THE FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN ETHIOPIA: A REVIEW OF PROBLEMS*

*Gebremeskel Hailu***

ABSTRACT

Political parties serve democracy through articulating and aggregating social interests. However, keeping other factors as they are, the success of political parties is dependent on having the necessary funds. Yet, there is extreme manipulation of political funding to create political advantages and disadvantages that affect election outcomes in a range of ways. Specifically, unequal access to funding, abuse of state resources and illegal funding are the challenges disrupting the competitiveness of election and democracy in Africa and Ethiopia alike. Thus, political finance is both a necessity and a problem. In response to such problems, the author tries to explore the way the Ethiopian political finance functions with due emphasis to the problems of political funding. For doing so, it uses primary and secondary sources of data. It reviews the existing laws governing the system of political funding. It also examines the reports of the 2010 and 2015 national elections of the ENEB, the EU and AU Election Missions to Ethiopia. It conducts interviews with key political actors and officials of the ENEB to appreciate the problems of the system of political funding. Accordingly, the research finding indicated that the incumbent party in Ethiopia has excessively used its incumbency to protect its position and further weaken the already weak opposition political parties. The amount of public funding granted to the political parties is so insignificant related to all African states. Of which the incumbent party takes the lion's share because of the biased apportionment criteria. The public media allocation also significantly favors the incumbent party. Besides, the incumbent party massively abuses the state resources for its own partisan advantages. Now, therefore, there is a pressing need for leveling the political playing field by safeguarding equitable political resource distributions.

Key terms: *Political Finance, Political Party, Public Funding, Ethiopia, EPRDF, Opposition Parties*

---

*This piece of work was presented at a National Conference, Organized by Hawassa University on "Constitutionalism and Governance as Enablers of Sustainable Development in Ethiopia", May 7-8, 2018.

** LL.B (Bahir Dar University), LL.M in Constitutional and Public Law (AAU); Assist.prof at the Law School of Mekelle University. He can be reached at gerelaw2008 @gmail.com

INTRODUCTION: WHY POLITICAL FUNDING MATTERS?

In modern democracy, regular elections among contending political parties have become the dominant method of selecting governments. In the process, political parties play two important roles: they form government or they serve as opposition.[1] They promote vital competition on policies and offer the same alternatives to the electorate.[2] They also give channels for citizens' participation in government decision-making process. As agents of representative democracy, political parties are required to reach out to the electorate and explain their goals and policies, and receive inputs from the people.[3] Thus, election campaigns need to engage citizens in the democratic dialogue.[4] For accomplishing these democratic functions, political parties need financial resources, otherwise called 'political finance'.[5] Marcin Walecki in his work entitled 'Challenging the Norms and Standards of Election Administration and Political Finance' defined 'political finance' as "money for electioneering or campaign finance of political parties". In connection to this, this introductory part intends to address the question: why is political finance so important?

Political funding is crucial for any political activity and indeed, sufficient access to funding is crucial to the overall vibrancy of an electoral and democratic system.[6] It also determines fundamentally the quality of democracy.[7] This is because the financial resources available to parties, the distribution of those resources, and the ways in which they are collected and spent can have a pivotal impact on the efficacy of political parties, the nature of electoral competition and ultimately the legitimacy of elections and

[1]Wondwosen Teshome, *Political Finance in Africa: Ethiopia As A Case Study*, World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (2009), Vol.31, P.854.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Magnus Ohman, Introduction to Political Finance (ed.), Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns (A Handbook on Political Finance, International IDEA, 2014), P.1.

[4] Wondwosen, *Supra* note 1.

[5] Marcin Walecki, Challenging the Norms and Standards of Election Administration: Political Finance, (Ed.), 2007, P.75. See also, Magnus Ohman, *supra note* 3.

[6] Magnus Ohman, *Supra* note 3.

[7] Gudeta Kebede and Alemu Kassa, *Ethiopian Opposition Political Parties in the Post -1991 Political Structure*, International Journal of Current Research (2014), Vol. 6, Issue, 01, Pp.4796-4797, Available online at : **http://www.journalcra.com** <as accessed on April 4, 2018>.

democratic institutions.[8] In this regard, various authors have highlighted the importance of political finance in various terminologies. For instance, Heidenheimer in his classical work published in 1970 coined political finance as the "oil that greases the engine" of party politics.[9] Another author also called political finance as "mother's milk of politics".[10] Gudeta Kebede quoting the work of Sachikonye underlined the importance of political finance stating, 'the viability of political parties largely depends on whether they generate or receive satisfactory funding for their activities" and he further underscored the fact that "little funding cripples a party's operations and reach'.[11] Makara likewise accentuates the importance of finance to political parties and democracy asserting, "under-funded political parties are not likely to compete effectively in the political game and are unlikely to nurture the growth of democracy".[12]

Although political finance is very important to the viability of political parties, yet, the relation between money and politics has come to be one of the great problems of democratic governments.[13] Political finance is susceptible to manipulation by "all political actors" though the degree of manipulation could differ from one to another.[14] At any rate, it has never been neutral; rather it creates significant political advantages and disadvantages that affect election outcomes in a range of ways.[15]

---

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Heidenheimer, A., Comparative Political Finance: The Financing of Party Organizations and Election Campaigns ((ed.), Lexington, DC: Heath, 1970).

[10] Unruh, Jesse, as quoted in Nassmacher, K-H., Introduction: Political Parties, Funding and Democracy(2003), in International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) *Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns*, Handbook Series (Stockholm: International IDEA) P. 5.

[11] Gudeta and Alemu, *Supra note* 7.

[12] Makara, S., *The Challenge of Building Strong Political Parties for Democratic Governance in Uganda: Does Multiparty Politics Have A Future?* IFRA-Les Cahiers (2007), Vol. 41, P.74.

[13] Marcin Walecki, *Supra* note 5.

[14] Wondwosen, *Supra* note 1, p.4, see also, Gudeta Kebede, *Supra note* 7.

[15] Michael Johnston, Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives, political Finance Policy, Parties, and Democratic Development, NDI, (2005), P.3, retrieved from:*https://www.ndi.org/files/FINAL-Policy-Development-PDF-2.pdf,* <accessed on Jan 31, 2018>.

What is worst further is that election campaigns are getting expensive from time to time.[16] Particularly, in Africa political campaigning is getting more costly due to the low income of the society, large rural population living in sporadic villages, high illiteracy rate, low technological development and infrastructure such as poor roads, poor telecommunications and transport.[17] All these factors increase the burden of election campaigning for the political parties.[18] According to Magnus Ohman, such situation more affects the opposition political parties than the incumbents.[19] Wondwosen Teshome also concurs with the latter conclusion.[20] Over all, the system of political financing in Africa inclines towards the advantage of the incumbent political parties and thereby creating uneven playing field between the incumbent and the opposition political parties.[21] Moreover, there is serious abuse of state resources, whereby the incumbent political parties use resources belonging to the public to strengthen their political power and increase the chances of re-election.[22]

In connection to this, one may assert that Ethiopia is not an exception as regards the problems of political financing in Africa. Nonetheless, in order to examine the magnitude and degree of the problems, there is pressing need to appreciate how the Ethiopian political finance functions on the ground. Because of its importance for one's democracy and political system as a whole, political finance has attracted the attention of many researchers in different countries. However, except Wondwosen, who gave observations on African political finance with particular emphasis on the case of Ethiopia and Gudeta who brought a passing remark on the issue,[23] to the best knowledge of the author, there is no other research on the Ethiopian political finance.

[16] Wondwosen Teshome, *Democracy promotion and Western aid to Africa: Lessons from Ethiopia (1991-2012)*, International Journal of Human Science (2013), Vol.10, Issue 1, P.996.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] Magnus Ohman, The State of Political Finance Regulations in Africa *(* International IDEA Discussion Paper 14/2016, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2016).
[20] Wondwosen, *Supra* note 1.
[21] Magnus Ohman, S*upra* note 19.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] Exceptionally, Wondwosen Toshome has tried to explore the area while dealing with the topic entitled 'Political Finance in Africa: Ethiopia as a Case Study." Yet, his discussion is wide enough covering the context in Africa and not entirely focused on Ethiopia. Another

In view to regulate the perceived or real problems, Ethiopia has introduced laws regulating political finance.[24] Whether the laws are fair and whether they are efficiently enforced is yet a point of inquiry discussed in the upcoming topics. What is vivid from the laws is that most sources of funding are banned except those received from membership contributions, public funding and donations and grants from Ethiopian nationals, either individuals or businesses.[25] Wondwosen Toshome quoting a research finding of Lovise Alen, which she incidentally tried to touch, said, “One of the major causes for the weakness of political parties in Ethiopia is the lack of strong resources or funds”.[26] The opposition political parties also overlap with this finding that they are suffering from the scarcity of resources to undertake their political activities.[27] Even the public fund allotted to political parties by the government has its own impediments.[28] Furthermore, there are questions, among others, on the allocation of public media and on how the incumbent party uses its incumbency in administering the resources of the state.

In view of these problems and concerns, the author tries to address how the Ethiopian political finance is actually working on the ground. It specifically aims to examine the problems of the political funding system in Ethiopia. For doing so, it employs primary and secondary data sources. It reviews the existing laws governing the system of political funding and the reports of the 2010 and 2015 national elections of the Ethiopian National Electoral Board (here after ENEB), the reports of the European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) Election Missions to Ethiopia. It also conducts interviews with some key political actors and officials of the ENEB.

---

author who can be mentioned here is Gudeta Kebede, which he incidentally touched the area while dealing with ‘Ethiopian Opposition Political Parties in the Post-1991 Political Structure’.

[24]For example, *the Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, No. 573/2008*, *the African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance Ratification Proclamation No. 613/2008* and *Regulation Concerning the Procedure for Determining the Apportionment of Government Financial Support to Political Parties Regulation No. 5/2009.*

[25]The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, *Proc. No.573/2008*, *14th Year No. 62*, 24th Sep, 2008, Addis Ababa, Art. 51(1).

[26] Wondwosen, *Supra* note 1.

[27]An interview of ENN Television with Professor Beyene Petros, a key figure of Medrek, a coalition of four political parties, in the Voice of the Public Program, Feb 19, 2018 at 4:30 PM.

[28] Wondwosen, *Supra* note 1, P858.

The structure of the article goes as follows; it starts outlining the introductory part stressing on how important is political funding to political parties. It goes on briefly addressing the need for regulating political funding. It then reviews the challenges of political funding in Ethiopia with particular focus associated to direct and indirect funds. This part explores how and who determines the amount of public funding, looks the eligibility and allocation criteria for apportioning public funding and the interval and timing for its distributions. It also investigates the problems of public media distribution among the political parties and its effect on opposition political parties. The last part scrutinizes the problems and effects of abuse of state resources in Ethiopia and winds up with conclusions.

With this introduction, the following sub-topic examines the need for regulating political funding before resorting to see how Ethiopia tries to regulate the system of its political finance.

1. WHY DO WE NEED TO REGULATE POLITICAL FUNDING?

As stated above the relationship between finance and politics has become among the thorny issues in democratic states. Kevin Casas-Zamora in his work, 'Political finance and state funding systems,' has summarized the possible negative consequences of political financing on democracy, unless properly managed, in the following three accounts.[29]

- *The flow and distribution of funds can encroach upon electoral equality. A lopsided distribution of funds erodes genuine electoral results.*
- *Political donation can bestow asymmetric opportunity among political parties where political power simply reflects economic power and*
- *Fund raising process may result in a 'quid pro quo' deals between donors and policy makers where the latter serves the interests of donors at the expense of public interest.*

[29] Kevin Casas-Zamora, Political Finance and State Funding Systems: An overview (Brookings Institution / University of Costa Rica, 2008), P.3.

Unregulated political funding can shape public debates and can unduly influence the results of an election.[30] In addition, the expense of running for office can prevent some parties from doing so and may cause them to spend too much time raising money or accepting money from unacceptable sources, and could contribute to public skepticism concerning the political process.[31] Unregulated political finance can also feed the greediness of political parties, and their increasing financial need can affect the other arenas of democracy.[32] For instance, political parties with authoritarian tendencies can sometimes put pressure on the state apparatus, civil society and economic society through the abuse of state resources.[33]

Consequently, in order to prevent these dangers coming from the incumbent or opposition parties, democracy must regulate political funding,[34] be it for campaign or party activities. In this regard, though there seems consensus on the need for regulating political funding, the practice reveals that there is extreme heterogeneity of political finance regulatory systems i.e. there is lack of single, magic, 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the problems of political financing.[35] For the time being, the complex question of why different political systems travel along different regulatory paths will be sidelined. Yet, within the various regulatory systems, there are four categories subject to legal regulation; source of funding, political expenditure, financial transparency of political parties and sanctions and penalties.[36]

The issue of regulating political funding has also attracted different international organizations, which tend to propose standards for political finance systems. Many of the proposals emerge from international and

[30] *Id.*,P.76.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] Throughout this paper, the term "political funding or political finance" will encompass all aspects related to the funding and spending of resources by political parties and candidates in the context of election campaigns as well as in non-electoral times. As such, it is a broader term than "campaign finance", often used in the literature to cover the whole subject, see, Kevin Casas-Zamora, *ibid.*
[35] Kevin Casas-Zamora, *Supra* note 29.
[36] *Ibid.*

regional organizations including the African Union (AU)[37]. These proposals may differ in approach but all focus on the need for transparency of political finance.[38] Because of such international, regional and domestic concerns, in recent decades, there has been much desire toward more political finance regulations and more public funding.[39]Yet, scholars and practitioners agree that an effective political finance system should meet the following *minimum* requirements:[40]

- ✓ *Enabling equal opportunity to stand and compete in elections;*
- ✓ *Preventing political corruptions through the abuse of state resources;*
- ✓ *Avoiding biased enforcement mechanisms against political opponents and*
- ✓ *Ensuring transparency about how parties collect and spend their money.*

Generally, by examining the system of political financing in the world, as the USAID and IDEA in their respective Handbooks on 'Money in Politics,' pointed out, one can understand that there exist too many laws but too little enforcements.[41] Hence, among others, lack of enforcement is one scenario hindering healthy political financing.

This said about the importance of regulating political financing, the subsequent discussion tries to examine the regulatory system of political funding in Ethiopia.

---

[37]The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (Adopted in Maputo on 11 July 2003), Art. 10.
[38] Kevin Casas-Zamora*, Supra* note 29.
[39] Ingrid van Biezen, *State Intervention in Party Politics: The Public Funding and Regulation of Political Parties*, European Review (2008), Vol. 16, No. 3, P338.
[40] Kevin Casas-Zamora, *supra* note 29.
[41] USAID, Money in Politics Handbook: A Guide to Increasing Transparency in Emerging Democracies (USAID: Washington D.C., 2003)

2. THE REGULATION AND CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL FUNDING IN ETHIOPIA

According to Transparency International, "political finance regulations have been introduced in a majority of democracies to promote fair political competition and to 'clean up' politics, or limit the influence of money over politics."[42] To address the problems of political finance, though they vary from country to country, more and more countries are introducing some form of regulation, which encompass public funding, disclosure regulations, bans and limits on donations, the setting of party spending ceilings etc.[43]

In this view, Ethiopia has introduced its first political finance legislation in 1993[44]. This law included various provisions intended to regulate political finance though it was not effectively enforced. For instance, articles 27 and 28 of this law deals with affairs related to source of income and properties of political parties. Accordingly, it stipulates that political parties are prohibited from engaging in commercial and industrial activities. However, they can raise funds from such events as bazaars on a non-permanent manner. Parties can also draw funds from membership dues, subsidies and grants from the government, and donations from supportive domestic sources. Prohibited donations according to this law were; grants from foreign nationals, foreign governments and political parties, external welfare and religious organizations, and convicted prisoners.

Later in 2008, the former legislation is amended by the revised parties' registration proclamation, No.573/2008. As it is the case in the former, the latter proclamation tries to regulate political finance in many aspects, including ensuring transparency thought disclosure and reporting and the scheme of public funding. In this regard, article 51(1) of the proclamation describes the sources of income of political parties as income from membership dues, donations or grants by Ethiopian nationals and companies in accordance with the limit set by the Ethiopian National Electoral Board[45]

[42]Transparency International (TI), *Political Finance Regulations: Bridging the Enforcement Gap*, *TI Policy Position*, No.2, 2005), P.18.
[43] Wondwosen*, Supra* note 1, P.855.
[44] Political Parties Registration Proclamation No.46/1993.
[45]So far, there is no any law made by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, which limit the amount of contribution to political parties.

and the grant and support given by the government (public fund). Besides, article 51(2) of the same proclamation states; "a political party may, upon the approval of the government or regional state administration, collect money from the proceeds of events organized on non-permanent basis to enhance its financial position." However, as it was the case before, political parties are not allowed to directly or indirectly engagement in commercial activities.[46] Moreover, the proclamation puts a bulky list of sources of funds that political parties could not resort.[47] It strictly prohibits political parties from accepting any donation or grant from foreign nationals,[48] foreign government or foreign political party.[49] It also prohibits donation from welfare organization or non-governmental organization,[50] religious organization,[51] prisoners of law,[52] an organized group or person assuming state power in a manner other than that provided under the Constitution,[53] and terrorist organization.[54] Besides, it outlaws donation or grant having unknown source,[55] from government organization[56]and donation or grant from anybody or person intended for the execution of any inappropriate or unlawful future benefit.[57] However, there is no ceiling limit on election expenditure by the political parties though there are disclosure requirements for any fund received from the lawful sources

[46] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation *Proc. No.573/2008, 14th Year No. 62*, 24th Sep, 2008, Addis Ababa, Art.52(3). On this respect, even though there are no businesses ventures registered by the name of political parties, in practice there are business activities administered by the EPRDF member parties. The TPLF, ANDM and OPDO administer huge companies over which they have full autonomy over them. The SEPDP has also a business activities led by the party called Wondo Trading.

[47]Article 52(2) states; where any political party receives directly or indirectly the donation or grant prohibited in paragraph /a/ to /j/ of sub article (1) of this Article, the received money or property shall be confiscated. The political party may be responsible under the appropriate law and article 52(3) also states where a political party happened to get in any way the donation or grant prohibited under sub article (1) of this Article, the party shall return the donation or grant to the Board together with related documents within 21 days from the date it received the donation or grant.

[48] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, *supra note* 25, Art. 52(1a).

[49] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art.52(1b).

[50] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art. 52(1c).

[51] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art. 52(1d).

[52] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art. 52(1e).

[53] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art. 52(1f).

[54] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art. 52(1g).

[55] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art. 52(1h).

[56] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art. 52(1i).

[57] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, Art.52(1j).

from either a person or a business corporate.[58] Yet, the law intends to put maximum limit on the amount of donations given to political parties as determined by the ENEB. Nevertheless, still now, such law is not issued.

As depicted in the aforementioned paragraph, the law treats most sources of funds except few as illegal. Arguably, membership due is preferred source of funding to political parties for it encourages democratic engagement and grass-roots ownership.[59] Nonetheless, in the Ethiopian case, as it stands, membership contribution is very limited, specifically, for the opposition political parties, because of their narrow membership base and the obvious reason of poverty.[60] Hence, membership contribution cannot become reliable source of funding for the opposition political parties, unlike the EPRDF that is substantially benefiting from the contributions of its large membership base as well as significant financial support from the business sector.[61] As opposed to this, the opposition political parties are unlikely to receive donations and grants from Ethiopian individuals and businesses except the diaspora.[62] This is mainly because of the fact that the disclosure of the identity of the donors may make them fear the possible revenge that comes from the incumbent party.[63] The public has a right to know which individuals or businesses contribute funds to which parties because contributors donate to political parties not for merely altruistic reasons but for what they hope to get in return. Thus, it is logical to demand the disclosure of donations made to political parties as a way of enforcing the legal restrictions; otherwise, the banned

[58] *See, the Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, No. 573/2008 articles* 19 (1d) and 54(2(a, b and c)).
[59] Ingrid van Biezen*, Supra* note 39, Pp.337–353.
[60] An interview of ENN Television with Professor Beyene Petros, *supra note* 27.
[61] As Wondwosen depicted, in Ethiopia, for instance, according to the official declaration of the EPRDF, the party collected 17.8 million (Ethiopian Birr) in 1999EC, and 11.4 million in 2000EC. In addition, it collected 75.6 million from the public and 70 million Birr from business owners as donation. The party's expenses in 1999EC were 18.8 million and in 2000 E.C it was 18.7 million, see Wondwosen, *supra* note 1, P858.
[62] Wondwosen, *Supra note* 1, P857, According to this author, the most common sources of income for opposition parties in Ethiopia is the diaspora, for instance, in the 2005 Ethiopian parliamentary election, the main source of income for opposition parties was the Diaspora Ethiopians. However, the Diaspora money has also brought many troubles to the opposition parties.
[63] Abrha*, Infra* note 91, P18.

organizations will donate in anonymity and can spoil the political process, as it was the case in the 2005 Ethiopian National election.[64]

Therefore, if there is strict enforcement of political finance laws, the opposition political parties will lack viable alternative source of funding unless they resort to rely on public funding. Yet, the system of public funding merits investigation whether it is a reliable source of funding, if not, for reviewing the problems that it is facing.

2.1. PROBLEMS RELATED TO PUBLIC FUNDING

Although there are arguments forwarded for and against state funding of political parties, the spread of the latter has become a dominant trend over the last century following its early introduction in Uruguay in 1928.[65] Though there are critics dispatched against state funding, among others, arguing it damages the public purse, the positive political significance of state funding has garnered immense support in the following three areas.[66] These are;[67]

- ✓ *Ensuring autonomy of political parties and prevention of corruption,*
- ✓ *Helping political equality and electoral competition and*
- ✓ *Safeguarding the institutionalization and organization of political parties*

[64] "*For instance, the collapse of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) was mainly the result of the diaspora divergence and "one of the reasons that contributed for the collapse of the CUD was the party's heavy dependence on the Diaspora donors and hence, the party was the victim of the infighting and rivalries of the Diaspora Ethiopians." In that particular time, the Diaspora supporters of the CUD in the US and Europe split into two and two rival Diaspora groups emerged: one group (i.e. Kinijit International Leadership-KIL) allied itself with Birtukan Midekasa, the party's first chairperson, and Berhanu Nega, the mayor-elect of Addis Ababa. The other group (i.e. Kinijit International Council-KIC) allied itself with Hailu Shawel, the chairperson of the CUD. They blackmail each other; while the supporters of Birtukan Midekssa and Berhanu Nega accused Hailu Shawel of dictatorship, and his close associates in the Diaspora for involving in corrupt practices, the supporters of Hailu Shawel accused Birhanu Nega, Birtukan and their Diaspora associates as infiltrators and agents of the incumbent party" , See,* Wondwosen *supra* note 1, P.857.

[65] Kevin Casas-Zamora, *Supra* note 29, P.10.

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] *Ibid.*

Because of its importance, state funding, now days, has become the most common form of state intervention in political finance and it comprises three basic categories;[68]

- *Direct state funding, i.e. cash grants disbursed to parties according to a public procedure laid down in the law.*
- *Indirect state funding, i.e. any grant delivered in kind to political parties-such as access to State-owned broadcasts, public buildings and*
- *Specific political subsidies, for instance cash grants earmarked for party-related or party-controlled organizations, such as parliamentary caucuses, ancillary groups (women's and youth, mainly), and newspapers.*

The Ethiopian laws dealing with public funding comprises the first two types of funding, direct and indirect state funding and the third form of state funding is included neither in the laws nor in the practice. Nevertheless, as it is the case in many African countries, there are problems with the two types of state funding in Ethiopia. [69] Among others, the weakness of opposition political parties emanates from the problems of public funding[70] either because the amount reserved for public funding as a whole is insignificant or because the formula used to apportion the already insignificant fund is predisposed towards the incumbent party.

[68] The demarcation of different kinds of State funding is controversial, particularly concerning the status of specific subsidies. While, in principle, these *specific grants* may be considered as no more than particular examples of direct subvention, it seems advisable to group them in a separate category. Specific grants are frequently outside the control of the parties' central or local organs and, in fact, are frequently disbursed to entities with a separate legal existence from the party (e.g. a newspaper or a research foundation). Moreover, in the case of parliamentary subsidies the extent to which public funds help to sustain the activities of parties rather than the workings of Parliament is unclear. See, Kevin Casas-Zamora, *ibid.*

[69]Kassahun Berhanu, *Beleaguered Opposition under A Dominant Party System*, P.8, available at https:// www. cmi.no/file/?1315 <accessed on 6 February 2018>.

[70]Lovise Aalen, Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000 (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, Development Studies and Human Rights, 2002), P.31. This is because, unlike for the incumbent party, membership dues made to the opposition is insignificant because of the presence of narrow membership. Again, contribution from the business sector is unlikely to be made to the opposition unless made without exposing the identity of contributors, which is illegal.

With the existing deficiency of financial resources, it seems so demanding that political parties must be partially, if not fully, funded through budgetary allocations of the government. However, the actual challenge with public funding remains in addressing the questions, *'how much, when and how.'* Hence, the upcoming discussion will examine these points one by one. Particularly, the first three points, which concern with direct state funding will discuss how and with what procedure is the amount of state funding determined, the criteria used for determining the eligibility and apportionment of funds and the interval and timing of disbursements. The fourth part of the discussion that deals with indirect state funding tries to investigate the issue of public media allocation to see how fair it is.

2.1.1. Amount and Procedures of Determining Public Funding

In most countries the initial amount of Direct State Funding (DSF), rests in the hands of legislators.[71] In other countries, non-political organ defined the amount of funding, so as to isolate the grant from political meddling.[72] In the former case, the initial amount determination may follow one of several paths, including one that gives politicians a blank authorization to define the subsidy's amount on an ad-hoc basis through the budget or a special law.[73] This *unconstrained* system leaves the subsidy open to manipulation.[74] Others follow *constrained* amount definition procedures, which lay down clear rules for the calculation of the amount of DSF and most countries have indeed preferred to formalize the rules for calculating subsidies to protect them from short-term political manipulation.[75]In this regard, in some countries, the electoral law may define in detail the amount of subsidy payable for each seat or vote and alternatively, legislators may choose to fix the total sum of the donation.[76]

---

[71] Kevin Casas-Zamora*, Supra* note*,* 29, P14.

[72] Hofnung Menachem, *The Public Purse and the Private Campaign: Political Finance in Israel*, Journal of Law and Society (1996), Vol.23, No.1.

[73] Kevin Casas-Zamora*, Supra note,* 29, P15.

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] This is the case, for example, in Australia, Belgium, Colombia, Denmark, Italy, Japan, Paraguay, Portugal, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, Germany and, with slight variations, Canada and the U.S.

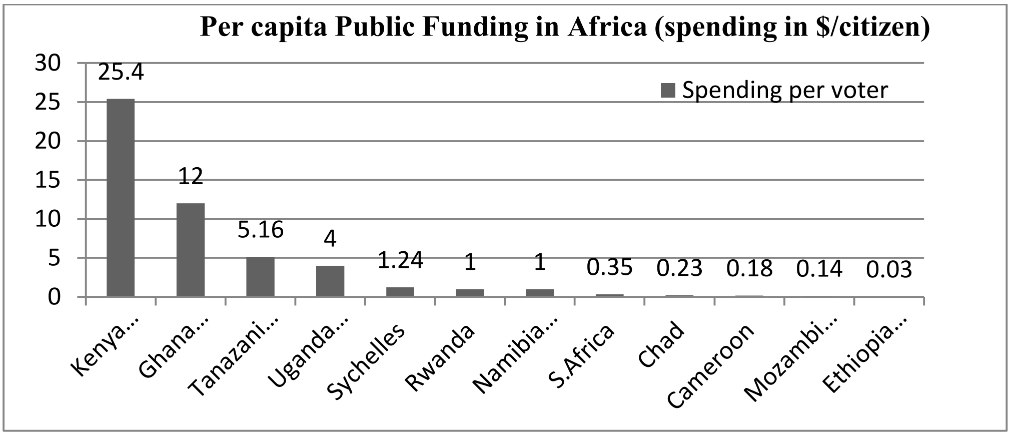
[76] Hofnung Menachem*, Supra* note 72.

When it comes to Ethiopian situation, who determines the amount of grant extended to political parties and how is that determined is important issue in this regard. Article 42 of the Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation No.573/2008 states the government may grant support for political parties for conducting their day-to-day activities or for election purposes that have representation at the Federal and at State houses. Yet, it says nothing as to the amount of finance allotted and how it is determined. Like all other budgets, it is left to the determination of the Federal House of Peoples Representatives done in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation. Hence, the influence of the incumbent party is so obvious that it might affect it in one or the other way.

To be specific, it would be better to examine further the practice and its consequence on the opposition political parties. As far as the amount of finance reserved for public funding is concerned, Ethiopia appears the last in the list of African countries. In this regard, Magnus Ohman recaps the situation of public funding in Africa as the lowest and the Ethiopian case as the worst of all.[77] The following chart tries to summarize the amount of public funding in Africa.

[77] Magnus Ohman, *Supra* note 3, P.50 and See also, Abdi Latif Kadir, *Kenya is set to hold one of the most expensive elections in Africa, Quartz Africa*, July 18, 2017, available at: https://qz.com/1030958/kenyas-elections-will-cost-1-billion-in-government-and-campaign-spend/ <accessed on March 26, 2018>.

Figure 1-Per capita public funding in Africa



Source: *Adapted from the Handbook on Political Finance, IDEA, 2014 and Ashiagbor, S., Party Finance Reforms in Africa, Lessons Learned from Four Countries: Ghana, Kenya, Senegal & South Africa National Democratic Institute for International Affairs 2005.*

From the chart, one can clearly see the level of public funding in African countries where Kenya stood the peak followed by Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda. Other like Seychelles, Ruanda, Morocco and Namibia have an African 'average public funding per capita' (over $1 per citizen), compared to around $0.7 in Tanzania, $0.35 in South Africa, $0.23 in Chad, $0.18 in Cameroon, $0.14 in Mozambique, $0.08 in Niger and *a meager of all $0.03* in Ethiopia. Accordingly, Ethiopia is the least per capita public funder in Africa compared to all other states. This being as it is, who is going to suffer much from the small amount of public funds allotted to political parties is a question that will be considered in the subsequent discussion.

2.1.2. Eligibility and Allocation of Public Funding

As far as the formula employed for the distribution of public funding, there are generally two issues: first, which parties should have the right to receive funds (eligibility thresholds) and second, how the fund distributed among those who are eligible (allocation criteria).[78] Magnus Ohman while writing

[78]Magnus Ohman, *Supra* note 3, P.23.

about the African public funding stated that there is lack of a level playing field between the incumbent and the opposition parties.[79] This often gave raise to direct struggle between those who are in power and those who are not.[80] From this perspective, it would be better to scrutinize the situation of public funding in Ethiopia.

According to the revised political parties' registration proclamation No.573/2008, direct subsidies can be *permanent* and/or *electoral*. Both categories differ in the frequency of the allocation, their recipients and the object of the funding. Thus, in contrast to electoral subsidies given during elections,[81] permanent subsidies are normally annual, payable to political parties and directed towards a wide array of activities primarily for building up and administering the day-to-day activities of the political parties.[82] This type of public funding is granted to political parties for conducting their day to day activities but its allocation is made on the basis of the existing seats of the political parties' in the federal and regional parliaments.[83] By implication, it excludes opposition political parties from receiving funds of such sort for they lack parliamentary seats in the 2010 and 2015 national elections in the federal and regional parliaments. In effect, the EPRDF and its allies are the sole beneficiaries of this fund.[84] This type of public funding can be more beneficial than the election time fund, for two reasons. First, this type of fund is apportioned annually more frequently than its counterpart. For instance, the previous trend shows seven million birr allotted yearly to those who have parliamentary seats.[85] Second, the number of parties involved in the allocation of funds for the day-to-day activities is very small (EPRDF and five of its allies) compared to the election funding where numerous political parties take

[79] *Ibid.*
[80] *Ibid.*
[81] The Revised Political Parties Proclamation, *supra* note 25, Art. 42 (2).
[82] The Revised Political Parties Proclamation, Art. 42 (1).
[83] The Revised Political Parties Proclamation, Art. 45 (1).
[84] The Ethiopian National Electoral Board Regulation concerning the procedure for determining the apportionment of government financial support to political parties, regulation No.5/2009, Art. 20. This regulation confines the allotment of funding for day-to-day activities to political parties who have a seat in either the federal or regional parliaments and technically excluding all other opposition parties.
[85] The ENEB Office, *Election 2010*, A Special Bulletin, June 2010, P.22.

part (for instance, during 2010 and 2015 election periods 63 and 58 political parties involved respectively).[86]

When it comes to the election campaign funding, it is allocated based on the number of elected representatives in the federal and regional houses, the number of candidates and the number of women candidates.[87] This formula proportionately favored those parties already represented in the parliaments.[88] According to ENEB sources, in the 2010 General election seven million birr allocated for election campaign.[89] Yet, all opposition parties considered that the received amounts were insufficient to conduct an effective campaign.[90] Even some opposition party members argued, not only the money is meager but also it was less than the money needed for preparing audit reports for itself.[91] To support or otherwise disprove this allegation, it would be proper to examine the formula or criteria employed to distribute the public funding. In this regard, the ENEB has prepared a formula for allocating public funds to the political parties as depicted in the following table.[92]

[86] ENEB Office, *Post-Election Assessment of the 2015 General Election*, June 2016, P.3.
[87] This fund is extended to political parties for election campaigning and it was established according to the Political Parties Registration Proclamation No.572/2008 and the NEBE Regulation Concerning the Procedure for Determining the Apportionment of Government Financial Support to Political Parties regulation No.5/2009.
[88] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, *supra* note 25, Art. 45 (2).
[89]The ENEB Bulletin, *supra* note 85.
[90] Report produced by the European Union Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia 2010 and presented the mission's findings on the 23 May 2010 elections to the House of People's Representatives and State Councils, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, p.6, retrieved from: http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/africa/ET/ethiopia-final-report-house-of-peoples/view, <accessed on Jan 2, 2018>.
[91]Abrha Desta, chairman of Arena Tigray for Democracy and Justice, a regional party in Tigray which is a member of the national coalition, Medrek, in an international conference on the them; Political Parties, Multi-Party System and Democracy in Ethiopia, hosted by Mekelle University and Friedrich Evert Stiftung, Ethiopia, Feb. 14 and 15, 2018.
[92] Data from ENEB, 27 October 2017.

Table 1-formula used for allocating public funding in the 2010 and 2015 general elections

Criteria on the basis of	2010 election	2015 election
Parliamentary Seat	55%	35%
Number of candidates	25%	40%
Women candidate	10%	15%
Equality	10%	10%

***Source**: Adapted from the data gathered from ENEB, Political Parties' Directorate Office*

As revealed from the table, in the 2010 general election public fund distribution, the highest weight given to the seat of the political parties. Thus, the EPRDF and its allies, which entirely controlled the federal and regional parliaments, had an exclusive claim on the 55% of the budget before resorting to the other criteria. Furthermore, EPRDF and its allies had the highest degree of advantage even on the other two criteria; number of candidates and women candidate presented for the election. The rest 10%, allotted on equality basis, among numerous political parties is insignificant.[93] Hence, the opposition parties likely suffer from shortage of budget. In this regard, taking into consideration the financial limitations of most political parties, European Union Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia (EU EOM) concluded that most Ethiopian political parties, with the exception of the EPRDF, are under-funded.[94] As depicted in the table, though the ENEB has introduced some modifications in the 2015 national election on the weight of the criteria allotted to parliamentary seats, yet it increased the weight given to the number of candidates presented to which the EPRDF would possibly have greater advantage.

[93] Data from NEBE, 27 October 2017.
[94] EU EOM Report, *supra* note 90.

Given the plurality electoral system and the huge wastage of votes when converted in to seats, using parliamentary seat as criteria for apportioning public funding would not be fair in the Ethiopian context. It would not also show the popular support of political parties. Rather it would have been fairer than it is, had the criteria been based on votes earned in the previous elections. Besides, as it is done in Israel and Mexico, substantial amount of subsidy could have disbursed in equal terms for all recipients.[95] However, while leveling the playing field for allowing the state funding to all political parties fairly is important, there is a challenge that some parties may use it as a tool, only for getting the funds without having serious courage to compete in the election. To regulate such problems, it can be necessary to devise a system of threshold limits for becoming eligible to get state funding. Yet, the threshold limit should not be so high, that only one or two already well-established parties will benefit.

Against all odds, as it stands, the incumbent party in Ethiopia, with substantial alternative sources of funds, is the recipient of the largest portion of the meager budget allotted to public funding of political parties and the opposition political parties with minor alternative sources of funding get the smallest portion of the disbursement.

2.1.3. Interval and Timing of Distributions of Public Funds

The moment of the disbursement of public funding is consequential having its own negative and positive impacts on parties and enforcement of reporting requirements. In some countries, the State subsidy operates as a post-electoral reimbursement of expenditures, while in other systems there are rules that entitle parties full access to the subsidy before the election.[96] In a few countries both options are mixed, combining in different measures a post-election

[95] Most countries allocate the bulk of DSF proportionally, according to the share of vote or representation obtained by each eligible recipient in the previous election (e.g. Belgium, Greece [per share of votes]; Finland, Sweden [per share of parliamentary seats]). The use of vote or seat-based allocation rules is not, however, universal or unqualified. Out of normative choice or political expediency, reformers frequently enact rules that qualify proportional election-based distributions and make the subsidy system move towards absolute equality for all recipients. See, Kevin Casas-Zamora, *supra* note, 29, p.14.

[96] Kevin Casas-Zamora, *Supra* note 29.

reimbursement with a pre-electoral advance.[97] The availability of subsidies before the election or, alternatively, their arrangement as a post electoral reimbursement can greatly influence the financial barriers experienced by newcomers since advances tend to be distributed according to the parties' or candidates' previous electoral results.[98] Despite such an effect on emerging parties, it might still provide them with vital resources during the decisive months of the campaign and thus reducing to some extent their dependency on private financial operators.[99]

When it comes to the Ethiopian case, the Ethiopian National Electoral Board Regulation concerning the procedure for determining the apportionment of government financial support to political parties, regulation No.5/2009, under its article 17, underscores the fact that political parties shall receive public funding before the Election Day.[100] Through this, it enables political parties to receive important resource for making campaigns though the amount is insignificant as discussed above. Yet, such an arrangement hinders newly emerging potential competitors from having fair share from the electoral funds, for instance, in the 2010 national election out of the seven million allotted to political parties more than half (55%) of the fund was allotted on the basis of seats that actually demand previous performance. Hence, to try to compromise these two interests it may be good to introduce a mixed system of fund allocation without compromising the other concerns stated herein above.

2.1.4. Problems Related to Public Media Allocation

As an indirect support of the government to political parties,[101] the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority (EBA) have allocated free airtime and space to all political parties contesting the election.[102] For instance, in 2010 general

[97] *Ibid.*
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] ENEB regulation, *supra note* 84, Art. 17.
[101] The Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation, *supra* note 25, Art. 42(3) states the support to be granted by the government may be in the form of money, in kind and in service.
[102] The Ethiopian Broadcast Authority *Directive on Media usage of political partied for the fifth general election* (May 2015 general election), January 2015, Art.5.

election such an allocation extended to all 63 political parties attending the general election.[103] The formula for its allotment is depicted as follows:
Table 2-Public Media allocation criteria for the 2010[104] and 2015[105]

Ethiopian general elections

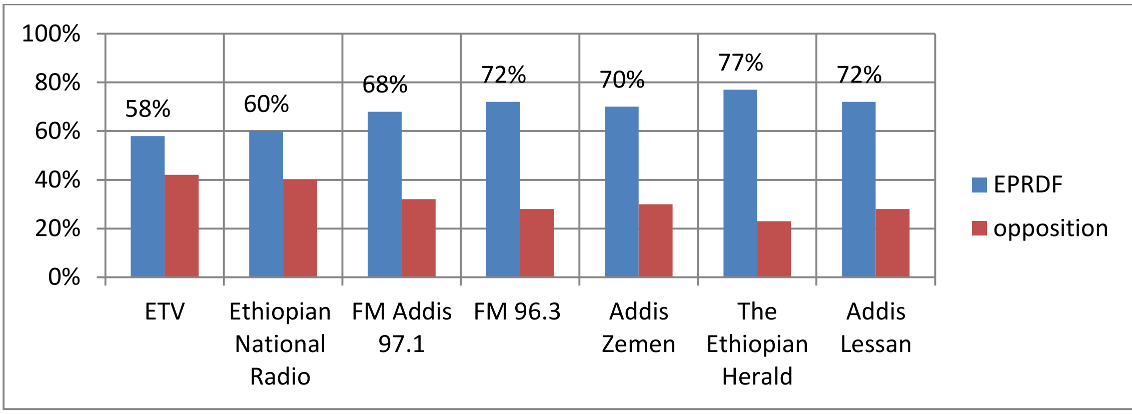
Criteria on the basis of	2010 election	2015 election
Parliamentary Seat	55%	40%
Candidates presented	20%	40%
Equality	25%	10%
Women candidate	-	10%

***Source**: Adapted from the data gathered from ENEB, Political Parties' Directorate Office*

When we look at the distribution of the state-owned media, it does not seem to provide a balanced coverage in its news and bulletins.[106] This is mainly because parliamentary seat has taken the highest weight where the EPRDF would be the sole beneficiary. On this regard, the EU EOM Report on the 2010 Ethiopian general election has visibly shown the actual benefit that the EPRDF received compared to the other opposition political parties.[107] The following chart summarizes the practical distribution of public media airtime and bulletin by the EPRDF and the combined opposition in the 2010 general election.

[103] An interview with Ato Tesfalem Abay, Public Relations Directorate Director of the ENEB, October 27, 2017.
[104] The Ethiopian Broadcast Authority *Directive on Media usage of political partied for the fourth general election* (May 2010 general election), January 2010, Art. 5.
[105] The Ethiopian Broadcast Authority Directive, *supra* note 102.
[106] EU EOM Report, *supra* note 90, P.21.
[107] *Ibid.*

Figure 2-the distribution of public media both airtime and bulletin by the EPRDF and the combined opposition in 2010 general election



Source: *Adapted from the EU EOM Report on the 2010 Ethiopian election*

As can be depicted from the chart, on ETV1, the EPRDF obtained 58% of total airtime for election-related news. Likewise, Ethiopian National Radio devoted 60% of airtime to the ruling party. The EPRDF's coverage on FM Addis 97.1 and FM 96.3 amounted to 68% and 72% of total airtime, respectively. The imbalance was even more marked in state-owned written media, where the EPRDF obtained 70%, 77% and 72% of all electoral coverage space in Addis Zemen, The Ethiopian Herald and Addis Lessan, respectively.

Consistent with the above finding, Kassahun Berhanu in his article entitled 'Ethiopia: Beleaguered Opposition under a Dominant Party System' argued opposition parties in Ethiopia got limited access to state owned media during the previous elections to publicize their election platforms. He emphasized that no equal coverage given to the opposition in a manner that is on a par with the access enjoyed by the ruling party.[108]

Hence, there is genuine concern on the distribution of Public Medias, as a public resource, where the EPRDF surpasses the combined opposition parties when it comes to the actual exercise and this would have negative

[108] Kassahun Berhanu, *supra* note 69.

ramifications on the electoral results by creating information asymmetry among the competitors.

2.2.PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ABUSE OF STATE RESOURCES

One of the problems of opposition parties in emerging democracies is the situation where the ruling party makes use of governmental resources for party purposes, while opposition parties are cutoff from access to public funds.[109] This situation makes the opposition parties disadvantaged in the electoral process. As such, the abuse of state resources is a key problem in the field of political finance in Africa.[110] Most incumbent political parties in Africa use their position to increase their chance of re-election to a certain extent by directly misusing public resources and this contributes to the uneven playing field between political parties.[111] Abuse of state resources carries the risk of undermining the *democratic process* by giving the incumbent an undue advantage.[112] This has been mainly because of the blurred distinction between the state and the ruling party.[113] In effect, as one analyst underlines, "it causes damage to democracy by creating an unleveled playing field which expands the re-election chances of incumbents."[114]

In the Ethiopian context, the use of public resources, including federal, regional and municipal, for a particular party's campaign is strictly forbidden in article 14 of the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties and it is regarded as 'abuse of power'.[115] Nonetheless, against this provision, there is widespread abuse of state resources to the extent of failing to distinguish the government and the incumbent party. In this regard, the European Union

---

[109] Peter Arthur, *Political Parties ' Campaign Financing in Ghana's Fourth Republic: a Contribution to the Discourse*, Journal of Asian and African Studies (2017), Vol.52, No.8, Pp.1126 &1127.
[110] Magnus Ohman, *Supra* note 3, P.40.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] Magnus Ohman, The State of Political Finance Regulations in Africa (International IDEA Discussion Paper 14/2016, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2016), P.7.
[113] Wondwosen Toshome, *Supra* note 1, P855.
[114] Magnus Ohman, *Supra* note 3.
[115]A Proclamation to Provide for the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties Proc. No.662/2009, 15th year No.8, Addis Ababa 28th August 2009, Art. 14 (1).

Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Ethiopia witnessed the exploitation of public resources by the ruling party's campaign throughout the country, mainly in Oromia, the Somali Region and Tigray.[116] It also observed a blurred distinction between the ruling party and local administration, which were, according to the latter, "often perceived and referred by citizens as being one single entity".[117] It particularly expressed as having directly comprehended;

> *The ruling party consuming propaganda on public administration buildings, civil servants wearing ruling party propaganda while on duty, the loading of EPRDF campaign posters in local administration vehicles, the use of local administration offices to coordinate campaign activities, housing of ruling party offices in local administration compounds and the storing of EPRDF posters within local administration installations.*[118]

These practices would have the possibility of providing an unfair advantage to the incumbent party in the process of campaigning. It has also an effect of further blurring the already blurred distinction between the state and the ruling party.[119] When considering the fusion between the incumbent party and the state in Ethiopia, Merera Gudina in his article 'Elections and democratization in Ethiopia, 1991–2010', also coincides with the above stated idea.[120] He observed that there is fusion between the ruling party and the state, which in turn allows the former to have unrestricted resources under the command of the state with little or no accountability.[121] He further argued that the hegemonic power of the EPRDF has effectively excluded the opposition political parties from taking fair access to mass media and campaign finances.[122]

---

[116] EU EOM report, *supra* note 90, P.17.
[117] *Ibid.*
[118] *Ibid.*
[119] *Ibid.*
[120] Merera Gudina, *Elections and democratization in Ethiopia, 1991–2010*, Journal of Eastern African Studies (2011), Vol.5 No.4, Pp.664-680, available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/ 17531055.2011.642524 on April 16, 2018.
[121] *Ibid.*
[122] *Ibid.*

Because of the unmatched resource disparity between the ruling and the opposition political parties and because of the limited resources available to the latter, the opposition political parties tried to depend on foreign funds, mainly in the diaspora. For instance, in the 2005 Ethiopian parliamentary election, the main source of income for opposition parties was the Diaspora community.[123] Yet, the Diaspora money has brought several troubles to the opposition parties. Particularly, the collapse of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) was chiefly the result of the diaspora divergence.[124] In this regard, Wondwosen firmly argues, "one of the reasons that contributed for the collapse of the CUD was the party's heavy dependence on the Diaspora patrons and hence, it was the victim of the infighting and rivalries of the Diaspora donors."[125] In this regard, one can safely conclude that the opposition parties' political allegiance to the diaspora is the consequence of the latters' financial support. Therefore, controlling or at least reducing the heavy financial dose of the diaspora community on the opposition political parties in Ethiopia is necessary. This is possible, first by leveling the resource platform among all political competitors, specifically, by ensuring sufficient and equitable public resources to the parties. Second, together with the first, it is necessary to strictly enforce the financial regulatory laws with due consideration to take corrective measures on issues affecting reasonable resource distribution.

3. CONCLUSION

Political parties are agents of representative democracy. They have incomparable contribution in a democratic process. For accomplishing their democratic functions, they need resource or political funding. Political funding greatly determines their strength. Yet, political funding is highly manipulated for creating unequal laying field and thereby extending ones

---

[123] Wondwosen, *supra* note 1, P857.

[124] The CUD was the biggest and the formidable opposition party coalition in the 2005 parliamentary election. In the said election, the CUD controlled almost 100% of the seats in Addis Ababa legislature. It also won many seats in the Federal parliament. In the post-election period, in fighting and rivalry among the party leaders fuelled by the Diaspora led the party into disintegration see Wondwosen, *Id,* P.855.

[125] *Ibid.*

electoral success. The incumbent parties are the beneficiaries in most of these manipulations through either law or practice.

In view to this, this research intends to address the system of political funding in Ethiopia. It particularly examines the regulation of sources of funds, the allocation of public funds and the abuse of state resources in Ethiopia to demonstrate their influence on the opposition and the incumbent parties.

Accordingly, it concludes that political funding in Ethiopia is unevenly dispersed. While the EPRDF garners huge resource, the opposition suffers from lack of the same. The regulation and distribution of political funding favors the incumbent party. In this regard, the incumbent party earns large amount of funds from its big membership base and from the private business contributions. It takes the lion's share of the public funds allotted by the government. It also substantially benefits from the public media distribution. Moreover, the incumbent party uses its incumbency for abusing the state resources, at its disposal, for its own partisan advantages thereby getting the upper hand in the electoral competition. In sharp contrast, the opposition political parties suffer from lack of adequate resources. It is because their membership base is narrow and private donations are rare for the latter fears retributions coming from the incumbent party. As far as public funding is concerned, on the one hand, the funding allotted for day-to-day activities is apportioned based on parliamentary seats where the opposition parties are effectively excluded. On the other hand, regarding the election funding, from the beginning the whole amount is so small but in addition to this, the substantial amount of money is distributed based on parliamentary seats where the incumbent party overall have substantial claim. The same problem also exists in the allocation of public media allocation.

Generally, the Ethiopian political competition functions in a vicious circle; the opposition parties are financially weak, as a result, they are unable to win parliamentary seats and still the direct and indirect resource allocations base on parliamentary seats and yet the same problem continues reproducing itself.

To deal with such problems in the political funding system of our country, though there is no-one-size-fits-all solution to the said problems, the author suggests the following measures might help:

1. The laws regulating political funding, from the very start, should be drafted through the concerted and genuine engagement of all stakeholders. Specifically, the voices and concerns of political parties, civic societies and the citizenry must be dully considered.

2. Both the sum of the total budget granted to political parties and the specific criteria employed for its apportionment, to each of the political parties, should not be left as a 'blank check' only to the determination of the legislative organ dominated by the incumbent party. To be more explicit, either objective standards must be set in advance as part of the laws regulating public funding or the same should be determined in an open and transparent discussion of all stake holders.

3. Further, to avoid biased enforcement of the political financing laws by the National Electoral Board, usually against the opposition political parties, the former's independence and impartiality should be ensured first. Besides, the board's institutional capacity should be strengthened to make sure it has the capability to properly enforce the laws regulating financial fair plays.

4. Last but not least, to minimize or control the abuse of state resources by incumbent parties, the best way is ensuring that the government institutions including the civil servants and the bureaucracy of the civil service and public media are liberated from partisan dispositions. And again, as part of the enforcement of the funding laws among political parties, the National Electoral Board should be given the mandate to investigate abuse of state resources and expose the same to the public and other relevant bodies.