

## **An Investigation on the Perspectives of Political Economy: The Case of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC)**

**Ayele Addis Ambelu<sup>1\*</sup>, Adem Chanie Ali<sup>2</sup>, and Terje Steinulfsson Skjerdal<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Woldia University, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Department of Journalism and Communication, Lecturer and Ph.D. candidate in Bahir Dar University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Journalism and Communication

<sup>2</sup>Bahir Dar University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Journalism and Communication, Associate Professor of Communication

<sup>3</sup>NLA University Colleges, Associate Professor in Media Studies, Kristiansand, Norway

**Article History:** Received: January 11, 2021; Accepted: May 17, 2021; Published: December 14, 2021

**Abstract:** This article is framed to analyze the role of political economy in the African broadcast media in the case of Ethiopia. The research implemented a qualitative approach, mainly document analysis and in-depth interviews whereby a purposive sampling technique was used to generate relevant data. The data analysis technique for the study was drawn from the theoretical underpinnings of the theory of political economy. The research findings reveal that the Ethiopian government has exerted direct and indirect influence over the broadcast media through co-opting the political economy of the state, most of which were employing political-oriented regulatory bodies and regulations on the mainland. The political economy has shaped the media, and their interactions with the orientation of political structure, ideology, and function. As a result, the state broadcast media is facing the challenge of intrusion by the state. This study shows that efforts to reform state-owned public broadcast media into a public service broadcaster were never accomplished due to political economy factors, lack of political will, and tight regulatory environment. The main recommendations which are emphasized in the reform of the government's political economy, party ideology, regulations, and regulatory bodies are imperative for the future free and public media development.

**Keywords:** Broadcast media; Ethiopia: Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation; Ideology; Political economy

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## 1. Introduction

Media is the reflection of the political system. Boyd-Barrett (1995) explains the political economy approaches media study and compares it with the media structure and power studies approach. Boyd sketches a profound picture of how the political economy is reshaping the ecosystem for media institutions, internal and external arrangements. In addition to this, the political economy of the media studies the power relations (political economy) that constitute the mass media to its public consumers (Flew and Smith, 2014). However, the concept has been to analyze the political relations between the mass media system, the institution, and the wider social/economic structure in which it operates (e.g., role of the state), with a focus on understanding both the political emergence and current state of the media environment (Mosco, 2011).

Blondel (1976: 13) identifies the frame of political economy analysis of the 'media main battlefields', each dominating the political system at different times. However, political economy plays a major role in determining the existence, nature, and character of media in a country. Ibrahim (1989) argues whatever the stated motive of establishing media is, not a neutral agent in political economy and ideological rule of the system. Ibrahim (1989) claims that politics perform a political economy function that helps ultimately in either conferring legitimacy on existing arrangements or questioning or offering alternatives. So, this is one reason why the government controls the media.

To focus on this point, the theoretical insights afforded from the Regulation School of political economy, particularly its development in the work of Boyd-Barrett (1995), will be considered. In general, the theoretical framework depicts the political economy of the state. In brief, political economy is taken to refer to the power relations inscribed in media systems (and structurally in the state/media relationship) that have causal consequences for multiple areas of political experience. According to Galperin (2004), political economy in communications analysis asks the broad question of who gets to say what to whom in what form, for what purpose, with what effect, and why? Part of this concept is shaped by the balance between state and media organization of communications/media and the forms of state intervention in the media system. So, the political economy provides a critical system in understanding contexts and structures in media and communication studies.

Although this assumption provides a basis for understanding the relationship between media and politics, the presence of political frameworks and economy powers imply a certain level of the country's media economy. Additionally, the broadcast media sectors have labored under the 'legitimate constant pressure' of regulatory bodies. To this end, scholars have questioned the influences of political economy on the media (Lunt and Livingstone, 2013).

Specifically, Tiruneh (2017), Wodeneh and Mekasha (2018), and UNDP (2019) have studied the relationship between media and politics. Contemporary media studies tend to focus on the influence of politics on media development under a specific political and economic system. The existing study, despite somewhat limited (local) literature on the subject, adds a beneficial literature component to Ethiopia by placing this research squarely in the field of media.

According to the reports of UNDP (2019), the main ups and downs consistent with the regime are considered to be determinants of the legal provisions and the media failures. Several questions arise from these findings: how does the political economy shape the media, their function, role, and governance? And ultimately, what were the results of the media sector being subjected to undue influence?

In the study of media model, function, and system in Ethiopia, *vis-a-vis* the current political economy system, there remain relatively few studies dealing with application derived from institutional structures (Gartley, 2003). Among key issues in prior research is the role of the media in the democratic process (Wodeneh and Mekasha, 2018), media policy and regulation (Freedom House, 2016; Tiruneh, 2017), and the structure of media systems and the patterns of government regulation (Tiruneh, 2017).

According to Lunt and Livingstone (2003) and Norris (2010), the scarcity of comparative works is due to many conceptual and methodological inconsistencies in prior research. Related especially to the knowledge of the researcher, data sets on the regulatory and regulation framework of the media are currently available. As pointed out by Tiruneh (2017), one of the major reasons for the absence of local work is the paucity of suitable methods for clear conceptualizations and assessments of core concepts such as political economy, regulations, and regulators.

Thus, the broadcast media sector is under the 'legitimate constant pressure' of the political economy (Moges, 2019; Skjerdal and Moges, 2020). Scholars have questioned whether the political economy is automatically supported when freedom of broadcasting is guaranteed or whether, instead, the political economy is affected. After the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power, the Ethiopian media space has raised controversies on many aspects. Although scholars have previously put forth studies on the media laws of different countries, it is still open for adequate study.

Bent (2018: 2) noted that traditional media in Ethiopia, over the past ten years, had experienced a change from regulation to re-regulation, while the media had gone from strict-regulation to authoritarian regulation. Bent (2018) had pointed out Ethiopian media landscape research, the conflict between laws and media; the conflict between advancing and limiting technological development; and the conflict between local value and international standards. In his recent study on the application of criminal law on the media, Bent called for less control of free speech and reasserted the importance of the government to keep a comfortable distance from the 'government place of ideas'. In this case, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) reflects the nation's political life to its media organization arrangement and interaction among its rules, as a media engaged in the political economy. Under the circumstances, EBC was established to address the national audience through such content as news, documentaries, entertainment, and language programs and channels (EBC, 2014). Notwithstanding EBC's public media model, it was considered to be too identical to the political system, as a state-owned media model of the political economy and not general enough to be a model of public media (Mekasha, 2007; Lencho, 2013; Reta, 2013). In several studies, EBC was criticized in its journalism practice for being heavily dependent on government or not adequately reflecting the standpoints of the public interest as an independent media (European Union Delegation, 2015; Kemal, 2013).

These pitfalls of the national media are motivating to investigate as the main source of rationality in relating to examining the system of politics under the media system. Besides this, the research examines and tends to assemble the cause of the context of the broadcast media (the political economy) influences, further interpreting the narrative of the politics of the media, and their consequences.

However, these constructed types of studies need longitudinal constructive qualitative research. Is broadcasting in Ethiopia developing in a manner with the political economy of the state in the media? What challenges are the broadcasters facing in this respect? These are questions of critical concern.

In the paradigm of structuralism, the concept of political economy is that hegemonic ideologies are imposed from above which one can only live and experience through the categories classifications, and frameworks within the politics. Fantini and Puddu (2016) define the political economy of the media as a set of beliefs about media standards with which producers and policymakers explain perceived media structure and meaning. According to these scholars, the media shapes are structured from the understanding of what different forms of media including ideology, model, philosophy, structure, regulation, and regulatory bodies entail.

Mosco (2011) has come up with a single adequate definition of political economy. The term 'political economy' refers to character, sets of rules, and values concerning political, ideological, regulatory, and financial life that govern the institutional activities through which existence is constructed. Mosco (2009) principally believes in the construction of a political economy that organizes, forms, and develops the work environment of the society.

Althusser's (1971) conception of political economy is important when analyzing how the media is shaped through political ideologies. Hence, political economy can be regarded as a distinct recognition of work relations and organization formation. According to Althusser, each aspect of the work is controlled by political economy, functioning through 'the repressive state apparatus (e.g. the regulation and regulatory forces) and 'the ideological state apparatus (e.g. the media) (Althusser, 1971). Political economy can also be seen as a channel through which the ruling state tries to deceive and control the media function. Regarding Thompson (1984: 4) political economy is "linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power—to maintain domination... by the ruling, legitimating, or distorting those relations."

One of the assertions of political economy theory is that the media supports the status quo by promoting the ideas and views of the ruling class, or the elite (Davis and Baran, 2006). Ultimately, the media keep the status quo by being pro-government and possibly promoting party lines (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). This viewpoint about the media serving the interests of politics is a dominant theme in media and communication scholarship. In this study, as demonstrated earlier, the political system in Ethiopia is influential in driving the media environment; hence the political economy views need to be considered with the media system to determine whether the government system dominates the media environment. Thus, the data from the in-depth interviews and the document analysis conducted in this study are analyzed to investigate the implication of the role of the broadcast media in the current Ethiopian political economy.

From a political economy perspective, the current political order appears convenient for developing countries as they acquire media systems from the government. However, this system may fulfill the political needs the same as the normative media functions. In addition, the political economy also examines the relationship between the media and the political structure. In this regard, an analysis of the political system, the institutional structure is essential to determine how the political economy factors shape the operations of the media. For instance, political economists argue that the overriding goal of profit-making in the American media has led to the commercialization of media content aimed at attracting audiences (Beeson, 2009). Thus, from a political economy perspective, the media, specifically in Ethiopia, is part of the broader ideology of the political system.

Overall, the literature underpinning this study is the need for a deeper understanding and analysis of the phenomenon of the political economy in Ethiopia and its impact on the media. Based on the problems enumerated above, the researcher proposes the following research questions:

1. How does the political economy of the country make the media environment?
2. How does the political economy arrange the program, structure, and operational system of the media?
3. What are the main challenges of the political economy about the broadcast media in general, and EBC in particular?

## **2. Research Methods**

As an exploratory method of study, a qualitative approach was the most suitable approach as qualitative research deals with the exploration and understanding of meanings given to certain phenomena (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). Qualitative research is focused on how data sources give meaning to events happening around them. A qualitative approach facilitates an understanding of reality from the perspective of the meanings. This study used descriptive analysis to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Thus, the research was conducted using document analysis and in-depth interviews.

A multistage non-probability sampling technique was used to select appropriate samples. Purposive sampling was implemented for document analysis. The researcher used policy, government report, speeches and secondary source type of materials for the research. Following, convenience sampling was used to contact informants for the in-depth interview. Higher officials, journalists and policy makers were interviewed. The reason was that convenience sampling is the most popular in media

studies focusing on a specific person that involves primary data collection from professionals, decision-makers, and resourceful persons of that industry. The researcher seeks information that is best for giving the required information. Moreover, the purposive sampling strategy was used for selecting documents (Patton, 2002). The researcher believed that he can obtain adequate information by using sound judgment which resulted in saving time and money. Furthermore, in this study, the broader issue of the broadcast media's political economy of the state in the media in Ethiopia was explored.

### **3. Results and Discussions**

#### **3.1. The Power of Political Economy in the Making of Media Environment**

The power of the political economy in the making of media exists in leadership, model, organization structure, and production arrangements. In-depth interview informant 3 from higher officials of the current government believes that building a peaceful and democratic system is the foundation of the media's existence in the struggle for the creation of a well-informed Society (Higher official, personal interview, Addis Ababa, 2019). In this regard, the Ethiopian media policy is derived from the government strategy and programs of the country. According to the in-depth interview informant 3, EBC has major roles to play in supporting the national efforts to build a new Ethiopia.

The management of the broadcast media is appointed by the federal political authorities. Despite this, many EBC's management staff is or has not become professional managers who attempt to maximize editorial independence within the given limitations. Similarly, in-depth interview 8 explained the ambition to become a world-class Media Company (In-depth interview informant 8 from EBC, 2020). Therefore, within the EBC leadership process, media monitors expect internal and external, media board leaders to measure only the performance of the government's objectives. Thus, "The change of the EBC comes only when the political ideology of the country and the democratic process and independent institutional structure are created" (In-depth interview informant 6 from EBC board of management, 2019).

In addition, there are political structure-oriented program formats that fill the air. 90% of the format of Radio Ethiopia and the television medium are linked to the government institutional Policy such as Agriculture, Health, Women, Children, HIV/AIDS, Investment, Trade, etc. Besides, In-depth interview informant 7 reported that a well-developed professional content-based program is not visible in the media station (Journalist from EBC, 2019). EBC's program logo and Id most likely derive from the government institutional structure. It can offer some constructive thoughts about the choices that EBC must make in building their organizational structures, and show how our recommendations would appear in the EBC context. The other regulatory body of EBC is Civil/public service also the final executive in the structure and human resource size, scale of the organization.

The organization is large and complex, and will be undergoing substantial change. Hence, maintaining familiar relationships will help retain stability. From this, it can be inferred that the organization looks to keep the structure as flat as possible to assist timely decision-making, to make communications across the entity swift and clear, and to maximize the budget available for the program. These days, EBC appears to be a relatively flat structure but it is not complete. These structures detail what needs to be done in each functional area, rather than showing that it could do the right work. The center of EBC structure rounds in the program, medium, marketing, finance, and technology.

EBC program structure incorporates all existing structures and adds some more, representing a broadening of existing program themes. It is illustrative as to how a program department might be organized. The Director of Radio, Television, and Digital Media has the power to oversee all broadcasting or 'output' departments. Yet, a more advanced structure could be developed as a separate Director of Program that oversees program production and commissioning. So the structure by itself is a problem under the making of media.

State radio and television programs including news programming have focused on development, while the opposition has sought a political slice of the airwaves (EBC, 2017). More political debate and criticism are being featured in the media. In this regard, the Ethiopian state is clamping down on the media. Through this prism, the explanation fails to address Ethiopian media on its terms.

As a result, one of the structural issues addressed by in-depth interview informants was that, “the work of EBC’s various departments was not organized in a manner that permitted proactive collaboration. This has hindered departmental synergies within the corporation and contributes to lowering the quality of production and to lost economic opportunities” (In-depth interview informant 10 from EBC, 2019).

The main characteristics of the political economy in the Ethiopian media shape the structure and working atmosphere of the media. There are several media controls in the political economy mechanisms of Ethiopia. According to the above in-depth informants and selected media related documents, the major influences are impacted in content, technology, professionalism, structure, management, and rights of the media.

The main effects of the political economy in the case of EBC are listed below.

1. Ideological influence
2. Regulators Influence
3. Financial Influence
4. Influence on the formatting of the program
5. Influence on reporting angle
6. Influence on ways of presentation
7. Influence on agenda selection
8. Influence on information gathering
9. Influence on ways of production
10. Influence on coverage of the area and language
11. Legal influence
12. Government officials' influence
13. Intense media laws and regulators

As part of this study, the following three political factors were found to have constrained the operations of EBC: (1) state ownership of EBC (2) unlimited interference of regulatory bodies, and (3) the lack of clear regulatory frameworks. System of the government, finance, and regulations are central political factors to the analysis of the media because of the centrality of national governments in determining national media systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) through legislation, finance, and the introduction of media technologies. As demonstrated in this article, the Ethiopian Government spearheaded the structure, controlled the role and functions of broadcast media, and enacted the legislation guiding broadcasting in Ethiopia, and funds for EBC. Specifically, EBC was launched as a state-owned broadcaster which has remained unlicensed contrary to the requirements of the then Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority in the Ethiopian broadcast service proclamation about the need to license all broadcasters in Ethiopia. The viewpoint of the political system in Ethiopia is that ownership of EBC by the state occurred because of several factors. First, the Ethiopian broadcast media was already in existence as a government body. Second, a broadcast media service as a political system orientation for Ethiopia was considered to be a ruling party ideology, demonstrated by its inclusion on the part of the government body. Contrary to the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (2012) statement about launching a national broadcast media service as a state enterprise, which the establishment proclamation (858/2014) referred to as a public service media, the Ethiopian Government launched it as a Government department. If EBC was launched as a government institution as stated in the five years strategic plan (2015), EBC would be inconsistent with the normative media theory paradigm (Mosco, 2009), neo-liberalism, and UNESCO’s ideals of media operating as commercial enterprises in a free, independent and pluralistic context (Banda, 2007).

Thus, contrary to development media theory that focuses on a free-market approach, the economic conditions in Ethiopia are more favorable to state ownership of a national broadcast media such as EBC.

According to the 357 policy document analysis, the commutative of the impact of the political economy are listed below.

1. Eroded editorial independence of the media
2. Increased self-censorship
3. Increased institutional censorship
4. Increased harassment of journalists
5. Increased intimidation of journalists
6. Increased mono voice of the media (lack of balance)
7. Increased support of government policy
8. Working in the conveyance of a positive image (lack of pluralism in idea)
9. Supporting only ruling party national development
10. Withholding information
11. Polarization from the public, extreme support or extremism oppose
12. Increased monopoly of the government in technology, information, ownership
13. Increased jamming of opposing views
14. Imposed legal censorship
15. Developed lack of trust in the media
16. Outdated technology shifts
17. Outdated political structure, including traditional media structure
18. Political plan orientation-expected output and plan
19. Increased strategically arrangements
20. Limitations of the right to know and quality of knowledge,
21. Limitations of access to information

The number of media regulation articles, restricted media rules of the country, program, policy, and plan of the government shape the political economy of the media. Regulatory bodies are controlled or censored in media activities. The selected 357 policy, regulation and regulatory document sources shown that the main change of the media character shift comes from the Ethiopian political economy of the state.

1. Citizenship reporting shifts to patrician of the media and journalists
2. Professional orientation shifts to political orientation
3. Institutional orientation shifts to party organization orientation shift
4. Media plan to report shifts to sectarian plan
5. Policy advocacy shifts to government reporting
6. Development journalism shifts to development pr
7. Truth shifts to propaganda or scientific reason dominated in personal opinion
8. Plan reporting shifts to event reporting
9. Professional media format shifts to government structure as a format
10. Balance shifts to imbalance
11. Persons are more important than the written law
12. Public property is a party or government property
13. State media is a party media
14. Develop perception of private media is an obstacle to ideological choice
15. Revolutionary democracy into front democracy
16. The program nature and format of a program are similar to the government structure and are reflection of the minister's office (e.g. Agriculture, Health, Science, and Technology).

In the meantime, government officials' influence is deemed especially high in EBC, underscoring the persistently close ties between appointments in the public media and the political sphere. This

impression is underpinned by a Human Rights Watch report of 2015, stating that harassment and intimidation of journalists in Ethiopia and abroad by government officials play a crucial role in making journalists self-imposed limit to their reporting. There are also reports of family members of critical journalists being targeted or harassed. The same report points out those independent journalists were also threatened by Diaspora-run and opposition-affiliated media outlets (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Approval rates of those journalists for whom it is important "to support government policy" and "to convey a positive image of the political leadership" (56.5 % and 49 % respectively) are also high (Skjerdal, 2017: 23). Even more, respondents declared to actively support national development within their work, giving an idea of the prevailing concept of developmental journalism that has also been endorsed officially by the Ethiopian government for the last decade (EUD, 2015).

In 2008, the Ethiopian government issued a policy paper aiming at anchoring the principle of developmental journalism in the public media's editorial policies. However, this is not so unusual given that development activities in Ethiopia are higher in the newsworthy activities than they might be in other countries where "national development" is not an everyday issue.

The final difficulty facing the EBC media is the obstacles set up by political powers confronting journalists in their work. The first of these is withholding information. In Ethiopia where there is no tradition of public information and where the least administrative fact is considered to be a state secret, the practice remains widespread, especially in regimes under pressure (Monarchy, Military, and Federal Democratic Ethiopia). But, state intervention is often more direct. In EBC, the state continues to impose censorship on the media practices up until the recent change of regime, a series of suspensions caused the transition of Abiy Ahmed, the first leader to open the space of the media in a while, and regularly hit EBA. Moreover, in press cases, the executive exerts strong pressure on the justice system to secure heavy penalties or to submit infringements to legal proceedings.

Mainly, other pressures are felt besides regulation and regulatory bodies' procedures. Thus, in the EBC, journalists are sometimes arrested and tortured by the police, intelligence officers, and prosecutors. But the information is not public, due to the heavy censor law of not exposing the special investigation of intelligence. More than 500 journalists were imprisoned and exiled during the 28 years in power of EPRDF (Mersa Media Institute [MMI], 2019).

The state-owned public broadcaster led a committed campaign in favor of Prime Minister Abiy hardly providing his challengers the chance to come to the party. In a few exceptional cases, they were confronted with competition and a multiplicity of voices and approaches to make some changes: on one hand by opening up to all the various voices and, on the other, by moving towards structural transformation.

Despite the political change in status, many ministers continue to see the state media as a weapon in their operation, demanding that it covers a certain ceremony, demanding airtime to justify or clarify itself at appropriate times, and calling on editors to prohibit the handling of sensitive material. Efforts have been made to enable the telecommunications and media sector to adapt to the dynamics and rapidly changing demands of the global and national environment, which are currently undergoing major global challenges. Therefore, the sector needs to adjust, end, and prepare for the next mission in terms of national and public mission.

Most of Ethiopia's state media are created from top-down drives, in which the will of officials prevails not that of professionals who are responsible for the work. The main challenge of the Ethiopian political economy is its incapability of creating trust. Trust in terms of institutional, media, political, and communication is not well-developed. Each goal of the political economy ties the pluralistic idea to the same. Human beings are not factory products that are expected to be products in the same shape, depth, and nature.

The wrong direction of the political economy is blocking a free environment in several mechanisms of censorship or restrictions. However, free discussion helps the people to build the common nation of the country. The influences of the political economy impact the media to develop the professional



sphere waiting outside aids or partnerships. Most of the free press was established and demolished in 2005, with the government labeling the media landscape as destructive and anti-democracy institutions.

In 2009 the skyrocketing media equipment tax price for the media was a form of censorship. The teeth of the government liquefy the media. Their content is a copy-paste of government speeches, handouts, and reports. The state media is flooded by communication or PR reports. The nature of the media remains the spokesperson of the media. PR documentaries and PR news releases and reports were utilized as a first-hand factual account. The beginning and the end of the news and program production were the single sources or government officials.

The linear nature of the media excludes the audiences to watch and trust the program. The big gap of the state media is this lack of trust. The in-depth interview informant asserts that the government offices and public relations experts are substituted for the journalists' role. The media shifts to development journalism and development communication function. The state media ignored the role of journalists. Because of this, the production failed to achieve professional quality and scientific reporting. The rationale behind the existence of such restrictive laws was keeping the status quo of the government.

Mostly the media landscape is an orientation of leaders. The leaders decide the destiny of the country and the philosophy of politics. In-depth interview informant 9 said that "Meles' repressive laws controlled the system in the name of protecting the national interest of the ruling party" (In-depth interview informant 10 from EBC journalists, 2019). During the Hailemariam period of Meles's legacy, things were not changing. After the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power while reforming the number of media laws. The new CSO law incorporates fundamental improvements of annual funding restrictions and regulatory hurdles on registration and membership. It has laid basic building blocks for a system of participatory democracy where organized and informed civic groups can lead citizen participation in formulating public policy and safeguarding governance.

The political economy of the state creates a media regulatory establishment that is -government-orientated. The public institutional orientations have yet to be fulfilled, For instance, federal government agencies whose leaders are appointed by government spokespersons and are approved by the leader of the country have the right to issue or not to issue a broadcast license (Article 9). If you are lucky to get the license, the government tells you what equipment to buy and issues a certificate of approval for your purchases (Article 7). Then, if a government official or a member of the public complains about the content of your broadcasts, you are investigated by government officials who probably have never worked as journalists, and the punishment reaches USD350–3,500 (Article 45).

At the highest level, a state official decides to press charges and a government-salaried prosecutor takes you to court under the 2005 criminal code—where you'll be forced to defend your case before a court that is heavily influenced by the government. Finally, a guilty verdict puts you behind bars, giving the broadcast authority the legal mandate to confiscate all your broadcast equipment and property citing Article 46 of the Broadcasting Proclamation.

Quality journalism is the rationale for the very existence of free media. Everyone is responsible for building quality media and professionalism. Maintaining a dialogue with the public by delegating an independent ombudsman to investigate complaints is critical. It is suggested that the ombudsman include respected members of the public, journalism professionals, and academicians. Due to this, there is no public journalism and public trusted institution. The profession is not respected in the culture of society and the government. This is also the result of a lack of professional freedom. Professional freedom comes out not from the professionals but from the political economy of the state. The rearrangement of political economy and ensuring professional freedom is a key determinant of the fate of Ethiopian journalism or media development.

### 3.2. Power of Political Economy in the Program, Structure, and Content Production

The broadcast media plays a traditional wholesale role fully funded and controlled by the government. In addition, EBC has five desks regarding the information coordination departments. In turn, the departments are classified according to the type of media (radio, TV, and online), by content (news, program, documentary), by profession (technical, supportive, and administration), by level (top, middle and lower management, and workers), by media function (entertainment, news, education, and documentary), by specialization (business, sport), by position (reporter, editor or manager), and by supportive staffs (marketing, PR, and administration staffs).

It has become popular for EBC entertainment to clone the format of the program in the frame of government structure. In the running order of EBC, *Tourism, sport, culture* (ቱሪዝም፣ስፖርት፣ባህል) of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation radio and TV program cloned *Tourism and culture minister, sports commission* which immediately became the “entertainment section of the government structure” and led the “cultural promotion”. Meanwhile, *drama* (ድራማ) and *music* (ዘፈንምርጫ፣ፈታኝሰጥን) of EBC radio and TV outlets all copied the national theater mission and vision of EBC cloned from *the motto of the government show “diversity is beauty with unity”*.

Today, EBC is the beginning of an unprecedented “educational fever” that emerged in the Ethiopian radio and TV industry. EBC’s program format of the presentation cloned the policy and names of ministerial institutions. *Agriculture (Masa)* of EBC copied Ministry of Agriculture; *Health Minister* of EBC media outlets imitated *ministry of health and health policy* of Ethiopia; *Diplomacy, education, industry*, (ዲፕሎማሲ፣ትምህርት፣ኢንዱስትሪ) of EBC radio and TV cloned *government organizations*. TV and radio shows claiming “the government structure” and “policy and strategy” continued to appear on the air. Their formats and contents were almost the same.

Why did the “cloning wind” blast the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation? As mentioned above, mass media in Ethiopia were required to become more financially independent. Thus, there was a growing pressure of considering broadcast content in the context of the political economy. This issue was the main one to contribute to an imitator phenomenon in Ethiopia. Therefore, it was more efficient to borrow a successful experience to advance the services. Unfortunately, it became a fatal flaw for the further development of Ethiopian Television. ETV’s programming was inspired by the government structure.

Most of the programs were copied untidily and ideological and party-oriented, others were cloned blindly and remained just pathetic parodies of institutional and government structure oriented. The problem was that the latter lacked any professional journalistic value. News and program of EBC show the structure of the political system such as ideological, institutional, financial orientation, and others. Being focused on imitating formats, radio and TV producers forgot about innards: they did not insert professional values and morals into their programs.

The EBC was succeeded due to embracing ethical elements adopted from the government civil service structure different from the professional standards. The example of reflecting the structure of the government in media format demonstrates that if to add political values to formats of national media products, successful cloning is possible in the sphere of the Democratic Development political economy. This, in some sense, may be defined as the “golden” rule of copying.

Unfortunately, EBC producers did follow the rules to run and their programs came from the political system. In-depth interview informant 8 said that propagandizing any news and program became a critical weakness of the broadcast which brought Ethiopia’s television and radio outlets to a rather low point (In-depth interview informant 8 from EBC management, 2019).

The political economy and ideology of the state format were widely blamed for their contribution to the problem of professional journalism. The Ethiopian government started battling the media programs inspired by government institutions. The board of EBC or EBA took measures against “low-taste” and “promotion” state-sponsored programs and issued a directive calling them to promote of a

government plan, open discussions of the effectiveness of the government plan matters, and make-up of positive stories (In-depth interview informant 7 from board member of EBC, 2020).

As the officials stepped in, *leaders' orientation* increased its focus on the image building of higher officials and drew attention to their devotion to leaders' duty. The origins of development journalism ideology or political economy in the media cloning in Ethiopia are undoubtedly related to the democratic development political economy of the state, revolutionary democracy ideology of the party, and policy and strategy of the government. The most important reason mentioned by the informant why this phenomenon emerged is the aim of the ruling party Ethiopian leaders' mindset and their role in the society (In-depth interview informant 6, 2020).

Throughout history, media in Ethiopia have always been influenced by the government and oriental culture, shifting from authoritarian, communist, and developmental to leaders-oriented. According to EPRDF's 28 years of reports, traditional soft-spoken and submissive media exemplify the ideals of the government (Mersa Media Institute [MMI], (2019). The media were taught to obey the regulation, regulatory bodies before establishment, and the system after getting a license, and the political economy as a working space (Busch, 2017). For many years, the media belonged to the state and could not have any self-determination or independence.

In contrast to the clones of EBC's current structure, the news program shows in Ethiopia were more considerate towards political values. Political structure-grown glossy programs, including the Ethiopian government versions of policy and institution titles, are not entirely unlike glossy formats elsewhere: they also broadcast a strong mix of new media, radio, and TV as well as the five single formats (drama, testimonial, interview, discussion, and demonstration). However, the degree of liberalism taught, sexual content, and discussion of sexual liberty is not entertained in the program and formats. It is taboo for Ethiopian society and the media. The style of presentation is in favor or against the opposition's viewpoints of the EBC. In-depth interview informant 4 from EBC higher officials said that:

The channel will offer mixed programming, but broadcast considerably more news and current affairs in radio Ethiopia and FM programs than those ETV1 (News and Documentary), ETV2 (Entertainment), and ETV 3 (Languages) channels solely focusing on News and Documentary, Entertainment and Languages. Owing to administration links to the ruling party, EBC is usually the first channel to air breaking news (In-depth interview informant 4, 2019).

Generally, EBC's editorial policies reflect the principles and ideas of developmental journalism which were repeatedly endorsed by the Ethiopian government about the country's media sector (Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, 2014). Its editorial line aims at supporting the government's policies in nation-building, poverty reduction, and economic development. This becomes explicit when EBC states that it intends to "promote and support National Economic, Political and Social policies to achieve national consensus on constitutional values and the role of the developmental state." (EBC)

Interview informant voiced concern that:

EBC heavily censors certain programs, which were recorded before a crowded live audience. What the in-depth interview assumed was that how come a 3hr taping has to be reduced to an average of 1hr air time? Although journalists do not have the freedom of editing, the way productions are handled at EBC creates the possibility of questionable editing of the interviews or panel discussions (In-depth interview 11, 2018).

Therefore, the most important thing for any media is trust, and to win the hearts and minds of the audiences programs that are recorded before a live audience has to follow a system that doesn't create a vacuum for such allegations. It is now up to the informant to express themselves, and the job of the host to guide the panelist to be short and to the point with their thoughts.

In-depth interview informant 5, however, says that "the result of this intervention is yet to be measured by audiences' reaction: most programs in EBC have increased their credibility among social leaders and commentators, who now seemed more willing to appear on-air." In-depth interview informant 2 adds:

We are doing well in terms of entertainment and sports currently. The music of the various national anthems has made every Ethiopian aware of it. Today it is good that we all see the folk music that emanates in Ethiopian sentiment. It's also a great job to have 24 hours of added time and a lot of channels opening up; we have the option (2019).

### 3.3. The Challenges of the Political Economy in the Media

The research found several tight spots in structure, ownership, orientation ideology, and administration of the media in the context of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. The main spaces of EBC's dilemma are described in the following table.

Table 1. Organizational dilemma of the EBC

No.	Sources of dilemma	Versus/indications of the dilemma	
1	Structure	Professionalism	Civil Service of the state
2	Orientation	Institutional	Professional
3	Ownership	State	Public
4	Ideology	Development	Liberal
5	Administration	Party	Government
6	Code of conduct	Professional	Civil Servant
7	Governance	Regulation	Regulators
8	Level of organization	Agency	Corporation
9	Power	Customer	Service provider
10	Responsibility	Regulatory body	Media Institution
11	Accountability	Legislative (HPR)	Executive (Board/PMO)

As Table 1 reveals, the core of EBC's dilemmas is the tension between state ownership and public media. The data obtained from the in-depth interviews indicate that "the structure dilemma happened in professionalism opposition to the public service tilting structure" (In-depth interview 2, 2019). Another dilemma is evident in institutional management orientation as opposed to professional orientation (In-depth interview informant 7, 2019). Moreover, the administration quandary becomes transpires in party versus government linkages (In-depth interview informant 12, 2019). Similarly, an ideological orientation also affects principles related to development journalism, development communication, and liberal teaching of journalism (In-depth interview informant 13, 2019).

In line with the above reports, proclamation no. 858/2015 states Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation is a medium primarily for the government and the political parties. However, some early steps towards autonomy have been taken recently. The EBC board now includes a civil society representative and a prominent member of the opposition, but it is still chaired by the Minister for Government Organizations (formerly Office for Government Communication Affairs). Lately, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority members are the ministerial cabinets and the press secretariat of the prime minister.

In-depth interview informant 11 (2019) responded: "The programming is still commonly considered to follow primarily the government lines but also generally held to have become more balanced and diverse." In the selection process of the management, the ruling party's office is involved as a primary nominator. The degree of politicization of the board and the management is high.

To solidify this, In-depth interview 7 from Board of EBC (2019) explained:

The board consists of the Board Chairman, the Board Secretary, and seven members are trusted by the party and government or higher member of the prime minister office. The board members of EBC are drawn from societal institutions; from the House of Peoples' Representatives; and government institutions.

However, the CEO and the majority of the board members of EBC always come from the political parties.

The findings of this study reveal the advanced reasons for the establishment and operation of EBC which are related to structure, orientation, ownership, ideology, administration and code of conduct, governance, Level of organization, Power, Responsibility, and Accountability largely framed in the

political and economy of the state. The document analysis findings show that it is stated and/or implied that EBC should support national development. The interview data extends this to explain the development democratic state political economy perspective of a development journalism model of Ethiopia.

The findings reveal that a consensus exists among the public on the role of EBC in educating, informing, and entertaining the public. Considerable agreement between the ruling party and the media also exists on the role of broadcast media in disseminating government information. However, the most significant finding is that the function of broadcast media for broadcasting information about government programs, activities, and policies is contested. The in-depth interview informant 1 stated that some government information is propaganda (2019). The in-depth interview 2 from policy makers states that such information is necessary for informing the public about the activities of their government (2019). The other role of the broadcast media is the need for EBC to reflect Ethiopian politics. The findings of this study also reveal that an expectation is placed on EBC to play a role in nation-building, and national consensus exists that the media performs this role properly. However, Ethiopia stated that nation-building must reflect diversity as well as unity (In-depth interview informant 1 from higher officials, 2019).

The key findings of this study relate to the media model, the establishment regulation mandate and objectives of EBC, and programming and funding. The findings reflect that over the years, an absence of clarity existed mostly among media professionals on the broadcasting model that was adopted when EBC was launched in 2000. This tension prevailed, and several dilemmas approach emerged over various periods to address this issue. The proposal to transform EBC into public service from 1995 to 2014 was one such approach that did not materialize, mostly due to the absence of political support. The enactment of a new regulatory framework (Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority [EBA], 2013), which, unlike previous frameworks recognized state broadcasting as opposed to public service broadcasting, is the latest approach to address the stalemate of a broadcasting model for EBC.

The findings also show that the mandate of EBC was never clearly articulated, and in an instance where that was implied, the mandate was articulated in terms of the programming focus of the broadcast program. The other key finding is that the objectives of EBC are diverse. Whereas this is normal for broadcasting, the limitation is that these objectives were not delineated accordingly to reflect key and peripheral goals of broadcasting in the case of the EBC.

Despite development communication content and the dominance of development journalism the analysis of the in-depth interview informant data revealed that reporting is given prominence on state-owned public media. The aforementioned selection process renders considerable leeway for exerting political influence on EBC's editorial policies and decision casts doubt on its overall editorial independence.

A public broadcasting board is considered to be representative of the people. However, EBC's board, which incidentally has political members and higher trusted persons in the ruling political orders, is more representative of the government and created a compromise among various dilemmas in the context of the Ethiopian media.

According to the above findings, the Ethiopian broadcast media were almost exclusively owned by the state. The media were partly government-owned and partly privately owned. Private media owners were members of the political class who were either active members of the political parties or allied with politicians. As a result, journalists and media managers in Ethiopia were civil servants drawn from the ministries of information, and the managerial class consisted of political functionaries whose appointments were political; they held those positions as long as they were in favor of the political party. Similarly, by chance or design, media professionals of the time became part of the political economy coalitions in the ideological party orientation of the state. Ethiopian development media approach, particularly in EBC, tends to be journalists and managers who are supporters or members of the ruling party. In addition, the station disseminated government-proposed information that could help citizens improve their living conditions. It is a common consensus of the media and the

journalists; they are only factual and objective information of the government. In contrary to this, the last check standard of the truth is the government official or the report. In doing so, the media managers work for the legitimacy of the political regime and its developmental policies. The government policies give coherence to the national political economy discourse on the imperative of the media's desire to catch up.

The political economy supposition was the basis of development journalism. The '*Ethiopian government developmental democracy communication policy and strategy*' further states that "whoever runs the media as its primary and vital task, should be able to present issues of peace, development, democracy and good governance in news, news analysis and other forums of debates and dialogues". In this case, the media to be established in Ethiopia presuppose three basic characteristics of the system: that it takes development, democracy, and good governance as questions of survival and has an unwavering stand on the questions; being free from the owner/investor politically and economically; it gives prominence to developmental ideology and interfering in a selected area fruitful manner to do away with bottlenecks that can or would hamper development.

In the political system, many factors like ideology, leaders, party, policy, strategy, institutions, and regulations are involved in the media. Under the ruling political system, a journalist's production is fully controlled by the ruling political-economy plan. As evidence, the funds for each EBC medium: digital, radio, television were allotted directly by the ruling government (Federal Broadcasting Law, 2007). To summarize our discussion, the Political Economy or ideological orientations in the media are derived from the ruling party orientation, the government or party program, government orientation, regulation orientation, regulatory orientation, leaders orientation, financial orientation, the government policy orientation, the government strategy orientation, the government ideology orientation, the government institutional orientation; professional orientation; the government structure orientations; and editorial orientation.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The state-owned public media nature of the broadcast media organization arrangement is one of the main functions of the management and it is characteristic to achieve the institutional goal. It describes similar tasks in terms of the knowledge and skills required. It is the concept of mobilizing resources, money, and the like. As part of the organizational structure of the media, all sectors of the administration will be identified and structured in a process that is operational into work.

The major challenge faced by the broadcast media is that of maintaining loyalty to its audiences. The programs of broadcast media are full of government structure-oriented and politically adjusted put on the air. Moreover, without good reason or notice in advance to the audience, the programs disappeared or were replaced with another format. Hence, EBC has to put a system that allows programmers when creating a show/ programs in place in line with the principal guidelines of the ruling party. Among the core values that need to be addressed are the consideration of the political economy

Their main problem with broadcast media structure arrangement is that many jobs are not managed properly. Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation is not able to organize effectively and efficiently. Therefore, the broadcast media is not managed on time.

EBC's radio and TV stations are the public television stations managed by the Ethiopian government. Ethiopian television is more widely accessible than on the mainland, due to a government policy of using television for public education and mobilization. Governments invested in the medium – radio, TV, and online media was the first highest type of coverage in Ethiopia - and pursued a deliberate policy of making the broadcast media accessible to ordinary people in towns and villages. Though still controlled by the government and in this respect open to criticism, EBC is among the liveliest in Ethiopia.

At the same time, the public service mandate of the public broadcasters to inform and educate the public is being more clearly articulated, particularly in the context of the new mass media's policy.

This prioritizes EBC's responsibility as the only broadcaster with nationwide reach, responsible for communicating matters of national and local interest to people of many languages in the remote and rural areas of the country.

The government should consider a policy of compelling new private license applicants to establish their services in regional areas. However, after some consideration, the idea was dropped as it was felt to fly in the face of commercial realities and the spirit of liberalization. Instead, the problem will be addressed through the strengthening of public stations, and the establishment of booster stations and satellites.

## 5. Acknowledgment

We are most thankful to Woldia University and Bahir Dar University.

## 6. References

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