

Political Parallelism in Diaspora-based Transnational Media

The case of Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio
(ESAT)

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Abstract:

This study explores political parallelism in the context of diaspora-based transnational media through the experience of the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT). The station is conceived as a party media outlet and transformed into a diaspora-based, non-profit and mainly diaspora funded institution. It has been operating from its three studios in Amsterdam, London and Washington, D.C., until recently. ESAT has emerged as one of the most influential media outlets in the political landscape of Ethiopia in the last ten years. The research, through qualitative and in-depth case study interviews, examines the underlying ideological, political and organizational affiliations that defined ESAT's position in the media landscape. The study concluded that political parallelism, as an indicator of the dynamics between media and politics, can be used in the diaspora-based transnational media context. However, the study also validated critics on the inapplicability of the two preconditions of political parallelism, namely the existence of competitive system and patterns. The analysis confirms a high level of political parallelism in ESAT in all the five indicators selected for the study. The indicators considered are Ownership, Organizational connections, Party or ideological loyalty, Media personnel's political involvement, and Journalists' role orientation. Each of them demonstrated a level of parallelism in ideological orientations or party connection with *Ginbot 7 Movement for Democracy and Justice*. The study concluded that the salient features of political parallelism should further be studied in the context of the transnational media space of diaspora-based media.

Key Words: *Political Parallelism, diaspora media, diaspora-based transnational media, Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT), Ethiopian media*

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Acronyms

CUD - Coalition for Unity and Democracy

DVB - Democratic Voice of Burma

EPRDF - The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front

ESAT - Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio

ETN - Ethiopian Television Network

FDI- Foreign Direct Investment

Ginbot 7 - Ginbot 7 Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy

IDPs - Internally Displaced People

ODA - Official Development Assistance

OLF - Oromo Liberation Front

ONLF - Ogaden National Liberation Front

UEDF - United Ethiopian Democratic Forces

Note on Ethiopian and Eritrean Names:

Ethiopians and Eritreans have their own tradition of naming, which does not have the concept of “family name.” The tradition does not follow the system standard in Europe containing first name, second name.... Inverting Ethiopian names is confusing and meaningless in the real world. According to the Ethiopian tradition, a person’s full name contains three names: the person’s given name, his/her father’s given name, and given name of the father’s father (parental grandfather). For example, my full name is Mesfin Negash Bekele. Calling me Negash (my father’s first name) or Bekele (my paternal grandfather’s first name) doesn’t make sense in the natural setting. Therefore, for Ethiopian and Eritrean authors and sources, I used the first/given names both in the text citation and reference section.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

The number of communities dispersed from their homelands is increasing globally. With the surge in number, economic power, social capital and communication technology, diaspora communities have become influential in their host-lands and original homelands (Tsagarousianou, 2004; Ekwo, 2011). These communities rely on online and satellite-based media to stay connected with and, at the same time, exert influence on their countries of origin. In the era of globalization, diasporas are among the early adopters of global communications technologies to amplify voices from the South (Karim, 1998). The African diaspora has already grown strong to leave its footprint in the media ecology of the continent (Skjerdal, 2009).

The same can be said of the Ethiopian diaspora whose number and capacity has been growing steadily since the 1980s (Lyons, 2009; Elizabeth and Peter, 2012). Ethiopians in the diaspora open websites, blogs, local radio and TV channels to communicate among themselves and reach out audience globally (Lyons, 2009). A significant number of these platforms are for the primary consumption by people in the diaspora. However, what has emerged in the last ten years is launching satellite-based transnational media that primarily target audiences at home.

One of such diaspora-based transnational media – the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT) – will be the main object of analysis in this thesis. By diaspora-based transnational media I postulate a media outlet based in the diaspora but primarily targets audience back home. I will further explain the difference between diaspora media and diaspora-based transnational media in Chapter three. ESAT is a diaspora-based transnational media that makes a visible difference in the Ethiopian media since its launch in 2010. It challenges the government narrative, especially in the broadcast and online sphere, which had been the monopoly of the ruling party (Endalkachew, 2018).

This study reveals four factors that gave rise to and shaped the Ethiopian diaspora-based transnational media. First and foremost, a significant number of Ethiopians, including many journalists, have been leaving the country for political and economic reasons. Second, the political space had been narrowing for several years until the introduction of the new reform in April 2018. Fragmented and polarized politics, compounded by government repression, made

diaspora media among the only safe and accessible public spheres for competing ideas. Third, the diaspora communities are establishing themselves as powerful groups in their respective hosting countries which involve expanding cultural, economic and political interests. Expanding capabilities of the diaspora rendered them thriving involvement in the political and socio-economic affairs of their homeland. Fourth, technological innovations, particularly internet and satellite communications, reduce the cost of reaching Ethiopians across the world.

Such media outlets entered the transnational media space that used to be dominated by global media corporations and state-sponsored brands (Karim, 1998). The significance of their emergence crosses the peripheries of international politics and communications. Subsequently, diaspora and diaspora-based transnational media are attracting interest in academic fields such as journalism, media studies, foreign policy and international relations. This study approaches the topic from the perspective of journalism and media studies.

1.2. Significance of the study

This study contributes both to the literature on political parallelism and diaspora-based transnational media. Media studies have been criticized for excessive focus on the experience of Western countries. The development of and continued practice of media studies, which usually includes the dynamics between media and politics, have long been dominated by cases drawn from Western societies and selected historical periods. Hallin and Mancini's (2004) ideal models of media systems – that will be discussed in detail in this thesis – are criticized for the same reason (e.g., Albuquerque, 2011 and 2013; Mihelj and Downey, 2012;).

Media and journalism in Africa and beyond are among the least studied and represented in international academic fields (Adejunmobi, 2016). The Ethiopian media have received very little scholarly attention, and even less so, the Ethiopian diaspora media in the context of the rapidly changing transnational mediascape driven by diaspora communities. Proponents of de-westernization of media/communication studies advocated for the expansion of both the “ontological horizon” and “body of evidence” in media studies (Waisbord and Mellado, 2014:363). The original theorization and application of the concept of political parallelism fall short of capturing the experiences of non-Western societies. The presuppositions and ingredients considered by Hallin and Mancini (2004) are all drawn from the socio-political realities of North America and Western Europe. Afonso de Albuquerque (2011 and 2013) explicated the

limitations of the two presuppositions, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. Furthermore, the concept took nation-states as the only unit of analysis. The emergence of technology-driven transnational media, not least the role of diaspora, has further expanded the unit of analysis beyond nation-states.

This study of diaspora-based transnational media, thus, can be a critical contribution to fill this gap. Diaspora-based transnational media are new phenomena to the fundamental presupposition of political parallelism especially in terms of their fluid geographic centers, in contrast to the initial nation-state-oriented analysis, and fixed physical and psychological location of political actors. This study brings valuable data to the study of political parallelism from the ‘periphery’, from one of the most influential diaspora-based media operating in North America and Europe to reach an audience in Ethiopia.

1.3. Research Questions

This study answers the two guiding questions:

- To what extent political parallelism characterizes the Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT)?
- What reconsiderations are needed to apply the concept of political parallelism in the context of diaspora-based transnational media setting?

1.4. Methodology and Outline of the project

Methodologically, the paper employed a qualitative case study research method to gather facts and perceptions among key stakeholders and actors affiliated the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT). Eleven informants are interviewed for this study. At the time of the interviews, the informants are, except one, working with ESAT taking different roles. Three of the interviewees are leaders of ESAT’s support groups in the diaspora at country, regional and international coordination office levels. The remaining informants are journalists among whom many involve in other roles, including administration, management, and fundraising. The interviews took place between March and May 2019.

The interviews generated firsthand information relevant to assess the five indicators of political parallelism selected for this research. I consulted related academic publications and institutional reports for the theoretical and literature review parts of the project. I used secondary sources

dealing with ESAT and the Ethiopian diaspora media for the background information and analysis. Additional resources included reports, interviews, and speeches made by supporters and opponents of ESAT.

The same primary and secondary sources helped to flesh out unique features of diaspora-based transnational media which includes the global nature of media content production. It also indicated the diminishing role of the nation-state as the cardinal unit of analysis to understand the dynamics between media and politics.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first Chapter provides a rough roadmap for the entire research project. Chapter 2 sketches an overview of media and politics in Ethiopia. The theoretical discussion on political parallelism and diaspora media constitutes Chapter 3. Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology used in the study. Chapter 5 presents the historical and organizational root of ESAT to set the stage for the analysis. The last Chapter summarizes the findings and conclusions and reflections to answer the two research questions.

1.5. Scope and limitation of the study

Measuring the full extent of political parallelism in one media outlet or an entire media system requires a thorough investigation of different factors. Reaching a conclusive result is an elusive objective in the business of determining the level of political parallelism (Artero, 2015). Hallin and Mancini (2004), for example, suggested five parameters: Media content, Organizational connections, Media personnel's political involvement, Partisanship of media audience, and Journalists' role orientation and practices. Critics (Van Kempen, 2006; Albuquerque, 2013; Artero, 2015) further added new aspects in the interpretation of political parallelism as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Ideally, had the available time and resource allowed me, this research could have started from assessing the level of political parallelism at a system level in Ethiopia and diaspora media. Interviewing more individuals affiliated with ESAT and visiting their studios to understand how the editorial operation reflects political parallelism would have helped this research endeavor. A comparative study of two or more diaspora-based transnational media outlets could have offered more insights regarding political parallelism in the arena of a new kind of transnational media. Many of the diaspora media outlets I know use languages others than English, which makes the

idea of undertaking a comparative study in such a short time and resource a tall order. The decision to focus on only one media outlet, ESAT, is informed by this methodological concern.

This research project, therefore, focuses only on five variables: Ownership, Organizational connections, Party or ideological loyalty/orientation, Media personnel's political involvement, and Journalists' role orientation in ESAT. This study does not assess Media content and Partisanship of media audience due to time and resource limitations. Content and audience analysis require more extended time and resource (Van Kempen, 2007) than this research allowed me. For instance, a thorough examination of the editorial process of content production should involve visiting the newsrooms; content analysis could have taken more time and space than I had to conduct this research. When this study was proposed, travelling to Ethiopia where the primary target audience of ESAT resides was not risk free for me due to legal issues for exiled journalists like me.

The research limitation concerns not only the variables it deals with but also their potential evolution over time since the establishment of ESAT. My enquiry does not necessarily approach each variable from a historical perspective to assess changes over time. The informants' knowledge on the subject determines the information they can provide. The research, however, focuses on the present and recent past in the eyes of the informants. The assessment of the selected variables may not be exhaustive and conclusive due to the limited number of interviewees and time. It is beyond the scope of this research to develop an authoritative profile of ESAT. This study provides the experience of one media outlet, which may not be generalizable to other Ethiopian diaspora based transnational media.

Current political developments in Ethiopia triggered considerable fast-paced changes within ESAT, not to mention the dramatic transformation of the political environment that shaped and sustained ESAT from its inception. This research covers significant developments happened only before May 20, 2019.

CHAPTER TWO

The Ethiopian media, politics and diaspora

2.1. Media and Politics in Ethiopia: A brief history and current state

Ethiopia is one of the few African countries to develop and uniquely preserve its script and written literature (Shimelis, 2000; Markakis, 1974). Media and politics are closely linked in Ethiopia, as elsewhere. Neither the introduction of a printing press in 1863 nor the starting of periodicals or the current configuration of media can be explained without the active role of the state. Even though many consider the state-owned *A'emro* (አዲስ አበባ) as the first Ethiopian newspaper, the debate is not conclusive regarding the place of the other two publications that appeared in the same period in 1900 (Shimelis, 2000:6).

The role of the state remains the most defining feature of the Ethiopian media to this day. The three successive governments that oversaw the gradual expansion and instrumentalization of media since the 1940s followed a heavy-handed approach. Press has been under the full control of the state, with rare exceptions, for much of its history despite the fact that the two successive governments before 1991 had recognized freedom of expression and the press in their laws (Shimelis, 2000:16, Shimelis 2002, 184). Media practically were liberalized, and the independent private press was allowed to operate only since May 1991.

Taking three momentous political events of the last three decades as a benchmark, I will try to set the historical context to understand the chain of events that have shaped ESAT.

2.1.1. Year 1991: Between opening and closing

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power in May 1991 after ousting the communist junta that had ruled the country since 1974. This change coincided with the wind of change, what Huntington (1991) famously called the "third wave of democratization," was in full force across the former Eastern Bloc. It was a political necessity for new regimes across Africa to profess the basic tenets of liberal democracy, which unequivocally stress the importance of press freedom. The new rulers of Ethiopia guaranteed press freedom in the transitional charter of 1991. The Transitional Charter, which adopted the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as part and parcel of it, legally recognized press freedom and lifted censorship. The gestures paved the way to the private press that mushroomed within months (Shimelis 2000; Skjerdal and Halleluja, 2009) and marked the beginning of a new

era in the history of the print media in Ethiopia (Mocria, Mesfin & Alemayehu, 2003:31). The Press Law of October 1992 further consolidated the legal recognition and protection for free expression and the press. It legally prohibits censorship and recognizes private ownership of media. Private ownership was limited to newspapers and magazines for the first 15 years though.

The relationship between state and media has not changed fundamentally even though private press can function albeit limited to big cities. On the one hand, the government has not changed the over- instrumentalization of state media in an environment where the line between party and state is hard to locate. The number of television and radio stations owned by federal and regional governments grow exponentially, and their operational logic as the mouthpiece of the ruling party has not changed (Menychle, 2017:62).

On the other hand, the relationship between the state and media has been tense and confrontational. Ethiopia stood among the biggest jailers of journalists for several years (CPJ, 2010). According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Ethiopia's long-held class was among "most-censored countries" and "worst jailers of journalists in sub-Saharan Africa" before the recent change (Mumo, 2019). Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2018a) noted that Ethiopia has been "languishing in the bottom quarter of the freedom index" until the political reform of 2018 started. One glaring consequence of this unabatted government pressure is the number of journalists fled to exile.

CPJ (2015) registered the case of 425 journalists forced into exile between June 2010 and May 2015. The analysis shows that 57 of the journalists were forced to flee from Ethiopia, which is the most significant number of exiled journalists in Africa and only the second in the world after Syria (ibid.). The record is not any better in internet freedom. Internet and mobile phone penetration rates stand at 15% and 51% respectively and are among the lowest in the world. The government has been deliberately filtering, blocking and slowing down the internet and mobile connectivity over the years to deny citizens access to dissenting views and information (Freedom House, 2017).

Skjerdal (2012:17-27) developed an extensive periodization of the Ethiopian media since 1991. His self-descriptive classification is very relevant to our discussion. The era started with the liberalization of laws (1991–1992), which gave way to the second period (1992–1996) of "proliferation of private publications." These were the formative years of the private press under

the new environment. Three hundred eighty-five publications were licensed in this period even though only a few of them saw the light of day (ibid.:18).

According to Skjerdal (2012), political motivation was the *raison d'être* for many of the newspapers. The proliferation of new critical and vocal publications followed by a harsh "government crackdown" between 1996 and 1999. The first wave of exile registered in this period where, according to one account, around 43 journalists were forced to flee in 2001 (ibid.:22). Many of these journalists later became "pivotal in forming the opposition movement abroad through the use of new media channels," Skjerdal noted. A weakened private media sector started the period of 'Consolidation and renewed diversity' (1999-2005), paradoxically, when the country was at war with neighboring Eritrea between 1998 and 2000. Either government and private press found an overriding shared concern in the war or the government was preoccupied with the war effort, one may speculate. "Some of the most notable newspapers" also established in this period (ibid.).

The period in the run-up to the 2005 election saw a vibrant media and widening political space for public engagement. The post-election crisis, however, brought a harsh blow to the media sector in general and the private press in particular. The 'post-election setback' (2005–2007) saw the closure of more than 35 newspapers, arrest and exile of journalists, and a new reign of the oppressive environment. The crackdown, in Skjerdal's view (2012:24), "demonstrated the underlying political parallelism that characterizes Ethiopian media operations." The political nature of this period, discussed in the next page, was very consequential. As the regular rotation between repression and revival dictates, a new three years period of "revitalization" dawned between 2007 and 2010. Both the print and broadcasting media revitalized with the opening of new publications and issuance of a license for the first two private radio stations. However, another round of media clampdown was creeping in the run-up to the May 2010 election. Skjerdal's last period (2010–2012) of "renewed coercion," seen an increased instrumentalization of laws and state apparatus to suppress press freedom. With the introduction of three restrictive laws, including the 2009 Anti-Terrorism proclamation, independent media, political opposition and civil society faced a systematic and crippling attack. The entire state apparatuses (the legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy, and law enforcement agencies) turned into mere instruments of the all-powerful prime minister (PM) and his party.

2.1.2. Year 2005: The downward spiral, ESAT's seed sown?

It is almost inconceivable to understand the recent political history of Ethiopia without highlighting the consequential May 15, 2005 parliamentary and regional election. Lyons (2006:275), in his part, concluded that the election “is a critical case for any analyst wishing to examine the influence of the diaspora on Ethiopian politics.” The election was the only moderately free and contested in the history of the country; but also garnered a full endorsement and involvement of the Ethiopian diaspora (ibid.). The two main opposition coalitions, United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) and Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) had the backing of the diaspora. UEDF has consisted of ethnic and regional parties, which is closer to the ruling coalition (EPRDF) in ideological terms. The second opposition coalition (CUD) represented the ideological opposite of the government. This ideological orientations of the two camps will resurface in our discussion later.

The pre-election phase was open for debates and critical engagements unparalleled by any election the country has ever seen. The official result put the ruling coalition (EPRDF) far ahead with a gain of 67% of the 547 federal parliament seats; and CUD won all seats in Addis Abeba (Lyons, 2006). Nevertheless, the two opposition blocks rejected the over-all result and even claimed victory (Wondwosen, 2009:914). A protracted controversy opened the road to a deadly political crisis. In October 2006, CUD boycotted joining the parliament which marked the escalation of the crisis. The government arrested top leaders of CUD, 14 journalists, and many civil society leaders for alleged crimes of “genocide,” “treason,” and “attempt to overthrow the government and the constitutional order by force” (Wondwosen, 2009:925). The genocide charges were dropped but 35 CUD leaders (a few in absentia) sentenced to life imprisonment. Four of the 14 journalists were ordered to serve prison terms ranging between 18 months and 18 years; and seven were acquitted (Tsegaye, 2007; Skjerdal 2012). All of accused were released in July 2007 “after their request for pardon was approved” (Namrud, 2007.)

Some among these oppositions (CUD) leaders and journalists fled the country soon after their release. They resurfaced in the political and media scene again - from exile - after a year or so. Birhanu Nega (PhD.) and Andargachew Tsige, among the top leaders of CUD, spearheaded the formation of a new political organization called “*Ginbot 7* Movement for Justice, Freedom and

Democracy” (‘G7’ or *Ginbot 7* in short)¹ in 2008 from exile (Kiruga, 2019.) *Gibot 7* (2008) declared to employ strategies “that best fit” its objectives and leave the door open to deploy violence for political ends. Even though *Ginbot 7* was not the first or last political organization launched from abroad, its widely perceived lineage with CUD and the trauma of the 2005 election injected a new sense of resistance against the government. This sentiment created a fertile ground for the group to expand its roots in the diaspora community effectively.

As the following sections will unveil, *Ginbot 7* as a political group and its leaders were very instrumental in the creation of the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT). Similarly, among the 14 journalists who were imprisoned in connection with the 2005 election, three of them appeared as central figures of the station after they left the country on their release (CPJ, 2005). Fasil Yenealem became one of the co-founders and Editor-in-Chief of ESAT, Dereje Habetewold and Sisay Agena as producers of political shows.

For EPRDF, the trauma of the 2005 election was profound and lasting. The government introduced new laws and administrative measures to control critical voices and civil society organizations. The “Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (no. 652/2009),” the NGO law (“Charities and Societies Proclamation (no. 621/2009)”) and the Media law (“Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation (no. 590/2008)”) proved to be the most effective in steaming out dissent. Human Rights Watch (2019) and many other rights groups called out these laws “draconian.”

The bill, in the words of HRW (2013) “decimated the media.” CPJ records show that at least 24 journalists and bloggers were accused or sentenced under the Anti-Terrorism law. This number doesn’t account those accused under different rules. Predictably, the atmosphere became more intimidating, critical journalism and dissent deemed a dangerous adventure. The number of journalists leaving the profession or going into exile climbed exponentially. For example, CPJ (2015) registered 34 journalists that were forced into exile within one year (from June 1, 2014, to May 2015).

In June 2011, the Ethiopian parliament designated *Ginbot 7* and four other groups as “terrorists” based on the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP) (Tesfa-Alem, 2011). In February 2017, the

¹ *Ginbot 7* merged with another armed group, the Ethiopian People Patriotic Front (EPPF) in January 2015 under a new name “Patriotic *Ginbot 7* Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy.” However, many continued to refer the party as *Ginbot 7*. For convenience, I adapt the same name to refer the group in this paper.

Ethiopian prosecutor brought multiple charges against the two influential diaspora-based transnational broadcasters – the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT) and the Oromo Media Network (OMN) (Mahlet, 2017). The other three defendants in the same file were the leader of *Ginbot 7*, Birhanu Nega (prof.), Merera Gudina (PhD), Chairman of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), and Jawar Mohamed, a prominent Oromo activist and director of OMN. One of the charges against the five defendants based on the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. The political reform arrived in April 2018 before the court pass any verdict.

2.1.3. Year 2018: New reopening and the unknown

Ethiopia is undergoing a promising but uncertain reform initiative since 2018. A confluence of political, economic and social factors contributed to the ultimate onset of the reform experiment (Mebratu, 2019). The immediate triggering reason, however, was the years-long semi-organized public protests. The government couldn't control or diffuse public frustration and demonstrations through the usual means (ibid.). The internal power struggle and political differences within the ruling party (EPRDF) further exacerbated and complicated the political paralysis along the way. In February 2018, the then PM, Hailemariam Desalegn resigned “to be part of the solution” (Guardian, 2018). The country had been under a state of emergency and gripped by fear of civil war and disintegration until this point.

When the new PM, Abiy Ahmed (PhD.) was elected to chair the ruling party (EPRDF) in March, the party intended to introduce a gradual political reform to save the country from a looming danger and remain in power. The PM's inaugural speech on April 2, 2018, however, set a different tone of a more profound, faster and inclusive change. He further admitted the government's wrong-doings and apologized for those harmed directly and indirectly (Awol, 2018). Similar statements and public engagements in the first months of his time in office resonated the hope of the nation at once, which garnered unprecedented popular support to the PM (Burke, 2018). The weeks and months following his inaugural speech have been full of exciting announcements, drastic measures in crucial sectors of political, security and economic governance. The most critical steps, relevant for this discussion, include the release of political prisoners, legal reform initiative, the return of outlawed political groups, media houses and journalists.

With the release of political prisoners, CPJ (Beiser, 2019) declared that for the first time since 2004, no journalist is in prison in Ethiopia. In May 2018, the charges against the two

broadcasters, ESAT and OMN, and the other defendants were dropped (AP, 2018). A month later, the government unblocked 264 websites and blogs that were not accessible in Ethiopia and stopped the jamming of signals of ESAT and OMN (RSF 2018b). It was the first time for the government to admit the practice of online filtering and signal jamming. Scores of new newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations and shows are filling the air. OMN moved its operation to Ethiopia in 2018, and ESAT opened a studio in Addis Abeba. In March 2019, almost a year after the official commencement of the reform under the new PM, The Economist magazine asked: “Press freedom in Ethiopia has blossomed. Will it last?”

Andargachew Tsige, a British citizen, the co-founder and general secretary of Ginbot 7, is among the notable politicians to be released from prison. (Zecharias, 2018).

Legal reform is another crucial aspect of the reform initiation of the PM. A judicial reform council, consisting of academics, lawyers, civil society representatives and journalists, tasked to review all restrictive laws beginning with the three “draconian laws.”² The parliament ratified a profoundly new NGO/CSO law (2019) to replace the previous one (ICNL, 2019). The review of the Anti-terrorism proclamation and Media law is in progress at the time of this research.

In June 2018, the parliament ratified an amnesty law (2018) that absolves individuals and entities from convictions or pending charges related mainly to the Anti-terrorism bill (Mahlet, 2018). Reportedly, close to 50,000 individuals benefited from this amnesty law; they are released from prison or allowed to return from exile (Xinhua, 2019). The Ethiopian parliament lifted the “terrorist” label for the three local groups, *Ginot 7*, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) (Hamza, 2018). Top leaders of exiled political groups such as Ginbot 7, including the leader Birhanu Nega returned to Ethiopia and held a big public rally at the national stadium in Addis Abeba (ENA, 2018).

It is worth noting that ethnic-based tensions, attacks and communal clashes are creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity in many parts of the country (Mehari, 2019). The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in 2018 put Ethiopia at the top of the global list, even before war-torn Syria (IDMC, 2019). Amid such a big humanitarian crisis, and many pockets of deadly clashes, the potential outcome of holding the next general election in May 2020 is a cause of serious concern for many.

² “Anti-Terrorism Proclamation,” the NGO law (“Charities and Societies Proclamation,”) and the Media law (“Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation”)

2.2. The Ethiopian diaspora and diaspora media

2.2.1. The Ethiopian Diaspora

For Levin (2011), one of the authoritative figures on Ethiopian studies, the modern history of mass migration from Ethiopia only started in the 1980s as the result of the political upheavals of the 1970s. Lyons (2007), starting from a similar assessment, defined the Ethiopian diaspora as a “conflict generated” to emphasize the principal reasons forcing people to flee their country and its potential traumatic consequences. He identified three waves of migrations, all of them associated with regime changes and political struggles. The first wave started surrounding the 1974 revolution and the overthrow of the imperial regime. Most persecuted and fled were those affiliated with the imperial government.

The second wave of the late 1970s saw one section of the revolutionaries being persecuted by the other. The coming power of the current ruling coalition (EPRDF) in 1991 marked the beginning of the third wave (Lyons, 2011: 536). Though widely popularized, this periodization underestimates the role of civil wars and famine, not to mention the US’ “Diversity Lottery” and scholarships in increasing the migration rate between 1990 and 2000 (Terrazas, 2007; Elizabeth and Peter, 2013). However, Lyons characterization as “conflict generated” diaspora is valid regardless of the periodization. The Ethiopian diaspora also qualifies his observation of homeland as a “focal point of diaspora political action” (Lyons, 2011:532).

Political refugees, including political opposition members, activists, critical academics and journalists who are forced into exile constitute the core of the Ethiopian diaspora political movements. In a 1991 survey of the Ethiopian diaspora in the Washington, DC area (USA), 95 per cent respondents identified “political events/actors” as the main pushing factor to flee (Terrazas, 2007). Diaspora-based activities often tend to be easily politicized along ideological, party, ethnic and sometimes religious lines mostly reflecting divisions at home.

The exact number of Ethiopians in the diaspora is hard to come by, partly because it is impossible to account those living illegally. One to two million Ethiopians is estimated to live outside their country. A significant majority of the Ethiopian diaspora is concentrated in the United States and Israel, Germany, France, Sweden, Greece, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Switzerland, and New Zealand (Terrazas, 2007). In 2016, Ethiopian-born immigrants in the U.S.A were estimated to be 239,000, which constitutes the second biggest, next to Nigeria, according to Pew Research

(Anderson and Lopez, 2018). Ethiopian immigrants in Europe are the 15th biggest group (Kuschminder and Siegel, 2011). If we go by the World Bank continental distribution of the Ethiopian diaspora in 2002, 37% of the Ethiopian immigrants live in the Asia landmass, followed by 31% in North America, 21% in Europe and 9% in Africa (ibid.:7).

Tedla and Terrazas (2011) found that almost 60 per cent of the Ethiopian diaspora in the US have a college education, higher than the 43 per cent average of the total immigrants and is a relatively young population. However, their household median annual income is \$36,000, much less than the national US median income of \$50,000 (Migration Policy Institute, 2014). It may not warrant a conclusion about the entire Ethiopian diaspora groups across the world. A detailed global data on the Ethiopians diaspora is scant and scattered. The impact of the Ethiopian diaspora on the local economy and politics, however, skyrocketed in the last two decades.

2.2.2. Diaspora as a battlefield

Elizabeth and Peter (2013:496-497) forwarded three factors that determines the potential contribution immigrants can make to their home countries: (a) circumstances forcing or encouraging leaving one's country; (b) educational and economic profile of the person; the relative success of the immigrants; and (c) their willingness and ability to repatriate resources, and their relationship with their home country.

The increasing economic capability, knowledge, skill, and global network of the diaspora is an attractive capital to different actors (IOM, 2018). For this discussion, the most relevant actors are government and political groups. The Ethiopian government adopted a very aggressive approach to court and wooed the diaspora for economic and political reasons. On the one hand, for the government, convincing the diaspora to involve in the economic development of the country is indispensable. To this end, the government encourages the diaspora to engage in investment areas, sending remittance and facilitating skill transfer. The other cardinal objective of the government has been neutralizing the diaspora from opposition politics. The government adopted a carrot and stick approach to dictate the favorable political participation of the diaspora. The possibility of travelling to or investing in Ethiopia for diaspora members was predicated on their involvement in opposition politics. Participating in anti-government demonstrations or attending events and fundraisings organized by opposition groups could cost one access to Ethiopia, including a visa to visit family members back home. On the other end of the "carrot" side, the Ethiopian government introduced policies, regulations and institutions to engage the

diaspora systematically (Elizabeth and Peter, 2013). The new PM confirmed the increasing importance of the Ethiopian diaspora when he dedicated his first official visit to the U.S in July 2018 to meet the diaspora community in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, and Minneapolis (Tadias, 2018).

Historically, the opposition in the diaspora, in its part, stands in stark contrast to counter the objectives of the government in handling the diaspora. Opposition groups employ different strategies to bring the diaspora in their fold; similarly, they use the naming-and-shaming strategy to punish perceived supporters by depicting collaboration with the government as a betrayal of the people of Ethiopia (Lyons, 2006).

The diaspora, both as a community and a public sphere, therefore, became a battleground. The fierce competition between the government and the opposition, not to mention the one between opposition groups themselves, led to an elaborated scheme of race in the diaspora. Ethiopians in the U.S. are good examples. This community is the largest Ethiopian diaspora community, but also the biggest investing group and, at the same time, most influential in the political opposition (Leyons, 2011; Elizabeth and Peter, 2013). In the first six months after the 2005 election, Elizabeth and Peter (2013) reported, diaspora investment declined by half. Similarly, remittance reduced by 45 per cent between 2014 and 2017 (Ayele, 2018). The country was engulfed by anti-government protest in these three years which was reinforced by remittance boycott campaigns in the diaspora. The volatility of diaspora investment in Ethiopia can be partly explained by political developments at home (Elizabeth and Peter, 2013).

In terms of absolute values, the amount of remittance flowing to Ethiopia is increasing. Ethiopia is a net remittance receiver. The officially recorded remittance inflow has been consistently growing between 2003 and 2014. The figure was \$1.8 billion in 2014, which plummeted to \$393 million in 2017 (World Bank, 2019.) Despite the political reform and significantly changed the position of the diaspora, the remittance is yet to recover.

There is no official record how much the opposition mobilized from the Ethiopian diaspora. Nevertheless, it is common for the opposition parties and groups to organize public meetings and fundraising events in the diaspora from time to time. For example, it is customary for the opposition parties operating in Ethiopia to send delegations, led by top officials, for a fundraising tour to Europe and America before elections and significant events. All relatively active opposition groups have been dependent on the financial support of the diaspora (source).

The support both the government and opposition groups seek from the diaspora is not limited to finance but also relates to diplomatic pressure, publicity and advice (Lyons, 2005). In the diplomatic front, diaspora groups pressure politicians of host countries to influence foreign policy. The best example is the passage of “the Ethiopian Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007” by the United States Congress. The act recognized the human rights violations committed in the post-election crisis and demanded punitive measures on the perpetrators. It was a significant diplomatic and publicity success for the diaspora and opposition groups alike.

2.2.3. Ethiopian Diaspora Media

The Ethiopian diaspora is keen to “frame political debates and act as a gatekeeper for opposition strategies” (Lyons, 2005:279). Media related initiatives have been among the most attractive for diaspora activists from the early days. Websites, blogs, news portals, local and short-wave radios, and television stations are frequented tools used by the diaspora to discredit and fight government at home and ideological opponents (Lyons, 2006:270-271). After all, as I discussed in the previous section, one ramification of the political repression in Ethiopia is the narrowing down, at times total closure, of the political space to air views different from the state-sanctioned narrative. Diaspora media, in this respect, is a direct consequence of the situation in Ethiopia (Skjerdal, 2011:731).

The most vocal Ethiopian diaspora media corps are concentrated in North America and Europe. A majority of these diaspora media outlets primarily targets local diaspora communities in the host land with a heavy focus on political developments back ‘home’, in Ethiopia. True to Lyons’ “conflict generated” diasporas, these media play a pivotal role in “framing conflict issues and defining what is politically acceptable” at least in the opposition circle (Lyons, 2007:530) in the Ethiopian political discourse of the day. Whether they are small local community media in one corner of hosting countries or broadcasting globally as transnational media outlets via satellite, they often “position themselves in opposition to the mainstream, challenging both structural media concentration and the dominant discourse (content)” (Moyo, 2007:87) of the government.

Diasporas live on “transnational networks” that connect them with homeland politics and life (Lyons, 2006:266). In an increasingly connecting world, the physical location of an actor is becoming less decisive and participation more de-territorialized. As I pointed out earlier, the Ethiopian diaspora has established a robust transnational relationship between its origin and the host countries, in which it transcends borders. Mobilization of the diaspora to influence or

participate in local politics, in Lyons' view (2006:267), is "one prominent form of transnational politics." In this transnational political relationship, diaspora-based media is a linchpin between the two spheres, even though the flow of information is not always two ways (Endalkachew, 2018:46).

The subject of this study, the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT), is one of the most powerful embodiments of politically influential diaspora engagements (ibid.). ESAT was not the first diaspora-based satellite television initiative for the Ethiopian diaspora. The short-lived Ethiopian Television Network (ETN) was a source of inspiration when it was launched in February 2007 in Washington, DC. The station was intended to be more of entertainment, and less political, in its programming. ETN's business model of generating income through subscription and advertisement was not sustainable (Endalkachew, 2018). Soon after the collapse of ETN in 2008, the idea of creating a satellite-based politically oriented TV station, the would-be ESAT, was in progress in London and Amsterdam among political confidants, as we will learn in the Analysis chapter. The team had considered the idea of reviving ETN. A combination of factors, including the overriding interest in politics, paved the way to the historical formation of ESAT.

Political Parallelism in Diaspora Media: A theoretical framework

3.1. Diaspora

Understanding the concept of ‘diaspora’ is a necessity to grasp the historical and political factors behind diaspora-based transnational media. The usage of the term ‘diaspora’ is contested and elusive that “often carries with its connotations relating to the transnational character of diasporas and the phenomena surrounding them” (Tsagarousianou, 2004:54).

Tölölyan (2012:4) elucidated the evolution of the term diaspora since the early 20th century, where he noted the last two decades of the century added the complexity, hence the “changing meanings of ‘belonging’ and ‘citizenship’ have further complicated the conceptual situation.” However, scholars advise caution not to consider diaspora “as a given community, a logical, albeit de-territorialized, an extension of an ethnic or national group, but as imagined communities, continuously reconstructed and reinvented” (Tsagarousianou, 2004:52).

Muller and Van Gorp (2011:4), rather put emphasis on the political nature of the term diaspora. They argued that the term is employed by different actors “as a means of creating a de-territorialized social, cultural or political community.” Therefore, they continued, a diasporic identity is an alternative tool to assert a political identity which can serve as a source of empowerment. Such “diaspora networks” constitute one form of transnational politics, according to the authors (ibid.).

For centuries, the predominant perception depicts diaspora groups as “powerless dispersed ethnic communities” (Cheran, 2004:3). With the increase in number, diversity, economic power, social capital and technologically driven interconnectivity, diaspora communities became influential both in their host-lands and original homelands (IOM, 2013). Diasporas are accentuating the impact of globalization in terms of adding layers, blurring the demarcation between domestic and international politics attracting more attention from sending countries governments, international actors (Osman, 2017: 37).

What drives diasporas from their homeland differ across times and countries. Poor social, economic and political conditions at home are push factors forcing people to leave their

countries. Economic and political issues in host countries, on the other hand, are critical pull factors attracting migrants, exiles, refugees, expatriates (Lahneman, 2005).

Diaspora groups emerged as important players in their hosting and homeland societies. Wiberg (2007:42) noticed that while “some diasporas engage exclusively in collective action in their host country, others exclusively at their country of origin, and others again combine both types of actions”. They play many roles in their homeland from a distance. What is often associated with the diaspora is remittance sent to a homeland in financial forms. Other forms of engagements and contributions may be captured as “social remittance” (Lyons, 2007:534). “Social remittances” take different shapes and forms. It includes supporting peace and reconciliation efforts or routing behind the opposition groups or regime in power. Diaspora communities raise fund for humanitarian emergencies or development activities; campaign in international platforms or lobby for/against the government at home; promote struggles for secession or autonomy of particular cultural groups etc. (Lahneman, 2005; Wiberg, 2007). Diasporas dispersed because of violence at home tend to be more political and active in seeking to influence political developments back home (Lyons 2007; Bernal, 2013:248). In our age, Lyons (2007:531) further claims, any attempt to understand political developments without considering actors operating outside the country is problematic.

According to the World Bank Group (2018:13), remittances stand three times the official development assistance (ODA) and higher than Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Diasporas’ relation to conflict and political actors at home is another defining area of confrontation and complementarity (Lyons, 2007). The apparent correlation between the existence of diaspora with the probability of conflict in the homeland is the most striking, researchers found. A study commissioned by the World Bank in 1999, authored by two leading scholars - Collier and Hoeffler (2000:26), stated that the probability of conflict recurrence is “around six times higher in the societies with the largest diasporas in America than in those without American diasporas.”

Lyons (2009:589) traced this feature to the history of diasporas when he characterized the Ethiopian diaspora as “conflict-generated diasporas.” He is convinced that such diaspora communities are active agents in “framing conflict issues and defining what is politically acceptable” (ibid.).

Cognizant of this dynamics, the number of countries establishing ‘diaspora institutions’ specifically responsible for handling diaspora issues is increasing over the last decade. By 2013, more than half of the member states of the United Nations established some sort of diaspora institutions (Gamlen et al., 2013:4). The same authors noted, these institutions “extend domestic politics beyond national borders, extraterritorially projecting state power” to influence the behavior of emigrants and politics back home. In many ways, this is a response to the ever-increasing influence diaspora communities exert in shaping how things work in their homeland and the international image of governments of the time. The first “Diaspora Ministerial Conference” held in Geneva in 2013 attended by representatives from 143 states and 43 migration-focused international organizations (IOM 2013).

Diaspora communities initiate, run and support a variety of institutions to affect the socio-cultural and political economy of their homelands. Digital media is one of the preferred institutions for diaspora communities transforming their experience and influence on homelands (Barnal, 2013:247).

3.2. Diaspora-based Transnational Media

From the communication point of view, the very concept of diaspora assumes the existence of “a real or imagined relationship among scattered people, which is sustained by some form of communication or contact” (Hiller and Franz, 2004:733). Research has been refocused to the emergence of diaspora media as “transnational public sphere” through new media (Skjerdal, 2009:314). Bernal (2006:164) criticized earlier researches on online communities for failing to grasp “relationships between online activities, virtual community and experiences of belonging, exile and citizenship in the lived world.”

It is not surprising to find immigrant communities first as active consumers, producers and distributors of media (Ekwo, 2011:2). Technological development, particularly the advent of the internet, made this communication endeavor cheaper, simpler, faster and more democratic across borders. The technological development further made local, national and transnational communication accessible in the same platform. Hiller and Franz (2004:732) argued that computer-mediated communication (CMC), which contemporary diaspora and exile media heavily depend on, “transcends the limitations of time and space”. Diaspora media are integral parts of the increasing transnational flow of information (Pidduck, 2012:545; Osman, 2017). The

inherent extraterritoriality of diasporas is only sharpened by global connectivity through the creation of a transnational public sphere. The emergence of “digital diaspora” captures the phenomenon where dispersion and technology meet. This phenomenon put diaspora communities “at the forefront of political innovation and social change” (Bernal, 2006:163). Laguerre (quoted in Gemedu, 2012:6) elaborated the purposeful use technological connectivity to pursue a variety of goals by the digital diaspora.

On the one hand, diaspora media came into being as a result of particular social, economic and political dynamics of the diaspora communities. All sections of dispersed communities engage in the consumption and (re)production of media content. It partly gave rise to diaspora media that avail stories relevant to the day-to-day life of the communities in the host-land mostly in ethnic languages, and at the same times serve as a link between the two homes: homeland and host-land. Depending on - internal and external conditions of the media, the level of emphasis they give for stories from the two lands varies. Shumow (2012:817-818), in his study of Venezuelan immigrant journalists in the USA, captured this reality of living in and serving the two worlds.

They spoke of wanting to connect their fellow immigrants with events taking place at home while at the same time seeing their work as also being important in helping members of their community adapt to their new life as immigrants.

On the other hand, there are cases where political and social realities in the homeland necessitated the creation of diaspora/exile media that continued or started its operation from abroad. We recall cases such as the *Democratic Voice of Burma* (DVB) for Burma, *Radio Freedom*³ for apartheid South Africa, *Ethiopian Satellite Television* (ESAT)⁴ for Ethiopia, *The Zimbabwean*⁵ for Zimbabwe, etc. Such media outlets set to counter the gap and repression in the media sphere at home. Ekwo (2011:5) saw a “shifting mediascape” which is the result of “globalization, migration, and increased media consumption and communication technologies”

³ Radio Freedom was a clandestine station operated by the African National Congress when established in 1963. Later the station was forced into exile in neighboring countries till it returned back to South Africa in August 1991 (Mosia, Riddle, & Zaffiro, 1994).

⁴ ESAT is an Ethiopian satellite TV and radio station based in the USA and the Netherlands. Visit www.ethsat.com

⁵ The Zimbabwean is a UK based tabloid newspaper and online publication founded by former journalist. It receives funding from donors to distribute the newspaper. Visit www.thezimbabwean.co

at the global level. Several studies made on media consumption of immigrants (Shumow, 2012). The history of dispersed Africans is full of diaspora and exile media experiments. In recent decades, Skjerdal (2009:311) noted, it is making a significant impact on the continent's "media ecology".

The Somali diaspora provides us with a notable example on the power of diaspora in shaping mediascape in the homeland. According to Osman (2017:85), a "hegemony of diasporic media" characterizes the media landscape in Somalia since the country plunged into crisis. The Somali diaspora dominates not only the media based in the diaspora, which is not surprising but also the one operating back home as investors and owners (ibid.).

Diaspora media emerge mainly as "alternative media" where the public sphere is shrinking as in the case of Ethiopia or Burma, or in Somalia where civil war suffocate media space. In countries where free and independent media is banned or constrained, media outlets based in the diaspora play an essential role of providing an alternative public sphere (Moyo 2007:81; Skjerdal, 2011:730).

The peculiar condition of diaspora media creates corresponding changes in "how the media are organized, owned and produced" (Moyo, 2007:85). It implies the media outlets take different forms of organization, ownership and production of content compared with the traditional media, which is either based at home soil or a satellite of multinational media corporations.

The development of media and politics on similar social conditions is not peculiar to diaspora media. The social and political realities gave rise to political parties and newspapers were the same in the 19th century Europe (Semyour-Ure, 1974:159). "The same social forces that find expression in the party or parties of a political system tend to find expression also through the press," he wrote (quoted in Artero, 2015:3) in his argument. In other words, the emergence of parties and newspapers was historically and inextricably intertwined (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:26). Outright "political advocacy" had been "the central function of print media" until the late nineteenth century (ibid.). Mancini (2012:263) further concluded, "in most countries, journalism was born as a political tool".

Skjerdal (2011:730) wrote that diaspora media have three distinct features: "provoked by repressive or less than ideal condition at home, represent an alternative to traditional media

outlets..., and expand the potential audience base”. These are indicative enough to see an active link between politics and diaspora media, at least in the Ethiopian case.

The terminology ‘diaspora-based transnational media’ is purposefully adapted for this study. In the course of my research, I came across the generic term “diaspora media” or “diasporic media” extensively used without proper qualification. Many of the writings (ex. Myria, 2005, Lyons 2009, Harindranath, 2012) do not differentiate between diaspora media targeting audiences in the diaspora with those aiming at listeners back home. The distinction is crucial because the organizational and operational logic of a local media is different from that of transnational media. The difference between “diaspora radio” broadcasting in Stockholm for Ethiopians in Sweden and ESAT radio or the Voice of America Amharic service, which is funded by the US government are distinct. To avoid this confusion, I preferred to characterize ESAT as a “diaspora-based transnational media,” instead of the “diaspora media” to indicate its diasporic and transnational characters at once.

To summarize, the political nature of diaspora-based transnational media such as ESAT is evident, I will establish in Chapter Five. This research aims at to ask if we can investigate diaspora media through models and concepts primarily developed to understand traditional mainstream media based at ‘home’ or operate as part of international broadcasting houses. This study will borrow the concept of political parallelism to scrutinize an Ethiopian diaspora-based transnational media, ESAT, broadcasting from studios in the Netherlands, United Kingdom and the USA.

3.3. From Party Parallelism to Political Parallelism

The mainstay of this research is to investigate the level of political parallelism that characterizes one of the leading Ethiopian diaspora media, the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT). The political context in which the media is operating in has a direct bearing on the institutional and professional development of journalism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). The same can be said to diaspora-based transnational media, as seen in the previous section.

It was Seymour-Ure who introduced the concept of party press parallelism in his famous work, entitled “The political impact of mass media,” in 1974. He identified two strands of parallelism, namely one at the level of a press (party-press) and second, at the system level as a press system paralleling a party system. In his view, a newspaper is paralleling a party if it is “closely linked

to that party by the organization, loyalty to party goals and the partisanship of its readers. A press system can be defined as paralleling a party system when such links exist between each newspaper and a party” (quoted in Mancini, 2012:263).

It took a century for newspapers in Europe to “freed themselves from their party sponsors” which heralded the dawn of ‘commercial press’ (ibid.) and the notion of “impartial journalism” (Votmer, 2012:180) or public service broadcasting (Artero, 2015). However, it would be naïve to assume that newspapers, media outlets in general, became fully “disconnected” from parties and politics since then. The dynamics between media and political actors vary between political and media systems. The association between media outlets and parties has been evolved from a direct one-to-one correspondence to that of ideological tendencies and system level through time. In Europe, the party/press parallelism give way to government subsidy (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:27).

Identifying parameters to determine and measure party/political parallelism remained inconclusive (Artero, 2015). Seymour-Ure put three dimensions of party-press parallelism: organizational link, loyalty to party goals, and readers’ or supporters’ partisanship (quoted in Mancini, 2012; Artero, 2015). It is interesting to point out here that partisanship is about readers/supporters, not journalists. Historically, it was common in Europe for parties and labor unions to run their own newspapers, which gave rise to a high level of party-press parallelism at organizations level. Party-owned or affiliated newspapers used to constitute a significant proportion of the entire press corps in the 1970s and early 1980s (Van Kempen, 2007; Mancini, 2012).

In the context of Seymour-Ure’s analysis, similarities between the goals of newspapers and parties usually originate from historical and institutional bonds between the two. The primary purpose of the newspapers would be to promote and further the political objectives of the party through information packaging. By implication, the newspaper’s loyalty to party objectives dictates the content it produces and distributes. The third indicator questions the political profile or loyalty of readers to a given party. Unsurprisingly, in the height of party-press parallelism in Europe, newspapers were read mostly by party members and supporters (Mancini, 2012:264). It was customary for readers to buy and read only “their own” newspapers that reflects and

reaffirms their political views. One notable omission in Seymour-Ure's analysis is the role of journalists in the party-press parallelism equation.

In his interpretation of Seymour-Ure's thesis, Juan P. Artero (2015:3) identified three elements to trace the connection between media and political systems: "obvious historical associations; the role of the press in the political systems connects it to parties; the functions of parties are highly compatible with the capabilities of newspapers".

It was Hallin and Mancini (2004) who took the concept of parallelism to the next level when they elaborate their famous three models of media systems based on the study of 18 countries in Europe and North America. They observed that the party-press parallelism had declined or entirely disappeared in Europe (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:178). The most significant departure in their analysis is the transition from Seymour-Ure's party press parallelism to political parallelism. I also adapt the term political parallelism in this study.

Table 1: Hallin and Mancini's Three Models of Media Systems with the Four Dimensions

Dimensions	Models		
	Mediterranean / Polarized Pluralist	Northern European / Democratic Corporatist	North Atlantic / Liberal
Press Market	Low	High	High
Political Parallelism ⁶	High	High	Low
Journalistic Professionalism	Low	High	High
Role of the state	High	High	Low
Countries studied	France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland	Britain, Canada, Ireland, United States,

Source: Brüggemann et al., 2014:1042

Their three models of media system are the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model; the North/Central European or democratic corporatist model; and the North Atlantic or liberal model. For them, the last one is the most ideal. They (2004:21-22) introduced four "dimensions"

⁶ "High" and "Low" indicates the level of political parallelism in each model. High level of political parallelism implies a media system strongly mirroring the political system, or the connection between media outlets and political actors is strong.

to compare these media systems. The four dimensions are: “(1) the development of the media market, with particular emphasis on the strong or weak development of mass circulation press; (2) Political parallelism; that is, the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties or, more broadly, the extent which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society; (3) the development of journalistic professionalism; and (4) the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system”. Even though these ‘dimensions’ are interrelated, I will focus on Political parallelism for this discussion.

For Hallin and Mancini (2004:27) political parallelism is “the strength of connections between the media and political actors and the balance between the advocacy and neutral/information traditions of political journalism.” Seymour-Ure’s one-to-one parallelism between media and party politics is declared “uncommon” which convinced the authors Hallin and Mancini (2004:27) to shift to “general political tendencies” or “political orientations” expressed by media. They employed five indicators to trace the strength of political parallelism.

1. *Media content* defined as “the extent to which the different media reflect distinct political orientation in their news and reporting” (2004:28). The preference for commentary over the news and at other occasions, the deliberate mix and confusion of the two indicates a high level of parallelism (ibid.).
2. *Organizational connections* “between media and political parties or other kinds of organizations, including trade unions, cooperatives, churches, and the like which are often linked to political parties” (ibid.).
3. *Media personnel’s political involvement*, which is framed as “the tendency for media personnel to be active in political life, often serving in a party or public office” (ibid.)
4. *Partisanship of media audience* which is premised on the authors’ assertion that readers’/audience’s’ choice of media depends on the party or political tendencies they subscribe.
5. *Journalists’ role orientation and practices*” is primarily concerned with journalists’ self-perception and role. Hallin and Mancini (2004:29) noted that journalists in certain historical periods of some systems might play an advocacy or “publicist” role. In other systems and periods where political parallelism is low, they contend, journalists “see

themselves as providers of neutral information” (ibid.). In terms of their approach, journalists in the first group tend to use commentary and analysis instead of news.

Hallin and Mancini added two dimensions to their discussion of political parallelism, namely pluralism and instrumentalization. Media systems handle “diversity of loyalties and orientations” (2004:29) through internal or external pluralism. The former refers to a system where diversities are handled within individual media outlets or organizations. In other words, each media outlet strives to represent different voices, loyalties and orientations, whereas ‘external pluralism’ approaches diversity at the system level. The variety of voices, orientations and interests find their way through the existence of many media outlets. Media where external pluralism dominates favor some political tendencies or views rather than the others; but the remaining views also have the possibility of finding outlets. External pluralism, therefore, reflects a high level of political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:29). By the time the book was published, it was remarked that political parallelism could be found in the Polarized Pluralist Model and Democratic Corporatist Model.

In countries of the first model, polarized pluralist model of the Mediterranean, newspapers are “addressed to small elite-mainly urban, well-educated, and politically active” and aimed at “horizontal process of debate and negotiation among elite factions.” By contrast, newspapers under the liberal model of North Atlantic target mass audience, and political content may not be at the center of their production. The authors (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:22) interpreted this as a ‘vertical process’ whose function is linking political elites with ordinary citizens. They contested that mass-circulation press tends to reduce political parallelism (ibid:24) Political parallelism, they concluded, is high in countries where the polarized, pluralist model is dominant. Societies “resistant to liberalization” or “deeper level of cleavage voting” tend to experience a high level of political parallelism (Artero, 2015:4).

Compared with the other three dimensions, political parallelism tends to be high where professionalization is weak, and market and circulation are limited. The liberal model is their favored or ideal media system which is characterized by a commercial press primarily governed by the market.

In the same vein, Hetty van Kempen (2006:411) suggested four slightly different features to look for to see parallelism: “media contents; ownership of the news media; *affiliation of journalists, owners and managers*; readership patterns” (emphasis added.) Her contribution is more on elaborating the dimensions identified earlier by Seymour and Hallin & Mancini, but with valuable perspective. The previous classifications neglected the role of personal affiliation of journalists and managers while focusing on ownership and organizational affiliations (Mancini, 2012:264).

The concept of political parallelism is “less clear and more volatile than that of party parallelism” (Mancini, 2012:265). Subsequently, competing or overlapping concepts came to the fore since the publication of *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* in 2004. Clientelism, colonization, media capture, and instrumentalization are the most popular (Mallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Mancini, 2012).

The emergence of new forms of parallelism is another emerging debate. For example, Ciaglia (cited in Artero, 2015:10) pointed out “politicization of public service broadcasting and the inclusion of media practitioners in political positions, with a significant number of journalists seating in national parliaments” forms this new aspect of political parallelism.

Artero (2015) demonstrated the two opposing views regarding the general trend of political parallelism, at least in Europe and North America. One standard belief holds that political parallelism has been decreasing mainly due to increasing commercialization. The other position rejects the “commercialization and consequent non-parallelism thesis” citing examples from the Scandinavian countries (Allern and Blach-Ørsten, 2011 cited in Artero, 2015:9). Proponents of the second position further argued political parallelism is reducing only at the organizational level, while “political ideologies are more apparent in news content than in the past” (Artero, 2015). An interesting observation in the same line is what Artero (2015:10) called “media coalitions around political parties.” He explained that the two have a shared interest of reaching more audience, in which parties reward media that supports during political competition.

Mancini (2012:269-270) later on suggested that new forms of parallelisms should be investigated. He pointed out a new kind of parallelism, what he termed “virtual parallelism,” has emerged with the expansion of new media. Virtual parallelism has a weak structural and

organizational presence on the ground, which is the result of technological innovations (ibid.). “Business parallelism” is among the new forms emerged in subsequent studies in Central and Eastern Europe where mass media are solely owned by and dependent on economic and business interests rather than political and social organizations (Mancini, 2012:272). “Radical parallelism” is another addition of our time “determined by dramatic circumstances (as in the case of the Arab Spring)” which is primarily riding the internet and social media train (ibid.).

3.4. Instrumentalization

Instrumentalization is worth a brief reflection as it is closely related to and often confused with political parallelism. Hallin and Mancini (2004:36) defined instrumentalization as “control of the media by outside actors – parties, politicians, social groups or movements, or economic actors seeking political influence – who use them to intervene in the world of politics.” They also recognized the possibility of instrumentalization of media for commercial purposes (ibid.). This description accounts a range of actors, unlike political parallelism, which is limited to parties, politicians and political systems. It shouldn’t cloud the fact that parallelism and instrumentalization of media can co-exist in a system together.

Instrumentalization can take three forms which can overlap (Mancini, 2012:273-276). Media can be used as an instrument (a) to build or destroy the image, (b) “to extract money from the state,” or (3) to “intervene in the decision-making process.”

What is critical for the discussion here is highlighting the difference or similarities between political parallelism and instrumentalization in media. The line between these concepts is not always clear (Mancini, 2012:276). But the fundamental difference between the two can be found on the conditions that enable them to exist. Political parallelism presupposes the existence of (a) a relatively stable competitive political system that allows expression and negotiation between different views, and (b) a stable relationship between media and political agents that can be observed over time (Albuquerque, 2013:743). Mancini (2012:274) wrote that instrumentalization emerges where “economic or political pressures do not respond to any stable and well-rooted cultural and ideological frameworks.” Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002:275) added that media instrumentalization is very common where the level of political polarization is high. It has a short life span driven by immediate pressures and represents the interest of fewer individuals.

Political parallelism is a “model of the public sphere” interested in political socialization. It enables expressions of views through external pluralism (Mancini 2012, 276). In this sense, political parallelism is either open or easy to detect. Media outlets can be evaluated against their political orientations and coverage to locate where they stand in the political parallelism spectrum. Media actors and journalists have the agency to decide which views to amplify.

Whereas, instrumentalization does not concern about “political socialization and construction of informed citizens” (ibid.). It is more interested in achieving the immediate interest of owners. Instrumentalization prevails where personalized politics/parties are conventional and party politics is new or very weak. Parallelism, as noted earlier, is high in societies where a party system is established that can be paralleled by partisan media (Mancini, 2012:275).

3.5. A critique on political parallelism

Attempts to apply, test and modify the concept of political parallelism in connection with new media and technology-driven transnational diaspora media studies is relatively new. Diaspora media were beyond the purview of the original works of Seymour-Ure (1974), and Hallin and Mancini (2004) who are credited to popularize the concept. In Mancini’s own admission “the Internet and digital media, in general, is a big hole in the book” (cited in Moe and Sjovaag, 2008:137).

Hallin and Mancini (2004:6) have never meant their media models to be universally applicable. The concept of political parallelism falls short of capturing media systems in non-Western societies and new democracies; and historically emerged in the post-WWII decades (Albuquerque, 2013:748; Mihelj and Downey, 2012:8; Voltmer, 2008).

The new configurations of political parallelism mentioned earlier can be a good starting point to show the gap in the original theorization of the concept. The most important critique, however, questions the very relevance of the presuppositions that inform the theorization of political parallelism. Drawn from the experience of Western Europe and North America, Political Parallelism assumes two preconditions fulfilled from the outset: the existence of a competitive political system, and a reasonably stable relationship between media and political actors that can lead to identifiable patterns. Albuquerque (2013) criticized political parallelism lacking full applicability in non-western societies, especially where there is no competitive political system.

The complicated relationship between media and politics, he argued, cannot possible explained by a concept whose preconditions do not exist or significantly diverged in non-Western societies.

Albuquerque's (2013:749) central contention is the possibility of political competition exerted through non-democratic means, such as through violence instead of public debate. Similarly, a non-competitive environment can be created and sustained through a democratic means as in one party dominated states (ibid.). A different set of dynamics emerges between media and politics in these largely non-Western conditions. He divided societies into four based on two variables: political competitiveness and stability in media/politics relationships. The four groups are: Competitive/Stable; Competitive/Unstable; Non-competitive/Stable; and Non-competitive/unstable (ibid.).

Table 2. Albuquerque's (2013) Political competitiveness and stability in the media/politics relationship

		Stability of media/Politics relationship	
		<i>Stable</i>	<i>Unstable</i>
Political Competitiveness	<i>Competitive</i>	Competitive/ Stable	Competitive/ Unstable
	<i>Non-Competitive</i>	Non-competitive/ Stable	Non-competitive/ Unstable

Source: Modified version of Albuquerque's table (2013:749)

Japan exemplifies the democratic but *Non-competitive/Stable* system where one party dominates politics for decades. On the other extreme, former communist countries are considered part of the same group. In both cases, the political scene is dominated or controlled by one party/ideology, and the relationship between media and politics is strong and journalists, contrary to popular notion, enjoy "degree of autonomy" even though they are discouraged from being vocal critics (p. 750-751).

Competitive/Unstable includes societies such as Brazil and Thailand, the former a democratic and the later undemocratic variant in this category. Alternative views and groups exist in such communities, but the rule of their engagement can take place in the form of election or other means. In Thailand, “persistent political instability” characterizes the nature of political competitiveness. Media developed healthy internal pluralism as a coping mechanism against the volatile political system (p. 753). In the Brazilian case, despite contested politics, the relationship with media is unstable, forcing the later to adopt a strategy of shifting alliances.

Non-competitive/Unstable is characterized by distrust between media and political actors. Military dictatorships who uses intimidations for controlling purposes represent the undemocratic, non-competitive system in which the relationship between media and politics is unstable. The democratic variant can be found in the post-apartheid South Africa, a democratic system but non-competitive political scene and the media/politics relationship volatile due to government hostility and pressure on media (p. 751)

The ‘*Competitive/Stable* political communication environment’ comfortably embrace many aspects of the three models Hallin and Mancini proposed. The category includes competitive political systems, whether the rule of engagement is democratic as in Europe or undemocratic as in Lebanon and Rwanda, where media develops a stable relationship with political agents (Albuquerque, 2013:753-754).

In summary, the notion that political parallelism exists only in democratic political systems is misleading, as demonstrated by Albuquerque (2013). More importantly, political parallelism is not necessarily detrimental in all conditions and societies. Compensated through internal and external pluralism, a media system characterized by political parallelism may serve its purpose of providing information and encouraging civic participation.

3.6. Models of Immigrant Journalism

The change in the alternative diaspora-based transnational media is not only in form but also in the content and the model of professionalism it takes. Shumow’s (2014:2-14) three models of immigrant journalism, namely ‘Oppositional, Market-driven/hybrid and Immigrant/community’ are good examples. He introduced these three models in a discussion of the Venezuelan

journalists in South Florida, USA. This typology is instructive in that it is set to understand the ideological and operational shift immigrant journalism developed among practitioners. The ideological motivation of immigrant journalists (Terje, 2011; Shumow, 2012) influences their work.

Journalists in the Oppositional model heavily focus on events at home, Venezuela in Shumow's case, and firm opposition to the regime/leader. Their professional motivation is politically driven. There is always an element of sacrifice in their journalistic engagement. They aimed to find their primary target audiences in the homeland. Finding advertiser is difficult mainly because they stand in a direct political confrontation with the regime at home. The models reflect Lyons' observation of "conflict-generated diasporas" which "often play critical roles in political struggles in the homeland." (Lyons, 2009:1)

True to its name, the Market-driven/hybrid model is for those journalists who follow events at home but only "as part of their work." This partial emphasis is due to their conscious consideration about the interest of audiences in the diaspora who have "family and business connections" back home. Another consideration for journalists in this model is the need to serve newly arriving and residing immigrant community members to adjust and succeed in their day to day life in the host land. These considerations signify that journalists in this model have a different set of the target audience than the first model. It reflects both political and economic concern. Shumow further noted that journalists and media in this model widen their audience beyond Venezuelans to address the broader group of Latin America immigrants and Hispanic Americans. All these considerations ultimately resulted in the production of 'mediated communications' that aspires to avoid too much focus on one small group of the audience (2014:4). Economic considerations are vital factors common among all kinds of media (Lee, 2013).

The third model is the Immigrant/community model. The model is distinct in its emphasis on "issues relevant to immigrants" in the host land. Their coverage focuses on "local events" which are ignored by the host and mainstream media but essential for the immigrant community (Shumow, 2014:4-5). This approach of the model has economic ramifications for the media operating under the model.

Mushow's models can be understood within the framework of political parallelism. Political parallelism and Mushow's models intersect where media, politics and journalists meet. In both cases, except Mushow's third model, journalists react to political factors at home. What makes Mushow's model relevant to our discussion is the transnational nature of immigrant journalism, which was absent in Hallin and Mancini's original theory of political parallelism.

Building on these theoretical insights, this paper will assess the nature of political parallelism in one of the leading Ethiopian diaspora-based transnational media. The indicators developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), in combination with Van Kempen's modifications (2006), will be used to trace the existence and level of political parallelism in ESAT. I will apply five indicators, namely Ownership, Organizational connections, Party or ideological loyalty, Media personnel's political involvement, and Journalists' role orientation. Where the concept is applicable in the context of ESAT, the operationalization of the indicators will demonstrate the level of political parallelism. The failure of the concept to evaluate the dynamics between politics and media will be a starting point to refine the concept. Borrowing Albuquerque's critical observations (2013), this research will question whether the preconditions for political parallelism exist in the diaspora-based transnational media context. Mushow's models will be additional tools to understand political parallelism in ESAT in relation to the journalist's perception and practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design: A Case Study

This research employs a qualitative case study approach for two reasons. First, the study is limited to one real-life unit of analysis, the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT), that is experiencing a profound change due to political developments in Ethiopia. Second, assessing political parallelism entails a thorough understanding of political dynamics and inner life of media outlets. A case study is one useful tool to dig complex subjects and phenomenon like the one at hand.

On the one hand, this study is interpretative and inductive for it seeks to understand ESAT through the theory of political parallelism. On the other hand, it is deductive that tries to assess possible areas of reconsiderations in the conceptualization of political parallelism to make it appropriate to the diaspora-based transnational media setting.

A Case study: pros and cons?

Case study research has a long history in major social science disciplines as an integral part of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Gerring, 2017:25; Yin, 2014:19; Bryman, 2012:68; Runeson and Höst, 2009). Case study, like other social science research methods, has its strengths and weaknesses. First, it is flexible both in designing and implementation processes (Yin, 2014; Runeson and Höst, 2009). Research questions can be modified when original goals are found to be less relevant (Bhattacharjee, 2012:93) or methods not feasible. Second, a case study allows researchers to investigate the detailed account of a variety of phenomenon to produce a more contextualized and authentic account. Third, the method can be used to theory testing/refining and theory building purposes (Bryman, 2012:71).

Concerns over research validity and reliability are common to all qualitative research methods, including a case study. Case study tends to demonstrate weak internal validity because it has no experimental control to check the researcher's role (ibid.). To increase the validity and reliability of the present study, I used triangulation techniques. Through data/source triangulation, I used more than one data sources, be it personal interviews or documents to understand the state of affairs in ESAT. My personal and professional experience and knowledge of the Ethiopian media

give me a unique access into the political and cultural world under investigation. This improves the quality of the information gathered and the analysis

Another weakness of the case study method is its over-reliance on the knowledge and skills of the researcher to capture observations, and then integrating them in the body of a theoretical discussion. It renders the findings of case study researches susceptible to subjectivity.

The theoretical discussion of this study establishes a link between the concept of political parallelism and its applicability in different situations. Research objectives, questions and interview questions here are designed to explore the political parallelism in the real world of diaspora-based transnational media. Therefore, the findings of this study will demonstrate how the concept interacts with the real-world case which will ensure a better internal validity of the exercise. This case study will not claim any significant level of external validity or generalizability due to its limited scope. However, I believe the findings and conclusions of this research will shed light on the possibility of political parallelism in a diaspora media context. It is my firm belief that the investigation will be a kind invitation for a broader and more in-depth study in the field.

4.2. Research Strategy and Data Collection Method

A case study can use six different sources of evidence, namely, documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts (Yin, 2014:105-133). I employed interviews, academic works and documentation- in the form of mass-media outputs- for data gathering. My observations are also used as a validation mechanism.

I gathered first-hand information through interviews with 11 staff members and supporters of ESAT. Many of the interviews are an hour long. Nine of the interviews made over Skype and two face-to-face meetings took place in Stockholm and Addis Abeba, Ethiopia. ESAT is selected due to its glaring presence and impact in the Ethiopian media scene since its launch in April 2010. No other diaspora-based, politically oriented transnational media has made a visible impact as much as ESAT in the Ethiopian media landscape in the last ten years (Endalkachew, 2018).

ESAT broadcast its radio and television program via satellite. It has four program languages, Amharic⁷, Afan Oromo⁸, Tigrigna and English. The Amharic program is the most dominant in all terms, staff, branding, and revenue generation (Interviews, 2019). I also speak only Amharic among the local languages in Ethiopia. All interviews are carried out in Amharic to maximize the quality of the information gathered. In order to make good use of the limited time frame available to conduct this study, I transcribed and translated into English only essential quotes and notions for the analysis.

The interview participants are selected based on their role and experience in ESAT. At the beginning of the study, I chose the participants through snowball sampling with the help of two individuals with close knowledge of ESAT. The informants have practical experience in different operational aspects of ESAT, ranging from reporting to administration and support group (Chapters). The list is in Appendix E. Some informants requested anonymity on some of the information they shared. I followed two approaches in quoting the interviewees. For data that the sources are comfortable with to be quoted, I mention individual interviewees by name. Where the participants preferred not to be quoted or if more than three interviewees support the same notion, I refrain from mentioning names. In such instances, I use “interviews, date” to indicate either of the two situations. I hope that this ensures anonymity while allowing me to use the information. Many of the informants have had more than one role in ESAT at some point in time. The most common multiplicity of functions is journalists’ active involvement in administration, fundraising events and brand building exercises. Informants were selected from the three ESAT field offices: Washington, D.C. (USA), Amsterdam (the Netherlands) and London (UK). The informants have worked for ESAT between 5-9 years. Journalists in the newly opened office in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, were not interviewed due to lack of resources and time. They could have shed light on the experience of ESAT in Ethiopia under the new political environment. Instead, I have interviewed the Addis Abeba office manager for this study and another journalist juggling between Addis Abeba and London.

ESAT support groups, aka “Chapters,” are critical structures connected ESAT with the grassroots diaspora communities. The Chapters are the bloodlines of the station in terms of mobilizing finance, resource and public support. The Chairwoman of the Sweden Chapter, Coordinator of the North America Chapters’ regional office, and the International Coordinator

⁷ The widely spoken and working language of the county

⁸ The second biggest spoken language

are among the participants. One of the founding members of ESAT, who has no affiliation with ESAT now, is also interviewed and provided a critical historical background.

I used various secondary sources for this research, such as books and academic publications dealing with political parallelism, the Ethiopian diaspora, Media in Ethiopia and ESAT. Relevant interviews and speeches given by leading figures in ESAT published in the media are also reviewed to validate information gathered from my interviews.

4.3. Method of Analysis

A semi-structured interview method was employed to allow the flexibility that maximized the quality of information participants can provide. An Interview Guide was developed to guide the interviews (see Appendix D.) I made the initial communication with the informants via email and phone (see the request in Appendix A). Once they accepted the invitation, they were given the Interviewee Information Letter and signed the Consent form (Appendix B and C respectively).

The study of political parallelism covers the vast horizons of political and media issues. The central concern of the concept is capturing the nature of the relationship, especially how and why media mirrors politics in its content, operational modalities, institutional and ideological loyalty, and audience preferences (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This thesis used thematic framework analysis to summarize the key findings of the interview materials (Bryman, 2012:578-579).

I developed a thematic matrix to register qualitative information from the interviews, along with the indicators. The interviews were analyzed along with the five conceptual themes identified in the theoretical discussion to assess the extent of political parallelism: Ownership, Organizational connections, Party or ideological loyalty, Media personnel's political involvement, and Journalists' role orientation in ESAT.

I developed a narrative and analytical profile of ESAT based on the data I gathered from the participants and other sources. It is framed in a manner that helps to assess the variables the research set to examine. The analysis shows trends and exceptions in responses to the thematic issues. The findings, in conjunction with secondary sources, informed the final review and conclusion of the research.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

The first ethical consideration is reducing the potential impact of my personal experience and bias on the study. I have been a journalist for more than 15 years and exiled due to my journalistic

work. I followed ESAT's journey over the years. I have long considered ESAT and similar outlets as alternative media worth critical support in the face of a hostile political environment in Ethiopia. To minimize the impact of this connection on the research, I anchor the data gathering and analysis of this research only on the theoretical framework borrowed from the authors discussed in Chapter Three. I tried to guard my potential biases through a self-reflexive mindset. I declared to participants from the outset that this is nothing but an academic endeavor of understanding political parallelism in a diaspora-based media context, making ESAT more accessible in the academic world. Therefore, they are warned not to expect any favorable outcome in my analysis. I use face-validity, the use of expert opinion both to mitigate the researcher's own bias, evaluate if the study investigated what it was intended (construct validity), and authenticate essential data gathered from the interviews.

All participants received a brief explanation of the purpose and methods of this research before they agreed to participate in the interviews. Once they expressed their will, the Information Letter and Consent form, which had been reviewed by my advisor beforehand, were sent. The Information Letter clearly establishes the objective of the study, rights of interviewees and relevant contact details in case they have complaints. Participants confirmed their consent by signing the Consent Form or stating their approval at the beginning of recorded interviews.

Few of the issues discussed in the interviews are sensitive in the context of current developments in ESAT and Ethiopian politics. Subsequently, some participants asked for not to be quoted in connection with some topics. Therefore, for consistency and increased protection of the informants, I identify three quoting and anonymizing ways discussed above (under 4.2.). The content of the interviews and their data will be kept confidential and be destroyed at the end of the research project as per Södertörn University guideline. I tried not to reveal the identity of other participants to interviewees unless they discussed among themselves.

Data presentation: The Political and Organizational Profile of ESAT

5.1. The Story of ESAT: From Party to Diaspora-based Media

Political parallelism, as we defined in chapter three, is the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties or, more broadly, the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society. Therefore, building the political and organizational profile of ESAT is indispensable to a meaningful assessment of political parallelism. This chapter constructed a tentative profile touching upon different aspects of ESAT. I also try to shed light on the political context that may not be evident in fragmented data.

ESAT's inception is a journey from party media to diaspora-based media. The establishment of ESAT has long been associated with *Ginbot 7*. However, neither ESAT nor *Ginbot 7* ever admitted it officially until May 7, 2019. *Ginbot 7* finally declared its role in the establishment and sustenance of ESAT in a press statement at the end of its general assembly. The organization held its general assembly to dissolve itself as a Movement. The meeting discussed ESAT under the agenda item "the Movement's wealth and property" (*Ginbot 7*, 2019). *Ginbot 7* further expressed its position on the need to register ESAT as a nonprofit organization within Ethiopia that will be owned by all Ethiopians, to be reconstituted as a national institution whose board can match the diversity of the counter. *Ginbot 7*'s assembly also delegated a committee of four to work with the existing ESAT Board in the transformation of ESAT.

Ginbot 7, at its establishment, had identified influential media "as a necessary tool to wage the struggle against government back home" Mesfin Aman⁹ recounts (Interview, 2019). The idea of starting a politically oriented satellite TV station, Mesfin remembers, first came from members of the *Ginbot 7* in London. They were inspired by the Somali diaspora in the U.K. who run multiple satellite-based stations. Mesfin was among the few to take part in the discussions at the

⁹ Mesfin was one of the founders and among the very few publicly known members of the then underground movement *Ginbot 7*. Currently, he has no affiliation with *Ginbot 7* and ESAT.

earliest stage in Amsterdam. Subsequently, the top leadership of *Ginbot 7*, including Birhanu Nega and Andargachew Tsige, started discussing the idea (Interviews, 2019).

The decision to establish, at least to midwife the birth of, a new politically oriented TV station was exclusively taken by *Ginbot 7* aimed at “breaking the air-wave monopoly of the government in Ethiopia and reaching the public directly” (Interviews, 2019; *Ginbot 7*, 2019a).

The independence and business model of the TV station was a subject of debate among the steering group, that includes senior *Ginbot 7* leaders. The consensus was, according to Mesfin and Fasil, to give full editorial independence to ESAT (Interviews, 2019). According to Mesfin, the Movement (*Ginbot 7*) had decided to support ESAT to become “an independent media institution lead by a competent board.” The resolution to make ESAT a diaspora-based, grassroots-supported station was a departure from building a party media.

An independent Board comprised of “respected individuals” set as a safeguard to ensure the institutional freedom of ESAT. However, political consideration was the main criteria for selecting the original board members who reside in Europe and North America. *Ginbot 7* heavily influenced the recruitment process even though the individuals selected were not necessarily party members (Interviews, 2019).

The responsibility of leading the administrative and logistic aspect of the new ESAT was entrusted to Mesfin, while the editorial responsibility given to Fasil Yenealem. A task force, constituting *Ginbot 7* leaders, members and journalists then worked out the detail on how to operationalize the idea. Both were affiliated with *Ginbot 7* back then.

Amsterdam was chosen to host the initiative for two reasons. First, *Ginbot 7* had a better presence in the Netherlands back then; second, a high concentration of exiled journalists was taken as a dependable human resource pool. Among the journalists in the Netherlands were Fasil Yenealem and Dereje Habtewold, who would be ESAT’s Editor-in-Chief and program producer respectively. The two were imprisoned in Ethiopia during the 2005 election crisis with opposition leaders such as Birhanu Nega.

5.2. The Organization

Legally, ESAT is a non-profit entity registered by the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce. The Netherlands based organization that owns ESAT is “Foundation of Ethiopian Satellite Television

(ESAT).”¹⁰ Its counterpart in the USA is another non-profit organization, “Advocates for Media and Democracy in Ethiopia.” The Dutch-registered organization had extended the right to share the ESAT brand to the one in the U.S.A. (ESAT website, nd; ESAT, 2019; Interview with Mesfin, 2019). ESAT identifies itself as grassroots organizations.

5.2.1. Structure

The organizational structure of ESAT gets blurred as it goes upward, where the overlap with *Ginbot 7* is evident. As I gathered from the interviews, the highest authority in the organization, at least nominally, is the Board or in the words of one informant, “Founders’ Board.” In the most common parlance, this Board can be taken as “Board of Directors” that is responsible for policy and strategic issues. Initially, members of this Board were mainly those in whose name the two nonprofit organizations were registered, an informant believes (Interviews, 2019). But it is not clear, for many of the informants, how this Board relates with the two nonprofit organizations today. Furthermore, the full identity and number of the members and their appointment mechanism have never been official (Interviews, 2019).

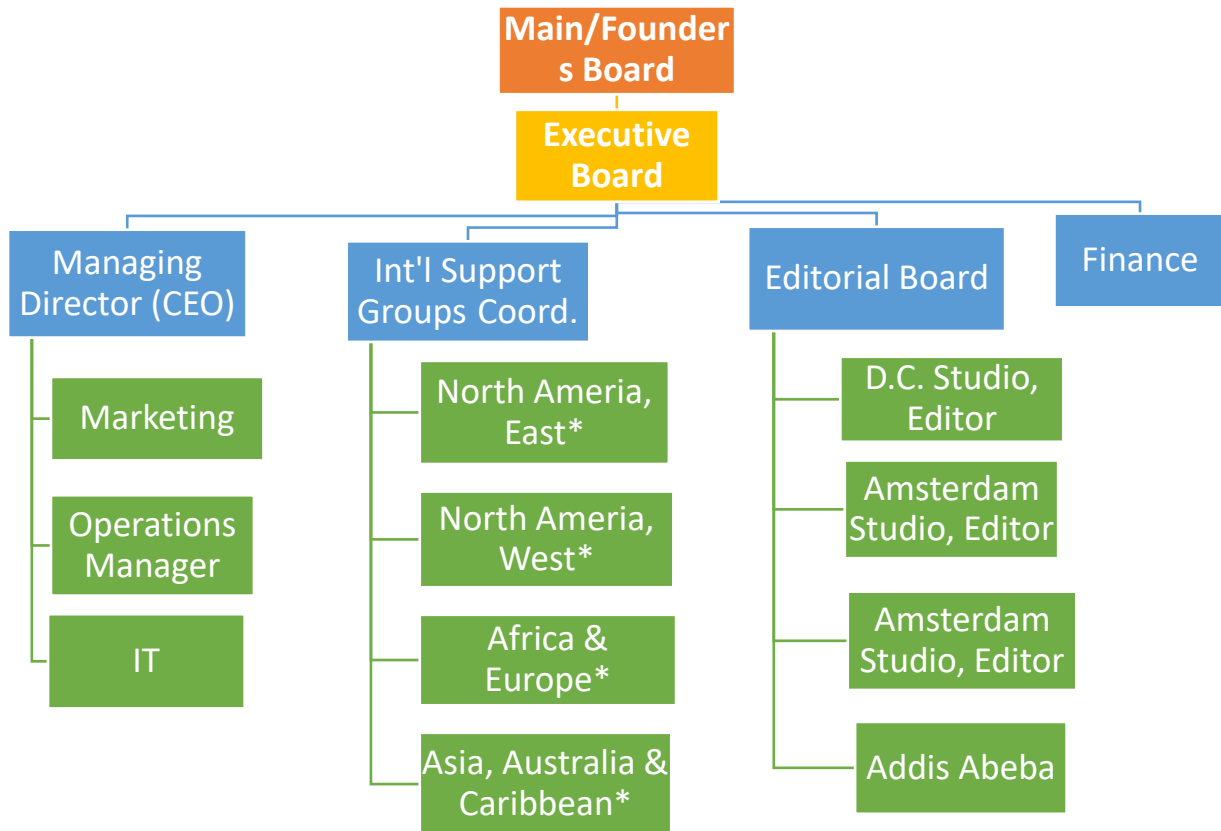
Politically, the informants agree, admitting the political and organizational connection between ESAT and *Ginbot 7* would have had a negative impact on the brand and credibility of the station (Interviews, 2019). The Ethiopian government consistently tried to establish this connection to discredit ESAT. Pro-government and state media almost always used to refer to ESAT as the mouthpiece of *Ginbot 7*.

After *Ginbot 7* was designated as a “terrorist group” in 2011, having any connection with ESAT, whether giving interviews or information, was an act that potentially lands one in prison. Journalists and political activists were charged for collaborating with ESAT. The government brought criminal charges against ESAT and OMN, another diaspora-based broadcaster, in 2017 (dropped in 2018). Under the last state of emergency in October 2017, watching these two TV channels “belonging to terrorist organizations” was banned (BBC, 2017). The secrecy created a condition where the leadership of the organization is unreachable and unaccountable to anyone except for those in the inner circle of *Ginbot 7* (Interviews, 2019).¹¹

¹⁰ Mesfin Aman said that the name of the organization is “Stichting Task Force on Promoting Ethiopia Democracy and Human Rights.” “stichting” means foundations in Dutch. I can’t establish why the names are different and which is one is the current one.

* Chapter (Support Groups) are organized at city or country level. Chapters of a certain region constitute each of the four regions: North America-East, North America-West, Africa and Europe, and Asia, Australia and Caribbean.

Diagram 1: ESAT current organizational structure



Source: drawn based on the information gathered from interviewees.

5.2.2. Day-to-day operations

The day-to-day operation of ESAT, according to Yeheyis Belayneh and others, is under the purview of the “Executive Board” (Interviews, 2019). The Executive Board (EB) is delegated by the main or “Founders’ Board” to oversee and direct overall activities. The Executive Board has five departments under it: Finance, Marketing, IT, Editorial Board, and International Support & Coordination. The Editorial Board members are Editors from each of the studios. Until recently, there was a Managing Director, based in Washington, DC, who coordinated the logistics and administration of the three studios (Interviews with Ermias, Fasil, and Yeheyis, 2019). In the early days of ESAT, an Advisory Board was formed constituting prominent scholars, journalists, advocates and artists in the diaspora who were not members of *Ginbot 7*; but this Advisory Board could not last more than a few months due to “internal disagreements”

on its role (Interview with Mesfin, 2019). See the current organizational structure above in Diagram 1.

The “International Support & Coordination Department” connects local “ESAT Support Groups (Chapters)” with ESAT. According to Yeheyis Belayne, who is leading the department from Germany, currently, there are 53 Chapters organized under four regional offices: North America-East (18 Chapters), North America-West (11 Chapters), Africa & Europe (15 Chapters), and Asia, Australia & Oceania (9 Chapters) (Interviews with Getachew and Yeheys, 2019). Chapters organize at least one fundraising event annually. More than half of the Chapters are in North America which may reflect the size of the diaspora community and its active engagement in opposition politics. Currently, ESAT has four studios in Washington, DC (USA), Amsterdam (the Netherlands), London (UK), and Addis Abeba (Ethiopia).

The number of ESAT staff members fluctuates, and the terms of their work vary. The number of full-time employees is lesser than the total involving in content production. Many works at ESAT out of “political or patriotic convictions” (Interviews, 2019). There are journalists and support staff who take an extra job to complement their meagre income (Interviews, 2019). Some individuals have more than one role juggling between journalistic work, administrative assignments, and taking part in promotional & fundraising events.

The Washington, D.C, studio has been the biggest with 15-20 staff members, followed by Amsterdam with 7 staff. The London studio, which is always the smallest, has currently 5 journalists and support staff among whom one has returned to Ethiopia. The new studio in Addis has around 20 staff members (Interviews with Ermias, Fasil, Kassahun, Metasebia, and Saba, 2019).

5.3. The Chapters: grassroots or political roots?

“Chapters” are the institutional channels connecting ESAT with members of the diaspora. A detailed guideline is put in place that outlines the mandates, activities, division of responsibilities of Chapters. Group of individuals can establish a “Support group” (Chapter) at a city or country level if they have enough committed organizers and community members. The regional and international coordinating offices provide support to local Chapters (Interviews with Emebet, Getachew and Yeheyis, 2019). A Chapter, ideally, is a committee of around 7-9 people who mobilize the diaspora community in support of ESAT. Chapter members are to be elected, for a

two years term, among volunteers. In many cases, Chapters register as non-profit organizations in their respective countries.

The formation of Chapters started in 2010. In June 2010, one of the first Chapters formed in Germany, and by the end of 2011, the two North America Regional coordination offices were established (Interviews, Getachew and Yeheyis, 2019).

The role of *Ginbot 7* and its structure in forming “support groups” (Chapters) across the world “cannot be overstated,” though it had never been recognized in public (Interviews, 2019). Key mobilizers in the majority of the support groups (Chapters) are believed to be members or sympathizers of *Ginbot 7*, or “at least they are critical of the regime at home” (Interviews, 2019). An interviewee noted that ESAT is among the everyday agenda items in *Ginbot 7* local branches; and “they took the success of ESAT as an important part of their political objective” (Interviews, 2019).

Many of my interviewees, however, warn against generalization on the membership status of Chapter members and leaders. There are many Chapter-leaders and community mobilizers who are not party members or sympathisers; “there are even Chapter members and supporters who disapprove *Ginbot 7* in public.” It is also common to find members of other opposition groups supporting ESAT (Interviews, Emebet, Getachew and Yeheyis, 2019). Yeheyis believes that *Ginbot 7* membership is not the least denominator for all ESAT supporters. He speaks about three other widely shared drivers: opposition to the government in Ethiopia, sympathy to ‘Ethiopian patriotism,’ and a gradually increasing realization of the role of media (Interview, 2019).

Emebet noticed that many of those involved in the Chapters and supporting ESAT might have more reason beyond the ideological appeal and the wish “to contribute to the struggle” (Interview, 2019). Individuals’ interest in media is one attraction, Emebet believes. For some, involvement in ESAT related activities is an expression of social status and political position. Asylum seekers sometimes try to use their affiliation with ESAT to substantiate their asylum application on the bases of political persecution in Ethiopia (Interview, 2019).

5.4. Business Unusual

At the inception of ESAT, the plan envisaged financing the operation mainly through monthly contributions and fundraising events in the diaspora. However, ESAT was entirely dependent on

Ginbot 7 for the first months until individual efforts started generating money. *Ginbot 7* donated “substantial amount as seed money and at critical junctures” (Interviews, 2019).

The business plan had hoped that convincing 5000-10000 Ethiopians in the diaspora would commit a monthly contribution of 10-20 USD and that it would be a sustainable financial source. It did not work as planned. What surprised the organizers was the response from the public to the formation of the support groups and the fundraising events. Chapter coordinators, Yeheyis and Getachew Legesse (Interviews, 2019), knew that deepening political crisis in Ethiopia had given an impetus to grassroots organization and fundraising events since the early days of ESAT.

Today, the most definitive source of income is fundraising events organized by Chapters. Two interviewees attributed around 75% of the annual revenue to fundraising events, another put the figure at 40%. Monthly contributions, monetization of content (Youtube and Audionow¹²), Vehicle donation¹³ and financial donations complement the income. Youtube is becoming an increasing source of income (Interviews, 2019). ESAT’s social media presence is a crucial aspect of reaching people and gathering information online (Endalkachew, 2018). Currently, it has more than 1.3 million followers on Facebook though it is not monetized yet.

Advertisement is insignificant in the station’s financial structure. Businesses, at home and in the diaspora, shy away from advertising their services on ESAT for fear of government reprisal until recently (Interviews, 2019). It must be noted here that viewers at home, the main targets and consumers of ESAT, don’t play any meaningful role in financial terms (Endalkachew, 2018:107). It is yet to be seen whether and how the new political situation in Ethiopia will widen ESAT’s market.

The 53 Chapters hold at least one fundraising event annually. The amount of money collected on fundraising events usually depends on two factors. The most critical determinant is political developments; and the second, honorary guests attending the event. A government crackdown in Ethiopia and the amount of donation mobilized during fundraising events are directly related (Interviews, Birutawit, Emebet, Yeheyis, 2019). The arrest of prominent politicians and human rights activists, mass incarcerations, reported killing and brutal treatment of dissidents all

¹² AudioNow is a mobile access to radio content service. Users can listen radio content through the AudioNow App or through call-to-listen i.e. by calling to a designated local number. It claims to “to connect diaspora communities to their countries of origin and news in their native languages through universal, mobile access to radio content.”

motivate the diaspora community to react. Opposition parties, at home and in the diaspora, are too weak to respond to events and channel the resentment into political action. Covering such developments extensively through news and analysis, with a bold partisan sympathy to the perceived victims, ESAT positioned itself well as a platform to amplify public frustration and institutional means of distance resistance.

Yeheyis singled out 2016 as “year of records” where Chapters broke their own record of donation mobilized at one event. 2016 was one height of the public protest in Ethiopia, which was met by deadly government violence and widespread arrest. The nationwide movement of Ethiopian Muslims in 2014, the death of the late PM Meles Zenawi in 2012, the killing of demonstrators in Gondar and the Eerecha festival are some of the examples my interviewees remember. Attacks against Ethiopians in the diaspora, such as the xenophobic attack on African immigrants in South Africa, and abuse of Ethiopian maids in the Middle East garnered an unprecedented level of participation and successful fundraising events (Interviews, 2019).

There is an established tradition of inviting honorary guests to fundraising events to attract more people. Public figures such as the renowned artist turned human rights activist Tamagn Beyene, opposition leaders, journalists, human rights activists and artists are the most frequent guests. ESAT journalists tour the world as part of annual fundraising events to promote ESAT and assure supporters that their contribution matters (Interviews, 2019).

Landinfo (2012:8), a research institute affiliated with the Norwegian immigration authority, quoted one senior leader of *Ginbot 7* saying “ESAT and G7 are partially financed by the same sources, but are otherwise separate entities.” The report didn’t disclose who the financier could be.

Since the border war of 1998-2000 between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the two governments were at loggerhead and busy in supporting insurgent groups of the other. *Ginbot 7*, until last year, officially received at least political and diplomatic support from the government of Eritrea; and the party’s military base located in Eritrea. The second report came from a leaked audio material published by a pro-government website. The leader of *Ginbot 7*, Birhanu Nega, is heard in the leaked audio discussing the allocation of 200,000 USD to ESAT out of a total received from the government of Eritrea (Daniel, 2013).

So far, the income generation scheme of mobilizing a diaspora community around oppositional ethos to run a diaspora based tv station has been “working well” for ESAT. It defies Downing’s (quoted in Shumow, 2014:7) warning for activists not to forget the temporary nature of public support associated with a political crisis. ESAT’s model inspired the emergence of diaspora TV stations such as the Oromo Media Network (OMN) and recently the Amhara Satellite Radio and Television (ASRAT). The striking difference to ESAT is that the OMN and ASRAT build their support base around ethnic-nationalist ethos, in contract to ESAT’s [Pan-] Ethiopian nationalism (Endalkachew, 2018:107).

5.5. Political Identity and Encounters

The political landscape in Ethiopia is dominated by “competing nationalisms” (Merera, 2003). “[Pan-] Ethiopian nationalism,” broadly defined, may cover ideological strands premised on and prioritize the shared history, identity and shared destiny among all Ethiopians, regardless of their ethnic background. Their political rhetoric, almost always, put the history and unity of Ethiopia at the center. “Ethiopian nationalism,” Endalkachew (2018:101) noted, is “a unifying sentiment” in ESAT manifested in “its staff, its language, and its name.”.

The contending strand is “ethnic-nationalism,” which capitalizes on the rights and historical grievances of ethnic groups, undermine or deny the existence of a shared identity, and demands a re-constitution of the country, and in some cases secession. The 1994 Constitutions reconfigured the country, broadly, along ethnically and linguistically defined regions. Political forces of the same conviction hold the upper power since 1991. Therefore, political competition in Ethiopia inherently carries a certain level of nationalism(s).

Forces in the political opposition are of two broad and loosely defined categories. In the first group are those who support (a) the ethnic federalism model but (b) criticize the lack of democracy and economic development. Their primary targets are members of one ethnic group. Those in the second category disapprove both the ethnic federalism model and the poor record in political and economic governance. Many who subscribe to “[Pan-] Ethiopian nationalism” tend to be in this category and stand in stark contradiction with the policies of the ruling party and government. Appealing people across ethnic lines is at the core of their objective¹⁴. One may

¹⁴ Political parties referring to themselves as “Pan-Ethiopian,” “multi-ethnic,” usually, or ideally, attract members from different ethnic groups. Their membership does not predicate on ethnic identity. Among the notable and relevant parties for this discussion are “Coalition for Unity and Democracy” (CUD) and *Ginbot 7* (Patriotic *Ginbot* 7 Movement for Democracy and Justice).

add a third category to accommodate, notwithstanding their minimal role, those who accommodate the economic and/or political performance of the regime but demand reform on the federalism model.

In this broad political canvas, ESAT positioned itself in the second category of [Pan-] Ethiopia nationalism. All staff members and support groups leaders, interviewed for this research, firmly and consistently agree on the centrality of “Ethiopia” or “Ethiopian-ness” or “the unity of Ethiopia” in ESAT’s identity and their affiliation with the station (Interviews, 2019). Matasebia Qetsela, a producer at the London and now Addis Abeba studio, summarized it poetically, “Ethiopia is the alpha and the omega.” Speaking of the importance of “[pan-] Ethiopian nationalism” in the editorial process, Ermias repeated the same expression: “the alpha and the omega of [ESAT’s] editorial is Ethiopianism” (Interviews, 2019).

Studying the impact of two diaspora-based transnational media houses, ESAT and OMN¹⁵, Endalkachew Chala (2018:30) demonstrated how different nationalisms frames (Ethiopian nationalism and Oromo nationalism) used by the two outlets convey divergent interpretations.

The relation with the government and its perceived supporters is confrontational. As much as the government identified ESAT as a strategic enemy, what Fasil Yenalem (2014), the Editor-in-Chief of ESAT, told supporters gathered at a fundraising event¹⁶ in Stockholm divulges well-thought political objectives behind ESAT’s work. He started by listing the three cardinal objectives of ESAT: first, “to play a positive role in the struggle to create a united and democratic Ethiopia to the next generation;” second, “to identify and fight hindrances against unity and democracy;” third, “to show alternative ways.” Among all the institutions of the regime at home, Fasil added, “ESAT focuses on weakening and discrediting the propaganda institutions of the state” to force out the regime (ibid.) The informants interviewed for this research echo a similar view in their role perception. Such is the underlying motive that geared ESAT’s effort, from the outset, towards discrediting the regime at all opportune moment (Interviews, Ermias, Fasil, Kassahun and Mesfin, 2019). ESAT members and supporters do not get enough words to emphasize the unique mission of the station in relation to the government in Ethiopia. The most common expression catchphrase is “ESAT is a media of struggle”¹⁷(Interviews, 2019). This

¹⁵ Oromo Media Network (OMN)

¹⁶ I personally attended this event and received a copy of the presentation at a later stage.

¹⁷ In Amharic “ኢሳት የትግል ሚዲያ ነው”

echoes the framing of political engagement as “struggle,” which is common in the political opposition camp.

When asked about their journalism style, the most common answer used to be “ours is advocacy journalism, journalism is not a goal by itself for us” or “we don’t have the luxury of talking about journalism styles, our mission is to rescue the country and contribute to set the people free” (Abebe, Messay and Sisya, 2019; Interviews, 2019). Their journalistic role within the new political environment in Ethiopia is now a source of a new debate among ESAT stakeholders (Interviews, 2019).

The encounter with opposition groups that share similar ideological orientation is more amicable (Interviews, 2019). The most delicate encounter is the one with opposition groups¹⁸ that espouse the “ethnic nationalism” orientation. Even though the ideological difference is undeniable, ESAT adapted a pragmatic approach to collaborate with these political forces, whenever is possible, against the government at home. Interviewees remember many instances where opposition parties in this camp supported ESAT (Interviews, Emebet, Getachew, Metasebia, Yeheyis, 2019).

But there are repeated accusations against ESAT of favoring *Ginbot 7* and discriminating ethnic-based groups. The station has been vehemently denying this criticism, which is repeated by three of its editors in a recent TV interview in Ethiopia (Abebe, Mesay and Sisay, 2018).

5.6. Ideological orientation

ESAT’s ideological orientation in relation to nationalism issues and critical stance on other policies of the regime defined the nature of its political encounters. In the arena of “competing nationalisms,” as elaborated earlier, ESAT strongly identifies itself with the [Pan-] Ethiopian nationalism. Everything gravitates towards two ideals in ESAT, Fasil explains: “building a democratic and united Ethiopia” (Interview, 2019). The way these ideas are interpreted in ESAT’s programming is unmistakably pro-Ethiopian nationalism, and in contradiction to the narratives espoused by ethnic-nationalist media such as OMN (Endalkachew, 2018).

Undoubtedly, ESAT’s relation with the government and its perceived supporters is confrontational. As much as the government identifies ESAT as a strategic enemy, it tries to

¹⁸ The groups can legally operate within Ethiopia or in exile and waging armed struggle.

cripple the station in different ways. Jamming ESAT's transmission, hacking journalists, criminalizing working with and watching ESAT are only the most remembered.

On ESAT's part, what Fasil Yenalem (2014), the Editor-in-Chief of ESAT, told supporters gathered at a fundraising event¹⁹ in Stockholm divulges political objectives driving their work. He started by listing the three cardinal objectives of ESAT: first, "to play a positive role in the struggle to create a united and democratic Ethiopia to the coming generation"; second, "to identify and fight hindrances to unity and democracy"; third, "to show alternative ways." Among all the institutions that the regime at home mobilizes, Fasil added, "ESAT focuses on countering and weakening the propaganda institutions of the state" (ibid.)

The informants interviewed for this research echo a similar approach. Such is the underlying motive that geared ESAT's effort, from the outset, towards discrediting the regime at all opportune moments (Interviews, Ermias, Fasil, and Mesfin, 2019).

The encounter with opposition groups that share similar ideological orientation is more amicable (Interviews, 2019). The most delicate encounter is the one with opposition groups²⁰ that espouse the "ethnic nationalism" orientation. Even though the ideological difference is undeniable, ESAT adapted a pragmatic approach to collaborate with these political forces, whenever is possible, against the government at home. Interviewees remember many instances where opposition parties in this camp support ESAT (Interviews, Emebet, Getachew, Metasebia, Yeheyis, 2019).

But there are repeated accusations against ESAT of favoring *Ginbot 7* and discriminating ethnic-based groups. The station has been vehemently denying this criticism, which is repeated by three of its editors in a recent TV interview in Ethiopia (Abebe, Mesay and Sisay, 2018).

With a glaring ideological slant within the Ethiopian political contours, ESAT emerged as a source and symbol of counter-narrative to the government in power. For some, ESAT is "the most prominent political phenomena in the Ethiopian political scene during the last ten years" (Endalkachew, 2018:88).

5.7. ESAT in the transition

Ethiopia entered a new period of political transition since 2018 (Mehari, 2019). No aspect of ESAT is untouched, unquestioned and unchallenged by the political transition in Ethiopia. First,

¹⁹ I personally attended this event and received a copy of the presentation at a later stage.

²⁰ The groups can legally operate within Ethiopia or in exile and waging armed struggle.

the legal and political situation in Ethiopia has changed dramatically. The criminal charge against ESAT is dropped; it started operating from a studio in Ethiopia. ESAT journalists and supporters are allowed to go back to Ethiopia. The station is welcomed by the government, occasionally praised and courted by the new PM.

I demonstrated earlier how ESAT was conceptualized as a party media and transformed early on to be a diaspora-based advocacy media. Due to the current political change, ESAT's history and internal workings are now becoming a subject of public discussion. Similarly, the ownership and administrative arrangement that led ESAT to success is facing a legitimacy crisis. Again, the ownership status and its fate are on the way to transform into a new constellation. By the time of writing this thesis, the exact details of the promised new ownership model have not been cleared (Interviews, 2019).

One profound consequence of the political transition in Ethiopia is a new realignment among political forces. The leaders of *Ginbot 7*, the most important political group to ESAT, returned to Ethiopia and recently dissolved. *Ginbot 7* adapted a very restrained tone towards the government and even discouraged vocal and excessive criticisms against the new PM. Its key figures argue in public that the government deserves support to calm down tensions and control conflicts.

There is a split among ESAT staff members in relation to their assessment of the reform initiative and the tone they should now set (Interviews, 2019). The problem for ESAT "is not the difference of opinions regarding the situation in Ethiopia, but the sentiments that might lead to the loss of a unity of purpose and ultimately a reason to work together" (Interviews, 2019). "It is time for ESAT to redefine its identity and purpose," one of the interviewees said.

Adding to the pressure, ESAT supporters are confused by public controversies among ESAT staff members, and [the lately defunct] *Ginbot 7* leaders. Many think that ESAT has realized its objective with the introduction of the political transition in Ethiopia, and therefore doubting the need to continue supporting ESAT. Membership contribution has reduced since the beginning of the political reform in April 2018 (Interviews, 2019). On the other hand, Chapters' leaders and organizers are wary of the risk of losing supporters whose main driving reason was the ideological orientation and loyalty of ESAT. They are pressuring the Executive Board and ESAT personnel to act (Interviews, 2019).

Conclusion and Reflection

The previous chapters laid down the theoretical, historical, political and organizational context to analyze the level of political parallelism in one diaspora-based transnational media. In this chapter, I will assess if the five indicators of political parallelism can be traced in ESAT. This exercise investigates ESAT based on the information gathered through primary and secondary sources highlighted earlier in chapter five. Due to the close relationship between the indicators, in some cases more than one indicator can be discussed under one theme.

6.1. The Preconditions reconsidered

The previous sections draw a clear connection between the state of politics in Ethiopia and ESAT. On the one hand, the lack of political space in Ethiopia is one of the push factors driving Ethiopians to migrate. On the other hand, shrinking space at home gave additional impetus to diaspora and opposition groups to fill in the gap in the media landscape.

The first and most important question to start the analysis, therefore, is not about a link between politics and media in the diaspora media context. It is rather about how well political parallelism and its indicators explain the relationship between politics and media in the context of diaspora media. A good starting point is to ask if the two presuppositions of political parallelism, as formulated by Hallin and Mancini (2014), exist in the diaspora media context. These two underlying preconditions are the presence of a competitive political system and a reasonably stable relationship between media and political actors that can lead to identifiable patterns.

The diaspora media political context, in this case, that of ESAT, demonstrates the existence of neither of these two conditions. The political system in Ethiopia, extended to the Ethiopian diaspora, is not competitive in the sense the original theorization understood it. It is one-party authoritarianism that best characterizes the political space in Ethiopia. The competition is beyond peaceful public debate and political negotiation. This validates Albuquerque's (2013) criticism on the original conceptualization of Hallin and Mancini (2004), particularly on the inapplicability of these preconditions to studying such societies. Albuquerque noted that political parallelism could exist in a non-competitive environment too; therefore, predicated on the existence of competitive political systems render the concept unable to explain the phenomena

in societies different from Western Europe and North America. What should be added to Albuquerque's criticism is that his observation should be extended to transnational diaspora media context.

However, there is one caveat in the competitiveness of politics in the diaspora. Political forces in the diaspora, theoretically, can compete in a legal and political sphere of their host countries. This contrasts with the lack of level playing field in their homelands. It is imperative to study the kind of competition diaspora-based political groups are having among themselves to characterize the system. How far the competition affects diaspora and diaspora-based transnational media? It is a question that should be left for other studies that may shed light on the relevance of political parallelism in such diasporic space.

The second precondition is a "reasonable stability" of the relationship between media and politics that allows the emergence of "identifiable patterns." Albuquerque aptly demonstrated that political parallelism could be observed in unstable relationships. Another problematic aspect of the "reasonable stability" condition is defining the timeframe. It can be seen as a unique coincidence that I started to conduct my research at the time of political changes in Ethiopia. Had this study been conducted two years ago, my case could have landed in Albuquerque's "Non-competitive/Stable" category of parallelism. Now, the situation best described as Non-competitive/Unstable than stable.

ESAT's political parallelism can be traced in relation to two opposing political forces, the government of Ethiopia and *Ginbot 7*. The relationship between ESAT and *Ginbot 7* can be characterized as a mutual interdependence, and mutual animosity between ESAT/*Ginbot 7* and the government. The onset of political transition in Ethiopia now is disturbing the relatively stable relationship ESAT had with the two political forces. The government of Ethiopia and *Ginbot 7* are no more arch enemies. In this, ESAT is facing the daunting task of redefining its mission and identity visa vis political developments in Ethiopia (Interviews, 2019). Before the transition period, there was no debate in ESAT editorial rooms and prime time shows how far commentaries could attack the government or the entire political system in Ethiopia. Now, journalists, supporters and the Board are floating between two seemingly contradictory assessments of politics in Ethiopia. ESAT used to counter almost all narratives and positions of the government and share that of *Ginbot 7*. This has been changing since the introduction of reform in Ethiopia.

The ownership of ESAT has never been an issue, either because it was not urgent, or the existing arrangement had been serving its purpose well. Now, the ownership and future of ESAT became a contentious issue internally. It is not certain how the political development will affect these relationships. Does the current situation indicate a change in the parallelism?

Notwithstanding the “reasonably stable” criterion, the case of ESAT exemplifies situations where signifiers of parallelism can evolve under specific political environments. This does not disprove, however, Albuquerque’s thesis on the possibility of political parallelism under the unstable relationship between media and politics.

To summarize, Hallin and Mancini’s original preconditions do not exist in the Ethiopian diaspora-based transnational media context. The political parallelism I discuss in the following sections is occurring in the absence of those preconditions. It occurred in the context of non-competitive and unstable relationships. What is not known is to which of Albuquerque’s set of conditions²¹ the transition is heading for ESAT.

Another related concept relevant to this study is instrumentalization. Apart from the historical, organizational and ideological parallelism, the possibility of instrumentalization of ESAT by *Ginbot 7* or a particular political/ideological group is worth closer scrutiny.

Hallin and Mancini (2004:36) wrote that instrumentalization is not a reserved space for political parties and economic actors; social groups and movements can instrumentalize media. In our case, a section of the diaspora with a shared ideological profile, and an opposition group (*Ginbot 7*) created and supported a media that mostly promote their ideology. People around ESAT unequivocally acknowledged their intent to use media to achieve a political mission before the new development in Ethiopia.

Media can be instrumentalized (a) to build or destroy an image, (b) “to extract money from the state,” or (3) to “intervene in the decision-making process” (Mancini, 2012:273). The first and the third forms of media instrumentalization resonate with what many of my interviewees said about their goal in supporting ESAT. Breaking government monopoly of the airwave, countering the narratives of the ruling party, discrediting the regime, and “clearing the cloud of fear so that

²¹ See four potential combinations of conditions in Chapter 3.

people challenge the government in Ethiopia,” are few of the ways in which the respondents frame the objective of ESAT (Interviews, 2019).

Political parallelism and instrumentalization of media can exist together. However, (Mancini, 2012: 274) postulated that instrumentalization prevails where “economic or political pressures do not respond to any stable and well-rooted cultural and ideological frameworks.” Hallin and Papathanassopoulos’ (2002) observation on the prevalence of instrumentalization where political polarization is high, as in Latin America, corroborate the possibility of instrumentalization in the Ethiopian context. Instrumentalization exists in ESAT, by and large, at the ideological and party level. It takes a separate inquiry to investigate how far the instrumentalization is linked with a single party, and to what extent it affects content production at ESAT. Endalkachew’s analysis (2018) pointed out the direct link between ESAT’s ideology and the framing of news. Government and section of the opposition accuse ESAT of being the mouthpiece of *Ginbot 7*, and “talk shows and even newscasts are slanted to *Ginbot 7*” (ibid.:106).

6.2. Ownership: Who Owns ESAT?

Discussing political parallelism in the context of broadcasting, Hallin and Mancini (2004:30) deliberated on four governance models. These are the government model, professional model, parliamentary or proportional representation model, and the “civic” or “corporatist” model. Premised on the two preconditions discussed earlier, their exposition has no direct relevance to understanding the ownership model in diaspora media.

The legal status of ESAT lies in the two non-profit organizations registered in the Netherlands and USA (see Chapter 5 under Origin and Organization). A significant part of its income is generated from members’ contributions and donations. These two factors may give an impression of an independent community-funded institution. However, ESAT’s political history and connections complicate the power relations between the stakeholders.

The station is conceived as a party TV; it received its starting capital from an opposition party (*Ginbot 7*), and, thus, was “born” as a party-diaspora (community) funded institution (Interviews, 2019). Reports escaping the direct financial, not to mention political and organizational, support given by *Ginbot 7* are misleading, according to my informants. At the time of this research, ESAT has not yet come out as a full-fledged, community based, self-

administered entity. The recent discussion regarding the ownership of ESAT only demonstrates the complexity and fluidity of ESAT's institutional standing.

The role of *Ginbot 7* in the life of ESAT, from its conception to today, is hard to ignore. The mere fact of *Ginbot 7* deliberated on the fate of, as was the conception of, ESAT, on the occasion of its dissolution implies a strong, real or imagined, bondage between the two. The resolution of *Ginbot 7* assembly (2019a, 2019b) explains what motivated the discussion on ESAT and what is to be done in its part:

....this is for the first time *Ginbot 7* is officially recognizing the fact that it established ESAT to support the struggle for democracy...; wishing to resolve ESAT's ownership issues once and for all; cognizant that, since its establishment, ESAT has been getting significant portion of its financial, information and technical support from the public; because it was serving as the eyes and ears of the Ethiopian people; to make the people of Ethiopia the owners of ESAT, as per the provisions of the upcoming revised media law; to register the entity as a non-profit organization [in Ethiopia]...

The party further calls upon (*Ginbot 7*, 2019a) the (re)registration of ESAT within Ethiopia with a broader-based diverse representation in the Board. It also requested the current Board members to realize what the transition takes and delegated a committee of four²² to execute the decision of the assembly. *Ginbot 7* didn't even mention that ESAT is currently operating under the two non-profit organizations registered abroad.

The statement surfaced divergent views on the issue of ownership. To start with, this pronouncement of *Ginbot 7* was not included in ESAT's news coverage of the assembly. Five days later, on May 12, 2019, a statement authored by "the majority of the Washington DC studio staff members" posted on ESAT's Facebook page. The statement rejects many of the claims made by *Ginbot 7* regarding its role in ESAT and the direction set to resolve the ownership issue. The authors of the Facebook post deny any pending ownership issue.

Endalkachew (2018:105), in his turn, earlier discussed the "peculiarities" of ESAT's ownership model at length and suggested a separate inquiry. However, his study stops short of pinpointing the financial and organizational support *Ginbot 7* extended to ESAT. He noted:

²² The members are Andargachew Tsige, Meazah Tafesse, and journalists Fasil Yenalem and Sisay Agena.

“...the patterns of media ownership in Ethiopian diaspora point to some contradictions. While ESAT is inclined to operate as a non-profit, community funded, public service media, diaspora-based opposition political groups conceive of ESAT as the extension of opposition groups. The outcome is an interesting marriage of the two models: opposition mouthpiece and non-profit communal media. As it is, ESAT is both a non-profit community—and although some people may have leanings towards certain ideologies—the network is not necessarily affiliated with a particular opposition party.”

It is not clear how Endalkachew defined or measured affiliation. However, the information I gathered in this research indicates a strong connection between ESAT and *Ginbot 7*, which contradicts Endalkachew’s doubt of affiliation. What is at stake is not the legal standing of ESAT as a non-profit entity but the operationalization of ownership in the formation and day-to-day business of the organization.

Ownership of media can be operationalized in many ways. Legal recognition is only one aspect of it. The study of political parallelism goes beyond questioning legal status. Without such “beyond-the-official” approach, the concept would have lost its value in the study of media and politics. Several studies (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 2011; Voltmer, 2008; Artero, 2015) underlined the evolving patterns of media ownership and political parallelism. Market or financial interest is treated as a critical indicator of political parallelism. In this respect, *Ginbot 7* seems to play a crucial role in providing direct funding to ESAT and garnering a strong mobilization capacity for fundraising.

The form and shape of ESAT’s ownership will be shaped by legal issues in Ethiopia and the negotiation between stakeholders of ESAT. But it is improbable, in Fasil’s view, that ESAT will become a commercial station (Interview, 2019).

Organizational independence should not be confused or conflated with editorial independence. It seems rare for the Executive Board of ESAT to interfere in Editorial matters, as all the 11 interviewees confer (2019). Influence on editorial issues from *Ginbot 7* comes more in the form of ideological and political positions and at the individual level, ESAT journalist observed (Interviews, 2019). But there are cases where critical coverage of *Ginbot 7* invited pressure from the party members and leaders (ibid.).

In light of Hallin and Mancini’s conceptualization, a significant level of overlap or connection between ESAT and *Ginbot 7* can be seen in defining ownership and funding. The authors correctly noticed that political parallelism does not necessarily take a political party as an actor. Similarly, even if we take out *Ginbot 7* from the scene, the ideological preference of the majority of ESAT supporters, “pan-Ethiopianism or Ethiopia,” confirms a high level of political parallelism.

6.3. Organizational connections/links

ESAT has more organizational connections with *Ginbot 7* than any other political actors (Interviews, 2019). The relationship between *Ginbot 7* and ESAT is not limited to the initial funding and the latest announcement, as seen in the preceding section. Mesfin (Interviews, 2019) reminded earlier that *Ginbot 7* members are active supporters and drivers of ESAT Chapters from the early days. An interviewee narrated how *Ginbot 7* members showed their interest in and influenced on ESAT Chapters.

The link between the two is informal and unofficial. Emebet leads the ESAT Chapter in Sweden. In her view, *Ginbot 7* members’ active participation in ESAT Chapters is personal; they do not take part on behalf of their party. However, another interviewee provided a different view, that the autonomy of ESAT Chapters has been challenged in many places. “Chapters are asserting more autonomy in recent years,” the same person observed.

As I discussed earlier (5.4), *Ginbot 7* members and party structure played an instrumental role in the formation and performance of grassroots support groups (Chapters). The organizational connection as a mirror of parallelism in ESAT appears very high.

6.4. Media personnel’s political involvement

The political involvement and affiliation of journalists is an element of political parallelism in the media. ESAT carefully selects the ideological orientation of its personnel. As I have demonstrated, at the top of the organizational ladder is a Board whose members are picked under the heavy influence of *Ginbot 7*. Not all these individuals are members of *Ginbot 7*, according to the informants (personal interviews, 2019). Yet, their political and/or ideological inclinations were one of the criteria in their selection process. At least they are not pro-government and subscribe to one or another strand of Ethiopian nationalism (Interviews, 2019). The second authority in the hierarchy is the Executive Board, which is delegated by the Board. Members of

the Executive board are selected among the Board. According to one of the interviewees, all the 5 members of the Executive were members or sympathizers of *Ginbot 7* (Interview, 2019).

At an individual level, the managing director is a dominant position that, ideally, coordinates the administration and logistics of the entire organization. She or he is to be appointed by the Executive Board. The political identity of the person is as vital as his managerial capacity (Interviews, 2019). The first person assigned to coordinate the administration of ESAT in Amsterdam was Mesifn Aman, he was among the leaders of *Ginbot 7* back then. Since the position of ‘Managing Director’ was created two individuals hold the position. The two previous managing directors were Neamin Zeleke (2013-2015) and Abebe Gelaw (2016-2018).

Neamin Zeleke was a member of another diaspora opposition party when he was asked to lead the effort to set ESAT’s Washington D.C studio in 2010 (Interviews, 2019). He later joined *Ginbot 7* to emerge as one of the public faces of the party and the head of public relations. Abebe Gelaw is a long-time journalist and vocal critique of the Ethiopian government. He came to political prominence with his investigative stories targeting the credentials of pro-government intellectuals and corruptions. His political fame reached its peak when he protested the late PM, Meles Zenawi in person. Abebe loudly interrupted the PM and called for the release of jailed journalists while he was speaking at the G8 symposium in May 2012 in Washington, DC. (Nazer.com, 2012). He announced his membership of *Ginbot 7* at a public meeting in July 2014 (Zehabesha, 2014). However, on other occasions, he claims that he doesn’t belong to any political party. What is not in doubt is where he stands in terms of his ideological and political orientation.

Among the journalists at ESAT, only Reeyot Alemu publicly announced her membership of *Ginbot 7*. Of the six journalists interviewed for this research, one of them has been a member. However, many of them run a politically active life. They spoke at anti-government rallies and public gatherings with a very pronounced political and ideological positions. This research cannot cover support staffs working at ESAT to generalize on the political involvement of the entire personnel. In the prism of this indicator, however, political parallelism can be viewed as high.

6.5. Party or Ideological Loyalty

One of the most reliable indicators of political parallelism in ESAT is ideological loyalty. A detailed analysis is needed to speak about party loyalty. ESAT's ideological orientation on Ethiopian nationalism issues and critical stance on policies of the regime defined the nature of its loyalty in the period preceding the current change. All the eleven participants of this research emphasize how vital is ESAT's ideological identity and mission to their affiliation regardless of their role.

The participants were asked how much ESAT's ideological orientation is essential in their affiliation with ESAT. All answered with strong affirmation. Those asked if they would still be with ESAT if it shifted its ideological orientation, everything else remained unchanged, the majority said no, and others not sure.

They may articulate the objective of ESAT in different ways but remained within the framework of "Ethiopian-ness, democratizing and united Ethiopia." Ideological loyalty in ESAT should also be seen from the "conflict generated" diaspora perspective. Such diaspora tends to be more ideological than other groups of immigrants (Lyons, 2005). Ideological loyalty, in this research, perfectly works to understand the dynamics between politics and media.

6.6. Journalists' role orientation

Hallin and Mancini (2004:29) noted that journalists in certain historical periods of some systems might play an advocacy or "publicist" role. In other systems and periods where political parallelism is low, they contend, journalists "see themselves as providers of neutral information."

The journalistic role orientation among ESAT journalists emanates from the very mission of ESAT itself. ESAT's mission, in turn, is a reaction to political realities or the perception of it. In explaining the objective of ESAT, there is no substantive difference between one of the interviewees who left ESAT soon after its launch and someone who joined recently (Interviews, 2019). The objective of the institution, one way or the other, guided the role orientation of journalists and others around ESAT.

Many in and around ESAT frame its work as "a struggle" or "part of the struggle" to democratize (sometimes to liberate) Ethiopia. This adds a political objective over their "ordinary" business of providing verified information and quality analysis to create an informed public. They are

open and clear about what they want to do with their journalism. ESAT's journalists are criticized for mixing journalism with activism. They rarely deny it, instead justify their activism-with-journalism, or advocacy journalism, approach on the states of politics in Ethiopia. Similar arguments were employed in South Africa during the apartheid era, and later in Nigeria in the struggle against the military regime in the 1990s (Terje, 2011:739-749).

Journalist's role orientation in ESAT is informed by political positions and geared towards achieving political ends, I summarize. This is a full mark of a high level of political parallelism.

6.7. Models of immigrant journalism

The three models of immigrant journalism introduced in Chapter 3, derived from the experience of Venezuelan journalists living in the USA in exile. Shumow (2014) observed how immigrant journalists' political orientation dictated their coverage, journalism style and business model. The factors Shumow considered in his analysis are very relevant to political parallelism. Therefore, the utility of bringing Shumow's classification is to test the significance of homeland politics in diaspora journalism.

Shumow's Oppositional journalism model perfectly reflects the practice in ESAT. Journalism of the 'oppositional model' heavily focuses on political events, motivated by political objectives and prioritizes audience in the homeland. My exposition in this research demonstrated the strong presence of these elements in ESAT.

One notable addition Shumow (2012:823) made was that the practice of such journalism involves "an element of sacrifice." I encountered similar feelings and personal experiences among the interviewees. Individuals working for ESAT earn much less than what they could have made if they accept another job, others take part-time work to complement their income, some forgot their private and social life (Interviews, 2019). ESAT's primary target audience is in Ethiopia, but it's dependent on donations from Ethiopians in the diaspora, which is one feature of the oppositional journalism model.

6.8. Conclusion and Reflection

The research started with two guiding questions to explore the world of diaspora-based transnational media and its interaction with homeland politics. The central thrust of the study, therefore, became understanding the making and operations of the Ethiopian Satellite and

Television and Radio (ESAT) through the prism of political parallelism. This was supposed to fulfil two objectives: (a) to examine the level of political parallelism in ESAT, and (b) to explore reconsiderations need to apply the concept of political parallelism in the diaspora-based transnational media context. The data gathered from the interviews and secondary sources were interpreted through the lenses of thematic indicators of political parallelism. The same exercise rendered a relatively detailed account of regarding the political aspect of ESAT's history, organization and operation.

I observed that the criticism on the two preconditions of parallelism holds valid in the context of diaspora-based media. The preconditions were the existence of competitive political system and reasonable stability to observe a pattern. Hence the total absence or lack of the preconditions is the very reason that creates or lead to the formation of politically oriented oppositional diaspora media Albuquerque's (2013) intervention in asserting the possibility of political parallelism in the absence of the preconditions holds true, as this research has shown. Starting from this assumption, attempting to designate the media system based on Hallin and Mancini's three systems model is ruled out.

A related finding is, categorizing systems in transition in one of (non)competitive/(un)stable paradigm developed by Albuquerque (2013) may also be problematic. The Ethiopia/ESAT context is now in an uncertain transition to move away from the non-competitive/stable paradigm. This uncertainty resulted in confusion in ESAT. The station's journalism model, institutional standing, objective and identity are under the heavy burden of uncertain political transition. Albuquerque's (2013) paradigms do not consider similar transitional challenges.

The indicators selected to assess political parallelism found to be applicable in the Ethiopia/*Ginbot 7*/ESAT context, albeit the absence of the two preconditions. The indicators (ownership, organizational connection, media personnel's political involvement, party/ideological loyalty, role orientations) are all applicable in the context selected for this research. Therefore, there is no criticism or recommendation to make on the indicators. The findings of each indicator are helpful tools to assess the dynamics between politics and media from different angles.

The original theorization (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) assumed that only local actors would play in the parallelism space. In the process of this investigation, I observed that the diaspora-based

oppositional media might attract external state actors and international NGOs. In this case, the financial support is allegedly coming from the government of Eritrea is a good example. If the report is accurate, it invites a closer look at external states' role in political parallelism studies. The case of Democracy Voice of Burma (DVB) is an excellent example of the role of foreign governments financing diaspora-based media through affiliated international NGOs. DVB received substantial support from the government of Norway when the country was under the full control of the military (Pidduk, 2012). Can we explain the role of international politics and public diplomacy through the prism of political parallelism? I believe this question is worth a separate inquiry.

When it comes to the findings on the level of parallelism in ESAT, this research demonstrated the existence of a high level of parallelism. The ownership arena seems the most complicated, not least because a political party and two non-profit organizations involved. The changing environment in Ethiopia rendered the existing ownership arrangement is open for contestation and instability threatening the survival of ESAT.

The organizational connection is one of the areas where a high level of parallelism is observed. Yet, the level of parallelism is likely to reduce with time in light of *Ginbot 7*'s dissolution and, according to the interviewees, "the internal initiatives to restructure ESAT." Media personnel's political involvement, in terms of formal party centred political engagement, is stronger at the higher level of the personnel hierarchy. Yet, many in ESAT lead an active political life which can be considered as a sign of political parallelism. One potential challenge in assessing the political involvement of personnel is the elusive nature of political activities. My assessment, therefore, is limited to observe formal party related activities and memberships.

Party loyalty is pervasive among individuals who are members of both *Ginbot 7* and ESAT Chapters. For the rest of the people around ESAT, including journalists, supporters, contributors and core target audience, ideological loyalty overrides party loyalty. The most unifying ideological orientation that attracts people to ESAT falls under the "Ethiopian nationalism" space. ESAT promotes the establishment of "united and democratic Ethiopia," emphasizes the shared identity and history of Ethiopians in contradiction to ethnic-nationalist ethos. This ideological orientation is the core of ESAT's identity, as much as that of the now officially defunct *Ginbot 7*. The role orientation of journalists steams from the unwritten commitment to "Ethiopian-ness" and the necessity of using journalism as a tool to save and build a better

Ethiopia. In both cases, ideological loyalty and role orientation, a level of political parallelism is observed.

To conclude, the case of ESAT demonstrates the applicability of political parallelism in the context of diaspora-based transnational media. We also learned that Albuquerque's critics are valid. However, this research is limited in many ways to generalize the findings to the entire population of diaspora-based transnational media. A wider and deeper inquiry of ESAT, especially in comparison with two or more similar media outlets from other countries could have yield a better understanding.

The role of international actors, state and non-state, in the study of political parallelism is another subject I found least studied. Further study is required to address this gap, I believe.

Political developments at home are at play in shaping the journalistic practice at ESAT. I also learned a similar trend is observed when the Democratic Voice of Burma returned to the country following the reform initiative. The relationship between political developments at home and journalistic practices of diaspora-based transnational media is another topic for future studies can explore. For example, a comparative study on the reasons and consequences of moving operations to homeland would benefit both the production of knowledge and growth of media.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Request Letter/email

Request for Informational Interview for a Research Project in Journalism Studies

Dear,

My name is Mesfin Negash, and currently a grad student at [Södertörn University](#), Stockholm, in the department of Journalism Studies.

As part of my MA thesis, I am researching the applicability of the concept of ‘political parallelism’ in diaspora-based transnational media. The concept theorizes on the relationship between politics, political actors and media. My project set to investigate if this widely used concept in journalism/media studies can be applied in the newly emerging diaspora mediascape. The Ethiopian media in general, the diaspora-based media in particular, is under-represented in academic studies. Furthermore, despite its undeniable impact, only very few studies are made regarding the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT). Considering these gaps and the objective of the study, I chose the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT) as a case study for this research project. This study contributes both to the literature on political parallelism and understanding of diaspora-based transnational media.

I would like to request an hour of your time to interview you about ESAT’s editorial and organizational aspects relevant to the study of political parallelism. I believe your rich experience and insight will benefit my study. We can have the interview in Amharic or English depending on your preference.

I will share my questions as soon as I heard your approval of my request.

You may respond to this email or contact me on via my mobile number +46735725610.

(I am available on the most common and secured mobile Apps, preferably Wire and Signal, but also on WhatsApp and Telegram.)

I thank you for your collaboration and help.

Best regards,

Appendix B: Interviewee Information Letter

Information for participants in surveys/interviews conducted by a student as part of their course/programme.

Information for you who will participate in an interview conducted by *Mesfin Negash* for his academic research project at [Södertörn University](#), Stockholm.

Title of thesis work/study: *Political Parallelism in the Diaspora-based Media: the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT)*.

Information about the study:

The purpose of the study is to contribute to (a) the theorization of political parallelism in diaspora-based transnational media context, and (b) produce an academic work that may help a better understanding the Ethiopian diaspora-based transnational media through the experience of ESAT.

I am conducting this research as part of the International Master's Programme in Journalism at Södertörn University, Stockholm, in 2019. The information gathered from this interview will be used for the master's thesis I am working on under the working title of "Political Parallelism in the Diaspora-based Media: the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT)."

Contact information for the students and supervisor

Contact Information of the Student:

Name: Mesfin Negash; Email: sh13hf6743@sun.se

Contact Information of the supervisor:

Name: Liudmila Voronova (PhD); Email: liudmila.voronova@sh.se

Personal data controller: The study / student work is carried out as part of the students' education at Södertörn University, which is legally responsible for the students' personal data processing. You can always reach Södertörn University via email registrator@sh.se, phone +46 8 608 40 00.

Data controller: The survey/student project is conducted as part of the students' education at Södertörn University, which is legally liable for the students' processing of personal data. You can always contact Södertörn University via e-mail: registrator@sh.se or by calling +46 (0)8 608 4000.

Data protection officer: If you have questions or complaints about how your personal data is processed, you are welcome to contact Södertörn University's data protection officer via dataskydd@sh.se. The data protection officer is an expert on the rules about personal data and has the right to review how the university's staff and students process personal data.

Legal basis: Your personal data is processed in accordance with your informed consent. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your consent at any time without providing a reason, though this does not affect the processing that occurred before your withdrawal.

Recipients of personal data: Your personal data will not be shared outside Södertörn University without your consent. All personal data that come to our knowledge will be processed so that unauthorised persons cannot access them.

Storage period: Your personal data will be stored until the research/thesis has received a pass grade and will then be destroyed, unless you have agreed that it will be stored for a longer period.

Transfers outside the EU: If your personal data is transferred to third countries (outside the EU and EEA), this will be communicated to you and done in accordance with GDPR.

Rights: According to the EU General Data Protection Regulation, you are entitled to find out what data about you is processed and when necessary have any errors corrected, free of charge. You may also request erasure, limitations or object to the processing of personal data.

Complaints: You may always send complaints to the Swedish Data Protection Authority. You can email them at: datainspektionen@datainspektionen.se or call them on +46 (0)8 657 6100.

Yours sincerely,

Mesfin Negash

International Master's Programme in Journalism,

School of Social Sciences,

Södertörn University

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent form

Consent to participate in the study: Political Parallelism in the Diaspora-based Media: the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT).

I have been informed in writing about the study and agree to participate. I am aware that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can interrupt my participation in the study without giving any reason. My signature below means that I choose to participate in the study and agree that Södertörn University processes my personal data in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and information provided.

Signature

Name, place and date

Contact Information of the Student:

Mesfin Negash

Email....

Contact Information of the supervisor:

Liudmila Voronova (PhD)

Email:

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Interview Questions/የቃለ መጠይቅ መነሻ ጥያቄዎች

Thank you for consenting to taking part in this research interview.

The following are initial questions for the research interview, which is part of a study on political parallelism in diaspora-based transnational media. ESAT is chosen as a case for this study. The interview follows a semi-structured approach that explores the issues from the interviewees' perspectives and experiences. The interviews may not necessarily follow the order of, nor limited to, the questions here.

በዚህ ቃለ መጠይቅ ለመሳተፍ በመፍቀድዎ አመሰግናለሁ።

ይህ ጥናት ፖለቲካል ፓራላሊ ዝምታ በዲያስፖራ ተከል ድንበር ዘለል ሚዲያዎች ውስጥ ያለውን ቦታ ለመረዳትና ለመተነተን ይሞክራል። ለዚህ እንደአይነቱ የተመረጠው የኢትዮጵያ ባለሀብት ቴሌቪዥንና ሬዲዮ (ኢሳት) ነው። ከዚህ በታች የሰፈሩት ቃለ መጠይቅ የሚያጠነጥንባቸው ጥያቄዎች ናቸው። ይሁንና ቃለ መጠይቅ የግድ ጥያቄዎች እዚህ በቀረቡበት ቅደም ተከተል ላይከተል ይችላል፤ ተጨማሪ ጥያቄዎችም ከውይይቱ ሊነሡ ይችላሉ።

- 1. How and when you started supporting or working with/for ESAT? What is/was your role?
ከኢሳት ጋር መስራት የጀመሩት መቼ እና እንዴት ነው? አሁን ያለዎት የሰራ ድርሻ/ሃላፊነት ምንድን ነው?*
- 2. Why you chose to work with or support ESAT other than other media outlets?
ከሌሎች ሚዲያዎች ይልቅ ከኢሳት ጋር ለመሥራት የመረጡት ለምንድን ነው?*
- 3. Who and how established ESAT?
ኢሳት እንዴት እና በ(ከ)ማን ተመሠረተ?*
- 4. በአርስዎ እይታ፣ የኢሳት ዓላማ ምንድን ነው?
What is the objective of ESAT in your view?*
- 5. How do you describe the organizational structure and financial sources of ESAT?
የኢሳት ድርጅታዊ መዋቅር፣ አሠራር እና የፋናንስ ምንጮች ምን ይመስላል?*
- 6. What are the financial sources of ESAT?
የኢሳት የፋናንስ ምንጮች/ምንጮች ምንድን ነው?*
- 7. Who are the primary targets of ESAT and where do they live?
የኢሳት ዋነኛ ተደራሾች ምን አይነት ሰዎች ናቸው? እነዚህ አድማጮች/ተመልካቾች የት የሚገኙ ናቸው?*
- 8. Has ESAT any particular mission and role in relation to Ethiopian politics?
ኢሳት በኢትዮጵያ ፖለቲካ ማለቀፍ ውስጥ ያለው ሚናና ተልዕኮ ምንድን ነው?*

9. Is there any political/ideological position that ESAT supports or opposes? What are they?

ኢሳት የሚደግፈው ወይም የሚቃወመው ፖለቲካዊ/ርዕዮተ ዓለማዊ ጉዳይ/አቋም አለ? ቢያብራሩልኝ።

10. Is your political/ideological orientation resembling that of ESAT? What are the main elements of this political orientation or preference?

የእርስዎ ፖለቲካዊ/ርዕዮተ ዓለማዊ ምርጫ ከኢሳት ፖለቲካዊ/ርዕዮተ ዓለማዊ አቋም/አዝማሚያ ጋር ተመሳሳይ ነው?

11. How important is your political orientation or purpose to work with ESAT?

የእርስዎ ግላዊ ፖለቲካዊ/ርዕዮተ ዓለማዊ ምርጫ፣ ኢሳት ውስጥ ለመስራት ምን ያህል አስፈላጊ ጉዳይ ነው?

12. How important is the political/ideological orientation of ESAT to its staff members (management and journalists)?

በኢሳት ውስጥ ለሚሠሩ ሰዎች (አስተዳደር እና ጋዜጠኞችን ጨምሮ) የኢሳት ፖለቲካዊ/ርዕዮተ ዓለማዊ አቋም ምን ያህል አስፈላጊ ጉዳይ ነው?

13. How important is the political/ideological orientation of ESAT to its supporters (members of support groups)?

በየአካፋ በኢሳት የድጋፍ ቡድኖች ውስጥ ለሚሳተፉ ሰዎች፣ የኢሳት ፖለቲካዊ/ርዕዮተ ዓለማዊ አቋም ምን ያህል አስፈላጊ ጉዳይ ነው?

14. Which political party/group is much closer to ESAT's political/ideological orientation in your view?

ከኢትዮጵያ የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች ውስጥ ለኢሳት ፖለቲካዊ/ርዕዮተ ዓለማዊ አቋም ይቀርባል የሚሉት ፓርቲ የትኛው ነው?

15. Are there any political parties or their members more active in supporting ESAT than others? Which one party is the most active and visible in supporting ESAT?

ከኢትዮጵያ የፖለቲካ ፓርቲዎች እና አባሎቻቸው መካከል፣ ኢሳትን በመርዳት ከሌሎቹ የበለጠ ንቁ ተሳትፎ የሚያደርግ (ጉ) ፓርቲዎች አሉ? ከእነዚህ መካከል ቁጥር አንድ የሚሉት የትኛውን ነው?

16. What is the relationship, direct or indirect, between this party and ESAT?

በዚህ ፓርቲ እና በኢሳት መካከል ያለውን ቀጥተኛም ይሁን ቀጥተኛ ያልሆነ ግንኙነት መግለጫዎች ምንድን ናቸው?

17. Ethiopia is undergoing a significant political change since April 2018. How this change affecting ESAT?

ከመጋቢት 2018 ጀምሮ በኢትዮጵያ ትልቅ የፖለቲካ ለውጥ እየታየ ነው። ይህ የፖለቲካ ለውጥ ኢሳት ላይ ያስከተለው ለውጥ/ተጽዕኖ ምንድን ነው?

Appendix E: List of Interviewees

	Name	Role in ESAT	Interview Date
1	Birutawit Moges	News anchor, marketing and advert head, Event coordinator, (D.C. Studio)	April 2019
2	Dereje Habtewold	Journalist, producer (Amsterdam Studio)	May 2019
3	Emebet Fantahun	Chapter Chairperson, Sweden	March 2019
4	Erimias Legesse	In-House Political Analyst, and ESAT former Operations Manager	April 2019
5	Fasil Yenealem	Cheif Edior, and co-founder (Amsterdam Studio)	April 2019
6	Getacehw Legesse	North America Chapters coordinator	May 2019
7	Kassahun Yilam	Journalist, (D.C. Studio)	May 2019
8	Mesfin Aman	Co-founder, ex-administrator	April 2019
9	Metasebiya Ketsela	Journalist, producer (London/Addis Studio)	April 2019
10	Saba Atero	Studio Manager, Addis Abeba	April 2019
11	Yeheyis Belayneh	International Chapters Coordinator	May 2019