

Diasporic Media Use: in Participatory Politics and Citizen Journalism: A Case in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The study examines diasporic media use in expediting citizen journalism and political apprehension in contemporary Ethiopia. The paper critically evaluated literatures on the role of media activism and citizen journalism in promoting and delivering democracy, describing and evaluating the importance of the development of the Ethiopian diasporic press since 2005, and giving an embellished conceptual account of the political and socio-economic ramification of diasporic media industries. The researcher used an intensive online interviewing tool which took place at the respondents 'convenience and an online chatting with the website editors and a longitudinal study between January 2016- and February 2018. The case study were Ethiopian Satellite Television, Oromia Media Network from the electronic media, and merja.com, voiceofgihon.com, and amharapress.com from the web-based diasporic media.

The empirical research undertaken shows that these diasporic media are creating an enabling environment in which people can access information and exercise their freedom of speech. These media are creating an environment in which people are able to make rational decisions when it comes to political affairs.

The study, in addition demonstrated that diasporic media which play a decisive role in the forms of social, political and economic synergy that scheme thoughts, world-views, beliefs, ideas and concepts that underpin their relationships.

Keywords: Diasporic media, Ethiopia, participatory politics, citizen journalism, web-based media.

Introduction



Diasporic media are a platform for self-expression, the representation of cultural artefacts and the argument of negative stereotypes by migrant people in the entire public orb. In the idea of this collection, diasporic media are seen as the media which are established and by and for transients and disk issues of particular enthusiasm for the partners of diasporic networks' (Bozdag et al., 2012, p. 97).

These days, as a result of globalization most of the powerful Western and in particular European societies seem to be confronted with an ever increasing number of immigrants. Such movement of people brings change to the social, economic and political endeavours of different states. The immigrant themselves are not settle in one destination rather they are continuously looking for better opportunities or experiences and as (Appadurai, 1990, p.297) contends, "As international capital shifts it needs, as production and technology generate different needs, as nation-states shift their policies on refugee population, these moving groups can never afford to let their imaginations rest too long, even if they wished to". Thus, "these movements comprises a basic feature of the world, and appear to affect the politics of and

between countries to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (Appadurai, 1990). The relationship between immigrant and host society has created many different schools of thoughts in social science, cultural studies, humanities, philosophy and anthropology.

As researchers showed that many of the immigrants forced to western countries either by political ideology or in seeking better living conditions. However, many elites who asked asylum in those western nations begin their propaganda against the dictatorial leaders in their homeland as they immediately settled abroad. Later these diasporas opened various media outlets and start their political activism and campaigning roles. As to Ogunyemi, these African diaspora media channels avail to complement and extend the role of the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) by giving 'an open, multidisciplinary disciplines to argue, discuss and share and exchange knowledge on issues about migration .

It is also a common practice that many of African media production does not take place on the African continent, but it is planted overseas. The communities behind this



production normally elevate with the African diaspora, particularly they represent Africans abroad who maintain ties with their country of origin. The given media operation is hugely made possible by the use of internet technology, witnessed by the impressive growth of Africa-related material in global online media channels. Yunusa Ya'u(2008) discloses that a number of online content matters about Africa are being produced by Africans outside than within the continent itself.

The development in diasporic media channels welcomes a key exchange of the boundaries of journalism. Clearly, a significant number of the supervisors of diaspora websites are not journalists in their professions in the common western feeling of the term. They may not have a place with set up media houses, they have not been instructed as media experts, they are once in a while individuals from an expert media association, their main occupation is something else than the media venture, and so forth. Yet, they are occupied with something that looks like journalism but they are aggressively doing a lot of political tasks and uncover information so as to aware their country's men and women about the

draconian government deeds in their home country.

The Ethiopian diasporic media industry do not only facilitate communication among the communities in the diaspora as is traditionally known, but which also link with citizens in the countries where they migrated from. Such a link is made possible by the use of modern communication technologies that can operate instantaneously across political boundaries. Such media help to maintain political, social and cultural ties and unity between those who left the country and those who remained behind.

These media may be understood as a reaction to the restricted data get entry to in a restrictive political environment in which facts of information and propagation are the support of the political societies. If so, at that point limitations on information get affirmation could be viewed as prompting imaginative thoughts produced by the masses to valuably make a cross country wide public sphere where they can take part dialogically on matters influencing the governance of their nation. If they are not able to operate freely within their country, evidences show that they will do clandestinely.



Literature Review

Ethiopian Diaspora and Media

Media is one of the least developed sectors in Ethiopia. Emperor Menelik II (1844-1913) was a prominent and ambitious king who established a diplomatic relation with Western countries to introduce formal education and media in the country. Currently, there are less than fourteen privately owned and thirteen government run broadcast, print and web-based media houses in the nation.

The government still holds the lion-share of ownership of the media agencies. For instance, “television broadcasting is a government-run media which is designated by nation building agenda and uncontroversial protocol news” (Skjerdal, 2011, p.5). Although freedom of the press and expression is granted by the constitution, many scholars argue that the Ethiopian free press suffers from a severe attack by the government and takes a defiant perspective towards the dominant political discourse or critical journalism that has been arguably absent in practice or is punishable by law. As it is indicated by Skjerdal. Journalists both in the privately and state-owned media execute

habitual self-censorship in place of official censorship that has been restricted starting from 1992 onwards. The media scenarios of the Ethiopian diaspora in exile should be explained with reference to the adverse situation for journalistic operations in native land, thus the need for a few insight into the media situation of the country (Skjerdal, 2011).

Several media researchers too realized that the media scene in Ethiopia is largely state-dominated, though less than it used to be. Most journalists, estimated at 80%, work for state media institutions. Skjerdal (2011). Privately-owned newspapers have not been on the market since the overthrow of the military Derge regime in 1991. In a similar vein, in the current regime too, the media industry has been being challenged by the establishment of frequent directives and binding rules.

Particularly, after the 2005 national election almost all private newspapers were out of the market. Moreover, due to the political crises and anti-government demonstrations in the year 2016 to the first months of 2018, the Ethiopian government has also blocked the internet following days of protests and



unease that brought about deaths and injuries in the Oromia and Amhara regions.

Not long ago, Ethiopia rated 150th out of 180 world nations in the 2017 press freedom index rankings by Reporters without Borders. By 1996, the country had also become the nation in Africa with the most frequent imprisonments of media workers (Kerina, 1996). Due to such accounts, journalists began to flee the country and reside abroad. The 2005 national post-election period was ended in violent turmoil. Many political activists, journalists and the so called 'Zone 9' bloggers were also arrested and have spent a number of years in the notorious prisons.

Ethiopian people in the country has nevertheless had a media alternative for a number of years in the shortwave services of Voice of America (VOA) and Deutsche Welle (DW) – considerably of the alarm of the Ethiopian government, which confirms that the stations, especially VOA as well as its Amharic service, would staff with oppositional Ethiopians in the diaspora. Both VOA and Deutsche Well were often disclosed that their Amharic broadcasting were jammed on Ethiopian land during the 2005 national elections; during the 2008 local elections, and during the 2016 anti-

government protest up to April 2018 when the nation got new prime minister. Ethiopian officials, nonetheless, repeatedly abnegated that they had never done anything to do with the interruption and said the accusation is baseless.

The authorities in the country have also been arraigned of blocking websites. In May 2006- one year after the national elections, reports came from various sources that specific websites were inaccessible in the country. The web-based media channels exercised were all incredulous news channels edited by Ethiopians in the diaspora, in addition the Blogspot.com, a host site that comprises several critical blogs on Ethiopian politics. Once again the government denied any censoring, but reports indicated that government-critical sites continued to be inaccessible and further investigation put in doubt the official explanation.

Moreover, satellite television programs which were being transmitted from USA and Europe were interrupted and jammed. As to sources, the government has been spending too much money so as to jam those diasporic based radio and television sites. With a strong focus on politics in the homeland, ESAT and



OMN televisions are the predominant diasporic electronic media which get many audiences and viewers in the home land. Many of the country's citizens have been watching those channels confidentially. As they might be considered as the opposition and terrorist group's channels abroad, and consequently the government cadres and provincial leaders were exasperating them. Despite the viewers and audiences were critically watched by pro-government officials, the number of viewers were increasing in an alarming rate. Starting from 2016 onwards, the nation was becoming fragile and a lot of anti-government protests were prevailing across the country, particularly in the places where the biggest ethnic groups-the Oromos and Amharas are living huge numbers of protesters were involved in the anti-government rally. Because of such instances, online diaspora media online web-based channels and online newspapers were launched and dispatched their political news stories regularly just many of the outlets were frequently visited by the homeland social media users. For instance, *Ghion media Center*, *Merja.com*, *hiber radio*, *Lisane amhara/Amhara press* and others are the prominent web-based

media outlets which create public awareness and dispatch some political content in Amharic and English language medium to the home social media users.

Statement of the problem

Due to maladministration, lack of democracy, prevalence of injustice, poor living condition and by other serious livelihood factors, Ethiopian people emigrated from their country and settled abroad and established diasporic media for the voiceless mass in the homeland. They established the media industry as a means to let their citizens free from the abuse of the oppressive EPRDF administration. Therefore, there is a need to understand the existence of diasporic media in an independent country as it is an indication of how far the citizens can go to challenge any type of control by the ruling class.

While different nations in the Sub-Saharan mainland are comprehending the standards of democracy, it is the matter of a few people in Ethiopia which democratic principles are yet to be observed in their entirety of the country. There are grounds which present that a few individuals from the diasporic network are

accomplishing to help and build up this feasible democratic popularity in the nation. This includes, the foundation and utilization of diasporic media by Ethiopians domiciled abroad. Grievances, Human rights violations, lack of democracy, dictatorial administration in the whole nation forced the diasporic based society to re-unite and made an operation against the existing regime and established the media. Hence, the aim of this research article is to understand the extent to which diasporic media use in participatory politics and citizen journalism in Ethiopia.

Indeed, the presence of such media in an autonomous nation raises great deal of interests among researchers. The influenced natives have utilized least assets available to them to make informative spaces where they exchange thoughts without obstruction from the Ethiopian officials. These natives seem to be by passing the prohibitive condition that exists in the nation to build up their own open circle in which they can express issues they want to change for the country to have a democratic model they need.

Given the significance of the issue, this study examines the degree to which these media domiciled in the diaspora because of the

restricted democratic based space in Ethiopia are managing to effect political change in the country. This paper seeks to facilitate an understanding of the role played by television, radio stations, online newspapers and a few well-known and well accessed Ethiopian diaspora web-based media which are created by natives of Ethiopia outside their nation and guided at their kindred subjects to give them a dialogical commitment about the political circumstance all-embracing in the nation. As (Soley 1995, p. 114) expressed that a general public's absence of transparency is the surest indicator that clandestine media will show up, regardless of whether the nondemocratic government is a military junta, communist or capitalist. Soley additionally contends that wherever dictator administrations, political clash or civil wars exist, there is dependably a stealthy media to open channels of free articulation. The development of such oppositional press by nationals from outside the limits of the state offers a ton of conversation starters about the recognition of democratic principles that are impacting on the people's ability to enjoy freedom of expression.

Objective



The major research aims to provide an enriched conceptual understanding of diasporic media use for participatory politics and citizen journalism in Ethiopia. Specifically the research has also answered the following points:

- i. Critically assessing literatures on the role of media activism and citizen journalism in promoting and delivering democracy.
- ii. Elucidating and assessing the significance of the growth of the Ethiopian diasporic media since 2005.
- iii. The role of the internet and citizen journalism in the democratization process.

Method and Theoretical Framework

The data for the research study were primarily collected from interviews with editors/managers of the chosen Ethiopian diaspora websites, journalists of the satellite television networks plus a longitudinal reading of the websites as well as two additional websites which are significant in the Ethiopian diaspora media landscape.

Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) is a publicly funded satellite television station and an independent Ethiopian media satellite service established in 2010, the radio program of ESAT was established before the television program launched. The media house is situated in various cities in Europe, North America. Oromia media network (OMN) is also the other independent non-profit and non-partisan satellite television cited in US and founded in 2014. The researcher used an intensive interviewing online using an email and online chatting with the website editors who are working in the two television stations and in the chosen web-based media sites. The interviews were conducted between January 2016 and February 2018. The years were purposively selected as these years and months were the hectic political periods as the huge anti-government demonstrations were made in the country and diasporic media were igniting and coordinating the homeland political scenario exceedingly via by channels. As the two diasporic satellite television channels are disseminating the current political situation in Ethiopia regularly, the researcher has chosen the case studies purposively.



On top of that it has been evident that many of the audiences in the country put a trust on these independent media and web-based media outlets than that of the state controlled mainstream media which is merely mouthpiece of the government and, hence later being detested by a lot by the viewers.

Moreover, the websites were likewise chosen basically on three criteria: critical scenarios (Ethiopian current undertakings), newsworthiness (customary updates), and audience/readers appeal (likely to attract a fairly wide readership). Apart from these criteria, the sites represent certain diversity in style more than some dominant pro-government alternative on the World Wide Web especially in addressing the public matter and in becoming the eyes and ears of the entire public in the home land.

It is obvious that a portion of the outlets in the investigation are among the most mainstream websites practicing on Ethiopian current political condition issues. Mereja.com claims to have 2,504,688 likes and 2,494,344 followers and more than 2k (page-views) in a day, which probably makes it the first largest Ethiopia-related community blog on the internet. The most popular site is another

diaspora website, *voice of gihion.com*, which mainly attracted as many as 200 daily reader comments on hot issues. Besides, *amhara.press.com* has 300 readers par day in average.

Media selected for the study

Broadcast media

Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) founded 2010

Oromo Media Network (OMN) founded 2014

Websites selected for the study

URL Mainly edited from Started

<http://www.mereja.com>, USA September 2013

<http://www.voiceofgihon.com> 2012

<http://www.Amhara.press.com> 2011, USA

Analysis

Development of Ethiopian Diasporic media and State response

Ethiopians have been migrating in large numbers since 1974. Skjerdal (2011) divided Ethiopian migration in three waves. Accordingly, the first emigrants came with the emergence of the military Derge regime (1974-91), the second major wave of emigrants came in the 1990s after the current



government and the third came after by 2005 national elections that ended up in the imprisonment of journalists, opposition party supporters and political parties. Besides, in the year 2013-2016 many political activists too went to Europe and USA and asked for political asylum. All emigrants travelled to new destination due to political changes in the country. Henceforth, Migration Policy Institute 2005 data shows that there are close to 460,000 Ethiopian-born migrant in the United States, 105,500 (Israel), 90,000 (Saudi Arabia), 30,000 (Italy), and 30,000 (Lebanon) to mention some others (Migration Policy Institute, retrieved June 5, 2011 from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org>).

The majority of the activists wrote and posted on the web media and journalists who have been working in diasporic media like ESAT and OMN television who were interviewed for this investigation have all left Ethiopia amid the rule of the current EPRDF regime. In other words, most of them left the country after the existing government have controlled the nation. Albeit a large portion of these editors, and most other Ethiopian diaspora media people, are settled in North America and Western Europe, there is likewise a significant Ethiopian diaspora voting

demographic in encompassing African nations, outstandingly Sudan and Kenya, south Africa anyway they are not dynamic in political interest of their country and they could not also establish diasporic radio or television, perhaps they rarely taking part in social media activism (Levine, 2004)

Lyons (2004) portrays the Ethiopian diaspora as substantial and effectively plighted with their home country monetary and political affairs. He claims that they lobby the US government and international financial institutions to reconsider financial support for Ethiopia due to alleged human right abuse, and they have been raising funds for humanitarian and development projects and all struggle to create foreign exchange shortage in their home country and let the government inefficient in the economic sector. Plainly speaking, the media played a pivotal role on remittances which provide economic buoyancy to help keep afloat the doomed ship of a ruthless dictatorship. And later, they made the government to have a shortage of hard currency of dollars.

Ethiopian diaspora are also advocating for democracy, freedom of expression and deal with current affairs by using various media outlets such as diaspora TV, blogs, websites



and internet radio. In his study on the self-identity of the Ethiopian diaspora online community, (Skjerdal, 2011, p.8) discovered that the diaspora websites are politicized in their subjects and introductions, and "nonpartisan news stories are not given much space". This is partially due to the fact that the contributors and writers of some of the diaspora websites are politicians, prominent Ethiopian journalists who are living in exile or academics who have been engaging in Ethiopian public life.

Broadcasting from the diaspora is not a new phenomenon in Ethiopia. Before decades, the diasporic media flourished in many European, American countries. For example ESAT, OMN, Hiber radio and so forth are giving the inside and outside citizens an alternative political voice to those who are under dark cave of the dictatorial regime. They were affording the masses an opportunity to engage intellectually in the fight against repression, injustice, absence of good governance and democracy. The diasporic network is a socio-political development, made because of either intentional or constrained movement, whose individuals view themselves as of the same ethno-national source and who for all time live as

minorities in one or a few host nations (Sheffer, 2003, p. 9).

Various international reports have also showed that Ethiopian communities have experienced displacement as a result of the political environment after the dictatorial 'Derg' regime was overthrown. Those that have been dislodged and separated, keep up a cultural, social and political connection with their networks by making ideological spaces that give the communities hope of solving the problems of their land.

The emergence of diasporic media spaces in Ethiopia was a direct response to a move to create communication and facilitate a dialogical space in a restrictive information environment that was created by both regimes. This communication is intended to assist its members with making feeling of their circumstance, and to think of approaches to unravel the difficulties forced by the prohibitive condition. As Wachanga (2007) contends, when the communication situation winds up prohibitive, information and message spreading mechanics are as needs be balanced with the point of accomplishing effective communication. The response to restrictive communication space



helps the community embark on an ideological war which has a potential to win the hearts and minds of the people more effectively than any military warfare.

As the respondents disclosed the Ethiopian government noticed the diasporic media and media activists' role as being counterproductive to the state's hegemonic program. There are evidences that the Ethiopian government is being put in a compromised situation by diasporic media where it is forced to respond to their activities by putting measures to reduce their influence on the populace. These responses include the criminalization of these media, blocking some the known websites which have many followers, jamming of television and radio signals, the propagation of counter information, the soliciting of support from other nations to stop their operations and the participation of government officials in the diasporic media. This clearly depicts the ongoing tension between the state and diasporic media.

It can therefore be seen that there have been gross human rights violations in Ethiopia in the context of media, and that the violators enjoy the protection of the government. The

government institutions fulfil the limited interests of the governing body to the detriment of the more extensive interests of the people whose freedoms the government has a commitment to ensure. Ethiopia employs a set of institutions that are used as a means of coercion and violence to facilitate the monopolization of rulemaking within the country so as to make subordination to the detriment of democracy. Political activity outside the ruling party is criminalized or curtailed using state and ruling party apparatus, thereby making it difficult for Ethiopians to elect a government of their choice. Freedom of expression and association exist on paper, but it has not been seen when it is practiced rightly and legally. According to the Press Freedom index report, as far back as the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) won 99.6 percent of parliamentary seats in the 2010 national election, the administration of Ethiopia has heightened its restraint of the free media, limiting the rights to freedom of expression and access to information. Due to this, most political analysts believed that the election result seemed to be biased as many opposition parties were either in exile or in jails. The government has shut down dozens



of publications and controls most television and most radio outlets, leaving few options for Ethiopians to acquire independent information and analysis on domestic political.

The bloggers demonstrated new channel instead, advocating reform from within, rather than beyond, the political framework created by the EPRDF regime. The arrests stirred a high-profile international social media campaign to free the arrested bloggers, which spread online behind the #FreeZone9Bloggers hashtag. The heyday of the campaign was phenomenal in Ethiopia. The diaspora based media outlets have been asking the Ethiopian government to set free its conscience prisoners, bloggers, human right activists and journalists. Due to their continuous online and street strikes campaigns, the government forced to release many of the prisoners in the mid-2017 and 2018.

In fact, the diasporic media would help the opposition and civil rights movements a platform to explain their policies to the masses. They are now able to pick out irregularities national reconciliation among the leading party and opposition parties and

demand transparency in the upcoming 2012 elections. The efforts of the diasporic media to create dialogue in the country have played a significant role for the changes which seemed to see in the nation. It has generated discussions that have a potential to create change.

It is true that the diasporic media allows for such possibilities that benefit societies, but the fact that access to diaspora media are banned in Ethiopia limit their impact to just the diaspora community, which have little power to challenge the situation or set an agenda in Ethiopia.

The Role of the Internet and Citizen Journalism in the Democratization Process

In recent years the mushrooming of citizen journalists have shown all over the world including Ethiopia. As to (Atton, 2003,p. 263) citizen journalism is a theory of journalism and an arrangement of practices that are installed inside the usual day to day existences of societies, and media subjects that is both galvanized and created by those individuals and whose practices accentuate first person observer accounts.



The implementation of democracy indeed has been problematic in Ethiopia with the governments maintaining control over the communication space in order to be able to capitalize it for hegemonic intentions. Having shown how there has always been some form of resistance to state domination with the help of alternative communication platforms, Kuhlmann (2010) and Moyo, L (2012) observe that in the internet era, there has been a surge in the use of electronic communication technologies used by citizens, which have an ability to create and exchange information, thereby delivering an environment where the government is put in a position where it is not the sole producer of discourse.

More than the electronic and print media platform, the emergence of online digital technologies is enabling them to expand such communication activities on a global scale thereby enabling individuals in diasporic environments to sustain intercontinental networks. The total effect of cross-border contact among people utilizing means, for example, email, telegraph, telephone, facsimile, and digital technologies have been significant among individuals from diasporic networks spread over many continents

Karim,H(1998). On-line media permit simpler access and are non-direct, to a great extent non-progressive, and not as such expensive (Karim,K 2008).

Despite its use is immense for disseminating information and in bringing democracy to the entire mass of the nation, as the government controlled the ICT sector, numerous web-based media sites from abroad have been obstructed a few times. For example, in 2016 the nation has blocked internet based life locales throughout the nation after college entrance tests were posted on the web. The blocked sites incorporate Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Viber. This comments Ethiopia was among the number one African nations to control the web and restriction web journals and human rights sites too are every now and again blocked.

Although the government has blocked the internet several times, the social media users in the country found another mechanism and upload Virtual Private Networks,(VPN) which in part bolstered social media users to securely access a private network and share data remotely through public networks. Yet, this was also no longer used in the country. As the government is alert on various social



media posts from inside and the outside web-based diasporic media outlets which make the public aware of the crimes and intimidation in the country, the government either fully shut down or blocking some critical sites.

As the researcher also got the information from the diaspora media workers, despite there were deep rooted problems in the nation to broadcast and disseminate the information, many of the respondents disclosed that the country's freedom of the press is repressed. Several of the activists in the media outlets abroad are mostly practicing citizen journalism to create an overwhelming awareness of the societies in their home country.

They added, without the internet and mobile phone technologies, the citizens would not have been able to effectively engage in media activities to counter state hegemony through diasporic media. Such media are as indicated by Atton (2002) radical as in they are against progressive, first class focused ideas of journalism. He sees online journalism projects as an attempt to place the power into the hands of those who are more intimately involved in those stories.

As some Ethiopians got displaced and others remained, there has been a range of media activity which facilitates the instantaneous exchange of messages between Ethiopians all over the world. This has created new publishing spaces that potentially allow anyone to become a producer of news that gives them power to represent themselves in a way that offers challenges to the Ethiopian government.

This diasporic media activity acts in a way that shapes the coverage of issues the political environment in Ethiopia does not allow media to address from inside the country. The use of this technology seems to be empowering the citizens and deepening the democratic culture of a nation by making information dissemination not the unique protection of the situation.

Africans in the diaspora have been active in contributing to the supply of news and views to help in the democratisation process of their countries, (Hyden *et al*, 2007, p. 7). Ethiopians are no exception. They have excelled in this field by expressing their ideas using alternative media in the diaspora. They have raised issues that could not be reported from within Ethiopia, thereby making



diasporic media a major part of the media menu in Ethiopia.

Likewise, the diaspora controlled social media ultimately turns to revolutionary to bring freedom and democracy. Notably in the year 2016-17 and some sporadic anti-government happenings in the first months of 2018, the political unrest in the country was ignited by these diasporic based media like television channels, radio stations and web-based blogs. Thus, the involvement of the diasporic community in the escalated crisis can be understood through the lens of citizen journalism (Atton, 2004, p.263).

Atton's view of citizen journalism emphasizes what has been happening in the recent crackdowns of the country in which the Oromo youths and the Amhara youths were seriously urged the government to bring democracy, good governance, justice and send as many pictures and videos as possible to the diaspora social media task force and the group again disseminate to the whole communities in the homeland. This again ignites and creates a vicious circle and forced the government to shut down the internet many times.

The newsgathering under citizen journalism as being driven by a desire to share information with the help of the new media technologies. According to (Atton, 2004, p. 25), a vital aspect of citizen journalism is the egalitarian mode of address in which academicians share media platforms with activists and where elitism is disintegrated. This came out clearly during the current 2016-up to the country appointed new prime minister from the same party.

The utilization of the social media by citizens and their diasporic counterparts during the 2016 and up to the first months' of 2018, the ongoing protest movements in Ethiopia has set off a power struggle inside the nation's long-lasting governing coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's (EPRDF), representing an uncommon challenge to its 27-year rule can be applauded as having been tool for political change in Ethiopia. Social media became a counter-hegemonic news outlet that was able to tackle issues of human rights and democracy and to host the dissenting voices of the disgruntled population through an unsanctioned public sphere.



Evidence points out that the social media platforms are used as mobilizing tools in the hands of both Ethiopian at home and across the diaspora during the revolution. With around 80% of the country's population engaged in using Facebook and with EPRDF'S regime cracking down on the Internet, the Ethiopian diaspora had often been the source of information for what was going on in the nation. Factual information, images, and videos were circulated via social media (in Amahric, oromiffa and in English) languages to appeal for the international audiences for help and address the matter in English medium.

As the vast majority of this movement via web-based networking media exuded from Ethiopians and was prepared in the diaspora, the effect of the diasporic network's mediation in the Ethiopian protests become conclusive. Social media activities had transformed into a political instrument for equitable political change. For them to remain relevant, satellite television channels like ESAT and OBN had to catch up with what the diasporic community were reporting on a daily basis. The postings on social media were also picked up by many individuals all over the world who showed solidarity with

the people of Ethiopian in their call for change and political reform.

The media literate population who had access to the new technologies of communication linked with the rest of the populace and the world through Facebook, Twitter, mail, SMS and oral media (expression of mouth)to drive the revolution plan to various levels through their show of open resistance and famous outrage. Web-based social networking and citizen journalism turn into a space for interceding the emergency by sharing and circulating news about the dissents and urging the mass never disregard the contest.

Through their routine with regards to citizen journalism, the diasporic networks could build up social media networks that made a universal show of solidarity for the pro-democracy protestors in Ethiopia. They were accordingly instrumental in intervening the contention in the troubled Ethiopia.

Citizen journalists can publish material that does not appear in mainstream media which eventually forces mainstream media and authorities to respond, such as the protest of ormoia and Amahara youths and the killing and detention of peaceful protesters, bloggers. The various notorious episodes was



captured on by their mobile phones and distributed to press throughout the world. In a restricted information environment, new communication technologies such as mobile phones and the internet have become powerful tools for political mobilisation, advocacy, as well citizen participation in the national political discussion.

Although the internet penetration is low in Ethiopia and controlled by the state and have been shutting down many times due to the unrest in the country, the diasporic media professionals advised the citizens to use various methods to access it like by using VPN, by advising them to go to internet cafes in which the internet access is available.

The ascent of citizen journalism bolstered by communication innovations of different structures, has in this way been generally observed as proclaiming another time where the ability to characterize what is news has been expelled from business and government control. Citizens are using new technological forms to inform the population about critical issues or events of concern in their lives. Undoubtedly, the most potent tool for alternative communication in the developing

world today is text messaging through mobile phones.

The Ethiopian blogosphere is a world filled with as much paranoia, rumor, frustration, stoicism, humor, racial views and focused on nationalism views as the country is using an ethnic based federal system of governance. Many are condemning the federal structure via their blogs and sided with one ethnic group political ideology.

An analysis of the media democratic environment in Ethiopia has revealed that the country has a history of media repression dating back to earliest regimes where media were used as propaganda and exaltation of leaders rather than working for the mass in bringing democracy, As the literature review has revealed, the use of media as a political tool in the hands of the ruling class was inherited by the Ethiopian government in 1889 and has continued to date. Media repression in Ethiopia is facilitated by the implementation of restrictive legislation which was established during the then government and continued till to now.

The current Ethiopian crisis has led to the re-emergence of diasporic media which have



become critical players in the mediation of the crises facing the country. This paper has established that the citizens have responded to this repressive environment by establishing oppositional media domiciled outside the boundaries of the state from where they are able to source information from the country, process it and disseminate it back into the country and all over the world, thereby creating a liberated communicative sphere where the citizens can engage with each other and deliberate on issues that have a potential to bring about political change in the country. The ability to control these media is made difficult by their use of technologies which transcend political boundaries.

Conclusion

The Ethiopian diaspora are influential and active in homeland economic and political affairs. The Ethiopian diaspora's are basically using their diasporic based media and the Internet for information and news about homeland. Ethiopians' digital presence facilitates and indicates their need for civic engagement such as their participation in political chat-rooms like Paltalk and other forums on the Internet. The use of modern media technologies by citizens who have

turned into journalists has created a liberating environment in which the masses are enabled to share information through unsanctioned channels that are putting forth an imposing defiance to the circumstances. This has led to the creation of dialogical spaces that enable the sharing of information that is capable of bringing about democratic change.

The empirical research undertaken shows that these diasporic media are creating an enabling environment in which people can access information and exercise their freedom of speech. These media are creating an environment in which people are able to make rational decisions when it comes to political affairs. The diasporic media have created a platform on which the disenfranchised members of society are actively engaging with each other to formulate and share ideas that have a significant impact on the political environment in Ethiopia. The empirical research has established how the citizens use digital technologies and internet based platforms to exchange information which impacts significantly on the democratic process.

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