

# **POLITICAL CORRUPTION: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STATE CAPTURE IN ETHIOPIA**

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## **Abstract**

Corruption is an international issue that gets the recognition of the United Nations. International day was assigned to exchange ideas, sharing knowledge, to revitalize the commitment as well as to devise new strategies concerning this securitized matter of all member states. Besides, the UN provided convention that has been ratified by states of the world. Ethiopia is one of those which have signed this convention and currently institutionalized the ‘cosmetic’ anti-corruption practice. Yet, things have a different scenario in Ethiopia; its political systems are deficient in democratic power sharing formula, check and balance, accountable and transparent institutions and procedures. These deficits of democracy are clearly observed when one compares the significant steps of the country’s transition from its authoritarian legacy to the current ‘rhetoric’ good governance experience of the country. The artificial nature and the failure of the country's transformation to democratic governance and its legacy to the deficit of the political system open the door to corruption and facilitated the fertile breeding ground for this political gangrene. This article argued that the perpetuation of political corruption on the part of the incumbent government in Ethiopia, significantly aborted the country’s democratization process, eroded the country’s rule of law, prevail a politicization of the country’s civil service system, as well as the monopolization of the country’s economy.

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**Keywords:** Political corruption, good governance, democratic governance, Ethiopia

## **Introduction**

Contemporarily, corruption has not only become a hot issue in the academic sphere, but it also has securitized and institutionalized in the various multilateral, governmental and non-governmental institutions. However, despite a high agenda in the current undertaking of various states and institutions, it is not a new phenomenon. It ‘has been persistent

throughout history and across political system in many different forms and degrees' (Bicchieri & Duffy, 1997, p. 477). Yet, its current reverberation can be explained mainly by the legacy of the Cold War which 'has stopped the political hypocrisy that had made the decision makers in some industrial countries ignore the political corruption that existed in a particular countries...as long as the latter were in the right political camp' (Tanzi, 1998, p. 560). Besides, the role-played by non-governmental institution, the United Nations, and particularly the USA 'through its influence in some international institution, has been important' (ibid., p. 556). In the academic realm, corruption as a subject of study can be treated with respect to the tenet and the parameter of various concerned disciplines respectively. Accordingly, using the political factors into account, Political Science has attempted to analyze corruption as a deviation from the rational-legal values and principles of modern state, and 'approached the phenomena of corruption in terms of regime type and searched for its causes in authoritarianism versus democracy and in developmental oriented regimes verses neo-patrimonial rule' (Andvig, Fjeldstad, Amundsen, Sissener, & Søreide, 2000, p. 51). Political corruption is an outcome and a major symptom of poor governance or it is a sign of 'state which is functioning poorly' (Hope, 2000, p. 9). In other words, corruption is a manifestation of poor performance of a particular polity. Conventionally, 'it is understood as caused by political systems that are deficient in democratic power sharing formula, check and balance, accountable and transparent institution and procedures of the formal and ideal system of democratic governance' (Doid and Theobald, cited in Andvig, et al., 2000, p. 52).

In the context of Ethiopia as Haberson posits (cited in Merera, 2003, p.145) 'the dual transition, from an ethnically dominated empire to an ethnically egalitarian nation state and from authoritarian rule to democracy' couldn't realize democratic governance in Ethiopia. There remains a gap between the rhetoric and the reality, between the declaration and the implementation of the genuine democratization. In Ethiopian political system one can witness the 'deficits of democracy...when one compares the significant steps of transition with normative standards' (Vestal, cited in Merera, 2000, p. 190). The artificial nature and the failure of the country's transformation to democratic governance and its legacy to the deficit of the political system once again open the door to corruption and facilitated the fertile breeding ground for the political gangrene. When the incumbent regime came to power, it propagated solemnly to institute a democratic government to resolve the age-old legacy of the country in which 'the classic Ethiopian polity has been characterized by a heavy dosage of authoritarianism' (Bahiru, 2002, p.11). However, we are experiencing practically the division from the guiding principles, the promised good

governance are not achieved, rather the wide spread corruption perpetrated by the EPRDF (Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front) poses serious challenge and ‘it undermines the country’s good governance by subverting formal process’ (UNDP, 1999, p.15) for the sake of the regime security as well as the uninterrupted continuation of its tenure. This can be manifested through the political and economic state capture of the regime in power, its neo-patrimonial rule as well as weak institutional framework. As a consequence, what can be observed as a legacy of EPRDF’s perpetration of political corruption is the aborted democratization of the country, the erosion of the rule of law, the monopolization of the Ethiopian Economy as well as the politicization of the civil service in Ethiopia. Thus, it is against this background that this article attempts to examine the above mentioned problems of the political corruption of the regime in power against the rhetoric ‘good governance’ undertaking.

### **Political Corruption in the post 1991 Ethiopia**

Political corruption can develop and flourish as a result of structural deficiency in the political administrative system of a given country. In broader terms, this phenomenon is the apparent prerequisite, but not the sufficient condition for political corruption to exist. Essentially, the various causes of political corruption as ‘summed up in the literature are in the first place, the increasing complexity of the functioning of the public administration due to unclear laws and indistinct prescriptions ... a second possible cause is the lack of financial control on the executives power... thirdly, there are political appointments...[in which politicians] increase their power by means of appointing friends to important positions...and finally there is the fact that public and private sectors have become intertwined’ (Robben, 1998, p. 221-22).

In the context of Ethiopia, the widespread manifestation of corruption is the norm that the state is functioning as a part and parcel of its mega system of politics. In the contemporary Ethiopia, ‘corruption flourishes...as institutions are weak and as the rule of law and formal rules are not rigorously observed; as the political patronage is rife and as the civil society lack the means to generate public pressure’ (Abebe, 2004, p. 5). Comprehensively, the significant causes of political corruption in Ethiopia are ‘poor governance, lack of accountability and transparency, low level of democratic culture and tradition, lack of citizen participation, lack of clear regulation and authorization, low institutional control, extreme poverty and inequality, harmful cultural practices, ...centralization of authority and resources, family and ethnic loyalties and obligations, blurred distinction between private and public interests, privatization, weak financial management, inadequate accounting and auditing, weak legal and judicial

system, over regulated bureaucracy, deterioration of acceptable moral and ethical values, desire to want more, unsound policies and, most importantly inefficient civil service system’(FEAC, 2005, p. 3-4). When one analyzes these numerous factors as the core causes of political corruption in Ethiopia, he/she finds that they are overlapping each other as well as some of the factors can accommodate the rest; therefore, one can boil down these multitude factors into three categories for the sake of simplification as well as analyzing each of them effectively. Accordingly, state capture, weak institutional framework and neo-patrimonial rule are taken as the major causes of political corruption that are best explained the proliferation of political corruption perpetrated by the regime in power as far as this article is concerned. These interrelated causes that show the EPRDF’s version of political corruption as well as its *modus operandi* will be discussed in the next section of this article in relation to their negative impact against the ‘good governance experience’ of Ethiopia.

### **Political Corruption and Good governance in Ethiopia**

In an attempt to qualify the phenomena of political corruption, it is believed that corruption is both a prime effect and a major cause of poor governance. Within this vicious circles setting, it has several deleterious effects on good governance of a particular country. Yet, its debilitating impact varies accordingly, depending on the level of political development as well as the degree of political culture. The litany effects of political corruption on the state can ultimately contribute to the paralysis of its institutional set up since it has repercussions on the rule of the political game and the operating rules of the political system. These negative repercussions can be compartmentalized into philosophical, psychological, political, and economical aspects. In its philosophical aspect, its impacts pushed forward the adherences to ‘cynicism and nihilism of citizens and it may also be nurtured by these (kinds of perceptions)’ (Osei-Hwedie & Osei-Hwedie, 2000, p. 50-51). In its psychological dimension, it ‘affects professionalism... in the public servants and leads to frustration on the part of few honest public servants to the extent that they emigrates’ (Hope, 2000, p. 25). Consequently, this in turn contributes to brain drain dilemma of educated people, administration inefficiency and parasitism. The effect of corruption on politics is that, it renders the state incapacitated and impotent. With these negative impacts, political corruption is ‘destructive to the state’s ability to extract taxes, implement coherent and rational development policies, redistribute resources among groups and regions, and consequently to its ability to transform the society and the economy accordingly to political priorities’ (Andvig, et al., 2000, p. 60). However, the most glaring problem of political corruption in a given country is that ‘the general public may not

put any trust in the leadership and its administration which in turn discourage them from actively participating in government activities....This will definitely deter a democratization process in a given country’ (FDRE-MFA, 2005, p. 132). Moreover, it has a negative relationship with the rule of law, and it affects institutional quality of the political system, in which ‘countries with more corruption experiences lower acceptances of established institutions, weakened political institutions and a deficient court system’ (Dreher & Herzfeld, 2005, p. 8).

Political corruption has a repercussion on the institutional quality of a given country and the apparent injustices. It ‘may also weaken the judicial system of a country thereby facilitating the abuse of human and democratic rights of the general public’ (FDRE-MFA, 2005, p. 132). The judiciary as the ‘central entity in the regulatory process for purposes of fair play’ (Bukurura, 1999, p. 109) as well as “the custodian of most, if not all, of the ideas that go with the rule of law and human rights’ (ibid.) compromised and unable to carry out its expectation as an essential pillar in the emerging era of political pluralism. In its economic aspects, political corruption has negative impacts on the level of economic development. As the ‘regression analysis indicates, the amount of corruption is negatively linked to the level of investment and economic growth; that is to say, the more corruption, the less investment and the less economic growth’ (Mauro, 1998, p. 9). This is due to the fact that it is ‘the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development’ (WB, 2004, p. 21). It has significantly harmful impact on those ‘determinants of economic welfare like, e.g. the level of per capita/GDP and its growth rate, the quality of the public infrastructure, public expenditure allocation, total investment and foreign direct investment’ (Dreher & Herzfeld, 2005, p. 3). As a whole, political corruption also poses threats to the security and stability of countries in different parts of the world. In this regard, Muganda (1999, p. 43) generalizes the debilitating impacts of political corruption and notes that ‘corruption subverts political stability and becomes a serious impediment to the democratic process by interfering with free elections, law enforcement and judiciary process’. These are all being the general effects of political corruption on the democratic governance of the state.

In case of Ethiopia, I argue that the impact of political corruption on the country’s ‘good governance’ experience, has in fact seriously affected the country’s political system, its political and economic undertakings as well as its judicial institutions. Most specifically, the widespread perpetuation of political corruption on the part of the incumbent government in Ethiopia, significantly aborted the country’s democratization process, eroded the country’s rule of law, prevail a politicization of the country’s civil service system, as well as the monopolization of the country’s economy. As

a consequence, its resultant effects brought about the deficiency of the political system in the country. Thus, in the next subsequent subsections the manifestation and the impacts of the perpetrated political corruption in Ethiopia will be treated briefly.

### ***Aborted Democratization***

When I said to be the democratization process of Ethiopian is aborted, it is a transition in which the overall outcome of this process manipulated, dictated and controlled by the party in power as a project of political state capture. This is because, the political system of Ethiopia is not as such a product of political bargain, genuine competition and a national consensus of an inclusive approach to governance. It is rather a winner-take-all mentality outcome of political craftsmanship of the EPRDF. In this process of camouflage democracy, the EPRDF using its omnipresence and overarching control of matters all over the country has institutionalized state capture. The overall arrangements of such a process leave a very little room to the citizens at large to influence the policy outcome. Viewing the beginning of the political arrangement of the state capture in Ethiopia, its subsequent evolution began in the July 1991, National Conference of Addis Ababa as calculated in advance by the EPRDF. In this historical junction, the EPRDF that assumed the central role of sending out invitations to the possible participants purposely left out its age old contending political organizations and invited ‘mostly ethnic liberation front’s, some of which were created by the EPRDF for the occasion’ (Vestal, 1999, p. 7). In this conference, as it was first envisioned and manipulated for its own political hegemony, ‘the EPRDF got its own charter approved... ensured its centrality in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) by controlling the key institutions of the state, the executives, the legislative and the judiciary branches of the government, together with the army, as well as the rest of the security apparatus’ (Merera, 2000, p. 183).

Moreover, when one can analyze the successive periodic elections carried out in this country, he/she finds that the process as well as the actual undertaking is a series of felonies perpetrated by the regime in power. In a zero sum game political culture, the EPRDF had been continued derailing the democratic process enshrined in the Charter. The harassments and intimidation of the EPRDF led TGE, as well as the various irregularities that were experienced during the preparation for the June 1992 election, pressurized member of the TGE political organization like OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) to boycott the election and to make withdrew from the TGE as a whole. In addition to OLF, other political parties like ‘the All Amhara People’s Organization (AAPO), the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromo, the Gedeo Democratic Organization and the Ethiopia Action

Group withdrew from the elections questioning the fairness of the playing fields as well as the transparency of the rules of the game being applied' (ibid., p. 184). With such exclusion of political parties that are denied of providing political alternatives to the people of Ethiopia, this in turn formally excluded 'the citizenship right and ... therefore debarred from any kind of political voice' (Percy-Smith, 2000, p. 150).

With the absence of unimpaired opportunities to formulate political preferences on the part of the Ethiopian electorate, 'the EPRDF, which was both a referee and a player, 'won' a land slide victory, but the outcome was yet another nail in the country's hope for democratic transition' (Merera, 2000, p. 184). The overall process was a kind of 'one-step forward, two steps back rhythm of polices for the democratization of Ethiopia' (Vestal, 1999, p. 38). As the manifestation of its failure, the process of this particular election of the country since the coming to power of the EPRDF was a flawed one in many ways as it was acknowledged by the then time Transitional Period President Meles Zenawi as well as the National Democratic Institute /African American Institute, which contributed the largest contingent to the Joint International Observer Group concluded that 'to the disappointment of many Ethiopians and their friends in the international community, the June 21 elections represented a sterile, surreal and wholly formalistic affair' (NDI/AAI, 1992, p. 6-7). In consequence, what can be taken out from the outcome of this election is that 'in the eyes of greater part of the Ethiopian public and foreign observers, the June 1992 elections were neither, "free and fair", nor did they help the institutionalization of multiparty democracy in the country' (Merera, 2004, p. 252). Rather in the name of democratic election, it instituted the wish of the EPRDF and heralded the hegemony of the ruling party as logical outcome of its political calculus.

Likewise, the previous one, the 1994 Constituency Assembly elections were also 'more exclusive than the June 1992 election as more opposition groups were pushed out of the game and were further marginalized' (ibid.). Once again EPRDF became victorious in 'the race of EPRDF against EPRDF' (Kassahun, 1994, p. 5). As the further crystallization of the political state capture to its vision for hegemonic aspiration, the 'EPRDF members and sympathizers assumed such positions as a chair person, vice-chairperson, and secretary of the Drafting Commission (of the constitution); there by ensuring control of matters pertaining to the subject in question' (Kassahun, 2003, p. 132). This constitution as the bigger framework for the restructuring of the body politics of Ethiopia, ethnicity was highly inculcated for reordering of the state structure along this line. Theoretically, the validity of this political move emanate from its attempts to remove the national oppression legacy of the country prior to 1991 however, practically the overall politics of the country

geared towards single ethnic group hegemony and self centered political and economic benefits, namely for EPRDF party home base. In the party politics scene of the political state capture, from the beginning, “the EPRDF leadership, which has been conscious of political implication of its policies quickly moved to create a surrogate ethnic organization of its own for almost all ethnic groups in the country” (Merera, 2003, p. 123). Most importantly, these satellite or surrogate ethnic based organizations “are not locally and independently initiated political groups, but TPLF created ‘People’s Democratic Organizations’ for the control of non-Tigryan ethnic groups of the country’ (ibid.) or in other words, these satellite organizations ‘were created to compete with and undermined non-conformists from influencing matters in a manner that would be detrimental to the EPRDF’s hegemonic aspirations’ (Kassahun, 2003, p. 120).

This prior political calculus of EPRDF for the realization of the badly needed and highly valued political state captures, the ‘infamous people’s democratic organizations (PDOs) helped the ruling party to speak through the mouth of several dozen ethnic groups, mushroomed across the country’ (Merera, 2003, p. 123). Thus, all those ethnic based PDOs have been easily manipulated for the best interest of their creator and played a channel for the long stick of the TPLF’s powers, where TPLF used these PDOs as instrument to impose its hegemonic agenda on the politics of the country at large. Besides, its hierarchical arrangement of the party, its instruments of PDOs and their significance position of administrating their respective region, TPLF benefited from the prevailing deep down centralized decision making and controlling machination to ensure the continuity of its core interest and hegemony. To safeguard this arrangement in case for diversion, ‘TPLF assigned hard-core cadres, who have right to supervise the actions and performance of the PDOs at all level, implement the decision made by the TPLF/EPRDF leading bodies’ (ibid., p. 146). This modus operandi of the country’s political settings politically enabled the EPRDF to benefit immensely and it resulted in a system where the party capitalized all the political fruits’ of the country. This advantage is visible in a way that the parties can ‘speak through the mouth of all other ethnic groups, win elections and rule the country in the name of all the peoples of Ethiopia’ (ibid). The outcome of this entire political move crystallized, the situation all in the hands of TPLF where ‘the TPLF practically controls the central government by occupying the key post of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Ministry as well as the key posts in the Army, the Police and the Security structure’ (Merera, 2003, p. 147).

When we come to the 1995 regional and national elections of the nations, the process was also a replica of its predecessor and it was ‘the final act which accompanied the EPRDF goal of in the situation that ‘no

independent party worthy of its name participated in this election, and in the absence of major opposition parties; such as, OLF, AAPO, EPRP<sup>43</sup>, MELSON<sup>44</sup>, COEDF<sup>45</sup>, Medhin and CAFPDE<sup>46</sup>. The EPRDF repeated its landslide victory to form an EPRDF- led second republic’ (ibid., p. 18). Most importantly, what was observed in this election is that opposition parties boycotted this particular election as a result of continued atmosphere of intimidation, harassment and the various overt and covert obstacles initiated by the EPRDF. Viewing these injustices of the EPRDF against the opposition parties as well as the absence of alternatives views to voters, Ottaway (1995, p. 71) commented the process as ‘flawed...and an extension of the drive and machinations that put in place to ensure the preponderance and omnipotence of the ruling EPRDF’. On its part, the Norwegian Observers Group of researchers Tronvoll and Aadland (1995, p. 59-60) who follows the process of the elections also come up with a similar analysis of the flawed nature of the elections process and according to their report:

*[They] cannot characterize the 1995 regional and federal elections in Ethiopia as ‘free, fair and impartial’. Conducting election as a mere formality and claiming democracy without having democratic public debates is a futile exercise [...] the 1995 elections were not based on inclusive discussion. They did not allow free competition between all legal political alternatives [...] Thus [they] cannot considered that these elections can be considered free and fair. They were not sufficient as an indicator of a democratic debate or even of a process toward developing a democratic society.*

What is to be concluded from the successive elections conducted under the guise of rhetoric democratic elections with the leadership of EPRDF regime is that ‘the political system has changed little, with the exception of cosmetic changes in terms of a procedures and mechanisms, and actual political activity’ (Kassahun, 2003, p. 130). In the final analysis, what is to be put as rubber stamp, at the end in any of the elections is that the rule of the game governing multi-party democracy and ‘free and fair’ elections were not observed in any of them under the EPRDF rule. The kind of window dressing democratization process of Ethiopia that could at the end institute a *de facto* one party state in this country is often allegedly squanders the legitimacy of the EPRDF leadership in particular and its architected political system of the country in general. Since the legitimacy of a given political system goes beyond the holding of period elections, the EPRDF initiated democratization that are characterized by the absence of a consensus

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<sup>43</sup> Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party

<sup>44</sup> Amharic acronym for All Ethiopian Socialist Movement

<sup>45</sup> Coalition of Ethiopia Democratic Forces

<sup>46</sup> Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia

oriented approach as well as a meaningful participation of political associations as a result of the ruling party manipulation of the process using endless tricks, has not been bestowed legitimacy. This is due to the fact that it ‘would be a mistake to equate democracy with regular elections’ (UNDP, 2002, p. 54) on the part of EPRDF-sponsored transition that ‘fall into the fallacy of electoralism’ (ibid.) and it can be explained by its fear of free and fair elections. On the part of this regime, its fear of free and fair election is directly related to the nature of the Ethiopian state. As its inherent nature ‘the state in Ethiopia is prized as the major avenue of accumulation of wealth, privileges and status’ (Mesfin, 1993, p. 33). The EPRDF government has always been in secured to let go this badly needed avenue. It has the perception that it achieved its current political reality not as such as an outcome of a ballot box, rather as a result of political and economic hegemony; if there is a free and fair election in Ethiopia, it can lose this golden opportunity of self-aggrandizement.

### ***Violation of Freedom of Association and Expression***

In connection to the democratization process of EPRDF, the other dismal picture of the current political setting is that ‘EPRDF’s democracy’ doesn’t equate with freedom of expression and assembly...starting with its inception, the regime has not been tested in terms of these expressions of democracy’ (Mebratu, 2004a, p. 19). In contrary to the right of associations of the population at large, the EPRDF has always been squeezed, emasculated and onslaught independently organized mass associations. In its divisive move against the existence of these organizations, the regime goes a greater length to instituted its lackey mass organizations that are rival one to the previously organized independent mass organization; in order to make it possible, these organizations as instruments of achieving political socialization of the regime, not only in terms of ‘carried out political, executive, and organizational work in such way as to enable party directives to be correctly understood and implemented by the population at large’ (Vestal, 1999, p. 145). It also amasses contributions, channelizing political recruitments to the party’s memberships as well as communicating political feedback to the regime in power. Yet, the curtailment of the freedom of associations and the continued intervention on the part of EPRDF leadership to undermine the independent existences of mass organizations using a direct and indirect punitive measure is against Article 31 of its highly regarded constitution. In spite of this article of the FDRE constitution that enshrined the basic rights of Ethiopians to join with others in pursuit of political, social and economic ends, the EPRDF marginalized and forced such kinds of associations to operate under continuous harassment while their leaders faced detentions, torture, and dismissal from their jobs as well as their

associations. By a way of expressing the EPRDF rejections, the freedom of assembly and its continual intervention in the internal affairs of the mass organization, Mebratu (2004a, p. 19) upholds that:

The EPRDF was not taken with the teacher association formed by exercising the right to assemble; it established a rival one set them against each other. When ultimately both associations became spent due to the squabbling, teachers became bereft of an association that protected their interests. When the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Union (CETU) was established under the leadership of Ato Dawi Ibrahim; a person whom EPRDF regarded as being dependable, it run short of words to extol its democraticness in the belief that it had put the confederation in its palms without creating a competitor. But when Ato Dawi began to adopt a position is differing from the EPRDF's concerning workers, and to argue that the EPRDF was sidelining workers [...] is vowed to “destroy” him. Since it is an organization that displays concern only for itself and not workers, it fond the criticism to be unpalatable. So it exerted pressure to have Ato Dawi removed and simultaneously endeavored to establish another workers associations. However, as it didn't want a repeat of Ato Dawi's “rebelliousness”, it created an association that couldn't stand by workers in their time of hardship let alone protect their interest. Consequently, there was as far as promulgated a law that “send workers down the drain”, that denies them the rights to be paid severance pay upon termination of employment contract. This is how the EPRDF “eat away” associations and enfeebles them.

In light of the freedom of associations, the freedom of press is also ‘one of the benchmark's of the existences of a true belief in democracy, [and it] is the ability to entertain diverse opinions whether or not they conform to each other; or not to prevent the expression of ideas’ (ibid., p. 17). Yet, in contrast to ‘the acknowledged contribution of the ... [freedom of press] for the democratization initiatives and smooth workings of a democratic government, the EPRDF-led government has been at war with members of the free press and their associations...hundred of members of the free press have been accused, detained, exiled and even died in prison cells’ (Merera, 2003, p. 159). Criticizing the position of EPRDF against the freedom of press, Mebratu (2004a, p. 17) notes that:

*The EPRDF recognizes freedom of press in so far as it feels that the press will not harm it. In that case, it doesn't mind anything that is writing by it. In fact, it portrays this as “proof” of its democratic way of doing things. But when the freedom to express thought begins to exercise in a manner which is “trouble some” which shows it in a bad light, it sucks, bristles, elbows, lashes out.*

As a continued war of EPRDF against the freedom of press as well as its stands to curtail their freedom of associations, with regard to the current draft press law the article (ibid.) also goes to say that:

*In the draft press law, the EPRDF not only deals with freedom of expression but asserts only it alone knows how and decide for journalists how they should be organized in an association. It insists that unless an Ethiopian who wants to make a living by investing in the media forms a business organization and structure the organization's ownership of shares not in accordance with investment or commercial reserved to itself the power to determine hoe editors, journalist, vendor may carry on their activities as well as which foreign press product may or may not be imported into Ethiopia. This has exposed the EPRDF's dictatorial nature of restricting the public's right to know.*

### ***Weak Institutional Frameworks: Parliament and Anti-corruption Commission***

In relation to the prevailing aborted democratization process, one of the weak institutional frameworks of the current political system of country is the parliament. Contrary to its nature, as the superior organ of the political system of a particular country that creates the executive arm of the government, the parliament of Ethiopia has been a subservient nominal body that can only put a rubber stamp on decision which had already been made by the powerful executive. As can be observed practically, more than 75% of the seats of the parliament are controlled by the EPRDF, that have been giving adherence to unforgiving party discipline of democratic centralism, the legislative apparatus function as an instrument that leads legality to what the executive does and wishes to do in the name of a parliamentary arrangement. Such kind of political drama is the outcome of the EPRDF political calculus in which its “leadership discuss in and decide before hand what they want to be decided by parliament... [since the EPRDF members of parliament] have the obligation, dictated by the principles of ‘democratic centralism’ to accept and respect as well as unanimously approve these decisions given outside parliament” (Mebratu, 2004b:17). It is possible to generalize that everything has been at the back of the parliament and come to parliament for a formal deliberation. In the current Ethiopian political culture, the party and the executives are fused together; the parliament of Ethiopia is a half dead entity that lacks lively debates on issues.

The Ethiopian parliament is also incapable to scrutinize the executives, if the various governmental institutions have not implemented the laws that it enacts previously. In practice, to over sight their activities with regard to the implementation of the enacted laws necessitates the respective institutions to present their performance reports in the house of the

parliament though the executives are not responsive and the parliament itself does not explicitly exercise its bestowed rights to get answers and make accountable the culprit party. In view of this unresponsive nature of the executives, Mebratu (2004b: 13) noted that:

*The executives, being appointed by the party's apparatus, does not accord respect to parliament, which it uses just for the sake of declaring that it was "appointed by it". It is not responsive to parliament's queries; when it wants to, it declines to present a report to it scoffs at it. So, it is hard to say that in practice [Ethiopia] parliament is the body having the rights power.*

The Ethiopian parliament was unable to realize its supremacy over the executives, and failed to implement one of its core responsibility to control the executive apparatus of the government from abusing power and its entrusted responsibility. Thus, there is always the room for the executive apparatus to deliberate whatever doomed necessary laws for its own governmental advantage, to the extent of compromising the provisions enshrined in the constitution and to perpetuate its manipulation for the security of its survival at the helm of the political power hierarchy as long as it takes.

In connection to the weak institutional framework, the other instrument for the perpetuation of corruption as well as a façade institutional set up that seemed the government in power as a 'politically wiling' to fight corruption is the anti-corruption commission. However, creating institution that fights corruption is a commendable conspicuous act, from its inception the adherence as well as the urgent institutionalization of the anti-corruption endeavor in EPRDF is a continuation of the incumbent government hidden agenda of using institution as instrument of the survival of the regime in power. This is due to the fact that at that particular point in time, the regime former Deputy Prime Minister was on trial for grand corruption offences, the ruling party was not rushed to institutionalize anti-corruption agency as the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi explained at length to parliament that he had repeatedly cautioned the culprit but that when he became recalcitrant, he was held accountable for the transgression by the Office of Attorney General. Yet, the Federal Ethics and Ant-Corruption Commission (FEAC) start its first allegations of corruption of those 'dissident factions' members, which have been ousted from the EPRDF party as instrument agencies of the regime in power to disable a political rival under the cover of fighting corruption in Ethiopia. FEAC is the new instrument of the EPRDF that could be used to revenge political opponents. In its previous proclamation, the FEAC providing for 'special procedures and rules of evidence on anti-corruption had nothing to say about bail' (Tilahun, 2004, p. 26). Once the accused political dissidents 'post a bail and get chance to go out of prison, the executive took a measure of force... [and] ordered its members of

parliament to convene on the weakened to immediately prepare a draft law...[that] denying person arrested on suspension of committing a corruption offences the right from being released on bail' (Mebratu, 2004c: 13). With this kind of 'capturing the legislative powers of the state, the political groups in powers [EPRDF] will use legislation to lock out rival political groups' (Garamfalvi, 1997, p. 10). Thus, FEAC made remarkable gesture of playing its institutional role to the best satisfaction of the executives, by shutting of the political opponent of the Prime Minister behind the prison door by denying the right to bail of these dissidents against the provision enshrined under Article 19(6) of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution. Vaghan and Tronvoll (2003, p. 101-102) noted the instrumental role of FEAC wrote that:

*Corruption charges [in the current Ethiopia] have been leveled exclusively at those on "the wrong side" of political divide; that the allegations on which the cases are based on relatively trivial or empty and such as could be leveled at almost any one in a position of authority; the legislation establishing the Anti-Corruption Commission, and modifying habeas corpus provisions for those subjects to its investigation, was rushed through explicitly in order to keep political dissidents out of circulation, and was in any case "unconstitutional"*

When one can closely filter out the government will in tackling the 'perceived causes or effects of corruption at a system level' (Kpundeh, 1998, p. 92) other than a short-term political significance, he/she gets that its exclusive concern on corruption of economic type has made its endeavor rhetoric one. The crux of the matter here is that the political will of a particular government on anti-corruption policy's determined by the 'rule of the political game, such as the prevalence of a democratic institution and context specific incentives' (ibid.); thus, this necessitates a participative political culture, a period free and fair election, effective check and balance among the three strands of government, a distinctive private and public realm; a dynamic civil society. Most significantly, these democratic practices are the essence of democratization and 'in itself present an opportunity to control systematic corruption by opening up the activities of public officials to public scrutiny and accountability...democracies, more so than any other political system, are able to deter corruption through institutionalized checks and balance and other meaningful accountability...reduce secrecy, monopoly and discretion' (Pope, 1997, p. 27). In spite of all these advantages of democratic institutionalization of statehood that can be instituted through the process of democratic election which gives birth to a democratic body politics, it is the norm in Ethiopia that 'elections that can be manipulated in advance, long before Election Day' (Pausewang, Tronvoll, & Aalen, 2002. p. 9). These kinds of incidences of manipulation which have been raised now

and then are purely political corruptions that are destined to realize a political state capture for the benefit of the ruling power that has always the motive and the means. Yet, surprisingly, such kind of incidences of manipulation has not been considered by the EPRDF led government as a corruption act, and it is left out in the rhetoric anti-corruption policy of the incumbent regime and was not included in the FEAC mandates. FEAC is non-mandated to investigate political corruption as well as elections manipulation and rigging, it is lurking only in the economic pattern of corruption and illegitimate to deal the political cancer of Ethiopia. The ruling power relegated these bigger problems to be dealt by the National Electoral Board (NEB) whose higher officials are appointed by the EPRDF dominated and controlled House of People Representative up on the nomination by the Prime Minister. NEB, being part and parcel of the core institutional framework that reinstates the foundation of the political state capture when ever election come in; has always been under strong hold of the EPRDF. It is unlikely that NEB refines the recidivist behavior of the EPRDF. It is also expected from a hierarchical arranged election structure to comprise of government and a party intermingled apparatus with full of the ruling party members, supporters and opportunist sympathizers.

With its narrow mandated realm of administration type of economic corruption; the FEAC is not also autonomous to handle all the corruption offences. In its restricted endeavor, there has been preferential handling of corruption offences as well as extreme care employed not to be missed up with the “restricted areas”, since it has been already tied-up to the EPRDF through a long string that can be manifested through the appointment of political sympathizers and members of the ruling party to lead the FEAC. In view of such activities of FEAC in which it has been selectively handling corruption offences, Mebratu (2004c, p. 24) argued that:

*The commission inability to gain a full measure of independence has led to the assumption that instead of “taking an aim” against all corrupt persons it has been made to discharge its responsibility or to focus its attention selectively. It is hard to say that the commission is operating unhampered given that persons who are similarly “strained” are not similarly viewed and adjudged because the question whether they are “supporters or opponents” also come into the picture. Exerting pressure on a commission establishing by law using political clout and preventing it from functioning at full capacity by itself merits to be considered as [a political] corruption.*

Thus, FEAC is a kind of anti-corruption rhetoric move, and indeed many of the outcries and mobilization against corruption were staged or triggered by the incumbent government in a well-orchestrated effort to use corruption symbolically to divert attentions away from itself in the wake of

post Ethio-Eritrea war political difficulties of disabling a political rival under the cover of fighting corruption in Ethiopia as well as to sustain the political and economic support of the donors' community as well.

### ***Eroded the Rule of Law***

When we think of the other weak institution in Ethiopia, there come the pictures of the judiciary. The judiciary branch in Ethiopia has been historically weak and continues to lack public trust and respect. The judiciary subjugated to the executive branch of government in Ethiopia. This situation 'has fostered a weak judicial branch with reduced capacity to exercise genuine independence, as well as a reticence of other branches to treat the judiciary as either truly independent or co-equal' (WB, 2004, p. 24). In current justice system of Ethiopia, 'one of the major weaknesses observed...is the absence of a genuine commitment to enable the judiciary continue as an independent institution free from interference by the government or the ruling party' (Mebratu, 2004d, p. 11).

The continued interference of the EPRDF government in the justice system of Ethiopia is seen not only in the dismissal of '*en mass* young judges ... for not being biddable to the instructions of the executives arm of the government' (ibid.), but also in the continual chipping away of the powers of the judiciary and given them to the other governmental institutions to exercise the power to be 'judges, jury and executioner' all in one. Moreover, it also intervene in the daily work of the justice system in terms of perpetrating coercion to manipulate judicial decisions that favor the executives and the "the politically correct" persons. With this kind of an instrumental role of the justice system, the ruling party can perpetrate political corruption for the survival of the regimes by arresting and prosecuting those who are deemed to be against the ruling party; this is clearly articulated by the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in his writings of Bonapartism that described the EPRDF's 'decaying' in terms of justice and he remarked that, 'member of ... [EPRDF] organization's senior leadership utilized 'independence of the judiciary' to have citizens he personally hated and he has not done any crime to speak of sentenced to tens of years of imprisonment' (ibid).

The other critical problem regarding the justice system is that because of retribution of many judges by EPRDF and its subsequent appointment of politically loyal judges resulted in a decaying situation that 'many judicial positions have been filled with people who have had minimal, if any, legal training and experiences' (WB, 2004. P. 19). This is due to the fact that, as far as EPRDF is concerned the essence of the appointment of judges is seemed to be 'a reward for party services or as a precaution by the executives to ensure that it will have a friendly face on the bench if the rule of law is

violated' (Pope, 1997, p. 60). With all these justice hurdles that impede independence as well as inferior status *vis-à-vis* executive arm of the government; it is now in an incapable position to carry out its vested authority to usher the supremacy of the rule of law; and consequently exhibited a 'repeated failure to adhere to the constitution' (Mebratu, 2004d, p. 11).

The filling up of the legal system with its political supporters and sympathizers makes the EPRDF to bestowed 'a powerful influence in judicial decision-making, potentially rendering judges unwilling to reach decisions that might be seen to make them out as critical of the government' (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003, p. 100). As a consequence of the EPRDF continued intervention in the *modus operandi* of the justice system, what has been resulted, is not only the 'near paralysis of the courts, with most citizens being denied the full protections supposed to be provided in the constitution ... [but also] did give Ethiopia the distinction of being the African country with the largest number of untrained judges' (Vestal, 1999, p. 121). With respect to the failures observed in the Ethiopia justice system Mebratu (2004d, p. 12) upholds his comments as follows:

*The EPRDF's "era of justice" has been that of assailants than victims, of defendants than plaintiffs. Today cases are adjourned for long months and customers have come to regard frequently going to courts needlessly as "putting on attire". The "golden era of justice," which the EPRDF's leaderships crowned about when the party took the reign of power, is still not around the corner. Although the computerization of service delivery and erection of signboards, which are being hyped as improvements in the rendering of justices, are commendable they cannot be the main indicators of the prevalence of justices. And they cannot do away with our problems of a dearth in justice. There can be a reliable justices system when a reliable judiciary is in places. But the EPRDF has been unable to achieve results apart from perpetually saying, "efforts are being made". It may require knowing the duration of the EPRDF's stay in power to know when these "efforts" will be completed.*

On its parts, in connection to the readily identifiable problems of governance in Ethiopia, Neway (2001, p. 9); a Chief Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister even if he attached it with the inadequacy and in adherence to procedural matter, also acknowledged the failures as well as the dearth of justice in Ethiopia during the era of EPRDF's rule and came up with the following careful conclusion:

*We can now readily identify the problems of governance in Ethiopia. [ ... If we start with administration of justices, corruption is apparently widespread. ...Implementation of rules and delivery of services by the civil service is defective. In both the judiciary and the civil service, internal*

*mechanisms of enforcement of rules are weak either because the procedures are inadequate. Even when they are inadequate, they are not adhered to. For instances, a court cases can be lengthened out by a simple expediency of postponement of court hearings.[ ... ] Regulations tend to be enforced intermittently, selectively, and partially by government agencies.[... ] As to external mechanics which would ensure that the judiciary and the civil service enforce rules properly; these are not well developed in Ethiopia.*

In other aspect of the erosion of the rule of law and its selective nature, what has been seen so far in the EPRDF rule is that it discriminates between friends and foes in implementing the law. In addition to this, the rigor of the law is applied selectively, ‘the EPRDF believes that it has *carte blanche* authority to selectively apply, stretch or render in effective at will any laws that serve as instruments to realize revenges and hatred while it negatively forgets to implement the other laws’ (Mebratu, 2004d, p. 19). As this same author (*ibid.*, p. 12-19) elaborates this injustice, he writes that:

*The EPRDF has shown several times that it has the boldness and muscles, though not the mental restraint, to violate any ironclad restriction if doing so is in its interest. It violates the lease law, the tax law, the custom law and so forth. It does not seem to have the energy or concern to make this country a place where the law is respected, where citizens are ruled by a set of abiding laws. [... ] Whenever it wants to beleaguer someone, it “abhors” wiping the dust off laws that seem to be detrimental to its interest and read them let alone bemoaning the fact that they are neglected. How can justice become prevalent when the EPRDF enforces only the laws that serve as instruments to realize revenge and hatred while it negligently forgets to implement the other laws? For the EPRDF, justice does not have a homogeneous meaning.*

As a summery remark of the impact of political corruption that erodes the rule of law, the OECD argues the similar situation of the judiciary system that are characterized by failure, in-expeditiously as well as non-independence like Ethiopia, the ‘inefficiencies in the legal system, such as lack of predictably, delays in handling court cases and lack of enforcement of law decisions, increases business costs, discourages investors and obstruct development’ (CWS, 2000, p. 96).

### ***The Politicization of the Civil Service***

As far as neo-patrimonial rule of EPRDF is concerned, it has the relevance to explain its political appointment and it can reveal itself through the EPRDF ‘policy of filling all higher and middle level posts with appointee on the bases of political and ethnic consideration’ (Meheret & Paulos, 2000, p. 24). This policy of EPRDF was repeatedly communicated as a mark of uniqueness of the public sector appointment by the Prime Minister Meles

Zenawi and he asserted that ‘for him the yardstick by which someone is measured in his political loyalty only’ (Mebratu, 2004e, p. 11); so that as long as he is loyal, he can be illiterate in order to be crown as a state minister for the EPRDF. This kind of relationship, where for the appointee client, the job represents an important asset of reward for his continued loyalty and support of the regime in power, where as for the patron EPRDF, the unquestioned and unflinching loyalty of the appointee and the continued support of the regime that matter most. The hallmark of this kind of arrangement is ‘using public resources to secure political survival, and rewarding appointment behavior and securing political loyalty’ (Abu, 2001, p. 17). In this situation the government in power that amass public resource as well as the consideration of the state as a food by the opportunist appointee; the ruling power mobilizes political support via the public office as a ‘bargain chips that government provide to the public and hence develop client-patron relationship’ (ibid., p. 17-18). With this framework of neo-patrimonial rule, ‘political patronage is tempered with meritocracy, but the overriding criteria consists of political loyalty and the right connections’ (Dube, 1999, p. 72) in the ministerial appointments, membership of board of directors, civil service appointment, the rewarding of scholarship as well as management position in NGOs and civil organizations. However, this kind of appointment of the EPRDF that has not been ‘considered merit and integrity, infringes the modern criteria of competence: the right person in the right place who has not been given a ‘leg up’’ (van Duyne, 2001, p. 86). As a manifestation of this infringement, the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi ‘tried to defend this practice saying that if the appointee cannot perform he would be assigned as an advisor [for another incapable appointee as leg up]’ (Mebratu, 2004e, p. 23). As far as the EPRDF is concerned, the existing modus operand of political appointment of a ‘person whom it knows cannot do the job without being assigned an aide under or parallel a person to him amounts to squandering the country’s resources’ (ibid.).

In addition to the mobilization of political support with the expense of the public resource, the EPRDF can go extreme to protect its clients ‘suspected of involvement in corruption ... [it] issues orders preventing suspects acquitted by a court on charges of corruption from setting foot outside the court compound in violation of the court's orders’ (Mebratu, 2004e, p. 24). EPRDF that talks about voluminously for the fight against corruption, ‘if it is in its interest . . . it does not want to hurt someone [a political appointee] mixed up in corruption, it will bargain and settle with him’ (Mebratu, 2004e, p. 11). Such kind of a clandestine rescue operation of EPRDF ‘from the claws of the law through the weapons of *nolle prosequi*’ (Mulei & Andrew, 2000, p. 116) is a political corruption of perpetrating a direct violation of the rule of law of the country.

The political patronage that has been exercised by the EPRDF as a kind of redistribution schemes of public resources to its political supporters as well as a means of controlling the civil service through a politically entrusted ‘remote control of men and women’; it give rise the politicization of the civil service. This policy of deprofessionalization of the civil service system that ‘will undoubtedly result in the civil service being filled with mediocre personnel whose card is none other than their ascribed qualification of ethnic background or political loyalty’ (Meheret & Paulos, 2000, P. 8). It has produced various negative legacies against the development and institutionalizations of a rational-legal bureaucracy model of civil service in Ethiopia. One of the consequences is that has led many public servants to openly align with the regime in power and like the “dog barking” for its masters and they totally against any other contender political opponents of the regime in order to demonstrate their loyalty. This kind of alignment of the civil service to whatever the incumbent government breathes has in turn ‘the most disastrous long-term effects of political appointment throughout the civil service, ... creates a situation where many professionals once dismissed will be subjected to unemployment, imprisonments and exile to other countries’ ( Meheret & Paulos, 2000, p. 25). As chain of reaction, what come next from the arbitrary rejection and dismissal of public servants due to the expendability nature of political appointee of civil servant in Ethiopia is that, it led to the intermittent interruption of institutional programmed as well as a short-term organizational tumble down as a result of the loss of organizational memory. Moreover, ‘the other negative consequence of political appointment is the humiliation that has created on career officials’ (ibid.). This means, ‘those career officials who claim the position because of their experience, merit and qualification have suffered when somebody with no sufficient competence and doesn't deserve the appointment takes the claimed position’ (ibid.). In addition to the feeling of humiliations, it also brings about ‘the feeling of professional inadequacy, a sense of insecurity, and attitude of inertia to public service and spurred the brain drain’ (ibid.). Finally, a causal observation of political appointment in a country like Ethiopia suggested that it is one of the prominent causes for corruption in the public service. From this angle, the political appointee officials and bureaucracies of their position motivated by their expendability of occasional dismissal and demotions, the feeling among them as being temporary drives by towards corruption and administrative frauds. This may be the case, corruption ‘appears as an integral element in relations to political powers, with state property and jobs allocated to ethnic or political supporters in networks of patron-client relations’ (Harsch, 1999, p. 69). Thus, political appointments as the official policy of the EPRDF that depicted the regime vested interest of politicizing the civil service creates the situation that can in

turn become the breeding ground for the proliferation of corruption in the civil service of Ethiopia.

### ***Monopolization of the Economy***

In the economic state capture, as part and parcel of the rhetoric political decentralization initiative, the EPRDF regime has also initiated a manipulated fiscal decentralization scheme, where the overall economic calculation of 'the fiscal decentralization policy [EPRDF] is more political than economical' (Merera, 2004, p. 261). Using its core position in the power hierarchy, unanimous position to set the agendas, political maneuvering and political hegemony, the TPLF (Tigray People Liberation Front) continued the unfair, uneven and non-transparent allocation of resources to its constituent region; and by doing so 'the home base of the ruling party receive a disproportionate share of the national cake both directly or indirectly' (ibid.). As Merera (2003, p. 175) noted on the uneven distribution of the decentralization of fiscal policy of the incumbent regime write that:

*The Oromo and the Southern Ethiopian People's Regions, which above all else are known for their production of coffee, which contributes more than 60% of the country's foreign exchange earnings get a clearly visible disproportionate share in return from the national treasury ... the Tigray region's per capita share of the federal subsidiary is constitutently higher than Oromia, Amhara and SNNP regions, which constitute more than 80% of the country's population.*

In the economic state capture, as a kind of self-aggrandizement its endeavor, the EPRDF is not only relied upon the country's national cake but also rationalize its economic capture indirectly through those organizations of GONGOs (Governmental Non-Government Organizations) which are claimed to be endowment funds by the TPLF Premier for the public propaganda consumption. These party owned business entities are not operating with legal framework of the endowment organization; rather operating in a non-competitive conducive atmosphere using their owner award of different projects, purchases and easy pass of the economic bureaucracy. The conglomerates business empire EFFORT, which came to exist in 1995, is the one currently operates in Ethiopia as a 'business conspiracy' that institutionalized the economic state capture of the TPLF and continues its monopoly and dominance over the private business operating in this country. In their studies, Pauswang, Tronvoll and Aalen (2002, p. 231-232), explained this situations by referring to Gunther Schroder work, wrote that:

*The state has sold most of the former state companies and parasitical enterprises but, paradoxically, the ruling party and its affiliates have bought most of these enterprises, directly or through individual members ... These*

*businesses, including several important services to the control population such as the importation, production and distribution of fertilizers have been integrated in strong party-controlled business conglomerates.*

In regard to the above argument of the EPRDF economic state capture, through the ownership of the different companies, which are privatized by the same ruling party; TPLF/EPRDF played a shadow theater of putting the country's resources from the right pocket to the left, followed a clandestine policy of transferring the state assets to its party ownership. Specifically in Ethiopia, where the assets of the country's being the assets of the ruling party, the major companies linked to the TPLF are 32, those linked to ANDM (Amhara National Democratic Movement) are 5; those linked to the OPDO (Oromo People Democratic Organization) are 5 and those linked to the SEPDF (Southern Ethiopian People Democratic Front) to are 2 (Merera, 2003).

In view of the framework of the economic state capture project of EPRDF, one can argue that, it was the ruling party itself in his Political Parties Registration Proclamation No.46/1996 promulgated that a political party, which has attained legal personality, may not directly or indirectly engage in commercial and industrial activity. Yet, it has been the EPRDF itself that 'has set up huge organizations, ostensibly as endowments, by the name EFFORT, Tiret, Dinsho ...where in political and economic corruption are widely reflected' (Mebratu, 2004f, p. 24). These organizations as party-orchestrated commercial activities of business conspiracy of the EPRDF regime that perpetuates party monopoly over the economy of the country are not as such endowments as it has been claimed by the ruling party. They are not transferred to the people of Tigray, Amhara, Oromo as well as the Southern People Nation and Nationalities, rather they are still owned and managed by the EPRDF, for instance EFFORT 'is governed by a 32 member Board of Directors elected from TPLF and its mass associations; it is managed by an executive committees whose seven members have also been members of TPLF central committee' (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003, p. 76). The Prime Minister public deliberation, spearheaded against private sector 'rent seeking' tendency, he clearly spelt that rent seeker is ascribed in one that rationalize his economic advantage using the political backing of officials, of course his argument is one that suffices 'rent-seeking has indeed become a euphemism for 'corruption'' (Szefel, 1998, p. 224). Where in their daily business undertaking, by the same token 'no one comes close to the business organization affiliated with the EPRDF [in their perpetration of rent-seeking activities] namely TPLF's EFFORT, ANDM's Tiret and OPDO's Dinsho' (Mebratu, 2004f, p. 26). As Mebratu (ibid.) cites as the very clear manifestation of their rent-seeking activities of these organization as follows:

*The organization can secure bank loans; win tenders, rent and use government owned buildings not because they compete equally with other Ethiopian business but because everything is at their disposal on the snap of a finger, because they are privileged to use the country's political setting to their advantage. The manner in which they are availed with better access to credit and be more competitive than other business using this political privilege is an expression of the economic facet of corruption.*

In the current economic state capture in Ethiopia, what can discern is that a party business benefited from 'preferential access to government controlled credit facilities, preferential treatments in obtaining operational and import/export license and customs clearances; precedence over private competitors in regard to government contracts; transfer of REST<sup>47</sup> transport capacities to TPLF enterprises through manipulated government auctions; governmental pressure on international governmental and nongovernmental donors to work with EPRDF controlled companies, NGOs and Charities' (Melissa & Barkan, 1997, p. 14-15). Commenting this situation and the dearth of the public verses private realm distinction as well as the mingling of these two spheres in Ethiopia, Melissa & Barkan (1998, p. 19-20) in their studies of Corruption and Political Finance in Africa noted that:

*The party control in business, or of the party controlling government, phrases which presumes some separate existence of the abstract entities of a party, business, and government, when in fact the same small pool of people may be simultaneously the principal actors in government, party and business, fluidly regrouping as needed. At the limit, the same actor may control both party and the government, commingling party, government and personal finances and drawing on all three for spending indiscriminately... Parties capture the state and legalize their use of state resources.....engaged in coordinated self-dealing through manipulation of their multiple institutional membership and roles.*

In the economic scene, the effect of the perpetrated political corruption on the part of EPRDF, is the 'emergence of new monopolistic and unfair trading practices by the ruling part' (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003, p. 78); however, in its defense of such critics the EPRDF 'are quick to claim that the organization does not have a monopoly in any of the sectors in which it operates, and that, most business it is motivated not by the desire simply to make money, but by the mandates continuity to move on to develop new sectors which others would otherwise be unwilling or unable to work in, because of existing levels of underdevelopment' (ibid.). Yet, the reality is not in compatibility with what the EPRDF claimed, rather it is indeed under the EPRDF dominance and control of the state of the economy. The economic

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<sup>47</sup> Relief Society of Tigray

liberalization slogan of the ruling party has not been genuine implemented, as it is manifested in the previous sections of this article, and as part and parcel of the party's economic goals 'the EPRDF *nuevo conversos* of capitalism secretly established a substantial number of large "private" companies in the names of party cadres' (Vestal, 1999, p. 173). An interesting account of Vestal (ibid.) regarding the monopolistic handful control of the state of economic of Ethiopia writes that:

*For public consumption, the EPRDF extols the virtues of economic liberalization, a free market, and the privatization of state owned enterprises. Behind the scenes, however, most of the Ethiopian economy is under state ownership or control.... Key sectors of the economy, including banking, manufacturing, foreign trade, mining, and transportation are either dominated by EPRDF-owned companies or controlled by the state.... [The EPRDF], with its nuevo conversos and crony capitalists comfortably occupies "the commanding height of the economy". The EPRDF has devised an encyclopedic stock of anti- comparative weapons, and they have adroitly found ways to restrain trade, rig markets and suppress competition. According to the international financial institutions, the EPRDF controls or owns more than 80% percent of the Ethiopian economy.*

In the other sector of the economy like the construction, agriculture, import and export, banks and insurance sectors are all dominated by the ruling party established companies. Using their owner political clout these business conglomerates rationalize economic prowess against legally established economic transactions.

## **Conclusion**

Political corruption is a manifestation of political systems that are deficient in democratic power sharing formula, check and balance, accountable and transparent institution and procedures of the formal and ideal system of democratic governance. It is also manifested as a result of a self-serving political leadership and highly politicized, misdirected and inefficient state framework within which individual and group private interests have priority over the collective good. In contemporary Ethiopia, the political system of the country characterized by political and economic state capture, absences of genuine competition among political parties, weak and vulnerable national governance institutions, such as the parliaments, judiciary and corruption watchdog agencies. In practical terms, what came into existence is a favorable environment for the proliferations of corruption in Ethiopia. With this situation, what is there behind the scene is the ruling party that has been overtly and covertly engaged in the perpetuation of corruption as a consequence of prior political calculus of its own for the realization of its hegemonic aspiration. In an endeavor to manipulating the

democratic process for its own best advantage; the incumbent government has been engaged in gross infringement of the democratic process. It has been engaged in harassment and intimidation against political oppositions and their supporters, successive intimidation and cheating in elections, political repression and gross human rights violations, suppressions of freedom of association and expression as well as undermined the free press.

This injustice of the EPRDF has been manifested through its political state capture that enables the party in power to have firm control over leading public positions and institutions at the national and sub-national levels through a plethora of patron and surrogate organizations as result of manipulations and flawed periodic elections, the PDO- system that was created out of a 'weak, corrupt, captured prisoners of war with law education' by the TPLF and its strategy of political exclusion of other contending groups. Using the outcome of the political state capture that instituted a *de facto* one-party rule in Ethiopia; the economic scene of the state capture made the EPRDF to run billions of dollars worth of business conglomerates as a party's private enterprises. In addition to these kinds of grand corruption activities, the EPRDF also engaged in neo-patrimonial patron-client network in its political appointments policy as well as the institutionalizations of impotent and subservient institutional frameworks. Within these systems of corruption, the EPRDF has found itself commanding of substantial sources of political and economic amenities on which others political supporters and sympathizers are forced to depend, and created its clear advantages in terms of institutional and resource capacity *vis-à-vis* its oppositions. As a previously intended outcome of political calculus, this could indeed facilitate realistic conditions for the perpetuation of EPRDF hegemony in the political as well as economic system of the country. Thus, what is said to be the cause of all these felonies as far as the political corruption of EPRDF is concerned, are the state capture in the political as well as the economic scene, neo-patrimonial rule and weak institutional framework of the regime in power.

With respect to the implication of the regime political corruption in Ethiopia, what is apparent and clearly visible is that, it aborted the democratization process that was sponsored by itself. Starting from the inauguration of the Ethiopian second republic that opened the door to the current political game and the operating rules of the political system that enshrined democratic principles and procedures *vis-à-vis* the actual undertaking of the country's political system, the overall exercise is an imposition and strictly controlled affairs of the EPRDF that manipulated, dictated, and run the gear of the Ethiopian-ship for its own political and economic advantages. Apart from the manipulated procedural aspects of the Ethiopian political system, the successive periodic elections and process

carried out in this country are flawed. It also carried out manipulation and intimidation of elections in advance in order to alter the results and to make sure their final outcomes of ushering the uninterrupted tenure of the EPRDF. In addition to this, the regime in power also unable to protect the freedom of expression and assembly of the population; rather it emasculated and onslaughts independently organized associations of civic and political organization and continued suppression and harassing of the private press by routine use of detention and imprisonments of prohibitive fines and bail amount on journalist and editors.

Being an active interventional in the *modus operandi* of the justice system in Ethiopia, the EPRDF has been also tightly controlling the judges by dismissing the previous one and appointing its political supporters and sympathizers. Apart from this, it denies legal immunity to judges and makes them an instrument of its extra-legal executions against its political opponents; it selectively enforces laws that already promulgated by itself and with the dismissal of qualified judges and prosecutors. It also brought about the near paralysis of the justice system and eroded the rule of law. In the economic state capture, the ruling party established companies and runs business conglomeration and these companies receive preferential treatments since they are privileged to use the country's political setting to their advantage and the party as well. This means that in the EPRDF rule, the political clout of the regime in power is often used by its party affiliated companies to gain economic advantage. As the consequence, like its hegemony in the political arena of the country, it made itself to dominate the economic scenery of the country and monopolizes the economy of Ethiopia. In its neo-patrimonial rule, the EPRDF also pursued political appointments based on loyalty and ethnic consideration to fill positions of the state bureaucracy, other than merit based rational-legal system recruitments which lead to a massive dismissal and demotion occasionally. It has also given rise to the motivation for rampant corruption in Ethiopia, as result of the expendability, inefficiency and incapacity of the political appointee.

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