THE RATIONALITY OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN THE SOMALI REGION OF ETHIOPIA, 1991-2003

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia's Somali Regional State (SRS) or Region 5 has a long history of political instability and Somali resistance towards its Ethiopian rulers. The region has been characterized by chronic insecurity, factional fighting and institutional disorder ever since the arrival to power of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991. While some observers have apprehended contemporary politics in Ethiopia's Somali region as an example of 'internal colonization' by highland Ethiopians, others attribute the ongoing stability to the 'nomadic culture' inherent to the clan structure of the Somali. This study argues that neither the colonial nor the clan hypotheses grasp the complex interactions between the federal Ethiopian government and its Somali periphery. Retracing the political and institutional evolution of the region since 1991, it defends the view that the ongoing political disorder is the product and motor of a neo-patrimonial bargain in which Ethiopian and (Ethiopian-)Somali interests concomitantly collude and clash. The main actors, interests and dynamics constitutive of this neo-patrimonial bargain of the SRS are sketched out and situated in the structural power dilemma between the federal and regional governments.

Keywords: Somali region of Ethiopia (Ogaden), political instability, violent conflict, neo-patrimonialism, federalism

I. INTRODUCTION[1]

The year of 1991 marked a turning point for Somali nationalism in general, and for Somali-Ethiopians[i] in particular. As a result of the downfall of the Derg regime and the total disintegration of neighbouring Somalia new institutions and political manoeuvres emerged within the Somali inhabited territory of Ethiopia. The former Ogaden and today's Somali Regional State (SRS) or Region 5[ii] become one of nine member states within the decentralized, ethnically structured Ethiopian polity established under the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) (see Aalen 2002; Kidane Mengisteab 1997; Pausewang, Tronvoll, and Aalen 2002; Young 1996, 1998). Ever since the incorporation of the Ogaden into the Ethiopian Empire, political affairs in the Ethiopian Somali region have been fashioned by the region's double identity as a (peripheral) part of the Ethiopian nation-state on the one hand and as a division within the larger Somali political economy consisting of the former Somali Democratic Republic (Somaliland, Puntland, south-central Somalia), Djibouti and north-east Kenya with the Ethiopian Somali region on the other hand. The EPRDF's granting of national self-determination to the Somali-Ethiopians significantly altered political interactions between the Ethiopian highland and its Somali periphery. While it did not lead to an effective pacification of the SRS, new dynamics of political instability were unleashed which are at the centre of this study.

Young's observation (1999:322) of the ignorance by governments, development agencies and political analysts of Ethiopia's western regions of Gambella and Benishangul even more holds true for the Somali region. Due to a decades-long history of conflict and inaccessibility, the SRS is characterized by an astonishing data gap. Consequently, "the usual geographical and anthropological literature prevalent in other pastoral situations is lacking" (Abdi Noor Umar 2004:4). The neglect of the region by Ethiopianists and other foreign scholars working on Ethiopian issues has been lamented before (Mohamud H. Khalif and Doornbos 2002:88). Chronic insecurity in large parts of Region 5, mainly due to fighting between the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Ethiopian federal army as well as sporadic intrusions by armed groups from Somalia, have rendered data collection in the 250'000 km² wide territory of the SRS an unpredictable and cumbersome undertaking. Apart from selected field reports by Ahmed Yusuf Farah (1995a; 1995b; 1997), Hogg (1996; 1997) and van Brabant (1994) as well as short political briefings by Markakis (1994; 1996; 2003)

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contributions on political developments in the Somali region since 1991 have been few in number and meagre in first-hand empirical information. In addition, existing contributions are often geared towards the past or have a rather general outlook on the region (for example Brons, Doornbos, and Salih 1995; Escher 1994; Mohamud H. Khalif and Doornbos 2002). A notable exception is Schröder's (1998) unpublished manuscript that comprises detailed information on political events in the SRS since the arrival to power of the EPRDF.

This study attempts to provide a coherent interpretation of political developments within the SRS since the integration of the Somalis into the "new political order" (Markakis 1994) of federal Ethiopia in 1991. It posits that the political instability which characterises the region is the product and motor of a neo-patrimonial bargain between representatives of the federal Ethiopian government and Somali clan-based groupings. Three elements are central to this argumentation. First, neither the highland narrative blaming Somali clannishness nor the lowland discourse emphasising the colonial nature of the Ethiopian highland capture the rationality of political instability of the Somali region. Second, political instability materialises in different, yet related forms, namely successive changes within the state apparatus, recurrent clan fighting and the consecutive redefinition of political and administrative boundaries. Third, the neo-patrimonial bargain is inscribed in a structural power dilemma between federal highland and Somali lowland.

Most of the empirical data presented in this article stems from interviews and informal discussions conducted in the region between May and July 2003 and between June and July 2004. The study starts with a brief introduction on the contrasting narratives or supposedly "explanatory hypotheses" of instability in Region 5. It then retraces the different forms and intensities of political instability which have characterized SRS since 1991. Subsequently, the actors and main dynamics of the neo-patrimonial bargain are outlined and contextualized in structured interactions between federal highland and regional lowland interests and strategies. Lastly, the article concludes by reflecting on various dimensions of centre-periphery interrelations shaping the fate of the SRS and implications within the wider spatial and diachronic context of the Somali Horn of Africa.

II. REGION 5: CLANISHNESS OR COLONIALISM?

Ever since the British Empire ceded the Ogaden to Ethiopia's Emperor Menelik in 1897, respectively 1947 and 1954, the region has been "one of the most problematic examples of colonial partition" (Doornbos 1997:490). Historically, relations between the Ethiopian highland and its Somali periphery have been characterized by successive phases of Somali resistance to their Christian "Amhara" rulers. This resistance was partly manifest in the "proto-national" Dervish rebellion of Mohammed 'Abdulla Hassan and culminated in large-scale modern warfare in the 1977 Ogaden war which produced deeply entrenched distrust between the Somalis and the highland settlers, although amicable relations and partial integration into the Ethiopian State were and continue to be manifest (Abbink 2003; Barnes 2000; Gebru Tareke 2000; Lewis 1989, 2002 [1965]; Somali Democratic Republic 1974; Tibebe Eshete 1991, 1994). The slow and incomplete incorporation of the Somali region into the Ethiopian nation-state is an ongoing tale of repetitive, yet futile attempts by the central government to establish a monopoly of violence by forceful and political means. It is also a tale of continuous marginalization of the Somali lowlands by the Ethiopian highlands. Consequently, successive Ethiopian regimes apprehended government action in the Somali region primarily in military rather than civilian terms.[iii] Violent confrontation between Somali and Ethiopian armed forces are not only linked to a struggle of territorial control, but also have an economic dimension. Historically, attempts to subject the predominantly mobile pastoralists to taxation and more recently to stop cross-border "contraband" trade (see Hagmann 2003) with neighbouring Somaliland and Somalia have caused frustration on behalf of Somali-Ethiopians.

The Somali eastern Ethiopia enjoys a particularly negative image which is sometimes reproduced rather uncritically by external observers, Ethiopians as well as foreigners. Unquestionably, the SRS has become synonymous with drought, famine and conflict, "each disaster exacerbated by political turmoil that has gripped the region" (UN OCHA 2002). Adding to this is the non-equilibrium climate characteristic of the semi-arid lowlands which has manifested itself in recurrent droughts in recent decades, thereby increasing human suffering and cementing the image of "permanent crisis" so often ascribed to the region (see Holt and Lawrence 1991; Watkins and Fleisher 2002). Lister (2004:20) qualifies the Somali region as "perhaps the most problematic of the 'peripheral' regions" of Ethiopia characterised by "widespread political, organisational and financial disorganisation within different branches of government" as well as "endless rounds of political infighting, and sacking and imprisoning of politicians". Gebru Tareke (2000:667) speaks of "a volatile region where

nationalist or ethno-nationalist aspirations clash with each other". Yet the problematic character of the region is not limited to complex political and harsh climatic circumstances, but is reflected in two opposite viewpoints when it comes to interpreting the political turbulences within the SRS.

Two dominant narratives, both of which appear in folk and scientific discourse, confront each other. On the one hand there is the highland narrative which attributes political instability in the SRS to the "nomadic culture" of the Somali (-Ethiopians). The latter are portrayed as enemies of Ethiopian identity (including Christianity), as lawless troublemakers with an "unwavering insurgency attitude" (Faisal Roble 1996) and deplored for their incapacity to organize themselves in stable state institutions, thus unable, if not immature to benefit from Ethiopia's ethnic federalism which – at least formally – allows for national self-determination. This paternalistic perspective puts heavy emphasis on the Somali clan fabric to explain the ongoing turmoil in the region. This view is partially echoed by Markakis (1996:570) who states that "the new political order in Ethiopia does not seem to have affected the categorical imperative of Somali political practice, which is clannishness". Van Brabant equally talks about tribalism having entered Somali politics in eastern Ethiopia (Brabant 1994:16). Paradoxically, the highland discourse on its Somali borderland oscillates between the official party-state discourse and popular perceptions of the Somali compatriots. The EPRDF's state ideology of ethnic federalism praises the "process (…) of 'de-colonisation'" underway in what is paternalistically termed as Ethiopia's 'backward' or 'emerging' regions[iv] (Walta Information Center 2000) and apprehends the Somali Ethiopians as one among the many "peoples, nations and nationalities" of federal Ethiopia. Contrary to this somewhat idealistic view, the majority of Christian highland Ethiopians perceive the Somali-Ethiopians primarily if not exclusively as Somalis which are alien to the Ethiopian nation-state and polity.

A blatantly contrasting view on the permanent turmoil within the Ogaden, respectively the SRS, is proposed by the lowland narrative brought forward by Somalis and those sympathetic to their cause. This view stresses the oppressing nature of the Ethiopian state which is accused of "practicing colonialism" (Said Yusuf Abdi 1978:22) similar to past British, Italian or French colonialism in the Horn of Africa. In its more radical, yet quite widespread version, the continuity of Ethiopian domination is stressed: "Successive regimes have not only failed us, but even worsened the lid of oppression on us, massacring at will and letting their security machinery rape our mothers, wives, sisters and kill our fathers, sons and brothers" (Abdi Aden Mohamed 2001). Although many Somali-Ethiopians emphasise the comparatively more

liberal character of the current EPRDF government, others maintain that "the present regime is not different from its predecessors in substance" (Abdurahman Mahdi 2000). The theme of widespread human rights violations, atrocities against civilians including extra-judicial killings and arbitrary (federal) military rule in the SRS is also taken up by Mohamud H. Khalif and Doornbos (2002). According to this perspective political instability, chronic insecurity, the absence of social service delivery and continuous humanitarian crisis are ultimately the fault of the "Amhara", i.e. the Ethiopian highlanders.

Many attempts to explain past and ongoing politics in the SRS are partly or fully reproducing elements of the (Ethiopan) highlander "clan hypothesis" or the (Somali) lowlander "colonial hypothesis". This study attempts to demonstrate that neither one of these politicised narrative fully captures the rationality of political turmoil within the SRS, rationality being defined as "what (…) provides an analytically coherent explanation for a given political conduct in a given historical context" (Chabal and Daloz 1999:152),. It argues that political instability within the Somali region can neither be reduced to Somali clannishness nor blamed on Ethiopian colonialism. Rather instability is a functional outcome of the interaction between the two and, in turn, inscribed in a particular historic conjuncture, i.e. the near total collapse of Somali statehood - yet not nationalism - and "ethnic federalism" within Ethiopian territory. The ongoing instability, violence and disorder in Region 5 thus requires an analytical dissection on the basis of a political sociology approach which is centres on the state, yet focuses on social practices (as proposed by Chabal 1992). A framework proposing the normative content of western democracy as the analytical tool to decipher political action within the Somali political sphere is of limited analytical value.[v] Rather this study proposes an exploration of "local politics" which reflects the regain of interest in "local power centres" (Trotha 2001:16-17) in the aftermath of the fundamental reorganisation experienced by the post-colonial African state.

III. EVIDENCE OF POLITICAL INSTABILTY SINCE 1991

Political instability within the Somali region has been generalized, persistent and multidimensional. The observation made a decade ago that "presidents have come and gone in Region 5, and most of the area is still lacking anything resembling an effective administration" (NN 1995) continues to be valid to this day. The SRS is Ethiopia's only region where the first multiparty elections at local level (i.e. district or *woreda* elections) could only take place in the beginning of 2004 as they had to be postponed continuously for reasons of insecurity. Political instability in the Somali region not only encompasses politically motivated violence, but needs to be understood in a broad sense. Factional politics within the formal state structure, constant rotations inside local administration, different types of armed conflicts as well as the permanent redrawing of political boundaries all are different expressions of political instability.

The establishment of multiparty democracy on the basis of ethnic identity by the EPRDF coalition had initially led to a proliferation of clan-based political parties in the newly constituted SRS during the period of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991-1995).[vi] The ONLF which was allied to the victorious EPRDF alliance won the first elections in the region with a sweep[vii] and established regional administration under ONLF hegemony. The Non-Ogadeni clans of the region soon felt marginalized by the ONLF and increasingly sought support from the federal government who feared secession of the region after an Ogadeni announcement of a referendum on self-determination. In 1992 the EPRDF had fallen out with *Al-Ittihad*, a radical Muslim group who lacked a proper social constituency in the region, but was funded by fundamentalist groups based abroad (Ahmed Y. Farah 1996)[viii]. Two years later, ONLF leaders had been imprisoned or fled into exile and the front exchanged politics with the barrel of the gun. The regional capital was transferred from Gode, situated in Ogadeni heartland, to Jijiga in the north and the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL), a coalition of Non-Oagden[ix] clans supported by the EPRDF, took over the regional government. The League had won the elections in 1995 after a late decision of the ONLF to participate and a redefinition of electoral zones which strongly disadvantaged the Ogadeni. The initial exclusion of Ogadeni representatives by the ESDL was the continuation of earlier clan feuds among the local clans, particularly between the Ishaq and Ogadeni (see Markakis 1989) as well as former political alliances with, respectively against the Syaad Barre regime during the 1980s (Brabant 1994). In 1998, the moderate remains of the ONLF merged with the ESDL who by then was in a state of discomposure to form the EPRDF-friendly Somali People's Democratic Party (SPDP). The SPDP has been "described as wracked by infighting

and political disputes" (IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Network of the United Nations) 2003), but it continuous to be the only relevant party in and through which the different Somali factions can operate and has won the 2000 and 2004 elections with vast majorities.

Political instability has been omnipresent within the administrative apparatus of the region. Under the EPRDF-regime regional presidents have become "perishable commodities" (Mohamud H. Khalif and Doornbos 2002:81). None of the former presidents lasted for more than three years and half of this period they had been under investigation.[x] The first three presidents had been charged with corruption, abuse of authority and a number of other accusations (Markakis 1996) and the subsequent successors mostly met a similar destiny.[xi] The constant reshuffling and rotation within the line ministries is usually justified by individual misbehaviour, usually corruption, and has led to a situation of permanent staff turn-over within the region. In addition, large parts of the regional cabinet are dismissed by the Central Committee of the ruling party on an annual basis, with some regularity usually before the new budget year starts (i.e. before September E.C.). It is common for government officials to circulate between the different regional bureaus of the SRS, often not maintaining their position longer than one year. This has led to a situation in which the people never ask themselves "how does the regional government perform'", but rather " how long are they going to stay in power?". (author's field notes). The regional administration is furthermore paralysed by frequent vacancies of senior officials who are regularly summoned to the federal or regional capitals for party meetings or internal evaluations.

Violent inter-group conflict within Region 5 are manifest in different forms, ranging from the highly escalated political conflict between the government and ONLF to resource-based conflicts embedded in nomadic pastoralism, and armed confrontation spurred by ethnic federalism and administrative reform. Organized military rebellion by the ONLF not only threatens the national Ethiopian army, it also divides the Ogadeni[xii] clans and families whose personal and kinship loyalties are increasingly torn between support to the front and the government. The example of a recent murder of a *kebele* chairman in Fiq district by his own brother, the latter being an ONLF activist, illustrates this point. Clan fighting sparked by competition over pasture and water points is a common occurrence in the region and has engulfed most of the districts at one point or another in the past decade (SRS (Somali Regional State) 2004). However, the introduction of ethnic federalism as the principle of political representation has transformed relations between pastoralists and their natural resource base and has considerably altered the nature of inter-group conflicts. The massive

conflict between various Ogadeni subclans and the *Shekash* clan which sought to establish its own district in order to gain political representation and access to resources is a case in point. After the conflicts between the government forces and the armed opposition groups, it is the violent confrontation with the largest number of casualties in SRS (Ulf Terlinden, personal communication).[xiii] The longstanding border disputes between the Somali region and its Afar (Markakis 2003) and Oromiya (Ahmed Shide 2003) neighbour states represent another dimension of political instability. Ethiopia's restructuring on a ethno-national basis had disrupted previous political alliances within its eastern lowlands. In Bale the Somali and Oromo once used to rally around a common Muslim-Cushitic identity within the then Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) against the Ethiopian highland government (Lewis 1980). Ethno-national competition in the framework of ethnic federalism as well as Somali-Ethiopian expansionism had turned former alliances into bitter fights over territory and political majorities along the regional border. Districts within SRS's border zones of Liban, Afder, Fiq, Jijga and Sinhille all are in one way or another engaged in disputes with the neighbouring regions. While these border disputes have been presented by senior government officials as a problem between local communities, they also implicate regional government officials who have partly encouraged these conflicts by providing money and weapons to their Somali compatriots.[xiv]

The constant redrawing of administrative units and political boundaries as well as the (re-)creation of new districts within the SRS are other signs of instability as well as permanent redefinitions of political configurations. Namely, the boundary issue is a most interesting one. Watkins and Fleisher's (2002) observation on the fluidity of boundary names and shapes in Ethiopia, Somalia, and southern Sudan finds its ideal-typical realisation in the case of the Somali region. Up to this day, a geographic map featuring the correct politico-administrative boundaries of zones and districts of the Somali region and which corresponds to the on-the-ground reality within the region is inexistent. A comparison of previous maps as well as of different maps produced by different organisations demonstrates a great variety of political boundaries and administrative units within the region. This fluidity is partly the reflection of a longstanding tradition of "cartographic exercises" in which, in absence of effective administration, boundaries are defined on paper only, but never demarcating on the ground in this part of Ethiopia and the world (Bahru Zewde 2002:114; Tibebe Eshete 1994:79). More fundamentally, the constant flux of political boundaries reflects changing power relations among different clans and sub-clans of the region which translates into repetitive changes of the formal political architecture of the region. As more and more groups, usually on clan

basis, claim their own district within the region, the number has risen from an initial 41 district during 1995 elections to 55 in the 1998 elections (Schröder 1998). The number of districts continues to be controversial and most sources indicating the total number of districts of the region contradict each other. The conduction of successive population censuses is another example of political or rather politicised instability of a seemingly technical task by the political elite of Region 5. A first census had been conducted in 1994 producing a number of the total population of the SRS of an approximate 8 million people. It soon became apparent that this figure reflected a strategic move of political leaders seeking to maximise the demographic weight of the Somali region within the country rather than reflecting actual numbers. A second census was conducted coming up with the currently used figure of an estimated 3.5 million predominantly ethnic Somali living in Region 5 (CSA (Central Statistical Authority) 1998).

IV. A NEO-PATRIMONIAL BARGAIN

The fundamental analytical challenge in the context of the SRS consists in understanding the role of the State on the basis of its effective performance (what is happening) rather than on grounds of social desirability (what should happen). Chabal and Daloz's (1999:9) observation that the neo-patrimonial State is "simultaneously illusory and substantial" corresponds perfectly to government in Region 5. Regional and district government[xv] of the SRS present themselves formally as a modern administration which is territorially (region, zones, districts, *kebeles*) and functionally (different policy sectors and bureaus) differentiated. Although each imaginable policy sector materializes in its own regional bureau, ranging from Women Affairs to Tourism, Culture and Information, the administration's implementation capacities are extremely limited. In Region 5 the state does neither provide services on a continuous basis nor possess the human resources or the technical infrastructure to do so. Outside of major urban centres such as the regional capital, implementation of policies is usually sporadic and limited to maintaining or re-establishing security through military means, mediating disputes by dispatching delegations of elders and/or politicians and distributing food aid through the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) in collaboration with western donors and NGOs. It is thus no surprise that traditional "clan insurance", i.e. social capital and collective security guaranteed by kinship networks, is of much higher relevance than "state insurance".[xvi]

Administration and political positions in the SRS are primarily the object of competition between different clan-based factions as they permit access to material and political resources. Large amounts of the Somali region's past budgets have disappeared in the private pockets of politicians and their clan-based networks rendering the distinction between public and private pointless.[xvii] The administration can be pigeonholed as a "shadow state" as it is the "product of personal rule, usually constructed behind the facade of de jure state sovereignty" (Reno 2000:45).[xviii] Since 1991, the state in SRS functions primarily as a honey pot of resources which are absorbed, appropriated and shared within clan-based networks in a never-ending competition for appointments at regional and local levels. Power struggles, rotation of personnel within the formal state structure and nepotistic distribution of "public" resources are best understood by a neo-patrimonial approach so brilliantly sketched out by Chabal and Daloz (1999) on the basis of Médard (1991) and others. This peculiar neo-patrimonial bargain which perpetuates instability in the Somali region involves representatives of the federal government as well as Somali-Ethiopian political leaders.

Every major policy decision within the SRS is subjected to this bargain between the federal and the regional levels and is operated through formal as well as informal channels involving a range of different actors who manipulate and are manipulated. Consequently, the EPRDF or federal government and the Somali-Ethiopians are concomitantly patrons and clients to each other in shaping regional politics. From this results a complex web of domination and manipulation which more often than not manifests itself in the previously outlined political instability. This "economy of manipulation"[xix] at times involves military coercion, political bullying and financial blackmailing. More frequently, it takes the form of negotiated agreements between the two sides, thus the concept of "neo-patrimonial bargain" which is analytically more precise than the before mentioned narratives. It is also more specific than talking about a "modus vivendi" between Somalis and the Ethiopian state as Escher does (1994:655). The following paragraphs briefly sketch out the main actors and interests within this neo-patrimonial bargain of the Somali region.

V. ACTORS AND INTERESTS

Political action within the Somali region is fashioned by a strong interaction between the clan structure and its key traditional representatives, the elders, on the one hand and the party and government structure on the other hand. Clan elders and so-called traditional community leaders such as *sultan*, *garad* or *ugaas* act both within and outside the government structure and play a key role in channelling kinship interests through state institutions. Permanently lobbing for political representation of their clan in the formal state structure, these elders act as jealous watchdogs that make sure that the balance of power is kept between different lineages and political groupings. The overall objective of Somali-Ethiopian political parties in the interaction with the federal government is to further clan interests and expand the political and territorial sphere of influence of one's own clan vis-à-vis the other clans. This parochial dynamic underlies most of the interactions between the different formal state institutions of the SRS. Analysing the respective roles of the party, the administration and the parliament in Region 5, Lister (Lister 2004:22) points to the existence of an „actual overlap in personnel and functions between the different institutions". Similarly, Brabant (1994:16) states that "political authority and `party discipline' do not mean much where elders, elected officials, political party representatives and anybody else with political aspirations or a degree of influence, all participate in the political process."

Before the February 2004 local elections[xx] which produced elected councils for almost each district of the region, *kebele* chairmen, district administrators and zonal representatives had been appointed in a top-down-process, i.e. politicians at regional level nominated their allies, usually from the same clan, in the zonal administration, the zonal administration appointed the district officials and the district authorities selected the *kebele* chairmen. Despite the multi-party rhetoric evoked by the regional and federal governments, elections in Region 5 are mainly a matter of such top-down nomination process within distinct clan networks. Apart from formal and technical weaknesses of electoral processes in the region (see for example Vigneau 1994), Candidates are thus systematically pre-selected by the ruling party and elected on a clan-ticket.

Politics within the ruling party are characterised by shifting alliances and clan-based political in-fighting. The whole party as well as the different clan based factions within it are best understood as "consortiums of competitive identity groups" (Matthies 1977:261). Whichever consortium or group gets overhand in the struggle for power and positions, it has to seek approval from the federal government in all important decisions. The central committee of the SPDP thus constitutes an important forum where transactions between the

region and federal institutions take place. Different orientations within party politics of Region 5 are, however, not only determined by clan membership. There are important divisions across the clan divide among the "realists" who reject the idea of an independent Ogaden State, the "nationalists" who pursue the goal of liberation and the "moderates" who settle for an autonomous status within a decentralized Ethiopian State (Brons, Doornbos, and Salih 1995:47). The close interrelation between party and government structure in Region 5 is, however, based on the predominance of the party structure. Whenever senior bureaucrats or politicians are dismissed, they are in a first moment excluded from the party (SPDP) and only then dismissed from government office. Thus, it is the position one enjoys in the party which is decisive for political advancement and survival and which determines one's relative weight in the neo-patrimonial bargain, not the holding of office (author's field notes).

After the massive exodus of Somali from the region following the 1977 Ethio-Somali war, few educated people were left behind when the EPRDF established the regional government (Hogg 1996:162). Consequently, most higher positions of the SRS were initially taken up by politicians and senior bureaucrats formerly active in Somalia's Syaad Barre'regime.[xxi] These politicians and high officials were systematically removed from office between 2002-2004 on grounds of having previously served for a "foreign government" and were replaced with persons judged to be loyal to the EPRDF. Despite this change of senior personnel, the principle of periodic rotations within the government workforce did not alter significantly. The position of regional politicians and senior bureaucrats, namely of the bureau heads, is a particularly difficult one as subjected to numerous pressures from all sides. These officials have to appear legitimate within the eyes of their own kinship constituency, i.e. they have to be successful in furthering clan interests and providing a material "dividend" to relatives and those elders who put them into power. At the same time they have to avoid being perceived as "puppets" of the party or the highland government.

Actors of the federal level can broadly be distinguished into three different categories. First, there are the bureaucrats and officials who deal with the region from the centre. These are mainly officials of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and EPRDF party cadres. Second, the federal authorities dealing with taxes, customs and (cross-)border trade. Third, the military and intelligence officials represent the third and most important federal actor within the region. While these actors have different agendas, their overall objective is to maintain security and to prevent the emergence of a strong, meaning unified, Somali-Ethiopian political leadership which might effectively challenge the geo-strategic status quo of the region.[xxii]

A important, if not the most decisive federal actor interfering in regional politics is the Ministry of Federal Affairs (MoFA) which is part of what Aalen calls the "dual administration" of the Ethiopian political system (2002:85). A peculiar ministry within a decentralised state structure, not much is known about the MoFA's internal workings.[xxiii] The MoFA's predecessor was the Bureau of Regional Affairs within the Prime Minister's Office[xxiv], formerly headed by Bitew Belay who fell out with Meles Zenawi in the March 2001 split within the ruling TPLF. According to one of its senior members, the office had been established to "facilitate the communication between federal and regional government and give advice to the Prime Minister on federal affairs" (Ato Lul Seged cited in Aalen 2002:85). In the words of another senior EPRDF-official based in Addis Abeba, "the bureau used to interfere a lot in the regions" without any constitutional basis (author's field notes). The establishment of the Ministry of Federal Affairs in 2001 under Abay Tsehaye, another member of the Central Committee of the TPLF, demonstrates the federal government's continuous preoccupation with, depending on one's viewpoint, assisting and supervising or meddling in the regions. This particularly applies for Ethiopia's four lowland regions (Somali, Afar, Gambella, Benishangul) where state penetration is weakest and federal, mostly security-related concerns highest.

Between the mid-1990s and 2001 the MoFA's controversial involvement in the SRS took place through a system of so-called "technical advisors", i.e. senior bureaucrats usually linked to inner circles of the TPLF/EPRDF politburo, who represented the Ministry at the regional level. These advisors followed politics within the region on a daily basis, respectively through regular visits and they were perceived by Somali-Ethiopians as "moving around Somali region". After the end of the Transitional Government (1995) they had been directly attached to the regional president's office as well as to other regional bureaus heads. The technical advisors proofed to be anything else than technical and soon become very powerful, especially the one attached to the regional president. After repetitive complaints by different presidents of the "backward regions" about the undue influence of these advisors, this somewhat crude system of direct influence by the federal level was abandoned. Yet, the MoFA's supervision and involvement in the SRS continues to this day, namely regarding the implementation of major, internationally funded development grants in the region as well as all other key political decisions.

The MoFA and EPRDF cadres based in the region or responsible for the region within the party structure are both instrumental in electing and sacking senior bureaucrats and politicians, a process permanently taking place in the region (author's field notes). The federal

government's direct participation in regional politics functions through ministries such as the MoFA as well as through the EPRDF party structure. Consecutive ruling regional "Somali" parties never formally belonged to the EPRDF-coalition, yet with the exception of the first ONLF-led administration, were allied to the federal party coalition. The party structure thus allows the federal government a discrete partaking in decision-making in the Regional state. This observation is fits with the description of Aalen (2002) and others (for example Pausewang, Tronvoll, and Aalen 2002) who have establish that the party representatives of the EPRDF constitute a second administrative structure in the regions. Whenever a critical political issue arises ministers and high officials within the ruling Somali party are summoned to Addis Ababa for consultation with the MoFA as well as other federal ministries and EPRDF cadres. These regular meetings reflect the EPRDF's obsessive preoccupation of controlling Region 5, alternatively they also allow representatives from the region to mobilize political support from the federal government which is essential for their political survival within the harsh factional infighting within the political system of their home region. Interactions between party cadres from the federal and the regional levels are as subtle as they are opaque. The dismissal of regional president Abdirashid Dulane in July 2003 is a case in point. A majority within the Central Committee of the SPDP was ready to sack its regional president after previous attempts to do so had failed. Yet, it was only after approval by the federal level, that the Central Committee was able to kick him out (author's field notes).

The national army based in the various military camps within Somali region[xxv] has a strong and immediate impact on the politics and the economy of the region.[xxvi] In many districts within SRS the administration was appointed by national army officers who prefer political leaders with low educational background, but strong involvement in clan affairs. This permits easy manipulation as well as a direct access, respectively (limited) control over local communities. The political weight of these tribalist leaders stems from their capacity to invoke and manipulate clan identity, most frequently through processes of mobilisation for conflict. More specifically, many of them had actively assisted the federal army in the armed confrontation with ONLF in the mid-1990s. The Somali-Ethiopians recruited into local office by the military during this period continue to be dependant on the support of federal army officials for their political survival. In the "insecure", predominantly Ogadeni-inhabited zones of SRS such as Fiq, Korahe or Degehabur the federal military de facto runs the zonal and district administration (author's field notes). In some places the army also controls customs and was itself engaged in informal cross-border trade. Officers have also been known to

decide on who is allowed to import goods from Somliland and Somalia by attributing special permits to local traders and businessmen.

Contrary to what one might expect the federal actors within SRS do not represent a univocal approach. In the past decade rifts have arisen between the MoFA, the federal military and the Prime Minister's Office regarding the strategy to be adopted in dealing with Region 5. Most of the past dismissals of the regional presidents had been jointly supported and co-orchestrated by the MoFA and the military, often against the will of the Prime Minister. The fact that Abdirashid Dulane who had been sacked from presidential office in July 2003 by the regional State Council barley over two weeks was reappointed by the Prime Minister as vice-minister of the federal Ministry of Water Resources Development is an indication of dissent among the different federal organs (Reporter 2003).[xxvii] The wrangling between and among the federal ministries is largely driven by competition for power among political leaders who use the region as a playing ground to further their interest within the federal party and government system. Minister of Federal Affairs Abay Tsehaye had initially been part of the dissident faction in the 2001 TPLF-split and although he supported Prime Minister Meles Zenawi later on, competition between the two seems to continue. In the framework of the EPRDF's "renewal phase" (Medhane Tadesse and Young 2003) the Prime Minister has removed and rotated a number of contending high army officials stationed in the SRS, allegedly with the unstated support of US troops based in Region 5 since the beginning of 2004[xxviii]. This move has again shifted the balance of power among the federal actors. Today the Prime Minister seems to be in a position where he can mediate between the interests of the MoFA and the armed forces.

The neo-patrimonial bargain is perpetuated by a number of influential power brokers who act mainly behind the scenes. These actors may not be the most powerful in absolute political or military terms, yet they are of crucial importance as they are in a position to mediate between the actors described above and to accommodate clashing interests. Among these power brokers are senior party members such as the former chairman of the regional party, the late Dr. Abdulmejid Hussein[xxix]. They have longstanding experience in civil service and enjoy the trust of the EPRDF's top leadership as well as of key Somali-Ethiopians in the region. Members of the regional government such as bureau heads are rarely among these power brokers as they lack longstanding contacts and socialization with EPRDF elite. Other key power brokers, this time from the "Ethiopian" side, are senior members within the MoFA who have regular contacts with party and government officials of the region during encounters in Jijiga and Addis Abeba. Clan elders also play a broker power among different

factions and across the federal-regional divide, some maintain regular contacts with federal institutions, notably the National Election Board, the first institution to be persuaded when one seeks to register a new political party.

VI. DYNAMICS AND STRATEGIES

After depicting the key actors and interests within the neo-patrimonial bargain driving political instability in Region 5, this chapter sheds light on a number of key dynamics of the neo-patrimonial bargain. These dynamics touch upon the logic of "infra-institutional" (Chabal and Daloz 1999) decision-making within the region which occurs at the interface of three overlapping orders. First, the customary order of the segmentary clan system including inter-group contracts (*xeer*), second, the nation-state order represented by government and party representatives at regional, district and *kebele* level and third, the military order of the federal army stationed throughout the region. Although subject to constant modifications and reinterpretations these dynamics of neo-patrimonial bargaining act as routinised rules of the game which structure and give meaning to political action. Five key dynamics are sketched out, namely political competition in a segmented society, the instrumentalization of insecurity for political and financial purposes, politico-administrative evaluations known as *gim gemma*, the integration of the traditional structure into the state system, and denunciations on the basis of politicised criminal charges.

Access to government positions within the SRS is heavily contested among clan-based factions and conditional upon support of the ruling SPDP. Despite the continuous divide and tensions between Somali-Ethiopian and the highland central government, the Somalis of Region 5 are strongly divided among themselves in terms of clan membership and political orientation. Escher (1994:656) speaks of the "disintegrative forces and relentless fighting for power and influence among the Ogaden Somali themselves". Ever since the establishment of the region, the government parties (ONLF, ESDL, SPDP) were not much more than a "wrapping" in which heavy and enduring political rivalries between opposing factions are played out (author's field notes). In Region 5 as in the neighbouring Somali territories, "the idiom of kin- and clanship, genealogy and segmentation forms the structural basis of competition and political strife" (Abbink 2003:335).

The obtaining of a proper administrative structure in 1991 gave the Somali-Ethiopians a degree of self-rule, but also established new types of competition for positions and nominations within the formal state structure. Deciding on political candidates, nominating officials and bureaucrats as well as dismissing existing ones thus became interweaved with

the volatile and segmentary clan politics which characterize Somali society. Individuals are first and foremost appointed into or sacked from government positions on the basis of their membership in a clan collective.[xxx] Consequently, nominations in the formal administrations are as unpredictable and ever changing as the clan interrelations which underlie the formal state structure. In reality, there is no job security for bureaucrats who neither have terms of reference nor knowledge about their duties and responsibilities within a fictitious rational administration. Consequently, there exists a strong incentive for personal enrichment during the short period one usually stays in office within the regional, zonal or *woreda* administrations of Region 5 (author's field notes).

Continuous insecurity and violent incidences within the region are maximized for political and material gain by representatives of the federal government as well as by regional politicians and party members. The imperative of fighting against ONLF provides the military and intelligence officials based in Jijiga and various military camps in the region a useful excuse to legitimise or cover up conducts of the armed forces which contravene basic human rights. Furthermore, accusing community members and political leaders of ONLF or alleged Al-Ittihad partisanship constitutes an easy tactic to harass or get rid of political enemies or economic competitors. However, it is not only the federal government that instrumentalizes the prevalent instability. The same applies to the regional government. In recent years considerable amounts of money of the regional budget is used for security related purposes and left unaccounted for[xxxi]. In some cases regional presidents have used "security" as a pretext to arm their own clan militia which has earned them the support of their clan elders who were content to see an increase of their own group's military capabilities in the ever ongoing competition between factions within the segmentary clan system of the Somali (author's field notes).

Another type of deliberate reproduction of instability is practiced by inciting and nurturing violent conflict in order to access the "conflict resolution" budget line of the region. Lister (2004:23) recently recorded that "there was a widespread view expressed in this research that some government officials benefited from the increased flow of resources to their areas brought by conflict. They thus attempted to perpetuate conflict, making "a trade on the insecurity"". Central to this strategy was the establishment of a special budget line within the regional Bureau of Security reserved to resolve clan conflicts after the transfer of the capital from Gode to Jijiga in 1995.[xxxii] The budget line was specifically earmarked for resolving the region's multiple and recurrent clan conflicts and was run separately from the regular finances for the regional police and militia. Whenever a major clan-based conflict erupted within the

SRS, a delegation of senior officials, usually regional bureau heads belonging to the clans fighting, as well as clan elders and some militia on government payroll were sent to the conflict site. Large sums of money were invoked to fund these conflict resolution trips which usually involved several days of hospitality and *qat* and remained unaccounted for. The attractiveness of the conflict resolution budget line was such that it became locally know as "the big project" (sic) (author's field notes). Most of the money used to "make peace" effectively disappeared somewhere in the pockets of government officials and clan elders. These peace missions often culminated in stereotype statements claiming that peace had been re-established after talks between clan leader. Yet, in many cases clan-based violence has been erupting again and again and state-sponsored conflict resolution efforts produced limited impact. Within the neo-patrimonial order of the SRS the existence of an institutionalised lump sum for "conflict resolution" provided an incentive for politicians to actually fuel and create conflicts in their home areas which permits access to the said fund. One can thus speak of a phenomenon of "commercialisation of violence" which has also been observed in other parts of the Horn of Africa (for example by Osamba 2000).

Gim gemma[xxxiii] functions as another institutionalised mechanism of the neo-patrimonial bargain which motivates changes in personnel within the SRS government structure. Inherited from the TPLF's period as a rebel group and used to evaluate mistakes, respectively improve military tactics during it's struggle against the Derg regime, it has become "one of the mechanisms that the ruling party is using to maintain its control in the regions all down to *kebele* level" (Aalen 2002:87). Local administrators, party officials and *guurti* elders all participate in the *gim gemmas*. Young's (1999:330) reading of *gim gemma* as "EPRDF's preferred method of dealing with corruption and maladministration" only partially corresponds its politicised use within the SRS. Rather *gim gemma* serves as an institutionalised and routinized mechanism which shapes political succession and is used to ensure compliance towards the government, but also the federal military. For example during a large *gim gemma* session conducted at different administrative levels in June 2003, the criteria "having good relations with federal security forces" was central in the evaluation of SNRS bureaucrats (author's field notes). In Region 5 *gim gemma* acts as a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of political nominees. Consequently, Aalen's (2002:87) claim that "the central party uses *gim gemma* to ensure its interests in the regional governments, as concretely seen in Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella" can be confirmed in the context of Region 5. Yet, the frequent and at times pre-orchestrated assessment of public officials is not only a method of control allowing the federal government to interfere in

regional affairs. *Gim gemma* is also enthusiastically practised by the competing Somali clan factions at all administrative levels as it provides an excellent means to get rid of rival politicians and, ultimately, to place one's own clan representative in local government positions.

Another recent and yet under explored change within Region 5's political makeup is the integration of elders into the government structure, respectively, the formal recognition of the important role played by clan leaders by the government and party within the SRS. [xxxiv] Upon initiative of the federal government[xxxv] a number of elders and clan leaders were selected to assist the regional government in daily political affairs. The election of these elders known, alternatively known as *guurti* (council of elders in Somali) or *amakari* (advisor in Amharic), took place two rounds at regional and district level in end of 1999 and beginning of 2000, respectively, i.e. before the 2000 elections.[xxxvi] Article 56 on the "Establishment of the Elders' and Clan Leaders' Council"[xxxvii] of the Somali Regional State Constitution (SRS (Somali Regional State) 2002) provides the constitutional basis for the establishment of these council's elders which exist at regional (30 persons), zonal (70 persons) and *woreda* level (3 per district). Basic criteria for elections were "not being a member of groups opposing the government, being free from clannism and favoritism; having a reputation in the community; integrity; and knowledge of traditional law and Islam with the ability of self-expression" (Donovan and Tsegaye Regasse 2001:30). So far no written rules or regulations exist regarding procedures, terms of references, and guidelines on how to discharge these elders, clan chiefs and community elders who receive an equal amount of salary as other bureaucrats working in a similar administrative position. The *guurti* structure is thus "parallel to (not under) formal structures at all levels" (Aklilu Abraham et al. 2000:31).

The main objective of these "government elders", be it at the regional, zonal or district levels is to assist the government in matters relating to peace and security. For example, in the occurrence of clan conflict they assist by bringing in their skills of customary conflict resolution based on blood compensation which is combined with state conflict intervention. In the words of one interview partner and former zonal head, "the *guurti* elders intervene whenever there are problems or conflict between communities and the government". Yet, these elders also act as informers for the government and help disseminating policies of the government among their community (author's field notes). This institutional innovation of the *guurti* has contributed to the creation of different category of elders within the region, i.e. "government elders" as well as "other elders". Yet in practice, these two types of elders have intimate relations with each other and, especially at the local level, do not essentially rely on

different types of legitimacy, but are both recognized as responsible for managing community affairs and resolving disputes. This said, tensions and competition for community representation between *guurti* elders and non-government elders is manifest in some areas within the region (author's field notes).

The attempt to synchronize state and community structures within the SRS through the establishment of the elders/advisors system has been recognized as a positive move for mitigating clan-conflicts more effectively (Aklilu Abraham et al. 2000:15). Criticism has been selectively voiced by different observers and within the media. The Ethiopian Reporter published a contribution in which some of the elders of the region were accused of being paid by government funds "although they have no formal public job to attend do" (Away Dalkii 2002). Other commentators regard the creation of this new institution as a deliberate move by the government to co-opt customary leaders for political purposes and a kind of "indirect rule". The formation of the elder's council has been instrumental for the ruling party (SPDP) to maintain its position. The elders have particularly been instrumental in campaigning, or rather mobilizing voters during elections. Lister (2004:27) concludes that the *amakari* elders "exercise considerable control over the voting habits of the communities from which they come". As they are mostly seen to be legitimate community leaders by their own clan, they have a privileged access to their own clansmen. In turn, they make sure that their clan elects a candidate which is a member or loyal to the ruling party and thus indirectly to the EPRDF (author's field notes).

Political denunciations and pseudo-criminal charges against party and government officials constitute another effective strategy in political disputes between and among different factions. They are mainly used to invoke or legitimise the ousting or imprisoning of officials and seldom translate in a formal legal process involving the judiciary. Apart from general accusations such as "hindering development" or "preventing the people of the region from enjoying the benefits of the transitional period" - the official reason given for the dismissal of former regional president Hassan Jirre Quanlinle (Ethiopian Herald, 9 April 1994 cited in Markakis 1996:568) - two specific types of charges have proved particularly popular in justifying attacks on and dismissals of rival politicians. They are on the one hand accusations of corruption and mismanagement and on the other hand claims of supporting ONLF, euphemistically referred to as "the anti-peace elements".

The removal from office of most of the seven former regional presidents has been rationalized by the ESDL and later on by the SPDP on grounds of unspecified corruption charges or being an ONLF-backer. Ugus Abdirahman Mahamud "Kani", for instance, left

office because of "charges of corruption and incompetence" (Helander 1994) and "for obstructing development projects" (Ethiopan Herald, 6 December 1994 cited in Markakis 1996:568). Abdirashid Dulane was "allegedly dismissed for anti-democratic attitude, non-compliance with the law as well as impeding development activities" (Ethiopian Reporter 2003) and had been "accused of being linked to 'anti-peace' groups (IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Network of the United Nations) 2003).

The rhetoric used by Somali-Ethiopian politicians is thus mostly one of motivated denunciations to be understood in its relation to the federal government. Neither the distribution of financial resources within one's kinship network (so-called corruption) nor the tacit or active support given to ONLF (many Ogadenis support ONLF in one way or another)[xxxviii] constitute "immoral" acts within the Somali normative framework. Yet both are turned into effective weapons in daily politics as they formally reflect and take up the democratic multi-party rhetoric of their EPRDF-patron. The "anti-corruption" and "anti-ONLF" discourse is actively instrumentalized by politicians of different clan origin. Within the government and party core structure, these political denunciations are also articulated within *gim gemma* sessions. In the larger public they serve to discredit disliked political figures and act as warnings to those in office that their appointments might shortly be over.

VII. OPPOSITION TO THE NEO-PATRIMONIAL BARGAIN

The previous chapters have sketched out the contours of neo-patrimonial politics manifest in region 5 since the downfall of the Derg regime. While a number of diverse political groups participate, voluntarily or involuntarily, in the dynamics described above, there are also organized interests which partly or fully oppose these political practices. These groups are first and foremost the young bureaucrats or "intellectuals" of Somali-Ethiopian origin, the ONLF as well as international donors. The agendas of these three groups differ widely, yet they counter the rules of the neo-patrimonial politics of the region.

In recent years a new actor group emerged in regional politics which mainly consists of young male Ethiopian-Somalis who graduated from the Ethiopian Civil Service College (ECSC) in Addis Ababa.[xxxix] Locally known as the "educators" (sic) or "intellectuals" they are among the few Somali-Ethiopians who received an opportunity to benefit from higher education.[xl] Most of them are urban-based professionals and, at least some of them, party cadres occupying important offices within the regional administration. In their view many of the region's senior officials, including regional bureau heads have achieved their position as a

consequence of their tribalist tactics and close cooperation with the federal military in the fight against ONLF and other armed groups since the mid-1990s. The older caste of politicians is often ridiculed as illiterate and corrupt puppets of the highland security forces. These "young turks" take pride in their education, feel close to and supported by Prime Minister Meles Zenwai, and have repeatedly vowed to "change the system" once they get appointed into office. Many of them support, yet not uncritically, the idea of ethnic-federalism and endorse the concept of a distinct Somali-Ethiopian identity. They condemn the clannish orientation of their own elders and political leaders. Many of them maintain close professional and personnel relations that transcend clan divides. However, members of this young educated elite are themselves permanently pressured by their own clan elders to defend clan interests, to take up important government positions or to take part in schemes supposedly aimed at increasing one's clan's benefit (author's field notes). Consequently, an inter-generational conflict is increasingly observable between the "young intellectuals" who base their self-conception on their status as the educated elite of the future and the "old political leaders" who base their legitimacy on a lifelong struggle in the service of clan interests.

Another actor which refuses to play the neo-patrimonial game is the ONLF, namely its armed wing and its followers in the bush.[xli] Supported by Arab countries, Eritrea, Sudan as well as from followers in the worldwide Somali (Ogaden) diaspora, the armed ONLF has become increasingly radical since the co-option of its more moderate part into the regional government after 1995. The front draws on a broad popular support within the Ogadeni-inhabited territory of the SRS (NN 1995) where it actually controls movements of people and goods.[xlii] As ONLF functions like a guerrilla movement receiving strong sympathies from local communities, the front's militia are informed about the movements and whereabouts of any "outsider" within their territory. Large parts of Region 5 are inaccessible for officials from the regional government who fear being targeted by ONLF which is known to shoot highlanders as well as high Somali-Ethiopian officials from the region, burn government vehicles and beat up lower rank bureaucrats (author's field notes). Despite consistent rumours of secret negotiations between the Ethiopian national army and ONLF, prospects for a peaceful integration of the Ogadeni rebels into the political process as well as subsequent disarmament of fighters seems unlikely in the near future. Although ONLF's ultimate political objective seems to vary quite a bit through time – it is not always clear whether an independent state of Ogadenia, a Somali region under Ogadeni rule or a reunification with a future rebuilt Republic of Somalia constitutes its main agenda – the front builds upon popular frustration of large part of the Ogadeni population which feels oppressed by the highland

military as is does not profit from the spoils the Jijiga and Addis Ababa based political networks.

Another stream of opposition to the neo-patrimonial logic of past politics in SRS stems from international donor organisations who pressure for effective decentralization within the region. These donors, most prominently the World Bank and United Nations agencies are funding large-scale development projects such as the now defunct South-East Rangeland Project (SERP). The SRS's administrative inefficiency, widespread corruption and lacking outreach to the districts have not been hidden from international funding organisations. The need to establish effective administration at *woreda* level had been recognized already in the mid-1990s, i.e. immediately after the end of the transitional government (Ahmed Y. Farah 1996). Yet, the past decade passed without any noteworthy devolution of administration to the districts where government remains embryonic at best and basic infrastructure and services such as health posts or schools are mostly absent. Recently, international financial institutions became inpatient and increased pressure on the federal government to come forward with its prior promises. The World Bank which currently implements its biggest pastoral development programme in south-eastern Ethiopia has mounted pressure for effective decentralisation in order to be able to implement its community-based projects (World Bank 2003). Pressure was then passed on from the federal government onto the regional political establishment. The ensuing wrangling between the federal and regional governments had almost led to the suspension of the regional government in June 2004. Finally, it was decided that a total of 600 civil servants shall be detached from Jijiga to the district of the region. The establishment of sub-branches of the Ethiopian Commercial Bank in all the zones of the region is underway to permit budget transfers to the districts. Functional and fiscal devolution to district level is expected to be implemented this (2004) and the upcoming years and is likely to transform financial resource flows within the region and thus modify the neo-patrimonial bargain.

VIII. CONCLUSION: BIG STICKS AND SMALL CARROTS

After several decades of oppression and marginalization, the former Ogaden has received a degree of self-government within Ethiopia's new federal structure. As this study has demonstrated, the newly found political autonomy did neither translate into a pacification of the region nor did it seriously advance much needed development efforts. Rather relations between the highland, respectively the federal EPRDF government and the Somali frontier transformed into a neo-patrimonial dynamic characterized by big sticks and small carrots. The

bottom-line of this study is that both the federal government as well as the different Somali factions have to constantly renegotiate political decisions through shifting alliances as neither side is able to unilaterally dominate the other side. As sketched out above, the means and strategies applied in this bargain range from subtle manipulation to targeted threats and forceful interventions such as imprisonments or military coercion.

Two major, because structural, dimensions of federal-regional interactions have not appropriately been mentioned yet. The first concerns the federal budget on which the region depends heavily as it produces almost no taxed income itself. It thus constitutes a major leverage for the EPRDF in achieving compliance from its Somali counterpart, namely by freezing or delaying budget transfers to the region. Second, the federal government has created a new instrument allowing to exert continuous political influence on the regional states with the intervention bill ratified by parliament in July 2003 (FDRE 2003). The proclamation specifies the conditions under which the federal government can suspend its regional states, i.e. in case of a "security deterioration situation in a region beyond the capability of the latter; when gross violations of human rights are perpetrated in a region and the latter fails to stop it; and when a certain region endangers the constitutional order" (Abraham Gelaw 2003).[xliii] In the context of the ongoing decentralisation within SRS, the federal government has already threatened several times to suspend the region temporarily. The proclamation serves as another sword of Damocles hanging over the region which can be invoked at any time by the federal level. However, the application of direct pressure through financial or other means on behalf of the federal government is a delicate task as it needs to be "approved by and balanced against the internal constellation of the region and the fragile composition of the SPDP" (Ulf Terlinden, personal communication).

Neither the federal EPRDF government nor the Somali-Ethiopian political elites has an interest to alienate its counterpart in the long run. The federal government cannot afford to loose its "Somali ally" as it fears a strong alliance between Oromo and Somali armed groups, namely the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the ONLF, respectively might need strong allies to counter the growing Oromo nationalism. From the perspective of the central government, the Somali-Ethiopians are thus not only an impending secessionist force, but also a potential friend in domestic and international politics. Parts of the regional elite have fully understand this and the SPDP-led government had decided to actively support national war efforts during the Ethio-Eritrean war (1998-2004) by sending Somali soldiers and in-kind support to the front. The Somali participation in the confrontation among Ethiopia and Eritrea was proof of loyalty to the EPRDF-government and a historic novelty.[xliv] Mutual favours

between the SRS and the federal level are thus done strategically and contrast with the picture of unilateral domination of the region by the centre.

Although the federal EPRDF is advantaged in terms of financial power and institutionalised instruments through which influence can be exerted upon the SRS, it suffers from one major weakness; the Ethiopian state is incapable of establishing effective control over its Somali periphery. The Somali region is a "failed state" within the relatively stable state of (highland) Ethiopia (Brock 1999). The old theme (see for example Tibebe Eshete 1994) of the centre's inability to achieve a monopoly of violence in its border area continues to shape today's political strategies towards the region. The highland cannot control the Somali region without consent and cooperation of at least part of the Somali clans. It constantly has to fear an eventual secession of Region 5 to a "Greater Somalia", namely in case of a rebirth of Somalia. In addition, the ongoing statelessness of Somalis makes the SRS an ideal buffer zone between Ethiopia and its neighbour. While the EPRDF might genuinely work for stability, peace and development in the Somali region, it is extremely suspicious of any political organisation within the region 5 gaining political strength, popular support and military equipment. Consequently, the federal government has to be afraid of any strong and legitimate institution within the SRS on which it cannot exert influence and which might, one day, work towards secession.[xlv] Thus, whenever Somali politicians or other individuals become "too powerful" for the centre, there is either dismissal of these politicians or a form of accommodation, usually in form of political reward, is sought.

In Region 5 managing instability has become a major preoccupation as well as key strategy for both sides. For the federal government managing instability implies preventing the emergence of a strong regional government and minimizing military insecurity, mainly through an extended presence of its armed forces within the region. For the competing Somali-Ethiopians, managing instability implies maintaining political and military insecurity as it constitutes a key strategy to force the federal government into situational concessions and to access resources otherwise blocked. On the systemic level, instability is thus rational and, to some degree, a mutually benefiting situation for the federal government and those political groups within the Somali region who have agreed to participate in the neo-patrimonial bargain in which both participate.

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[i] In this paper the term "Somali-Ethiopians" is used merely for convenience, and does not imply any opinion or statement on collective identity of political loyalty of those Somalis inhabiting Ethiopia's Region 5.
[ii] Article 47 of the Ethiopian constitution names "the State of Somalia" as the fifth in the list of its member states, thus Region 5 (FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) 1995).
[iii] A remarkable example of the Ethiopian State's militarised perspective on its Somali lowlands are the topographic maps of the Ethiopia Mapping Agency dating from the 1970s which depict major towns and settlements within the Ogaden simply as "military camp" with no reference being made to the existing (Somali) names of these locations.
[iv] Ethiopia's lowland regions of Somali, Afar, Gambella and Benishangul are commonly referred to as the „backward" or "emerging" regions in political discourse which implies blaming the Derg regime for marginalizing these areas and reflects a certain paternalism by the federal government in its dealings with these regions.
[v] See for example Ssereo 2003 for such a somewhat misled attempt.
[vi] The evolution of party politics in SRS since 1991 can only summarily be presented here. For a detailed overview see Schröder 1998.
[vii] Of the 9 zones of SRS, six are predominantly inhabited by members of the different Ogadeni clans and sub-clans (Wardheer, Godey, Dhagaxbuur, Qabri Dehar, Fiq, Afdeehr zones) and the remaining three by different clans (Jijiga, Shinille, Liban zones).
[viii] On Al-Ittihad see also Sage 2001.
[ix] Including Issa, Gadabursi, Gerri, Gurgura, Rer Barre, Hawiye, Dulbahante, Majerteen, Jidwak, Shekash, and Marehan.

[x] "All the Presidents, Vice presidents and Secretaries of the so called 'Somali regional governments' for 10 years, have ended up in jails in Addis Abeba" Abdi Aden Mohamed 2001. The exception is Abdirashid Dulane who lost his office in 2003.
[xi] Past presidents of the SRS are Abdulahi Mohammed Sadi (ONLF) from January – July 1993, Hassan Jirre Qualinle (ONLF) from July 1993 – April 1994, Ugaz Abdirahman Mahamud "Kani" (?) from April 1994 – December 1994, Ahmed Makahil Hussein (acting) (?) from December 1994 – July 1995, Iid Dahir Farah (ESDL) from July 1995 – mid-1997, Mahamed Macalis "Kedu" (ESDL) from mid-1997 – September 2000, Abdirashid Dulane (SPDP) from September 2000 – July 2003, Omar Jibril Abubeker (SPDP) since July 2003.
[xii] ONLF is mainly supported by sub-clans of the Mohammed Zubeyr clan within the Ogaden clan family.
[xiii] Reliable casualty figures of past and current conflicts within SRS are not available. A compilation of casualty figures by regional elders done in May 2004 puts the combined death toll of violent clan conflicts in 11 districts of SRS over the past years at over 700 (author's field notes).
[xiv] The former regional president Mahamed Macalis "Kedu", a representative of the moderate faction within ONLF, had provided massive support to the regional militia bureau during his reign (1997-2000).
[xv] Zones are loosing their importance under the new decentralized scheme of the region (summer 2004) while *kebeles* (peasant associations, originally established during the Derg time) have always led a nominal existence in this part of Ethiopia.
[xvi] A point confirmed by van Brabant who states that "where the public administration has historically been experiences as alien, imposed and coercive, and where traditional structures provide the best source of support, protection and survival in the face of widespread unrest and instability" (Brabant 1994:64).
[xvii] The same applies to previous development projects in the region, especially those with a heavy material and infrastructural output.
xviii Yet, despite widespread corruption and mismanagement, a large proportion of the annual budget is returned every year to the federal government as the region is incapable of absorbing (i.e. spending) the transfer payments by the federal government Ahmed Y. Farah 1996.
[xix] In reference to the "economy of affection" mentioned by the Samatar brothers (Abdi Samatar and A. I. Samatar 1987:690).
[xx] In the February 2004 elections each district elected a district council including a district spokesman, vice-spokesman, district administrator and vice-administrator.
[xxi] The phenomenon of "recycling of elites" (Chabal and Daloz 1999) is thus also observable in Region 5, even manifesting itself in a "cross-boundary" form.
[xxii] As happened in 1994 when ONLF opted for a referendum for secession which provoked the immediate imprisonment and dismissal of numerous regional party and government officials by the federal military.
[xxiii] The role of the MoFA in the interactions between the federal and regional governments deserves special attention and has not yet been subjected to in-depth investigation, some indications are given by Aalen 2002.
[xxiv] The institutional affiliation of this ministry to the Prime Minister's office, i.e. the centre of power within the EPRDF's party state is indicative of its strategic importance.
[xxv] The Ethiopian military also maintains a regular presence within the former Somali Democratic Republic's regions of Gedeo, Bay and Bakool. Addis Ababa has repeatedly denied these claims which have been verified by numerous independent and partisan observers.
[xxvi] The role of the national forces in Region 5 is an extremely sensitive topic and in-depth details are impossible to be obtained.
[xxvii] In this particular case, the regional president had opposed the growing influence of the federal armed forces within the SRS. His removal from regional office was thus not only a victory for those who opposed him within the SPDP central committee, but also for the national forces based in the region.
[xxviii] Eventually end of 2003.
[xxix] Former chairman of the SPDP (1998-2004) as well as former chairman of the ESDL (1994-1998) and the former Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations.

[xxx] Whenever a bureau head is dismissed from his office, he is in most of the times replaced by somebody from the same clan. Usually, it is up to the clan elders to appoint a successor among their clansmen, at times the regional president will appoint bureau heads will appoint new officials (author's field notes).
[xxxi] For obvious reasons reliable figures are difficult to obtain. A glance at the monthly current budget of SRS for the Ethiopian year of 1996 showed that the Regional Bureau for Militia had the highest expenditure among the 30 or so regional bureaus of SRS (author's field notes).
[xxxii] Apparently the "conflict resolution" budget line shall not be included in the new 2004-2005 (1997 E.C.) regional budget as its has been recognized as creating havoc.
[xxxiii] Reassessment or evaluation.
[xxxiv] The co-optation of elders for purposes of state politics is not completely new. It has been sporadically practices by Italian as well as Ethiopian governors and military leaders at the beginning of the 20th century (see Tibebe Eshete 1994).
[xxxv] A similar integration of elders and clan leaders into regional government structure had prior occurred in Ethiopia's Afar regional state.
[xxxvi] In November 1999 an "enclave of seven hundred of the most prominent clan elders and *ugaszes*" (Donovan and Tsegaye Regasse 2001:13) elected the guurti elders at regional and zonal level. According to Aklilu Abraham, et al. 2000 they were elected for a five-year term of office. Later on (beginning of 2000) assemblies of 150 community elders representing all the different clan in each of the (then) 48 *Woreda* participated in the election of the elders at district level.
[xxxvii] Article 56 stipulates that "The State Council shall, in accordance with this constitution, establishes (sic) elders' and clan leaders' Council. Particulars shall be determined by law". The corresponding proclamation has not yet (July 2004) been formulated.
[xxxviii] As one interviewee and member of an Ogaden clan pointed out: "all the people are ONLF" (Interview by the author, 12 July 2003, Jijiga).
[xxxix] The ECSC offers three year courses in law, economics and engineering and was set up by the government to build up professional capacities of regional bureaucrats, respectively to train civil servants from the different regional states. ESCS graduates are mostly loyal to the EPRDF embrace the idea of ethnic federalism.
[xl] The number of students of Somali origin in higher education institutions in Ethiopia is extremely low. The same applies to enrolment in primary and secondary schools within the region. The enrolment share of pupils in the primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools in 1992-1993 amounted to 1.4, 1.0 and 0.8 percent, respectively (World Bank 1994).
[xli] Publicly available information on ONLF is next to inexistent, some indications are given by Markakis 1994; 1996. All matters relating to the front are extremely sensitive and thus difficult to gather through field research.
[xlii] ONLF is also reported to extort some kind of "war tax" among Somali-Ethiopians working for the Ethiopian government, thus mainly from civil servants (author's field notes).
[xliii] The adoption of proclamation No. 359/2003 can be interpreted as a reaction of the EPRDF-government to increasing domestic and international pressures. After the bill had been passed in parliament speculations were ripe in Jijiga that the Somali region would be the first to be suspended. In Addis Ababa rumours wanted it that Tigray, the TPLF's primary constituency, might be the first regional State to be as an eventual first region to be suspended.
[xliv] To the disappointment of many, it failed to be rewarded by the appointment of a Somali-Ethiopian into higher positions within the federal government, for example as a federal minister.
[xlv] For example, although the regional government is consistently in a sandwich position between the federal level and local Somali power holders, the executive has a strong position within the formal institutional set-up of the region (stronger than parliament and judiciary). Notably in regard to security, the regional president has command over regional and clan militia and is thus always a potential threat for the federal government.