh thinking or producing original insights” (Siegesmund 2008:843). Recently, Tom Barone (2000) insisted that, in current philosophical and scientific understandings, research needs to be evaluated on its capacity to provide useful insights into addressing practical problems, not whether it is rigorously objective or subjective.

However, here, the researcher tried to be reflective at each stage of the research process about epistemological decisions regarding the research and its findings, as the researcher used his own experiences and reflections to illuminate important meaning from the raw data throughout the study.

3.7 Summary

This chapter sought to explicate the research context, the research processes, the research approach, research methods, the research data collection techniques and data analysis strategies.

First, this chapter discussed the qualitative paradigm as a suitable research approach and the importance of the integrated usage of three research methods: Historical Research, Discourse

Analysis and Grounded Theory for this study. The historical method was used to explain the history of the social, cultural, religious, economic and political aspects of life that had direct or indirect relations with freedom of expression. The discourse analysis was used to explore the underlying discourses or ideas behind those social, cultural, religious, economic and political histories of the country which contributed to the suppression of freedom of expression. Grounded theory was brought into the process of explaining of historical events, circumstances and incidents, identification of the threats of freedom of expression and the exploration of underlying causing factors of freedom of expression to generate theoretical models and grounded theory.

Second, as this research is a holistic study, it required a holistic approach to collect appropriate data. Hence, this chapter explicitly and comprehensively indicated how data was collected from all aspects of life: social, cultural, religious, economic and political. This chapter thoroughly elaborated the philosophical grounds for the selection of these sources and the techniques used to select the data from those sources.

Third, as this study was organised on the integration of three theoretical research methods, it was important to indicate how the data could be analysed using integrated strategies. Hence, this chapter explained how the data was processed, interpreted and presented by an integrated use of *constant comparative analysis*, *narrative analysis* and *critical discourse analysis* strategies. That means, the constant comparative analysis was used to compare and interpret the data obtained from three sources of data: documents, participant observation and aural data; narrative analysis was found appropriate to explain the historical information; and critical discourse analysis was used to critically assess the underlying factors that affect the right to freedom of expression.

Fourth, as qualitative research needs to be conducted with the issues of quality and rigor in mind, the criteria for the fulfilment of quality qualitative research: credibility, dependability and confirmability and transferability were outlined.

Finally, as credibility in qualitative research is enhanced with the minimal involvement of the researcher, this section outlined the researcher's involvement in the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE FEUDAL MONARCHY (1930-1974)

4.1 Introduction

After about a century long struggle for national unity and sovereignty, Ethiopia was established as an independent African power at the end of 19th century. Menelik's win over Italy and ability to resist Great Britain and other European powers developed Ethiopia's respect both at home and abroad. Menelik managed to preserve and extend the territories of ancient Ethiopia (with the exception of Eritrea); he restored order and held down dissident feudal lords; and he laid the foundations for further development and modernisation reforms of the country. However, the success in territorial gains through internal conquest and expansion, and resistance to external colonial expansions brought with it the notion that the use of force was a major instrument of control and domination. Over the years, not only has this been gradually ingrained in the belief system and values of the elites in Ethiopia, but has also been promoted by the cultural and social structures of traditional Ethiopia. The Solomonic myth, for instance, purportedly established the ruling line of Ethiopia into a blood relationship with the House of Solomon. The people were persuaded to believe that Solomon's descendants, such as Emperor Haile Selassie, should rule over Ethiopia because they were divinely ordained (see 4.3).

Nevertheless, with the demise of Emperor Menelik II in 1913, the Ethiopian political terrain experienced extensive religious and political intrigues. In the process of incorporating the periphery of the empire, Menelik II engaged and subdued heterogeneous communities with varying degrees of military resistance, and the system of governance put emphasis on centralisation, political, economic, social, religious and cultural domination. This was followed by the resettlement of conquered lands by individuals who operated as war lords for the monarchy. Consequently, not only freedom of expression but also all aspects of life of the dominated society were hugely restricted. The above activities have also been used as a precursor for latter-day claims of "Ethiopian colonialism" by irredentist nationalists and scholars who have created suspicion on national unity and security, and have contributed to the escalation of conflict, civil war and extended suppression and stifling of expression (see 4.4, 5.6).

As indicated earlier, Menelik's chosen heir was his largely ineffectual grandson, Lij Iyasu, who was ultimately deposed in September 1916 by a group of conservative nobles. The nobles frowned upon the young leader's flirtation with Islam. According to *Fetha Nagast* anyone outside of Orthodox Tewahido Christianity has no right to claim power (see 4.3.1), he promoted cultural reforms, along with his intransigence toward the veterans and nobility who were followers of Christianity. After the deposition of Lij Iyasu, Menelik's daughter and Iyasu's aunt, Zewditu, was subsequently proclaimed as Empress through the support of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church and Ras Tafari Mekonen, the later Emperor Haile Selassie, who was endowed as the full authority regent and heir. Selassie had some modernisation ambitions and finally overthrew princess Zewditu after fighting with her ex-husband (Zewdie 2008:125; Marcus 1994:117). The struggle for power was hugely tense, claimed lives and strengthened the already existed practice of claiming power by force, through the feudalist imperial system and through repression (sees 1.3).

However, opposition between individual adherence to orthodoxy and consent regarding indigenous traditions, and efforts by the political elite to impose rational bureaucratic reforms evolved. This situation ultimately invalidated the emperor's modernist aspirations, despite the efforts of Ras Tafari Mekonnen, in his status both as regent and later as Emperor Haile Selassie. After a bloody conflict in 1926, the regent consolidated his power, taking advantage of the death of old nobles and archbishop Mattheos. He isolated the *Rases* (regional lords) who resisted his political influence or modernist initiatives. He used his sophisticated understanding of the nuances of local and global politics to overcome the resistance against his power. Finally, on 2 November 2 1930, Tafari Mekonnen was crowned as His Imperial Majesty, *Haile Selassie I, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, and King of the Kings of Ethiopia*. This was possible because Tafari Makonnen had an imperial lineage through his mother who claimed direct descent to Makeda, the Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon of ancient Israel (Marcus 1994:117).

Though this transition period, from Emperor Menilik II to Emperor Haile Selassie I, was characterised by conspiracy, conflict and suppression, it was also a period of modernisation,

particularly with the expansion modern media (see 2.5, 4.5). As the objective of this study is analysis of the evolution of freedom of expression in the three most recent governments. In this chapter, the total practice and evolution of freedom of expression in this government, the Feudal Monarchy, lasting from 1930-1974, will be analysed, as it was impacted by the process of all round change of the country: political, economic, social, religious and cultural.

Table 4.1 Timeline of major events during the Feudalist-Imperial Reign

Year	Major Events
1930	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haile Selassie I, Ethiopian regent from 1916 to 1930, becomes Emperor
1931	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 16 July, introduction of Ethiopia's first written constitution
1932	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The weekly newspaper called <i>Le Ethiopie Commercial</i> is established in French
1933	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first radio station is inaugurated
1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 15 February, Emperor Haile Selassie I grants the right to establish a private press under the rule of <i>A proclamation to publish books and newspapers</i> 5 December: Italian invasion of Ethiopia at Walwal, Ogeden Province
1935	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two newspapers are established: a quarterly <i>Kesatie Berhan</i> and a political weekly <i>Atibya Kokeb</i>
1936	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italians capture Addis Ababa, Haile Selassie flees
1937-1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liberation struggle against Italy
1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy is defeated with the help British and Commonwealth troops <i>Addis Zemen</i> newspaper meaning 'New Era' is established as a weekly <i>Sendek Alamachin</i>, meaning 'Our Banner' or 'Our Flag', a popular weekly and bilingual, Amharic and Arabic newspaper is established to celebrate the victory over Italy
1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Press and Information Department is established under the then Ministry of Pen <i>Negarit Gazeta</i>, the proclamation newspaper, appears in Amharic and English
1943	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Ethiopian Herald</i> is launched as an English language weekly newspaper <i>Ye-Eritrea Demts</i>, meaning <i>The Voice of Eritrea</i> is being published in Amharic and Tigrinya by the Ethio-Eritrean Unionist Association
1946	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ethiopian Review</i> is started in English, <i>Berhanena Selam</i> newspaper was given a new life as a monthly
1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major press development takes place in Ethiopia for the contents of publications are widened as three religious and ethical related newspapers, <i>Zena Bete Kristyan</i>, <i>Nuro Bezeday</i> and <i>Tekle Haimanot</i> are introduced
1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two Newspapers, <i>Alemena Tebeb</i> meaning <i>The World and Wisdom</i>, in Amharic, and <i>Progress Economique</i>, in Amharic and French, are launched
1951	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haile Selassie founds the University College of Addis Ababa
1952	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Newspapers <i>L'Ethiopie d'Aujourd'hui</i>, meaning 'Ethiopia Today' in Amharic and French, and Amharic counterpart of the English <i>Daily News Bulletin</i> comes into being United Nations federates Eritrea with Ethiopia
1955	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Constitution is introduced The two <i>Menen Magazines</i> also begin as a bi-lingual publication in Amharic and English

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Voice of Ethiopia</i> and <i>Ye Ethiopia Dimts</i> are originally published
1957	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penal code is established, with severe restrictions on freedom of expression
1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 13 December there is a failed coup d'état led by the commander of the Imperial Bodyguard and a small group of radical intellectuals • Television medium is introduced
1961	
1962	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In May, at Student Day Ceremonies, students read poems that are charged with political commentary critical of the regime, signalling the start of the student movement • Haile Selassie annexes Eritrea, which becomes an Ethiopian province
1963	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shutdown of Addis Ababa University for strong students' protests • <i>Radio Voice of the Gospel</i> begins to broadcast • First conference of the Organisation of African Unity holds in Addis Ababa
1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Ethiopian University Service (EUS)
1967	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student movement becomes more unified and cohesive • Establishment of the University Students Union of Addis Ababa (USUAA)
1968	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various student organised mobilisations and protests are met with repressive responses from the police
1969	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student movement spreads to various colleges, universities and high schools • Emperor makes some concessions by firing his Minister of Education
1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ethiopian Radio</i> expanded into three different locations and began broadcasting in six Ethiopian languages
1971	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary school teachers strike in support of the USUAA
1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Famine begins in north-eastern region of Ethiopia • The Board of Governors effectively suspended the USUAA
1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students boycott classes calling for the reinstatement of the USUAA
1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final stage of Ethiopian revolution begins in January 1974 • Haile Selassie, and the 3000 years monarchical rule, is removed from power following a military coup d'état, motivated partly by the famine in the North-East of the country which claimed the lives of an estimated 200,000 people.

4.2 The process of socio-political reforms and practices of freedom of expression

Ethiopia's past has had an enormous impact on state-society relationships, specifically around the practice of freedom of expression. Traditional institutions developed over the course of time have been established in more conservative ways. Traditional values and institutions appeared to have encouraged neither open opposition nor reasoned criticism of government authorities. It is argued, therefore, that deep-seated traditional and indigenous political forms that have long been rooted in the past have vital relevance in explaining state-society relationships and the practice of freedom of expression in Ethiopia. For instance, the society has been bound to follow the rulers and their ideas and societal values without opposing such values. There is a clear motto which says "Teketel Alekahine; temelket elamahine" which literally means *Follow your boss and target*

at your objective. This clearly indicates that societal values usually lead by authorities have a great impact on the practice of freedom of expression (see 7.4-7.5). Therefore, having a good grasp of historical, social and cultural circumstances will be of paramount importance in understanding the evolution of freedom of expression in Ethiopia.

Emperor Haile Selassie's rule would feature major historical events which included major incidents such as fascism, colonial wars, and tests of the theory and practice of domestic and internationalist liberal reforms. As part of his duties abroad, Tafari Mekonen as regent served as an ambassador for 14 years, and his diplomatic achievements included the facilitation of Ethiopia's ultimate acceptance as a member of the League of Nations in 1923. He had imagined that membership in the league would ensure Ethiopia a period of peace and make it free from the colonial ambitions of other global powers, though the assumption and all the efforts ended in vain. Ethiopia's membership, indeed, was of global diplomatic significance as the sole African representative in the European-dominated forum. This sentiment was duly appreciated by many as an important historical achievement in the movement to obtain freedom for Africans. In 1924, Mekonnen undertook an extensive foreign tour as a modernist monarch with a progressive outlook which convinced him that Ethiopia needed major innovation and development reforms (Adejumobi 2007:52).

At home, the Emperor operated with the major imperative of completing the modernisation project, including that of the media sector which was initiated by Menelik II. Most of the modernisation details made before the second Italian-Ethiopian war were written in Haile Selassie I's autobiography, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress* Volume I (1938:46-54). The modernisation practices listed under the title *About the improvement, by ordinance and proclamation, of internal administration, and about the efforts to allow foreign civilization to enter Ethiopia* include, among others, curbing of hereditary feudal rule of nobility in remote provinces and substitution of merit-based appointees, revision of the judicial system and the establishment of a modern Criminal Code, establishment of foreign relations, abolition of slavery and backward criminal administration and punishment practices, introduction of foreign technology and development of infrastructures, and the establishment of printing presses. Indeed, these modernisation activities contributed to some extent to create a relatively more aware, more

free, more technologically modern, more educated and more informed society. However, the legal reforms are monarchical and mostly impractical, and the administration, including the press establishment, is strictly authoritarian. Hence, the practice of freedom of expression was not changed as it had been expected, for all threats to freedom of expression were broadly maintained (see 4.3-4.5).

In addition to those political and technological advancements, the emperor tried to change some cultural practices. One significant change was the reform on religious administration. Previously, native Ethiopians had not been allowed to become bishops of the Church of Orthodox Tewahido Christianity, rather bishops had been assigned from the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. However, the Emperor won this concession by stressing that "believers in Christ are not such by innate distinctness, but by virtue of conduct". Hence, the Emperor managed the appointment of five native Ethiopian Orthodox Bishops in 1928 (Haile Selassie I 1938:51). Egypt had used this practice, appointing bishops from Egypt, as a huge political instrument to manage and control the controversial Nile issue. Egypt had subtly used bishops to influence the thoughts and beliefs of Ethiopians in many aspects of life. As we have seen in the previous sections (see 2.5.4.2), religion and religious leaders have a significant impact on all aspects of life (political, social, cultural and economic), including in generating ideas, formulating laws, anointing leaders and regulation. Laws promulgated by governments are founded on the nature of the social fabric, culture, religion, societal values, etcetera. Hence, one can clearly see that repressive governments' laws, rules and regulations are usually germinated within societies. Accordingly, bishops have been used as an instrument to control society by preaching and persuading citizens through what is called *Gizit*, a compelling religious instrument used to constrain any disobedient followers to the orders of religious or/and political authorities. So, one can argue that religious and political authorities are different faces of the same coin and "secular" authorities and systems are the direct results of the religious and cultural authorities and systems. This relationship is the base of the new theoretical model of freedom of expression, the *Pyramid Trap Theory*, developed in this thesis (see 4.3.1, 7.2, 7.4.1-7.4.2). The argument by religious/political leaders is that if one is ordered to do something or to follow some religious dogma, this has to be done at any cost, without complaint or resistance. This practice has impacted on the socio-political orientation, economic performance, technological creativity and advancement of the country,

including freedom of expression. That is why many believe that a new brand of Christianity, with different and more conservative features evolved, and that is why a new socio-cultural context which endorses submissiveness, and promotes suspicion of new ideas, thoughts and practices evolved in Ethiopia. For instance, it is frowned upon to ask philosophical questions about God or other religious secrets. Religious leaders say “Atimeramer teblual”, which literally means *God orders not to investigate*, or they say” Egziabhern atifetaten teblo tetsifual”, which literally means *it is written not to dare God*. In addition, to prevent society from asking questions, the authorities say “Egziabhere yekebawun atkawom”, which implies *do not oppose the God’s appointee*, as the authorities are conceived as appointees of God. This was asserted by the Emperor in the preamble of the 1955 revised “modern” constitution saying “CONQUERING LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH HAILE SELASIE I ELECT OF GOD, EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA”. This implies when one opposes authorities, it is conceived that he/she opposes God. Accordingly, societies have developed a maxim which says “Semay ayitares nigus ayikeses”, which literally implies *Kings cannot be accused much as the sky cannot be ploughed*. Consequently, the majority of society haven been curved to be submissive, stifled, silent and a mere receivers of the thoughts of religious and political authorities.

Further, Egyptian bishops deviously demonised innovation and creativity by connoting them with evil. People have been made to be suspicious of new ideas and experiences as a result of religious teachings; even modern education and technology have been considered satanic. A good example is the case of the suspicion of the telephone during the reign of Menilik II. When telephone technology was introduced to Ethiopia, the nobility was suspicious of the technology. While the king was communicating through cable phones, they became disappointed, assuming that he was communicating with evil spirits, even though he had made a lot of effort to introduce the technology to society. The second example was the case of the cinema; when the emperor opened a cinema, the nobility labelled it “Seitan bet”, which means *Satan’s house*, and they agitated for people to oppose it and not participate in it. The third, practice, which persists even today, is the case of marginalising the creativity of manual and creative works like tannery, blacksmithing and weaving which those who practice them being identified as evil being excommunicated (see 2.5.5.1). For instance, my father told me, as he had been told by his “yenefis abat”, which literally means *God father*, that “people who do tanning are not pure

humans but hybrids of man and dog”, and ordered me not to communicate with them. More surprisingly, there are societies in Addis Ababa today who are considered to be “buda”, which literally means evil *eyed*. They are accused of killing and eating human meat just because they are just weavers and blacksmiths, and they have been feared, looked down upon, marginalised and excommunicated. All these incidents imply that people who have different ideologies, thoughts and practices have been restricted, silenced and excommunicated.

Another unique feature of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Christianity is the practice of restricting or banning work on “Yebeal Kenat”, to mean *Feast* or *Commemoration days*. These are days that are assigned to the pioneers of the religion called ‘saints’”. In Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Christianity, each day is assigned to different saints, and sometimes some saints are given more than one day, and each day of the month is assigned to at least three to four saints. These days are protected from undertaking daily secular activities. For instance, days 1, 16 and 21 are assigned to saint Mary; days 27 and 29 are given to Jesus; day 12 is given to saint Michael; and day 30 is given to saint Markus. Accordingly, almost all days are identified as Feast Days. Although there are regional differences to the degree celebration for these days, people have to restrict themselves from performing secular and manual activities or face the consequences of *Gizit*, that is, he/she will be “constrained in heaven and on earth” by religious leaders. Alternatively, he/she will be expelled from society because they have been identified as anti-religious and a person that brings catastrophe to society, as the society believes that working during these *Beal Kens* would enrage God or the saint and create natural disasters such as flooding, snow, lightening and the destruction of their wealth. This religious practice, as many argued, has impacted freedom of expression; firstly, directly preventing people from holding their own thoughts and being able to practice freedom of thought. Secondly, indirectly aggravating poverty by preventing society from working and expressing creativity, as freedom of expression is inversely correlated to poverty. The worst thing is that though the source of the clergy has changed from Egypt to Ethiopia, the already established socio-cultural feature has continued to impact freedom of expression.

These circumstances explicate that repressive governments and rulers and their repressive laws are commonly the fruits of the established values, principles and ideologies of groups which

evolve from the limited experiences, tests, attitudes, beliefs and philosophies of society, that is, the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*. In addition, these circumstances indicate that laws serve the group interests, that is, group values, principles and ideologies which are mainly *Ethno-Luminary*. These relationships create a pyramid trap of repression which the researcher named the *Pyramid Trap Structure of Repression* (see Figure 7.3), which also forms a complicated network of factors which the researcher called the *Web of the Pyramid Trap* (see figure 7.4)

The socio-political changes during the Imperial period, particularly 1930 to 1935, were significant in the consolidation of political authority and development reforms in the empire. Upon his ascendancy, Emperor Haile Selassie I began the programme of political reform by introducing Ethiopia's first written constitution on 16 July 1931. This constitution shifted the bureaucratic empire from the calculated balance of decentralised regional leadership towards centralised authoritarianism (see 4.3.2). The constitution document aided the new Emperor's desire to fracture the power of the feudal lords through the development of the authority of the central government. In reforming Ethiopia's political structure, the constitution provided for an appointed bicameral legislature, and was the first time, though nominally, non-noble subjects had any role in official government policy. Of course, this house was dominated by members of the noble class who had already served the empire as ministers, judges, or high-ranking military officers. The King's control of central power was visible in the fact that he was the one who convened and dissolved parliament, appointed ministers and had full power to issue decrees when the chambers were not sitting. He also established regulations for all administrative departments. However, in the reform process he used the sense of *double-consciousness* to his own advantage. He was well versed in both European modernisation and the traditional values associated with being a descendent of Ethiopian royal family; he walked between these two worldviews for the rest of his life, and he was always conscious of how they complemented and conflicted with each other (Adejumobi 2007:52; Hall 2003:72). Hence, though there were big promises to modernise and develop the media, freedom of expression levels remained the same because traditional establishments could not match modern innovation and thought. For example, although efforts to establish media were there, the media were moulded to serve the interests of ruling groups or to propagate *Ethno-Luminary* thought (see 2.5.4, 4.5).

Further, though the Emperor, in the name of modernisation, appointed administrators of his own choosing wherever he could and thus sought to limit the power of the regional administrators and other nobles, he did not directly attack the land tenure system that had been linked to the traditional political order, hence, the economic effect on freedom of expression continued. Moreover, though the new constitution officially removed the legitimising function of the church to determine the nature of the empire and succession, and transferred it into the hands of the monarch, the church's conservative presence was maintained. The monarchy made little effort to functionally separate the power of the church from that of state, a prerequisite for modern governance. Furthermore, in accordance with the revised constitution of 1955, the Bishop, commonly known as *Abun*, the primate of the Orthodox Tewahido Church, was a member of The Crown Council, an informal policymaking body which was given great attention by the Emperor (Perham 1969:89). Consequently, the church's immense wealth was expanded to the detriment of the citizenry, with extractions from the peasantry in particular (see 2.3.1). The new constitution did little to further modernisation initiatives and improves the practice of freedom of expression, although it helped establish a nominal parliament and legal or administrative facilities to implement its programs (see 4.3).

Though modern education, which had been considered as part of modernisation, helped to eradicate some of the claims of tradition and authority, it was mainly available to individuals who came from noble families. This, in turn, created a de facto system of occupational caste and failure to dismantle the indigenous land-tenure system which remained entrenched within the church and within the hegemonic order. This situation provided the basis for class formation and social stratification with the emperor at the very top, the nobility and landlords occupied the highest rung of social and political hierarchy, smallholding farmers controlled small plots of land with low rental value in the next category, followed by millions of landless peasants who cultivated rented land and were dominated in every aspect. This hierarchical social system similarly created a hierarchical pyramid of repression and causal network of repression instruments (see 7.5).

In addition, by the 20th century, most of the southern landlord class consisted of Christian settlers from the north while the tenants were mostly non-Christians and indigenes of the area. This has pointed to the gradual transformation in ethnic and cultural differences and resulted in rivalry and development of *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* which are the core of causal factors of repression. This complicated the process of class formation and social relations have also laid the foundations for current individual and communal disputes, suppressions and restrictions to freedom of expression. Furthermore, the predominant socio-cultural, political and legal milieu permitted no political associations of any kind (Wolde 2005:80). All these illustrate that the Emperor continued with the course of the old aristocracy under the cover of Western style of bureaucracy with absolute monarchical rule, where the nobility exercised absolute dominance over freedom, including freedom of expression. While the peasantry was dominated and suffered severe restriction in every aspect of life, hence the repression of freedom of expression remained the same.

4.3 Legal and constitutional frameworks and freedom of expression

Section 2.5.4 showed that freedom of expression has not only faced restrictions but threats from law. Though the constitutions and legislation of the majority of nations globally promote freedom of expression and press autonomy, it is evident that the press has been losing more and more of its freedom by restricting laws. Particularly in Ethiopia, the executive and judicial branches have been getting more power than the legislature and have been operating to limit press freedom. The press has felt the blows of libel action and its timidity has increased. In addition to legal restrictions which are launched to maintain order, responsibility and social harmony, society formulated other regulation that has constrained free expression (see 4.2). The Rule of the Imperial monarchy is basically characterised by such legal features, which also has cultural and traditional origins that restrict freedom of expression. Hence, these legal restrictions and threats to freedom of expression have been addressed below.

4.3.1. Traditional laws

Although the centralisation process of modern Ethiopia, based on the principles of monarchical absolutism, started in the middle of the 19th century, up until 1931 there was no written secular constitution which governed the state. From the beginning of the 13th century to the beginning of

20th century, the laws of the *Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church* were the chief legitimate monarchical rules (see 2.3.1). The rights and obligations of the crown and its subjects were developed by monks of the church. Accordingly, the church had until 1974 two traditional laws to govern the church and the citizenry. The two laws were: the *Kabra Nagast*, which literally means The Glory of the Kings; and the *Fetha Nagast*, which means The Law of the Kings.

The first law narrates the mythical origin and glory of the royals. According to Markus (1994:17), *Kabra Nagast* was compiled by Ethiopians in the 14th century by blending different documents to legitimise the ascendancy of Emperor Yekuno Amlak, the first king of the *Solomonic Dynasty*. This was after it was captured by the *Zagwe Dynasty* and then restored the Solomonic line, believed to be chosen by God to rule the chosen nation, Ethiopia, after God rejected Judah (Israel). However, the tale had been used as a vital instrument from the 13th century to the middle of the 20th century, particularly until the 1974 revolution which saw the overthrowing of the 255th king of the *Solomonic Dynasty*, Emperor Haile Selassie.

The basic argument of this document, according to Budge (1966:220-227), was that the *Ethiopian people*, not the Jews, are the *chosen people* and that only the Ethiopian monarchs, who could trace their lineage to the house of *David* and his son *Solomon*, had a right to rule the people of Ethiopia and the world. In the process of telling the mythical divine origins of the Ethiopian monarchs, the *Kabra Nagast* discredits Solomon of Israel and the Jews for having rejected Christ. Following the rejection, the light of God is said to have left Israel and began to shine on Ethiopia. According to this document, Ethiopian monarchs have established the right to rule because of a combination of being the direct descendent of the *House of David* and having possession of the *Ark of the Covenant*, which is believed to be in Ethiopia.

The second law, *Fetha Nagast*, spells out clearly the duties and obligations of the subjects of the crown, as well as the obligations of the Crown to the people. The codes articulated in this document are supposed to have flowed from God to the people through the king, and anyone who claimed to be a legitimate heir to the Ethiopian throne had to adhere to Orthodox Christianity (Keller 2010:61-62; Greenfield 1965:240).

These two documents, in addition to being used as the precursors of the written national constitutions of the modern era have remained dominant and used as official supreme laws from the 13th century to the 20th century and beyond. *Kabra Nagast* had been a crowning principle until the 1974 revolution. A person who is going to be king was identified by the principles of *Kabra Nagast*. That is, a person who is not descendent of King Solomon could not be King of Ethiopia. Though *Fetha Nagast* remained official supreme law in Ethiopia, both in the church and in secular society, until the 1931's modern-style constitution, its effect in the secular world is still evident; and is still officially used in the Church. In the preface of its publication of the English version of this document in 1968, the Emperor asserted its continued effect saying "Fetha Nagast - a work combining both spiritual and secular matters...has been venerated, supported, and applied both by the government of our Empire and by the Church". This document has been used to maintain the superiority of the church and the nobility in all aspects of life by directly or indirectly restricting freedom of thought and expression. For instance, Chapter XI (14) of this document restricts access to information by saying "...nor must we reveal mysteries (our faith to the infidels); rather we must be constant (not to reveal the mysteries) for asked for them". This implies that people out of that religious group has no access to information. Furthermore, according to XX (GENER 20) "He who despises those who gather during the feasts of the martyrs is one full of pride, and must be excommunicated". This also shows that each individual should strictly undertake the practice of Feast, and no one has a right to comment or be a critic of religious people and their practices, otherwise they face a penalty of excommunication (see 5.2). If one has different religious thought, cultural or religious practice, he/she is labelled a heretic or an apostate and excommunicated. Hence, everyone in society should possess identical beliefs, thoughts, ideas and practices (see 2.5.4.2).

Of course, in addition to this dominant practice, different societies in Ethiopia have their own traditional institutions, some with unwritten laws, which articulate the rights and obligations of the rulers and the subjects. A good example for this is the *Gadaa* system which is a form of democratic practice of the Oromo people that change ruler every eight years. In this system, females have been excluded from political participation. Moreover, to be part of this society, one needs to change his/her identity according to the society's administration principle called *Moggaasa*, that is completely *Ethno-Luminary* which is the core of the pyramid Trap of

Repression. According to this system, any individual or group who is defeated by the Oromo Ethnic group should change his/her religion, name, his/her predecessors' name, and life ideology, amongst other things (Seyoum 2016) (also see 1.3).

Females, not only in this society but also throughout the country, have been restricted from participating, not only in politics but also in different social and economic activities. For instance, females did not have the right to own land until the 1974 revolution. Today, females under the Orthodox Tewahido Christianity do not have the right to teach or preach religious ideas. This is one simple example of how the values and principles of a society have huge impact to make some parts of a society muted and create a sense of groupthinking and a conception of *Ethno-Luminarity* in some degree beteen men and women (see 2.5.5.1, 2.5.5.4).

However, in 'secular offices', the 'modernised' penal code, (see the impact of this code on freedom of expression below in 4.3.2), was introduced and officially replaced the criminal provisions of the *Fetha Nagast*. This document had been used as an educational resource for centuries and is still consulted in matters of law in the present era. For instance, in 1960, when the government enacted the civil code of Ethiopia, the *Fetha Nagast* was cited as an inspiration for the codification commission (Damitie 2011:160, Dominic 2010:2). This indicates that the so-called modern but repressive constitutions have been developed based on traditional and conservative principles, and on laws that restrict freedom, particularly freedom of expression. Threats to freedom of expression originate from the religious, socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political foundations of society which themselves germinate from the limited experiences, tests, attitudes, beliefs and philosophies of the societies, *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*.

4.3.2. The 1931 Constitution

Although many developments and modernisation efforts were deployed by the Emperor, the period between 1930 and 1936 was used as the basis of the establishment of absolute monarchy. Through the struggle for power with the support of educated elites, the emperor executed and exiled all the competitors, accusing them of being obstacles to modernisation and replacing them with supporters. On the other side, those who opposed him accused him of selling the country's interests and values to foreign powers, particularly the enemy Italy. However, although the

Emperor was supported by the educated elites of the European mould, the promoters of modernisation took the model of Japan's administration and created a senate and a chamber of deputies. It was intended as the foundation for a strong monarchical government rather than for popular representation (Zewdie 2008:150, Hall 2003:72). Hence, no development process was in favour of freedom and freedom of expression, but was rather implemented to strengthen the authority.

The first measure the Emperor took along the process of modernisation and centralisation was to grant the adoption of the 1931 Constitution. This constitution, as indicated above, is the first *modern* written constitution of the country but with unique features. On the one hand, it reinforced the traditional position of the emperor saying "Siyume Egziabiher, Niguse Nagast Za-Ethiopia", which literally means *Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia*. On the other, hand it marked the end of absolute role by the church and nobility, or at least the gradual reduction of their role in local leadership and the traditional check against the power of the King of Kings. This feature undoubtedly marked the culmination of the struggle for unification and centralisation of the country which began with Emperors Tewodros II during the middle of the 19th century and reached its consolidation under the absolutist rule of Emperor Haile Selassie I.

The constitution was a fairly brief document containing 55 articles. The first chapter, with five articles, dealt with the emperor and succession to the throne. Chapter I, article 1 of this constitution provided: "the Imperial dignity shall remain perpetually attached to the line of His Majesty Haile Selassie I, descendant of King Sahleselassie, whose line descends...from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of King Solomon of Jerusalem and of Queen Sheba of Ethiopia". The Solomonic legend finds its spiritual justification in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (see 4.3.1). The people were taught to believe that although the ultimate source of authority is God; its worldly exercise was bestowed upon the Emperor. Therefore, not only was authority claimed to have originated from the pinnacle of the hierarchy and the direction of its flow downward but also the excessive respect afforded to authority promotes the a sense of *Narcicism*, the apex of the Pyramid trap of repression, and made it difficult and even impossible to express any opposition to a superior (see 7.4.3). This cultural order was even more complicated by the hierarchical nature of the politico-administrative structure and the predominantly feudal socio-economic

formation which seen Ethiopian society being ruled by a hierarchical politico-administrative order, with public institutions operating under the monarchy (Ayenew 1997:64)

Article I (4) of the constitution declared that the emperor's office was sacred, his dignity inviolable and his power indisputable. As indicated above, the significance of the references to the nature of the empire and the procedure for imperial succession in the new constitution was it effectively removed the legitimising function from the church and transferred it into the hands of the monarch who promulgated the document. Nevertheless, the church's conservative presence was maintained as little effort was made to functionally separate the power of the church from that of the state; a prerequisite for modern governance. The church's immense wealth expanded at the detriment of the citizenry and resources were extracted from national coffers, particularly from the peasantry (Adejumobi 2007:53). This shows that though the power of decision on succession transferred from the church to the monarchy, the nature of cultural and economic dominance, and the nature and practice of freedom of expression, remained unchanged. Furthermore, it became more concentrated because all decisions were in the hands of the Emperor who was a good manifestation of *Narcicist* rulership and the demise of freedom of thought and expression.

Moreover, according Chapter 1 Article 2-5 and Chapter 2 of this constitution, the emperor controlled almost everything; all power over central and local governments, the legislature, the judiciary, and the military remained with the emperor. Accordingly, every political, social, economic and cultural policy emerged at the centre. Thus, the monarchy promotes one political and economic ideology, a dominance of one religious thought, assimilation of one culture centrally controlled media, etcetera. This situation has created a sense of suppression and disappointment across different ethnic groups and has initiated the evolution of anti-centralisation movements which trigger, rivalry, conflict, Ethno-Luminarity and further repression and restriction on freedom of expression in the name of national security and sovereignty (see 2.5.4, 4.4.2, 5.6, 6.2). Hence, the constitution was essentially an effort to provide a legal basis for replacing traditional provincial rulers with appointees loyal to the emperor.

In Chapter 4 of the constitution, there is an assertion of the Emperors own status, declaring that “the person of the Emperor is sacred, his dignity inviolable, and his power indisputable”. This implies that his authority was unlimited and unquestionable and his function was multi-faceted. Therefore, it is completely illegal to criticise the Emperor, deviate from his orders and thoughts, and claim power from him or his decedents, He has been portrayed as ‘God’, whom everything should be constrained by his name. Indeed, many Jamaican societies believe him to be God, the saver of the black world from domination by the white. For instance, in Ethiopia, if one was asked to do or not to do something by the name of the Emperor saying “Behaileselassie amlak”, which literally means *in the name of Haile Selassie*, he/she has an inescapable obligation to accomplish it by any cost. Moreover, these provisions indicate to some extent that the coming to power of Haile Selassie I and his constitution was planned in order for Ethiopia to take a different course to the tradition which saw the right to rule open to anyone, presumably of regional nobility, who combines competence, might and Solomonic legend.

Generally, the bulk of the other provisions provided guidance about the power and prerogative of the Emperor. The Emperor had unrestricted constitutional powers, exceeding the power of the legislators; including the power to declare war, appoint judges, dissolve parliament, negotiate, as well as sign treaties. Article 6 of the constitution says “In the Ethiopian Empire supreme power rests in the hands of the Emperor”.

Of course, this constitution heralded the establishment of two legislative chambers: the chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and concisely defined the structure of these chambers. The *Yeheg Mewesegna Mekerbet*, which meant the *Chamber of Senate or upper house*, consisted of members appointed by the Emperor drawn from among the nobility “who have, for a long time, served his Empire as Princes or Ministers, Judges or high military officers” (Article 31). Though the people were in a position to elect members of the *Yehig Memria Mekerbet*, which meant the *Chamber of Deputies or lower house*, the chamber members themselves were designated by the nobility and local chiefs (Article 32). According to Keller (210:64) and Merkakakis (1974:172-172), both houses were merely meant to play a strictly *advisory* role. The presence of the nobility as part of a toothless legislative body seems to provide some semblance of legitimacy at the centre and to be used as an instrument of the centralising and modernising process launched

by the regime. The aim was to keep them in the capital, providing place for honourable retirement under close surveillance. Hence, these houses neither carried out the usual functions of an elected legislature nor were they the source of public authority, but were important instruments for curbing the power of the nobility. The constitution was circumscribed even the legislature. The fact that the nobility and local appointees existed at the whim of the Emperor implies that the ideas of the dominant few had been taken higher positions and expanded, while the ideas of the mass had been stifled which is levelled in this thesis as *Di-spiral of silence* (see 7.4.2).

This constitution, of course, was a landmark in the history of Ethiopia, not only because it was the first *modern* constitution but also because the first bicameral parliament convened immediately after the constitution was promulgated. The first constitution resembled in part that of the Japanese Empire of 1889, which was similar to the constitution of the German Empire of 1871 (Redden 1966; Endeshaw 2002). During this period, nearly all sub-Saharan African states were still under colonial rule. It is probably not surprising to see such a constraining constitution that represented the basic repository of supreme body of the state rather than the authority of ordinary people.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the 1931 constitution was devoted to stipulating the power of the monarch, with the virtual power of initiating laws and policies resting with the emperor. The constitution reflected and advanced the traditional principle of absolute imperial power without any practical limitations. The Emperor was granted full executive power over both central and provincial government, and the nobility and provincial governors were granted no independent authority. Twelve of the 55 articles in the document pertained to the powers and prerogatives of the Crown and other articles were related to the discretion of the Emperor. It is possible to say that the issue of human rights, democracy and freedom, particularly freedom of expression, were not indicated in this constitution. The only provision related to the right of freedom of expression was Article III (28), which says “All Ethiopian subjects have the right to present to the Government petitions in legal form”. This implies that this system is an absolute feudalistic monarchy and that almost everything, including public opinions, ideas and thoughts were

controlled and guided by the Emperor. The constitution aimed to curb against the personal, arbitrary and ill-defined powers traditionally held by the nobility. The rights afforded to the average citizen were few and directly and indirectly impractical; all citizenship rights could be suspended either by the Emperor or by his agents. Consequently, the constitution's major outcome was its ability to establish the legal framework within which governmental power was to be channelled and distributed through the *Social Pyramid* and *Pyramid of Repressive Instruments* in the *Pyramid Trap structure* of repression of freedom of expression (see Figure 7.3).

4.3.3. The Revised Constitution of 1955

We have seen above that the 1931 constitution was absolutely monarchical and used as an instrument of centralisation under the guise of modernisation. Similarly, the Revised Constitution of 1955 continued to reinforce the process of centralisation. Therefore, the provisions regarding the powers and prerogatives of the Emperor in the 1931 constitution were extensively elaborated in the revised constitution. For instance, the revised constitution spent the first chapter articles with 25 articles settling the issue of succession on the rule of male primogeniture that the imperial dignity remained as it descended from the King Menelik I, the son of Queen Sheba of Ethiopia and King Solomon of Jerusalem since about 1000 B.C. Further, the imperial family would include only those having direct lineal ascendants and descendants. These articles show that power was limited to only one bloodline and only males, all others were left vacant of power and political and human rights. For instance, according to Article I (15-16), the imperial family should not undertake marriage with anyone outside of the imperial circle. Consequently, not only the peasantry but also the aristocracy and bureaucracy were captive in thought and action.

The constitution I (4) and III (62) clearly declared the emperor's office as sacred, his dignity inviolable and his power indisputable, and it was impossible to sue the King. "In accordance to tradition...no one shall have the right to bring suit against the emperor". The word "tradition" refers to the religious establishment where society conceives authorities as the appointees of God. There is a maxim within society that says "Semay ayitaress nigus ayikesess", which literally means as the *sky cannot be ploughed, kings cannot be indicted*. Hence, society is

constitutionally restricted in criticism against the authorities. Other detailed provisions vested in the Emperor's wide and absolute powers over the military, foreign affairs, local administration and so forth (Article II (26-27)).

Of course, in theory, the constitution was the supreme law of the land, governing even the Emperor. While it contemplated an independent ministerial government responsible to the monarch and parliament, and an elected chamber and independent judiciary, these liberal provisions were overshadowed by executive prerogatives reserved for the Emperor who exercised them expansively. Despite the apparent inclusion of the notion of separation of powers, little change was introduced regarding the position of the Emperor. He was both the head of state and of the government, and he continued to oversee the judiciary through his *Chilot*, which means *Crown Court*. Final decisions in all aspects of life were made by the Emperor, hence, even the courts and the judges were not free to provide verdicts according to legal provisions and it was clear that laws were superficial.

A basic development in the revised constitution was the introduction of the representative principle for the chamber of Deputies, whose members were elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. However, parliament was still granted no control over the ministers, indirectly or collectively, who remained responsible to the Emperor. In much the same way as the 1931 constitution, however, the Senate remained an appointed chamber with members still chosen from among the nobility, dignitaries and the clergy by the Emperor. Moreover, a strict wealth requirement was imposed to force them to rely on government patronage for re-election, because there were no parties from which the Deputies could have drawn inspiration (Lipsky, 1962; Clapham, 1969). Hence, they did not put up challenges to any legislative proposals originating from the executive. In fact, the powers of the monarch were even more precisely sharpened in the revised constitution. It vested a multitude of powers of vital importance in the emperor. Not only did it invest sovereignty of the empire in the emperor but also the power to retain direct control over the executive: determine the organisation, powers and duties of all government departments; appoint and dismiss government officials; and control the armed forces with wide ranging emergency powers (Articles 26, 27 & 29). Apart from this, the emperor had absolute

control over foreign relations, the power to dissolve parliament, to reverse the decisions of the courts and to grant pardons (Articles 30, 33 & 35).

Every branch of the imperial government at central and provincial levels such as the Council of Ministers and the organs of administrative apparatuses, operated as extensions of the palace court. The emperor, as an apogee of both modern and traditional political institutions, became the source of legislation, and no policy was issued without his approval (Zewdie 1991). Consequently, only the ideas of the emperor were the ruling ideas. The maxim which says “teketel alkahin; temelket ilamahin”, which literally means *follow your boss as you point for your shot target*, comes to effect here.

Indeed, critics state that, even more than its predecessor, the revised constitution was a legal charter for the consolidation of absolutism. The absolute powers of the emperor were spelt out in unmistakable terms in chapter I article 4:

By virtue of His Imperial Blood, as well as by the anointing which He has received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity is inviolable and His power indisputable. He is consequently entitled to all honours due to Him in accordance to tradition and current constitution.

This article clearly shows that the constitutional provisions amount to little more than a formal statement of the facts of political life in Ethiopia. They reinforced the ultimate power of the authoritarian regime and made human rights a luxury, which the government has not taken seriously, nor had anyone expected that it would. Most of the provisions were dead letters, and served the regime’s penchant. Of course, beyond these constitutional provisions, there are other factors that explain the complexity of the process of centralisation and its impact on the regional nobilities. We have already noted the fact that the power of the chamber of deputies was not particularly significant. Additionally, the hereditary aristocracy was marginalised and any voice they had was through the Crown Council, which included the Patriarch that served as an advisory body to the emperor.

All these instances show the highly *narcissistic* behaviour of the emperor and the Feudalist-Monarchy. As indicated above, the system was established to perpetuate the belief that wisdom could be generated only in the imperial genealogy, and to develop a perception that the rulers’

idea was a ‘golden’ idea. This implies that knowledge and expertise have been averted by position and power. Accordingly, those who have been relatively knowledgeable, experienced and educated have been excluded from participation in large decisive aspects of the country. Hence, their ideas could not have been included in the decision-making processes of the government and have been prevented from being introduced into society. Accordingly, ignorance and dilemma were staples of society and the cycle of a repressive traditional system and practice continued.

The ground-breaking contribution of the 1955 revised constitution was the recognition of freedom of religion and freedom of expression for the first time, although it lacked practicality.

Article III (40) states that:

There shall be no interference with the exercise, in accordance with the law, of the rights of any religion or creed by the residents of the Empire, provided that such rights are not utilized for political purposes or prejudicial to public order or morality.

Though this provision seems interesting, it has been crippled for the following reasons. One, this constitution chapter I and II prevents political and social participation of other religions such that power succession was allowed only to those with Christian lineage. Two, this provision is open to different interpretations according to political and religious orientations. For instance, the phrase “such rights are not utilized for political purposes or prejudicial to public order or morality” could be interpreted in any direction and against any group’s expressions and can be conceived as blasphemy or defamations or damage to national security and could threaten freedom of expression (see 2.4.5.1, 2.5.4.2, 4.2).

In addition, while Article 41 says: “Freedom of speech and the press is guaranteed throughout the Empire in accordance with the law”, the emperor has the right to initiate legislation, originate resolutions and proclaim laws according to Article 34 and 88. In accordance with this, he declared another proclamation called *The Penal Code Proclamation of 1957* which restricted freedom of expression.

4.3.4 The penal code of 1957 and freedom of expression

This penal code countered the rights to freedom of expression provided by the 1955 constitution. In this proclamation, Article 41-47, freedom of expression was restricted to prevent abuses

through media such as “printed material, posters or pictures, cinematography, wireless, television or tele-diffusion, or any other means”. These abuses could be “committed against the honour of other persons, public or private safety or any other legal object protected by criminal law...” Hence, the publication or diffusion of any publication “which constitutes the offence, or any-one who adopts them as his own and forwards them for publication or diffusion with a criminal intent, shall be guilty of an offence” (Art.41- Principle 1 &2). First, the words “honour” and “criminal intent” are subjective and can be interpreted according to well established ideologies and intentions. This is because it might be difficult to identify the extent of honour of an individual and to identify whether one’s expression had criminal intent. Second, the authorities were legally exempted from any criticism. For instance, although an expression could be offensive to the *Mequanint*, literally meaning the rich and land owner, it would not be offensive to the *Balagar*, which literally means poor ordinary people, the tenants. Another example is the maxim which says “Mequanint biyatefam balagar yiketa”, which literally means *penalise the Balagar (ordinary individual) though the Mequanint is the offender*. One can understand the extent of class differences and the violations of human rights based on class and the emergence of group thinking or *Ethno-Luminarity* which is the core in web structure of the *Pyramid Trap of Repression* of freedom of expression. Accordingly, all media outlets and expressions were censored based on the feudalist and imperial social, and cultural and economic establishments. Hence, freedom of expression was restricted and threatened by law as well as by social, political, economic and cultural factors. Indeed, the laws had been vanguards of these establishments and the apex of in the *Pyramid of Repressive Instruments* (see 2.5.4, 2.5.5.1, 4.2, 7.4).

In addition, Article 476, 478, 481 & 483 restricted freedom of expression by threatening punishment. Article 476 made the founding and organising of bands, meetings, assemblies or demonstrations punishable with a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars, and organisers or commanders are punished with imprisonment not exceeding six months. In particular, Article 478 had restricted assemblies on public highways or in a public places and made these “punishable with a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars”, and “ringleaders, organizers or commanders are punishable with simple imprisonment not exceeding one year”. Similarly, Article 480 and 481 had made punishable whosoever:

...Starts or spreads false rumours, suspicions or false charges against the Government or the public authorities or their activities, thereby disturbing or inflaming public opinion,

or creating a danger of public disturbances...by whatever accusation or any other means foments dissension, arouses hatred...makes, utters, distributes or cries out seditious or threatening remarks, or displays images or drawings of a seditious or threatening nature in any public place or meeting... publicly incites or provokes others to disobey orders issued by a lawful central or local authority...

Moreover, “offences against honour or reputation...may be committed against individuals, or corporate bodies or institutions”, had been made punishable. For instance, Article 575 provides,

Injury to honour, direct or indirect, is punishable whether committed by word of mouth or by sound, in writing, by image, drawing, sign or other means, by gesture or behaviour, or in any other way whatsoever. Indirect means of offence or circulation by any process of recording reproduction, emission, communication or projection, graphical, visual or aural, rank with natural and direct means...especially through the Press, by placarding, or through the cinema, the radio, television or any other means of mass diffusion.

Further, Articles from 580-587 insist that whatever act, fact or conduct that injured one’s honour or reputation is punishable as defamation. The offence is completed by direct imputation or charge or by spreading of defamatory allegations, and “a person charged with defamation cannot in general plead in defence that he acted without intent to injure ... a person charged with defamation shall not be permitted to provide proof of the truth of his allegations or of the fact that he acted in good faith, and is accordingly punishable” with imprisonment up to one year or a fine of approximately five-hundred dollars. However, if the defamation injures the honour of the emperor or the constitutional authorities such as contempt of court or insults to a military superior, the imprisonment extends to between five and ten years (Article 256, Article 310 & Article 443, respectively).

Hence, the right to freedom of expression provided in the 1955 constitution was countered by these legal provisions. This penal code was used as one threatening instrument to freedom of expression by the *Derg’s Socialist Regime* and the current *Revolutionary-Democratic* regime until it was replaced by the *Criminal Code of 2004*.

4.4. Post-war Ethiopia: the desire to change and the practice of freedom of expression

Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia became the catalyst for the intersection of the internationalist anti-colonial activities and the domestic civil rights and anti-racial movement in Africa, Europe, and

the Americas. According to historian Harris (1994), the invasion led to the development of an international constituency spanning the United States, the Caribbean, Europe and Africa in an affirmation of a shared identity and racial and colonial burden among people of African descent towards the establishment of post-war antiracist, anti-colonial and civil rights movements. Accordingly, Ethiopia became an active member of Pan-African initiatives and the emperor was “seen as a noble man with a great reputation as the leader of a great African nation that survived the European colonialism and defeated one of the colonial powers” (Záhořík 2014:168).

However, Ethiopia came out of the Italian occupation in a much weakened structural condition because of social and economic destruction and the emergence of domestic opposition. The war devastated the country’s social and economic resources; many Ethiopians who died during the occupation period were young and educated people, including 2000 political trainees, who had been groomed as the pillars of Haile Selassie’s modernising autocracy and who could have a greater contribution to the evolution of a modern administration and a better practice of freedom of expression, which had been curtailed by traditional and illiterate conservative thoughts (see 2.5.4-2.5.5). We can take, as an instance, the perception and change in attitude in society on the importance of modern education and cinema, which had been attained by the modernisation efforts of the emperor. When a cinema house was opened by Emperor Menelik II, the traditional society saw it as an unreligious act, society associated it with evil, and labelled it “seitan bet”, which literally means *Satan’s house*. However, diffusion by the educated has made cinema common in the country in the middle of the 20th century. In addition, modern education was considered to contribute to the rise in changing religion. In particular, Christians in the Northern part of the country conceived modern education as Isalmisation. But, later the societies changed their perception and advanced to develop a maxim which says “Yetmare Yigdelegn”, which literally means *I will die for the educated*. Hence, the demolished elite would have contributed better to the modernisation and expansion of freedom of thought and expression by sharing international experiences.

However, the educated elite have also emerged with destructive shortfalls. As it has been indicated above, Ethiopian society had been divided into ethnic and religious groups and had passed through rivalries, conflicts and bloody wars which escalated repression by promoting

Ethno-Luminarity. Fortunately, though repression of freedom of expression continued from another perspective, for the centralisation and unification efforts by governments since mid of 19th century, the *Ethno-Luminary* thought which had destroyed the country and freedom of thought and expression had decreased remarkably. Unfortunately, the educated elite has emerged with an escalation of ethnic based *Ethno-Luminary* thought and *Narcissistic* behaviour in the name of the “question of Nationalities”, which devastated the country and destroyed the rights to freedom of expression (see 4.4.2, 5.6, 6.2-6.5).

In addition, the Italy’s invasion had a huge political impact on freedom. Firstly, the opportunity for consolidation of Imperial political authority was quite high and the Emperor preserved his political image as the living symbol of Ethiopia liberty and unity with his initial active participation in the war effort (Adejumobi 2007:90-92). Secondly, the end of Italian rule in Eritrea in 1941 gave rise to even more strident separatist movements in different parts of the country which have contributed a lot to the escalation of repression and stifling that have continued until today. The aid and support from different nations, basically from the USA, enabled Ethiopia to retain its independence while strengthening the Emperor to suppress domestic rebellions. Consequently, after his restoration to the throne, Emperor Haile Selassie I continued the earlier policy of state centralization and curtailed the power of the aristocracy though his centralisation efforts, as many believe, have proved to be disruptive rather than having a cohesive effect. Post-war reforms further allowed the bureaucratic empire a potential larger measure of control and defence capability.

After World War II, the emperor controlled everything, abolished all political parties and banned groups from forming cohesive organisations. The regional nobility, with military, political and economic power, were reduced in significance; many were forced to give up huge holdings, their personal army and regional autonomy. These measures reduced internal freedom and stifled, directly or indirectly, different political, cultural and social opinions. They also aggravated ethnic rivalries, tensions, conflicts and *Ethno-Luminary-Thought*, which devastated the rights to freedom of expression (see 4.4.2, 5.6, 7.2).

4.4.1 Conservatism and liberal reforms, and the practice of freedom of expression

As a moderniser, the Emperor was surrounded by a small group of social elites that supported him. By the 1950s, there was notable growth in the number of Ethiopians, from varied ethnic groups, with degrees in higher education, and with hopes and aspirations of reaping the benefits of modernity such as democracy and higher living standards (Adejumobi 2007:90-94). However, Zewdie (2007) indicated that in the post-Italian invasion period, educated elites did not view Emperors Menelik II and Haile Selassie I as patrons and allies; rather they looked towards Emperor Tewodros, the pioneer radical modernist, for inspiration. Zewdie identified three major forces that guided 20th century intellectuals: first, they wanted justice and equality through the rule of law and a meaningful constitution. Second, they wanted to eradicate poverty in Ethiopia by making peasants the owners of their own products and controllers of their means of production. At this stage, peasants were only *gabbars*, which literally means tribute-payers, while nobles, who had been owners of large amount of land and recourses, did not pay taxes. Third, they wanted to ensure justice and equality among religious and national communities because the emperor was accused of ignoring the *nationality* question in his reformist policies, as the empire consisted of culturally subordinated and not politically integrated ethnic groups during the process of expansion and centralisation between the early 19th century and the middle of the 20th century. However, in spite of the yearnings of the citizenry for a modern government and for development initiatives, the emperor instead embarked on duplicitous reforms embodied by continued portrayal of his regime as a paternal and modernising autocracy (see 4.4.1-4.4.2)

Hence, the post-war era represented a prime moment for large-scale progressive reform, particularly for freedom of expression that was lost. This loss of momentum was created by the loss of intelligentsia during Italy's invasion of the country. Huge numbers were killed while battling against colonialists, the remaining were executed by the emperor during the aftermath of the war for critiquing the emperor because he fled to England during the invasion. Those that remained within the emperor's circle were obsessive of the old conservative order and fans of Italy's modernising efforts during the invasion. Specifically, the destruction of the intelligentsia invariably resulted in the loss of a critical, independent spirit and a commitment to revolutionary transformation of the human condition that undermined the potential of Ethiopian project of modernity and the struggle for internal freedom, freedom of media and expression and

democracy. As long as there were no independent-minded intellectuals and because there was pressure from the conservative camp to support the emperor's efforts towards change, the emperor proceeded to forge reformist initiatives on his own terms. Hence, the change inclined towards an old and repressive administrative style, that is, the dominance of the military and the clergy, hubris of the royalty and the nobility, and extreme centralisation which helped to lay the foundation for the social, political, and economic tribulations that Ethiopia faced in the decade that began in 1960 and resulted in expanded repression (see 4.2).

Extreme centralisation affected many levels of administration as well as the daily lives of ordinary Ethiopians. According to the 1955 revised constitution (Chapter I & II), the emperor controlled almost everything, and ordinary citizens had little or no say on their political, legal, or economic lives. Firstly, the emperor was the initiator of all legislation and the originator of all resolutions. Secondly, the emperor was the governor and appointer of all bureaucracy down to the *Woreda*/district level, which gave rise to a strong patronage system in which "*each official at the higher rung used his influence to promote his men at the lower rung*" (Rahmato 2009:115-116). Thirdly, the Emperor was the controller of all resources and institutions, including the media. He had absolute right over all land with the authority to grant and withdraw land rights at all levels. According to Article 26 of 1955 revised Ethiopian constitution the sovereignty of the empire is vested in the emperor and supreme authority over the affairs of the empire is exercised by him as the head of state. According to Pausewang (1983: 240), these rights not only privileged him to control and enforce his obligation on peasants but also on war lords, governors and nobles so that the emperor was rewarding land to local and regional authorities for their political support, and political power is largely linked to the size and quality of land owned. This means men who enjoyed high positions of authority usually controlled significant amounts of land and were placed at the top of economic redistribution, at the apex of the *Social Pyramid* whom their thoughts: political, religious or cultural had great influen on freedom of expression (see 7.2.2.1, 7.4-7.5).

In the 1960s, the emperor embarked on a process to secure his political administration through a balancing act that consisted of gradual integration into the world capitalist system, while holding onto the conservative trappings of the bureaucratic empire. In the beginning of this period, a

combination of political and economic centralisation, diplomatic statecraft and modernisation of its military had allowed Ethiopia to increase and consolidate the scope of its territory. By the middle of the 1960s, however, the inherent contradictions and conflict that grew out of the political brinkmanship of the emperor had exacerbated tension in the domestic political affairs of the country and stifled different political ideologies, particularly ethnic-based political philosophies. Opposition to the emperor and his policies became most strident among intellectuals educated abroad, from some younger members of the aristocracy, from a growing number of student radicals, and even from peasants. Elites and intellectuals had become frustrated by the limited opportunities for modern political ideologies and for alternative political opinions. Sizable groups began to call for radical social and political reforms. Besides these, widespread claims on inequality engendered sobering consequences among population groups that revived the already established *Ethno-Luminary* thought and *Narcissistic* behaviour. Particularly, the Oromo, Somali, and Eritrean ethnic groups who have resented the implications of the nation-state's policy have viewed as the Ethiopian state coloniser (Chala 2016:111), have escalated *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and exacerbated the rivalries, conflicts and bloody wars which cost the country on all sides including the right of freedom of expression

In addition, forces fuelling social dislocation and resentment, on the side of peasants, emerged from the ills of the land ownership system. As mentioned previously, the land ownership system under Emperor Menelik II was a feudal system of land ownership and agricultural production. Emperor Haile Selassie's land tenure policy was similar to Emperor Menelik's tenure policy of encouraging feudal landlordism where land resources were controlled and administered by the Emperor, the feudal nobility and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This system was characterised by heavy exploitation by land owners since most of the land was controlled by the state and feudal lords prior to 1975. Hence, citizens adopted customary and complex land systems known by different local names: *Rist*, *Gult*, *Gabbar* (Chala 2016:113; Miller and Eyob 2008:352). This land system created a difference of status in society and impacted on freedom of expression in a similar way to systems that had been prevalent. Those who owned land were positioned on the upper side of the *Social Pyramid* and controlled the ideas and practices of the broad mass using bureaucracies, law, media and other structures like the Church.

This land ownership system, however, forged a disparity between the northern and the southern regions of Ethiopia. In the Northern provinces, the power base of the imperial authorities, land ownership was vested by: The *Rist* system, in which peasant ownership of land was protected for their kin, and peasants were expected to pay tribute to the land owners; through the *Gult* system, where land was granted to nobility by the Imperial rulers; and *Church* ownership of land. These systems extracted surplus from the peasantry through tributes, produce, rent, and services. In the south, on the other hand, *Neftagna* and/or *Balabbat*, which literally mean *war lords* and *local chiefs*, used acquired landlord status which created *Gabbars*, peasants who paid tribute to local chiefs, who owned the land for use of the land. In addition, the development of private ownership of land resulted in the forced dispossession of peasant land, which in most cases forced peasants into *Chisegna*, which means tenancy. In other areas, the influence of the settlers, most of them Christian, over a predominantly Muslim or animist population further complicated the overwhelming sense of alienation on both sides and escalated the *Ethno-Luminary* thought and *Narcissistic* practices. This affected freedom, culture, thought and expression. The use of coercion, law and religion provided the major political and ideological institutions to reproduce these unequal relationships and affected freedom of expression. In totality, four-fifths of the total population were subsistence farmers, and the large majority among them were *Gabbars* who lived in poverty. Although the emperor had anchored the crux of modernisation policy around the educated elite, the major educational institutions and other social amenities, including media, were established in the national centre. However, the periphery remained confined in restricting traditional thought and communication systems which were highly repressive.

At this period more than 70% of fertile land was possessed only by 1% of the entire population in Ethiopia (Shimelles et al. 2009:13). After the Ethiopia-Italian war, intensive land grants were afforded to those groups like patriots, exiles, soldiers and civil servants and land alienation was used as an instrument for political reprisal against people due to their political outlook. Although land reform had been held during the Imperial period, all land reform attempts were opposed by peasants in the Northern provinces of the country which were affected by the 1942, 1951 and 1969 revolts. Consequently, the cumulative effect of the land policy created political inequality and divided social structures among ethnic groups. One extreme case was the way the regime deprived the fundamental rights of Southern farmers and reduced them to second class citizens in

comparison with northern landlords and government officials. Land was also used as a political instrument for obtaining fidelity from subjects because disloyal subjects were punished. This created grievances against imperial government property (Chala 2016:113-14; Ambaye 2015:52; Hussein 2004:6-11). Consequently, those who were deprived of land became economically and politically weak and dominated, hence, the mass, the peasantry and the tenants, were dominated second and third class citizens whose thoughts, ideas and opinions were rarely recognised and usually suppressed.

4.4.2 Counter centralization, the question of ‘nationalities’ and freedom of expression

According to Adejumobi (2007:108), besides land and economic issues, the state also witnessed the explosion of divergent interests and aspirations that threatened the social fabric of the country: the most significant of these interests has been the “question of nationalities”. The Ethiopian state was believed to give little or no reference to ethnic, linguistic and religious diversities and different cultural values. As there was structural inequality in development projects for varied cultures, languages and religions, the nationalist’s demands emerged during the Emperor’s period. By the middle of the 20th century, exacerbated by stagnation and underdevelopment, most of those nationalist groups emerged in the public sphere and international stage as nationalist movements. They emerged with increasingly violent expressions and with a sore *Ethno-Luminary* thought and *Narcissistic* behaviour which curtailed freedom of thought and expression. Different groups demanded increased autonomy within the Ethiopian state and a declaration of an agenda for a separatist independent state. Those groups included the Eritrean nationalists, the Somalia nationalists and the Oromo nationalists. These movements have created a series of bloody wars against the Ethiopian governments since the 1940s. In the process, Eritrea gained independence in 1991 after 30 years of war against Ethiopia. However, both societies suffered tremendous suppression. After independence, the two countries appeared set for an era of peace and cooperation on the surface, and everything seemed peaceful, but the potential for trouble has remained, particularly on the issues of the boundary, the currency and the hundreds of thousands of Eritreans who continued to reside in Ethiopia. These issues were at the root of a new round of conflict that flared up in 1998, which triggered significant human rights abuses, suppressions and stifling of different political and economic

ideas. These tensions have remained fully unresolved to date, including contentious boundary issues, and the question of the right to access the sea, which could continue to be one main causes of conflict and suppression in the region.

Somalia and the Oromo nationalists have been fighting for independence despite more than half a century of bloody conflicts with three successive governments of Ethiopia. The Somalis conflict was triggered by modern geostrategic and economic aspirations of Ethiopia and with the creation of new boundaries in East Africa. These came about as a result of a series of treaties with Britain, France and Italy in 1948 which caused further repression. According to Adejumobi (2007:111), however, “Somali resistance to Ethiopian authority in this region dates back to political and economic events between 1887 and 1955..., and was constructed on the platform of ‘national’ origin traced back into antiquity”. This is because the Somalis in the Republic of Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya’s north-eastern province, and Ethiopia’s South-Eastern region (Ogaden) proclaimed a common heritage, bound together by language, custom, Islamic religion and socio-political organisation structures. Indeed, Somali resistance to Ethiopian authorities in this region dates back to the Islamic expansion of 15th century using the support from Tury. By 1535, with the leadership of the warrior Ahmed Giragn, headed a vast and ephemeral Islamic empire stretching from the south to the middle of the Red Sea on the coast. This also included the Ethiopian interior and devastated Christianity which had created religious and ethnic conflict that reached a climax in the middle of the 16th century. However, the Northern Christian societies, particularly the Amharas and Tigrays, turned back a determined Muslim advance with Portuguese assistance, but only after the northern highlands had been overrun and devastated, many people Islamized and acculturated (Markus 1974:31, Lewis 1999:17, Fage 2007:28). These incidents created significant *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism* and a trend of suppression of freedom of expression. Consequently, Somali-speaking people in Ethiopia, specifically in the Ogaden region, tend to have only minimal attachment to the Ethiopian state, regardless of which historical period we are dealing with (Negash 2008:283-285; Shehim & Searling 1980:212). Hence, the purely Islamic Somali society has been alienated from the predominantly Christian Northern and central societies and has little socio-political participation in the Ethiopian empire. Accordingly, in one way or another, they have restricted and been restricted, dominated and been

dominated, suppressed or been suppressed for centuries, and the effect has continued and contributed to the current status of freedom of expression in the country.

Additionally, the Oromos have claimed that they have been historically marginalised in cultural, political and economic relationships within the Ethiopian empire, especially from the middle of the 19th century onwards, though the rivalry traced back to 1000 B.C. when the Semitic took dominance from the Cushitic (see section 2.2), and have demanded independence from Ethiopia. Bulcha (1997:336) criticizes a homogeneous language policy, which was believed to be a necessary step towards social and economic development of Ethiopia though it resulted in rivalry, conflict and a series of repressions. He insists that the policy of “one language one nation” became an obstacle to socio-economic development, because the insistence on the use of a single language prevented vital information from reaching the majority of the population. Ethiopia hosts more than 80 nationalities speaking a multiplicity of languages: many with a claim of their own unique identities. Those groups, in one way or another, have developed their own way of life, philosophy, cultural practices and even religions, and these differences, in turn, have developed different interests from other groups. Taking this situation as a threat for national unity, a series of governments in modern Ethiopia have tried to expand one language, Amharic, as the national language. This incident has created disappointment in other ethnic groups, specifically on relatively larger ethnic groups, such as the Oromo. This situation has created the evolvement of Nationalist Movements that have been struggling for self-administration and even for succession, which in turn has created critical Ethno-Luminary-Thought, rivalries, huge social, political and economic crises and further repressions and stifling.

Further, Záhořík (2014:165) and Tareke (2009:76-79) argue that the main factor promoting the rise of nationalist movements was the regional rivalry inside Ethiopia alienating Northern regions, Shewa and Tigray regions, now interpreted as rivalry between Amhara and Tigray ethnic groups. This rivalry has a great impact on the development of various movements in Ethiopia and Eritrea, including the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, and has created a suppressive political environment in the country, including the current ethnic-based socio-political structure of the country characterised by repression (see 6.2, 6.7-6.11). Consequently,

different uprisings that centred on specific local and regional socio-economic factors developed in different parts of the country. The *Wayane* rebellion, Bale rebellion, and Gojjam uprising at the end of 1960s arose from combination of various factors including religious rights (Crummey 2000: 242–244).

Despite such problems and the growing threat, the emperor continued to nurture his image as a modernising and benevolent autocrat. The authorities continued his policies unabated, expanding the state's security and defence capabilities. By employing the resources of the military, the bureaucracy and a pool of educated elites, the emperor became successful in cultivating the imperial hegemonic value system until the 1960s. However, government crackdowns often resulted in the death of peasants across the nation. Labour unions were discouraged from embarking on protests even though the right to protest was supported by both international and national legislation, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Right2Know[sa] & Article19 2016).

The elites, particularly the military elites, took another strategic position at the beginning of 1960's. On December 13, 1960, a coup d'état took place led by the commander of the imperial bodyguard and a handful of radical intellectuals, many of whom had familial ties to the military. The coup was initially qualified a success as the rebels seized the crown prince and more than 20 cabinet ministers, along with other government leaders and strategic points in Addis Ababa, including all communication centres. They declared a manifesto that included the establishment of a government that promised improved economic, social and political conditions for the general population. The plotters also approached Crown Prince, Asfaw Wassan Haile Selassie, who was reputed to have a strained relationship with his father, the emperor. They appointed a new premier and declared, via a radio announcement, that the coup was a means to end the 3000 years of the *Solomonic Dynasty*. The Prince promised to set up a true constitutional monarchy and the creation of political parties. However, though university students demonstrated in favour of the coup, the core of the army and air force remained loyal to the emperor, the coup failed, and rebels were captured and executed. The church also disapproved of the attempted coup, and as the patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church prayed for those who fought as loyalists, he also condemned the rebels as anti-religious traitors. The church, as purveyor of state

power, called for Ethiopian citizens to honour their traditional duty of devotion and faithfulness to the emperor (see 2.3.1).

However, the political events and subsequent repression foretold the great challenges which awaited both the educated elites and the rapidly expanding population of poor masses (Adejumobi 2007:96). Specifically, this political environment sustained and gave impetus to the emergence of a revolutionary intelligentsia, who were suppressors themselves, as well as the radical Ethiopian Students Movement, which was abolitionist to the existing socio-political order. The effects of the ideologies and practices of these two political powers have continued until today and devastated the country's socio-political nature, specifically the freedom within the country, as the subsequent two governments have both been the result of these two powers and their ideologies (see 5.2, 6.4).

4.4.3 The students' movement and the practice of freedom of expression

As part of his modernisation plan, the emperor expanded education rapidly. In 1951, the emperor founded the University College of Addis Ababa, which was administered by Canadian Jesuits. To match the speed with which education was expanding, educators and curricula were brought in from Western nations, thus implanting Western ideals into the Ethiopian classrooms. However, the emperor wanted to establish a regulated modernisation with the introduction of modern education and technology that preserved the conservative socio-political order, particularly the Feudal-Monarchy and oligarchy. Therefore, all activities related to education and publications were heavily censored. Hence, though modern media had shown relatively good progress since the emperor had been regent, the regulation and restrictions on the media remained intact (see 4.5). For instance, university administrators censored the first notion of student newspapers that manifested in the late 1950s. The administration, with the emperor as the university's chancellor and a number of members of the government censored what went on in the classrooms and in student groups (Zewdie 2007:238).

Perhaps, because of the tight censorship of ideas and actions, unrest began to boil among university students in the early 1960s and became a full-fledged student movement by 1967. Students began their push for political and social change, and advocated for change subtly in the

form of poetry. In May 1962, at the Student Day Ceremonies, students read poems that were charged with political commentary that criticised the regime. After the readings, several students were suspended and many more warned not to meddle in politics. However, this did not hinder the students and protests continued, causing the university to shut down in 1963 to bring things back under control.

Although the constitution allowed only for petitions, in 1964 and 1965 students rallied around the issue of land tenure, under the slogan “Land to the Tiller!” which called for a redistribution of land from wealthy landlords to working class tenants. Their protests were directed to parliament (made up of a collection of landlords) and they held demonstrations outside the Parliament building. In addition, students from their respective institutional bases often espoused the “rights of nationalities to self-determination”. Others expressed dissatisfaction with the social and political hierarchy in their homeland and were motivated to build Ethiopia based structure emerging from the idea of *equality and consent* (Adejumobi 2007:105). Zewdie (2007:238) stressed that the activity of post-invasion intellectuals, particularly the student movement, was largely dictated by the theoretical desire to eliminate class and ethnic hegemony and oppression, which were viewed by many as the main cause for suppression of freedom of expression (see 2.5.4.2, 2.5.5).

The student movement gained momentum through support from different nations; for example, Sweden threatened to cut ties if reforms were not made. Despite the students’ protests and pressure from abroad, the regime did not budge on the issue. Instead, Ethiopia created a law banning student organisations, unions, and demonstrations (Negarite Gazeta 1957). However, their demonstrations led to small improvements in the camp facilities and the treatment of the incarcerated. Apart from the domestic students' movement, overseas student bodies such as the Ethiopian Student Union in North America (ESUNA) and the Ethiopian Students Union in Europe (ESUE) later emerged as active participants in their home country’s political activities (Darch 2011 & Carpenter 1974).

Another supportive incident in the era of the students’ movement was the establishment of the Ethiopian University Service (EUS), in 1964, which required all university students who

completed their third-year of college studies to serve for one academic year across the country in their respective fields. The program exposed students to the pitiful conditions in the countryside and potential supportive areas for change, often secondary schools, where they successfully introduced a younger generation to national social and political ideas. There were also a proliferation of political publications, social critiques, and satire among the population, and these activities extended into poetry and debating gatherings. Encouraged by their small victory, students reorganized their efforts, in 1967, and the movement became more unified and cohesive. Different students' unions in the university who had different opinions and positions on the effect of protest for change joined into the University Students Union of Addis Ababa (USUAA) and narrowed the focus to overthrowing the government. The University Newspaper *News and Views* was replaced by a much more politically charged publication called *The Struggle*. The major theme of this publication was the protest, the need for change, and it included anti-Western influence as there were US military presence in Ethiopia at the time and students saw the US as assisting to keep the emperor in power. In March 1968, they demonstrated at a fashion show in protest of mini-skirts, a style that the students saw as un-Ethiopian (also see 2.5.4.2). They organised a student boycott, formed picket lines and attempted to stage a large demonstration in the streets surrounding Addis Ababa. The police cracked down immediately, resulting in a clash that saw some violence from students. This implies that even the struggle for change was confined within conservative ideology. It is also believed that the emperor's ambition for change had been challenged and delayed by conservative groups. This shows that culture has a huge impact on restricting or threatening freedom of expression, as much or even more than politics in Ethiopia. Basically, culture is the base for the emergence of the development of group ideologies, values and principles, and *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* which themselves are the spines the web of repression (see 2.5.4.2, 2.5.5.4).

In 1969, the campaign spread to other colleges, universities and even high schools. The USUAA drew up a systematic list of ten demands on the government and distributed them widely in pamphlets and by word of mouth. These demands included the overturning of new school fees, the expulsion of the Peace Corps from Ethiopia, an overhaul of the government and education system, and trials for police officers who had fired on students at peaceful demonstrations. The students continued to campaign in favour of these demands with their support mounting. They

accused the government of mismanaging resources and criticised the state of education in Ethiopia. Enthusiasm among young students all over the nation snowballed until a large part of the school system had to be shut down due to massive demonstrations, school boycotts and riots. When secondary schools attempted to reopen, students staged a sit-in that yielded 500 arrests and one death when police arrived. Finally, the emperor made an appearance on television agreeing to discuss the demands with the students, but at the same time the newspaper *The Struggle* was banned. At the end of 1969, the emperor had made some concessions by firing his Minister of Education and pardoning some of the arrests earlier that year. The regime tried to hide the unrest from international eyes, heavily censoring newspapers and publications. However, these concessions were not enough to stop the student movement (Eskinder 2011).

In the period between 1969 and 1974, the government cracked down with force on the student movement, violently dispersing organised demonstrations. Despite the strength and support of the movement, organisational problems and division emerged among the protestors. At the same time as the student movement, the government was trying to suppress an Eritrean revolt and some members of the USUAA were split on whether the movement should take advantage of the country's quasi-civil war to topple the regime. The movement became split between radicals and moderates. The president of the USUAA, Tilahun Gizaw, advised the students that they needed to re-evaluate their plan. In late December, Gizaw was assassinated, and the next day the Imperial Guard broke up a meeting of several thousand students by firing into the crowd. (Hall 2003:110-115).

The violence drew international attention, sparking articles of disapproval from the *Frankfurter* in Germany and a three-hour sit-in by Ethiopian students at the Embassy in Russia. Despite the attention, the violence continued, and every demonstration the students held was cut down by force. In 1971, secondary school teachers went on strike in support of the USUAA, which was facing sanctions from the regime that affected dorm facilities and meal plans. Students staged more boycotts and demonstrations, but many deteriorated into violence. The Board of Governors effectively suspended the USUAA in 1972, disbanding central leadership and divisions within the movement grew wider. In 1973, students learned of the widespread famine in the northern part of the country, which the government seemed to be doing nothing about. As a result, the

students boycotted classes to discuss what could be done about the famine. This meeting was violently broken up by riot police, who beat students, employees, teachers and bystanders without discretion. At the end of 1973, students boycotted classes again, calling for the reinstatement of the USUAA. The boycott was also broken up violently by riot police (Darch 2011; Zegeye & Pausewang 1994:77-94).

Despite the fact that the student movement had become increasingly disjointed, it had succeeded in weakening the government's control significantly and created a general era of political unrest and an atmosphere of expression, for perhaps the first time in Ethiopian history. This attempt was a remarkable achievement in the struggle for free expression and media, at least in using free and private media in Ethiopia (see 2.4.1.1, 4.5). Students continued to campaign relentlessly in 1974 for the government to recognise the famine. The movement was compounded by the beginning of the 1974 revolution or 'creeping coup' which ousted Emperor Hail Selassie I.

4.5. Media landscape and practices to freedom of expression

Menelik's attempt to modernise the country, specifically the media, was further strengthened by his successor, Haile Selassie I. Modern journalism in Ethiopia, which had appeared during the reign of Emperor Menelik II, was more developed at the time of Haile Selassie I. As part of Haile Selassie's endeavour, the media had grown and a number of newspapers came into existence. Since he was the regent of Ethiopia from 1916 until he became emperor, he showed interest in the establishment of printing presses, as well as the publication of newspapers and educational materials.

As a regent, he founded a printing press known as *The Regent's Press: Ethiopian Crown Prince Tefri Mekonnen's Printing*. He launched a new weekly popular newspaper, *Berhanena Selam*, which literary means *Light and Peace*. He established three separate branches of printing presses known as *Kesatie Berhan*, which literally means *Light Giver* I, II and III in three different cities of the country, namely Addis Ababa, Harar and Jimma. After the coronation of His Imperial Majesty as emperor in 1930, the mass media underwent an impressive period of development. The press was seen as a means of both preserving tradition and spreading modernisation within the nation. Various publications were produced until 1935. In 1932, a weekly newspaper called

LeEthiopie Commercial was established in French. In 1935, two newspapers were established: a quarterly, *Kesatie Berhan*, and a political weekly, *Atibya Kokeb*, which literally means *The Morning Star*, only to die within a few months under the heel of the Italian invasion. Owners of these newspapers included the government, missionary societies, as well as foreigners with religious backgrounds. This implies that these publications were broadcasting the ideals of the government or thoughts of religious entities. Of course, the appearance of such publications preceded the proliferation of any regulation by the government and their operations were not dictated by any law, though restrictions and threats of law emerged later (Survey of the private press in Ethiopia: 1991 – 1999).

On the eve of the Italian invasion, there were no fewer than seven newspapers and seven printing presses in Addis Ababa alone: Four were Amharic; two French and one Italian, namely, *A'emro*, *Berhanena Selam*, *Atbiya Kokeb*, *Kesatie Berhan*, *Le Courier d' Ethiopie*, *Le Ethiopie Commerciale*, *Notiziaria*, respectively, and *The Government Printing Press*, *The Press of the Courier d' Ethiopie*, *Berhanena Selam Printing Press*, *Goha Tsebah Printing Press*, *The Hermis Printing Press*, *The Love Printing Press* and *Artistic Printing Press*. On 15 February 1934, Emperor Haile Selassie I granted the right to establish a private press. The proclamation provided for the procedures to be followed when applying for permission to publish and a list of penalties in the event of infringements. The Italian invasion, however, eliminated any possibility of testing the sincerity of the emperor's initiative. It could also be argued that even if there were possibilities, the chances of having a private press were slim (Survey of the private press in Ethiopia: 1991 – 1999).

In the post liberation period, the publication industry witnessed a comparatively significant expansion in terms of the number of periodicals produced and the size of their publication. Besides, a number of decrees were passed recognising freedom of speech, and allowing the existence of the private press. These included the decrees of 1942 and 1944, the revised constitution of 1955, and a number of private newspapers dealing with political, economic, social and religious issues. The problem, however, is to correctly identify which of these periodicals were privately owned and independent in their operation, and the practice was countered by the penal code of 1957. *Addis Zemen*, which literally means *New Era* was established as a weekly in

1941. It was called *Addis Zemen* by Emperor Haile Selassie I to indicate the country's new beginning when he returned from exile after the Italian occupation of Ethiopia for five years. It continued its daily publication in December 1957. *Sendek Alamachin* literally means *Our Banner* or *Our Flag*, a popular weekly and bilingual Amharic and Arabic newspaper, was also established in 1941 to celebrate the victory over Italy. It translated from the battle field newspaper, *Bandirachin*. There is now a separate Arabic weekly, *Al-Alem*, which also means *Our Flag*, published by the Ethiopian Press Agency. The object of *Al-Alem* was to give a picture of the country for Arabic diplomats residing in Addis Ababa. The Press and Information Department was established under the Ministry of Pen in 1942. The publication still existed as the government proclamation newspaper called the *Negarit Gazeta* which appeared in Amharic and English in the same year (Meshesha 2014:81). In succeeding post-war years, many other periodicals were published in the country: *The Ethiopian Herald* was launched as an English language weekly newspaper in July 1943. It became a daily in 1958 and continued publication as part of the Ethiopian Press Agency. Similarly, *Ye-Eritrea Demts*, that is *The Voice of Eritrea*, was being published in Amharic and Tigrinya by the Ethio-Eritrean Unionist Association in 1943. In 1946, the *Ethiopian Review* started publication in English, and *Berhanena Selam* was given new life as a monthly. All the publications were controlled by the government and worked only towards government political objectives.

In 1947, major press development took place in Ethiopia with the introduction of further publications: three religious newspapers: *Zena Bete Kristyan*, *Nuro Bezeday* and *Tekle Haimanot*, which literally means *News of the Churches*, *Living Wisely*, and *Saint Tekle Haimanot*, respectively; and one English newspaper, the *Daily News Bulletin* come into being. In 1950, *Alemena Tebeb*, which literally means *The World and Wisdom*, and *Progress Economique*, published in Amharic and French, were launched. In 1952, *L'Ethiopie d'Aujourd'hui*, that is, *Ethiopia Today*, was published in Amharic and French. At the same time, the Amharic counterpart of the English *Daily News Bulletin* also came into being. The *Menen Magazines* also began in 1955 as a bi-lingual publication, Amharic and English, and then became separate publications in 1963. Further, *The Voice of Ethiopia* and *Ye Ethiopia Dimts* were originally published as a single publication in 1955. They became separate English and Amharic language

newspapers in 1961 and were published under the National Patriotic Association (Ellene, Mesfin & Alemayehu, 2003).

Further, according to Meshesha (2014:82), during post-Italian occupation, different government organisations such as the State Bank of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education, Commerce and Industry started several quarterly and yearly departmental journals and publications. In addition, magazines produced by government institutions were also published during this period. Some of the monthly magazines published by the Ministry of Information during this period were *The Ethiopian Mirror*, in English, the two *Menen* magazines, one each in English and one in Amharic, and *Addis Reporter*, in English. Two religious magazines, *Tewahido* and *Berhan*, were published by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, respectively. Additionally, *Azeb* was published by the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association, and the *Ethiopia Observer* was published in Ethiopia and Britain. One contributing factor for the publication of a number of newspapers was the establishment of the *Berhanena Selam Printing Press* in 1923. This was a good leap forward in the history of the press and of politics in the country because the establishment of this printing press contributed to the relative flourishing of newspapers, magazines and books. This printing press is still the only one in the country which performs high quantity printing. The other contributing factor for the development of the press during the reign of Haile Selassie was the occupation by Italians within the country for five years. This period also contributed to the development of the modern press in Ethiopia because some newspapers were being published and radio programs were being broadcasted by the Italians to propagate their war in Ethiopia and promote the Second World War.

In addition to media outlets, there was also good progress in the field of Amharic language and secular literature. The media had traditionally been represented largely by the Geez language and by Orthodox Tewahido Church literature, though there had been some work in Arabic. Indeed, Amharic, with a few works in Tigrigna and Oromogna, has been replacing the classic Geez from the middle of the 19th century. Haile Selassie's period was one of introducing commercial capitalism and Western ideas through the Europeans living in Ethiopia as well as through Ethiopians educated abroad. Though Ethiopian writing was interrupted by the Italian occupation, it passed through a number of stages that followed the economic and socio-political

developments of the country. Accordingly, writers in this period can be grouped into three categories. The first group were conservative writers of the ruling class who justified the feudal aristocracy and stood firm in their opposition to all innovation which was likely to disrupt the status quo, and they were prolific in publishing moralistic and didactic texts. On the one hand, these writers mystified the irremediable weakness of man and uselessness of this world; while on the other hand, they depicted the unaccountable power of God and the good life in the next world. Accordingly, they tried to pacify the poor and dominate society so as not to stir or raise questions (see 2.5.4.2, 4.4.). The second group of writers were Ethiopians educated abroad, such as Afewark Gebreyesus, Gebrehiywet Baykedagn and Hadis Alemayehu, who were writing anti-feudal sentiment, and who were criticising the already established cultural and political system. In this group there were also a radical sub-group of revolutionary writers, such as Dagnachew Worku and Berhanu Zerihun. They demystified the old concept of a God-created world defiled by man's sin and presented it as an integral part and consequence of a decaying system which should be removed by a revolution. These writers were usually correlated modernisation with secularisation and called for revolt and the banishing of the shackles of oppression. Of course, this activation has created 1974 revolution, severe *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and conflict, and another round of soaring repression. The third group, that included Heruy Woldeselassie, Kebede Mikael and Germachew Teklehawariate, took the middle-ground. On one hand, this meant supporting technological progress and development along Western capitalist lines and calling for the end of feudal privileges, while on the other hand, they advocated for the preservation of what they called Ethiopian culture and tradition. This group wanted to see Ethiopia advance economically while retaining the culture of a different period; the writers in this group explained the persistence of the moralistic and didactic element in their writing.

All these groups, in one way or another, had positions that promoted the restriction of freedom of expression. Specifically, the first and second groups were extremists that denied ideas and thoughts, while the third group still had restrictive tendencies because they believed to preserve Ethiopia required restricting freedom of expression. Moreover, the development of literature was largely affected by poverty, in addition to the suffocating hand of censorship practiced by the feudal-bourgeois regime (Eshete 1982:30).

In reference to broadcasting, the first radio station was inaugurated in 1933 in a contract signed with an Italian company. However, this was revoked soon thereafter following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936. The first shortwave radio broadcast was resumed after freedom, and in 1963 the World Federation of Lutheran Churches broadcaster, *Radio Voice of the Gospel*, was established in Ethiopia and broadcast to the Middle East and other regions. By 1970, *Ethiopian Radio* expanded and operated from three different locations and began broadcasting in six Ethiopian languages. Television broadcasting was introduced in the early to mid-1960s (Kiflu 2015:40).

While an overview of modern media shows they were flourishing during the Imperial period, it did, however, have low levels of public outreaching due to poor infrastructure, very low levels of literacy and small printing runs. Most of the products were accessible mainly to the royal class, economic elites, and literate city dwellers. Moreover, though the press was meant to grow, at least in content (Girmay, 2005), it had a limited content which focused mostly on the royal family and the king (Metaferia, 2003), and expressed the whims and wishes of the king (Seifu, 2008). Generally, the media were the mouth-pieces of the government that propagated the interests of the feudal monarchy and were designed to maintain and strengthen the power of the imperial aristocracy.

4.6 Conclusion: A continued imperial hegemony and extended centralization

***“As sky cannot be ploughed a king cannot be accused”- the tenet of
Feudalist-Monarchy***

Ethiopia journeyed a long and arduous pilgrimage, from the ancient kingdoms to the last monarch of the *Solomonic Dynasty*, which was punctuated by much trauma and triumph along the way. This path also created enormous impact on the socio-political life of the country, specifically on the practice of freedom of expression. Deep-seated traditional, religious and political forms that had long been rooted in the past, also impacted on the socio-political features

of Haile Selassie's government. Those traditional values and institutions appeared to have encouraged neither open opposition nor reasoned criticism of cultural structures or religious and political authorities. Every thought, idea and opinion was restricted or curved to serve only the authorities.

Following the socio-political trend of previous regimes, this government took power by force and, therefore, resorted to violent mechanisms in ascertaining political power and domination. No problem was resolved through open debate and compromise. Rather, the use of authority and force were used to discourage even the most ordinary disobedience and dissent. Except for the privileged few, the bulk of people remained apolitical or had no or little say in any aspect of their life. Therefore, most Ethiopians have long been captured by traditions deep-seated in their socio-political cultures that define the relations of the state to society and religion to society in authoritarian terms. The only politically active groups in every aspect of life were those in the upper-most hierarchy of society, such as the nobility, the clergy and males. The masses, including the poor tenants, religious followers and females, were the muted or the dominated group. Both religious and political authorities were treated with the utmost respect, and no one could challenge or even express reasoned criticism on the practices, thoughts and ideologies of those authorities. If one did, it was considered as a diminution of their greatness. For subordinates to hold their own ideas, take decisions and perform actions by themselves; to challenge the ideas and practices of their superiors; to oppose policies, ideologies and thoughts generated from above, was considered as a sin and a crime. Accordingly, every thought was generated from above or from the centre and diffused from the top to the bottom and from the centre to the periphery.

Moreover, the feudal order had long been the bedrock of the Ethiopian socio-economic order. In this period, socio-economic power and/or status was dictated by the possession of large tracts of land, which was in the hands of the nobility and the clergy. In its worst form, the feudal order nurtured a culture of subjugation and inculcated absolute compliance with the decisions made by those groups. Accordingly, not only was the power of the clergy, emperor and nobility unchallenged, but ordinary citizens had no legal, economic or political rights and had no say in most aspects of their life. In short, the servant-lord relationship that developed over centuries

between the society on one side and the state and religion on the other side has significantly affected the practice of freedom of expression. The emperor and the Feudal-Monarchy controlled every aspect of the state, including political power, from the centre to the local level; natural and material resources; the church and religious aspects; and the media. Hence, the whole atmosphere was confined. Perhaps this situation, in addition to other external factors, raised ethnic nationalism and escalated *Ethno-Luminary* thought and, in turn, these questions galvanised regional and ethnic conflict that further triggered human rights violations and restricted freedom of expression under the guise of national unity and national security.

Of course, the emperor tried to create a modern state by introducing an apparently “modern” style of constitution for the first time, the essence and the goal of the constitutions and legal frameworks were to strengthen the imperial aristocracy. Specifically, though these constitutions had provisions that guaranteed the practice of freedom of expression, those provisions were countered by other laws or were not practical, and the restrictions and threats to freedom of expression remained intact relative to the pre-Haile Selassie period. Moreover, there was no room or right to form associations and to establish free and private media though there was a relatively better atmosphere of freedom of association during the period of the student movement. In addition, there was expansion of the media during the emperor’s reign, though the media were controlled by the government and religious institutions, and propagated only the controller’s ideology.

This feudal monarchy system was clearly an extension of the centuries old imperial hegemony which had the absolute power to be worshiped like a god for eternity, controlled almost all resources and all institutions including religious institutions, all ideas and thoughts, etc. The ideas of the few were the golden and dominant ideas, but the ideas of the majority were cheap and confined. That was why society developed a governing and explanatory maxim which says: “Semay ayitaress nigus ayikeses”, which literally means *as sky cannot be ploughed a king will not be accused*. The word *king* refers to all clergy and the nobility. This shows that Ethiopia had primary and secondary citizens, with the primary citizens, the clergy and the feudal nobility. The primary citizens were the winners who had been conceived as the *appointees of God and had the right rule and control everything*; the secondary citizens were ordinary people, the poor and

females who had almost nothing, including the right to hold their own thoughts, opinions and ideas; unless allowed by the clergy and imperial aristocracy. Everything emerged and was controlled from the top and centre, and no one had the right resist, criticize and oppose ideas, thoughts and policies from above or the centre.

Generally, freedom of expression in the era of this government was threatened by factors emanating from autocratic and *Narcissistic authority*, *Ethno-Luminary thought*, and the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*. Those threats included complex bureaucracies, restricting laws and coercive power which emanated from an authoritarian structure of the government, religious and cultural hegemonies and the resultant rivalries, conflicts and wars, and poverty, and a lack of access to education, media and information. Freedom of expression was trapped by a variety of factors that emanated from a number of sources rather than only from the government.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION UNDER THE SOCIALIST-MILITARY REGIME (1974-1991)

5.1 Introduction

As indicated in chapter five, the last 14 years of Haile Selassie's reign witnessed growing opposition. While the emperor sought to reclaim the loyalty of coup sympathisers by stepping up reforms after the suppression of the 1960 coup, much of these were in the form of land grants to military and police officers, and the development of a new tax system, without a coherent pattern of economic and social development. Therefore, the change was fiercely resisted by the landed classes, the nobility and clergy; while on the other side, forces were exerting direct or indirect pressure in favour of reform, leading to the revolt. However, the most outspoken remained a small number of elites and nobility, while the mass peasantry were relatively silent for they had no power or knowledge that could challenge the noble aristocracy. The government's failure to achieve significant economic and political reform, combined with rising inflation, corruption, famine and the growing discontent of urban interest groups provided momentum to the eruption of the 1974 revolution. The revolution brought the 3000 year monarchical period and the so called the *Solomonic Dynasty* to an end, and diverted Ethiopia onto an unfamiliar path. In this chapter the researcher is going to address the revolution and its participants, the ideological which emerged after the revolution, the outcomes of the socialist ideology, and its impact on freedom of expression.

Table 5.2 Timeline of major events during the Socialist-Military Rule

Year	Major Events
1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On 12 September Haile Selassie is deposed in coup led by General Teferi Benti• <i>Bloody Saturday</i> or <i>the Death of the Sixty</i>, which saw the Derg execute 60 higher officials of the Imperial period
1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Haile Selassie dies under mysterious circumstances while in custody• <i>Land Reform Proclamation</i> is introduced
1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All royal titles are revoked• Abuna Tewoflos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is deposed• Struggled for supremacy among Andom, Hailemariam, Banti, and Abate evokes insurgencies, particularly the Nationalist movements, in the country's different

	administrative regions
1977	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andom, the first post-imperial acting head, is killed • Benti is killed and replaced by Mengistu Haile Mariam • Abate, Hailemarims's last rival in the Derg, is eliminated • EPRP initiated attacks on the Derg, known as the <i>White Terror</i> • Derg's counter-action, known as the <i>Red Terror</i>, claims up to 30,000 suspected EPRP members • Somalia invades Ethiopia with the support of the USA
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Union of Ethiopian Marxist- Leninist Organizations, known as EMALDEDEH, which paves the way to a socialist Ethiopia, is established • Ethiopia defeats Somalia by deploying 300,000 militia and with the support of Cuba and the USSR
1979- 1983	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethiopia experiences a series of civil wars in different parts of the country
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenth anniversary of the revolution: Workers Party of Ethiopia, a Marxist-Leninist organisation, is established, and Derg proclaims Ethiopia as a socialist state called the Peoples Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worst famine in a decade strikes; Western food aid is sent; thousands are forcibly resettled from Eritrea and Tigre
1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 1 February, the new constitution is introduced, and Mengistu is elected president • The country's 14 provinces are divided into 25
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The central committee declares a state of national mobilisation to counter the rebels advance in the North
1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 15 June, there is a bloody coup attempt on President Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Derg is deposed

5.2 The 1974's revolution, political change and the practice of freedom of expression

Though the lack of civil freedoms had created widespread discontent among the middle class, which had led to increasing the cost of living and the devastating drought and hunger during the early 1970s eventually caused the revolution, the initiators of the 1974 revolution were the urban elites, particularly students and the military. Low ranking soldiers in the southern part of the country rebelled and took their commanding officers hostage, requesting redress from the emperor because they were economically weakened and had no say in the socio-political outcomes in their life. Attempts at reconciliation and a subsequent impasse promoted the spread of discontent to other units within the military. In addition, demands by teachers, workers, and eventually students for higher pay and better conditions of work and education, promoted the revolution (Marcus 1994:181; Zewdie 2007:239). Following such uprising, the emperor announced new reforms including the revised constitution of 1955. However, the new government introduced no substantial reforms although it granted the military, which had several factions within it, big salary increases. Although the government announced a revision of the

1955 constitution, this was not implemented. A new Prime Minister and new government were introduced, and while the prime minister would be responsible to parliament, the new government was assumed to be a reflection of emperor's decision to minimise change. For instance, the new cabinet represented virtually all of Ethiopia's aristocratic families, and the conservative constitutional committee appointed in March included no representatives of the groups pressing for change. The efforts of change by the government did not please many of the junior officers, who wished to pressure the regime into making major political reforms. Consequently, the final stage of the Ethiopian revolution began in January 1974 with a series of uprisings led by the military in various provinces as well as in the capital. In what initially started as an urban phenomenon; students, teachers, civil servants, and soldiers embarked on a rebellion against the representatives of the monarchy, supporters of the feudal aristocracy and the emerging national bourgeoisies. Popular campaigns and uprisings were accompanied by calls for religious, regional, occupational and economic equality, and the separation of the Church and the state which could have a huge effect on freedom, particularly on freedom of expression (Hall 2003:113; Henze 1985:3).

In late June, a body of men, none above the rank of major and almost all of whom remained anonymous, organised themselves into a new body called the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police, and Territorial Army that became the *Derg*, which refers in Amharic to the *committee* or *council*. They elected Mengistu Hailemariam chairman and Atnafu Abate vice chairman, both outspoken proponents of far-reaching change. This group of men remained at the forefront of political and military affairs for the next decade. Their involvement resulted in a continued legacy of centuries old political conspiracy, which, in turn, led to severe suppression within society (Zewdie 2007:239-241; Adejumobi 2007:119-20). The *Derg's* agenda rapidly diverged from that of the reformers of the late imperial period. In early August, the *Derg* rejected the revised constitution which called for a constitutional monarchy and, thereafter, worked to undermine the authority and legitimacy of the emperor. Although the *Derg* professed loyalty to the emperor, it immediately began to arrest members of the aristocracy, military, and government who were closely associated with the emperor and the old order. By late August, the emperor had been directly accused of covering up the famine of the early 1970s that had allegedly killed many people. After street demonstrations took place urging the emperor's arrest, the *Derg* formally

deposed and imprisoned “...the elect of God...sacred, his dignity inviolable, and his power indisputable...” Emperor Haile Selassie I. Three days later, the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee, that is the *Derg*, transformed itself into the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) under the chairmanship of Lieutenant General Aman Mikael Andom and proclaimed itself the nation's ruling body (Zewdie 2007:239-242; Hall 2003:116). At first, the *Derg's* officers exercised their influence behind the scenes; only later, during the era of the Provisional Military Administrative Council, did its leaders emerge from anonymity and become both the official as well as the de facto governing personnel. Because its members in effect represented the entire military establishment, the *Derg* could henceforth claim to exercise real power and mobilised troops on its own. They thereby deprived the emperor's government of the means to govern through some form of *creeping coup* which saw the imperial system of government slowly dismantled. Promoting an agenda for lasting changes which went beyond those proposed since the revolution began in January. The *Derg* proclaimed *Ethiopia Tikdem*, which literally means *Ethiopia First*, as its guiding motto and suppressed all claims to freedom. Even those who brought up the question of nationality were accused of damaging national unity (Zewdie 2007:239-242). This incident clearly indicated the continuation of the centuries' old practice of claiming power by force, dominance of only a winners' idea (*Ethno-Luminary-Though*), and the confinement of the weak majority (*di-spiral of silence*) though there was an intention of easing cultural and religious suppressions by promoting socialist ideology (see 5.4).

Of course, according to Henze (1985:8), during the revolution there was more open discussion of political and social issues than the country had ever experienced in its long history. In the spring and summer of 1974, “there had been a great deal of public commotion, marching, protesting, debating, polemicizing and political maneuvering”. But the *Derg* gradually “consolidated its influence and maneuverer or intimidated civilian politicians into passivity or cooperation”. However, this “passivity and cooperation” did not last long; the usual political practice of dominance took root, and led the country to one of the most horrific and brutal incidents in the history of country (see 5.3).

5.3 The struggle for power: a political massacre and an apex of suppression

In its early period, the revolution was called the *bloodless revolution*, regardless of some incidents of mutiny and detention of government officials, because the emperor was deposed without a single shot being fired, and the period immediately following the overthrow of Haile Selassie was a time of open political debate. The *Derg* developed a motto called “yaleminim dem Ethiopia Tikdom” to mean *Let Ethiopia progress without any bloodshed* because Ethiopian politics and bloodshed had been inseparable for centuries (see 1.3). However, it was not long before fierce and ruthless rivalries broke out among the leaders of the revolution. The first serious conflict happened when a bomb exploded in a bar frequented by Ethiopian soldiers. Some members of the *Derg* accused Eritrean rebels who struggled for succession (see 4.4.2) of planting the bomb and wanted to take immediate action. General Andom, who was a popular commander and hero of the war against Somalia in the 1960s and an Eritrean himself, wanted to pursue a more moderate approach. In accordance with the *Derg's* wishes, he became head of state, chairman of the Council of Ministers, and minister of defence, in addition to being chairman of the *Derg*. Despite his standing, General Andom was almost immediately at odds with a majority of the *Derg's* members on three major issues: 1) the role of *Derg* members; 2) the Eritrean issue and insurgency; and 3) the fate of political prisoners. The conspiracy ended with the usual resolution, killing of General Andom (Hall 2003:118).

Moreover, the *Derg* immediately found itself under attack from civilian groups, especially student and labour groups who demanded the formation of a people's government in which various national organisations would be represented. These demands found support in a faction of the *Derg* composed mostly of army engineers and air force officers. Nevertheless, the *Derg* arrested dissidents supporting the civilian demands, charged Andom and killed him because he resisted arrested. The most remarkable event in the process was the action of the day known as *Bloody Saturday* or *the Death of the Sixty*, when the *Derg* executed Andom in addition to fifty-nine political prisoners which included prominent civilians, military officers, cabinet officers, aristocrats, members of the royal family and two *Derg* members who had supported Andom. The event revealed that a ruthless military regime controlled the country and this event foreshadowed a violent and uncertain future for the people of Ethiopia and was a certainly an indicator of the continuation of the demise of freedom of expression.

Following this bloody event, Brigadier General Tafari Banti became the temporary chairman of the PMAC and head of state. But, power was retained by Major Mengistu Hailemariam, who kept his post as first vice chairman of the PMAC. Hailemariam hereafter emerged as the leading force in the *Derg*. Over the course of the next 17 years, he held onto more power than the previous emperors by eliminating his opponents one by one. Moreover, all royal titles were revoked and one of the last major links with the past was broken in February 1976, when the patriarch of the *Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Abuna Tewoflos, an imperial appointee, was deposed (Marcus 1994:190; Henz 1985:8). Generally, according to Zewdie (2007:244), the revolution had two contradictory faces; on one side it seemed that the revolution granted freedom by abolishing the feudal monarchy which had confined the nation for centuries along with their predecessors. On the other side, it promoted further totalitarianism and a more brutal regime which stifled the nation using savage punishment for anyone who had new or different ideas from the *Derg*. Hence, the extent of change to freedom of expression was simply a zero-sum-game, the suppression of freedom of expression went from bad to worse, and restrictions on freedom of expression regaled by the development of *narcistic* behaviour and *ethno-luminarity* among the military, the nationalist groups and the pro-socialist educated groups (see 5.4-5.8).

By late 1976, the *Derg* had undergone an internal reconfiguration as Hailemarim's power came under growing opposition and as Hailemariam, Banti, and Abate struggled for supremacy. The instability of this arrangement was resolved early in 1977, when a major shootout at the Palace in Addis Ababa took place between supporters of Banti and those of Hailemariam, in which the latter emerged victorious. With the death of Banti and his supporters in the fighting, most internal opposition within the *Derg* had been eliminated, and Hailemariam proceeded with a reorganisation of the *Derg*. This action left Hailemarim as the sole vice chairman, responsible for the People's Militia, the urban defence squads, and the modernisation of the armed forces. In other words, he was left in effective control of Ethiopia's government and military. In November 1977, Abate, Hailemarim's last rival in the *Derg* was eliminated, leaving Hailemariam in command (Zewdie 2007:250; Henz 1985:9). These incidents indicate the continued legacy of

totalitarianism and claiming power by sheer force which denied any freedoms, including freedom of thought and expression.

Following the establishment of his supremacy, Hailemarim declared himself the *Derg's* chairman in February 1977 and set about consolidating his power. However, several internal and external threats prevented Hailemarim from doing this. Various insurgent groups posed the most serious threat to the *Derg*. The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party (EPRP) challenged the *Derg's* control of the revolution itself by agitating for a broad-based democratic government run by civilians, not by the military. However, EPRP itself initiated attacks against the *Derg* members and their supporters, in February 1977 known as the *White Terror*, and soon provoked a *Derg* counteraction with intense brutality known as *the Red Terror*. During *the Red Terror*, which lasted until late 1978, government security forces systematically hunted down and killed about 30,000 suspected EPRP members and their supporters and tortured many thousands, especially students, in concentration camps. Hailemariam and the *Derg* eventually won this latest struggle for control of the Ethiopian revolution. However, the victory was at the cost of death, imprisonment and disappearance of thousands EPRP members and supporters which resulted in absolute stifling of freedom (Zewdie 2007:250-257; Hall 2003:121).

After the destruction of EPRP, Hailemariam increased the crackdown to other political parties and movements, some of which had been its allies, including the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM), commonly known as *MEISON* in Amharic. Although *MEISON*, in coordination with the *Derg*, had organised the peasant associations and the *kebeles*, which are the lowest administration units in the system, they had begun to act independently and thus had begun threatening the dominance of the *Derg* within local governments throughout the country. In response to the political vacuum that would be left as a result of the purging of *MEISON*, in 1978 the *Derg* promoted the union of several existing Marxist-Leninist organisations into a single umbrella group, the Union of Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist Organizations (UEMLO), commonly known as *EMALEDEH* in Amharic. The new organisation's duty was similar to that of *MEISON*, promoting control of Ethiopian socialism and obtaining support for government policies through various political activities. The creation of *EMALEDEH* symbolised a victory of the *Derg* in finally consolidating power after having overcome these challenges to control the

Ethiopian revolution. However, there were argumentative differences among them, particularly on how democratic rights will be delivered to society: with limitations or without limitations, immediately or over a period of time. In addition, the power struggle for dominance continued among these parties and finally disintegrated (Zewdie 2007:250-259; Hall 2003:119). Accordingly, Ethiopia was headed to the usual absolutism and even stronger centralisation than during the Imperial period. The repressions which had emanated from cultural and religious ideologies, values and principles were replaced by *Marxist-Leninist* ideology, and the usual components of the *Pyramid Trap of Repression: Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma, Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism* surfaced again. Hence, the entire country, including its characteristics around freedom of expression, was crushed.

In the process of the power struggle from 1975 to 1978, serious internal and external challenges continued to emerge against the revolutionary regime. By the end of 1976, insurgencies, particularly the Nationalist movements, existed in all of the country's administrative regions (see 4.4.2, 5.6). In addition to the Eritrean secessionists, rebels were highly active in the Northern region, where the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) started demanding social justice and self-determination for the Tigrayan ethnic group. In the southern region, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF), gained control of large parts of the countryside, and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) was active in the South-Eastern part of the country. The Afar Liberation Front (ALF) coordinated with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and began armed operations in North-Eastern Ethiopia. The roots of the WSLF conflict lay particularly with Somali irredentism, and WSLF was used as an instrument for Somali irredentism. The group began to take advantage of the *Derg's* political problems as well as its trouble in Eritrea to attack government positions throughout the South-East of Ethiopia.

Finally, the Somali National Army (SNA) started supporting the WSLF and Ethiopia and Somalia engaged in full-fledged war. The situation had significant international repercussions that resulted in a major realignment of power in the Horn of Africa as the USA sided with Somalia, and the USSR and Cuba with Ethiopia, which made Ethiopia a battle ground for world powers. Ethiopia won the Somalian war by deploying 300, 000 militias and with the support of

the USSR, Cuba and South Yemen, and the new regime defended different insurgencies which emerged in different parts of the country by force and managed to consolidate rule. However, the war cost the country which resulted in a huge social, economic and psychological crisis and left behind a legacy of disunity, rivalry, conflict, and the military subsequently never attempted political solutions to centuries old problems. The *Derg* maintained the authoritarian nature of government and the legacy of repression of any idea outside of those supported by the *Derg* continued in Ethiopia (Zewdie 2007:250-266; Hall 2003:120; Markus 1994:201).

5.4. The reign of socialist ideology: social unrest, civil war and freedom of expression

Soon after consolidation of power, with all civilian opposition groups either destroyed, forced underground or into exile, the *Derg* tried to embark on its reform programmes. The *Derg* promoted “Ye-Itiopia Hibretesebawinet”, which literally means *Ethiopian Socialism*. The concept was embodied in slogans such as “equality, self-reliance, and the dignity of labour, the supremacy of the common good and the indivisibility of the nation.” These slogans were devised to combat the widespread disdain of manual labour and promote a deeply rooted concern with status (Adejumobi 2007:121; 124). This was necessary because individuals and communities who live on manual labour, such as weavers, blacksmiths, potters, were considered as lower in status and had little say in social, political or cultural decisions. Specifically, those groups had no religious rights. Even if they become religious, they had no the right to be religious leaders or priests, and did not have equal rights to express their opinions, particularly in meetings and gatherings. These measures, as indicated above, seemed to ease the *Ethno-Luminarity-Thought* for the timebeing before replaced by divicive socialist ideology (see 5.4).

The central aspect of socialism was land reform, as land has been the main source of living and was an indicator of power and status in the nation. There was, however, common agreement on the need for land reform because it had been controlled by aristocrats and the church, affecting political and human rights including freedom of expression (see 4.2). However, the *Derg* adopted a radical approach with the Land Reform Proclamation of 1975. This proclamation nationalised all rural land, abolished tenancy and put peasants in charge of enforcement. No family was to have a plot larger than ten hectares and no one could employ farm workers. Farmers were

expected to organise peasant associations which would be headed by executive committees responsible for the enforcement of the new order.

However, the move was made with little preparation and met with opposition in different areas of the country, particularly in the North. The *Derg* lost much support from the country's left wing, which had been excluded from power and decision-making processes. Furthermore, all urban land, rentable houses and apartments were also nationalised, and urban residents organised into urban dwellers associations, or *Kebeles*, which were analogous in function to the rural peasant's associations. These nationalisation measures transferred resources from private to government hands, thereby constituting the economic foundations of totalitarianism. Implementation of these measures caused considerable disruption of social and economic systems, and transformed the society from a repressive aristocracy to an absolute autocracy (Henz 1985:14). Hence, the economic effect on freedom of expression remained almost intact and even more severe in some occasions because the media and other traditional communication practices got consolidated only in government hands and used to promote *narcistic* behaviours and only socialist ideology which strengthens the *Pyramid Trap of repression* (see 5.5, 5.8).

Although the revolution emerged in the name of the united Ethiopian people, who rallied around the slogan *Ethiopia Tikidem*, which means *Ethiopia First*, and implies a united country, the *Derg* did not permit peoples' voices in the process (Marcus 2003:2002). Groups were not allowed to assemble and discuss on national issues. Everything was under the control of the members of the new system and the people did not have any right to decide their political, social and economic futures. The elimination of political groups, the elimination of civic associations, including the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Union (CELU) and the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA), further disillusioned the revolution's early supporters and numerous officials originally associated with the revolution fled the country. Once it re-established control, the *Derg* resumed the creation of institutions that would enhance its political hegemony and legitimacy. Therefore, the measures taken in the name of establishing the Ethiopian revolution corresponded less to popular interest and pressure and instead "aimed to support the *Derg's* desire to neutralize and eliminate autonomous institutions, to weaken potential opposition and to build constituency of supporters" (Adejumobi 2007:122; and see also Henz 1985:11). This implies that the *Derg* could

not fulfil the democratic demands of the people: to elect their own representatives, to have freedom of speech and media, to organise political parties that could protect their benefits. Instead, the *Derg* limited all these basic political elements by taking control of all associations, resources and institutions, including placing the media in government hands and only propagating the *Derg's* socialist ideology. Further, the *Derg* generated undemocratic policies and working methods. This included the nationalisation of all rural land and the unfair redistribution of land to *Derg* supporters. Additionally, there was the organisation of different associations and cooperatives equipped with only supporters of the *Derg*, which could not guarantee the demands of development, democracy and freedom, including freedom of expression (Tola 1989:26).

According to Osman (1980), the revolution was not merely a revolution directed against feudalism and bureaucratic bourgeoisie. It was also a manifestation of the total internal crisis which included the trade unions, the armed forces, the state administration, the workers, peasants, women and students. The assault on the conditions of oppression led to the attack on organisational forms of this oppression, such as culture and religious hegemony, created another form *Ethno-Luminarity* tension between *secularism* and *religiousism* or/and between “traditionalists” and “modernists” Therefore, the revolution negated the political and economic forms of domination which recognised an individual's political existence only via the possession of land and the subjugation of the peasant; and forwarded a radically different conception of the organisation of the society. According to Osman (1980), the revolution could not be confined within the limits of the agrarian question and the anti-feudal struggle, that is, the abolition of landlordism, or the distribution of land. Nor did it conform to the “orderly and gradual” process which the petty-bourgeoisie dreamt of in order to realise its aspirations to turn into the bourgeois. Of course, the revolution vowed to address the claims of the rights of cultural equality and freedom because of the dissatisfaction from the south and Islamic societies, who questioned the cultural domination of the North and of Orthodox Tewahido Christianity (see 2.5.4.2, 4.2). As Osman (1980) indicated, the section of the petty-bourgeoisie which appropriated state power via a coup had to destroy various committees set-up by the people and thwart any attempt of autonomous organisational action. Hence, once again, the political existence of the individual or group exists only within the framework of their subjugation by the state. Hence, the resort to *socialism* as an ideological facade highlights the repression and, beyond it, the subjugation of

individuals/society by the state/government and the majorities' idea by the minorities'. Hence, *Narcisism* developed and the the *Pyramid Trap of Repression* strengthened.

One particular event that emerged in the process is that the military regime did not express the interest of one particular class, as it was striving to mould all classes in its interest. Even the nationalisation measures, which included regimentation of the peasants and workers within the military regime aimed to transform the petty-bourgeoisie into a state or bureaucratic bourgeoisie, were in contradiction with the appeals of the revolution. The establishment of mass organisations, such as the All-Ethiopia Trade Union, the All-Ethiopian Urban Dwellers Association, the All-Ethiopia Peasants Association, the Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association, the Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association, the Working People's Control Committees, and various professional associations, were created at the behest of the *Derg* as vehicles of societal control. Their aim was to create a party that would neutralise “narrow nationalism” or sectarianism and destroy the feudal order, which were identified as threats to national unity and modernisation, respectively. The organisation would be based on broad, yet, clearly defined class interests (Ofcansky and Berry 1991). Every individual in each part of a society was expected to be member of at least one of these associations and participate with their knowledge and resources, and each one had to provide military services to protect the revolution and ensure national unity. All these measures affected freedom of thought, free association, and self-administration which had been a question of different ethnic groups.

However, the imposition of the regime's interests as the interests and needs of the society, in the forms of socio-economic reforms, follows its conflict with almost all other classes, including the fractures of the petty-bourgeoisie. For example, the imperial policy of appointing officials from the centre to regional and local levels continued and the scenario remained the same, local officials had to be loyal to the top. Such a system was characterised by “the indigenous structures of decision-making and identity formation” (Abbink 2003:180). Balsvik (2007:48-49) also asserts that centralisation remained, with power vested in the hands of a narrow elite, this time the military forces, which despite being supported at the beginning by the student movements largely ignored what teachers and students thought and was finally looked upon as “dishonourable replacement of the Imperial regime”. Indeed, all promises of removing the

burdens of the poor, particularly the peasantry and the labourers, by abolishing the feudal aristocracy and the emerging bourgeoisie, remained vacant, instead replaced by new autocracy which shattered freedom of expression.

5.5. Socio-cultural changes: correlation of secularisation with modernisation

The widespread social protests and overthrow of Ethiopia's imperial regime in 1974 was soon followed by a series of radical and deep-seated social changes that heralded the implementation of a socialist policy. Clapham (1987:151), Messay (2011:2) and Young (1982:69) indicated that the Ethiopian regime had an exceptional commitment to the ideology and development policy of socialism. Therefore, the revolution completely changed the social system through the overthrow and eradication of the landed aristocracy and the Imperial state through a radical and sweeping nationalisation of the means of production. This included deep alteration of the structure of the state and its ideological configuration, and a shift in Ethiopia's international alignment from the West to the East..

The overthrow of the monarchy and of the landed aristocracy was a manifestation of a thorough structural change which took place in the country. According to Tibebu (1995:168), "the revolution destroyed the power base of the ruling class of the Ge'ez civilization" and its "most important outcome ... was the rise of the people of the South to public visibility" following the emancipation of southern peasants from tenancy through the nationalisation of all rural land. The political landscape was also altered significantly by the rise of a new multi-ethnic elite in place of the exclusive aristocracy. So that the change was both total and drastic, and the transformation of the Ethiopian social fabric was significantly greater than any other African regimes, even military ones, that claimed to be socialist and had an earnest commitment to the socialist ideology. This includes Mozambique and Angola, Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, Madagascar, Tanzania, Guinea, and Somalia. However, the real causes and main goals of the revolution in Ethiopia differ from other African countries. According to Záhorkík (2014:171) and Kebede (2011:2), the Ethiopian revolution was the "outcome of internal class confrontations causing the overthrow of traditional ruling elite" which in turn had a significant impact on social relations and cultural orientation in Ethiopia that had lasted more than 3000 years. These incidents ignited some hope of freedom, democracy and freedom of expression, though ended only with a regime

change. This change, of course, changed the base of repression in some extent and form, from cultural and religious to ideological, but the *Pyramid Trap of Repression* continued by changing rolling tyers.

This shows that the secularisation objective that was equated with modernisation and started in the imperial period by the educated elite continued in the socialist regime. According to Kebede (2004), the political doctrine of the regime established a fanatical dedication to the revolution rather than to sow a new Ethiopian political culture. Within the new nationalism, the best way to prove oneself as a patriot was to display an enthusiasm for the revolution. The traditional nationalism, which had some sense of religious conscience, was not given any place in the new regime. Even the wholesale murder of the Red Terror in Ethiopia was countenanced by its perpetrators as the ultimate loyalty to the homeland. According to Brissett (2006:151) and Kebede (2004), this secularisation served as the handmaiden of ruthless politicians set adrift by the corrosive cultural influence of Western imperial powers. As Adejumobi (2007:127) indicated, the *Derg* forwarded its socialist ideology by not necessarily opposing religion, “instead emphasis is often placed on charismatic pragmatism and an authoritative state apparatus directed at achieving national development”. But, on the ground, the *Derg* clearly diminished religion and suppressed religious ideologies, to the extent of executing religious leaders including the patriarch of the Orthodox Tewahido Christian Church, and tried to change centuries’ old cultural establishments. This is because religion was conceived by socialists as an impediment to modern thinking and traditional practices were hindering development. Hence, freedom of thought and expression were suppressed directly or indirectly.

5.6. The illusion of nationalism: political and social tension and freedom of expression

Ethnicity in Ethiopia is an enormously complex concept. The existence of groups in the 20th century has resulted from biological and social amalgams of several pre-existing entities; and inter-ethnic relations in pre-revolutionary Ethiopia did not conform to a single model. Nonetheless, such mixing eventually led to the formation of groups that think of them as different. The Amharas have been conceived as the dominant group and the representatives of the central government, with the result that some have resisted the Amhara bitterly while others

have aided them. The question of ethnicity continued to grow along with an escalated *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissistic* practices. The growth of Ethiopia's ethnic and cultural diversity has affected social relations and the practice of freedom of expression. Moreover, rural inhabitants, who constitute about 85% of the total population, have lived their lives without coming into contact with outsiders, and most Ethiopians conducted their daily lives in accordance with norms peculiar to each community or region. Ethnic groups characterised by social organisation and values were, on closer examination, actually quite diverse (Abate 1991). These differences created some sense of alienation from each other and created resistance and hatred to each other's' ideas. In many instances, some tried to impose their ideas, thoughts and practices on others. These pressures have created counter pressures, rivalry, tensions, conflicts, and hence, another cycle of repression.

However, the question of nationalities and the claim of self-determination reached a climax after the revolution. During the period before the revolution, many Marxist individuals and students had occasionally dabbled with the idea of restructuring the country along nationality lines (see 4.4.3). Indeed, it was an experiment undertaken by Italy during the invasion of Ethiopia, and to some extent was speculated by the USSR and China in an attempt to break the out-dated empire through the independence of separate people. Based on this claim, minor concessions to nationalities were made on the basis of language because the Imperial regime had stressed Amharic as a national language and had enforced its use for administrative purposes and for education throughout the country. Indeed, the *Derg* permitted and encouraged the use of many major regional or ethnical languages for publications, broadcasting and national literacy campaigns (Henz 1985:25). This can be considered as an improvement in the self-expression of minority languages and cultures. Further, as the *Derg* strove to impose Soviet patterns to all aspects of Ethiopian life, the question of restructuring the country along ethnic lines gained recognition. Hailemariam, in his announcement of the *National Democratic Revolution* on April 20, 1976, proclaimed that:

... under the prevailing conditions in Ethiopia, the problem of nationalities can only be solved when the nationalities are guaranteed regional autonomy. Accordingly, each nationality will have the right to decide on the matters prevailing within its environs, be they administrative, political, economic, social or language, as well as elect its own leaders and administrators. The right of nationalities for autonomy will be implemented in a democratic way" (Ethiopian Herald April 20 1976).

In addition, there was a sense of sympathy towards Islam during the early stages of the revolution that saw Islamic holidays officially placed on par with Orthodox Christianity. However, the *Derg* had only one Muslim member. This could be the result of inertia from the imperial period when power was directly related to Kinship and Christianity (see 4.2), and even after the revolution, the proportion of Muslims in prominent positions remained the same. Indeed, though the *Derg* has been perceived as progressive, religion, religious organisations and foreign missionaries had been severely curtailed though not entirely forbidden (Henze 1985:36-37; The Lives and Times of the Derg 1984:5).

However, unlike other African countries, Ethiopia is a nation which has evolved based on its own internal socio-political dynamics. The *Derg* started its journey with the slogan “Ethiopia Tikidom”, which means *Ethiopia First*, showing a commitment to maintaining the old borders and retaining a unitary state. Consequently, the promises made by Hailemariam were not practiced and the revolutionary government’s approach, that is, imposing Soviet-style political, economic and social systems in Ethiopia, exacerbated the strain and regional tension amongst ethnic nationalities (see 4.4). Hence, ethnic questions persisted. Chief among the detractors of Ethiopian transformation have been the Oromo elites. They regard Ethiopia as a colonial empire, established by the Amhara feudal class after Emperor Menilik II conquered and subjugated non-Amhara people during the scramble for Africa. These ethno-nationalist scholars purport that, though the main social problem that precipitated the overthrow of the imperial regime was the abject fate of the subjugated non-Amhara people, the revolution did not bring about their liberation. On the contrary, the state was being further centralised in the name of socialism and made the sole owner of the resources of the people through a radical policy of nationalisation. What is more, as they claimed, the “Amharisation” of the “colonised” people was intensified, enhancing previous practices. That means, the new military regime was determent to *Ethiopianise* the “colonised” nations completely by destroying their culture, identity and peoplehood through its so-called modernisation policies (Jalata1993:118). Consequently, the Oromos became more militant and established the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) to liberate the Oromo nation from Ethiopian colonialism (Adejumobi 2007:126; Bulcha 1996; Baxter 1994). This orientation created severe alienation on the side of the Unitarians and escalated rivalries, conflicts and wars. Accordingly, the two basic components of the *Pyramid Trap of Repression*:

Ethno-Luminary-Thought and *Narcissistic* practice reached a climax, and freedom of expression was almost eliminated.

Despite some cultural changes resulting from Islamisation, evangelisation and political participation in the centre, many Oromo believe they share relatively common language, belief in common ancestry, common history and memory, social institutions. This defines the peoplehood/nationhood in which their nationalism is rooted. According to Gnamo (2002:99), their resistance against what is perceived to be an oppressive state serves as a rallying point for their nationalist aspiration. As Hayes (1960:15-16) argued:

Nationalism relates man to his nation's historic past and identifies him and his descendants with the future life of the nation. And its goal is the assurance of freedom and individuality and autonomy, if not to the person, at least to man's nationality and national state.

Nationalism or the politics of nationalism, as John Breuilly (1985:371) puts it, is used as a means of contesting the legitimacy of the state or imposing the legitimacy of the state.

According to Gnamo (2002:104), even after the revolution of 1974, which led to official separation between the state and the Church, many Oromos, many of which are inclined to Islam, considered the church the mainstay or custodian of imperial ideology. Bulcha (1994:8-11) further explains the perception of many Oromos about the Ethiopian Church:

The Orthodox Church can hardly be proud of its past relations with the Oromo people. Abyssinian priests never came to Oromia as the messengers of God and peace. They (priests) came as conquerors with Menelik's generals, 'blessing' the massacre that the latter and their soldiers inflicted upon the Oromo People. They shared with the emperor, his generals and soldier's booties plundered from the Oromo. The clergy were given land that was confiscated from the Oromo peasants and became landlords; they owned Oromo peasants as *Gabbars* (serfs) and thrived upon their labor.

Generally, the Oromos, Somalis and other Muslim ethnic groups recently included in modern Ethiopia perceive the Ethiopian Church as the embodiment of imperial legitimacy and official nationalism in its feudal or revolutionary and post-revolutionary regimes.

Moreover, from the nationalists' perspective, the Ethiopian state, whatever the source of its ideological legitimisation, has been owned by the Abyssinians, which basically include two ethnic groups, *Amhara-Tigreans*, who have imposed their vested political, economic and cultural

interests (see 2.5.4). They believe that the Oromo, along with other southern people, were conquered and incorporated during the last century and were considered second class citizens. Consequently, Oromo nationalism contests the legitimacy of the Ethiopian state, institutions, and its ideological foundations based on a master-servant relationship and a history of oppression (Gnamo 2002:105; Markakis 1987: 259). Hence, this mind-set created, as indicated above, an alienation towards each other and uncompromised animosity (*Ethno-Luminarity*) which persistently triggered political, social, cultural repression and counter repression (see 6.2. 7.2, 7.4-7.5).

However, other historians argue against Oromo elites and groups, and critically oppose this sentiment, insisting that not only the so called Abyssinians, *Amhara-Tigre*, but also the Oromos have assimilated their culture and ideology, overwhelming the identity of other smaller ethnic groups in their expansion to the north since 16th century (see section 2.2). Marcus (2003:37) indicated that “The Oromo made for the high plateaus. Helped by their adversaries' war weariness, demoralisation, and depopulation; the Oromo won territory after territory in the seventeenth century”. Further, Ta'a (2003:172) indicated that the Oromo clan made expansion in the second half of the 19th century in peripheral regions of Ethiopia. At the Ethio-Sudanese border for instance, the Oromo clan led by Jotee Tullu of Leeqa Qellem invaded the Goma territory and established their rule over the Goma before the rise of Menelik II. Besides using force to ensure invasions and expansion, Oromos have used another strategy or practice aimed at gaining social, political or religious benefits. One such strategy was the practice of “Mogaasaa”, which means *adoption* based on assimilating alien individuals into the Oromo nation, which is a common practice in many other groups in the Horn of Africa (Haile 2009:18; Triulzi 2002:54-55). According to Seyoum (2015:111-112), through this system, other societies have been obliged to change their thoughts, beliefs, ideologies and even ethnic identities. Tolossa (2016:15-31; 145-200), an Oromo academic, critically argues against the Oromo elites claim of being dominated, and indicated that the role of Oromos in relation to state development in Ethiopia is tremendous. The participation of the Oromos in Ethiopian government history is so significant that the Oromos became kings, queens and major parts of the royal family in the *Solomonic Dynasty* for about 700 years. This implies that Oromos have taken part in the repressive history of the Ethiopian state (Tolossa 2016:188-189; 194). On the contrary, according to Tolossa, the

Amharas did not have high positions in the Ethiopian aristocracy other than serving as soldiers and low ranked governors. For example, there have only been two women in the Ethiopian royal family who were Amhara descendants around 3rd and 4th centuries. The only thing Amharas benefited from was the expansion of Amharic language (Tolossa 2016:172-173). These circumstances show that the Ethiopian socio-political history has continued with cyclical forms of *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and the practice of *Narcissism* and subsequent repression and restrictions on freedom of thought and expression since antiquity, particularly since the starting of the rivalry between Semitic and Cushitic people about 4000 years ago.

However, many writers including Záhóřík (2014:151-152), argue that many of the recent debates concerning ethnicity and nationalism in Ethiopia completely “ignore some crucial factors of socio-political development in Ethiopia including religion, regional competition and balance, and cross-border as well as international and transnational issues”. For instance, Tamirat (1972) and Østebo (2012) specifically indicated that the rise of religious nationalism in the 14th and 15th centuries was used as a significant tool for territorial expansion and contributed to the conflict and war. Záhóřík (2014:158) further argues that the expansion of the Ethiopian state into the Oromo speaking areas was not a task of subjugation and domination; rather it was an opportunity for the Oromo people to be protected from foreign aggressors like Egypt. It also the Oromo trading routes South-west of Ethiopia used by the Oromo regional lords like Aba Jifar of Jima. This implies that the Oromo culture, language and identity were relatively protected by the expansion of the Ethiopian state to the South.

Generally, nationalism in modern Ethiopian history had three basic phases. The first stage of the rise of nationalism in Ethiopia was that of the 1896 victory of Ethiopia at Adowa over the Italian forces, which strengthened the concept of Ethiopian unity and partially fulfilled the centuries-long process of unification of Ethiopia. However, this incident and the presence of Italy in Eritrea, weakened the hegemony of Tigre and approved the rise of Shewa as the dominant core of Ethiopian expansionism. In the process, the Tigre nationalism was also elevated, though later Eritrean and Tigray nationalism emerged and created the succession of Eritrea after the fall of the *Derg*. This triggered the long history of power rivalry, at least since the 16th century, between the societies in central and Northern Ethiopia, the Shewas and the Tigres, and subsequent repression. The second phase of the rise of nationalism in Ethiopia is related to the issue of

Ogaden which challenged the Pan-Somali ideology, and even created a bloody war between Somalia and Ethiopia at the end of 1970s. The third phase of nationalism is related to civil unrest and the protests against the centralised power of Imperial Ethiopia. This includes the rise of various associations, Marxist ideology and ethno-nationalist movements throughout Ethiopia, particularly the Oromo nationalist movements which emerged as a response to the *Derg's* military socialist regime (Záhořík 2014: 153-154; Negash 1986: 39-41; Abir 1980: 154-157).

5.7. Constitutional and legal frameworks and freedom of expression

Since the downfall of Haile Selassie's regime in 1974 to 1987, there had not been any written constitution in Ethiopia. During this period of transformation, the *Derg* tried to find political solutions to answer some socio-political questions by adopting different proclamations. Of course, after removing the imperial establishments, the *Derg* did not offer guidelines for how to deal with socio-political questions. The proclamation that the military government issued in September 1974 nonetheless suggested, at least indirectly, how the *Derg* would go ahead. It stated:

The Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (Parliament) is hereby dissolved until the people elect through democratic processes their genuine representatives dedicated to serve the interests of the people... The Constitution of 1955 is hereby suspended. The Armed Forces, the Police and Territorial Army Council has hereby assumed full government power until a legally constituted people's assembly approves a new constitution and a government is duly established... (*Negarite Gazeta* 1974).

This proclamation clearly shows that the society and the country failed under full control of a few low ranking officers and young military men that had no political experience. They lacked the experience to administer the civil service and lacked the mind-set for governing in favour of freedom and freedom of expression. Hence, every decision had military leanings: harsh orders, imprisonment, torture and killing.

Hence, in 1975, the *Derg* proclaimed the Program for National Democratic Revolution (PNDR) with a commitment to create a system to respond to the claim of self-determination of all ethnic groups. This programme and the *Derg* committed to using Marxism-Leninism as a panacea for the socio-political and economic problems. As such, it dictated the role of institutions so that freedom of thought was confined to only Marxist-Leninist ideology. However, the land reform proclamation of March 1975 set the stage for fundamental transformation across the organisation

of rural social life in the countryside. Accordingly, the poor peasantry apparently developed a sense of economic freedom which could have a big impact on freedom of thought (see 2.4). Nevertheless, mass mobilisation in the cities and towns across the country were carried out after the nationalisation of urban land in the same year. Accordingly, the *Derg* mushroomed peasant associations, producers cooperatives, urban dwellers associations, youth and women's organisations, moulding them with socialist ideology. The structure of these associations stretched from headquarters in the capital to towns and villages (Kebeles) in the countryside, and every citizen was forced directly and indirectly to be a member of an association or they faced being disadvantaged from political and economic benefits. For instance, anyone who resisted being a member of one of the associations was devoid of resources, inputs, daily basic products and jobs. Implementing agencies had also been restructured in ways to ensure they execute centrally guided socio-economic ideologies along those principles. State and mass organisational establishments became highly institutionalised and integrated into a common and centralised administrative apparatus. Hence, every thought and action was channelled into the group ideology and freedom of expression was stifled (see 2.5.5.3, 5.4).

Two years later, the *Derg* promulgated a piece of legislation that had a semblance of 'a supreme law of the country'. The legislation was enforced until the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) was officially inaugurated in September 1987 (Negarite Gazeta 1977). This legislation established authoritarian relationships within various government agencies, on the one hand, and between the government and mass organisations, on the other. It also empowered the *Derg* with both legislative and executive mandates. Hence, almost all the powers of ideology formation and policymaking resided only in the *Derg*.

By a proclamation promulgated in September 1984, the Party of Ethiopia (WPE), the only party during this the period, was established. With the coming into being of the WPE, the *Marxist-Leninist* ideology promoting centralisation and institutionalisation intensified. The strategic objective of the party was claimed to be building socialism, and through socialism move towards a classless society, namely, communism (WPE 1984). The party professed that any socio-economic development and transformation in Ethiopia would be unthinkable in the absence of

the leading role of the WPE and the principles of Marxism-Leninism. WPE (1984: 116) contended:

Accordance to the stage of development that the Ethiopian revolution has currently attained, the primary and fundamental goal of the revolution is the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia under the leadership of WPE. The realization of this goal will primarily necessitate the political hegemony of the working class...

Further, WPE pledged the establishment of a new socio-political order whose ultimate objective was the establishment of proletarian dictatorship under the leadership of the WPE. It was further dedicated to the Party's commitments of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and laying the socio-political basis of socialism. This was only possible if it could assert its supremacy in political leadership. Hence, the party was set as the only ideology while the rest of society was silenced (WPE 1984:39-40). Accordingly, the WPE pledged the establishment of a People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) and initiated the proclamation of a new constitution. The WPE's programme set the preconditions for the making of the constitution, spelling out as follows.

The institutional structure of the PDRE would be based on the universal tenets of Marxism-Leninism and the principles of socialism. Hence, the republic would be supported by democratic centralism, socialist legality and proletarian internationalism (WPE 1984: 42).

Accordingly, a Constitutional Commission consisting of 34 members selected by the WPE was formed to draft a new constitution in March 1986 (Negarit Gazeta 1986:3-8; Amanuel 2003: 2). This shows that the new constitution was predefined by the ideology of the only party of the country that was dominated by the proletariat. The leader of the *Derg* and the WPE Mengistu Hailemariam asserted, in his opening remarks to the first plenary session of the Constitutional Commission, that:

... the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) will be organized and run on the basis of the well-known principles of Democratic Centralism, Proletarian Internationalism and socialist legality. It will also be founded for the purpose of the realization of the programs and policies of the WPE (People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 1986:1).

It should also be noted that the major decisions regarding the Constitution were made personally by Mengistu Hailemariam and his close associates. In fact, even the Central Committee and politburo of the WPE were not even involved in the drafting process (Woldegiorgis 1990: 67-68; Tiruneh 1993:267). Hence, the generation of ideas and freedom of expression during this period

was only afforded to members of the *Derg* and later to the WPE and close allies, while the mass society were obliged abide by those ideas. Through this confined process the constitutional document, which established the normative foundations of the PDRE, consisted of 17 chapters and 119 articles, was promulgated and put into effect on 22 February 1987.

5.7.1 The 1987 constitution's provisions and practices of freedom of expression

The *Derg* ratified the 1987 Constitution, which was reported to be endorsed by 81% of the 14 million eligible voters. This was the first Ethiopian national election based on the principles of universal suffrage, though freeness and fairness of the election was arguable. After three weeks of the promulgation of this constitution, the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was officially proclaimed (Keller 2010:72-73; Beken 2007:28-29). The preamble of the PDRE's constitution traced Ethiopia's origins and praised the historical heroism of its people. It further situated Ethiopia in the context of the movement of proletarian internationalism and progressive states and pledged to seek solutions to simmering problems of ethnicity within the framework of a single multi-ethnic state rather than a federation with a strong power assigned to the president. This implies that the country was made to continue with the strong centralisation policy of the previous imperial regimes, in which all the ideologies had originated from the centre and the top, and disseminated to the peripheries and to the grassroots (see 4.4.2). The articles that follow the preamble largely addressed the political and socio-economic system that the country had to build in order to align to the republic's commitment to building socialism. The aim was to make Ethiopia a state of the working people established on the basis of a worker-peasant alliance (Negarit Gazeta 1987:55-56). This further shows that some groups of society would be advantaged by the law while others would be excluded from their national and natural rights of equality. It is clear that excluding one from political and economic rights means preventing him/her from human rights, including freedom of thought and expression.

Article 1(3), indicated that this republic "shall, while accomplishing the national democratic revolution, lay the foundation for the construction of socialism". Hence, the goal of the republic and this constitution was to establish a Marxist-Leninist socio-economic system in the mould of Russia, though it included the word "democratic" which contradicts the basic tenets of socialism. In addition, the Marxist-Leninist philosophy is different from democratic principles which are

concerned with individual rights and equality. But, the theory and the practice in Ethiopia showed that socialism is based on class differences and the promotion of allies while suppressing others. Article 1 of this constitution clearly spells out the regime's definition of appropriate social order, where the state is "a state of working peasants in which the intelligentsia, the revolutionary army, artisans and other democratic sections of the society participate". Further Article 3(1) asserted that "power belongs to the working people". These provisions divided society into the revolutionary or anti-revolutionary, the working class or the aristocrat. Those who accepted the *Derg* were identified as revolutionary and working people and were rewarded, but those who opposed or had different perspectives were identified as anti-revolutionary and devoid of any social, political and economic rights including freedom of expression and even subjected to brutally. This divisive strategy created another form of group rivalry and paved the way to the development of *Etho-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcistic* behaviour and strengthened the *Pyramid Trap structure of Repression*.

Further, Article 4(1-2) outlined the manner in which popular participation could take place and how people should exercise their powers through the election of representatives to the national legislature body.

In the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the organization and the functioning of the organs of state is based on the principles of democratic centralization. All the organs of state power, from lowest to the highest, shall be established by election. The organs of state power shall exercise centralism and local initiative. Decisions of higher organs shall be executed by lower organs. Lower organs are accountable to higher organs.

However, elected officials had to first be nominated by the local cells of the lone party of the country called the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE), mass organisations, military units and selected other bodies which were entirely founded by the *Derg* and led by their political members and supporters. In addition, the thoughts and ideologies of the *Derg* should be accepted without resistance and opposition, and all decisions and orders should be executed by lower organs without question. Hence, the peripheries and the mass societies at the grassroots had little or no say in any aspect of life. In the economic sphere, the government strengthened the socialist relations of production which reaffirmed the pre-eminence of the socialist ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The government controlled almost all resources, while allowing for limited private ownership within the boundaries set by laws

(articles 9 and 12). In the field of culture, the constitution pledged to imbue working people with socialist morality and the proletarian culture (article 23), which is clearly Narcistic, that could limit societies' freedom to hold and express their own thoughts.

The second part of the constitution covered citizen's rights, freedoms and duties. Accordingly, people were guaranteed individual human and economic rights: the right to work and leisure, protection of private property, due process, the right to vote, freedom of religion freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. In reality, however, citizens enjoyed very little in this regard (Articles 35, 40, 41, 42, 46 & 47). For instance, Article 47(1-2) dictated that "Ethiopians are guaranteed freedom of speech, press, assembly, peaceful demonstration and association. The state shall provide necessary material and moral support for the exercise of these freedoms". In addition, Article 2(1-2, 5) of the constitution declared the equality of all nationalities and the realisation of regional autonomies and respect of all languages, saying that "The people's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is a unitary state in which all nationalities live in equality... shall insure the equality, development and respectability of all the languages of all nationalities".

Moreover, Article 46 (1) and Article 41(3) guaranteed freedom of religion and clearly outlined that state and religion are separate in the sense that one cannot interfere in the affairs of the other. Accordingly, Ethiopia became a constitutionally secular state for the first time in its medieval and modern history. Thus, citizens were officially free to practice their own religion and all religions were proclaimed equal. This was at least on paper because the *Derg* did not have a positive attitude towards religion. Religion was tolerated as long as it did not contravene the interests of the state and the revolution, public morality, and the freedom of other citizens. The Orthodox Tewahido Christianity Church was reduced to a mere religious organisation while Islam has got the same recognition, as there had been questins and claims for equality, in the new secular state like all other religions (see 2.5.4.2). Further, according to the constitution Article 2(5), there were some efforts to guarantee the equality of Ethiopian languages. For instance, an adult literacy campaign which had been conducted in five languages: *Amharic, Oromigna, Tigrigna, Wolaytigna and Somali* was later expanded to fifteen, which represented about 93% of the population. Therefore, Ethiopian nationalities were relatively free to use and develop their own languages as Article 35(1-2) guaranteed equity among nationalities and their right to self-

determination saying “Ethiopians are equal before the law, irrespective of nationality, religion, sex, occupation or social status. Equality among Ethiopians shall be insured through equal participation in political, economic, social and cultural affairs.”

However, all these provisions were only lip service because there was no space for ideas, thoughts and opinions that oppose the *Derg's*; for example, there was no single opposition political party, free social association, free economic sector, free or private media. Further, this constitution vowed to combat chauvinism and narrow-minded nationalism. That means, the constitution and its practical application did not align, and the constitution could not satisfy the interests of freedom within society. Rather, individuals were expected to give their primary loyalty to the mass organisations and associations such as women, workers, peasants, and youth associations founded by the *Derg*, and almost all members were expected to be members of the WPE.

Moreover, though the constitution guaranteed freedom of expression, it was countered by other laws. For instance, this government was using *The Penal Code Proclamation of 1957* as a criminal code. In this proclamation Article 41-47, freedom of expression was restricted to prevent abuses through media such as “printed material, posters or pictures, cinematography, wireless, television or tele-diffusion, or any other means”. These abuses could be “committed against the honour of other persons, public or private safety or any other legal object protected by criminal law...”. Hence, the publication or diffusion of any publication “which constitutes the offence, or any-one who adopts them as his own and forwards them for publication or diffusion with a criminal intent, shall be guilty of an offence” (Article 41- Principle 1 &2) (for more on this panel code 4.3.3). Consequently, Ethiopia remained more centralised, within a more controlled state. Simply, the concentration of power by the emperor during the Imperial period was transferred to the new head of state, the president. The same functions of the royal retinue which filled and sustained the Imperial state were restated in favour of the only party allowed to exist in the country, the WPE. There was no distinction between the state and party structures, and the overlapping powers of the functionaries in both recreated the autocracy at the zenith. Accordingly, the socio-political atmosphere remained confined, and the dissatisfaction of the masses and the bloody conflict continued along with severe repression and threats to freedom of

expression. Hence, the provisions of the new constitution were not able to extinguish the revolutionary fire and nationality questions, and the ethnic-based struggle for freedom, and self-determination by ethnic nationalist groups continued to the demise of the regime in 1991.

The impracticality of the constitution and the terrible results spring largely from implacable competition for power and resources which are the main cause and manifestations of *Ethno-Luminary Thought* and repression of free thought and expression (see 5.2-5.3). However, Adijumobi (2007:127) argues that not only did the policies and practices of the dictatorial regime devastate the state, but also those of international powers, specifically Western expansionist national policies. They have often advanced their national interest, contributed to the instability of the state and also undermined the fundamental rights of those in the region. For example, the Cold War contributed to the denial of civil and political rights in the Ethiopia and added a new dimension to the nationalist fervour, and upheaval on the part of the citizenry (see section 8.2.4). It is clear that the legal frameworks and the constitution during this government were simply formalities that could not guarantee promises made including basic human rights such as freedom of expression. Instead, the country was ruled by the thoughts of some individuals and the ideologies of some groups, particularly the military personnel.

5.8. The practice of media and freedom of expression

During the end of the *Feudal-Monarchy* and the transition to a military regime and during the period of the revolution, for the first-time journalists could freely report, even from the Parliament. They exposed social ills and accused the emperor of using statements inconceivable in the media prior to 1974. As stated previously, this was unheard of because as it has been said “*Semay aytare nigus aykeses*”, which literally means *a king cannot be accused as a sky cannot be ploughed*. For instance, Ethiopian Television in a very provocative presentation juxtaposed footage of drought victims in the country with pictures of the emperor in his fine attire. Censorship had disappeared during that period. Moreover, news publications appeared, if only a few. Even if it could not last long, the press were used as a platform for relatively open discussion. “However, in short period of time, the regime changed the landscape of the Ethiopian press for good, and started to use the media primarily for propaganda purposes and for the spread of socialist ideology” (Meshesha 2014:82, Girmay 2005:38-39).

During the first two or three years of the *Derg's* regime, there were promises and hopes of freedom of the press and expression. Dialogue between opposing political groups became common and journalists became extremely open and critical of the government. Relevant national issues such as democracy, land tenure and the form of government the country should have were openly discussed in the public media. The high point of this free expression of views was reached with the debates between the stalwarts of the two leftist parties, EPRP and MEISON, particularly in the Amharic daily *Addis Zemen* newspaper and *Goh magazine*. Indeed, in these, as well as in other government newspapers which were published in different Ethiopian languages-including Oromo, Tigrigna and Arabic, people discussed burning political issues.

As indicated above, with the outbreak of the Ethiopian revolution - in addition to the most spectacular changes in the media, especially newspapers, printed and unprinted literature which had no parallel in Ethiopian history - a true expression of freedom was flourishing. Poems and other literary works that had been 'political prisoners' were liberated. Newly available books by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung started to fill bookshelves and shops, which could only have been circulated 'underground' in the past. As the revolution proceeded, translations of Marxist books were made. This raised a new phenomenon - the creation of a socialist and revolutionary vocabulary which was not known to the official press in the past, but which was already developing among student revolutionary movements locally and abroad. A new 'progressive' dictionary was published in 1967 with the creation of new words such as "abeyot", literally meaning *revolution*, and "Hebreseóawinet", literally meaning *socialism*. Besides translation, socialist books that were oriented towards Ethiopian problems such as equality of women were made more accessible to Ethiopian readers using Ethiopian languages, mostly in Amharic. The most surprising in a religious oriented country, was the appearance of two books in support of Darwin's theory of evolution. Following the revolution, a number of periodicals, both government and private, appeared as a forum for discussion on the construction of socialist Ethiopia. However, these developments were the continuation of the progressive evolution of Amharic literature carried over from the last years of the past regime (Eshetu 1982:32-32).

Unfortunately, that period referred to as the *golden days of Ethiopian journalism* did not last long. The *Derg* eventually assumed total control of the media, initially using it to denounce and humiliate the ancient regime and, subsequently, to consolidate the power of the military government. Many periodicals, such as *Democracia*, *Struggle*, *Labader* (meaning Proletariat), *Tseday* (meaning Spring) and *Ye Sefiw Hizb Dimts* (meaning the Voice of the wide public) which held views incongruent with those of the regime, were eventually declared counter-revolutionary and forced to go clandestine. Moreover, in its nationalisation programme, the *Derg* took privately-owned large-scale printing presses into government ownership. Eventually, the government eliminated most publications and, in so doing, eliminated all hope of democracy and free expression (Tadesse 2015:15).

The government printed material that emerged during the time of the *Derg*, including *Meskerem* (meaning September) that marks the revolution and the month the emperor was dethroned, and a newspaper called *Serto Ader* (meaning Proletariat), which was meant to pronounce the sovereignty of the proletariat. Additionally, the *Derg* continued to publish the daily *Addis Zemen* (meaning New Era), the *Ethiopian Herald*, and the weekly *Yezareyitu Ethiopia* (meaning Ethiopia Today) which came into being in the imperial period. In addition, during its 17-year rule, the regime published a weekly *Al Alem* in Arabic and *Barissa* in *Oromogna* and an irregular *Le Progres Socialiste* in French (Tadesse 2015 19-20 & Meshsha 2014:83).

On the surface, it seems that the media flourished, but these publications were mouthpieces of the government. Concomitantly, with the confiscation of privately-owned papers and the prohibition of establishing new ones, the government proceeded to eliminate any traces of independence in the government-owned print medium. The method frequently and successfully employed was censorship (see 2.5.3). A censorship organ, which had been working under the Ministry of Information and National Guidance since 1972, was given the power of *refining* all kinds of information in 1977 (Proclamation No. 127/1977 Article 7 & Proclamation No. 174/1979). A lot of restrictions were also introduced in newsrooms. Ordinary journalists could not read international news publications. Such exposure was only allowed for a few senior managers. Accordingly, the Ethiopian population became selectively informed about world events, to the extent that even important news about Ethiopia published in the international

media scarcely came to the knowledge of the local population. Moreover, the *Derg* is blamed for the persecution of many journalists and independent writers who attempted to write articles and books that exposed the regime. This included the author of the Amharic book titled *Oromai*, Bealu Girma and famous novelist, Abe Gobegna. Girma was abducted and is still missing, presumed to have been killed. The regime was generally portrayed as a dark chapter in the history of Ethiopian media and journalism as they turned all media outlets into propaganda channels and effectively forbade any opening for professional independence. The newsroom environment was marked by fear and anxiety. The press entered its darkest period of adulation of the infallible ruler and cynical manipulation of the people (Tadesse 2015:18; Seifu 2008; Simon 2006; Mocria, Messele & Gebre Hiwot 2003). As Meshsha (2014:83) indicated, this would mark how tyrannical the socialist military government was and the extent to which freedom of the press and expression was curtailed. Even the Imperial monarchy had relatively large numbers of newspapers compared to the *Derg's* regime. It was completely unthinkable to have private media during this period because everything was owned by the government.

In 1987, the government made a change of policy when the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) was introduced along with the new constitution which made provisions for freedom of expression in Article 47(1-2), promising "the necessary materials and moral support of the exercise of freedoms." In fact, freedom of the press was not clearly indicated and it remained completely under the government control, and the press was characterised as a tool of the government from its inception and ended-up being a partisan and totalitarian socialist propaganda machine. Of 17 publishers that existed in 1974, only one (a church publisher) was left untouched by the media restructuring by the *Derg*. In 1975, correspondents belonging to Western news agencies were deported. From then on, they could only visit Ethiopia on special occasions and always under the strict guidance of the militia. However, communist-loyal agencies were allowed to stay, however; for instance, for example, the Cuban news agency *Prensa Latina* opened a correspondent office in Addis Ababa in 1978 (Tadesse 2015:16; Meshsha 2014:82).

The practice of media during the reign of the *Derg* deteriorated compared to the period of the imperial monarchies (see 7.3). Specifically, the number of newspapers during this regime was

fewer as compared to the imperial government of Emperor Haile Selassie I. According to Meshesha (2014:90), “It was completely unthinkable to have private press during this period because everything was owned by the government for public consumption. Hence, the freedom of press and expression was highly curtailed.” The research of Sussman and Karlekar (2002) supports the idea that the control of the media in many developing countries extended to editorial content.

The only advancements in the Ethiopian media during the *Derg* were the introduction of new media technologies and support for freedom movements around the globe. The introduction of communication and media equipment such as photo and video cameras, sound recorders, CD players, etc. contributed significantly to the struggle for democracy and freedom that helped society record and share information outside of government control. Using these technologies, political and human rights activists exposed the wrong doings of the *Derg* including savage killings, tortures and political sabotages. In addition, they used colourful photographs and drawings, huge paintings and promoting slogans visible on big buildings or on elevated positions in big towns, particularly in Addis Ababa. In addition, though films had been imported during the last regime they had been criticised for their lack of consideration of Ethiopian reality and they had been restricted by imperial censorship. Since the revolution, though the importing of pornographic or purely pleasurable films was controlled, educational and progressive films, largely imported from the socialist countries, was encouraged. Moreover, the *Derg* promoted film production in Ethiopia and by the Ethiopians, geared to satisfy the needs and tastes of the masses, while keeping up with the artistic and technical requirements of the modern age. For example, the film *Harvest Three Thousand Years* (Gerima 1976), which shows the hard and oppressive life of peasants in feudal Ethiopia, could be testament to socio-political progressive messages. Further, a large number of documentary films were also produced after the revolution (Eshete 1982:29).

The introduction of media technologies also helped in the alliance and support of freedom movements around the globe, particularly in Africa, in politics as well as in media-related issues. For example, Radio Ethiopia lent transmission equipment to Voice of Zimbabwe to realise daily broadcasts from Addis Ababa until Zimbabwe was liberated in 1980, and later offered the same

service to the South African liberation movement and its programme ANC Radio Freedom (Tadesse 2015:17). These solidarity movements helped in sharing professional knowledge and international journalistic principles and ethics to largely non-professional journalists of the country and contributed to a better flow of information. Additionally, solidarity between the government and Russia influenced the nature of the Ethiopian press and allowed it to take the features of a communist media system. Further solidarity was shown through support for the Ethiopian opposition groups to have access to media that helped to expose the government's ills and to challenge the government and revolt against repressive and authoritarian governments. For instance, different radio channels of opposition groups such as the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) broadcast with solidarity with some countries and organisations. Hence, in one way or another, positively or negatively, solidarity in the media affected freedom of expression in the country. The positive side was that the media provided information that expanded people's access to media. The negative was that there were few of them and were patrician; they were largely used as mouthpieces and propaganda machines.

Consequently, one can argue that the media took a step back during the *Derg's* period, and freedom of expression was significantly restricted. Society could not express their feelings as a result of the fear because the whole environment was overwhelmed by security. Ethiopian society had only two choices: submission and silence, or brutal execution. The only opportunity to express their agony was the *Seal and Gold* and symbolic expressions (see section 3.2). Of course, even these methods could not save writers from execution. For instance, Bealu Girma's book, *Oromai*, was written using symbolic expressions which do not directly indicate the names of officials, to criticise the defects of the government; but he was abducted and lost. Eventually, the *Derg* was replaced, along with the totalitarian ideology, by Ethnic-nationalists (Taye 2003; Mengei 2015). Ethiopia has continued to be ruled on the ruins of the predecessor, in the centuries old trend, based on *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, using escalated *Ethno-Luminary-Though* and by more *Narcissistic rulers* which are the basic components of the *Pyramid Trap Structure* of repression, hence, freedom of expression has remained largely elusive (see 7.4-7.5).

5.9 Conclusion: The *new Ethiopia* under old motto: aborted nationalism and patriotism

“Revolution consumes its child to survive”- the Derg’s motto.

At the beginning of the revolution, the *Derg* seemed to have an agenda to introduce reforms after the Imperial period. However, at the end of the revolution, the *Derg’s* agenda rapidly diverged from that of the reformers of the late Imperial period and became revolutionist. They then began to wipe out the Imperial government system, as had happened in all political and regime changes in Ethiopian history. This included eliminating all the elements of the aristocracy, military and bureaucracy that were closely associated with the emperor and the old order and proclaimed the so-called *new Ethiopia*. After that, the *Derg* proclaimed *Ethiopia Tikdem*, which literally means *Ethiopia First*, as their guide to refer to their policy of no compromise with the country’s unity and, thus, established the revolution guard army to the lowest administration level. Thereafter, they wiped out not only the old system but also eliminated all groups and individuals that had different ideas from the *Derg’s* group in the name of protecting the revolution and state unity. Even members of the *Derg* regime were executed in their struggle for power. This shows that the main driving force in the persecution was not protecting the revolution nor protecting national unity but rather striving for power and dominance. The *Derg* perceived this act, knowingly or unknowingly, as a nationalist and patriotic act. This character, indeed, was not unique to the *Derg*; it had been a centuries old practice for attaining and maintaining power in Ethiopian history.

The monarchy had restricted and suppressed freedom of opinion and expression claiming the protection of the nation and their national religion. Similarly, the *Derg* labelled those who claimed freedom and human rights as anti-revolutionary, secessionists and pro-secessionists. In the process, hundreds of thousands of lives, particularly the young and educated, were wiped out. Of course, there were groups who officially raised the question of succession, but the *Derg* tried to eradicate all political and human rights claims to maintain power. That situation could be briefly expressed by one sentence that it is believed to be uttered by one of the *Derg* leaders. It says “Abiyot lijiwan tibelech”, which literally means *Revolution consumes its child to survive*. Consequently, it was lamented as “Kena biye bayew semayu keleegn; egziabherin ende sew

wesedew meselegn”, which literally means *Mengistu Hailemariam might have abducted God because the sky seems shallow*, to show the severity of human sacrifice. This implies that everything was less worthy than the revolution and socialist political ideology, including human lives and dignity, as well as freedom of expression.

Indeed, the *Derg's* steps brought a paradigm shift in about 3000 years of political, social, economic and cultural changes within the country. Specifically, this government brought three important changes: it abolished the legal eternal claim of authority of the *Solomonic Dynasty*; it broke thousands of years of tenancy though the peasantry was still under indirect tenancy as the land was still under the ownership of the authority or the government; and it pushed aside thousands of years of hegemony of the Orthodox Tewahedo Church. However, the nation as a whole, all physical and human recourses, institutions and associations were under the total control of the military and their ideology. They tried to rule the new nation using an old strategy. There was no rule of law, though it was written on paper; there was no democracy or multiparty system; there were no free and/or private media or freedom of expression. The *Derg* perceived that they could achieve their goals entirely by force like their predecessors and left the nation absolutely stifled.

These brutal and repressive acts of the *Derg* finally consumed them, leaving centuries old Ethiopian Nationalism and patriotism at bay. Hence, the *Derg* regime was simply a transformation from Imperial aristocracy to totalitarian autocracy, and society was stifled with new socialist ideology and the continued influence of 3000 years cultural legacy. Hence, ordinary people were caught between the devil and deep blue sea. Generally, this period was one of cultural and political dilemma, bloody conflict among political and social groups, poverty and suppression. In other words, this period was, as usual, a period of *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, a period of escalated and expanded *Ethno-Luminary* thought, and the period of more severe *Narcissism*. Therefore, freedom of expression has continued to be threatened by the government, by religious and cultural hegemonies, by poverty and the related lack of education, access to media and information, and by group rivalries, conflict and war. The only shift in this period was the change from more religious and more cultural hegemonies to socialist ideological hegemony. Consequently, freedom of expression remained trapped in those three main causal

factors of those threats, and this period became one of the darkest in freedom of expression in recorded history of the country.

CHAPTER SIX

6. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION UNDER ‘REVOLUTIONARY-DEMOCRATIC’ REGIME (1991-2014)

6.1. Introduction

Ethiopia reached the end of 21st century through many ups and downs. On one hand, the nation was equipped with success and prestige, and on the other hand, it was disgraced by its ancient reputation, particularly when compared to other African countries, most of the developing and previously colonised world. Of course, since the middle of the 19th century, Ethiopia tried to emerge out of decline and endless squabbles among provisional rulers in addition to successfully defending its sovereignty from external aggressors. However, the inspiration and the effort did not end in success.

The revolution of 1974 introduced a counter hegemonic culture that was supposedly dislodged from the county’s religious establishment. But the military junta led by Mengistu Hailemariam “continued and perhaps completed the process of over-centralisation introduced by the modernizing emperors of the nineteenth century” (Novati 2004:97). Moreover, by adopting Marxism-Leninism, the *Derg* marginalised the church and the richer parts of society through the nationalisation of private property and the means of production and contributed to increased repression. The *Derg* tried enforcing the transition to secular modernity by any means necessary. Further, Marxism allowed the regime to focus on its radical projects of restructuring the grassroots of the imperial political networks. However, the *Derg* regime faced fierce resistance from ruminants of the monarchy, the emerging educated elite and ethnic-based nationalists (Adejumobi 2007:133; Fantini [Sa:2). After 17 years of repression and bloody conflict, the *Derg* and its ideology was wiped out by the secessionist and pro-secessionist groups in 1991, ensuring the legacy of suppression remained intact.

The new ruling group was not founded on the reign of its predecessors but on completely the opposite: that is, the thoughts or ideologies of this new group were designed to counter the establishments of their predecessors. Hence, the policies and implementing instruments of the

new regime were selected based on research of the predecessors. It was implemented with thorough caution, with a very complicated strategy and using a very complex system, in contrast to the predecessors who had been direct authoritarian rulers directed by clear and open policies and strategies. Therefore, to understand the total evolution of freedom of expression in the three most recent governments of Ethiopia, it is very important to comprehensively analyse the features of the 1991-2014 regime. In the forthcoming sections of this chapter, all political, economic, social and cultural issues related to freedom of expression will be deeply and widely analysed, and compared with the previous regimes.

Table 6.1 Timeline of major events during the ‘Revolutionary-Democratic’ (1991-2014) regime

Year	Major Events
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front captures Addis Ababa, forcing Mengistu to flee the country • Eritrea establishes its own provisional government pending a referendum on independence • Ethiopian national army is demolished
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Press Proclamation, the first legislation in the history of Ethiopia’s legal system, is introduced with intense restriction on media and communication • Haile Selassie’s remains discovered under a palace toilet
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eritrea becomes independent following a referendum • April, more than 40 professors dismissed from AA university, illustrating continued repression
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New constitution divides Ethiopia into ethnically-based regions
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negasso Gidada becomes titular president; Melese Zenawi assumes post of prime minister.
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 February, General Haylom Araya, the well-known war veteran, is shot dead
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute erupts into armed clashes
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethiopian-Eritrean border clashes turn into a full-scale war • The broadcasting proclamation that specifically deals with the broadcasting services is introduced along with more restricting provisions of media and freedom of expression
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than eight million Ethiopians face starvation after three successive years of poor rain and failed harvests. • In May, Ethiopia advances and captures Eritrean territories • In June, Ethiopia and Eritrea sign a cease-fire agreement, and sign a peace agreement in Algeria
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In February, Ethiopia announces it has completed its troop withdrawal from Eritrea • In March, Melese Zenawi says he has thwarted an attempt to cause political upheaval by a dissident group in the dominant Tigre People’s Liberation Front • 12 May, intelligence and security chief Kinfe Gebre-Medhin, a key ally of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, is assassinated
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In April, Ethiopia and Eritrea accept a new common border, drawn up by an independent commission, though both sides then lay claim to the town of Badme

2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In April, Independent boundary commission rules that the disputed town of Badme lies in Eritrea. Ethiopia says the ruling is unacceptable
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start of resettlement programme to move more than two million people away from parched, over-worked highlands • The Criminal Code is introduced, along with repressive instruments against the media and other human right claims
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March, Human Rights Watch accuses army of widespread murder, rape and torture against Gambella region's ethnic Anuak people • In April, first section of Axum obelisk, looted by Italy in 1937, is returned to Ethiopia from Rome • In May, disputed multi-party elections lead to violent protests over months, and hundreds are killed, thousands imprisoned and more than 80 people, including opposition leaders, are charged with treason and genocide and sentenced to long prison terms or the death penalty
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In August, Ethiopian troops enter Somalia, prime Minister Meles says Ethiopia was "technically" at war with the Islamists because they had declared holy war on his country • In December, exiled former dictator Mengistu Hailemariam and higher officials of the Derg are convicted of genocide at the end of a 12-year trial • Hailemariam is later sentenced to death in absentia
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In November, Ethiopia rejects border line demarcated by international boundary commission. Eritrea accepts it • The Broadcasting Proclamation of 1999, revised with various powers and duties, including the power to issue, suspend and revoke broadcasting licenses, is introduced
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In December, police re-arrest key opposition leader Birtukan Medeksa, who was jailed for her role in the opposition protests after the 2005 polls and freed under a government pardon in 2007 • Freedom of the mass media and access to information proclamation is introduced, includes additional restricting provisions
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In November, 26 found guilty of coup plot, and some, including opposition party leaders, sentenced death and life in prison • Anti-terrorism proclamation, which is a major executing instrument to suppress freedom of expression, is promulgated • Charities and Societies Proclamation comes into effect and significantly influences social freedom
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In May, Ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) wins huge majority (99.6%) in the disputed parliamentary elections, handing PM Meles Zenawi a fourth term
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In April, Ethiopia, for the first time, declares openly that it will support Eritrean rebel groups fighting to overthrow President Isaias Afewerki • In June, parliament designates three domestic political and armed organisations as terrorist groups • Two Swedish journalists are captured by Ethiopian troops in Ogaden region during a clash with ONLF rebels and are found guilty of supporting terrorism and sentenced to 11 years in jail
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In August, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi dies after several months of rumours about his declining health • Hailemariam Desalegn appointed as the Prime Minister by EPRDF • The Telecom Fraud Offence Proclamation is enacted and restricts and threatens freedom of communication
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In May, violence as students' protest against plans to expand Addis Ababa, which they say would encroach on land belonging to the Oromo people. This marks the start of a new revolution in Ethiopia

6.2. The new socio-political set up: ethnic federalism and freedom of expression

The failure of the *Derg's* policies, a growing wave of change and realignment in global relations encouraged radical opposition in domestic affairs. The ethnic-based opposition which had been asking nationality questions for decades (see 4.4.2, 5.6) saw an opportunity and escalated their insurgency against the regime. This included in particular those engaged in guerrilla warfare, including the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). After about two decades of civil war, the TPLF formed a new alliance with other smaller nationalist groups, founding the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and snatched power from the military regime in May 1991, triggering a new wave of suppression.

As the EPRDF was regarded as a peasant movement, its fighters were comprised of countrymen from different ethnic groups in Ethiopia. This characteristic frightened the urban bourgeoisie in Addis Ababa and fuelled class based political tension in other cities. The urban elites feared the advent of *peasant power* and the loss of their authority over what they regarded as a rabble, and depicted the EPRDF leadership as ill-educated Marxists. Hence, at the beginning this was seemingly a class based rivalry. However, with the demise of the *Derg* and the apparent end of the civil war that ravaged the country for decades, the issue of peace, democracy and the rule of law captured the imagination of large numbers of people. On 1 July 1991, the EPRDF called a national conference that excluded political groups and parties that propagated Ethiopian nationalism, such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM), better known by its Amharic acronym (MEISON), but included ethnic-based political parties and groups. Indeed, this incident heralded a significant and radical ideological change from the dominant political ideology, *centralisation* which reined the country since the middle of the 19th century.

The conference culminated in the adoption of a Transitional Period Charter to function as an interim constitution. Pursuant to the Charter, a Council of Representatives was set up to govern the nation until a permanent government could be elected. The following year, local and regional elections were held, allegedly as part of the effort to lay down the basis for a constitutional

government. Although Ethiopia had no prior experience with a popularly elected democratic government or legislature, over 60 political parties emerged to contest the regional elections held in 1992. However, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) was ultimately driven by the EPRDF at the helm. The EPRDF's leader, Melese Zenawi, was elected interim president of the transitional government and chairman of the transitional Council of Representatives, a position he occupied from 1991 to 1995 (Adijumobi 2007:134).

In the process, the EPRDF wiped out all the foundations laid by the previous government, the military, institutions, the social composition of the country, and savagely executed individuals and groups that were considered remnants of the old system. That is, the new reign demolished, as had been done in previous regime changes, the ideological, social, economic and cultural establishment and replaced these with a completely new one. This shows that EPRDF's action is a full and pure manifestation of *Ethno-Luminarity*, and *Narcisism*. Similarly, this practice is a resurgence of a *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilema*. For instance, this political group, as a group, and other pro-nationalists are in dilemma on the importance of Ethiopian nation building or freedom of "nations and nationalities"/ethnic groups, which is a controversial issue as many perceive it as state disintegration and promotion of rivalry, conflict and war which could create a vicious circle of repression. So one can clearly see that *the Pyramid Trap structure (Model) of Repression* has been fully exhibited in this period (see 4.2, 5.2, 7.4.2-7.4.3).

Accordingly, the fall of the *Derg* created a new socio-political set up, which exhibited a U-turn in the Ethiopian political history after almost two centuries. The socio-political orientation diverged from centralisation, unity and integration to decentralisation, diversity and identity formation (see 4.4.2, 5.6, 7.4.2). The centralisation process was re-started in 1855 by Emperor Tewodros, and ethnic mobilisation was the path to power and the pillar used to maintain it for centuries. During that period, Ethiopia was parcelled or 'decentralised' in a disorderly fashion among local princes, who drew support from their ethnic or sub-ethnic base. Here, history repeated itself, and the vicious circle of unification and diversification, expansion and disintegration, repression and re-repression have continued.

Immediately after the fall of the *Derg*, Eritrea seceded from its mother land, Ethiopia. The EPRDF reorganised the country as a federal state structured along ethno-linguistic lines, supporting the apparently ‘unconditional’ right of every ethnic nationality in the country to self-determination, cultural autonomy and self-governance including a provision for the special representation of minority nations. Accordingly, Ethiopia has been reorganised into ethnically-based regional states which have the constitutional right to secession at any time they feel discomfort living in Ethiopia. Those regional states got their names from the larger ethnic group spread across each territory, namely, Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Harare, Somali Benishangul Gumaz, Gambella and the South Nations, nationalities and people.

This ethnic-based federal system emerged from the notion that unity required the government to assimilate the dominant Amhara culture, language and religion across the ethnically diverse people of the country, which resulted in ethnic inequality (Clapham 1988:195; Gudina 2003:62). However, this notion and the efforts to create ethnic-based administration systems could not address the basic question of freedom and inequality. Instead, the government emerged with similar problems hidden by different covers.

Firstly, the system hierarchically categorised ethnic groups into “nations, nationalities and peoples” (Article 20/5 of the 1995 constitution explicitly indicates this hierarchy among the ethnic groups). The bigger ethnic groups such as the Tigray, Amhara, Oromo and Somali were called ‘nations’ and were given their own regions and the regions were named following their own ethnonyms and allowed to develop some sense of prestige. In contrast, several dozens of the smaller ethnic groups were called “nationalities and peoples” and were put together to create “multi-ethnic” regions such as the SNNPR, Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz. They were also given a derogatory label, *Anasa Kilil*, which literally means *Diminutive State* and have been practically excluded, directly or indirectly, from political and economic participation in Ethiopia. These divisions and nomenclatures have raised questions of fairness in power and resource division. For example, the Harari people, whose overall population does not extend beyond ten thousand people and constitute about 7% of the total population of the Harar city, were allowed their own regional state while much larger ethnic groups like the Sidama whose populations are more than three and half million were given a zonal status under the Southern Nations,

Nationalities and Peoples state. Moreover, according to current political arrangements, individuals or groups from those “Diminutive States” have been officially excluded from political power of the central government because only parties from the big “nations” have the right to lead the country. Consequently, societies in these “diminutive” states have little or no say in the country’s policy making, but are used only as only implementers for the ideas and thoughts of dominant groups (see 2.5.5.1).

Secondly, provision of Article 39 of the constitution which allowed ethnic groups seceding and forming independent states created tensions among the country’s ethnic groups. Specifically, this situation created two potential threats. One, it left the entire multi-ethnic, multilingual, multi-religious population and minorities amongst “nations” in a state of confusion because their identity could not be determined and consequently their basic rights could not be protected, and their basic needs were not addressed. The rights of individuals and groups in this system have been protected based on their identity. Hence, individuals born from two or more ethnic groups have been forced to select only one ethnic group and are then given an identity card accordingly. If that individual finds it difficult or resists choosing one ethnic group as an identity, he/she is automatically given the *Amhara* identity. This has negative consequences because the current ruling and dominant ethnic group has labelled the *Amharas* as “Neftegna”, which means the *ruling* and *oppressing* ethnic group, who are marginalised and deprived of basic rights (see 4.4 5.6). Consequently, the Amharas have been coerced to change their identity: culture, language, and even names which could be denoted as Amharas. For instance, individuals or groups, labelled as *Amharas* who have been living in other ethnic group states have been prevented from their basic rights, such as political participation, using their language, practicing their culture and religion, etcetera. Even in a regional state delegated to those labelled as Amharas, rulers who promote the ideologies of the ruling group have been assigned to rule, hence, all government services have been delivered screened through ethnic identities (see 2.5.5.3, 6.2, 7.2.4, 7.4.2, 7.5).

Moreover, maybe due to such marginalisation, the *Amharas* population has declined by about 2.5 million at the national level since the 2007 census, while Oromo and Tigray populations have almost doubled. Many Amharas have claimed that they have been purposefully and

systematically executed, and are the victims of ethnic cleansing by the government (Endalk 2013; Tesfaw 2016). This situation has triggered revolutionary and revenge-seeking sentiments on the side of the Amharas which could lead to another cycle of repression in the country. Also, even though the country's federal constitution has recognised 'unlimited' self-determination, it has been clear, from a quarter of a century's experience that the ethnic regions are not allowed to exercise administrative autonomy, let alone freedom of practicing their own thoughts and succession. This shows that political leadership is provided to all of the ethnic regions from the centre, but the constitutional provisions are used only as lip service.

A good example of this is the case of the ONLF. The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) was initially a political party, but began a low-level armed insurgency in Ethiopia's Somali region in response to what it perceived to be the EPRDF's failure to respect regional autonomy and to consider demands for self-determination including succession according to the current constitution. In 2007, the ONLF scaled up their armed attacks against government targets and oil exploration sites, and triggered a harsh crackdown by the government. As with the government's counter-insurgency response to the ONLF, the Ethiopian security forces have routinely committed abuses against individuals of Somali ethnicity, including arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings, based on their ethnicity or perceived support for the ONLF (Human Rights Watch 2008, International Crisis Group 2013). Similarly, the Amharas who have been living in the area now demarcated in the dominant ethnic group's territory, have been brutally executed, displaced or given the dominant ethnic group's identity by force. They have been prevented from using their language and their cultural ceremonies, such as burials, festivities, marriage, and advertisements. Indeed, the patriotic song known as *Kererto* and *Fukera* have been restricted at the state level for being labelled the "Neftegna's song" to refer to *Warrior*.

However, this divisive policy in Ethiopia, which only involved the regulation and codification of ethnic identity, led to suspicion among different ethnic groups and contributed to the transformation and generation of conflict (Balashova, 2009:1318). Berhe (2001) insists that "this experiment too does not at all appear to work and has instead sown the seeds of recurring conflicts that deeply wreck the state". These conflicts have impacted significantly on the right to freedom of expression justified by reasons of restoring law and order; securing peace, protecting

national security and sovereignty (see 2.5.4, 4.4.2, 5.6). Many believe that the bloody war between already seceded Eritrea and Ethiopia was the beginning of the rivalry and conflict among more than 80 ethnic groups. During the Ethio-Eritrean war beyond freedom of expression, people were deprived of all they had: properties, relatives and life. Since then, East Africa's crises and domestic ethnic rivalries have been getting worse. Border disputes among different ethnical states, namely between Amhara and Tigray, Somalia and Oromiya, Tigray and Afar, and suspicions, clashes and displacements among different ethnic groups, namely between Oromos and Amharas, Amharas and Tigrays, Sidams and Wolayitas, Agnuwaks and Nuwers, Amharas and Gumizis, have been evident. These conflicts triggered a range of repression and stifling by the government and different groups in different parts of the country. This is a clear manifestation of *Ethno-Luminary Thought* and the expansion and strengthening of the *Web of the Pyramid Trap of Repression* (see 7.4).

Different political, social, cultural and economic interests were denied space for compromise or broad-based consensus, and freedom of expression drifted beyond reach. More specifically, many people conceived that such repression has been executed by the ethnic Tigray oriented dominant party. This conception has also laid ground for future revenge on the Tigray ethnic group, hence, the vicious circle of repression could go on as it has for centuries. The Arbegnoch Ginbot in the North and North-West, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the South and West, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in the South-East, the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Front (ARDF) in the East, among others, stepped up their fight against the EPRDF government. The government used this dire situation to repress human rights, specifically the right to free expression by formulating many media and security laws, including the Anti-Terrorism law.

Since 1992, a number of journalists have disappeared and been killed (CPJ 1998); hundreds have been imprisoned and exiled (CPJ 2003,2006, 2013); thousands of members of political organisations, unions and associations who posed serious challenges and espouse different ideologies from that of the EPRDF have languished in prisons and detention centres; and many others have been killed (Berhe 2001:6). For instance, according to Amnesty International (1995:13-27), more than 20,000 individuals had been detained without due process of law and

have been subjected to harsh imprisonment and torture. Indeed, one sees the continuation of such repression and detention (Human Rights Watch 2015).

Consequently, ethnic federalism slaughtered basic human rights, including freedom of expression on two fronts. Firstly, suspicion and conflict amongst the labelled ethnic groups, that is intensified *Ethno-Luminarity*, threatened these rights. Secondly, the emergence of a wave of opposition and armed resistance, founded on constitutional provisions of self-determination including secession allowed the government to formulate *Instruments of Repressions* such as laws and restricting policies on freedom of expression in the name of national security. We remember that these laws and policies are the reflections of the existing ideologies, values and principles of societal and political groups, and are the key components of the *Pyramid Trap of Repression* (see 4.4.2, 5.6, 6.6, 7.2.1, 7.4).

6.3. ‘Revolutionary-Democracy’ and the practice of freedom of expression

Immediately after it seized power, the EPRDF continued to struggle for control of the nation and faced severe criticism for its failure to institute democracy and state unity. Additionally, it expelled political parties which have struggled for Ethiopian unity like the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Party (EPRP); and the EPRDF forced out the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the dominant party in Ethiopia’s most populous region fighting for an independent state of Oromia. Indeed, failure to shepherd Ethiopia into a democratic state was evident in the very process by which the institutions of the transitional government were created and the Charter was adopted. According to Adijumobi (2007:206):

EPRDF deliberately excluded opposition groups when developing the legal and institutional framework for the new government. The EPRDF has further undermined the prospects for democracy by employing violent and undemocratic tactics to upset election proceedings in order to maintain power. The upshot of these policies is the illegitimate concentration of political power in the hands of the EPRDF and the absence of any demarcation between it, as the dominant party, and the state - a situation that confirms the French saying: the more things change, the more they are the same.

Many opposition parties also accused the leading party of the ruling coalition, the TPLF, of dominating the political and economic arena of the country. They argue that this political transition was a mere shift in power, that is, the old perception of Amhara domination of the state

has given way to a new perception of Tigrayan domination (Gebreselassie 1992:213). Adijumobi (2007:213) confirms this claim, saying that “there is a noticeable ascendancy of Tigrayan domination in state power, especially the army, the security, and the top echelons of the bureaucracy”. Many indicated this by showing part-owned companies and institutions which have played a significant role in the country’s economy. Others show instances of the TPLF, which has a social base made up of Tigrayan people that account for only 6% of a population of around 100 million, but which controls more than 90% of higher positions in the military and security forces (Legesse 2016). As such, the thoughts and interests of the few became dominant and outspoken while the thoughts and interests of the majority are suppressed (see 2.5.5.2, 7.4.2.1). All this shows that the new government remained bound by its authoritarian past and was unable and unwilling to accommodate its administration style with ideas of democratic governance and freedom of expression. Consequently, the antagonism in the country continued as many ethnic and multi-ethnic rebel groups refused to accept the ascendancy and control of power by one small ethnic group.

Even coalition parties of the EPRDF, which apparently represent the Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples ethnic states were believed not to have symmetrical relationships, as the TPLF remains the dominant force within the EPRDF. Hence, under those conditions, one could not talk about a federalist decentralisation of power as the emphasis on democratisation was a purely formal process without substance. Everything emanated and was controlled from the very centre of the TPLF, just as it had been in Ethiopian history (see 2.5.5.3). Gebreselassie (1992:225) also insists that:

Constitutionalism and the rule of law are alien concepts to all of the people in Ethiopia.... For several thousand years, the source of law has been external to the Ethiopian people, and such a radical concept as self-governance is understandably difficult to fully comprehend.

Of course, human rights and political activists were encouraged by the provisional steps towards a democratic dispensation marked by the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as part of the transition Charter; by the apparent restoration of a free press and a buoyant civil society; and by promises of constitutional governance and elections. Specifically, the EPRDF’s political programme stated that:

The EPRDF'S strategic political objective is to put in place a stable multiparty democratic system whereby the human and democratic rights of citizens, upheld in the Constitution, are fully respected and where democratic institutions and culture flourish through ensuing popular participation in the country's political and economic life (EPRDF Program [sa]:8).

However, all those promises seem to remain at bay. The media were highly restricted and intimidated; the series of elections concluded with a 'land slide victory' for the ruling party; the administration was dominated by individuals from one ethnic group; and violating basic human rights became daily practice. To be more specific, there was no single private and independent broadcast media until 2014; the EPRDF won 99.6% of the seats of the 2010 parliamentary election and 99.9% of the 3.5 million seats on the *kebele* and *woreda*, lower level administration, councils of 2008 election; the government formulated a series of repressive laws and detentions and abuses sky-rocketed (Ethiopian Human Rights Council 1994, 1996; Human Rights Watch 2010). The ruling party dominated the political, economic and social spheres by controlling access to state resources, employment, and benefits (Human Rights 2010; 2011). Most surprisingly, almost all religious institutions fell under the control of the EPRDF, in much the same way as it had been during the imperial periods, by firing, imprisoning and exiling previous leaders, including the patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Christianity Church. Even further, the EPRDF decided which religion the society should follow in Islam; moreover, Islamic religious leaders were selected by the government for political administration offices, in *kebeles* and *woredas/districts*. Those who claimed religious freedom were executed, tortured, jailed and exiled. That is why the Muslim community shouted "Dimistachin yisema", which literally means *Let our voice be heard*. Hence, the ideas of the dominants became the dominant ideas, while the politically, socially and economically dominated became stifled and silenced though they are the majority (see 2.5.5.1, 7.4.2, 7.5).

All these situations emanated from the ideology of the ruling party. The stated ideology of the Ethiopian ruling party is 'Revolutionary-Democracy'. This ideology intertwines Marxist Leninist principles of party organisation and mobilisation with ethnic nationalism (Bach 2011: 643; Gudina 2003:120). Accordingly, Ethiopian federalism is national in form and 'Revolutionary-Democratic' in content. The ruling party officially professed a multi-party system and organised the administration in a frame of ethnic nationality with legal provisions for self-determination.

However, the prevailing condition has been single party rule with practical experience of ‘Democratic-Centralisation’, as it had been during the *Derg* regime. Within this system, the ideas and thoughts originated at the centre, that is, at federal government level, specifically from the central office of the EPRDF’s, or, more specifically, at the central office of the TPLF, and power flows only downwards through the channel of command. Every member of the EPRDF and even ordinary individuals could not deviate from the ideology from the centre. This implies that the ‘Revolutionary-Democratic’ ideology not only promoted the centralisation of power but also endorsed the EPRDF as the vanguard party of the Ethiopian peasantry which accounts for more than 85% of the population. Though the EPRDF officially adopted a multi-party system in 1991, it reinvented itself as a dominant party ensuring all aspects of life in the country would be under the umbrella of ‘Revolutionary–Democracy’.

Through democratic-centralism, the EPRDF provides the top leadership with uncontested authority to decide both the ideological affairs of the organisation, and the political and economic policies of the nation. The lower echelon of the EPRDF’s leadership and the rank-and-file members implemented the decisions made by higher officials. As a result, there is only a one-way channel of accountability within the organisation that comes from the top leadership to the bottom. Almost all government and party positions are filled by appointments from the relative centre; and all decisions and activities that affect the goals of the organisation and the state are accomplished with “Aktacha”, which literally means *secrete directives*. Thus, decisions are made by a few top leaders without the participation of the wider members of the party or the society.

The accomplishment of this “Aktacha” or political directive was evaluated by the “Gingema”, which refers to politico-administrative criticism and evaluation. This “Gingema” has only been used to evaluate the implementation of the ideology and directives. It has been used as an instrument to reprimand defects and mistakes in members on the one hand and subvert, manipulate and discharge civil servants and government officials on the other. It is usually implemented through criticism and self-criticism procedures. Party members, employees and officials are basically evaluated, criticised and screened through the mirror of ‘Revolutionary-Democracy’. Accordingly, each individual or group is shaped only to guard and accomplish the

ideology of the ruling party, as the *Derg* did to guard the revolution. Hence, the government and the party are not distinguishable: all organisations, leaders, vanguard elites, and individuals share party responsibilities and impose the party's ideology. Of course, the central point of "Abiyotawi-Democracy", which means *Revolutionary-Democracy*, according to Bach (2011:648) is "recruiting 'vanguard members', shaping their minds, and disseminating their views at every level of the society in order to impose EPRDF's view".

Therefore, according to 'Revolutionary-Democracy', people have only two choices: being the member and supporter of the ideology of the ruling group and enjoy all the benefits and freedom generated by that group or face the consequences. One can either be a partner and beneficiary or be an enemy and be excommunicated and exterminated. The surprising idea is that there is no space in the middle: either one is an enemy or a patron. Those supporters of EPRDF ideology are tagged as 'vanguards to development and democracy', but those who do not support the ideology were labelled as 'anti-peace, anti-people, anti-development and anti-democracy'. Specifically, business men were regarded 'rent seekers'; journalists and activists were tagged as 'terrorists'; political parties and academics were accused of being 'affiliates of old regimes'; and other professionals and workers criticised as 'inefficient'. Hence, society as a whole was suppressed and stifled. To accomplish their goal, they use divisive, 'carrot and stick' strategies; they set to confer supporters to punish and ostracise those perceived to support the political opposition. State resources were used by supporters; individuals who joined the ruling party benefited from access to services, jobs, and economic activities. Individuals and groups who were identified as 'enemies' were either executed, detained, ostracised, demeaned or denied government services and silenced. Further, in order to exploit state resources or/and out of fear of reprisal, many individuals became members of the ruling party. As a result, the EPRDF's party membership more than quadrupled, from approximately 760,000 to more than 4 million members in just three years (Human Rights Watch 2010).

6.4. The political landscape and freedom of expression after the 2005 election

The first decades of the EPRDF's rule continued under a mixed spirit of hope and desperation. Indeed, since the early 1990s, tensions began to emerge between the EPRDF and other anti-Derg allies of the EPRDF, such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National

Liberation Front (ONLF). During the 1992 *woreda* (district) level election, opposition groups were subjected to extensive intimidation and violence, including assaults on opposition candidates and supporters, threats against their families, arbitrary detention and closure of party offices (Human Rights Watch 2010:11). After that the country conducted federal and regional elections in 1995 and 2000, which ended with overwhelming domination by the EPRDF. Many opposition parties had boycotted the elections, criticising the uneven playing field (Puasewang, Tronvoll & Aalen 2002).

However, the year 2005 saw a somewhat different environment. The 2005 parliamentary campaign, as well as the elections themselves, were the most democratic the country has ever experienced. Despite continuing repression, the pre-electoral period saw a historic opening up of democratic space for political opposition parties, civil society and the media. Opposition parties were able to campaign, had access national government-controlled media and were able to hold rallies in a number of key geographic areas of the country. According to Human Rights Watch (2010), the EPRDF hoped to use the 2005 election for image building so that several independent parties and candidates were allowed to participate and civil society organisations were invited to conduct extensive voter education. In the process, two major coalitions of opposition parties, the *Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD)*, commonly known as *Kinijit*, and the *United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF)* emerged and hampered the EPRDF's calculation of an easy win. The media expanded these efforts with a proliferation of new newspapers, and robust debates were held between the ruling party and the opposition groups through the media (Aalen & Tronvoll 2009). Accordingly, voters across many parts of Ethiopia experienced a real choice at the polls for the first time in history and, hence, 90% of the voters turned out to vote on May 15, 2005 (National Electoral Board of Ethiopia 2005). Of course, the final days of campaigning were marred by an intensification of "hate speech" by some leading politicians from both the EPRDF and from one opposition party. Nevertheless, overall the pre-electoral period and voting day itself were significant and positive steps forward for Ethiopian democracy, even if it was for a brief period (EU Election Observer Mission 2005).

The post-electoral period showed that the brief democratic interlude before the election was an anomaly and the violent post-election period rolled back all of this progress and sparked a trend

toward increasing government repression that continues to the present day. As poll results began accumulating, it became clear that the opposition took the upper hand, and on May 16, although counting was ongoing, both opposition and ruling party officials made early predictions of an election win (Arriola [Sa]:75). On the same day, Prime Minister Melese Zenawi imposed a month-long ban on public demonstrations in Addis Ababa and declared that he had taken personal control of the security forces. Hence, all hopes of democracy and freedom of thought aspired to by society for centuries have been ruled out. Ethiopia continued on the usual road of accusations and counter accusations, bloody conflicts and suppression. On the opposition side, allegations regarding the delay of the final result were raised, and tension over the election results began to mount. Then, despite the ban on demonstrations, students in Addis Ababa began to protest and the incident turned bloody. Opposition leaders and supporters were targeted for harassment, intimidation and house arrest (Human Rights Watch 2005). The final election results were announced in September after a controversial complaints process of re-counting and re-elections in certain constituencies. The election commission proclaimed that the EPRDF and its affiliated regional parties won a parliamentary majority of 372 and the opposition gained an unprecedented 172 seats and control over the nation's capital, Addis Ababa (Aalen & Tronvoll, 2009:196). Accordingly, some of the opposition politicians opted to take their seats in parliament and capitalise on the historic opportunity to share power and govern Addis Ababa. While others called for the opposition to boycott parliament and organised public protests in reaction to what they called a stolen election. Street protests intensified again in early November 2005 as negotiations between the opposition and ruling party stalled, and some of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) leadership called for stay-at-home strikes and for drivers to honk their horns (International Crisis Group 2009). The protests started peacefully but escalated into violence and led to the destruction of a large number of city buses and some other property. In the process, nearly 200 people were injured, including six who were killed and 30,000, including party leaders, were arrested and transported into military camps, and party offices were closed by security forces. Of course, many were released within weeks but were warned not to get involved in politics (Human Rights Watch 2010:15). The rest, including 131 CUD opposition leaders, journalists and civil society leaders, remained in custody and were charged with a variety of offenses, including treason and outrages against the constitutional order (see 6.6).

Almost two years later, in April 2007, the majority of the politicians were convicted but subsequently pardoned, though they had done nothing wrong, and were released from prison. These incidents clearly indicate that people were denied their basic political and human rights of participation in political process, portraying their disappointment through demonstrations and the use of media. Moreover, the regime executed all those who expressed their ideas, charging them with “treason” and “outrages against the constitutional order” which many despotic governments had used for the repression of different thoughts. The law was also used here as a means of threatening political parties, journalists and individuals who tried to promote their political ideologies, broadcast the political, social and economic situation of the country and express their ideas. As democracy could not be guaranteed without the presence of freedom of expression, the whole political process, including the election, was simply a political trick for the international world.

Above all, after the 2005 election, the EPRDF found a new way to put pressure to subvert the opposition and abolish any ideas that are different from the EPRDF’s. This new strategy reminds me of what the US president George William Bush said on 21 September 2001, nine days after the twin towers of World Trade Center were attacked by hijackers. He said “You are either with us or with the terrorists” (VOA News). Similarly, the EPRDF awakened from the day dream of the 2005 election and gave the Ethiopian people only two choices: either being with EPRDF or being with the enemies of EPRDF. This new strategy divided society into two camps who were given tags: those who supported the EPRDF ideology were tagged as vanguards to development and democracy, but those who do not support the ideology were labelled enemies and regarded as “anti-peace”, “anti-people”, “anti-development” and “anti-democracy”. Individuals and groups who were identified as ‘enemies’ were either physically attacked or detained or ostracised or demeaned or denied government services and silenced (see 6.3). For instance, I was denied attending university for my Master’s Degree by the head of the government information office where I worked in the Awi Zone, in 2003, because I had been critiquing the government. Indeed, this was common practice in all government institutions.

As indicated above, the government used a ‘carrot-and-stick’ approach to limit or suppress the idea of others and to propagate the agenda and ideology of only the EPRDF. The carrot included

access to jobs and government-controlled resources such as education opportunities and work promotions, easy access to agricultural and industry inputs and aid rations. The stick encompassed threats, harassment, cutting off of government resources and services, and other means to single out individuals who supported the opposition or/and failed to support the ruling party (Human Rights Watch 2010). For instance, farmers were denied access to agricultural inputs like fertilizers and improved seeds; government employees were prevented from promotions; and some were even fired from their positions or jobs. Human Rights Watch (2006) asserted that:

In rural areas in Oromia, local officials often threaten to withhold vital agricultural inputs such as fertilizer from impoverished farmers if they speak out against them or their policies.... In a month prior to May 2005 elections, regional officials in Oromia created new quasi-governmental structures used to subject the rural population to intense levels of surveillance, and to impose restrictions on farmers' freedoms of movement, association and speech.

Further, the government replaced all managerial positions with EPRDF members in all government and government related institutions or offices from the centre of the federal level to the lowest level of administration, though the majority of positions had been occupied by fighter cadres before. It was also official that no one was allowed to occupy a managerial position unless he/she is a member of the EPRDF. The Prime Minister, Melese Zenawi, was once asked in the parliament "why uneducated and inefficient individuals have been assigned the role of head of office and managers of institutions? The Prime Minister replied "As far as implementing EPRDF's policy, a guard could be a Minister". Of course, this is a feature of *Narcissistic* rulers (see 7.4.3). Though this expression seems derogatory, the Prime Minister implied that any *layman can be a Minister as long as he/she is loyal to the EPRDF or propagates only the EPRDF's thought*. All these formulations emerged from the ideology of 'Revolutionary-Democracy' that deems to say *if one is Revolutionary-Democratic, he/she will benefit from all the fruits of this ideology, but if one is out of the realm of the Revolutionary-Democracy, he/she will not share the products of the Revolutionary-Democracy*.

Consequently, it has been evident that it is impossible to find a single person who is not a member of the EPRDF in title positions throughout the country. This implies that all ideas and all resources were controlled and regulated by only some groups, as it has been for centuries, and the rest of the society has been dominated, stifled and silenced. This strategy is an effective and

pervasive community-level surveillance system throughout Ethiopia, a system that relies on active monitoring and reporting of various kinds of activities. This community-level surveillance has been easily achieved by expanding the government control into the family level using different techniques of control.

The EPRDF inherited the *Derg's* repressive administrative structure, the *Kebele*. *Kebeles* were the lowest level of administration and definitely the most important manipulation tool of the previous regime. *Kebeles* played a vicious act during Red Terror, in which countless youth and revolutionaries were mercilessly murdered (Tronvoll, 1995:30; Human Rights Watch Report, 2005) (see also section 6.2). *Kebeles* were the most effective instruments of control because they were closest to the grassroots; and it is for this reason the *Kebeles* were the most hated institutions in the country. Currently, though the *Kebeles* exist ostensibly to provide services to their communities, they wield a great deal of power over communities in the same way as they did at the time of the *Derg*. They continue to keep communication within communities under perpetual surveillance and to report any subversive activities to higher authorities. In addition to the *Kebeles*, the EPRDF set up new quasi-government structures throughout the country. The EPRDF sub-divided *Kebeles* into *Nius-kebeles*, sub-kebeles, and then into *gotts*, meaning sub-sub-kebeles, a system of cells comprising between 10 and 50 households or 100 to 200 individuals, headed by a party-appointed official who has five militia members under his command.

These structures control and monitor any political and economic activity down to the level of individual households. They gather information, monitor and harass outspoken individuals, control and restrict the movement of the population, and disseminate political propaganda on behalf of the ruling party (Human Rights Watch 2005; 2010). It has become impossible to hold and impart ideas, forward opinions, or support ideologies that are contrary to that of the ruling group. Individuals cannot move out of his/her province without the recognition of local authorities. In order to move, one requires “Meshegna”, which literally means *pass letter or can get service letter*, similar to something that was required during the time of the *Derg*. This implies that one cannot get public services if he/she does not have this letter. In addition, if an individual is registered on the black list for not supporting the ruling group’s ideology, he/she is

usually denied this letter. Particularly in rural areas, *Kebele* administrators control and administer land and other resources such as agricultural inputs. Thus, if one opposes the ruling ideology, they could be deprived of these essentials. For instance, in the re-distribution of land in the Northern part of the country in 1997/1998, there were restrictions on allocations of land. This extended to: those who were regarded as the residue of the previous government; those who had any relation with the administration system of the previous regime; and those who do not accept the ruling group's ideology. All these groups were allowed only a maximum of four *Kadas*, which is only a hectare of land, while those who were not resistant to the regime were allowed up to 12 *Kadas* or three hectares. Additionally, supporters and members of the ruling group were allowed to possess four or more hectares according to the accessibility of the land. For instance, my father was allowed only three *Kadas*, which is less than a hectare, because he was accused of providing some services to the previous regime. Land is under the ownership of the government, and according to the Article 89(5) of the 1995 constitution, if one opposes the government's ideology and policies, he/she will be deprived of land immediately. Hence, freedom of thought and expression were crippled for fear of being deprived public services in addition to physical harassment, detention, torture and even killing. This measure is one method of suppressing the masses by weakening them economically.

Above all, the most entrenching structure, established after 2005, is a 5:1 team system. This structure is formulated by using five individuals with one leader which is commonly a member or supporter of the ruling party. The groups were established across contexts, including offices, classrooms, firms, neighbours, friends, and family members. Though this team could have many variations depending on location, all involved monitoring the day-to-day activities of other Ethiopians, including friends, family members, colleagues, and neighbours, and used as a forum for dispatching the EPRDF's ideology. Dissenters in a team are dealt with in a variety of ways, from informal pressure to threats. Continued dissent is passed up the chain of command for further action. Since anybody could be an informant, the net effect is that people are very afraid to speak openly to anyone but their closest confidants, and, in most cases, the mere knowledge that someone may be monitoring one's activities is enough to restrict free speech and compel them to self-censor. Human Rights Watch (2014:14) asserts this saying "there is very little in the

way of public discourse about sensitive political issues and little opportunity to express dissent in a safe manner”.

This illustrates that there was no distinction between the party and government or state. The EPRDF used government structures and resources for its own advantage. The ruling party operated under the assumption that the distinction between the party and government was not important because the government should be led by the party anyway. However, blurring the distinction between party and government led to the creation of a monolithic system in the country. This resulted in the restriction of participation by any individual, group or non-state sector, and the stifling of ideas, growth and development. This, in turn, exacerbates the aloofness of the ruling party and the distance between it and others. The development of such a situation led to miscommunication, which in turn led the party/government to consider any critical expression outside its realm as a danger that needed to be quelled. All these situations have emanated from the ‘Revolutionary-Democracy’ ideology of the ruling party, which allowed the government to control everything.

6.5. Social, economic and cultural transformations and freedom of expression

Ethiopia is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country. Religion has influenced the majority of Ethiopian lives, including freedom of expression. For centuries, the territory of Ethiopia was divided among Northern and central highlands with an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian core (with a Jewish minority); a Sunni Muslim zone in the East and South-East; and indigenous-faith area in the South and South-Western lowlands. The Jewish and their decedents dominated over a long period of the time, but have been diminishing in number over the last several decades. Indigenous faiths are also diminishing, in most cases yielding to Protestant Christianity, which is said to be growing at a brisk annual rate. Protestantism is also making headway against Orthodox Tewahido Christianity, in some Muslim areas and generating tension between these two communities. Consequently, Protestants have become the target of both Muslims and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Christians in several parts of the country.

According to Ethiopia’s 1994 census, Christians constituted 61.6% of the population, among this 50.7% were orthodox Christians, 10% accounted for Protestants and 0.9% accounted for other

sects. Muslims accounted for 32.8% and animists accounted for 4.6%. This showed that more than half of the population were Orthodox Christians. However, the 2007 census showed that Orthodox churchgoers decreased to 43.5% and traditional believers declined to 2.6% of the population, while Protestant surged to 18.6% and Muslims increased to 33.9%. Many Orthodox Christians condemned the EPRDF for directly or indirectly attacking churches and monasteries to diminish and destroy the country's history and heritage by smuggling cadres into churches and monasteries (Tenaadam 2017). Indeed, the government deposed and exiled the Patriarch of the Orthodox Tewahido Church and replaced him with another who was accused of being a cadre and of the ruling group. This was in contravention of the church's principle which states that a Patriarch should only be replaced if dead. Here, one can clearly see that "secular" systems are the reflections of societal, values, and governmental repressions, either in the form of policies and laws, are the reflection of societal repressions (see 7.4). Moreover, the ruling group was inclined towards a socialist ideology. There was practical evidence that the ruling group had little respect for religion and tried to use religious institutions as political instruments by allegedly assigning religious leader cadres. For instance, Muslim religious leaders have been elected in political institutions and church administrators have been assigned by analysing their political inclination. Consequently, religious tensions are pronounced in different parts of the country, particularly in parts of the vast region of Oromia and Muslim dominant areas. Although these religious tensions have been evident for centuries, they triggered suspicion, bloody conflicts and the destruction of religious institutions and materials. They have directly affected the rights of religion, thought, and expression (see 2.5.4.2).

On the other hand, the economic and social composition changed rapidly. Historically, the majority north was Semitic, and the majority South and South-East were Cushitic. Indeed, the historical expansion of the Semitic to the South and counter expansions by the Cushitic, specifically the *Oromos*, to the North, created a mixed society in the centre of the country. This situation created tension around territorial and natural resource dominance. A good example for this territorial claim and conflict is the case of the country's capital, Addis Ababa. Today, the city is a battle ground between the *Oromos* and other ethnic groups. The *Oromos* are the largest ethno-linguistic group in Ethiopia, accounting for 34.5% of the population and inhabiting large parts of the city though they are not the majority in the city. In the recent history, the Amharas,

which accounts for 26.9% of the country's population, were politically and culturally dominant. However, today, the city and the country is dominated by the Tigray, which accounts for only 6.0% of the country's population. The social composition has been changing accordingly. As the Amhara population has declined by about 2.5 million at the national level from the estimations provided before the 2007 census, the Oromo and Tigray populations have almost doubled. Hence, this effect has also impacted the Amhara population in the capital, and has created suspicion and rivalry among the different ethnic groups which could impact freedom of expression now and in the future. For example, Amharas living in different regions of the country have been restricted in the use of their language and in their ability to practice their culture.

Similarly, the country has undergone economic transformations. Ethiopian history shows that control of power usually results in control of the economy. Accordingly, many argue that the 1991-2014 government transferred the nation's wealth to one ethnic group. Specifically, Legesse (2016) argues that this ethnic-based government controlled all aspects of the economy by establishing party businesses and systematically transferring individuals from one ethnic group into economically dominant positions. This situation created disappointment in other ethnic groups, specifically from the Oromo and Amhara, which together account about 2/3 of the country's population. This economic transformation also impacted on freedom of expression. Wealthy members of the EPRDF, mostly from one ethnic group, controlled almost all media while others were prevented from media ownership, directly or indirectly, as a result of political or economic influence (see 6.7). Accordingly, the media owned by one ethnic group, affiliated groups and individuals, promoted the culture of one ethnic group while suppressing or demeaning the culture of other groups, particularly the Amharas. For example, as indicated in section 6.2, the patriotic rap-style music of the Amharas, commonly known as *Kererto* and *Fukera*, have been restricted at the country level, labelled "Neftegna's song". In addition, the Amharas are usually represented in films and dramas as bad or non-reputed characters, the Amharas are represented as killers, house servants and guards (for examples, see the film *Teza* and the drama *Betoch*); and people are made to conceive Amhara names as backward and barbaric..

This transformation created a significant psychological, social, economic and political tension, suspicion, hate and bloody conflicts across the country, similar to that which had occurred for centuries. This situation, in turn, affected freedom of expression in a number of ways. Firstly, as the economy was controlled by a few groups, the media designed to serve only the ideas of the ruling group or those who have relations with the ruling group. Secondly, the tensions, rivalries and bloody conflicts among different religious and ethnic groups have directly restricted freedom of expression. Thirdly, the government controlled freedom of expression in the name of protecting peace, national security and defamation. That is, freedom of expression was suppressed by different factors such as the government, cultural and religious hegemony, poverty, lack of access to media and information, and group-based rivalries and conflicts. It is argued herein, that the causal factors of those threats: *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*, have been aggravated, relatively in the country's history, the *Pyramid Trap of Repression* strengthened, and repression of freedom of expression intensified.

6.6. Constitutional and legal frameworks and freedom of expression

Constitutional development in Ethiopia has gone through many stages: the 1931 and 1955 'Imperial' constitutions, the 1974 aborted constitution, the 1987 *Derg's* 'Marxist' constitution, and the 'Revolutionary-Democratic' federal constitution that was promulgated in 1995. Immediately after the fall of the *Derg*, the EPRDF promised to address Ethiopia's past problems, including the question of ethnic nationalities, democracy and freedom of expression. In efforts to adhere to this, they established a transitional government within a few weeks of their ascendance. A national conference for this purpose was convened in July 1991 and resulted in a signing of the transitional charter by members of 31 political movements. The charter recognised freedom, equal rights and self-determination for all people. Article 1 of the charter recognised respect of individual human rights, including freedom of expression, in accordance with the 1948 United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Negarit Gazeta 1991). This article stated that:

Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations; adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly by resolution 217 A(III) of Dec. 1948, individual human rights shall be respected fully, and without any limitation whatsoever.

Particularly every individual shall have:

- a/ The freedom of conscience, expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- b/ The right to engage in unrestricted political activity and to organize political parties, provided the exercise of such right does not infringe upon the rights of others.

This event also created a council of 87 members, established the transitional government, and the council was charged to constitute a commission to draw up a draft constitution. Another important provision of the transitional charter is Article 2. This article asserted the freedom and right of all ethnic groups to the level of self-determination, that is, to preserve their identity and govern their affairs within wider society. Accordingly, new administration lines were demarcated based on ethnicity (Kebede 2003; Mengie 2015, Taye 2018). In addition, the EPRDF tried to issue policy statements on the process proclamation no.6/1991 and proclamation no.34/1992. Proclamation no.6/1991 determined the standards under which state-owned media could be used by the public. Proclamation no.34/1992, the Press Law, also determined the application of print media. Both of these reflect the interests of the EPRDF. During this transition, freedom of the press seemed to flourish (see 6.7). Nevertheless, even the time when the new constitution was on the verge of being finalised, the EPRDF declared its intentions to implement a plan to devolve power from the centre through ‘Democratic-Centralisation’ (Cohen1995:10). However, the new constitution emerged with tremendous hope for freedom but inherently fraught with political controversy.

6.6.1. The 1995 Constitution and freedom of expression

The new constitution appeared to shine a light on the long dark history of the country. The constitution makes provision for almost all human rights. Article 39 of the constitution, The Right of Nations and Nationalities, declares the unrestricted right for the country’s ethnic groups to take up self-determination through succession. This article further provides the ethnic groups the right to speak, write, promote and develop their own language. The constitution, accordingly declares the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, with nine national regional states. Five of these: *Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia* and *Somali*, are relatively ethnically homogeneous; while the remaining four are multi-ethnic; for example, the South Nations and Nationalities Regional state consist of more than 50 ethnic groups. Consequently, the government usually insists that the constitution addresses the nationality questions.

While I believe that the constitution has many good provisions, some articles, specifically Article 39, could be a threat to the country’s peace and freedom of expression. As illustrated in previous chapters, Ethiopia has been a nation of conflict among different groups of people, perhaps since

its establishment, and that conflict has affected basic human rights, including freedom of expression. Ethiopia currently has more than 80 ethnic groups and a number of religions groups, the majority of which have been interconnected at least in a cross kinship system, in religion, in culture and in geographical boundaries. Breaching such relationships, based on the succession provision of Article 39, will have devastating consequences on society because it could trigger centuries-old rivalry, bloody conflicts and suppression. Even if these could be settled through processes which fall under the umbrella of one nation, some problems may still exist. If succession occurs, the issue of boundary demarcation will lead to a crisis. This was evident when Eritrea seceded from mainland Ethiopia at the beginning of this regime, when hundreds of thousands of people were killed, millions were displaced, the economy was devastated, and thousands were imprisoned. In addition, political ideas were suppressed and media were stifled, apparently for national security and sovereignty reasons. Eritreans struggled for freedom and democracy for more than thirty years, but after succession from Ethiopia, Eritrea became one of the most draconian countries in the world (see the reports of CPJ, Human Rights Watch since 1990s). The problem continues to linger without any solution and the damage on all aspects of the country, including freedom of expression, is worsening. Experience has shown that succession bears conflict; conflict bears rivalry; and rivalry bears alienation, suppression and excommunication. Hence, succession should not be a solution for democracy, freedom and freedom of expression. Hence, the succession provision of Article 39 worsens the condition of freedom of expression in Ethiopia and the region.

In addition, as indicated in section 6.3, established federalism is not a true federalism. Almost all policies, strategies and rules originate from the centre, particularly from the dominant faction of the ruling party, the TPLF. This, in turn, is in contrast with the preamble of this constitution which says:

We, the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia: Strongly committed, in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, and advancing our economic and social development...

Keller (2010:78) labelled this federalism a *devolved federalism* for power is devolved from the centre to regional governments and further argues that such kind of federalism contrasts with

“federalism resulting from bargaining and negotiations that seek voluntarily join some type of federal arrangement”. He added that though the regime consistently refers its approach as “ethnic Federalism”, four regional states: *Gambela, Benishangul Gumuz, Harari* and *SNNPRS*, are not ethnically organised so that the rights of different ethnic groups have not been protected according to Article 39 of the constitution. In reality, it is almost impossible to implement this article across more than eighty ethnic groups. Above all, Article 39(1), which guarantees “an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession”, has generated the feeling that an unlimited political right is granted to all nationalities in Ethiopia. In practice, however, the *EPRDF* seem to show no concession to other forces which demand the same as Eritrea. To this effect, a number of secessionist groups, including the *Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)* and the *Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)*, have declared war on the *EPRDF*. This highlights the ambiguity of the article and begs the question of what the right to self-determination means, and how the constitution and the practice of self-determination are reconciled.

Article 29(1-6) of the constitution indicates that everyone has the right to thought, opinion and expressions. This guarantee has been expressed as follows:

- (1) Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.
- (2) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice.
- (3) Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed. Freedom of the press shall specifically include the following elements:
 - (a) Prohibition of any form of censorship.
 - (b) Access to information of public interest.
- (4) In the interest of the free flow of information, ideas and opinions which are essential to the functioning of a democratic order, the press shall, as an institution, enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions.
- (5) Any media financed by or under the control of the State shall be operated in a manner ensuring its capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinion.
- (6) These rights can be limited only through laws which are guided by the principle that freedom of expression and information cannot be limited on account of the content or effect of the point of view expressed. Legal limitations can be laid down in order to protect the well-being of the youth, and the honour and reputation of individuals. Any propaganda for war as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity shall be prohibited by law.

This implies that the constitution indicates that everyone has the right to seek, receive, hold and impart opinions, information, ideas of all kinds without interference and regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, in print, in the form of art, or through any media of choice. Therefore,

this article guarantees freedom of the press and other mass media. Freedom of artistic creativity and freedom of the press shall include prohibition of any form of censorship as well as access to information in the public interest. The article further indicates that as the free flow of information, ideas and opinions are essential to the functioning of a democratic order, the press shall, as an institution, enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions. According to this article, even state financed or controlled media operate in a manner ensuring capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinions. The constitution further provides that “All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land (Article 9(4)), and “The fundamental rights and freedoms specified in this Chapter shall be interpreted in a manner conforming to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenants on Human Rights and International instruments adopted by Ethiopia” (Article 13(2)).

These provisions meet international standards. But, when deeply analysed, many concerns emerge. Specifically, Article 29 contains several overly vague provisions that are vulnerable to broad and abusive interpretation. The first one is from article 29(3) (b) which guarantees “access to information of public interest”. Firstly, the term “public interest” was not defined; hence this provision could be susceptible to different interpretations. It is open to the authorities to decide which information is in the public interest and which is not. In the Ethiopian context, almost all authorities are members of the ruling party and the decision regarding public interest would, without doubt, be the interest of the party not the public. Secondly, under international law (ICCPR 19(3)), access to information should be fully guaranteed and limitations to this right, if there are any, should meet three important tests: 1) being prescribed by law; 2) pursuing legitimate aim; and 3) being necessary in democratic society. Nevertheless, the limitation in this constitution does not meet those standards.

The second concern comes with Article 29(5), which requires “media financed by or under the control of the government.” This provision clearly indicates that government will continue to own and control the media. State control over media contradicts principle 6 of Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa which states that “State and government control

broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, accountable to the public through the legislature rather than the government...” This principle further provides that:

- a) Public broadcasters should be governed by a board which is protected against interference, particularly of political and economic nature;
- b) The editorial independence of public service broadcasters should be guaranteed; and
- c) Public broadcasters should be adequately funded in a manner that protects them from arbitrary interference with their budgets.

The Ethiopian context is glaringly different from these provisions. Firstly, though the board apparently exists, members of the board were selected by the government. In addition, board leaders are the government officials, particularly the head of the Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO), which is the major propagator of the government agenda (Negarit Gazeta 2007), meaning that editorial independence could not be guaranteed. Secondly, it is clear that the government broadcaster is officially funded by the government and they are set-up to promote the interests of government. There would no way to escape these budgetary traps and instruments of propaganda. Consequently, freedom of expression cannot be guaranteed.

The third concern that emerges with Article 29(6) which provides limitations on freedom of expression to protect “...the honor and reputation of individuals” and to prohibit “...the public expression of opinion intended to injure public dignity”. Here, it is not clear what it meant by “honor and reputation” and “injure public dignity”. It is an excessively vague provision and open to interpretation. For instance, one could ask “what are the measures or standards of honour, reputation or dignity? Who is going to gauge whether honour, reputation and dignity are damaged? Who will be protected?” The answer for question one is clearly subjective or difficult to define, but the answer for questions two and three is clearly established as “government officials”. The Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation No. 590/2008, Article 41, clearly state that defamation and false accusations against “constitutionally mandated legislators, executives and judiciaries will be a matter of the government and prosecutable even if the person against whom they were committed chooses not to press charges” (Negarite Gazeta 2008).

As a result, journalists can be prosecuted for defamation by the government even when no individual government official initiates legal action. Fines for defamation are as high as 100,000 Ethiopian birr (USD \$5,000), in addition to criminal penalties. Therefore, it can be argued that there is great risk of such vague constitutional provisions being abused. This provision also fails to meet the third test of the international standard, being necessary in democratic society, as the Ethiopian parliament is controlled by one party. This regime has used many different laws extensively and intensively, compared to previous governments, to demolish the right to use media and freedom of expression. For instance, according to Amnesty International (1998:1), 200 editors and reporters from the independent private press have been arrested at various times, and several of them many times over between 1993 and 1998. In addition, “nearly all the journalists who have been arrested since 1993 were detained because of newspaper articles critical of the government” based on the Press Law promulgated in October 1992. Of course, there is no open ban on the media but instead what is evident is a deliberate pattern of suppression. This repression has worsened since the introduction of a series of laws. The Press Law, with its vaguely-defined criminal offences, lends itself to arbitrary government-condoned misuse by police and courts (see 6.6.2 below).

6.6.2. Restrictions and threats to freedom of expression in other government laws

Concerning limitation, the constitution stipulates limitations on the freedom it recognises, along with the means and reasons. That is, the “rights can be limited only through laws which are guided by the principle that freedom of expression and information cannot be limited on account of the content or effect of the point of view expressed” (Article 29(6)). Despite this provision, the government has formulated different laws, regulations and rules that strictly limit freedom of expression. Though these laws reaffirm constitutional protections and the prohibition of censorship in their preamble or elsewhere, they also contain problematic provisions that grant broad powers to initiate defamation suits, impose harsh financial penalties, demand corrections in print publications and empower government to arbitrarily deny licenses and permits. The common legislation among those restricting laws include media laws such the Press Proclamation of 1992, The Broadcasting Proclamation of 1999, the Revised Broadcasting Service Proclamation of 2007, The Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation of 2008, and other laws related to security such the Revised Criminal Code of

2004, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2009, the Telecom Fraud Offence Proclamation of 2012 and the Prevention and Suppression of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Proclamation of 2013.

6.6.2.1 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009

In international standards, freedom of expression may be restricted in order to protect public order and national security as a state has a duty to protect its people from terrorist threats. Therefore, as a matter of principle, anti-terrorism laws should be used only in circumstances when the exercise of these powers is truly necessary. The laws should be narrowly defined and be proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued: protecting national security. Under international law, it is well recognised that human rights, including free expression, must be respected in the fight against terrorism and cannot be arbitrarily limited. For example, the UN General Assembly Resolution 60/288 indicated that measures taken to combat terrorism must comply with obligations under international law. However, practice shows that anti-terrorism laws have been used to demonise political opponents, to throttle freedom of speech and the press (Article 19:2010). Similarly, the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism law has been used for the repression of media and freedom of expression.

This proclamation includes an overly broad definition of terrorism that gives the authorities wide discretion when suppressing non-violent dissent. Many organisations and individuals, including some members of the Ethiopian parliament, human rights organisations, journalists, and others, expressed grave concerns that the law contained an overly broad and vague definition of terrorism that gave the police and security services unprecedented new powers and usurped citizens' constitutional rights (U.N. 2014:25-26, U.S. State Department 2014, U.N. 2012 & African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights 2012). Indeed, those fears have proven to be well founded. Since the enactment of the law, people from all walks of life have been found to be 'terrorists' or have been awaiting trial as such. In short, this law violates international human rights laws and modern criminal justice standards and "is a tool of repression, designed and used by the Ethiopian government to stifle its critics and political opposition, and criminalize the robust discussion of matters of enormous public interest and importance" (Human Rights Watch 2009; The Oakland Institute and Environmental Defender Law Center 2015:5).

According to international human rights standards, interference in human rights and freedom of expression must be clearly and narrowly defined by law and serve a legitimate aim. But, the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism Proclamation fails to pass this test. First, the definition of terrorism set out in the proclamation is both broad and vague. Article 3 of the Proclamation defines “terrorist acts” as follows:

Whosoever or a group intending to advance a political, religious or ideological cause by coercing the government, intimidating the public or section of the public, or destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional or economic or social institutions of the country...

This definition could apply to many types of legitimate, non-violent protests and dissent. Article 3(6) further elaborates on this, saying that anything that causes “serious interference or disruption of any public service”. According to the African Media Barometer (2010), the inclusion of causing “serious interference or disruption of any public service” compromises the right to freedom of expression, and journalists could face terrorism charges if, for example, a report on a certain public service provider resulted in a strike. Article 5 also indicated that “moral support” for a “terrorist act” or “terrorist organization” is “punishable with rigorous imprisonment from 10 to 15 years”.

This Proclamation in its article 6 titled “encouragement of terrorism” states that:

Whosoever publishes or causes the publication of a statement that is likely to be understood by some or all of the members of the public to whom it is published as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to them to the commission or preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism stipulated under Article 3 of this Proclamation is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from 10 to 20 years.

Besides an unclear definition of the term “terrorism”, Article 3 lists acts of terrorism as the offences of “direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement”, which are extraordinarily broad and vague, and fail the limitations for restrictions on rights required under international human rights laws. In addition, the words “encouragement” and “inducement” are vague terms, and the phrases “indirect encouragement or other inducement” are equally vague and without meaning. Further, the phrase “some...members of the public” creates subjective standards. It is problematic that an act or expression is a “terrorist” act based on the views of “some...members

of the public”. As indicated above, publication of a statement that is likely to be understood as a direct or indirect encouragement of terrorism is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. It is clear that these prohibitions violate the right to freedom of expression and are not legal under international human rights laws because any form of expression concerning terrorism or any form of violence can be not prohibited unless it is clearly intended to directly incite such conduct (Johannesburg principles 1995).

First, the introduction of these penalties is likely to result in the criminalisation of lawful statements and the stifling of political speech and debate. The law is particularly worrying for media, because it provides discretion to authorities to prosecute those who “promote” or encourage terrorism. Under the law’s broad definition, this could include bloggers, editors and journalists who publish articles referring to armed opposition movements, such as the *Oromo Liberation Front*, the *Ogaden National Liberation Front*, *Arbegnoch Ginbot 7* or any other individual or group deemed to be terrorists, “anti-people,” or “anti-peace” by the government (CPJ 2011). Accordingly, in 2011, the authorities made extensive use of this law to prosecute a number of individuals who had criticised the government both online and offline, including Eskinder Nega, Reeyot Alemu, Zone-9 Bloggers, members of opposition political parties and those the government have declared as terrorists including Andualem Arage, Andargachew Tsigie and Bekele Gerba. This crackdown has generated a notable international condemnation on the government’s repression practices (International Labor Organization 2004; Endalk 2012).

Reeyot Alemu was a columnist for the weekly publication *Feteh*, where her articles were frequently critical of the Ethiopian government. She was initially accused of several terrorist activities and sentenced to 14 years in prison. However, after an appeal, her conviction was lessened to promoting terrorism and her sentence was reduced to five years (CPJ [sa]). Eskinder Nega was the owner of newspaper *Ethiopsis* and a publishing house that printed newspapers critical of the government (Human Rights Watch 2011). However, the newspaper was shut down by the government and he has been detained at least seven times by the authorities, including for reporting the violence surrounding the 2005 elections. His 2011 arrest came after he published an article criticising the government’s use of the anti-terrorism law to arrest journalists (Spielmann 2012). In June 2012, he was sentenced to 18 years in prison, under the Anti-

Terrorism law (BBC 2012). But, he has received two prestigious international awards: PEN America's *Freedom to Write* prize and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers Golden Pen of Freedom for his bravery and commitment to the truth (Meston2014; BBC 2012). Bekele Gerba was arrested in August 2011 by the Ethiopian authorities under the anti-terrorism law. Gerba was a teacher at Addis Ababa University and the deputy chairman of the *Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM)*, one of Ethiopia's largest opposition groups. Gerba was arrested because he had met with a delegation from Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2011). He was finally convicted in November 2012 after a trial that human rights groups say was "marred with irregularities" and was sentenced to eight years in prison.

The government's imprisonment of these journalists and political activists has drawn widespread criticism from the international community, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights who expressed grave concern about the imprisonment of Ethiopian journalists and activists for exercising their peaceful and legitimate right to freedom of expression and association (Griffith 2013).

Second, the proclamation establishes excessive powers to government bodies and infringes on individual and organisation rights to collect information. According to Article 12, anyone who knows about a terror threat and "fails to immediately inform or give information or evidence to the police without reasonable cause, or gives false information, is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from 3 to 10 years". The National Intelligence and Security Service have broad powers to conduct electronic surveillance of telecommunications including internet communications, and the police have the power to conduct covert searches without any explicit protections for confidential information (Article 14, 17, 18). Article 14 insists that, upon obtaining a court warrant, the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) can conduct communications surveillance "to prevent and control a terrorist act" as well as to install or remove equipment to enable such surveillance.

Though there is a list of factors required for the court to consider granting a covert search warrant, including the extent to which measures would assist in preventing terrorism, it does not

impose any specific standards or rules to limit the court's discretion in granting a search warrant. In addition, there is no requirement to disclose any information about how evidence from intelligence reports presented in terrorism cases was gathered, which prevents the ability to challenge the use of evidence gathered through illegal surveillance (Article 24). Communications service providers are required to cooperate with requests from the NISS according to NISS proclamation Article 27. Such breadth of the agency's mandate and the lack of specific safeguards that limit the nature, scope and duration of the NISS's surveillance powers, leaves undue discretion to the agency and raises concerns about abuse of these powers to target those who might criticise or oppose government policies.

Further, the police have absolute power to request information from any individual and organisation and any one so requested shall have the duty to give the information or evidence (Article 22). These provisions are overly broad and prone to misuse by the government. The government has used this legislation to target opposition politicians, journalists and others who oppose government policies. For instance, Woubshet Taye, deputy editor of the independent weekly *Awramba Times*; Riot Alemu, critical columnist in the leading independent weekly *Feteh*; and Eskinder Nega, were among several people accused of planning terrorist attacks. Moreover, some provisions are contrary to continental and international accords of the protection of information sources and violate confidentiality of sources and disrupt the free from of information (African Union 2002; Privacy International 2007; Scheinin 2009).

6.6.2.2 Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009

In 2009, the Charities and Societies Proclamation came into effect. Since then, the activities of civil society groups have substantially declined. Many Ethiopian and international civil society activists and Ethiopia's donors, who lobbied the government unusually assertively, had insisted the government remove some of the most alarming provisions. Nevertheless, those efforts ultimately failed and the legislation restricts and criminalises the activities of non-governmental organisations and associations in ways that violate the rights to freedom of expression and association (Human Rights Watch 2009). Human Rights Watch (2008) noted that the climate for independent civil society organisations in Ethiopia has long been inhospitable and has been increasingly threatened with the introduction of this law.

This law classifies associations into Ethiopian charities/societies, Ethiopian residents charities, and foreign charities. Ethiopian charities/societies are those formed under the laws of Ethiopia, all members are Ethiopians and not more than 10% of their funds are received from foreign sources. Ethiopian residents charities/societies are those formed under the laws of Ethiopia and which consist of members who reside in Ethiopia and receive more than 10% of their funds from foreign sources. Foreign charities are those charities that are formed under the laws of foreign countries or which consist of members who are foreign nationals or are controlled by foreign nationals or receive funds from foreign sources.

Accordingly, organisations that receive more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources are prohibited from carrying out activities relating to human rights, the promotion of equality, conflict resolution and justice reform (Article 2(2), 14(5)). That means the law confines advocacy activities, like the advancement of human and democratic rights and the promotion of equality, only to Ethiopian charities/societies. The other two types of associations can only engage in developmental activities. As a result, groups which engage in advocacy work are no longer allowed to receive substantial foreign funding. Lack of adequate funding has forced such groups to reduce staff numbers, shut down offices and focus on limited areas and activities. According to the World Organization against Torture [Sa.], since the 95% of domestic human rights NGOs in Ethiopia had received the bulk of their funds from foreign sources, the Charities and Societies Law has significantly affected their activities. The Ethiopian Media Women's Society, for example, which used to get 70% of its budget from foreign sources, has cut down its staff from 12 to 2 after re-registering as an Ethiopian society under the new law. Different charities and societies have been forced change their objectives and tone down their advocacy work, and people have been restricted from accessing information and exercising their human and political rights by getting support from such charities and societies. For instance, those charities and societies contributed significantly to the 2005 National Election by creating discussion forums in different parts of the country and developing political awareness and encouraging citizens to participate in elections. Accordingly, the 2005 National Election became the first competitive and relatively more democratic election in the country's history. However, the ruling party noticed the contribution of those charities and decided to restrict their contribution by using this law.

In addition, the new Charities and Societies Law requires that all charities and non-governmental organisations are registered with the Charities and Societies Agency, a government body created under the new proclamation. If they are not registered, they “have no legal personality” and are not permitted to operate (Article 65(1), Article 92(1)(d)). Hence, the government has frequently used its registration laws to effectively ban the work of human rights defenders. For example, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), a prominent human rights group that participates in civic education, human rights advocacy and human rights monitoring, and the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association were denied registration for approximately seven years (Human Rights Watch 1997; U.S. Department of State 2000; Gebre-Egziabher 2002).

Moreover, the government used this law to intimidate charities and societies. For instance, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), which had advocated for reproductive rights, the elimination of discrimination against women, the discontinuation of female genital mutilation, and related activities, found itself the subject of government harassment (Women’s Learning Partnership 2001; Hailu 2009). In September 2001, the Ministry of Justice accused EWLA of partaking in activities beyond its mandate and banned the organisation. EWLA had been criticising the government, accusing it of failing to take measures against persons charged with violations of women’s rights and lamented the absence of an independent court system in Ethiopia (U.N. Economic & Social Council 2002).

Further, the provisions in this law are broad, making interpretation difficult and further forcing civil society and the media to take extreme precautions to reduce the threat of accusation under the laws. The Charities and Societies Proclamation provides that any person who violates its provisions is subject to punishment. The punishment is not only limited to officers within civil society organisations, but also potentially extend to members, volunteers and recipients of services. The law is also vague with respect to which provisions of the penal code would be applied to determine the level of culpability and punishment that individuals would face. In addition to imprisonment and fines, criminal charges can lead to the cancellation of an NGO’s license (Article 92(2)(e)). Consequently, the law has been successful in creating a layer of fear and in creating self-censorship among NGO’s. For instance, the fear of government reprisals led

three of the four major human rights groups that had contributed to the Universal Periodic Review process at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in 2009 to pull out of submitting further reports (Human Rights Watch 2010). More surprisingly, more than 1000 charities and societies groups ceased to exist after the commencement of this law (ESAT News 28 June 2017).

In response to criticism against it, the government contends that the law is necessary to improve transparency and accountability, and promote indigenous organisations, all of which are clearly legitimate goals. But, the rationale behind the law is more insidious because it essentially equates non-governmental organisations with political parties. Hence, the government argues that they should be restricted from foreign funding in the same way as political parties in order to restrict foreign influence in Ethiopia's democracy (EPRDF Newsletter 2008). But, based on practical incidences, one can argue that the rationale behind this law is to cripple charities and societies; groups which work develop political and economic awareness. One can simply understand this from two concrete points. One, this law was initiated after the 2005 election campaign when there had been some co-operation among the media and civil societies in the area of training, and when a number of non-governmental organisations supporting the opposition had allegedly been funded by foreign organisations. Two, the law is clearly focused on clamping down on advocacy groups which work on awareness creation regarding freedom and human rights. Accordingly, the law demands they tone down the political advocacy of the charities and societies groups, which had created massive awareness and interest to hold, express and impart political thought. It was clear that people had started to participate in supporting different parties, questioning government policies and challenging government practices.

6.6.2.3 Telecom Fraud Offence Proclamation No. 761/2012

The Telecom Fraud Offence Proclamation, enacted in 2012, addresses the use of the internet and mobile communication. This law criminalises a range of services and activities related to telecommunications services, defined broadly to include mobile telephones, satellite telephones and internet services, while also entrenching the monopoly of the government-owned telecommunications operator. As indicated in the preamble, the goal of the new law is to address telecom fraud, which purportedly prevents the telecom industry from playing “an essential role

in ... peace, democratization, and development” and poses “a serious threat to the national security beyond economic losses”. In part, the Telecom Fraud Law reiterates existing offenses from the Telecom Proclamation of 1996 (as amended in 2002) and increases sanctions for their violation. However, the law also extends the anti-terrorism proclamation and criminal code to online activity. For instance, Article 6 indicated that using a telecom network to disseminate a “terrorizing” or obscene message, or for any other undefined “illegal purpose” is punishable with up to eight years imprisonment and a fine.

This provision under Article 9 and Article 10(3-4) criminalises the commercial provision and use of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services like Skype or Google Talk, or services that otherwise “bypass” Ethio-Telecom infrastructure. However, Article 26 of the Ethiopian constitution specifically guarantees the “inviolability of “notes and correspondence” including “communications made by means of telephone, telecommunications and electronic devices” and provides that “public officials shall respect and protect these rights”, and “no restrictions may be placed on the enjoyment of such rights except in compelling circumstances and in accordance with specific laws” and specific purposes. All these provisions have been violated by using state-controlled telecom operator, Ethio-Telecom, which engaged in filtering and blocking of websites using unclear legal grounds.

Article 5 of the Telecom Fraud Proclamation punishes the interception and illegal access to telecom systems without authorisation. Indeed, surveillance of Internet and phone communications had been allowed under several broad laws including the Criminal Procedure Code 196, Article 33, with vague and superficial safeguards for the right to privacy. As a general rule, to issue a search warrant, the Criminal Procedure Code requires that a court must determine that the “purposes of justice or of any inquiry, trial, or other proceedings under this Code will be served,” a vague and broadly drawn standard that leaves much discretion to the courts. Under the Telecom Fraud Proclamation Articles 14-16, police may apply for a covert search warrant from the Federal High Court if they have “reasonable ground” to believe that telecom fraud is “likely” to be committed, which allows the collection of electronic evidence gathered through surveillance. However, the broad surveillance powers articulated in these laws do not meet a

level of clarity and precision required for limitations to be prescribed by law. The lack of legal safeguards that limit the nature, scope and duration of surveillance measures and provide grounds for judicial approval raise concerns that these powers are not adequately regulated to prevent arbitrary, unlawful or disproportionate interference with the right to privacy. Although court warrants are required for some forms of surveillance, the courts seem to play no ongoing oversight role to safeguard against abuses in carrying out the warrant or how personal information collected through surveillance is used.

In addition, though Ethiopian law provides for an independent judiciary, criminal courts remain subject to political influence, raising concerns that even weak safeguards may be further undermined, especially in cases involving politically sensitive issues of national security (Human Rights watch 2013). In any case, there appears to be almost no ability to challenge the legality of surveillance and no rule to exclude illegally obtained evidence in criminal proceedings. In practice, it seems that much surveillance may be conducted without a warrant. Accordingly, the 2012 Telecom Fraud Law Article 10(2) punishes the attainment of a telecom service through “fraudulent means,” including by using the identity code of another person for the state retains a monopoly on mobile telephony. This law further extends to the controlling and screening of ideas that people communicate; and any idea that opposes the ruling group is identified as the attempt to “destabilising the constitutional system” and “committing Terrorist act”. A number of people have been charged for phone calls with individuals connected to groups and parties labelled as “terrorists”. For instance, the High Court sentenced Riyot Alemu in January 2012 to 14 years in prison for planning a terrorist act, possessing property for a terrorist act and promoting a terrorist act, based on emails she had received from pro-opposition discussion groups and unspecified money transfers from her bank account (CPJ 2014). It seems that the government uses surveillance technologies to access what individuals communicate. Consequently, many people have become frightened and suspicious of what they are talking about and with whom they are talking.

6.6.2.4 Press Proclamation 34/1992

The Press Proclamation 34/1992 is the first legislation in the history of Ethiopia’s legal system dealing specifically with the private press. As reflected in the preamble of the proclamation, this

press proclamation is meant to enable the press to play its role by providing favourable conditions under which the press can operate freely and responsibly.

...free press, not only provides a forum for citizens to freely express their opinions, but also plays a preeminent role in the protection of individual and peoples' rights and the development of democratic culture as well as in affording citizens the opportunity to form a balanced view on various topical issues and to forward their opinions on the directions and operations of government.

In addition, Article 3(1-2) expressly states that “freedom of expression is recognized and respected in Ethiopia to which end it prohibits censorship of the press and any restriction of a similar nature” and recognizes the right to “access to information.”

Accordingly, Article 2 (1) of the Press Proclamation declares that citizens have the right to launch any mass media such as newspapers, magazines, periodicals, journals, pamphlets, news agencies, radio, television, motion pictures, pictures, films, cartoons, books, music, electronics publications, and plays. This includes the right to publish and distribute without censorship and without any restriction of a similar nature, including freedom from prior restraint and liability after publication. In addition, Article 4 of the proclamation, states that the press stands for the pursuit of fundamental freedom, peace, democracy, justice and for the acceleration of social and economic development. Article 5 (1) further allows any Ethiopian national to carry out any press activity, and lays down the various rights and duties necessary to engage in press activity.

This Press Law is the cornerstone of the current legal and institutional framework of media regulation in the country. According to Article 19 (2000:3) though, the proclamation has some “provisions which is to be welcomed, it still appears to us predominantly to reflect the precarious political context of the time when it was promulgated.” Additionally, Human Rights Watch (2015:20) and CPJ (2001) assert that though press freedom was also afforded under Article 29 of the constitution, the government used Article 10 of the 1992 Press Proclamation to restrict the press and prosecute journalists. This article established the press's duty to ensure that no media content gives rise to any criminal or civil liability. Additionally, it imposed on the press the duty to ensure that media content was free from “any criminal offence [sic] against the safety of the State or of the Administration”, incitement of conflict between people or agitation of war, defamatory or false accusations against individual nationalities, people, or organisations. Article 10(2) sets penalties up to three years imprisonment and/or a fine up to 50,000 Ethiopian

Birr, which is equivalent to USD\$7,700. The liability for an offence rests with the editor, journalist or publisher, and sometimes all of these for the same published article.

The most commonly used charges against journalists on account of their published articles have been subsection (c) of Article 10 (2) of the Press Law. This is a vaguely-worded offence of “criminal instigation of one nationality against another or incitement of conflict between peoples”, supplemented by article 480 of the Penal Code (1957), which provides for imprisonment for even vaguer offences of "spreading false rumours, suspicion or false charges against the government or public authorities or their activities, therefore disturbing or inflaming public opinion or creating a danger of public disturbances", and Article 580, which provides for imprisonment for defamation. In practice, all these legal provisions have been used to detain or prosecute journalists for legitimately exercising their right to freedom of expression. In addition to this proclamation, the government has used the penal code of 1957 to restrict and threaten freedom of expression.

The main problem related to this law is barrier to entry. This problem is from the notion of licensing. Article 6 and 7 of the press law set out the requirement for registration and a procedure for print media license. But, it is generally recognised that requiring a license for print media is illogical and illegal. Firstly, there is no practical rationale for licensing the print media, unlike broadcast where limited frequency may require licensing. Secondly, substantive restriction on the print media do not pursue any legitimate aim recognised under the country’s constitution and international law rather than unnecessarily exposing the media to potential abuse fettering the free flow of information. Further, according to the law, registration is onerous, has chilling effects on freedom of expression because it subjects any press activity towards pamphlets and other small publications (Article 19[sa]:20).

6.6.2.5 Broadcasting Proclamation 178/1999

In the 1950s, while almost all African countries were under the colonial yoke, Ethiopia and Egypt were the first African states to broadcast a propaganda war against colonialism. However, the present broadcasting service in Ethiopia is in a very low position by African standards. In June 1999, a Broadcasting Proclamation was created to establish a Broadcasting Agency with the

power to issue, suspend and revoke broadcasting licenses (Negarit Gazeta 1999). This proclamation specifically deals with the broadcasting services, radio and television transmission and enacted “to provide for the Systematic Management of Broadcasting Service”, and is applicable to every private and government broadcasting service established within Ethiopia (Article 3). Prior to this, government broadcasting was regulated by Proclamation 6/1991 which states that Radio Ethiopia (RE) and Ethiopian Television (ETV), described as the "mass media" remain under state control within the Ministry of Information. Indeed, the provision of the 1999 Broadcasting Proclamation showed signs that private commercial radio and television could be licensed and raised the promise of the need to reconfigure the state broadcast media as a genuine public service broadcaster by the government. However, the new proclamation also emerged with binding provisions.

Article 17 of this proclamation stipulates processes and requirements for licensing. No person may undertake a broadcasting activity without applying for and obtaining a broadcasting license from the EBA. The application shall contain the following:

- (a) the name, nationality and address of the applicant; (b) if the applicant is a company, the name, nationality, and address of the shareholders, and the amount of their share; (c) the type of license required; (d) the name and address of the broadcasting station; (e) the coverage area and time of transmission (f) the type and capacity of instruments used for transmission; (g) the method of receiving; (h) the percentage amount of domestic and foreign produced programs to be transmitted; (i) source of the investment.

Article 18 (1) claims that the applicant's financial, organisational and technical capacity should be ascertained by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) before the broadcasting license is issued. Applicants are also expected to ensure that capital for the licence is obtained only by the applicants or under the guarantee of the applicant. Further, applicants whose nationality is not Ethiopian, as well as political parties and religious organisations cannot get licenses (Article 19). Article 27 also requires that any transmitted programs should not violate the dignity and liberty of mankind and the rules of good behaviour or undermine the beliefs of others; commit a criminal offense against the security of the State, the constitutionally established Governmental Administration or the Defence Force of the country; maliciously accuse or defame individuals, Nations/Nationalities, people or organisations; and instigate dissension among nationalities or cause to initiate dissension among peoples and incite war.

The licensee is also required to notify the EBA of all persons who are responsible for any transmitted programme (Article 34); keep record of every transmitted programme, including news, for 60 days (Article 35 (1)); and provide at its own expense a copy of the programme to the EBA or any other organ authorised by law to look into the case where a programme is needed for inspection or to investigate a grievance lodged against it (Article 35 (3)). In addition, every licensee, where required by an employee of the agency who is duly authorised to ensure and inspect the implementation of the provisions of this Proclamation, shall allow him to investigate the broadcasting station and provide him with the required documents (Article 37(1)). Furthermore, “the broadcaster is duty bound to respect the right of a person to give reply concerning an issue when he alleges that a transmitted program has encroached on his right or failed to be presented properly” (Article 39 (1)). Above all, the proclamation compels every broadcaster to allocate free air time for political parties and candidates registered in accordance with the relevant law, to publicise their objectives and programmes to the people or transmit statements during election periods (Article 40).

According to Article 42, those individuals or groups broadcasting without a license or licensees who failed to allow the EBA to investigate a station, not providing a right of reply, carrying prohibited advertisements or sponsored programmes, carrying programmes that corrupt children, failing to notify the Agency of the person responsible for a programme, failing to keep the required programme archives, or breaching the rules on political party advertising face imprisonment of between six months to three years, and maximum terms of two to five years, along with fines ranging from 5,000 Birr to 50,000 Birr. In addition to the principal penalty, the property used for broadcasting can found guilty of violating the provision of Article 27 (4) of this Proclamation will be confiscated (Article 43).

As already indicated above, the Ethiopian Constitution guarantees all citizens freedom of expression without any interference. The rights include “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or any media of [her]/his choice” (Article 29 (2)). However, Article 29 (6) stipulates that “...legal limitations can be laid down in order to protect the well-being of the

youth, and the honor and reputation of individuals. Any propaganda for war as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity shall be prohibited by law.” Although the article promised that the limitations hold on “only through laws which are guided by the principle that freedom of expression and information cannot be limited on account of content or point of view expressed” (Article 29 (6)), expressions have been limited because of their content. While this Broadcasting Proclamation (EBP) is enacted in accordance with Article 29 of the Constitution which says everyone has the right to thought, opinion and expressions without any limitations, however, limitations seem to go beyond what is allowed by the Constitution, and are not guided by the principle stated under Article 29 (6) of the Constitution. I claim that the following are inconsistent practices with the implementation of the Constitution.

The proclamation restricts the ability of specific groups to enter the broadcasting industry. Article 19 of the Proclamation states that broadcasting is an investment area which is strictly reserved for Ethiopians and it is prohibited for political parties and religious organisations. The Constitution Article 29 (2), on the other hand, recognises the right of everyone to exercise expression without any interference, including freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of any kind, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of her/his choice. Thus, restricting licenses from those organisations with political connections is contrary to the constitutional provisions about freedom of the media. This clearly shows that licensing and regulation of the broadcast media in Ethiopia is prone to politicisation.

Indeed, the decision to limit licences is firstly grounded on the assumption that religious and political groups have agendas that are not shared by the general public such as democratisation or development. Secondly, the parliament contends that since wavelengths are limited, it would be an inefficient distribution to allow these groups to have a share (Parliament Minute, April 28, 1999). The main questions that I and many have raised are “How political parties and religious organizations would not have development and democratic agendas? How a party could be established and members of the party recruited without some social, political and economic agendas? What could be the main goal of religious institutions? Is it not, for the majority, promoting good social values and discipline?” The prohibition of political parties and religious organisations is unconstitutional as it goes against Article 29 of the Constitution, which

guarantees freedom of expression without interference. Of course, the scarcity of frequencies is a valid limitation, but the solution cannot be a blanket prohibition of these groups.

Therefore, this law will be null and void by the virtue of Article 9 of the Constitution, which declares the supremacy of the law as follows:

- (1) The Constitution is the supreme law of the land. Any law, customary practice or a decision of an organ of state or a public official which contravenes this Constitution shall be of no effect.
- (2) All citizens, organs of state, political organizations, other associations as well as their officials have the duty to ensure observance of the Constitution and to obey it.
- (3) It is prohibited to assume state power in any manner other than that provided under the Constitution.
- (4) All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land.

As we can see in the constitution, legal limitations are not entirely prohibited; the possible grounds of limitation are to protect interests safeguarded by the Constitution. However, the blanket prohibitions made on religion and political groups do not promote any of the safeguarded interests i.e. the welfare of the youth, the reputation of individuals, public order and peace.

The second problem under the broadcasting proclamation is content restrictions after a license is issued. The proclamation lays an apparent limitation by requiring every transmitted programme to ascertain the accuracy of not just its source but also the accuracy of its content (Article 27 (2)). Further, Article 27 (3) stipulates that every transmitted programme is required to reflect varying viewpoints and serve the public through balanced presentations; and that all news shall be accurate, balanced and impartial. According to common media standards, accuracy and balance is not a question of law but of professional ethics. Article XIX principles 23(1&4) state that broadcasting laws should not impose content restrictions of a civil or criminal nature and such matters ought to be handled by an independent professional body. Furthermore, Article 27 (4) stipulates “any transmitted program shall not violate the dignity and liberty of mankind, the rules of good behaviour or undermine the belief of others.” The phrases in this article such as *dignity and liberty of mankind*, *good behaviour* and *undermine belief of others* are vague and are highly subjective against a broadcasting institution. For example, what are the standards of dignity and levels of liberty? What is good behaviour and with who’s perspective? Who defines that the belief of others is undermined or not? According to the principles forwarded by Article XIX on

drawing a broadcasting regulation "... any content rules should be developed in close consultation with broadcasters and other interested parties, and should be finalized only after public consultation. Agreed rules should be set out clearly and in detail in published form" (Principle 23 (3)). In addition, the content limitation is inconsistent with Article 29 (6) of the Constitution which says that "These rights can be limited only through laws which are guided by the principle that freedom of expression and information cannot be limited on account of the content or effect of the point of view expressed." These clauses without doubt expose a broadcasting institution capable of license revocation, suspension and confiscation.

The third problem of this broadcasting proclamation is the revocation and confiscation provisions. "A radio or Television broadcasting service license issued in with this Proclamation may be revoked where the provisions of Article 27 of the Proclamation are violated" (Article 25 (1.f)). Most confiscations emerged from the breach of a rule relating to content. As was mentioned earlier, broadcasters are left at the mercy of the regulatory body's interpretation of the loose terms in the provisions of Article 27. This article lays the ground for Article 43 that sets the confiscation of broadcasting property. This article says that "the property used for broadcasting of a person who is found guilty of violating the provision of Article 27 (4) of this Proclamation shall, in addition to the principal penalty, be confiscated" (Article 43). Accordingly, broadcasters are not only denied their right to free expression but also the means through which they express their views. Even the punishment, which is not justifiably proportional to the alleged harm, primarily contradicts Article 29 (2) of the Constitution, which guarantees everyone the right to freedom of expression without any interference "through any media of choice." Such punishment is believed not to be proportional. Article 19(2010) stresses that sanctions should always be strictly proportionate to the harm caused. According to Principle 27(1 &2) of Article 19(2010), principles on the protection of human rights in protests, in assessing the type of sanction to impose, regulatory bodies should keep in mind that the purpose of regulation is not primarily to 'police' broadcasters but rather to protect the public interest by ensuring that the sector operates smoothly and by promoting diverse, quality broadcasting.

Content restrictions are not limited to the broadcasting programmes but also extend to sponsors. Article 33 of the proclamation requires that the content and timetable of sponsored programmes

should not fall under the influence of a sponsor and the sponsored programme “shall not agitate the sale or hire of the sponsor’s products or services.” According to Article 29 (6) of this proclamation, the apparent limitation on content not only goes against the constitutional rights of a broadcaster which cannot be limited on account of content and point of view expressed, but also hints at an indirect interference into the internal workings and editorial policies of media institutions. Broadcasters which act in breach of the above provision (Article 33) are threatened with imprisonment not less than six months but not exceeding two years and with a fine not less than 10,000 Birr but not exceeding 50,000 Birr (Article 42 (1.c)).

The fourth problem of this proclamation is violation of the constitutional right of operational independence. While the constitution guarantees operational independence of the press under Article 29 (4), the proclamation undermines this right by empowering the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency (EBA) to inspect any broadcasting institution at any time: “every licensee, where required by an employee of the EBA, who is authorized to ensure and inspect the implementation of the provisions of the Proclamation, shall allow him to investigate the broadcasting station and provide him with the required documents” (Article 37 (1)). Accordingly, the inspector is allowed, under Article 41 (2 and 3) of the proclamation, to enter and inspect a broadcasting service organisation during working hours as well as to examine any broadcasting instruments, refer to relevant documents and demand a copy thereof. Failure to allow the EBA to investigate a station and provide required documents is punishable with imprisonment not less than one year but not exceeding three years and with a fine not less than 5,000 Birr and not exceeding 10,000 Birr (Article 42 (1.b)). Authorising the inspector to such levels of power and investigation into the detailed working of the media appear to be unjustifiable and contrary to the constitutionally guaranteed right to free expression.

6.6.2.6 Broadcasting Proclamation No. 533/2007

As we have seen above The Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency was established according to NO 178/1999 and served the government until 2007. However, proclamation NO 178/1999 was revised in 2007 under the proclamation NO 533/2007, including various powers and duties, such as the power to issue, suspend and revoke broadcasting licenses (Negarit Gazeta 2007).

Arguably, this proclamation begins with lots of promises. Firstly, the introduction accepts that broadcasting services play a significant role in the political, economic and social development in Ethiopia and in exercising the basic constitutional rights such as freedom of expression and access to information. Secondly, it insists that law that “insures fair utilization of limered radio wave” and “clearly define the rights and obligations of persons who undertake the broadcasting service”. Accordingly, revising the existing broadcasting law was found to be essential.

However, the proclamation re-emerged with more restrictive provisions than proclamation NO 178/1999. The Broadcasting Proclamation of 2007 under Article 23 mentioned that certain types of bodies should not be issued broadcasting service licenses. In this proclamation, eight bodies are not issued broadcasting service licenses, three of which had been in the previous one. Accordingly, Article 23 of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Proclamation NO 533/2007 lists the bodies that are prevented from getting broadcasting licenses, as one can see below. However, these are stated in a way that purposefully creates ambiguity. The English version states that: “The following bodies may not be issued with broadcasting service licenses.” The Amharic version states that “የሚከተሉት አካላት የብሮድካስት አገልግሎት ፍቃድ አይሰጣቸውም፡፡” which literally means “the following bodies are not issued with broadcasting service”. The list includes:

1. A body that is not conferred with a legal personality
2. without prejudice to the provisions of other laws regarding foreign nationals of Ethiopian origins, an organization
 - a. not incorporated in Ethiopia or
 - b. in which its capital or its management control is held by foreign national
3. An organization of a political organization or of which a political organization is a shareholder or a member of a political organizations supreme leadership is a shareholder or member of its management at any level
4. Religious organizations [...], etc.

As indicated above, the numbers of bodies which are excluded from getting the broadcasting service license are increased. But, it is against the international principles for freedom of expression to have a blanket ban or prohibition, such as for religious organisations, of licensing. Ethiopia has ratified and signed these international covenants. Though they are not binding documents and are not able to restrict countries from having their own domestic laws, they are morally binding. And this is clearly put in Article 13(2) of the Ethiopian constitution, which describes: “The fundamental rights and freedoms specified in this chapter shall be interpreted in

a manner of conforming to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenants on Human Rights and International Instruments adopted by Ethiopia.”

Another problem is the exclusivity of state media to promote only government ideology. Although Article 29 (5) of the constitution says: “Any media financed by or under the control of the State shall be operated in a manner ensuring its capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinion,” the reality seems to be different. The state media outlets are used by the government to transmit only its messages. This situation was emanated from government pressure specifically from government officials (see 6.9-6.11).

It is often asked what the importance of licensing and broadcast regulation is in different contexts. Arguably, the need for broadcast regulation and licensing vary and reasons can be different from country to country. Overback (2006:427) argues that governments need to regulate the broadcast media and issue licences based on the rationale of the scarcity of resource and frequencies. Hayden (2002:8) describes how governments control the media in the perceived interests of national unity and development, and this notion has continued to influence the media situation in Africa.

According to Gebru (2012), in the Ethiopian context, broadcast regulation is seen from the point view of audience coverage and the importance of safety of the general public and the nation. Kiflu (2015:36) insisted that broadcast regulation is for “interest of either consolidating the power of governments or the profit maximizing of other loyalties. Hence, broadcast speech is hampered both by those who are in power and profit maximizing loyalists.” I partially agree with Gebru’s idea that control in Ethiopia is not as a result of resource scarcity or fear of the safety the entire public, but rather for audience coverage and, hence, for fear that free media will develop public awareness. Additionally, I strongly agree with Kiflu’s idea that media in Ethiopia have been controlled mainly in the interests of keeping the power of authoritarian regimes.

6.6.2.7 Freedom of the mass media and access to information Proclamation No. 590/2008

The second press law commonly known as the Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation, which was adopted by parliament in July 2008, was initiated for the first time in

2003 by the Ethiopian government (i.e. Ministry of Information). The draft law passed various stages of evaluation, and discussion since its inception in 2003. But, it was surrounded by controversy from its introduction (Freedom House 2007). International lobbying organisations indicated the shortcomings of the Draft Press Law and expressed concern about the future of the press in Ethiopia, and its reputation among international standards on freedom of expression. For instance, after the Draft Press Law was introduced, 19 members of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (2004) wrote a joint letter to Ethiopian authorities expressing concerns about the proposed law and urged the government to “ensure that national consultations on the draft law respect the concerns of international, regional and local free-expression groups”.

One main concern was the imposition of a registration on the media outlets, which require the media to provide extremely detailed information regarding all journalists working for the media outlet and distribution of any press content in order to obtain a license. As the licensing office is ruled by cadres of the ruling group, the government has used the office as a means to exclude the opposition from media ownership. For instance, the government has refused to register a professional media association founded by the private press, the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association (EFJA). The EFJA campaigns against the imprisonment of journalists under the Press Law and regularly publishes lists of detained journalists. It is clear that this registration is designed to screen individuals and groups which oppose the ruling group. Those who support the ruling party have been supported by the government in different ways, but those labelled as the opposition have been directly or indirectly blocked (see 6.3).

The second concern was that the law allowed the Minister of Information to determine the fees for registration, time limits, and punishment. Hence, this could have made the media system directly dependent on the government and applications could be denied based on excessively broad grounds, while some media may be selectively favoured. The third concern was the system created by the draft law could impose substantive conditions, such as vague content restrictions on the media and extremely burdensome requirements about the breadth of information that was to be provided by media outlets. The fourth concern was the penalty of imprisonment for minor technical offenses, such as publishing a periodical without having a certificate of registration, submitting false information in the application for a certificate of

registration, failing to publish a reply or correction in times of elections, or distributing prohibited foreign press products. The fifth concern was that courts were granted broad censorship powers and could impose disproportionate penalties on media violations. A final fundamental concern among the opposition to the Draft Press Law was the establishment of a 29-member Press Council “comprised of representatives from the government, the press, and civil society”, whose powers and procedures would be determined by the government (CPJ 2004). Hence, this council, as experience shows, would not be independent but simply a collection of government cadres or supporters who would contribute to the government’s stifling activity rather than promoting the right to freedom of expression.

The pressure from those lobbying groups forced the Ethiopian government to call a symposium in 2003 to hear the concerns of the private press, press freedom advocates and advertising agencies (Asia Africa Intelligence Wire 2003). However, members of the private press and the Ethiopia Free Journalists Association were denied the opportunity to comment during the discussion. In protest, these representatives walked out of the symposium and criticised the Draft Law publicly (Ross 2010:1056). The EFJA criticised the government and directly attacked the government for threatening the survival of the free press and argued the country was in a dictatorship. In response to EFJA’s public criticism, the authorities claimed that the EFJA had failed to submit a certified audit of its budget in violation of the licensing requirements for media outlets and officially shut down the organisation and issued a strict ban on EFJA executive committee members not to communicate with other media outlets (CPJ 2005; Reporters without Borders 2003). Hence, the Draft Press Law continued to be a source of debate and controversy between free press organisations and the Ethiopian government for years (Freedom House 2007). On 1 July 2008, nearly six years after the first draft of the law was introduced, the Ethiopian House of Peoples Representatives passed the Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia 2008). This proclamation passed with the provisions that contrast with the constitution, the preamble and different provisions of this proclamation. Many provisions of the proclamation included retrogressive draconian provisions compared to 1992 press law (Writers in Prison Committee 2008). Some of these threatening provisions are discussed further below.

Article 29 of the constitution expressly guarantees access to “information of public interest.” Freedom of the Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation of 2008, also known as the Press Law, appears to reaffirm constitutional protection for mass media, access to publicly held information and prohibitions on censorship. The preamble of this Proclamation declares that “the proclamation removes all obstacles that were impediments to the operation of the media in Ethiopia.” The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008) explained that this “extremely liberal introduction and preamble” exemplified the Proclamation’s aims to implement values of accountability and transparency for government activities. Further, this proclamation reaffirmed the Constitution Article 29 (3) which provides for the right to “access to information of public interest” and Article 12 guaranteeing “all persons the right to seek, obtain and communicate any information held by public bodies.” The right includes the inspection of documents, taking extracts and notes, and obtaining certified copies, diskettes or any other electronic modes.

However, neither the preamble nor any other provisions in the proclamation accomplish what the Ethiopian government purports; they cannot change the restrictive provisions of the Press Law into an expansion of freedom simply by declaring so in the preamble of the statute. Contrary to the declarations of the government and the liberal language of the preamble, this Press Law in fact restricts the media in ways that the prior press law did not. While ostensibly providing for improved access to information, the Press Law puts a number of restrictions in place that actually hinder access to information. It provides too much discretion to government officials, allowing them to use a variety of clauses to deny access to government information including on the pretext that that the request may jeopardise the individual; harm commercial activities; or negatively impact policy, national security, or international relations. These restrictions have been mainly set to protect government officials and to cover government defects. One main restriction prevents access to information. Articles 15–25 in this proclamation contain a list of exempted information. The list includes, for example, information relating to third party, commercial information about a third party, proceedings of law enforcement and legal investigations, information in regard to defence, security and international relations, and cabinet documents. Indeed, Article 28 of the proclamation provides for a “public interest override” which sets that a public body may not refuse a request for information unless the harm by disclosure outweighs the public interest. The main question here is that “who is going to judge

the harm?” Clearly, these would be the authorities of the ruling party and individuals highly affiliated to the government and appointed by the government to that position. Consequently, can one expect independent and fair judgment from those groups or individuals? Practice shows that information is usually screened through the mirrors of the ruling party interest or ideology.

Another problem is that the process laid out in the law under Article 14 for accessing public information is complex and may be considered too lengthy, particularly for journalists. The law requires a person to request information in writing or through electronic device from the public relations officer concerned. The latter has up to 30 days to reply, with the possibility of extension of another 30 days. The public relations officer may also deny information “stating the reasons for rejecting the request on any of the grounds specified” in the law. The law gives the right of appeal in Article 31 to “any person who is aggrieved by the decision of the head of the public body” to the Ombudsman (an appeals body for all administrative decisions) within 30 days. This process could also take another 30 days until the Ombudsman decides on the issue. Considering the time constraints in the media, the process to access public information takes too long and as it is said *information delayed is information denied*. In addition, accessing public information is very difficult in practice due to poor record keeping and record management in the country.

According to Article 7(1), any person who exercises direct or indirect effective control over a company possessing a nation-wide broadcasting license or a broadcasting license for an area with a recorded population of more than 100,000 inhabitants, may not exercise direct or indirect effective control over another company holding such a license and servicing the same or an overlapping market. These provisions mean that no person can run more than one magazine or newspaper in the same area. Those who violate this provision could be penalised up to 200,000 Birr or around USD 10,000 which is a significant amount by Ethiopian standards (Article 45). This is a means of preventing the emergence of a vibrant media industry by dividing the media into small entities.

The most threatening provision of this statute is Article 43(7), the defamation provision. According to this provision defamation and false accusation against “constitutionally mandated legislators, executives and judiciaries” will be prosecutable “even if the person against whom

they were committed chooses not to press charge[s]”. In essence, under this law, anybody can be criminally prosecuted, fined or jailed for defamation even when there is no victim. According to Rose (2010:1061), “it seems the government is claiming the officials’ interests as its own as a means of gaining power and leverage against those questioning or making false accusations against the government”. This implies that the government is protecting its interest at the cost of the public’s freedom of information because information is suppressed by the media for fear of prosecution. The fine for a conviction of defamation can reach up to 100,000 Birr under the new law. Rose (2010:163) compares this fine with other fines of criminal violations to show the magnitude of these fines. In comparison, the fines for offenses such as rape and child labour abuse may not exceed 1,000 Birr (Kebede 2008). In most developed countries’ jurisdictions, the degree of fines for defamation and rape or child labour abuse is opposite of that in Ethiopia. Therefore, the magnitude of the fines imposed by the Press Law is arguably aimed at putting a media source out of business. The International Press Institute (2006) explained how excessive fines perpetuate the system of oppression: “The journalists end up trapped in a cycle whereby they remain in prison not for the offence they have allegedly committed, but for their inability to pay a fine”. This clearly implies that the government is controlling media by indirect censorship though the constitution and this proclamation prohibit “any form of censorship”. According to Frojo (2007), the threat of legal action, the requirements for obtaining a media license, and the consequences of a violation will indirectly censor what the press is willing to publish. Accordingly, media will likely only publish a report that questions or challenges the government if it is worth the risk of punishment. This results in the restriction of information being relayed to the citizens and violates the right to receive information.

To conclude, although the Ethiopian constitution and other laws guaranteed freedom of access to information and though the government portends repeatedly to fulfil this, the provisions of this law in fact provide for the opposite. It seems more likely to provide a media atmosphere of oppression. Members of the private media and even the public will likely be intimidated by the possibility of prosecution for any comments they make about government business or officers. Without the freedom to comment on any and all news, the media cannot fulfil its responsibility to provide complete and accurate information to the public. Hence, the public’s right to receive information is clearly violated by using this law.

6.6.2.8 The Criminal Code Proclamation No. 414/2004

This proclamation is one of the country's laws which have been used to repress media and other human rights claims. This law is usually used with other laws. The law incorporates provisions related to mass media with a view "to ensuring freedom of expression while preventing abuse" (Article 42). Accordingly, a person who was registered as editor in chief or deputy editor of a media shall be liable when crimes are committed against the honour of other people, public or private safety, or any other legal right protected by law.

According to this law, liability for crimes committed through broadcasting media shall rest with the person in charge of the programme. If this person cannot be found, the licensee shall be liable (Article 43 (3)). According to Article 44 (1), any person who contributes as an author, originator or publisher to the product published or diffused through mass media shall be criminally liable if the product results in crimes including armed rising or civil war, treason, espionage, crimes against humanity, incitement to disorder military order, disclosure of military secrets, breaches of military and official secrecy specified by law. Furthermore, Article 45 (3) compels the discloser of pen names and sources where a crime is committed against the constitutional order, national defence force, or security of the state resulting in clear and imminent danger. The criminal code's provision which says "participation in crimes by the mass media", outlines very broad criminal responsibility for the content of periodicals, holding printers, publishers, distributors and importers of foreign published periodicals liable for the content of those publications (Article 43).

Accordingly, many journalists were convicted under Ethiopia's criminal code. Various sections of the criminal code are regularly misused to charge journalists with penalties that can range from 3 to 25 years. The most commonly used sections against journalists include defamation (Article 613), attacks against the state (Article 244), inciting the public through false rumours (Article 486), and "outrages against the Constitution or the Constitutional Order" (Article 238). The death penalty and life imprisonment are sentences available under Article 238. Article 486(a) states: "Whoever ... starts or spreads false rumours, suspicions or false charges against the Government or the public authorities or their activities, thereby disturbing or inflaming

public opinion, or creating a danger of public disturbances ... is punishable”. This provision is broadly interpretable and the authorities have used it widely to charge journalists who report on stories that are critical of the government.

In 2014, the authorities charged magazine owners under various criminal code provisions, including for inciting the public through false rumours (Article 486(b)), and provocation and preparation (Article 257(a) and 257(e)). For instance, the owner of *Afro Times* was charged under Articles 32(1)(B), 34(1)(a), 44(1), and 486(b); *Lomi* under Articles 32(1)(a), 34(1)(a), 44(1), 257(a) and 257(e); *Jano* under Articles 32(1) (a/b), 34(1)(a), 486; and *Enku* under Articles 32(1) (a/b), 34(1), 44(1), and 486(a).

6.7 Media and the practice of freedom of expression

The previous sections illustrated how the media started, developed and served the public in Ethiopia, particularly during the imperial monarchy and in the socialist military regime. The media during the imperial regime was targeted to satisfy the interest of the imperial crown and royalty (Metaferia 2003). Similarly, most of the political discourse of the *Derg* got its foundation on socialistic orientation (Meshesha 2014:87) where “socialistic government... knows and represents the best interest of the people” and the media was the forerunner of this socialistic ideology (Graber 1989:22). While there had been some good practice within the media in the early days of the revolution, this did not last long. The regime started using the media primarily for the spread of socialist ideology, that is., for propaganda and political indoctrination. The political discourse about the activities of the *Derg* show the media was a wagging tail of the government. It had no room for private rights and freedom (Girmay 2005). The next section will assess the nature of media in the 1991-2014 government and how freedom of expression has been practiced through media.

The dismantling of the feudal system and later of the dictatorial military and Marxist government in Ethiopia heralded a historic moment in modern Ethiopian history, but was ripe with both challenges and opportunities. It was a challenge because it tested Ethiopia's emerging democratic institutions and their ability to participate in reshaping the future of the country. It was an

opportunity because it provided the means to promote democracy in the real sense of the word and learn from history, thus, enabling the people to heighten and deepen their awareness of their fundamental rights. With these challenges and opportunities, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was established from 1991 to 1994, and promised many democratic reforms. One of the initial promises was to liberalise Ethiopia's historical pattern of authoritarian rule and introduce a more tolerant and participatory political system, including independent media and professional journalists. The government media heralded freedom of expression and of the press, which had finally become a reality. Indeed, the commitment of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia seems to have been manifested by its first Charter, which guarantees freedom of expression and individual human rights. Article 1 and Article 9(10) of the Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia focussed on the fundamental democratic rights which included freedom of speech that is guaranteed by Universal Declaration on Human Rights and fair usage of mass media. Clearly, the EPRDF soon declared the adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its' Charter, as well as freedom of the press and freedom of speech. The Censor Department of the Ministry of Information was abolished and hopes for democratisation and freedom of expression emerged again. For the first time in Ethiopia's long history, the private sector became involved in the media field with confidence. Additionally, the government announced that the state media would give time and space for different political parties to carry on free discussions and inform the public about their views. The subsequent proclamations related to the press, Proclamations No. 1/1991 and No. 6/1991, Article 4(1) were considered by many as marking the beginning of a new period of openness and democratisation in Ethiopia. One saw the ushering in of private and independent media, and there was a big promise on the side of the dominant group to establish a free and democratic society. However, hope has subsequently been eradicated.

6.7.1 Print media

The first press law in the history of the nation was adopted in 1992. According to Proclamation No. 34/1992, titled the *Proclamation to Provide for the Freedom of the Press* Article 3, the freedom of the press was recognised and respected in Ethiopia, and censorship of the press and any restrictions of a similar nature were prohibited. The proclamation stated that any Ethiopian national could receive a press license from the Ministry of Information or from the Regional States Information Bureau, by submitting specific information required by the proclamation. Despite its shortcomings, there was broad agreement that the Press Law of 1992 opened the door

to the growth of the private press. In addition, the two articles of this proclamation: Article 3(2): the abolishment of prepublication censorship; and Article 5(1): the right for any Ethiopian citizen to open a media outlet was deemed particularly important. Furthermore, other principles, that included the right of foreign correspondents to freely gather news in Ethiopia, the right of access to information, the right of reply, and the duty of government officials to cooperate with the press, were equally important. Generally, one can say that this Press Law, in principle, appears to be a generous gift to this country, and that the Transitional Government of Ethiopia paved the way for journalists to write freely, though within limited borders. Despite its shortcomings, the Press Law has helped to elevate public awareness and readership. It is undeniable that people are much better informed than at any other time before.

Above all, freedom of the press in Ethiopia has been put in the constitutional frame of this government for the first time in the nation's history. Indeed, the 1995 Ethiopian constitution assures freedom of the press in Ethiopia. Article 29 (2) and (3) says that:

Freedom of the press and mass media as well as freedom of artistic creation is guaranteed. The media shall be granted institutional independence and legal protection to enable it to accommodate different opinions and to ensure the free flow of information, ideas and opinions.

Accordingly, human rights and political activists were encouraged by these provisional steps towards a democratic dispensation marked by the restoration of a free press and a buoyant civil society. Different newspapers with diverse content have appeared in large numbers and the private press, for the first time in the political history of the nation, emerged as a new public sphere, though it was limited to the capital city and a few major cities (Meshesha 2011). More than 50 new monthly magazines and 20 private newspapers emerged following the collapse of the socialist dictatorship in addition to government publications (Adijumobi 2007:135). Some common among those newspapers were *Siefe Nebelbal* means *The Thunderbolt*, *Addis Neger* means *Something New*, *Addis Zena* means *Fresh News*, *Addis Admas* means *New Horizon*, *Satenaw* means *The Courageous*, *Netsanet* means *Freedom*, *Medina* means *The Capital*, *Maheder* means *The Sheath*, *Mebreke* means *The Lightening*, *Abay* means *Blue Nile*, *Tomar* means *The Blog*, *Tobia* means *Ethiopia*, *Addis Tribune* means *New Tribune*, *The Press*, *The Reporter*, *Nation*, and *The Sun*. Most of these newspapers are weekly publications and political in nature. Some other non-political, entertainment, sport and business newspapers and magazines

include *Tsegereda* means *The Rose*, *Kalkidan* means *The Promise*, *Fashion*, *Style*, *Medical*, *Inter-Sport*, *Sky Sport*, *Giorgis* means *St. George*, *Fortune*, *Capital*, *Entrepreneur* and others. One main shortcoming of these publications is that they were not dailies; the only dailies were *Addis Zemen* means *New Era* and *The Ethiopian Herald*, which were established during the period of the emperor.

The increase in number of private print media was evident. By 1994, there were over 170 daily, weekly and bi-weekly publications in Addis Ababa. It had grown fast not only in number but also in diversity of local languages other than Amharic such as Oromiffa and Tigrigna. Except for one or two magazines, suspected to be functioning under political interests, the rest were private. The Ethiopian publishing industry mushroomed after the Press Bill of 1992. Figures differ, but according to the Government, 385 publications were registered between October 1992 and July 1997, of which 265 were newspapers and 120 magazines.

However, such growth was short-lived. More than half of the newspapers were closed during the same five-year period, often because of limited resources and pressure from the government. The Mass Media License Registration and Control Department in the Ministry of Information and Culture suddenly introduced a yearly license renewal fee of Birr 10,000 in 1999, which was unaffordable for small businesses. Additionally, the authorities exerted restrictions on newspaper distribution outside of the capital. Government pressure combined with financial and market constraints led to the termination of vulnerable titles. By mid-2001, 43 Ethiopian journalists were in exile. Many of them became pivotal in forming the opposition movement abroad through the use of new media channels (Tadesse 20015:25).

However, between 2003 and 2005, the number of publications available on the street doubled, the opposition-aligned press reached new heights and some titles multiplied their circulation figures many times. During the pre-election campaign, large, peaceful election rallies were held and an unprecedented openness was seen in public speech. But immediately after the 2005 election the first signs of a new serious wave of crackdowns on the private press became evident. The entire process led to a serious setback for the critical private press. A number of publications were forced to close as a result of the detention of their managers and editors, including critical

outlets such as *Addis Zena*, *Ethop*, *Menelik*, *Meyisaw*, *Meznagna*, *Netsanet*, *Satenaw* and *Seife Nebelbal*. Of the 85 newspapers that were in circulation in June 2005, only 51 were still being published in February 2006. In addition, there are currently 100 electronic publishers and 2 news agencies: one government owned the other owned by the ruling party (Tadesse 2015:27-28). According to Simon (2006:24), a government official himself, there were 56 newspapers and 12 magazines published and distributed in July 2006. However, the Ministry of Information insisted, there were 68 newspapers and magazines published and distributed in July 2006. Regardless of number differences, one clearly sees that there is a huge decrease from ten years ago. Indeed, Tadesse (2015) remarks that though the closures were enforced mainly by government, poor journalistic quality, the absence of professional ethics, and financial pressure contributed significantly. Generally, 1267 press products (768 newspapers, 316 magazines, 180 electronics publishers, and 3 news agencies) have been issued with licenses from 21 October 1992 to 7 July 2008. Among these, 550 newspapers and 175 magazines had entered the market (Tadesse 2015:28).

Though there are increases in the number of private press outlets, it seems that the political presses are characterized by strong verbal attacks (Bezabih 2000). One development was that different local and foreign languages were used for publication. Most of the newspapers and magazines in the country are published in official language of the country, Amharic (Metaferia 2011). Whereas some others such as *The Daily Monitor* and *The Ethiopian Herald* are published in English, the weeklies *Al-Alem* in Arabic and *Barissa* in Afan Oromo: all except the first one are published by the government under the Ethiopian Press Agency. Moreover, there were a number of privately owned Amharic and English weekly newspapers though most of them ceased participation in the public sphere for political sedition and some other reasons.

However, as indicated above, the number of newspapers which focus on political matters reduced significantly after the 2005 election crisis. The aftermath of the May 2005 election resulted in the long-term detention of journalists and media owners, opposition members and supporters of the main opposition party, Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD). Specifically, 23 journalists, 9 Ethiopian journalists in exile, and 62 opposition leaders together with CUD activists were charged by the public prosecutor, primarily for outrages against the

constitution, impairment of the defence forces, and attempt to commit genocide. Additionally, 9 Ethiopian journalists in exile were tried in absence, but acquitted.

Apart from domestic journalists, the government also targeted foreign based media. Five Ethiopian journalists working for *Voice of America* and *Deutsche Welle* had their accreditation revoked; at least one foreign journalist was expelled for “tarnishing the image of the nation”, while others experienced difficulties getting work permits as foreign reporters in the country (Tadesse 2015:36). When Prime Minister Melese Zenawi went public at a press conference in Addis Ababa on 18 March 2010, the government used jamming tactics against foreign news content. It later became clear that a diaspora-sponsored television station called *Ethiopian Satellite Television* (ESAT) and a number of politically-aligned diaspora websites were blocked. The infrequent blocking purportedly makes Ethiopia the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa known to use Internet filtering technology. All these events meant that Ethiopia dropped in rank on international press freedom indexes. In their reports for 2006, Freedom House ranked Ethiopia 170 of 195 countries, while *Reporters without Borders* rated it 150 out of 169. Further, opposition parties and journalists reported that they faced different bureaucratic hurdles to publish newspapers, including denial and cancellation of licenses by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency and refusal by the state-owned Berihanena Selam Printing Enterprise, the only printing press with the capacity to print newspapers, to print their papers (African Media Barometer 2011:28). Publishers were also asked by the Berihanena Selam Printing Enterprise to sign an agreement stating that the printing press has the right to censor the content of the newspapers before printing. In addition, newspaper publishers have reported that they faced a number of bureaucratic hurdles to set up their own printing presses. Consequently, the number of publications dropped further to 56 (25 newspapers and 31 magazines) as of June, 2012. This figure dropped again to only 39 (16 newspapers and 23 magazines) as of March 2013 (Tadesse 2015:28-29). According to the EBA, as of April 2014 there were 17 licensed newspapers and 20 licensed magazines, which mainly focus on political, economic and social affairs, in a country of more than 90 million people (Human Rights Watch 2015:12).

In contrast, the government and the ruling party continued to have a strong monopoly of the electronic media as many of these are believed to be owned by the government, pro-government

parties and individuals. For instance, some of the most stable newspapers in Ethiopia have been known as a pro-government and supported by the government or non-critical to the government or established by the members and even officials of the ruling party. These are the Amharic *Addis Admas*, established in December 1999; the two English-language financial newspapers *Capital*, established in December 1998, and *Fortune*, established in May 2000; *The Reporter*, published both in Amharic, established in 1995, and English, established in 1996.

The latest wave of crackdowns on Ethiopian media activity began in June 2011, when the authorities began to apply the anti-terrorism proclamation against journalists and opposition members. In June 2012, three local journalists were convicted under the new law, in addition to another six Ethiopian bloggers and journalists living in exile in Europe and North America who have been convicted or charged in absentia (Tadesse 2015:37) According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, with 49 exiled journalists over the period from 2007–2012, Ethiopia has the third highest defection rate of journalists in the world, after Somalia and Iran. By 2012, many human rights organisations claim to have seen the steady worsening of conditions for the operations of a free press in Ethiopia. Freedom House notes an “alarming trend in Ethiopia” and downgraded the nation to category ‘not free’ in its 2011 *Freedom in the World Report*.

On the other hand, government publications gained momentum through support from the government. These include *Addis Semen*, Amharic daily; *Ethiopian Herald*, English daily; *Yezareyitu Ethiopia*, Amharic weekly; *Berissa*, Oromiffa weekly; *Al Alem*, Arabic weekly; *Yekatit*, Amharic monthly; *Yekatit*, English monthly; *Zemen*, English monthly; *Merewa*, quarterly. These outlets are published under the wings of the centralised publisher Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA). The main objective of these government publications is to disseminate news, information and editorial material. For example, in *Zemen* (which means *Era*), the government reflects political, social and current issues including arguments concerning opposition politics and different national issues. EPA has formal political connections to the Parliament; the general manager of EPA is appointed directly by the executive through the Prime Minister. It is the responsibility of the general manager together with the press department head of EPA to hire editors-in-chief and deputy editors-in-chief of the various publications, while the editor-in-chief of each publication hires all other journalists in the respective institutions. In

addition to those centrally published outlets, regional states and many zonal administrations and even some districts publish their own newspapers and magazines with almost similar objectives and content to the central ones. Further, EPRDF member parties and other regional parties that work in combination with EPRDF have their own organs that are used to disseminate political ideologies.

6.7.2. Broadcast media

With regard to broadcast media, there were only two state-owned television stations until 2014: one run by the Educational Media Agency (EMA) established during the *Derg* for educational purpose, and the other was ETV, which was established during the imperial era, operating with limited broadcast hours, covering around half the country. In addition, radio has also been solely owned by the government, though using different languages including Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Somaligna, Afargna, English, Arabic and French. The Ethiopian Radio, which broadcasts in Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Afari, Agnuaak, Nuer, Somali and Tigrigna languages, is the major government news media. It also broadcasts using English, French and Arabic as external services. The state-owned Ethiopian Radio claims to cover 67% of the geographic area of the country, mostly by means of medium wave (AM). A nationwide survey found that 60% of the population had listened to radio and a majority regards radio as the most reliable and important source of information (Tadesse 2015:52).

Further, new channels have been launched by regional state media agencies like that of Tigray Mass Media Agency (TMMA), The SNNPR Government Radio and Television Agency (SNNPRGRTA), Addis Ababa City Administration Mass Media Agency (AMMA), Dire Dawa City Administration Mass Media Agency (DDMMA), Amhara Regional Mass Media Agency (ARMMA), Oromia Radio and Television Organization (ORTVO), Somali Mass Media Agency (SMMA), Harrari Mass Media Agency (HMMA) and Benshangul Gumuz Regional Government Mass Media Organization (BGRMMO). These regional media agencies have print outlets (newspapers and magazines) as well as television and radio (AM and FM) stations. Similarly, Gambela and Afar regional states have also broadcast in collaboration with other government and party media organisations. Nevertheless, regional television and radio stations are no different from each other either in format or content. The only difference is in the broadcasting language. The regional television stations in Ethiopia are mostly a replica of the central

Ethiopian Television (ETV) and their programmes are largely copied from the oldest broadcaster in the country with no or little modification. Undoubtedly, they can be referred to as branches of ETV, as no one sees any difference between ETV and the regional television stations. Furthermore, ETV has started to broadcast its programmes across three channels: ETV1, ETV2 and ETV3, catering to different regional languages (Meshesha 2014:83). This, according to Meshesha, is progress, at least in diversifying entertainment on television, but all three channels still propagate only the government agenda. ETV broadcasts free-to-air from terrestrial transmitters in 26 locations in different parts of the country.

All these channels serve under the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency which has been headed by a board appointed by the government. Specifically, the board is recommended by the minister of GCAO and approved by the Media Standing Committee of the House of Peoples Representatives which are 100% members of one party. The chairperson of the board is always the minister of GCAO, to whom the board is accountable, (African Media Barometer 2011:41); most members of the top management are members of the ruling party, and all staff members are government employees. Further, although the constitution in Article 29(4) says that all media under state control should have the “capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinion”, such diversity is not reflected in the programmes, which shows a lack of editorial independence. This implies that the state broadcaster is neither independent, open nor transparent and accountable, but simply a propaganda instrument for the government and the dominant party in the government.

Though the government maintains a complete monopoly on television broadcasting, it recently licensed a handful of private radio stations. The largest of these are Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC), based in Addis Ababa and Dimtsi Weyane Tigray (DWET), based in Mekele. Both operate two radio stations: Fana FM and Fana Radio, and DWET FM and DWET Radio. Others include Sheger FM, Zami FM, Bisrat FM, Abay FM 102.9, Afro FM and Multi Choice Ethiopia. While the last two broadcast in English targeting an international sector of society, a few of these stations are quite popular with the audience and appear to have met a demand in the media market.

However, all these media have been criticised for being limited in scope, mostly focused on entertainment and advertisements and owned by government affiliated individuals or the ruling party. For instance, DWET and Fana Broadcasting Corporation have historical associations with the TPLF and EPRDF, respectively, but are today legally registered as companies. They were established by members of the party and clearly accomplish the agendas and interests of the government and ruling party. Still others steer well away from critical news reporting that might upset the government. Only Fana FM has 12 branches throughout the country and works with its sister company Walta Information Center, the second News Agency to be established in the history of broadcasting in Ethiopia after the Ethiopia News Agency (ENA). Radio Fana broadcasts more than 18 hours per day in four different languages: Amharic, Oromo, Somali and Afar, in rotating time slots. It also has got license in 2013 to be the first private television broadcaster in the country. However, according to Tadesse (2015:69), Radio Fana existed “outside of a publicly known and consistent regulatory framework”. Even though the 2007 broadcasting proclamation Clause 23(3) prohibits politically-affiliated organisations to possess a broadcasting license, it became the first station to receive a commercial license. Even the policy line towards Radio Fana and Walta has been favourable ever since their inception in 1994, owing to their pro-government stance. In contrast, the government has frequently tried to jam the signal of the Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) which is broadcast from Netherlands and USA by Ethiopian diaspora, as it is very critical of the Ethiopian government.

In addition to the educational broadcast stations, the government established and licensed different community radio stations in different parts of the country. These community radio stations serve the interests of the government in specific localities.

All these media organisations are structured to serve the government, thereby, strengthening its position by presenting propaganda instead of information based on objectivity and verification. Because the media institutions in the country are not independent, they are not ready to serve the interest of the general public. Bezabih (2000:132) criticises the media, arguing that they were mostly politically motivated and they took extreme positions in criticising each other saying: “the state-owned media became simply the propaganda machinery of the new government, launching violent verbal attacks on those political or ethnic groups that are ill favoured by the

ruling circle”. Even the private media have been accused of simply taking an anti-government position, and as explained above, the private media are owned or sponsored by opposition groups or some other vested interests (Ministry of Information 2012). Consequently, verbal attacks (Bezabih 2000) have not been uncommon, and often go as far as libel or slander, which is against media law (Pember 2003). The principle of journalism and the Ethiopian Constitution (1995:89) both ensure that the media should be free from political bias since, and that the media should “entertain diverse opinions” instead of indoctrinating one view. The media, according to Street (2001:16), therefore, must be free from “providing sustenance for one set of interests while undermining an alternative”.

One question usually raised is why the government more strongly controlled broadcast media compared print media. Different arguments have been raised from different experiences around the world. Wagman (1991:128) indicated that controlling broadcast media has even existed in the USA and other countries, where freedom of expression and the media is highly respected, but the reasons for control differ from country to country. The two reasons that make broadcast media more controlled are scarcity and economic efficiency. Electronic spectrum is physically limited so there are only a finite number of broadcast frequencies available, and two outlets cannot broadcast on the same frequency at the same time. Because of this scarcity and the need to impose order, economic efficiency demands that the government in the name of all citizens parcel out the frequencies to private citizens (broadcasters) who act as the public trustees of a frequency (Overback 2006:427; Wagman 1991:128). According to Kiflu (2015:40), broadcasting is internationally controlled for: profitability, as a source of information, for the sake of national security, public health, and due to the limited capability of the resource. Hayden (2002:8) argues that governments have got to control the media in the perceived interests of national unity and development. As Hayden further notes, the legacy of the efforts to control the media in the interest of national development continued to influence the media situation in Africa.

On the other side, Article 19, insists that:

In the other dimension, Broadcasting is by far the most important source of information as well as of entertainment, for most people in countries around the world. High level of illiteracy along with difficulty of distributing newspapers mean that broadcasting is the only media which is accessible for many people. For the poor, newspapers may be prohibitively expensive, and some people simply find it easier and more enjoyable to watch or listen to the news than to read (Article19 2003:1).

So what should be the case in Ethiopia? According to Kiflu (2012), control in Ethiopia is not as a result of spectrum scarcity or economic scarcity, but it is seen from the point view of audience coverage, public safety and national security. The intention is to address the whole population throughout the country, in order to ensure the safety of the general public and the nation. These are not the main reasons, at least for me, for the monopolistic control of broadcasting in Ethiopia. The control of broadcasting for me is highly political. About 85-90% of the Ethiopia population is rural and similarly the large population is illiterate and extremely poor. So accessing the rural population through print media or the web is limited for many reasons including infrastructure inaccessibility for distribution of outlets, economic incapability for rural communities to buy publications, intimidation and harassment of distributors and vendors of media outlets, etc. Consequently, the main source of information and entertainment in rural areas is the radio. Arguably, controlling the broadcasting spectrum and keeping it mainly under government control results in a threefold advantage for the government: first, it helps the government to guard the rural population from views, opinions and ideologies different from those of the ruling party; second, it provides the party and the government absolute advantage to indoctrinate this illiterate population and use it as a political instrument; third, it lets the ruling party, the government and the pro-government groups exploit the economic benefit raised from the media. And this is another means of consolidating power by limiting the right to freedom of expression.

Concerning government media, though the transitional government and ruling party heralded that the government media would be more open and free to the general public to enable supporters and the opposition to debate freely their respective positions. Instead, it has kept its control and supervision, evacuated most of the journalists, broadcasters and other employees who had allegedly some kind of connection with the *Derg* regime. Like all groups who take up power by force, it redesigned the institutional structure and appointed its own political agents to run the media organisations. The new government assigned journalists who unfortunately had little or no exposure to media management or operations. Consequently, they underwent crash courses conducted often by media experts from abroad with little or no Ethiopian experience.

The government-dominated public media have plunged into pursuing the same path left behind by the *Derg*. The coverage of the media, especially that of newspapers, simply followed the

traditional practice of glorifying the *virtues* of the new government while engaging in an orchestrated campaign of condemning the past regime. This, at times highly excessive, exaggerated and indiscriminate campaign against the former regimes, by the public media has, contrary to the expected outcome, resulted in propaganda overkill and undermining the legitimacy and the seriousness of the new government.

6.8 Suppression of media and communication

Generally, the rise of private media has passed through oscillations. Among the privately owned newspapers, some came in and out with elections while others continue working. According to Meshesha (2014:83), the rise and fall of the private media could be the result of a less matured state and the political intolerance of the government. Indeed, though the political discourse of this government has encircled around the notion that the media becomes the promoter of democracy, media freedom was put in the constitutional and legal frames, specifically Article 19 in the 1995 constitution and Press Proclamation No. 34/1992, where every person has the right to seek, obtain and impart information, and which gives room for the right to freedom of the press, the media cannot get its full independence.

Some researchers, such as Meshesha (2014) and Metaferia (2003), indicate different and multiple factors that challenge the development and freedom of media in Ethiopia. Some claim that the background factor is the media history of the country that saw the government as the only owners of the media. The Ethiopian media culture probably developed from the experiences of *Azmaries*, the traditional enchanters or singers, who praised the actions of winner lords and kings in the Ethiopian war history. “I think the culture of Azmari and patron relations in Ethiopia seem to have affected the media culture to a greater extent where the media seems to be the sympathizer of only one party” (Meshesha 2014:87). Similarly, the media has largely become loyal supporters and fans of those who own them instead of serving the public interest; they favour the class that has power, in much the same way as the *Azmaries*. According to Gebremariam (2002), the government in Ethiopia controls the media for fear of inciting rebellion and losing power. Metaferia (2003:4) also believes that governments control media because there is no confidence about the media’s accountability. In addition to these to these factors, the development of the print media, particularly private print media, have been challenged by limited distribution of newspapers coupled with the lack of access to infrastructure and financial

inability; and low rates of literacy, particularly in the rural areas. It should be noted that the adult literacy rate is estimated at 36% (50% adult Male and 77%), with the majority of females reported to be illiterate (Tadesse 2015:29). There is also limited readership, professional incompetence and polarisation of news. Weaver, Buddenbaum, and Fair (1985:113) assert that “the stronger the media are economically, the less likely the government is to control these media”. African Media Barometer (2010:7) identifies the poor culture of reading among the general public, illiteracy, the cost of newsprint, distribution problems, high copy prices and crippling taxation as factors for the low distribution of print outlets.

To conclude the discussion on media practice, one can certainly say that the current government has introduced the private media and this is a story worth telling. Nevertheless, the government has not granted complete freedom of press to the media and has kept its eyes on the practice of media along with intimidation, strong bail claims and consistent imprisonment. In addition, there is great hostility and acute polarisation between government and private media. The government has also not granted licenses for private television and radio agencies. Further, the lack of professional knowledge about journalistic practice and ethics of media have affected the development of the media to a great extent. Even the government media is not critical about government policy and agenda. Instead, it is “focused on image building and moulding the opinion of the public rather than reflecting the opinion of the public” (African Media Barometer 2011:45). The media discourse and practice could not be separated from political influence as has been practiced since imperial regimes which, in turn, has emanated, directly or indirectly, from the social, cultural and economic foundations of the country.

6.9 Media and communication repression strategies and instruments

The government has used a variety of techniques to repress the media. These techniques include threats and prosecutions of media professionals, regulatory instruments, bureaucratic hurdles and others. These techniques also target individual journalists, publishers, distributors and even individuals who have relations with the media. Below, I will try to address some common techniques and targets of this repression.

6.9.1 Prosecutions of media professionals, sources and publishers

In this strategy the government, ruling party cadres, government officials and security officials, target individual journalists and warn or force them to either self-censor or face a distinct pattern of threats and intimidation. The aim of this intimidation is to pressure journalists to promote the EPRDF's programmes and priorities, and to refrain from undertaking journalism seen as contrary to those priorities. This pressure restricts journalists from critical analysis of political events, issues, government initiatives and policies. Human Rights Watch (2015) identified different repression strategies or techniques that could be grouped into five categories.

The first most common technique includes harassment, physical attacks and arbitrary detentions by ruling party cadres, government officials and security officials. These threats usually target owners and editors of publications that are regularly critical of government policy or journalists who are known to write critical articles. Those journalists receive phone calls or text messages from unidentified sources and are threatened to stop working against the government, and promised a better life if they would work in favour of the government. Additionally, security officials confront journalists on the streets. Further, police and GCAO may summon individuals to investigation offices, particularly the Federal Crime Investigation Police Center, Maekelawi and/or the Government Communications Affairs Office for questioning or interrogation. Journalists are then sometimes detained for short periods, mistreated and beaten, threatened to jail for terrorism acts and even threatened to death along with their families.

Many journalists told Human Rights Watch that these types of threats are common. They said that officials made repeated references to the anti-terrorism law and the treatment meted out to other journalists, particularly imprisoned journalists Reeyot Alemu and Eskinder Nega, to instil fear. Experienced journalists with private publications reported receiving dozens, sometimes hundreds, of these threats via telephone, text message, email, and in person (Human Rights Watch 2015:16).

Even before charges were filed, security officials have threatened and harassed individuals and created serious due process concerns including lengthy pre-charge detentions and access to legal counsels.

The second technique is criminal charges against media professionals. Accordingly, most journalists have been charged with crimes of defamation and acts of terrorism based on the

Criminal Code and Anti-Terrorism proclamation, particularly, Articles 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the Anti-Terrorism Law and Articles 248(b) and 252(1)(a) of the Criminal Code. According to Human Rights Watch (2015:20), 38 journalists were charged based on those laws and many sentenced to 14 years to life in prison. There are a number of recent instances for such techniques, for example, Reeyot Alemu Gobebo, a regular contributor to the weekly newspaper *Feteh*, was arrested in June 2011 and sentenced to 14 years in prison in January 2012; Woubshet Taye Abebe, editor of *Awramba Times*, is currently serving a 14-year sentence; Elias Kifle, editor of Washington DC-based *Ethiopian Review*, was sentenced to life in prison in absentia. Eskinder Nega Fenta was sentenced to 18 years in prison, in July 2012, after nine months' detention, for conspiracy to commit terrorist acts, as well as participation in a terrorist organisation and treason. Indeed, he had repeatedly faced government hostility for his journalism and blogging, with eight arrests and detentions since 1993. Eskinder and his wife, Serkalem Fasil, were imprisoned for 17 months following the 2005 elections. Mesfin Negash and Abiy Teklemariam of *Addis Neger* newspaper were sentenced to eight years in prison; Abebe Belew of *Addis Dimts*, an Internet-based radio station, and Abebe Gelaw of Addis Voice Radio, each received 15 years in prison; and Fasil Yenealem of Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) received a life sentence, though all the sentences were in absentia. Yusuf Getachew of Muslimoch *Guday*, which literally means *Muslim Affairs*, was arrested and charged, in July 2012, with incitement of Islamic extremism under the anti-terrorism law because he had written articles about the Muslim protests and the government interference in religious affairs.

Solomon Kebede, a managing editor, was also arrested and charged in January 2013 under the anti-terrorism legislation. Consequently, the publication ceased operations as other staff members fled the country. Further, the Zone-9 bloggers, Atnaf Berahane, Befekadu Hailu, Abel Wabela, Mahlet Fantahun, Natnael Feleke, and Zelalem Kibret, Soliana Shimeles seventh blogger, were charged in absentia and three journalists, Tesfalem Waldyes, Edom Kassaye, and Asmamaw Hailegiorgis, taken into custody in April 2014 and charged under the Criminal Code and Anti-Terrorism Law in July 2014. Above all, the Ministry of Justice officially released a statement in October 2014 that six magazines and newspapers: *Lomi*, *Enku*, *Fact*, *Jano*, *Addis Guday*, and *Afro Times*, had been charged with “encouraging terrorism, endangering national security, repeated incitement of ethnic and religious hate, and smears against officials and public

institutions”. Accordingly, *Guday* publisher Endalkachew Tesfaye, *Lomi* publisher Gizaw Taye, and *Fact* publisher Fatuma Nuriya were sentenced in absentia to between three and four years each (Reporters Without Borders 2014).

The fourth technique is intimidating sources, interviewees, and informants by security officials. Accordingly, many journalists were complaining about the difficulty of finding witnesses to events and experts who are willing to be interviewed from inside Ethiopia and even from the diaspora. This challenge is more critical for foreign-based media such as the Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT), and Oromia Media Network. Human Rights Watch (2015:24-28) documented at least 10 cases of individuals that have been intimidated by government security officials for speaking to VOA, ESAT, OMN, or other domestic and foreign stations. Some have been interrogated and given serious warnings, others have been tortured and forced to retract what they said and dispatch a completely changed story, still some others have been identified as terrorists and detained for weeks or months, and the rest have been forced to flee their country. The document indicated that if the informants are government employees, they lost their positions. Exiled Ethiopians and those in the diaspora and their family members inside Ethiopia were targeted by security officials outside of Ethiopia once they appeared on ESAT or VOA. Consequently, those media were forced to use various strategies to protect the identities of individuals including using “pseudonyms, altering voices, and omission of certain details” (Human Rights Watch 2015:28). Of course, threats, harassment and intimidation to media informants came not only from government officials but also from opposition groups, particularly those groups in the diaspora. Journalists and informants who are not critical of the government have been described as the mouthpieces of the government, and there have been incidents of threats via telephone, email and in person from unknown individuals.

The fifth method extends to the intimidation of private publishers. Once a private magazine is known as a critic of the government, it then becomes very difficult to find anyone to print magazines. Printers are either pressured from government not to print or just scared of being associated with content that is not liked by the government. Indeed, private printers usually face government crackdowns, directly or indirectly.

Printers who refuse to yield to government pressure have faced higher than usual taxes on imported paper, regulatory challenges, occasional closures, and loss of lucrative contracts with government sponsored publications. Some printers have closed doors completely because of these challenges, unable to compete financially with the larger state-run printer (Human Rights Watch 2015:34).

A good instance for this type of intimidation is the case *Lomi*, *Addis Guday*, and *Fact* magazines. While these magazines were charged under the Criminal Code in August 2014, their printers stopped printing their publications. One well-known private printer who published one of the five magazines listed above was intimidated by individuals with plainclothes and then charged in the same year.

In relation to these methods, documentation from Human Rights Watch (2005:54) indicated that journalists have been pressured by security officials to become informants against other journalists. Some journalists have been pressured to provide information on their colleagues' background, sources, their whereabouts, and etcetera. "This approach has resulted in journalists not trusting each other, being suspicious of colleagues" (Human Rights Watch 2005:54). Further, the government has hammered journalists using different training to that prepared by government. Using trainings, the government tried to brainwash journalists to work with government and promote only the government successes, and mostly unbalanced reports. However, private journalists complain that most unbalanced reports emanate from inaccessibility of government officials. Even those that are accessible, in many cases, the higher government officials do not want to release information to the private media, particularly the critical ones, and junior government officials do not speak to the media for fear of saying something politically damaging and being disciplined, or fear that the media may twist what they say. Above all, the government has seriously protected, in one way or another, the establishment of independent journalists' associations and has cracked down on those which had been established, including Ethiopian Free Press Journalists' Association (EFJA). According to Human Rights Watch (2015: 52), the EFJA had been "regularly subject to harassments, threats, and arrest before its leaders fled the country in 2005".

6.9.2 Politico-economic pressures

The government commonly uses direct and indirect regulatory instruments to stifle media. These repressive instruments include the politicisation of the regulatory system, rewarding political patronage, and creating a restrictive financial environment.

The first and most common instrument is politicisation of regulatory bodies. As previously indicated, every activity in Ethiopia is interpreted and screened through the mirror of politics. Accordingly, the government intentionally polices all media and used the organs of the media to stifle new private publications. This politicisation process seemed to be systematic. The official regulatory organ in the country is the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority which is seemingly independent. However, according to the Broadcasting Service Proclamation, it is ultimately responsible to the Government Communications Affairs Office. The GCAO, in turn, is accountable to the prime minister, making the EBA far from an independent regulatory authority. Further, it is common knowledge that leaders of the EBA are assigned, directly or indirectly, by political leaders and those leaders are required to be members of the ruling party. Therefore, the process of stifling the private media usually starts at the licensing process. Delays in licensing and denials in license renewals are common. Those who need licenses are usually questioned about their individual and family background, social and political relations, financial sources, the political orientation of key employees, etc. This kind of questioning goes far beyond the mandate of the organisation as outlined in the Broadcasting Service Proclamation and the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation. In addition, the process of publication is controlled by the government, which owns the only printing house able to print newspapers, Berhanena Selam Printing Enterprise (BSPE). As such, publications are printed at the mercy of this government run organisation. Indeed, it is evident that the content of the outlets has been censored and printing has been purposefully delayed or denied (Human Rights Watch 2015:30).

The second regulatory method is rewarding political patronage to journalists and media related individuals in the government bureaucracy. The first step in this process is forcing, directly or indirectly, those journalists to be the members of the ruling party. Journalists who refuse to join the party face a number of problems, including being denied promotion in wages and office positions, strict follow ups and demoralisations in their daily activities, being labelled as

inefficient, anti-development, opposition members and terrorists, and dismissals. If one becomes a member of the ruling party they are given improved positions and salaries even if they are not qualified for a position, they are also provided with additional incentives such as free education and training opportunities, pocket money in the form of per diem, invitations to more networking opportunities, relative work freedom, etc. This pressure is common even among university students, with potential members being told they would receive good jobs in newspapers or television stations after they completed their studies. It is clear that party membership or at least party support have become a golden card to get into any feast related to the government. Even printing houses that cut relations from private and critical publications are rewarded. For example, in several other cases, lucrative contracts for school examinations or school books have been used as an incentive, and private publications that have limited critical coverage have been offered lucrative government advertising (Human Rights Watch 2015:35-36). Along with such stick and carrot strategies, almost all government media employees have become members of the party and are forced to propagate the ideologies of the ruling party while blackening the opposition ideas and parties.

The third method of regulation is a restricting financial environment. This method targets printers, distributors and advertisers. The restrictions include a rise in the price of publication inputs, stifling printers by blocking contracts from the government, blocking advertisers and cutting off advertising revenues from publishers, blocking distribution channels of media outlets and stopping selling revenues, levying heavy taxes, and burdening license and re-license payments. First, the price rise is achieved by direct and indirect control of government over various parts of the market supply chains of media instruments, including papers and printing machines, and printing costs. Though the magazine printing machine is relatively cheaper and private individuals could import one, purposeful or bureaucratic capacity may create delays in Ethiopian customs.

The second strategy for restricting the financial environment, are the financial threats by the government, which controls key sectors of the economy. The survival of magazine printers has been mainly suspended on government contracts. Hence, one could not get those if he/she publishes private and critical publications. Third, the government has blocked selling revenues

by stifling distribution channels of media outlets through threatening distributors, buyers and advertisers. Publications that are critical of the government have been identified and labelled as anti-development, anti-peace and terrorism agents. This labelling usually creates fear in distributors, buyers and advertisers of being associated with the publications and being part of such accusations. Fourth, as the majority of advertising revenues in the media comes from government agencies and parastatal companies, advertisement revenues from those entities have been sent primarily to state-affiliated publications. The extent of private businesses able to offer advertising revenues to private publications became very limited. Even many smaller, private advertisers chose to avoid aligning themselves with private publications in order to avoid government reprisal. Fifth, burdening taxes, licensing and yearly re-licensing payments severely paralysed the financial stature of private publishers, printers and journalists (Human Rights Watch 2015:32-33).

6.9.3 Suppressing access to information

The fourth technique the government has used to repress media is suppressing access to information. This technique violates a wide range of rights from individual to public and includes four methods: restricting the movement of journalists, censorship and self-censorship, jamming of radio and television broadcasts, and restricting online content.

The first method, restricting movement of journalists, is a common practice in the history of this government. The private Ethiopian media is mostly concentrated in the capital and as such, events outside of the capital are mainly reported by travelling journalists. But, authorities regularly limit the ability of both domestic and foreign journalists to access sensitive areas and investigate important events outside of the capital. Even events in the capital are usually not allowed to be reported on by journalists, primarily by private and foreign journalists, if the issue is perceived by the administration to be sensitive. Security forces usually turn back journalists at roadblocks when they are attempting to cover events. A recent instance of this was denial of access to report the 2014 protests in Oromia. Those journalists that were able to access the areas faced numerous problems, including harassment and threats from security personnel, detention, etc. Certain parts of the country where there are allegations of grave human rights violations, including Ogaden and Gambela, Lower Omo Valley, are inaccessible to independent journalists.

Increasingly, journalists are being denied entry visas, particularly for visits related to human rights issues or development projects.

For example, two Swedish journalists, Martin Schibbye and Johan Person, were detained by the government after being found in Ogaden without government permission in July 2011 and sentenced to 11 years in prison (Pen-International 2012). Even areas around large-scale development projects, such as the Grand Renaissance Dam in Benishangul-Gumuz, are protected unless part of a state-organised visit. In other remote areas, journalists are required to register with local government officials who either permit the journalist to undertake their activities, deny them permission, or require them to take a government minder or translator with them for the duration of their visit. The government usually raises security issues to access journalists freely (Human Rights Watch 2015:37-38).

Recently, access to information is not limited to the journalists but also extended to the public. Following the emergence of diaspora sponsored television and radio stations such as Ethiopian Satellite Radio and Television (ESAT) and Oromia Media Network (OMN), the limitations have ranged to audiences. The government seemed afraid that these media have been spreading news about the defects of the government and the grievance and protests of people in different parts of the country. To the extent that whoever was watching these media may have been considered as an enemy by the government and been harassed, intimidated and arrested. Government security forces even extended their crackdown to dismantle satellite dishes off the roofs of private homes.

The second method is censorship. Although the constitution and other laws of the country including the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation no.590/2008 Article 4(1) guarantees the absence of censorship, to be a journalist in Ethiopia requires considerable self-censorship, muting any criticism of government or face ongoing harassment. Journalists working for state-run publications face a direct censorship and know that their stories must reflect government rhetoric and promote the government narrative about how everything the government is doing is good. Editors-in-chief will personally ensure that all articles covering sensitive subjects do not contain any perceived anti-government content. Indeed, the editors of state run outlets are usually cadres, members or supporters of the ruling party and their main duty

is to censor content of the outlets. Few of them have a journalism background or university education but their main concern is ensuring that content follows the government line. Any story that makes the government look bad is automatically cancelled, and even the journalist or media practitioner that had intended to report that story would be black listed and likely to lose benefits which include “higher wages, access to government press conferences, access to training opportunities, and the ability to work without harassment from authorities” (Human Rights Watch 2015:45). Cases have been documented of government journalists who have gone missing or jailed for reports that had not been censored by Government Communication Affairs Office (Human Rights Watch 2015:45). Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation no. 590/2008 holds editors-in-chief, either in public or private media, responsible for content so that in a way they are protecting themselves from problems with government.

The third method in repressing access to information is jamming radio and television broadcasts and blocking websites. It is evident that the government completely controls radio and television broadcasts that emanate from within the country. But stations that broadcast either on satellite or from transmitters outside of the country including Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, ESAT and OMN have become challenges for the government. However, the government has jammed these broadcasts and blocked many critical websites deliberately preventing people inside Ethiopia from access. Daily Star (2012) indicated the jamming of Arabsat from Ethiopia. BBC Media Centre (2014) and Space News (2014) blamed Ethiopian jamming. The US Department of State (2013) criticised the jamming of VOA, stating that the jamming contradicts the government’s frequent public commitments to freedom of the press. Indeed, late prime minister Melese Zenawi admitted that they had been trying to beef up the government’s capacity to deal with jamming, comparing the VOA broadcasts to the Rwandan radio station Mille Collines which was implicated in inciting genocide in 1994, and calling VOA broadcasts “destabilizing propaganda” (BBC News 2010). To avoid such restriction, to ensure to access to information unavailable through domestic media, and to express themselves without having to self-censor in order to remain free from possible government reprisals, many Ethiopians have turned to online news sites and blogs. But, the government has regularly blocked media websites that contain critical content, particularly popular diaspora media websites including Ethiomedia, Goolgule, Ethiopian Review, and The Habesha, Nazret. The government has even randomly blocked international

media organisations like Al-Jazeera’s website and YouTube channel showing violence in the country, particularly during the Muslim protests in Ethiopia (Al-Jazeera 2012; Human Rights Watch 2015:50).

6.10 Media regulatory bodies

As stated above, government controls media using legal, physical, bureaucratic and economic instruments such as licensing, intimidating, convicting, banning, pricing and other methods. Accordingly, it established institutions that openly or legally control media activities in addition to the hidden institutions and organs that control media indirectly. The two known institutions are the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency (EBA) and Government Communication Affairs office (GCAO). The government has prepared a draft proposal to establish a third regulatory body, the Press Council, but it had not yet been promulgated in 2014.

6.10.1 The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority

EBA was established as an “autonomous Federal Administrative Agency” according to Broadcasting Proclamation No.178/1999 Article 4 (Negarit Gazeta 1999). The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority is accountable to the government through its board. Article 9(2) of the Broadcasting Service Proclamation states that members of the board shall be appointed by the government on the recommendation of the Minister of Information, renamed the Government Communications Affairs Office (GCAO) in 2008. The number of board members is also determined by the government and it is accountable to the information ministry (Negarit Gazeta 2007).

The EBA has a mandate to regulate the broadcasting and the press industry. More responsibilities and mandates have been given to the EBA based on the revised Broadcasting Service Proclamation No.533/2007. The major activities that have to be done include inspecting the media, particularly radio, to ensure they are doing their jobs in accordance with the country’s laws; arranging and providing media training and to support the media arrange training; and making decisions on complaints about programmes on the radio stations. For the purpose of radio inspection, the authority has imported and installed modern monitoring receivers which are found in very few African countries. Therefore, every broadcasting transmission in the country

is listened to and recorded for six months by the EBA if any complaints arise. Its inspections include recourses, technical, procedural, ethical and content issues (Tadesse 2015: 141). The infringing effects of these regulatory bodies on freedom of expression are indicted in detail below in sections 6.10.2 and 6.10.3.

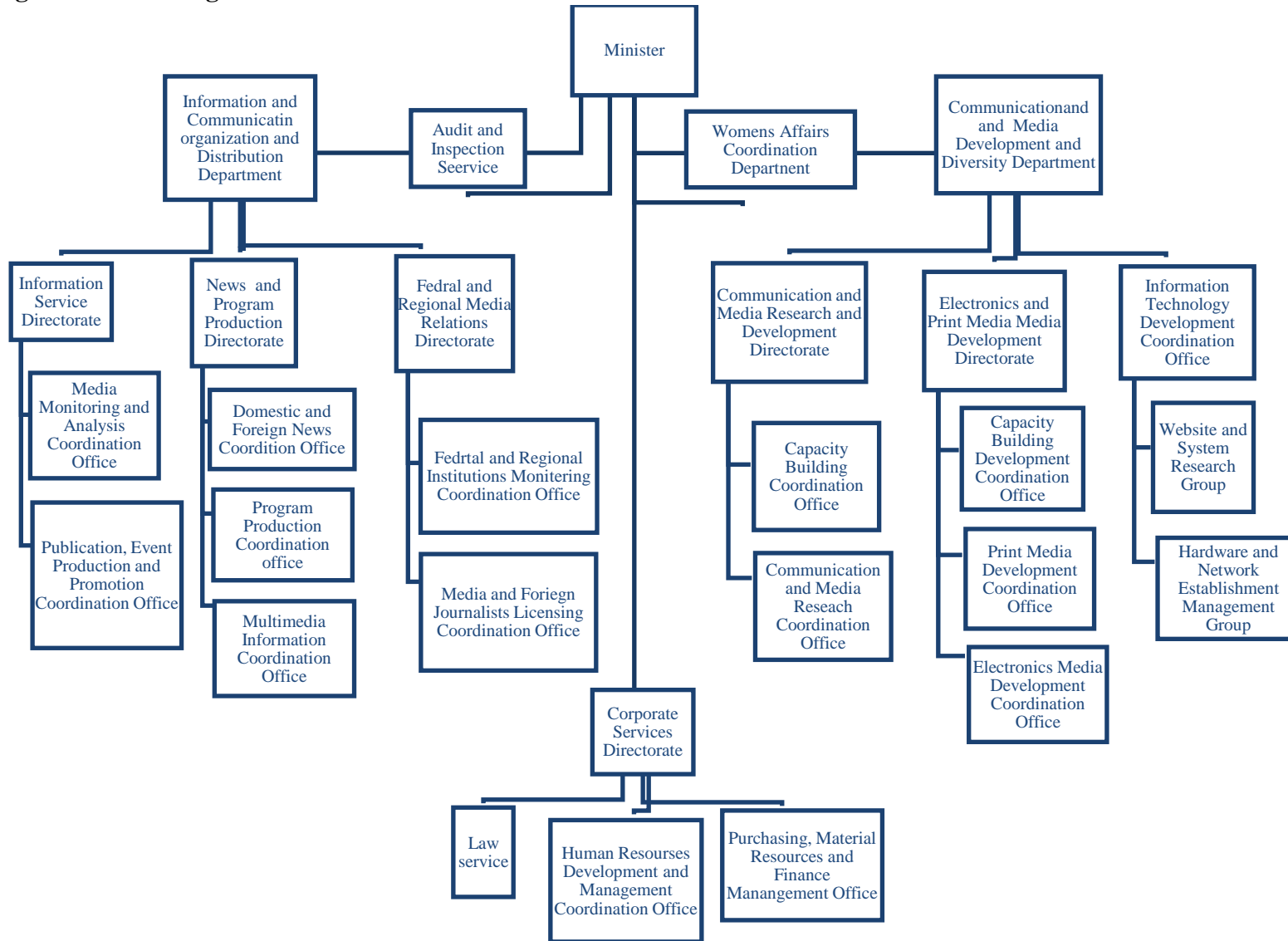
6.10.2. Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO)

The Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) was first established by Italians as the Ufficio Stampa e Propaganda, before they founded the Newspaper and Information Office, and put it under control of the Italian political office Ufficio Politico, to propagate their ideas in Ethiopia. After the defeat of Italy in 1941, the imperial regime established a press and information department under the Ministry of Pen. Later, in 1960s, after the coup attempt against the imperial regime, the emperor established the Yegazetana Mastawekia Mesria Bet, which literally means Newspaper and Information Office, under the Yestifet Minister, which literally means Ministry of Pen for propaganda purposes. It was established again as the Ministry of Information in 1964. This structure was intact until the overthrow of the imperial rule by the *Derg* in 1974.

The provisional military government reorganised the institution as the Ministry of Information and National Guidance in 1975. The Ministry was entrusted with powers and duties to head the Ethiopian News Agency, the Voice of Revolutionary Ethiopia, the Press Department, the Public Relations Department, the Agency for Distribution of Journals and Magazines, and the Censorship Service. This structure was effective until the military government was ousted by the armed struggle led by the EPRDF in May 1991. The Ministry of Information of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was reorganised as the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1995. The Ministry of Information was finally reorganised by Proclamation No. 256/2001, which separated it from the Ministry of Information and Culture that became the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. Finally, the organisation changed its structure and was renamed the Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) in 2009. The Government claims that the ministry plays a leading role in the government information and communication system; ensures the smooth flow of information between the government and the public; facilitates the process of building a society enriched with information; and the promotes the creation of equal opportunities for historically disadvantaged

and marginalised people and sections of the community that need special support in accessing government information (Taddese 2015:141). To accomplish such duty, the office reorganised, stretched and strengthened its structure from the centre to the Keble level, the lowest level of administration in Ethiopian bureaucracy. In addition, all government organisations and institutions are required to have a communication department responsible to the GCAO. These departments perform any duties that the GCAO do, including surveying any communication activity, and managing and controlling any information, ideas and opinions. The office organised its internal structure in such a way so as to control all media, print, broadcast and web, and information and communication systems. One can see clearly how the structure of the GCAO has been planned to propagate only the ideas of ruling party and the government, and control all information, ideas and opinions against them.

Figure 6.1: The Organisational Structure of Government Communication Affairs Office



Despite such highly repressive laws, bureaucratic structures, intimidation, harassment, torture, imprisonment, etc., the government has argued that there have been strong constitutional provisions with regards to freedom of the press. Senior government officials, including the prime minister, often reference the constitutional provisions, stressing the rule of law and reiterating allegations of involvement of journalists with terrorist networks. There is rarely an acknowledgement of restrictions on the press freedoms.

For example, the former head of the GCAO, Bereket Simon, stated: “But to start with the facts, you know, in the first place no practicing journalists in this manner had been summoned or charged because of his journalistic practices. None of them were sued or charged because of journalistic practices” (Benno Muchler 2012). Another former head of the GCAO, Redwan Hussein, once said: “They have not been accused for their writings ... it is because they were guilty of working with terrorists” (Hindu Times 2013). Following the charging of nine bloggers in July 2014, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn stated: “Anyone who is seen and acting within this terrorist network ... will be eligible for the course of law.... When you put yourself into this network and you try to become a blogger, don’t think that you are going to escape from the Ethiopian government” (AFP 2014).

Even though different international organisations and nations including the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, CPJ, etc., criticise the government for using the Anti-Terrorism Law for repression of freedom of expression (Bloomberg News 2012, Human Rights Watch 2015), the government regularly defends the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and its application against journalists. In a meeting with the Committee to Protect Journalists in 2012, Bereket Simon reportedly said: “It’s not an instrument for censorship, for stifling dissent, or for attacking press freedom; it is an instrument that ultimately shall be used to protect Ethiopians enjoying their constitutional rights” (Awramba Times 2012).

6.11 The emergence of new technologies and freedom of expression

The rapid growth of information and communications technology has provided new opportunities for individuals to communicate in a manner and at a pace like never before. In

recent decades, it is clear that the mobile phone and internet technologies have revolutionised the world. The internet has become an indispensable communications medium for many people of the world. These technologies are used for education, work, entertainment and personal communication, and have gone through tremendous changes since they became available to the general public. Likewise, web pages, blogs, mail services and other technologies have given people around the world the ability to express themselves to a mass audience. The low barriers to entry have also provided a more robust marketplace of ideas than other communications media. Generally, information has a better chance of accessing individuals, and individuals have got more freedom to express themselves than ever. Similarly, the emergence of internet and mobile phones seemed to add a chance to access information and some freedom in expressing ideas and feelings in Ethiopia.

However, many Ethiopians have not been able to enjoy these opportunities. Instead, information and communications technology is being used as yet another method through which the government seeks to exercise complete control over the population, stifling the rights to freedom of expression and association, eroding privacy, and limiting access to information. At the beginning of the technology in the country, the government of Ethiopia remained largely indifferent, perhaps as a result of a lack of a clear understanding of how technology could be used to serve the state's interests. Later, however, it became fearful that the new media could be turned against the government and simply prevented other actors from entering the market.

Further, the government has determined to keep telecommunications under a state monopoly. No private Internet Service Provider (ISP) has been licensed and the cost of connectivity kept out of the reach of the vast majority of Ethiopians (Human Rights Watch 2014:1-2). Though the technology has started to emerge through the influence of one or another factor, the pace has been slower to take off in Ethiopia than in many other developing countries. Mobile network coverage remains restricted to the main towns and their immediate surroundings. But, in rural areas, where about 85% of the populations live, few people own a mobile handset or are able to receive a network signal (Robert 2011:62). Of course, the state telecoms company Ethio-Telecom, that maintains a monopoly of all internet, mobile and fixed line telephone services, said in September 2011 that it had 10.5 million mobile subscribers from an estimated 83 million

people, which would mean a mobile penetration rate of just 13%. Whatever the true figures, Ethiopia is still far behind her neighbouring countries. For instance, the mobile penetration rate in Kenya had risen to 63% and Kenya had four private sector telecom operators by the end of 2010. In 2010, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) ranked Ethiopia 154 out of 159 countries surveyed in terms of access to information and communication technology (ICT). Ethio-Telecom said that in June 2011 it was operating 854,000 landlines - roughly one line per 100 people in the country and indicated a 46% increase in subscriber numbers during the 12 months to June 2011. A massive increase in mobile phone subscriptions accounted for most of this growth. However, the monopoly has significantly disadvantaged the customers. Experiences show that competition between different mobile operators could drive subscriber numbers and network coverage up and call charges down. But, the Ethiopian government has thus far not announced any plans to liberalise the telecommunications sector (Robert 2011:62-65).

In addition to telephony, internet usage in Ethiopia is very low and restricted to the main towns. The ITU estimated that in 2010, less than 1% of Ethiopia's population had access to the internet. Freedom House (2013) indicated that the penetration of the internet in Ethiopia is particularly low, that only 1.5% of Ethiopian citizens had access to the internet in 2012. However, the popularity of the internet and social networking is growing fast.

While development may lag, government oversight of the telecoms networks is seriously strong. Purchasers of new mobile phone SIM cards are required to show proof of identity and register the corresponding phone line in their own name. Cyber cafes also keep a register of their customers. Above all, the most challenging circumstance is the government's routine monitoring of telephone calls and email traffic. It is also clear that websites hosted abroad that are linked to opposition groups within Ethiopia or which are critical of the government have been blocked by the authorities. It was also official practice that the government has blocked the SMS text messaging service a number of times. One instance is after 2005 election, when the government argued it has been misused by the political opposition during the hotly contested elections that year. However, the SMS messaging remained suspended for two years. It was only restored in 2007. Even organisations seeking to use software-based programs to distribute bulk SMS

messages to large groups of people, such as Frontline SMS may be required to obtain prior authorisation for such activities from the government (Robert 2011:63).

6.12 Conclusion: The apex of ethnocentrism: partisan atrocity and the demise of freedom of expression

The founding basis of the 1991-2014 government is ethnicity and partisan democracy. The nation has been divided into ethnic lines and society has been labelled as *kith* and *enemies*. Consequently, any political, economic and social benefits have been provided to individuals, groups and societies reflecting this mirror. Those who are identified as *kith* have an unrestricted “democratic right” to access all benefits, including the right to own media, the right to access to information and the right to expression without limit. But, others labelled as *enemies* have been almost absolutely restricted access to many of their basic human rights, or intimidated. Further, those who insist on resisting acceptance of the regime’s ‘Revolutionary-Democratic’ ideology have been persecuted in one way or another. In brief, this is the first period in modern Ethiopian history that the country has been echoed with *Ethno-Luminar-Thought* and rocked by humiliating *Narcissistic* practice.

In addition, the government controlled almost everything: the politics, economy, media, religion, social associations and groups, by using the concept of ‘Democratic-Centralisation’ and different arrangements such as creating “one-to-five” networks in which five people are regulated or controlled by one person who is loyal to the dominant group or the system. Accordingly, the mouths and minds of the society are controlled by political cadres, security personnel and surveillance technologies.

Further, the government uses laws, physical coercion or political instruments to silence society. Private media, activists and political parties have been threatened by using a number of seemingly democratic but really draconian laws. Under these repressive laws, the authorities frequently charge and convict journalists for their reports and commentary on events and issues. Consequently, Ethiopia now has the most journalists in exile of any country in the world, other than Iran and Somalia, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists’ statistics and Human Rights Watch research (Human Rights Watch 2015).

Moreover, media and politics in Ethiopia are highly intertwined. In Ethiopia, the media have been shaped by the governments which have ruled over different periods. Past authoritarian governments have produced authoritarian media which served as the mouthpiece of its respective government. Similarly, the media environment, in the 1991-2014, has been shaped to serve the wishes and whims of those in power; it has served the respective ideological spheres. The relative increase in the number of newspapers during the imperial government was good, but substantially decreased during the military government. However, there have recently been improvements, both in the number and practice of media use with the introduction of a dual ownership system by the incumbent government related to the *Derg*. However, the practice on the ground remained the same or may be relatively better during the *Derg*. The *Derg* had used pre-censorship on media outlets while the current regime has used post-censorship, legal intimidations and penalties which largely result in widespread imprisonments and suffering.

Above all, in addition to controlling media by legal, physical and economic instruments, the regime controls the media by using complicated bureaucratic controlling systems such as licensing, banning, pricing and other methods. Accordingly, the regime has used established institutions such as the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency (EBA) and Government Communication Affairs office (GCAO) that openly or legally control media activities, in addition to hidden institutions and organs like the Ethiopian Telecommunication, that control freedom of expression indirectly.

Societal divisions through ethnicity, religion and political ideologies, and the control of everything by the government and pro-government groups have created a stifled environment and a culture of self-censorship in all aspects of life, including among journalists, experts and academics in the country. Journalists have been moulded by experiences of the previous (*Derg*) regime and have tended to practice self-censorship more often than not. Experts give their opinions only without having their names quoted. Reports often refer to anonymous sources and there is general unwillingness among the public to express their opinion to the media for fear of penalties and other consequences like losing their job. Much more, although the political reason

for not freely expressing opinions outweighs other causes, social and cultural taboos are also considered to be contributing factors for the stifling environment in this regime (African Media Barometer 2010:12). Generally, in this regime, the three causal factors threatening freedom of expression: the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism* have reached climax; the *Pyramid Trap of Repression*, which has been developed by the integration of these three causal factors, have been strengthened and widened, and freedom of expression has been most stifled.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. SYNTHESIZING HISTORY, PRACTICE AND THEORY

7.1 Introduction

The analysis of the context of freedom of expression and its evolution, particularly in the three most recent governments of the country, indicated that a number of forces have persistently challenged freedom of expression. Indeed, though the governments have contributed the lion's share in repressing freedom of expression, they have not been the only threat, as many assume. Each government separately could not be responsible for those situations. The causes of the crisis of freedom of expression are much more than what is seen on the surface (see 2.5.4, 4.2, 5.5, 6.2). Therefore, as indicated in previous chapters, this thesis is a holistic analysis of all aspects of life: the social, cultural, religious, political, economic, media and all parts of the society including in the grassroots.

7.2. Threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia

This historical analysis has revealed four main threats or challenges to freedom of expression. These are 1) governments, 2) religion and cultural hegemonies, 3) poverty, access to education, and access to media and information, and 4) resultant conflicts and rivalries.

As McQuail (1983) and Ochilo (1993) indicate that freedom has gone hand-in-hand with the evolution of democracy while the degree of control and censorship of the press and other media has been in direct correlation with the nature of government. The media and freedom of expression in Africa, as with everywhere else, is a product of the political system devised by each government (Barratt & Berger 2007:10). Similarly, as indicated in previous chapters, consecutive governments in Ethiopia have played a huge role in the repression of freedom of expression though they are not the only causal factors. They have used authoritarian political ideologies, repressive media systems, exploitative and oppressive economic policies, divisive, coercive and suppressive administrative structures and strategies, and intertwined and threatening laws, hence, freedom of expression has been hugely affected.

The second main threat to freedom of expression is religious and cultural hegemonies. Ethiopia is the nation of religions, as an early adopter and propagator of three of the world's major religions: *Judaism*, *Christianity* and *Islam*. The conflict, rivalry and suspicion among these religious groups, and the struggle to gain supremacy have created relapsing threats on human rights and freedom of expression. In addition, religions have absolute power over their members, who do not have a right to hold any idea different from their religion or practice any activity that contrasts to the customs or traditions of the religion. Particularly, based on religious teachings and cultural extensions, women are restricted from speaking particularly in public forums. The very worst thing in relation to religion is that each religion has been used as an instrument for the political struggle and as a base for maintaining power (2.5.4).

The third threat is poverty, access to education, and access to media and information. Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries. In Ethiopian history, almost all resources, including media, have been controlled by dominant groups, governments or urban elites. Consequently, the majority of society has no economic capacity to access the media, education and information. Accordingly, the majority of society does not have power to influence rulers, or sufficient understanding of political, social, economic and religious contexts of the world to challenge ideas, thoughts and ideologies. Consequently, society has been easily stifled and manipulated by political, economic and religious elites, and the people have been used as political instruments by different groups.

The fourth threat comes from conflicts, rivalries and wars. Ethiopian history shows that Ethiopia has been a 'Nation of War'; the country has passed through vicious circles of conflict, rivalries, revolutions usually evolved from both domestic and foreign forces. External forces directly threaten the freedom of the Ethiopian population by deploying their forces, and using their political and religious agents in and around the country; and indirectly, by creating ideological conflicts and galvanising suspicion among the diversified Ethiopian societies. Of course, harsh restrictions to freedom of expression have emerged from the ruling authorities under the cover of those foreign threats for national security, sovereignty and peace. For instance, governments' laws, administrative structures and political policies have been set to combat those foreign

threats, rather than securing freedom of expression. Domestically, threats originate from different social, religious and political groups for dominance, supremacy or power.

Accordingly, the basic questions that many usually raise are “why Ethiopia has become a nation of such repression? What are the real factors causing such threats? Is there any improvement through socio-political dynamics of the country, particularly in the three most recent governments of the country? What could be the prospect of freedom of expression in Ethiopia?” This historical analysis of the evolution of freedom of expression tried to address these questions (see 7.3-7.4).

7.3 Evolution of freedom of expression in Ethiopia

Ethiopia adapted to internal conflicts and combated external powers but under continued threat, frustration and repression. Over the course of Ethiopia’s history, power has been might, supremacy has been the ultimate goal, and human dignity and human rights have been almost negligible or unthinkable. In the process of the struggle for power and dominance, each group which claimed power has used force and repression as the main instrument: concurring territories mainly by war, destroying existing ideological foundation and establishing its own on the ruins of the previous. Accordingly, they make only their ruler’s ideas the ruling ideas, and there has not been any space for new ideas, discussion and compromise. Therefore, all Ethiopian rulers have been autocratic and aristocratic, and have been driven by their power interests and supremacy, and freedom of expression has been totally suppressed. They have controlled everything including political ideologies, religious institutions and thought, economic structures, and communication and media channels have usually been used as propaganda machines. Consequently, freedom of thought and expression has been curtailed (see 4.5, 5.8, 6.6-6.11).

In addition, most Ethiopians have long been captured by traditions deep-seated in their socio-political cultures that defined the relations of the state and religion to the society in authoritarian terms. The only politically active groups in every aspect of life were those in the upper-most hierarchy of the government and society, such as nobility, the clergy and males. The masses, including the poor tenants, religious followers and females were muted or dominated groups (see 2.5.4.2, 2.5.5.1, 4.2). Accordingly, every thought was generated from above or from the centre and diffused to the bottom and to the periphery.

The emperor and the imperial monarchy controlled every aspect of the state. This confinement raised ethnic nationality questions in different parts of the country, and, in turn, these questions galvanised regional and ethnic conflicts that further triggered human rights violations and restricted freedom of expression for national unity and security reasons (see 4.2, 4.4). Moreover, in this period, there was no room to form associations and to establish free and private media, though there was a relatively better atmosphere of freedom of association during the period of the student movement; and there was expansion of media during the emperor's reign, though the media were controlled by the government and religious institutions and propagated only the controller's ideology (see 4.4.3, 4.5, 6.7). This feudal monarchy system was an extension of the centuries-old imperial hegemony which had the absolute power to be worshiped as a god for eternity, controlled almost all resources and institutions including religious institutions, hence, all ideas and thoughts. The ideas of the few, the monarchy, the clergy and aristocracy, were the golden and dominant ideas, but the ideas of the majority, the peasantry, were cheap and confined. Even the constitution and other laws were established to control thoughts and expressions that aligned to the dominant thoughts. The primary citizens were those conceived as the *appointees of God and had the right rule and control everything*; while ordinary people, the poor and females, were labelled as secondary citizens. They had almost nothing, including the right to hold their own thoughts, opinions and ideas unless the clergy and imperial aristocracy allowed it. Everything emerged and was controlled from the top and centre, and no one had the right resist, criticise and oppose ideas, thoughts and policies from above. Therefore, freedom of expression in the era of this government was nearly unthinkable.

The *Derg* came to power in the same fashion as their predecessors and wiped out the imperial government along with its essence and system and proclaimed the apparently 'new Ethiopia'. Moreover, they wiped out not only the old system but also eliminated all groups and individuals that had different ideas from them in the name of protecting the revolution and state unity. The *Derg* labelled those who claimed freedom and human rights as anti-revolutionary, secessionists and pro-secessionists, and executed thousands. At this period, everything, including human life and dignity, were less worthy than the revolution and socialist political ideology. Indeed, the *Derg* brought a paradigm shift to about 3000 years of political, social, economic and cultural

thinking within the country, but the shift was directed to new socialist ideology and the system that resulted was at the same level or perhaps even more dominating, stifling and brutal. The nation as a whole, all physical and human recourses, institutions and associations were under the total control of the military junta and their ideology. They tried to rule the new nation using the old strategy: force and centralisation. While there was no rule of law, there were nominal legal provisions and constitutions. In addition, there was no democracy or multiparty system; and there was no free and/or private medium. Hence, the *Derg* regime was a simple transformation from imperial aristocracy to totalitarian autocracy. Hence, the societies during the *Derg* were stifled with new socialist ideology and with the continued influence of 3000 years cultural legacy. Ordinary people were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea: between cultural hegemony and brutal socialist ideology. Generally, this was the period of cultural and political dilemma, the period of bloody conflict among political and social groups, the period of poverty and suppression, and, hence, freedom of expression was under one of the darkest periods in the history of the country.

The 1991-2014 ‘Revolutionary-Democratic’ government took power after 17 years of savage fighting and the execution of hundreds of thousands of people. Again repeating history, this regime demolished all the establishments of the previous governments, at least, since middle of 19th century and restructured the country on ethnic socio-political orientations.

The new regime controlled almost everything: the politics, the economy, the media, the religious organisations, the social associations and groups by using the system called ‘Democratic-Centralisation’, by using laws, by using physical coercion, and other stifling instruments and structures. Accordingly, the mouths and minds of society were controlled by the political cadres, security personnel and surveillance technologies. What makes this government’s repression much more deceptive from its predecessors is the extensive use of laws and high level ethnic tension as major instruments of repression of freedom of thought and expression. This is in addition to the usual methods used such as impoverishment and intimidation, harassment, coercion and execution. Since 2015, Ethiopia has been undergoing another wave of political turmoil and a huge desire for change. Hence, it is hard to predict the fate of the country and of freedom of expression. One thing that may be forthcoming, unfortunately, is that *Ethno-*

Luminary thought seems to be increasing. In addition, ethnic domination seems to be shifting from the minority *Tigray* ethnic group to the largest *Oromob* ethnic group. This implies that the struggle for dominance and counter dominance seem to continue as there are still claims of repression on the side of other ethnic groups, particularly from the second largest *Amhara* ethnic group among others.

All these show that the vicious circle of repression will continue because the nature and context of freedom of expression in Ethiopia remains almost the same throughout the history of the country, particularly through the reigns of the three most recent governments. It may even be getting worse relative to the evolvement of new media and communication technologies. The only things that have evolved during the reigns of these governments are the reasons for repression and the means or instruments of repression. For instance, the imperial regime used national unity and sovereignty, and the cultural and religious reputation of the country as reasons of repression, and used religious and cultural hegemonies and restrictive laws as means of repression (see 4.3-4.4). The *Derg* used reasons of national unity and sovereignty as reasons of repression, and used coercion, intimidation, harassment and execution as major instruments of suppression (see 5.2). The 1991-2014 government used ethnic sovereignty and threats of security as a reason of repression, and used a number of derogatory laws and ethnic rivalries as an instrument of repression, in addition to those used by its predecessors (see 6.2-6.6).

What many people question is whether the nature of freedom of expression in Ethiopia is the same across a century and across different governments who have followed different political ideologies? Indeed, the main research question this thesis identified is “why have those challenges and restrictions to freedom of expression emerged?” Hence, the historic analysis of this thesis tried to address this question and has revealed three underlined causing factors (see section 7.4 below).

7.4 Three key determining factors of restriction of freedom of expression in Ethiopia

As indicated above (see 7.2), challenges or threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia has mainly come from governments, religions and cultural hegemonies, poverty, and conflicts, rivalry and wars emanating from inside or outside the country. Consequently, freedom of expression has remained almost identical throughout the centuries, particularly during the three

most recent governments of Ethiopia. This historical analysis of the evolution of freedom of expression in Ethiopia has revealed the real three determining factors of repression of thought and expression in Ethiopia. These are *Certainty-Uncertainty Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*, which work in networks as a web which the researcher calls the *Pyramid Trap*. Firstly, the *Certainty-Uncertainty Dilemma* refers to the state or condition which shows an absolute certainty of one's own position at a particular point in time, and the ability to be changeable (uncertainty) in another time or place as and when it is opportune to do so. It is a state of dark or gloomy understanding about the world's controversial issues. Secondly, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* indicates the conception of absolute self-centeredness and complete supremacy of one particular position and thought, and the undermining/oppression, and even execution, of other or alternative positions and ethnicities. Thirdly, *Narcissism* is the highest form of egocentrism and ethnocentrism characterised by an extraordinary need for high recognition and admiration, which is usually expressed through cynicism, force, brutality, disgracing and discrediting knowledge and wisdom or experience emanating from alternate groups.

7.4.1 Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma

Experiences show that our life is full of uncertainty. We are constantly uncertain of our physiological condition, our safety, our social relationships, our esteem or self-actualisation, etc. There may be some things that one knows to be true, while others are false, or there may be many things where the truthfulness or falsity is not known to one. For example, one can see differences in the views of different people on religion. Hence, one could be uncertain, to varying degrees, about everything in the future, or one may not have full information on the present situation, or much of the past could be hidden from him/her. Simply, uncertainty is everywhere and part of daily life, and one cannot escape from it. One cannot even be certain about uncertainty. Hence, life is full of dilemma.

Hence, the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* is created in a situation which involves imperfect or unknown information, or could arise in partially observable and/or stochastic environments, as well as due to ignorance, indolence. In the condition of lack of certainty, it is impossible to exactly describe the existing state, a future outcome, or more than one possible outcome. Brashers (2001:478) explains that “uncertainty exists when details of situations are ambiguous,

complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic; when information is unavailable or inconsistent; and when people feel insecure in their own state of knowledge or the state of knowledge in general”. These uncertainties are also usually creating doubt, fear or anxiety. Hence, uncertainty influences our decisions in every aspect of life, specifically freedom of expression.

Life is full of uncertainty for there could be an infinite number of questions that could not be answered or could be answered; there could be more than one answer or many answers to most questions. Some issues, for example, that could not have answers or could have more than one answer are religion and politics. There isn't a 'right' answer for most of the questions about religion and politics. Hence, dilemma of certainty and uncertainty is common in the issues related to religion and politics. As indicated above, the major threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia have also originated from rulers and/or governments and religions (see 2.5.5.4). Governments and religions threaten freedom of expression, labelling ideas and thoughts as defamatory, blasphemous and threats to national security which all could be a result of the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*. From my experience, particularly in Ethiopia, many decisions are based on fallacious information and knowledge, and could be characterised by my childhood understanding about the world. I was told and made to believe that the horizons are the edges of the world, that is, the span of this world ends at the connections of the sky and the mountains in front of our eyes, and the sky is a blue dry organ with nothing beyond it. I was told that the sky had been near to the human head, but got distanced because a mule kicked it off; and that is why a mule has become sterile. All the decisions of my life were made under the confines of this awareness. Consider what kind of decisions I can make in my life based on this information! This could be a very funny, but very good example. Indeed, many religious, social and political decisions are made based on similar fallacious and mythical information and knowledge (see 4.2-4.3, 5.2-5.3, 6.2).

Hence, there is usually uncertainty even in political thoughts and practices. For instance, countries that once had been rivals become close friends and even a united state for some time; or thoughts that once had been considered threats could be embraced as guiding philosophies.

Governments, groups and individuals who had once followed one political ideology and who had tried to stifle and excommunicate with anyone who has different thoughts and ideologies have been changing their thoughts and ideologies. For example, feudalism and socialism, which had been considered the irrefutable guiding political principles in Ethiopia, were labelled obsolete and dangerous philosophies (see 4.2, 5.4 6.3). The elites, who had been admirers of the feudalist Imperial period and had served the feudalist monarchy for decades, finally changed their thoughts and ideologies into socialism in the 1960s and revolted against their system. The first good example of this incident was the coup attempt of 1961 and the continued revolution by the educated and military elites (see 4.4, 5.2). Again, those military and educated elites who had absolute certainty on the absoluteness of their ideology were changed to socialism as their guiding ideology after about two decades of suppression of other thoughts and ideologies and after the brutal execution of hundreds of thousands of people who had different thoughts and ideologies (see 5.3-5.4, 5.6). Similarly, those who opposed the *Derg's* ideology once had similar ideologies to the *Derg*. Moreover, those who had opposed the *Derg's* ideologies and practices have repeated the *Derg's* practices perhaps in more cynical ways (see 6.3-6.4). Hence, uncertainties have always been evident in Ethiopian politics and amongst political rulers. At some point, they seemed absolutely certain on their political ideologies, thoughts, policies and practices and dismissive of the thoughts and ideologies of others, while at other times they have been accepting and promoting what they had tried to eliminate. Moreover, the dilemma is clearly seen when they value their thoughts and ideologies as the only one, and they try to demolish the others by using threats. If they had been certain that their ideologies and thoughts are the only ones that are truly valuable, they would not have tried to suppress and eliminate the thoughts and ideologies of others. But, there has always been a dilemma of certainty and uncertainty of thought, particularly in politicians, and they are suspicious of the ideas of others and hesitant on the prevalence of their ideas. That is why they always try to suppress ideas, thoughts and practices out of their own.

Further, we can examine defamation, blasphemy laws and accusations as an example of a *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*. As indicated previously, religious people claim that their God is creator of the whole world, omniscient, almighty, able to defend “his/her reign”, and able to punish or vanquish everyone, or wipe out everything within the blink of an eye. At the same

time, they rage if their “god” is defamed, and they are ready to defend their “weak god” and violate the natural right of holding and expressing opinions.

Similarly, it is common for defamation laws, and subsequent charges and verdicts in the secular world to emerge from the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* of innocence. For instance, many charges against journalists in Ethiopia are set most commonly using Criminal Code Proclamation No. 414/2004, which includes defamation (Article 613), attacks against the state (Article 244), and inciting the public through false rumours (article 486). These charges against journalists are mainly defamation of government and government officials (see 6.6.2.8). However, if one is certain that he/she is innocent why not prove him/her by disclosing the truth rather than heading to court. Specifically, in contexts where government and government officials have enough access to media, defamation can be countered by disclosing rather than by charging. These laws are not usually used as protection for innocent people; rather they are used as threatening instruments for corrupt governments and officials. It is clear that if there is access to counter the libel or false rumour by disclosing, one should not set defamation laws. Defamation laws highly restrict the media and individuals right to fight corruption, bad personalities of individuals, and mismanagement of officials (see 2.4.1.2, 4.3, 5.7, 6.6).

Furthermore, the issue of national security and sovereignty, which has been commonly taken as a reason to restrict free expression, has created huge repression in the world, particularly in Ethiopia, (see 4.4, 5.6), could have emanated from the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*. Security threats usually come from different interest groups inside the country or from outside groups or from other nations. On one side, it is usually believed that “humans are humans”, that is, they are equal, regardless of the place where they are living, and a lot of effort has been put in to promoting such a notion and to a create globalisation. But it is also known that the world is clearly divided into different nations and demarcated by strict physical, ideological, philosophical boundaries, and many, including the current President of the USA Donald Trump, have been seen promoting this idea by declaring ‘me/us first!’. Hence, it is clear that people are in dilemma of being nationalist or humanist. It is also clear and common that human rights, including freedom of expression, are violated for the sake of national security and sovereignty

(see 2.5.4, 4.4, 5.6, 6.6.2), which in turn originates from *Ethno-Luminary- Thought*, and contrasts with the idea that says “humans are equal”.

7.4.2 Ethno-Luminary-Thought

Though there have been efforts by some groups for cultural pluralism in Ethiopia, such as Emperor Menilik’s oral proclamation of “endeabatu Yider”, which is an order that allows freedom of religion and Emperor Yohanis’s loose political centralization. This research showed that ethnocentric thought seems to have been firmly established and sky-rocketed in Ethiopia, especially more recently. Indeed, Ethiopia is basically a nation of groups. It is a home of various religious groups like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, along with a number of sects and sub-sects and a variety of cultural religions; it is home to more than 82 cultural and social or linguistic groups; and it is a struggle ground for political groups that have been established based on different political ideologies like feudalism, socialism, liberalism, and based on different religious and cultural orientations.

Those social and linguistic groups, in one way or another, have developed their own way of life, philosophy, cultural practices, and these differences have developed different interests among groups. To fulfil their interests, each group has formulated different strategies. Commonly, groups have formulated, alternatively, autocratic and aristocratic rules throughout the country’s history, and have used highly self-centred philosophy to fulfil their drive for power and supremacy. That is, each group has tried to survive, dominate and illuminate only by destroying the establishments and interests of other groups (see 4.4, 5.2, 6.2). That is why Ethiopian aristocracy and/or ethnarchy have been much more than being ethnocentric, working only for each group’s interests, it is also *Ethno-Luminary*, that is aimed at the illumination of one’s group only at the demise of others. As we have seen in chapter two, the Ethiopian aristocratic base is *Ethno-Luminary*, particularly since around 100 B.C., that is, since the start of the Solomonic Dynasty. That means, the practice of change in Ethiopia is commonly “sir nekel”, which literally means *drastic or radical*, and new ideologies have not been compromised with the old. Rather, the new has usually wiped out the existing and replaced it; the new has flourished in the ashes of the old; there has not been a culture of middle ground, no compromise, no discussion, no communication; it has been just command and absolute change.

Accordingly, the rivalry among societal groups in Ethiopia started at least three centuries ago when the Semitic groups started to dominate the political, economic and religious arena of the country. What is more surprising is that in the 21st century, the current government has been constitutionally ethnic-based (see 6.2). That is why, as we have seen previously, Ethiopia has become a nation of wars and repression. The country has experienced conflict after conflict, war after war, repression after repression since its emergence as a state. In addition to domestic rivalry and conflict each government, at least in modern Ethiopian history, has been at war with some other country. The history of the country shows that almost all those wars, conflicts and rivalries seem to have been generated from *Ethno-Luminary* interests and goals. As we have seen previously (see 7.4), *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* is at the core of the repression trap. It has been clear that suppression and freedom in Ethiopia is group based: the ideas of the victorious group are ‘golden’ and protected, but the ideas of the defeated group are ‘garbage’ and dumped out or buried. There is no place for objectivity, truth, or conscience. That is, the winners’ ideas are the ruling ideas and winning is gained by force and destroying others. Specifically, what have happened in Ethiopia as a consequence of *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* are assimilation, avoidance, defiance, deviance, exploitation, domination and excommunication.

Firstly, dominated individuals and groups have been forced to have the dominant group’s opinion, ideology, practice, identity and even personality. Specifically, children grow up under strict family controls and are filled only with the group’s values and ideals. In the periods of domination and re-domination, and conversion and reconversions, people have been obliged to change their religion, thoughts, beliefs and ideologies, socio-cultural practices, social relations, ethnical identity and even names of individuals, places and materials. Accordingly, a number of names of cities and towns were changed from Christian ones or sometimes from Amharic to Oromigna or other names. For example, Nazrete was changed to Adama; Debrezeyit was changed to Bishoftu; Alemaya was changed to Haromaya. Even the name of the society “Oromo” was changed from “Galla” after 1991 and the practice has continued. The most surprising thing is that different societies are still not in agreement on the nomination of the country’s capital, Addis Ababa. The Oromo society believes that the original name of the capital was changed from *Finfinnee* to *Addia Ababa* by the expansion and domination of Amhara

society during the reign of “Amhara” King Menelik II at the end of 19th century, and they argue that it has to be changed to its original name. While the Amhara society argue that Addis Ababa had been the city of the Amharas, before the 15th century and had been named *Berera*, but it was occupied by 16th century Oromo expansion and named *Finfinnee* (see section 2.2), and changed to Addis Ababa during the reign of Menilike II to imply its modern formation at the end of 19th century. The country is full of such controversies.

Accordingly, individuals in Ethiopia have been shaped to think according to the group they belong to or the group they are under or the dominant group. That means, they usually accept only the group’s idea, work solely to the success and dominance of only their group and their group’s idea. There is a saying in Ethiopian society which shows that individuals are the moulds of any societal group they are under: “Sew manin yimesilal bibal? Gorebetun!” which literally means *a person is identical to where he/she belongs*. Secondly, those who had avoided assimilation have been labelled negatively, for instance as satanic during the imperial period, bourgeoisie during the *Derg* and chauvinistic during the EPRDF, and negatively stereotyped, marginalised and denigrated (see 2.5.5.3, 2.5.5.4, 4.2, 5.4, 6.2). Thirdly, groups who had the power to resist the dominant group and the dominant ideology have openly challenged the dominance and unequal treatment. This experience has been common throughout the history of the country and have made the country “the nation of war” and rivalry. Fourthly, the resistant and dominated groups have exploited all their political, human and economic rights, and hence are devoid of their right and capability of free thought and expression. Finally, it has been common to see efforts of the dominant group designed to settle the power by totally terminating the existence of other groups (see 4.1, 5.1, 6.1). For instance, all the most recent governments formulated different names for the country, different constitutions and even different flags for the same country by demolishing the previous ones (see 4.2, 4.3.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.7, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6).

Arguably, the whole history of Ethiopia is an exhibition of dominance and counter dominance, and demolishing and replacing of one group by another. The group could be social, economic, political, religious or cultural. One can see a number of instances, since three thousand years ago, of how *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* has shaped the country. For example, one can see how religio-centric constructs, particularly Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have shaped and reshaped

political, economic and social orientation and thought (see 2.5.4.2, 4.2, 4.3.1, 6.5); one can see different social groups, specifically the Semitic and the Cushitic, have been influenced each other and have influenced Ethiopian political and economic establishment and religious affiliations (see 4.4, 5.6, 6.2); and one can see how political ideological groups have impacted the social and economic orientations in the country (see 4.2, 5.3, 6.3). Generally, one can see how the combination of all these groups influences have affected the overall political, social, cultural and economic establishments and the practices of freedom of expression (see 7.2.1-7.2.4). Even the common threatening reasons for limiting freedom of expression in Ethiopia such as defamation, blasphemy and national security have been galvanised by *Ethno-Luminary* thought (see 4.4, 5.6, 6.2).

Consequently, the society has developed a number of maxims that show the prevalence of *Ethno-Luminary* thought. To show that the society has developed an orientation of envy on others they say “Ene balbelaw chirie labelahew”, which literally means *if I cannot use it, I will destroy it*. To indicate that racial or ethnocentric inclination is hugely influential, they say “Zer kelguam yitekisal/yisibal”, literally meaning *ethnicity is more pulling than what a horse’s bit does*. To show that the society have affection only toward relatives, they say “Yalweldikut lij aba bilegn afen daba alegn”, literally meaning *it is tart to hear anothers child call me father*. To show that one is very curious about the safety of his/her relatives, they say “tinish siga ende merfie tiwega”, literally to means your *relatives suffering is like a piercing with a needle*. They also say “Zemed kezemedu ahiya keamedu” to indicate that *everyone allies to his/her ethnicity*, which has similar meaning to *birds of a feather flock together*. All these show that different groups in Ethiopia have chosen struggle, conflict, rivalry and war to dominate or eliminate others. Or at least not to be dominated and eliminated.

This structure below (picture 7.1) is the model of two *Ethno-Luminary* groups (A & B) with their own group ideologies and interests to survive and dominate or illuminate. Of course, the participant groups on the actual ground are many, and events are too complex. But this model shows the *Ethno-Luminary* circumstance between two groups. This model tries to show the internal and external struggle between two groups, particularly ethnic groups, and the process of stifling thought and expression.

Firstly, the internal struggle in each group is usually held in the group, that is, between the group (group's ideologies, values and principles) and deviants in the group. The group usually needs to maintain conformity of all members of the group to the group ideologies, values and principles; while some who have got some enlightenment or who have developed different thought want to breach the group's ideologies, values and principles. Hence, there are always contrasting forces in the group, that is, forces towards conformity, centripetal forces, and resistance to conformity, centrifugal forces. Therefore, there is always friction among the group members. Each uses different strategies to win. Hence, the resultant force usually determines the sustenance, dominance and illumination of the group and of the group's ideologies, values and principles. If the centrifugal force outweighs the centripetal force, dominant rules, values, principles, ideologies, etc. are breached and change occurs. But if the centripetal forces outweigh the centrifugal forces, hegemony develops. In Ethiopia, experiences show that groupthink strategies, particularly force and intimidation, have been so strong and persistent, and deviants in the group have been usually crushed that groups and their influences have sustained for long periods, even centuries. Consequently, change in Ethiopia is usually slow in all aspects of life. Ethiopia as a nation has followed closed door policies for a long period of time, and has developed and maintained its unique culture from the surrounding countries, unique religion for example. However, changes are not uncommon because the country has witnessed different revolutions. Consequently, Ethiopia has usually been seen a nation of hegemonies and revolutions for governments are usually changed by revolutions.

Secondly, the external struggle has been held among different groups. Experience in Ethiopia shows that there is always rivalry, dominance and counter-dominance among different groups and the maintenance of one group is usually attained by the demolishing of others. Hence, there have always been a series of struggles among different groups for survival and dominance (see 4.1, 5.1, 6.2). However, it has been seen that the dominant group usually breaches the boundary and engulfs other groups. Engulfing refers to the process of capturing people and territories by force and restructuring the whole political, social, economic and cultural composition of that territory. This incident can be called politicisation, acculturation or assimilation. Good examples

of engulfing in Ethiopian history are the introduction of Semitic people and culture to Ethiopia by force; the expansion of Christianity and Christian culture and the expansion of Islam and Cushitic Somali people by force and war, the expansion of Cushitic Oromo largely by force and systematic assimilation; the re-expansion of the Northern people, particularly the Amharas to the South and the counter movements by other ethnic groups. Engulfing and Centripetal forces usually work in harmony to expand and control, respectively, the groups ideology, values, principles and even physical territory. The case of “Mogassa” during Oromo expansion is a good example of engulfing, and the execution of Amharas and Orthodox Christianity by ethnic nationalist groups since 1993, could be a good example of demolishing (see 6.2). In the periods when one group could not engulf others, there always have been conflicts, rivalry and wars to secure each one’s turf and boundary. One can take, as an example, the conflict, war and rivalry among three religious groups: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, conflict and rivalry among different ethnic groups: basically between two groups of people, Semitic and Cushitic, which have centuries old struggle for dominance or supremacy, and the struggle among different political groups with different political ideologies: basically imperialism and communism or socialism.

The following structure (Figure 7.1) shows the *Ethno-Luminary* process between two different groups, these may be ethnic, cultural, religious, or political. The big circles (green and grey) represent two different *Ethno-Luminary* groups (A & B), these may be ethnic, religious, political, or cultural, that are combating for supremacy or dominance. At their centres (purple and blue mini-circles) are each group’s core dominant values, principles and ideologies. The thin yellow arrows pointing outward from the centre, are the *centrifugal forces*, and represent the urge of group members to breach the dominant value, principle and ideology of the group, or represent resistance of the group members to conform to the groupthink. The inward pointing (purple and blue arrows) arrows, in group (A) and group(B) respectively, represent the forces that work for the maintenance of the groups dominant values, principles and ideologies, or represent forces that work to confirm groupthink. The two-way headed arrows (red arrows) around each group, which the researcher label *engulfing forces*, are the forces that work to engulf other groups and their ideas. These arrows represent the intent of expansion of one group and the group’s ideology, values and principles and to assimilate or eliminate other groups and their ideologies,

exiled or dominated insist on change. There has always been a struggle to be a winner which resulted in a vicious circle of wins and defeats, domination and being dominated, suppressing and being suppressed among different groups. There is always a saying “You are either with us or with our enemies”. There is always a winning or losing (see 2.3, 4.2, 5.3, 6.2). This shows that Mill’s optimism about humanity’s capacity to be ‘rational’ (see 3.3), has been eroded due to such ethnocentric and *Ethno-Luminary* thoughts.

7.4.2.1 Di-spiral of silence

When we are talking about the influence of groups and group-thought it is important to address the impact of majority and minority groups on freedom of expression in Ethiopia. According to the Spiral of Silence Theory, the majority will overestimate their influence and may become confident in their communication, and those who believe that they hold a majority viewpoint will be more encouraged to speak. But, people who believe that they hold a minority viewpoint on a public issue will remain in the background where their communication will be restrained. Although this theory has objective truth in religious contexts, the reality differs from this in the political context of Ethiopia. In Ethiopian history, particularly starting from the *Solomonic Dynaty*, minorities, who in one way or the other developed their military force, have taken power and have suppressed the ideas of the majority.

Moreover, as indicate above, Ethiopia is a nation of groups. It is a country where various ethnic groups, who speak different languages and have different religions and cultures, some inhabit in their own territories, while others interspersed in various modes of assimilation and integration. These groups are either dominant or dominated, in one way or another, throughout the country’s history. What makes the Ethiopian context unique is the highest and extended form of supremacy of minority groups over the majority. For instance, as history shows, ancient Ethiopia was a nation of Cushitic people, from about 3000 years ago. But, the introduction of the Semitic religion and culture, that is Judaism, was supported by about only 4,000 military men from Israel, called Agazians. Since then, the minority Semitic group has dominated politics, religion and the culture of the country for centuries. Similarly, since Christianity became the government religion at about 330 A.D, relatively few consecutive governments tried to load their religious thought on the majority by force. The introduction of Islam and the rise of Ahmed Gragh, during

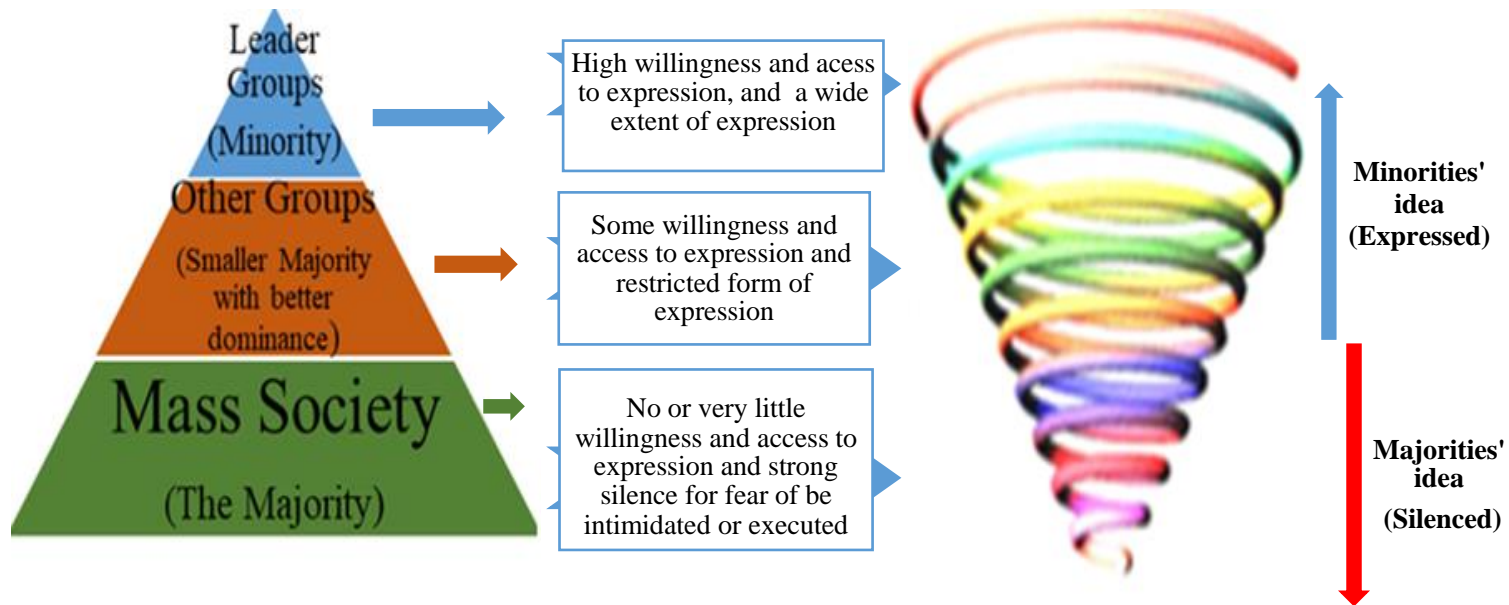
the mid-ages of the country, highly impacted large portions of the country and larger portions of population by using force and through the support of Islamic nations, particularly Egypt and Turkey. Further, the political process of modern Ethiopia is also similar to ancient and middle ages. During the imperial period, the aristocracy were the dominant group while the majority tenants were the dominated. The political, economic, social and religious ideas of the minority were dominant and widely spread, while the ideas of the majority tenants were stifled or inhibited (see 4.2, 4.5). During the *Derg's* regime, the majority's interest of democracy had been replaced by the socialist ideas of the minority academic elites, by force. The trend has continued to the current government and one ethnic group, who accounts only 6% of the nation's population, has dominated power while the rest of the population is silenced, for fear of exclusion from slices of economic benefits or for fear reprisals in one way or another. Indeed, those who tried to oppose this situation have been executed, imprisoned and marginalised (see 6.2-6.11).

Another form of experience in Ethiopia where the minority's idea overwhelmed the majorities idea is egocentrism, which is preferring ideas and things from other cultures over ideas and things from one's own culture, assuming that the other cultures are superior (Johnson 200:351). This experience has been prevalent in Ethiopia today, perhaps since 1000 B.C when traditional religion and culture were replaced by Judaist religion and culture. since the middle of 19th century, when European society and culture have been conflated with modernisation, or western civilization has been represented as the apex of human development. Today, the urban and "educated" group which accounts for about 15% of the country is a dominant group who generate most of the ideas and on who almost all political and economic power has been vested. This group equates modernisation with westernisation and labels traditional ideas as backward. Accordingly, this group has largely loaded Western ideology onto society using already established economic and political power that is using the bureaucracy, media, and law, amongst others. Hence, traditional and domestic thoughts, philosophies and ideologies were suppressed in one way or another and large parts of society, particularly the rural society, have been muted, silent or inhibited. Currently, everyone in everyday of life has tried to embrace Western ways of thinking and living, at least not to be labelled as backward. Many people are even embarrassed by their names, and it is common to see many youth change their names. I was surprised to find

6 among 32 of my students at Debre Markos University had changed their names in 2014/2015 season first semester. I asked all of them why they changed their names, and they replied that they need modern names. If they are called by their original names many would scorn at their “backwardness”. Consequently, many feel embarrassed to even tell their names, and it is common for many to have two names, one original name for their families and their specific place of origin, particularly from rural area, and another new and modern name for towns and work places.

Further, women account for more than 50% of the country’ population and more than 40% of the population are children (Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency 2007). However, women and children’s ideas are largely restricted (see 2.5.4.2, 2.5.5.1). About 30% - 50% of the Ethiopian population also lived in poverty between 1950 and 2014. Generally, what Edwin Ardener (1975:19–27) noted happened to Ethiopia that groups making up the top end of the social hierarchy or the dominant groups determine the communication system and suppress ideas and discourses of subordinate groups in the society. While lower power groups such as women, and the poor, have to learn to work within the communication system that the dominant group has established. As almost all media have been controlled by a few dominant groups, the media have propagated only the ideas and interests of the dominants groups, more particularly the leading groups, while the ideas of the rest are silenced (see 4.5, 5.8, 6.7).

Figure 7.2 Structure of Di-spiral of Silence



The ruling and dominant groups include those who have government powers, while other groups include groups related to governments and groups that represent dominant social groups and religions. For instance, the Orthodox Tewahido Christianity has centuries old relations to the government and relatively larger dominance than other religious groups in the country. Similarly, Semitic people, who have been perceived as relatively modern and who have commonly pale skin colours, have relatively more dominant than other social groups. Consequently, ideas get silenced or di-spiralled down the social pyramid though the population count increases. Inversely, ideas get outspoken up to the social pyramid though the population count gets lower. Generally, the ideas of a few dominant or well organised groups have always flourished while the ideas of the dominated groups have always dwindled in Ethiopia.

7.4.3 Narcissism

As indicated in section 2.5.4, threats to freedom of expression emanated from egocentrism and ethnocentrism which refer to centred or focused interest of one individual or group, respectively. It is usually believed that egocentric individuals focus on their own perception and opinion, and they make decisions around the needs of the self. Ruggiero (1995:66-67) pointed out that “Egocentric people have difficulty seeing issues from a variety of viewpoints...This attitude makes it difficult for egocentric people to observe, listen and understand”. Similarly, ethnocentric groups absorbed in themselves into “... their race, religion, ethnic group or culture which they think is superior” (Ruggiero 1995:66-67). For ethnocentric people, “what blends with their outlook is worthy, whatever differs from it is suspected, threatening” (Ruggiero 1995:66-67). Egocentric people can find it difficult to connect with others or maintain meaningful relationships. The bias toward self can result in an egocentric person struggling at home, at work, and within their intimate relationships. For instance, egocentrism could affect trust, intimacy, decision making, collaboration, and teamwork. This historical analysis has also revealed that a more serious version of egocentric and ethnocentric behaviours, *Narcissistic* and *Ethno-Luminary* (see 7.4.2), mind setups, have hugely affected freedom of expression in Ethiopia.

Though all humans could have some egocentric tendencies, this behaviour seems to have been hugely integrated in Ethiopian culture. The sense of self is openly seen in day to day activities. People usually seem more effective individually. Ethiopian society elaborates the prevalence of

this behaviour using different maxims. It is common to hear said “Ethiopian Abirew mebilat enji aberew mesirat aywodum” which literally means *Ethiopians dine together rather than work together*. This assumption implies that conversation and understanding is uncommon in Ethiopian work culture, but there is prevailing notion of only being heard. This context has not been restricted to only in the work environment, but it has been prevalent in political, social and religious environments. This egocentric behaviour has made many feel that you have no voice. Hence, it has been common to see anger, resentment and suspicion in different parts of life and among different sub-societies or ethnic groups. These negative mind setups and cynical experiences in Ethiopia has developed a conception in the society that says “Sewn mamen kebiro new”, to imply that *humans are mistrustful until they are buried*. This mistrust has created a tremendous amount of pressure among the society, causing anxiety around their decision making and social interactions. This cynicism is not only seen in big political, social and economic interactions and ideas, but it has also been exhibited in all sects of daily and ordinary life. For instance, society has developed a culture of testing any food and drink while providing to any other person for the reason of incredulousness among each individual of the society. These situations show that there is distrust and mis-communication among society. Accepting the ideas of an individual or a group distrusted, though the idea may be smart, is uncommon. That is why it has been common to see people resist the ideas generated by governments, and all Ethiopian governments have passed through conflict with people throughout their reign and have been overthrown by force or revolution.

In addition, due to high egocentric tendencies in Ethiopian elites, particularly political elites, it has been common to see the practice of false consensus between the governments and the society. Political cadres usually overestimate that their thoughts, ideologies and policies are seamless and usually believe that people share their perspectives or preferences. Hence, governments have developed laws, policies, rules and guidelines without the will or input of society. These acts have created huge misunderstanding between them; hence, governments have encountered severe resistance and failure. Still, many political cadres of different governments in Ethiopia have not admitted the defects of their ideas, but they usually find other factors for their failures. For instance, the *Derg* externalized the failure of the country to remnants of the feudal system, foreign governments’ intervention and separatist groups, rather than the problem of the

ruling ideology and policies. Similarly, the current ‘Revolutionary-Democratic’ government has developed its own political, social and economic policies almost without the participation from citizens and has encountered problems of performance and fierce resistance from different groups. However, the ruling party has still argued that the failure is not as a result of the ideology and policies of the government but due to the influence of ‘strivers of the old regime, terrorists and problem of implementation’. However, they had not addressed why a lack of implementation emerged. But the answer is clear; the implementers of the government system are chosen by their group or political affiliations, which is a clear manifestation of *Ethno-Luminarity*, rather than due to their efficiency (see 6.3-6.4),

Further, egocentrism has created a curse of knowledge in Ethiopian bureaucracy. Knowledge and expertise have been averted by position and power. Accordingly, those who are knowledgeable, experienced and educated have been excluded from participation in large decisive aspects of the country. Hence, their ideas were not included in decision making processes of the government and have been prevented from being introduced in to the society. This kind of establishment has continued into the lower level of administration in the current regime. Prime Minister Melese Zenawi was once asked about this situation and replied “A guard can be a minister if he accepts the policy”. The word “guard” here refers to an uneducated or less educated person. Therefore, during the beginning of the current government, the majority of the leaders at the ministry level had not completed secondary school education, and the majority of the leaders at lower bureaucracies have no basic elementary school education. For example, the President Melse Zenawi and the Prime Minister Tamirate Layne were only high school graduates; Information Minister Bereket Simon completed 10th grade; and even the mayor of the capital completed only 4th grade (Ethio Times 2018). Despite this, they forced the people to take their thoughts as ‘golden ideas’. All these show that egocentric leaders in Ethiopia simply follow and promote only their ideas and philosophies though they are relatively weaker, and they generally do not consider opinions of others. They are heavily focused on their own needs and desires.

Above all, the most agonising condition of freedom of expression in Ethiopia has emanated from narcissistic behaviours of leaders, religious, political or social. In Ethiopian political and religious culture, there is excessive need for recognition and admiration. What is surprising here

is that society has developed a perception that the admiration and recognition are obtained by being dominant in one way or another. The most common way of getting recognition and admiration is force. Being a warrior has greater reputation than serving the country by other means in Ethiopia. Hence, ideas have very little space in society; simply put: ‘might has been right’. In addition, dominant groups or leaders consider only themselves and their ideas as extraordinarily worthy or important. For instance, during the imperial monarchy, the emperor and the imperial aristocracy considered themselves the appointees and messengers of God, hence, they considered their ideas and power sacred and inalienable. During the *Derg*, the cadres perceived themselves as the guards of the revolution which demolished the three thousand years of imperial repression, and they considered themselves as promoters of the “golden” political ideology: socialism. Even President Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam was promoted as a “Patriotic-Revolutionary leader”. Accordingly, any other idea that opposed the *Derg* was considered unnecessary. Similarly, the current regime considered the ruling group and the system established by this group as the vanguard of nations and nationalities, ethnicities, that had been exploited and suppressed by repressive governments. Accordingly, the regime consistently threatened the society that if the political system was demolished, ethnicities would be oppressed again and the country would have disintegrated. Hence, no one should challenge or should try to change the system to save the country and to preserve the identity of ethnicities. Prime Minister Melese Zenawi was promoted as the only visionary and outstanding leader of Ethiopia. Therefore, all regimes in Ethiopia have promoted entitlement only for themselves to eternity. In order to keep their entitlement and to get what they want, they manipulate anyone in their range using instruments such as propaganda, economic power, religion, media, laws, physical intimidation, imprisonment, execution, etcetera (see 4.4, 5.3, 6.4-6.6). Even these manipulative instruments have been implemented arrogantly and pretentiously. For instance, the emperor planted in the minds of society that he has divine power, and people had no right to question the imperial monarchy, everyone was obliged to bow in front of the emperor. Mengistu Hailemariam declared “Hulum neger wede tore ginbar”, which literally means *everything and everyone to the war front*. Hence, everyone should do it. The current government has also consistently proclaimed that the policies of the ruling group are inalienable. Anyone who tried to breach the red lines have been threatened, imprisoned, excluded, marginalised and executed.

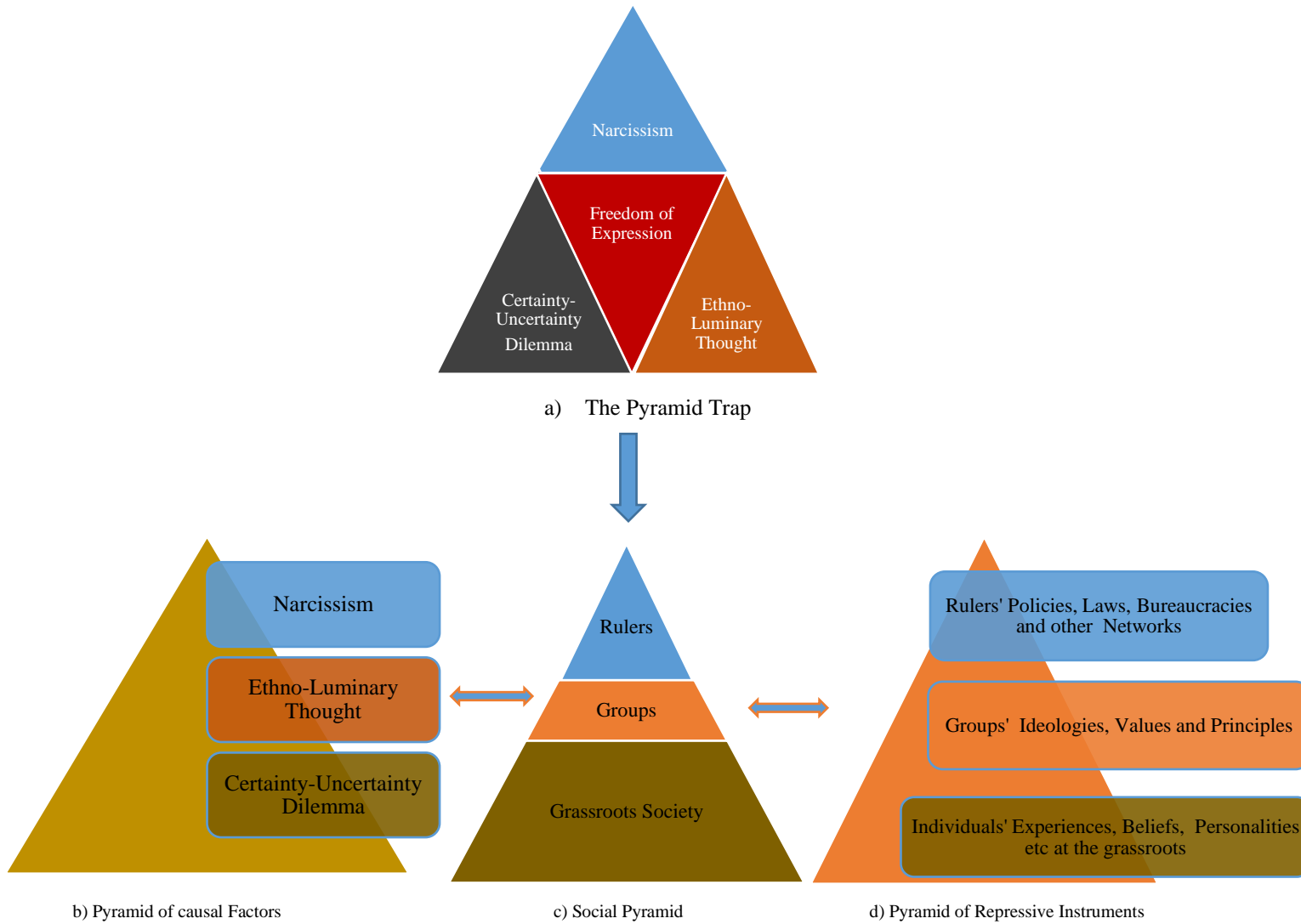
Indeed, such *Narcissistic* behaviour has not been limited to political, religious and social leaders. The society has also developed such behaviour and act accordingly. Here, there could be a question of ‘chicken or egg first?’ Have these narcissistic behaviours developed first by the society or by the rulers? Regardless of the answer, it is evident that such narcissistic behaviour has been established as a culture. Indeed, society has developed symbolic maxims that reflect the persistence and prominence of such *Narcissistic* behaviour. For example, the society uses the maxims such as “ene cabelhut chire labelashew alech doro!”, which literally implies *if I could not use it, I will destroy it, a hen said*; “ene kemitiku Serdo Ayibkel, alech ahiya!”, which literally implies, *grass should not grow after I die, donkey said*; “Negadie esu lekeserw sayhon guadegnaw lekerew yazinal”, which literally means *a merchant worries not about his bankruptcy but for his friend’s gain*. These apothegms reflect the egocentric and narcissistic thoughts, experiences and orientations of society in Ethiopia; hence, freedom of expression has been hugely affected by such egocentric and narcissistic thought and behaviour.

7.5 The interconnectedness of the causal factors: the pyramid trap theory

Individuals, groups, and governments make survival decisions daily, either separately or together, based on their understandings of the world and the means they have. The decisions are linked and structured in some way and form a trap of repression. This trap emerged and developed on the basic essence of human nature: self-being, uncertainty and socialisation. The self-being refers to a natural separate entity of an individual who is struggling for survival; the uncertainty refers to the lack of information, knowledge and capability one faces in day to day decisions or in life; and socialisation indicates natural human intent of creating coalitions, cooperation and groups as a strategy of survival in an uncertain and unlimited world.

The following model depicts the causal factors of the threats to freedom of expression: *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought*, and *Narcicism*; the three parts or components of the society: *Individuals/mass society*, *Groups* and *Rulers*; and the instruments used by each of these parts of society to govern and control others and their life. All of these factors are structured and form a *Pyramid Trap of Repression* of freedom of expression.

Figure 7.3 The pyramid trap structure of repression



This structure shows the context and process of stifling freedom of expression. The first triangle (a) shows how freedom of expression has been engulfed by three forces: the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*. That means, freedom of expression has to breach these three traps to be free (see sections 7.4.1-7.4.3). The next three pyramids, pyramid of causal factors (b), the social pyramid (c), and the pyramid of repression instruments (d), show how the root of causal factors of repression, the participants of repression and instruments of repression, respectively are evolved and integrated, vertically, horizontally and diagonally, create a web of threats and repression on freedom of expression.

The bases of the pyramids are the foundations where repressive thoughts, repressive forces and repressive instruments primarily originate. These are the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* (b), Grassroots of Society (c), and the Experiences, Beliefs, Attitudes, Tests and Personalities, etc. of the Grassroots of Society (d).

The *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* is the root foundation for all establishments and structures in the pyramid trap. Here, the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* refers to the lack of information on day-to-day decisions which could emanate from one's limited knowledge about his/her environment or generally about the world/universe and its phenomena. It is clear that all political, social, cultural, religious, economic thoughts, beliefs, principles, ideologies, laws, etc. are developed and have evolved out of existing and limited knowledge and understanding about the world. Hence, many decisions in life are usually made under uncertainty, and many become fallacious or restrictive to freedom of expression. The researcher labels this situation as the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*.

The *Grassroots of Society* refers the masses at the lower level of the social pyramid or the ordinary people or individuals who have their own different experiences, beliefs, personalities, attitudes, tests, etc. Here, questions may be raised about how restrictions primarily originate from the bases of the social pyramid while common repressors are found at the top of the social pyramid. When one indicates the bases of the social pyramids as the grounds where repressive

thoughts, repressive forces and repressive instruments originate, it does not mean that all restrictions to freedom of expression come from the bases. It does not mean that restrictions could not emerge vastly from the top of the pyramid. This is because governments and some elites that are at the top of the social pyramid have been commonly seen as the main suppressors of freedom of expression. These bodies, indeed, can generate or import repressive ideas somewhere. For example, the *Derg* imported restrictive socialist ideas from the USSR and had stifled the whole life of the society. This implies that restrictions emerge from all directions in the intricate world and freedom of expression is trapped under the web of factors (see Figure 7.4 below).

It is also clear that though the repressive ideas, strategies and instruments are used by groups or individuals at the top of the social pyramid, those repressive bodies, their repressive instruments and strategies, and particularly their repressive sentiments, originally emanated or evolved from the society, particularly among the grassroots of society. That means those repressive individuals and groups primarily emerge and develop in that society. That means they develop almost all their knowledge, skill and understanding from their society, particularly their families who themselves are also the members of that specific society. It is clear that babies at birth are like-minded. It is from that time onwards they are equipped with knowledge and skill, and their attitude, identity and personality are formulated by the society in which they grown up. For instance, two babies born at two different social, cultural, economic, political and religious environments could not have the same mental sentiment on freedom. Hence, the societal orientation is undoubtedly the ground where repressive sentiment, instruments of repression and strategies of repression germinate and evolve.

However, still questions may be raised that repressive ideas, instruments and strategies could be taken out of the society where repressors belong. This could be partially true because repressive ideas can be imported somewhere else, as Ethiopian academic and military elites have borrowed repressive socialist ideology from abroad. However, though indirectly, ideas could not be generated out of the grassroots of society. Everyone could have their own unique experiences as an individual at different times and places. These experiences could be bases for individual

beliefs, attitudes, tests or personalities, and, further, they could be ruling and dominant ideologies for the world. For instance, one can take a commonly known repressive ideology, socialism, and the common bases of restriction against freedom of expression, religions which Ethiopians adopted from other societies. These ideologies were conceived and born by individuals, for example by Marx, Lenin, Jesus, Muhammed, etc. who were born and grew up in their own specific societies. They were equipped with their societies' thoughts and grew up as part of the society. Moreover, their ideas were nurtured, supported and propagated mainly by the grassroots society. Hence, these individuals did not generate their ideas out of nowhere or in the vacuum. Though they are labelled as pioneers for those ideologies, we can understand that those ideologies were not be exclusive to those individuals, but evolved out of the hearts and minds of many in their own societies. If those ideologies had not been accepted, nurtured and supported by some society or some part of the society, they would not have been expanded and become dominant. Unfortunately, these ideologies which are nurtured and supported at the grassroots of a society may evolve through time as a means of repression against the grassroots of society. We can take the case of religion as an example.

More specifically, for example, in Ethiopia, we can take irregular assemblies such as “edir”, “Ekub” “Mahibers”, “debo”, “Buna”, etc., which are unique assemblies, formed in different environments and based on unique experiences, which have been used as a problem solving mechanism in day to day life by the grassroots of society. However, groups and associations have developed restrictive guiding rules and principles for the specific culture of the group. These incidents and experiences have been used as foundations for regular associations, sometimes group formations and for the development of cultural practices. These experiences have a huge impact on freedom of expression by themselves, in addition to being used as the bases and elements of other restricting instruments (see 2.5.4-2.5.5). Moreover, individuals at the grassroots of society could be members of different groups. For example, one person could be a member of one religion, a member of one ethnic or social group, a member of one colour group (black, white, pale) and a member of one political group at the same time. Based on these experiences, individuals develop their own beliefs, attitudes, tests and personalities. This could be from an individual level or family level, which in turn would have their own contribution on

the practice of freedom of expression and formation of groups and groups' ideologies, values and principles that could have a huge impact on freedom of expression.

This implies that the ground levels of the pyramids are used as both a foundation of repression and suppression. That is, the base of society is the primary origin of repression and the centre of repression gravity, and repressive instruments such laws and ideologies. Repressive forces, thus, are like trajectories that are launched from the ground, that is, from the society, and hit back to the ground. Hence, repression is a continuous and cyclical process created by interwoven factors that emanated from the experiences, tests, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and conceived identity of the grassroots of society, inhabited amidst an uncertain world, full of dilemmas. That means the fertile grounds of repression, the grassroots of societies where repressive individuals, groups and governments originate, and the experiences, beliefs, attitudes, principles and ideologies of the grassroots of societies which the repressive individuals, groups and rulers at the top of the social pyramid share and equip, are rooted in the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* (see Figure 7.4 below). But, those primary factors germinate at the base of the pyramid, interlink with each other, evolve to the top of the social pyramid and launched back to the bases by individual rulers or dominant groups as laws, principles, policies, etc. which restrict freedom of expression.

In short, repressive governments and rulers are commonly the fruits of repressive seeds at the grassroots of society. That is why the nature of freedom of expression throughout Ethiopian history remains almost similar regardless of different political ideologies, regardless of different ruling parties and the number of different rulers the country has seen (see 7.3). The tragedy here is that society is trapped by its own nets, as expressed in the Ethiopia maxim as “*Temama kirnchaf den yaschfehfal*”, which literally implies *forests are destroyed by tree branches which are used for an axe handle*, or as it is commonly said “one harvests what he/she sows”. But, one point that must be clear here is that societies at the grassroots of the society do not generate beliefs, attitudes, values, principles and ideologies to be used as repressive instruments, and it does not mean that the grassroots of society need to be repressed. All those factors of repression are evolved into repressive instruments through the process of struggle for survival; they

emerged as side effects when individuals devise strategies to tackle problems in their life, based on human nature that is self-being, uncertain and social.

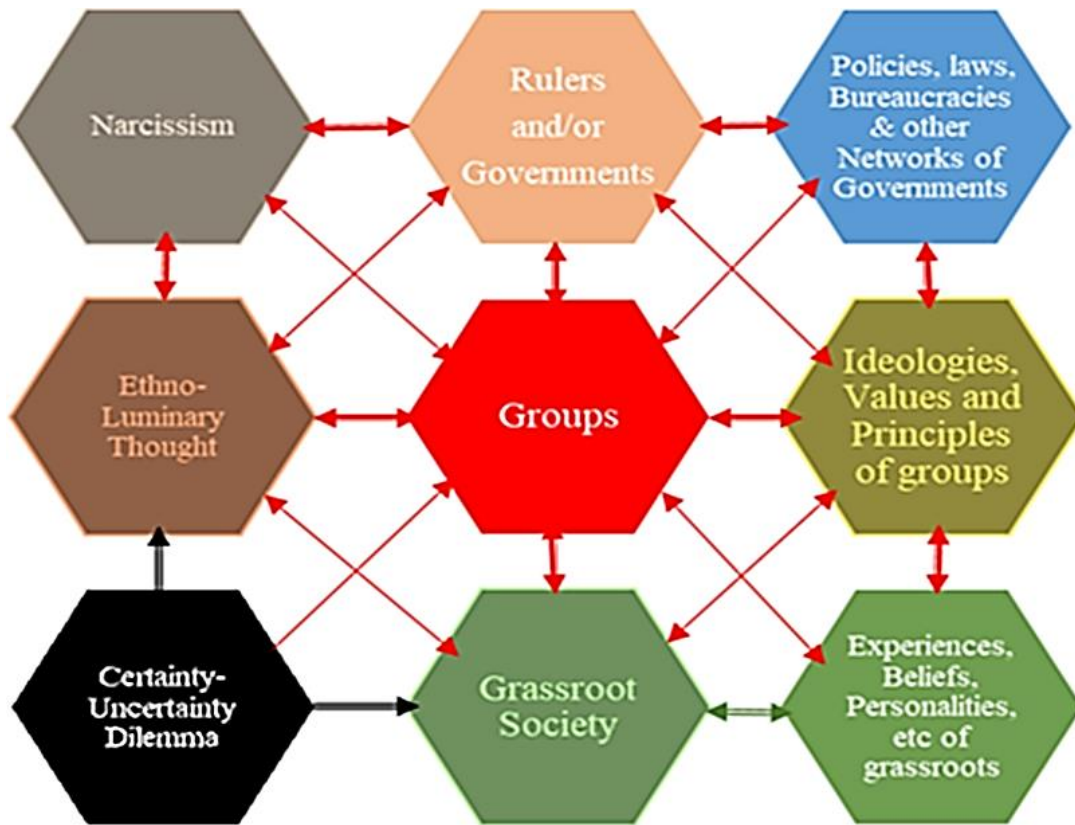
At the second level of the pyramids are *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* (b) different Groups (c), and Ideologies, Values and Principles of Groups (d). All the second level elements of each pyramid emanated from respective factors or forces of the bases and from the controlling elements from above. For instance, in pyramid (b), the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* (lack of information and knowledge) is the root cause of other factors though it may be counter influenced to some extent by other factors from above or from the side (see Figure 7.4 below). It is clear that as ideas regulate human action, any action is based on ideas which, in turn, emanate from information one already has about his/her environment or about the world/universe. As indicated above, without input of some information, the human mind is a vacuum. All ideas and decisions are generated based on imputes in one's mind. Hence, the *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* at level two of pyramid (b) originates from the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* at the base of the pyramid and reflexive factors from above and the side. Similarly, groups at the level two of the social pyramid (c) are the result of the surrounding factors from all sides (see Figure 7.5). On the side, group ideologies, values and principles at level two of pyramid (d) are similarly the results of different factors surrounding them such as experiences, beliefs, attitudes, personalities, and etcetera. at the grassroots of society, laws and regulations of the ruling elite such as the government, the nature of the group itself and the nature of other groups (see Figures 7.1, 7.4).

At level three of the pyramids are *Narcissism* which represents the personality of rulers and/or governments (b), absolute rulers and/or governments that have the power to decide anything in the Ethiopian context (c), and policies, laws, bureaucracies and other networks (parties' frameworks, different associations such as female, youth, farmer, traders, that have been organised and manipulated by governments and have been commonly used as instruments of restriction and threatening of freedom of expression) (d). For example, the *Derg* used different associations and party member's cells, and the current government has used one-to-five arrangements, party member's cells, religious leader's networks, different associations such as the youth leagues, female leagues, teachers' and trade associations to control society (see 4.2,

5.2, 6.4). These three levels at the top of the pyramids are commonly known or conceived as the factors that threaten freedom of expression. But, these elements at the top of the pyramids are the tips of the icebergs. The total burden of repression on freedom of expression is the cumulative effect of all repressive factors from the base to the top in the pyramid trap. Indeed, those at the top of the pyramid have played a huge role in restricting freedom of expression though they are reflections of other founding factors that are at the base and level two of the pyramid: groups, group ideologies, values and principles, and *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* at level two and the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, individuals and their experiences, values, principles and even ideologies at level one. Groups here refer to collections which have similar religious and cultural and political and ideological thoughts, have similar experiences, status or ethnic and social backgrounds, and are guided by specific principles, values, rules and regulations.

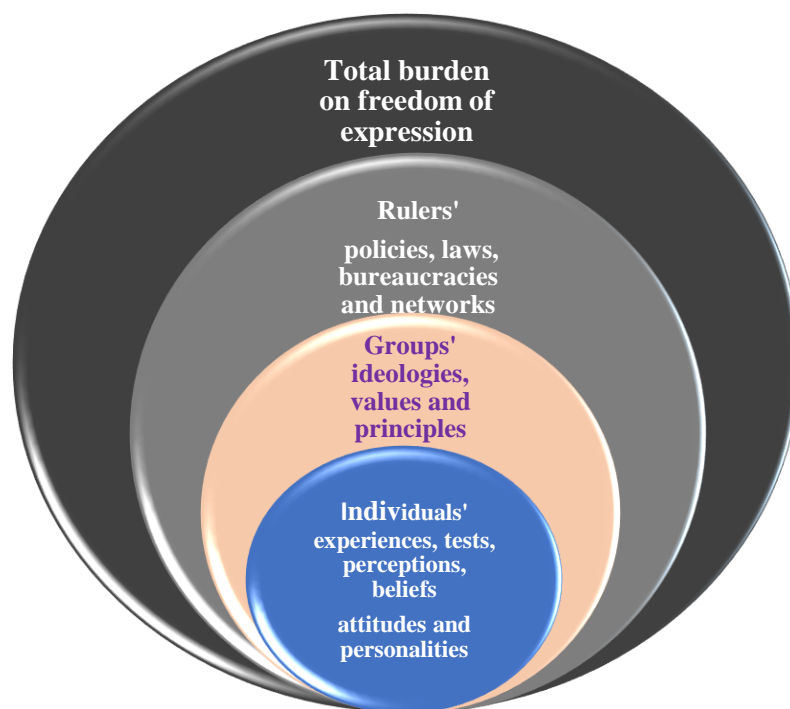
As indicated above, the relationships among elements at the different levels of the pyramids are multidirectional. For example, the grassroots of society at the base of the social pyramid has a contribution on development of groups on the same pyramid, on the development of beliefs, attitudes, tests, personalities and on group ideologies, values and principles in the repressive instruments pyramid. Similarly, groups at the second level of the social pyramid have contributions on development of rulers at the top of the same pyramid, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* at the causal factor's pyramid, and group ideologies, values and principles at the repressive instruments pyramid. In addition, each element in each pyramid would have reverse effects. For example, rulers and/or government policies, laws and bureaucracies could influence group ideologies, values and principles, and group ideologies, values and principles could influence individual experiences, beliefs, attitudes, tests and personalities at the grassroots level. The whole process creates a web of repression as a trap (see the web of the whole process in figure below). This trap shows that the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* is the root foundation for other causal factors, and groups are at the core of all thoughts and actions in Ethiopia.

Figure 7.4 The web of the Pyramid Trap



This shows that the ultimate force of repression on freedom of expression is basically the cumulative effects of all factors from the base to the top of the pyramid trap. For example, the cumulative effect all repressive instruments (see Figure 7.3(d)), from the base to the top of the repressive instruments pyramid, on freedom of expression can be depicted by the following structure. That is, the total burden on freedom of expression is the sum of all repressions from rulers' policies, laws, bureaucracies and other networks; from groups' ideologies, values and principles, and from individuals' experiences, tests, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and personalities, etcetera. Hence, one can guess the level of impact freedom of expression when all the cumulative effects of all factors in the pyramids come together, forming an intricate web and forming synergy.

Figure 7.5 Structure of the Total Burden of Repression



Generally, the above models (structures) depict that repressions of freedom of expression in Ethiopia emerge from all directions of society. Hence, repression of freedom of expression is a cumulative effect of all restricting thoughts, circumstances and actions in all aspects of life and in all directions of society. In addition, the models indicate that the the treats to freedom of expression and causal factors of the threats of freedom of expression originate from the grassroots of society, further evolve to top (group and authority/ government levels) and usually bounces back down to ordinary citizens. Further, they show that repression factors (threats) and the causes of those repression factors are usually interlinked each other in multidirectional way. Above all, repression in Ethiopia works as a vicious-circle for the persistence of causal and threatening factors for centuries. But it is commonly perceived or seen, particularly by normative theories that repressions usually emanate from some bodies such as authorities/governments. That is, *normative* theories commonly see, or mainly focus on, how media and freedom of expression is managed/manipulated/suppressed by authorities, particularly by governments (see

2.4.1). This indicates that normative theories see the process of repression of freedom of expression from *Top-to-Bottom* perspective only.

However, based on this study, the researcher believes that, the *normative* perspective has, at least, a partial view on the total process of repression of freedom of expression, within contexts like Ethiopia. This because the process of repression of freedom of expression is an intricate and complex process that emerges from many directions, though originally evolves from the ground (grassroots society). This implies that repression first originates (launches) from the ground (grassroots society) and evolves to the top (apex of the social pyramid); then it bounces back from the top (authorities) to the ground (grassroots/ordinary) society (see Figure 7.3). This implies that Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma (the origin seed) proceeds/ precedes the repressors' thoughts and repressive instruments: perceptions, attitudes, tests and personalities of individuals; ideologies, values and principles of groups; and policies, laws, regulations and rules of authorities and/or governments; and the repression action.

Therefore, the researcher believes that first we should focus and start to find solutions where the problem originates rather than where the problem is openly manifested or bounced back. That is, the researcher insists that this is the time to follow a holistic approach and need to have *Bottom-Up / Bottom-to-Top* perspective rather than *Top-to-bottom* to explore the real causes of repression of freedom of thought and expression, and to generate contextual solutions to such an intricate problem.

7.6. Prospects for freedom of expression in Ethiopia

The thorough analysis of political, social, cultural and economic dynamics of the country, particularly in the most recent governments of Ethiopia, revealed that, as indicated above, the main challenges or threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia are governments and their policies, laws and bureaucracies; religious and cultural hegemonies; poverty and lack of knowledge; wars and conflicts. Moreover, this analysis revealed that the nature and context of freedom of expression in Ethiopia remains almost the same throughout the reigns of the three most recent governments of Ethiopia as it had been for centuries, and may be getting worst

relative to the evolvement of new media and communication technologies. The only things that have evolved during the reigns of these governments are the reasons for the repression and the means or instruments of repression. Therefore, what many people question is “why the nature of freedom of expression in Ethiopia is the same across a century and with different governments who have followed different political ideologies?” However, the answer to this question can be easily drawn by looking at the persistence of those causal factors and the maintenance of threats to freedom of expression in the country.

The first causal factor, the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, has persisted for centuries in Ethiopia and has significantly affected freedom of expression (see 2.5.4, 7.4). Although the development of science and technology, specifically the development of information and communication technology, has increased and the flow of global information and knowledge has contributed a lot in minimising uncertainty, the slow development of technology in Ethiopia for political and cultural reasons, has ensured that uncertainty and ignorance, and its impact on freedom of expression, has remained similar (see 7.3). In addition, the development of communication technology and systems, particularly media, have been used for propagating stereotyping, hate and rivalry by *Ethno-Luminary* groups rather than being used for sharing information and experience and the expansion of knowledge. Further, as life is full of uncertainty in relation to infinite world, it seems that life decisions will continue to be made on *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*. Therefore, as the problem has persisted, the future of freedom of expression seems to be gloomy. What makes the persistence of this factor worse is that it is the base of many threats to freedom of expression and the source of all other repressive factors. That means its persistence triggers those threats to freedom of expression and those causal factors of the threats to freedom of expression (see 7.4.1-7.4.3).

The second causal factor threatening freedom of expression, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought*, is the main causal factor for repression in Ethiopian history. One can confidently argue that Ethiopia is a state of groups and *Ethno-Luminary-Thought*. All governments, all cultural groups and all social groups have passed through the motto of ‘dominate or be dominated’. That means accommodation in Ethiopian history seems have been null and void. Those who are in power always want stability, on the other hand, those who are exiled or dominated insist on change.

Even if there has been perceived stability, it has been superficial stability. If there is no stability, the right to freedom of expression is curved for reasons of national security and personal safety. That is what has happened in Ethiopia and the cycle seems to continue (see 4.2, 5.3, 6.2). What makes this factor a number one tragedy for Ethiopia is that besides its persistence throughout the history of the country and making the country ‘a nation of wars’, it has been getting worse since the 1950s. Consequently, Ethiopia today has become a nation of tensions, rivalry and is on the verge disintegration (see 4.4, 5.6, 6.2). Therefore, the prospect for freedom of expression in the country seems totally dark in this respect.

As the third factor, *Narcissism* is the result of the first two causal factors (see sections 7.4 & 7.4.3), the persistence of the first two factors would undoubtedly make it also continue, and, hence, its impact on freedom of expression will be maintained.

All these situations show that the fertile ground for repression of thought and expression has remained as it has been for centuries, perhaps even getting worse in some situations. This implies that the prospect of freedom of expression in Ethiopia seems likely to remain identical to its past, and the country is in a *vicious-circle of repression*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Conclusions, contributions and implications of the study

Throughout the country's history, Ethiopia has been known to have very restricted or absolutely banned freedom of expression. Governments usually harass, intimidate, detain, torture and even massacre those who try to express their views or have their own ideas or political ideologies. Further, governments set legal restrictions and penalties against freedom of expression. Even in very recent years, Ethiopia has been one of the world's leading jailers of journalists and civilians who have different thought to the government (CPJ 2005; IFJ 2006; HRW 2010). In addition, different groups and societies in the country are commonly stereotyped, marginalised, intimidated and even attacked or persecuted if they have different ideas or practices (Ahmed 2001:190).

Though the persistence and extent of these problems has been known, there has been very little information on the level and type of threats, the real causal factors of those threats, the evolution and the prospects of freedom of expression in the country. The majority of research and literature on the topic examines limitations on freedom of expression, focusing on repressive or authoritarian governments and solutions have been forwarded based on these findings. Efforts have also been exerted on changing governments, political ideologies, laws and policies. However, repression in Ethiopia has remained intact for centuries. Therefore, this research project aimed to address the problem from a much broader perspective by analyses of the holistic dynamics of the country, that is, the social, cultural, religious, economic and political realms, and encompassing all parts of the society, particularly under the three most recent governments of the country, that is the Feudalist-Monarchy, the Socialist-Military regime, and the ethnic based so-called 'Revolutionary-Democratic' regime, which range from 1930-2014.

This implies that this research is held on the belief that the restrictions and threats on freedom of expression in Ethiopia stem from a variety of different and interlinked sources and causal factors. Restrictions on freedom of expression are not simply a matter of government/state repression, but involve various aspects of life, such as cultural norms and attitudes, societal organisations

and orientations, including patriarchy and societal expectations from women, religiosity and religious hegemony, political systems including monarchic and dictatorial policies and rules, economic make-up including land ownership, group thought including social conservatism, nationalism and tribalism, amongst other factors. All these have intersected with one another over time to deter the right to freedom of expression. The historical narratives in this study do not only deal with freedom of expression as it applies to the press and media but also refers to freedom of expression rights for all parts of society including ordinary citizens or at the grassroots of society. Hence, this study is a holistic analysis of the restriction and suppression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia, and it is an effort to address the problem from a different perspective than that of the traditional dominant thought frame, which understands limitations on freedom of expression to operate in a top-down fashion.

To achieve this goal, the researcher followed a historical discourse analysis method and started with the description and analysis of socio-historical background based on the ground the political, social, economic, religious and cultural context of the country, particularly in the three most recent governments. Accordingly, the dynamics of the country under each of these governments are analysed along with widely accepted theoretical principles of freedom of expression. From this analysis the following lessons are drawn.

The suppression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia is not a recent phenomenon, but it is a centuries old phenomenon, perhaps as old as the Ethiopian state itself. The centuries old imperial system and the related cultural and religious hegemonies are the bases for the centuries old experiences of such suppression. In addition, the so called ‘anti-imperial’ and ‘anti-backwardness’ socialist military system was built on this foundation and with its repressive nature paved the way to another repressive system. Hence, it is clear that freedom of expression has not improved and the restriction thereof is bound to continue intact in the future. Though there could be various reasons, the following are found to be the main factors of such centuries old repressive experience.

One, the trajectories of political transition and the political culture of each government have created repressive environments. The transfer of power, particularly in the three most recent

governments, has been held only through force and bloody conflicts between or among rivalry groups or individuals. No single government in the history of Ethiopia has achieved power with the consent of the majority citizens. The new governance takes ground and establishes its reign on the grave of the predecessor, including the bureaucracy, political ideology, social value, administrative system, and etcetera. Moreover, governments have taken power based on ethnic orientations. Similarly, governments use sheer force, complicated bureaucracy, sophisticated surveillance systems, and legal instruments as the main suppression instruments to maintain their power.

Two, Ethiopia is a nation of religions as she has been an early adopter and propagator of three of the world's major religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, along with a variety of their sects. As the country's 2007 census indicated, more than 99% of the country's population is religious, and all aspects of life in Ethiopia are screened and portrayed by religion. The struggle for supremacy throughout the history of these religions has also been equipped with force and has cost the country any direction of life including freedom of expression. The very worst thing in relation to religion is that each religion has been used as an instrument for the political struggle and as a base for maintaining power.

Three, Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries. Specifically, about 85% of Ethiopians inhabit rural areas where illiteracy and ignorance is high. In addition, almost all resources, including media, have been controlled by some dominant groups or governments and urban elites. Hence, the majority of poor people have no access to education, media and information. Therefore, the main priority of society does not go beyond fulfilling their daily physiological needs, let alone being the owner of media and communication equipment or claiming the right to freedom of expression. Hence, in the Ethiopian context, the majority poor are the dominated, the stifled and the silenced, and are easily manipulated by the ideologies of political, economic and religious elites, and used as political instruments for the minority dominant groups.

Four, Ethiopia is a nation of groups, hence, a nation of rivalry, conflicts and wars. External forces also directly threaten the freedom of the Ethiopian population by directly deploying their forces, or by using their political and religious agents in and around the country, and indirectly

by creating ideological conflicts and galvanising suspicion among diversified Ethiopian societies. These situations have created a huge threat to freedom of expression, directly by foreign powers or indirectly by Ethiopian governments in the name of securing peace, protecting national security and sovereignty.

Based on these lessons, the researcher explored three main determining factors of this situation: the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*. The *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma* refers to the state or condition which shows absolute certainty of one or some on one issue, at some time or some place, and uncertainty in another time and place or by others at the same time and place. It is a state of lack of understanding about the world's controversial issues, or daily life issues. *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* indicates the conception of absolute self-centeredness and complete supremacy of one particular position and thought, and the undermining/oppression and even execution of other or alternative positions and ethnicities. *Narcissism* is the highest form of egocentrism and ethnocentrism characterised by extraordinary need for high recognition and admiration which is usually expressed by cynicism, force, brutality, disgracing and discrediting knowledge, wisdom and experience emanating from alternate groups. The thesis further revealed that these three determining or causal factors work by forming pyramid structures and creating an intricate web along with the social pyramid and pyramid of repressive instruments. This implies that repression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia originates from different sources that work in harmony, though it is primarily established on the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*.

Based on these findings, the researcher has developed the *Pyramid Trap Theory* that disclosed the multi-faceted and intricate nature of suppression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia. In addition, the researcher coined models that elaborate this theory, which the researcher has labelled the *Structure of Ethno-Luminary Repression* (Figure 7.1), *Structure of Di-spiral of Silence* (see Figure 7.2), *the Pyramid Trap Structure of Repression* (see Figure 7.3), *the Web of the Pyramid Trap* (Figure 7.4), and the *Structure of the Total Burden of Repression* (Figure 7.5) which show how repression in Ethiopia has been held. Indeed, as these models and the theory have been developed through a holistic analysis of life, and as the research has encompassed all parts of society including the bases, that is, the grassroots of society; it could potentially be

applied to any African context or beyond. Ethiopia could be an appropriate illustration for the study of free expression as it has experienced virulent dictatorship for many centuries, deployed with strict culture and religious hegemony, and filled with ethno-centric sentiments similar to many other countries.

8.2 Summary and contribution of chapters

Chapter One introduces the background of the research and background context of the country, indicates the framework of the research, identifies the statement of the problem, research questions and objectives. Indeed, this study aimed to examine the evolution of the practice of freedom of expression in Ethiopia, to identify the main threats to freedom of expression, to explore the main causal factors to such threats freedom of expression, and to indicate the prospect for freedom of expression in the country through a holistic analysis of the dynamics of the country, particularly during the three most recent governments of the country.

Chapter Two tries to assess international, regional and national practices of freedom of expression and tries to critically analyse different theories related to freedom of expression within the Ethiopian context. The assessment shows that though freedom of expression is viewed as a pre-existing and a fundamental human right by many scholars and human rights activists, and though it is respected by international and regional conventions and national legislation, the threats and restrictions have always existed internationally, and more specifically, in Ethiopia. Of course, the limitation and the threat differ from country to country or from context to context, and there is a lot of disagreement on the scope or limitation of the right to freedom of expression among different interest groups. In addition, practice at international level showed that freedom of expression has been mainly threatened by governments and political groups in the form of laws and regulation and in the name of protecting national security and sovereignty, impacted by cultural and religious pressures, and affected by group-think. Further, the analysis reflected that these conditions seem to be worst in Ethiopia.

Chapter Three deals with research methodology: it showed that this research used a qualitative research design, qualitative research approaches, techniques and methods. In addition, it indicted

that the nature of this research necessitated the use of more than one research method. That is, explanatory and exploratory methods were used and two fundamental types of research questions were addressed: “What has been occurring in relation to freedom of expression and why has this been going on?” Moreover, the study is a critical socio-historical analysis of evolution of freedom of expression in the three most recent governments of Ethiopia; and was conducted using a historical approach. This historical trace was also analysed using the critical discourse analysis approach to critically analyse the hegemonic socio-political practices along a range of time, that is, in the three most recent governments of the country. Further, as freedom of expression is an inherently interdisciplinary concept, the researcher took theoretical ideas, research methods and data from diverse fields of enquiry such as communication, history, politics, law and cultural and social theories. Hence, the researcher used several documents in different disciplines that were believed to be appropriate to describe the situation of freedom of expression of the country, particularly in the period of the three most recent governments. That is, a variety of data was taken from legal documents from each government, including the constitutions, proclamations, regulations, rules, law suits and policies; and much data was addressed from different governmental and non-governmental organisations. In addition, the researcher included ideas from documents that show cultural and religious practices such as religious doctrines and ethical principles and social norms. Moreover, metaphors/maxims/proverbs that exist in society and were believed to reflect the mass society’s mind-set regarding the issue were included into the menu of interpretation.

Chapter Four analyses the nature of freedom of expression in the Feudalist Imperial period. The analysis showed that as this government was the continuation of centuries old imperial system, those deep-seated traditional, religious and political forms that had long been rooted in the past were highly impactful on the socio-political features of this government. As the country’s centuries’ old socio-political trend, this government took power by force and resorted to violent mechanisms in ascertaining political power and domination. Except for the privileged few, the bulk of the people remained apolitical or with no or little say in any aspects of their life. The masses, including the poor tenancy, religious followers and females, were the muted or the dominated group. Therefore, most Ethiopians had long been captured by traditions deep-seated in their socio-political cultures that defined the relations of the state to society and religion to

society in authoritarian terms. The only politically active groups in every aspect of life were those in the upper-most hierarchy of the government and society, such as nobility, the clergy and males. For the subordinates to hold their own ideas, take decisions and perform actions by themselves, to challenge the ideas and practices of their superiors, to oppose policies, ideologies and thoughts generated from above were considered as a sin and crime. Accordingly, every thought was generated from above or from the centre and diffused from the top to the bottom and from the centre to the periphery. Particularly, the emperor and the imperial monarchy controlled every aspect of the state, including political power, from the centre to the local level; natural and material resources, the land; even the church, religious aspects and the media, as the media were the mouthpiece of the monarchy. Perhaps this situation, in addition to other external factors, raised ethnic nationalism questions, and, in turn, those questions galvanised regional and ethnic conflicts that further triggered human rights violations and restricted freedom of expression for national unity and security reasons. This shows that freedom of expression in such feudalist and imperial systems is highly restricted.

Chapter Five analyses the Socialist-Military regime. This regime ruled the new Ethiopia under an old motto. The *Derg*, the team of the lower and military personnel, took power from the centuries old imperial reign by totally wiping out the Feudalist-Imperial system. The monarchy had restricted and suppressed freedom of opinion or expression claiming it was necessary to protect the nation and their national religion. Similarly, the *Derg* proclaimed “Ethiopia Tikidem”, which literally means *Ethiopia first*, and demolished all thoughts and claims to rights. In the process, hundreds of thousands of lives, particularly the young and educated, were wiped out. This implies that everything, including human lives and dignity, were less worthy than the revolution and socialist political ideology, let alone freedom of expression. Indeed, the *Derg*'s steps brought a paradigm shift in about 3000 years of the political, social, economic and cultural scenario of the country. However, all physical and human recourses, institutions and associations were under total control of the military junta and their ideology. They tried to rule the new nation using the old strategy; there was no rule of law; there was no democratic process or multiparty system; there were no free and/or private media and freedom of expression. The *Derg* perceived that they could achieve their goals entirely by force much like their predecessors and left the nation absolutely stifled. The *Derg*'s regime was simply a transformation from imperial

aristocracy to totalitarian autocracy. Generally, this period was the period of cultural and political dilemma, bloody conflict among political and social groups, poverty and brutal suppression. Hence, freedom of expression was under one of the darkest periods in the history of the country. This implies that socialist ideology and militarism have ideological and structural foundations that completely contrast with freedom of expression or one can simply say that they are clear enemies of freedom of expression.

Chapter Six deals with the ethnic-based the so called ‘Revolutionary-Democratic’ government which also brought another paradigm shift in the country by demolishing all previous ideological and structural establishments of the country, particularly, national unity, which had been set since the middle of the 19th century, and replacing it with strong and extended ethnicism. Accordingly, the nation has been divided into ethnic lines and the society has been labelled as kith and enemies. In addition, the government controlled almost everything: politics, the economy, media, religion, social associations and groups by using the concept of ‘Democratic-Centralisation’. That means, all thoughts are generated at the central government controlled by a group from only one ethnic group using very complicated networking, bureaucracy, and restrictive and complex legislation. Any who are identified as kith have unrestricted rights to access all benefits, including access to economic resources, the right to own media, the right to access information and the right to expression without limit. But, others labelled as enemies have been almost absolutely restricted access to many of their basic human rights, or intimidated. Specifically, the media and communication systems in this regime were controlled only by the government and government-affiliated groups and individuals, and shaped in a way to serve the wishes and whims of those in power. Societal divisions through ethnicity, religion and political ideologies, and the control of everything by the government and pro-government groups have created a stifled environment and a culture of self-censorship in any aspects of life, including among journalists, experts and academics in the country. This implies that ethno-centrism and group thinking, which were dominant effects of limiting freedom in Ethiopian societies before the middle of the 19th century, were resumed and played a huge role in restricting freedom of expression.

Chapter Seven synthesises socio-political history, practice of freedom of expression and theoretical perspectives on freedom of expression. This synthesis exposed the main threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia and explored the determining causes of those threats. Therefore, based on those threats and determining factors of those threats, the researcher developed models that depict repression processes, freedom of repression and a theory that explained the nature of repression of freedom of expression in Ethiopia. The analysis revealed that threats to freedom of expression in Ethiopia were threatened by governments, religious and cultural hegemonies, poverty and related factors such as lack of education and information, and conflicts, wars and rivalry. These threats also originated from factors of the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*. The analysis exposed that these three main causal factors work in the form of networked webs and forming a pyramid that goes with the social pyramid and repressive instruments network, which the researcher called the *Pyramid Trap* on freedom of expression. This implies that restrictions on freedom of expression do not usually originate from one source or from one direction, but emanate from different bodies and factors, and work as an intricate web and as a vicious circle. However, the basic foundation for all factors is lack of knowledge and understanding about the works of this sophisticated and confusing world/universe, which is indicated as the *Certainty-Uncertainty Dilemma*.

8.3 Main findings

First, the research identifies four main threats to freedom of expression: governments, cultural and religious hegemony, poverty and lack of education and information, and conflicts, wars and rivalry. Second, the research indicates that the nature and extent of suppression or restriction on freedom of expression in Ethiopia remained the same regardless of government or politico-economic changes through history, particularly during the three most recent governments of the country. Third, the research reveals the real causal factors of those four threats originate from three main factors: the *Certainty-Uncertainty-Dilemma*, *Ethno-Luminary-Thought* and *Narcissism*. It also elaborates that these three factors are forming an intricate web and can be formulated as a pyramid. Accordingly, the researcher has developed a theory named the *Pyramid Trap Theory* that depicts the nature of repression. Additionally, the researcher developed models that elaborate this theory which are labelled the *Structure of Ethno-Luminary Repression*, *Structure of Di-spiral of Silence*, the *Pyramid Trap Structure of Repression*, the *Web of the*

Pyramid Trap, and the *Structure of the Total Burden of Repression*. Fourth, this thesis tries to criticise, at least in the Ethiopian context, other theories such as the Authoritarian Press Theory and the Spiral of Silence Theory, among others. Fifth, the research indicates that the nature of the repression of freedom of expression has remained intact for centuries, and repression of expression in Ethiopia will continue unless those causal factors threatening freedom of expression are addressed in some way.

8.4 Limitations of the study and proposals for further research

The goal of the study was limited to analysing the evolution of the practice of freedom of expression in Ethiopia, identifying the main threats to freedom of expression, exploring the main causal factors to such threats freedom of expression, and indicating the prospect for freedom of expression in the country. Hence, though these four basic questions were addressed, that is, although the extent of change or evolution in the practice of freedom of expression was described, the main threats of expression were identified, the main causal factors of those threats were explored, and the prospects of freedom of expression in Ethiopia were indicated, the appropriate remedies to the problem of repression or to the threats to freedom and the solutions to eliminating those threats has not been identified, hence, further research is needed to fill this gap.

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