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The Oromo-Amhara Ethnic Conflicts in Gidda Ayana and Kiramu Districts, North- Eastern Wallagga: Integrating Instrumentalist and Primordialists Theories

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Abstract

This study investigates the Oromo-Amhara ethnic conflicts in Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts of North-Eastern Wallagga, with a focus on integrating instrumentalist and primordialist theories. The objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the conflicts by examining the interplay between instrumentalist motivations, such as breaches of contractual agreements over land and differing interpretations of constitutional rights, and primordial expressions, including the crystallization of ethnic identities and historical resentments. The methodology employed in this study involves a combination of qualitative research methods, including literature review, analysis of historical documents, and interviews with key stakeholders from both the Oromo and Amhara communities. The findings reveal that the conflicts are driven by a complex interaction between instrumentalist and primordialist factors, with resource interests and power dynamics playing a significant role in shaping ethnic relations. The study underscores the malleability of ethnic relations in response to shifting resource interests and power dynamics, demonstrating the utility of ethnicity in these contexts. Based on the findings, the study recommends, first promoting dialogue and reconciliation between the Oromo and Amhara communities is crucial to foster understanding and peaceful coexistence. Second, addressing land disputes through fair and transparent mechanisms can help alleviate tensions. Third, enhancing economic opportunities for both communities can mitigate resource competition. Fourth, strengthening governance and the rule of law is essential to ensure equal representation and address grievances. Fifthly, promoting cultural understanding and appreciation can counter historical resentments. Lastly, supporting community-based conflict resolution mechanisms to facilitate sustainable conflict resolution and peace building efforts.

Keywords: Ethnic Conflict; Primordialism; Instrumentalism; Human Security

Introduction

Ethnic conflict poses a significant danger to global peace and security, as demonstrated by numerous regions and countries, including the Balkans, Chechnya, Ukraine, India, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and various parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the Great Lakes region [1]. These areas have a long history of ethnic conflict, threatening their harmonious coexistence [2]. emphasizes the need for the development of theoretical models that

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can elucidate how the different factors identified in existing theories of ethnic conflict interact and contribute to its occurrence. Williams further stresses that no single theory is comprehensive enough to fully explain the complexities of ethnic conflict.

The prevailing explanations for ethnic conflict can be categorized into two main theories: primordialism and instrumentalism. However, both theories have limitations in their ability to fully explain and provide effective solutions to ethnic conflict [1]. It is crucial to recognize the significant role of familial and formal connections in understanding the link between grievances and mass ethnic conflict, which the classical theories tend to overlook. These connections have the potential to enhance group unity and exacerbate ethnic divisions [3,4]. Within private settings like homes, gardens, and farms, interpersonal interactions among members of opposing ethnic groups allow for personal and communal grievances to be expressed [5,6]. These informal discussions can strengthen the sense of identity within one's own group and portray the out-group as a collective threat, thereby fostering cohesion among members of the rival ethnic group while intensifying differences between them.

The implications of this argument highlight the significance of recognizing the importance of familial and informal interactions in contributing to ethnic conflict. By acknowledging these dynamics, it becomes possible to develop a more comprehensive understanding of ethnic conflict and explore strategies for conflict resolution that take into account the complexities and nuances of group dynamics at both the individual and collective levels.

In addition to fostering dissatisfaction, group cohesion plays a crucial role in facilitating ethnic uprisings by enabling efficient mass mobilization. Scholars in the field of ethnicity, such as Posen [7], consider group cohesion as an indicator of "offensive military capacity." Consequently, when the out-group demonstrates unity based on shared grievances, it is likely to be perceived as a threat by the in-group. The in-group may find the allure of rebellious violence heightened due to perceived dangers [8]. Acknowledging the significance of out-group cohesion as a genuine source of in-group dissatisfaction, it can be argued that the instrumental role of grievances in generating ethnic conflicts becomes intricately linked to solidified identities. The two primary theories of ethnic conflict address these notions to varying degrees.

In this review, we examined the perspectives of primordialists on the causes of ethnic conflict. Primordialists argue that ethnic conflict primarily stems from disparities in ethnic identity [9,10]. According to this view, ethnic identity is an innate aspect of human nature that is established at birth and passed down through generations. As a result,

ethnic identity is perceived as unchangeable over time. Primordialism emphasizes the notion of "common blood" shared among members of an ethnic group, giving rise to expectations of hospitality and cooperation among in-group members, while fostering animosity and discord among out-group members [11,12]. These beliefs are rooted in the idea that ethnic differences are deep-seated, ancestral, and irreconcilable. As a consequence, ethnic conflicts are seen as arising from long-standing "old hatreds" between ethnic groups and a pervasive sense of "mutual fear" regarding dominance, expulsion, or even the extinction of one group by another [13].

By exploring the primordialist perspective, we gain valuable insights into how ethnic conflicts are perceived to originate from deeply ingrained ethnic identities and the associated beliefs in common ancestry, which contribute to tensions and rivalries between different ethnic groups. Understanding these perspectives allows us to shed light on the complex historical and psychological factors that underlie ethnic conflicts and contribute to their enduring nature. Consequently, ethnically diverse states are often seen as inevitably prone to ethnic conflicts, as ethnic identities are believed to provide the foundation for inter-ethnic hatred, fear, and violence [14].

However, it is essential to consider a more inclusive perspective that recognizes the existence of ethnically diverse nations that manage to maintain relatively peaceful inter-ethnic relations. For instance, certain heterogeneous republics in Sub-Saharan Africa, such as Cameroon and Botswana, have been able to foster amicable relationships among their diverse ethnic groups. Mulinge [15] suggests that peace in some heterogeneous nations may be the result of specific structural strategies implemented to manage ethnic diversity. This highlights a significant flaw in primordialist thinking, as it overlooks the critical role played by varying political and socio-economic structural conditions in shaping the emergence or mitigation of ethnic conflicts. By taking into account the broader context of political and socio-economic factors, we can develop a more comprehensive understanding of ethnic conflicts that goes beyond the sole emphasis on primordial ethnic identities. This inclusive perspective allows for a deeper analysis of the diverse dynamics and strategies that contribute to peaceful coexistence or conflict resolution in ethnically diverse societies.

In this review, we examine the perspective of instrumentalists regarding the causes of ethnic conflict. According to instrumentalists, ethnic conflict does not immediately arise from differences in ethnic identity alone. Instead, they argue that ethnic conflicts emerge when ethnic identities are politicized or manipulated to secure political

and socio-economic advantages for one ethnic group while disadvantaging others [7,16-19]. Instrumentalists attribute the occurrence of ethnic conflicts to factors that go beyond ethnicity itself. They contend that grievances and frustrations stemming from political and socio-economic inequalities play a significant role in fueling ethnic conflicts. For instance, Gurr [20-22] and Collier and Hoeffler [16,17] argue that dissatisfaction with such variables contributes to the emergence of ethnic conflicts. Under the instrumentalist perspective, ethnic conflicts are understood as outcomes of strategic actions taken by political actors who exploit ethnic identities to pursue their interests. These conflicts are not solely determined by inherent ethnic differences, but rather by the manipulation and mobilization of ethnic identities for political gain. This perspective broadens our understanding of the complex dynamics at play in ethnic conflicts, highlighting the importance of political and socio-economic factors in their genesis. Additionally, Ellingsen [23] emphasizes that instrumentalists recognize the role of grievances and frustrations as underlying causes of ethnic conflicts. These grievances often stem from disparities in power, resources, and opportunities, which fuel resentment and contribute to the escalation of ethnic tensions.

By considering the instrumentalist viewpoint, we gain valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of ethnic conflicts, going beyond essentialist explanations that attribute conflicts solely to ethnic differences. This perspective underscores the significance of political and socio-economic factors and their influence on the manipulation and politicization of ethnic identities, thereby shedding light on the complex dynamics that underpin ethnic conflicts.

Our review examines the cases of mass ethnic violence in Rwanda and Burundi during the early 1990s, as discussed by Vanhanen [14] and Esteban, Mayoral, and Ray [9], to illustrate the integrative model of ethnic conflict. This model highlights the interplay between instrumentalist and primordial emotions that contribute to such conflicts. While the model primarily focuses on conflicts between dominant and marginalized ethnic groups, its applicability is not limited to ethno political conflicts alone.

The integrative model recognizes the potential danger posed by cohesive ethnic groups. However, it is rooted in the conventional understanding that perceived threats from external groups can foster solidarity and cohesion within the in-group as a response to these perceived dangers. By considering the mutually reinforcing dynamics of instrumentalist and primordial emotions, the model provides a framework for understanding the complexities of ethnic conflicts. It is important to note that the integrative model goes beyond the specific context of conflicts between dominant and marginalized ethnic groups. It offers insights into the broader dynamics of ethnic conflicts and the role played by instrumentalist and primordial factors in shaping intergroup relations. By examining the cases of Rwanda and Burundi, the model serves as an illustrative example of how these emotions interact and contribute to the escalation of violence in ethnic conflicts.

This review aims to investigate and identify the underlying causes of ethnic conflicts in the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts located in the western part of Ethiopia, specifically in the North Eastern Wallagga region. Geographically, this area is bordered by Guto Gida to the south, Limmu to the west, Ebantu to the northwest, Horo Gudru Wallaga Zone to the east, and the Blue Nile River to the north. The district's topography consists of rolling hills north of Dicho Ridge and plains to the south, with only a few remnants of the once extensive forests remaining as of 2005. The region is traversed by rivers such as Warabessa, Wajja, and Chinina. Analysis of the land in this district reveals that approximately 65.7% is suitable for cultivation, with 61% of that being utilized for annual crops. Pastureland accounts for 22.8%, while forested areas make up 8.7%, and the remaining 2.8% is considered unusable. Notably, sesame and khat are significant cash crops in this region, while coffee cultivation occupies less than 20 km^2 [24].

The study proposes a model in which ethnic grievances and frustrations interact to increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict. A complex array of mutually reinforcing factors such as: economic, as expressed by land competition; political, as expressed by unequal power distribution (which favored the Amhara in the past but now claimed to have favored the Oromo groups); and socio-cultural, as expressed by pervasive Amhara cultural chauvinism and entrenched Oromo victimhood sentiments. Academically, however, this claim has never happened practically or has never been supported by policy changes to support it with evidence. The focus is on understanding how ethnic conflicts over resources, particularly land, have historically entrenched and energized these conflicts, as well as how they are intertwined with larger national politics and power relations at the center.

Methodology of the Study

This research adopts a qualitative approach, employing both primary and secondary data sources to investigate the ethnic conflicts in the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts. The primary data collection tool utilized in this study is the Rapid Response Assessment (RRA). The RRA method enables the researchers to gather firsthand information from eyewitnesses, displaced individuals, and survivors of the violent conflicts that occurred in the study area. The researchers collected data through various means, including

engaging with key informants and conducting phone conversations with members of the displaced community affected by the conflicts. The selection of informants for unstructured interviews was based on their expertise, accessibility to the research location, and credibility. Informants encompassed individuals such as teachers, local health workers, and community leaders.

In addition to primary data collection, the research also incorporated secondary data from document reviews and online materials. These sources provided supplementary information to enrich the understanding of the ethnic conflicts in the Guto Gidda, Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts.

Result and Discussion

The Origins of Oromo–Amhara Relations in Gidda Ayyana and Kiramu Districts

According to instrumentalist theory, ethnic conflict does not inherently arise from differences in ethnic identity. Instead, it arises when ethnic identities are politicized or manipulated for the purpose of obtaining political or socio-economic advantages for one ethnic group while disregarding the interests of other ethnic group [7,16-19]. Instrumentalists attribute ethnic disputes to factors beyond ethnicity itself. Scholars such as Gurr [7,20-22] and Collier and Hoeffler [16,17] argue that dissatisfaction with these factors demonstrates that ethnic conflicts are often fueled by grievances and frustration. This perspective suggests that the current conflict in the Gidda and Kiramu districts can be understood from both primordial and instrumentalist viewpoints.

The insights provided by informants emphasize the importance of considering historical context, socio-economic factors, and cultural connections between the Oromo and Amhara communities in the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts. Taking these factors into account allows for a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics within the Oromo-Amhara connections in the study area. The historical relationship between the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups in Ethiopia, particularly in western Ethiopia, has been a topic of significant research and interest. Previous studies and historical archives have shed light on the complex and challenging interactions between the Amhara people of Gojjam and the Oromo communities residing south of the Abbay River in the late seventeenth century [25,26]. Historical records indicate that these interactions were characterized by a mix of conflicts, tensions, cooperation, and collaboration. The specific nature of these interactions varied, influenced by factors such as territorial disputes, competition over resources, and socio-political dynamics.

The historical context is crucial for understanding the Oromo-Amhara connections in any specific region, including the north-eastern part of East Wallagga. Exploring historical sources, such as historical records, archival documents, and scholarly works, can shed light on the historical interactions, power dynamics, and events that have influenced the relationship between the Oromo and Amhara communities in that area. While, socio-economic factors play a significant role in shaping the connections between the Oromo and Amhara communities. Resource competition, land disputes, economic opportunities, and access to markets and trade routes can impact their relationship. Studying local economies, patterns of land use, resource distribution, and economic activities in the north-eastern part of East Wallagga provide insights into how these factors have influenced the Oromo-Amhara connections in this specific area. Similarly, cultural influences are instrumental in shaping the Oromo-Amhara connections. Each community has its own distinct cultural practices, languages, and social structures. The cultural dynamics, including religious practices, traditional norms, and intercultural interactions, also provide insights into how cultural factors have shaped the relationship between the Oromo and Amhara communities in the north-eastern part of East Wallagga.

During the final decade of imperial rule, a number of scholarly studies, including those conducted by Pausewang [27] uncovered significant patterns of Amhara migration towards the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts. Assefa [28] noted that in 1972, the first wave of voluntary migrants from the Wallo province arrived in the Haaroo Addis-Alem areas of the Gidda-Kiramu region. This migration was driven by various factors, such as the landholding system of the impe0rial era and population pressures. The local Oromo landlords, seeking tribute-paying tenants as well as an electoral constituency to support their bid for the bicameral imperial parliament, permitted the settlement of these migrants in the region. Assefa [28] provides insights into this arrangement. The newcomers from the Wallo province aimed to address their immediate concerns, acquire government farming licenses for land, and eventually become dutiful taxpayers. It appears that the initial flow of migrants from the north was facilitated by an alignment of interests between the settlers and local landowners.

According to the informants, despite occasional inter-personal disagreements, there were no significant fights between settlers and host populations in the 1970s and 1980s. The Haaroo-Addis-Alem Kebele, where recurring contests over strong leadership positions in local administration have been noted, may represent an outlier in today's Kiramu region. In 1995, the EPRDF leadership issued a new Constitution that provided the local Oromo an innate right

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to administer their territory, bringing the power struggle to an end. As a result, starting in 1991, local government administration, which had been a point of conflict between the two populations for nearly two decades (the mid-1970s to 1991), became the Oromo's property.

Despite the aforementioned factors, the migration to the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts witnessed acceleration in the 1990s. This can be attributed to a combination of push and pull factors. The pull factors were influenced by the availability of underdeveloped and fertile lowlands in the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts, which became more accessible with the completion of the Nekemte-Bure Road, connecting the Amhara and Oromia regions along the western corridor. Land scarcity and environmental degradation in the northern regions have long been recognized as significant drivers for migration from the north. Additionally, the land redistribution process in the Amhara Regional State in the mid-1990s, as highlighted by Assefa [28], resulted in a large number of peasants being left without farmland or being allocated marginal and unproductive lands on steep mountain slopes and rugged terrains. Consequently, these individuals started migrating to the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts in search of arable land and, in some cases, employment opportunities. It is important to note that these factors are not the sole determinants of migration, as other factors like population pressure and personal circumstances can also contribute to new waves of migration.

Based on the information that informants provided, it seems that there has been a significant migration of people from Gojjam to the Andode-Dicho area, with fewer migrants coming from Gonder. The reasons for this migration could be attributed to the familiarity of people from the northern regions with the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts, as well as improved access due to the completion of the Nekemte-Bure Road. The influx of migrants, including those seeking employment and escaped outlaws, may have contributed to an increase in criminal activities such as homicide and theft. This criminal activity, combined with the existing Oromo-Amhara violence, could potentially intensify the tensions and conflicts in the area.

The turmoil in the zone has been influenced by two major factors: the ethnic politics of the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) and demographic dynamics within local Oromo communities. As a result of the migration patterns described earlier, along with natural population growth, the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts, which had previously been sparsely populated in Wallagga, experienced a significant increase in population density throughout the 1990s. These lowlands had traditionally served as a "reserve" of cultivable land where slash and burn farming could be practiced if highland land became scarce or

if a farmer lacked plow animals. However, when self-initiated settlers began occupying the majority of the hospitable plain and encroaching on the mountains in the 1990s, the local disadvantaged individuals were left with few options. This situation created a sense of desperation among the poor and fostered animosity towards the newcomers. As the population of neighboring Oromo communities grew, even the previously self-sufficient prosperous peasants started facing land scarcity. Consequently, scarcity, which had been the primary driver of emigration from the north, became a source of conflict in the south. The continued migration of Amhara settlers reignited historical grievances and intensified resource competition, fueling animosity between the two ethnic groups.

To put it differently, under primordialism, the differences in ethnic identities became more prominent, leading to increased ethnic consciousness and raising the likelihood of ethnic conflict. At the same time, instrumentalist grievances and frustrations played a role in solidifying these ethnic identities. However, it is important to recognize that ethnic identity politics alone cannot be seen as the sole cause of the conflicts. The ethnic groups in the region have a shared history and both express unique and shared cultural practices. Consequently, addressing the current conflict necessitates an instrumentalist approach that acknowledges their shared history and focuses on addressing instrumentalist grievances, rather than solely relying on identity politics as the primary driver of the conflicts.

Furthermore, based on information gathered from informants and our review, we find that historically, the Oromo residing in Gidda and Kiramu were subject to the authority of the Amhara nobility and local 'Balabats' (referred to as "Abbootii Lafaa" in Afan Oromo), who assisted the central government in governing the peripheral population in Ethiopia. The control of land was a crucial factor in controlling the people. Unlike the Leqa-Nekemte region, where traditional authorities were granted internal autonomy in exchange for acknowledging Shoan rule, the entire Horro-Guduru Zone, including Gidda-Kiramu at that time, was placed directly under the rule of Menelik's representatives [29]. However, the central authority, as in other incorporated lands, relied on subordinate local elites (Balabats) to govern the local population.

As noted by John M [30], a significant shift occurred in 1974 during the Ethiopian Revolution when the feudal aristocracy and the imperial bureaucracy were dispossessed. The revolution led to the emergence of a new class of Marxist cadre corps, who served as alternative local elites under the new military rulers. Subsequently, the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) replaced the cadre corps, establishing a class of "regional intellectuals"

as its auxiliary elites [31]. These structural changes, accompanied by the political shift following the revolution, had a profound impact on the traditional graciousness-based political ideology of the Balabats. Additionally, the efforts of the military regime to deconstruct the prevailing political ideologies of the time further contributed to the fragility of the Balabats' political thinking. However, it is worth noting that the EPRDF revolution and its political consequences could also be seen as a potential cause of the current political turmoil. In recent years, there have been criticisms of the diminishing ability of the EPRDF to effectively implement constitutional rights (as some critics argue).

Based on the information gathered from informants and our review of the literature, it is evident that political upheavals in the central government had a profound impact on power dynamics in the periphery, as well as inter-ethnic relations. The fall of the imperial regime brought an end to the political dominance of the Amhara community, while the Oromo community gained political power under the current government. This shift in power dynamics led to changes in allegiances and the formation of new alliances among different ethnic groups.

In addition to the changes in power relations at the center, state-sponsored population resettlement initiatives in the 1980s and the subsequent spontaneous migration of the Amhara population to the Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts after the fall of the Derg regime in 1991 had detrimental effects on inter-ethnic relations. These migrations turned the study districts into contested areas where competition for resources became intense and conflicts arose [30]. The influx of new populations, along with the historical grievances and tensions between different ethnic groups, exacerbated the already complex inter-ethnic dynamics in the region. The competition for land, economic opportunities, and political representation further fueled the conflicts in the area.

A critical turning point occurred in Ethiopia when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) assumed power in 1991, marking the beginning of a new political era. Central to this new political order was the recognition of ethnicity as a significant factor in power dynamics. The EPRDF leadership acknowledged the importance of ethnicity in political mobilization and sought to utilize it as a means of addressing disputes. A key strategy employed was the decentralization of government power along ethnic lines, with the aim of mitigating longstanding inter-ethnic tensions and fostering social cohesion.

However, a contrasting perspective emerged, attributing the deteriorating state of inter-ethnic relations to the politicization of ethnicity. This viewpoint questioned the effectiveness of the ethnic-based power structure in promoting harmonious relations between different ethnic groups. In recent years, inter-ethnic relations in Ethiopia have garnered considerable scholarly attention, driven by the academic community's quest to understand the underlying factors behind these divergent viewpoints and the significant shifts observed in inter-ethnic dynamics following the implementation of the new political framework. This review highlights the transformative impact of the EPRDF's ascent to power in 1991, emphasizing the central role assigned to ethnicity in shaping power dynamics. It also acknowledges the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding inter-ethnic relations, seeking to comprehend the reasons behind the varying perspectives and the notable changes in inter-ethnic dynamics resulting from the introduction of the new political paradigm.

According to Deribssa A [29], the rise in the frequency and intensity of ethnic-based conflicts, coupled with the examination of the impact of ethnic federalism on these conflicts, has generated a significant surge in scholarly engagement with inter-ethnic relations. This academic interest seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate surrounding the factors that contribute to the periodic escalation and de-escalation of ethnic-based conflicts in western Ethiopia since the implementation of the ethnic federalist system. The research aims to shed light on the causes of these conflicts and their fluctuating nature, considering the introduction of ethnic federalism as a critical turning point. By exploring the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations within the context of this political framework, scholars aim to deepen our understanding of the underlying factors that shape these conflicts over time. This review underscores the growing scholarly attention devoted to inter-ethnic relations, particularly in relation to the intensified conflicts observed in the wake of ethnic federalism. By delving into these complexities, researchers strive to contribute to the ongoing academic discourse and uncover valuable insights into the causes and patterns of ethnic-based conflicts in western Ethiopia.

Based on information collected from informants and supported by literature, it is evident that the districts of Gidda Ayana and Kiramu, situated on the western periphery of Ethiopia's highland plateau, have historically remained relatively isolated from the rest of the country. These districts were largely shielded from the tumultuous events that unfolded in the Horro-Guduru region during the nineteenth century. Additionally, they were unaffected by the competition between Gojjam and Shoa in the early 1880s, as both powers vied for control over this sub-province [25]. Moreover, it is worth noting that these districts did not attract substantial attention from European travelers who extensively documented their journeys in the wider western region of Ethiopia during the nineteenth century. Consequently, the

districts of Gidda Ayana and Kiramu were overlooked by these European tourists, further contributing to their relative obscurity in historical accounts. More specifically, based on the information collected from informants, significant changes in the regional dynamics of the two districts occurred following the Italian occupation of the 1930s. The construction of a dry-weather road and a bridge across the Angar River by the Italians played a crucial role in connecting the districts to Nekemte, the zonal capital. This physical connection not only broke their regional isolation but also facilitated greater regional interaction. Additionally, in 1970, Dutch citizens established a commercial farm in what is now known as Angar-Gutin, further contributing to the region's integration [32].

Moreover, in the mid-1980s, state-sponsored population displacement initiatives transformed these areas into a hub of abundant resources. The completion of the Nekemte-Bure Road in 1990 provided full connectivity to the rest of East Wallagga in the south and Gojjam in the north, exposing the two districts to a wide range of regional interactions. Subsequently, there was an increase in spontaneous population migration from the Amhara region, leading to the emergence of novel multi-ethnic interactions, some of which have been marked by conflict [28,29,31]. These developments have attracted the attention of scholars interested in understanding the complexities of these inter-ethnic dynamics [33].

Linking Instrumentalism and Primordialism Expression in Oromo-Amhara Conflicts in Gidda Ayana and Kiramu Districts

In highland areas, where local peasants who covertly sold or temporarily leased lands to Amhara settlers have reclaimed or requested additional payment, resulting in a conflict that has gone beyond court litigation, there have been breaches of contractual agreements over land, resulting in a conflict that has gone beyond court litigation, linking instrumentalism and primordial expressions. Aside from the aforementioned circumstances, ethnic-based federalism and the varying meanings and interpretations of the right to movement and the liberty to choose one's place of residence anywhere in the country, as enshrined in the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution (FDRE, Constitution, and article 32.) have created a schism between the settlers Amhara and host Oromo communities [34,35]. While Amhara settlers claim the constitutional right to dwell wherever in Ethiopia, the Oromo claim the right to limit such settlements to the degree that they endanger the lives of local people. For the Oromos, their land is the only resource to lead their lives, as Amharas have developed some fears of political resettlement to their original lands looking to the long future of politics, and thus exacerbating the conflicts as extremist groups from the

Amhara are trying their last, and fading chances of living in the area. Such discrepancies in settlement rights became a playground for Oromo elites, who reenacted long-forgotten Amhara ruler atrocities to reawaken old resentments. Moreover, this may lead us to consider how irritation fosters cohesion and, as a result, crystallizes distinctions between ethnic identities; hence this section explains how disparities incoherent identities lead to dissatisfaction and the possibility of widespread ethnic conflict. Ethnic identity differences, as discussed in the discussion of primordial's above, are a sufficient cause of intra-group cooperation and hospitality, as well as inter-group competition and conflict [36,37].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Oromo-Amhara ethnic conflicts in Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts in North-Eastern Wallagga exhibit a complex interplay between instrumentalist and primordialist theories. The conflicts are driven by a combination of instrumentalist motivations, such as breaches of contractual agreements over land and differing interpretations of constitutional rights, as well as primordial expressions, including the crystallization of ethnic identities and historical resentments.

The conflicts in these districts demonstrate that resource interests and power dynamics play a significant role in shaping ethnic relations. The Oromo community's suspicions towards non-Oromo or mixed-ethnic individuals and the vulnerability felt by the latter highlight the tense environment in which these conflicts unfold. Moreover, local economic interests, as exemplified by the Oromo anti-government land policy protest and Amhara solidarity, contribute to the realignment of peripheral communities. Integrating instrumentalist and primordialist theories provides a more comprehensive understanding of the Oromo-Amhara conflicts. It reveals that while instrumentalist factors, such as resource competition and political dynamics, drive the conflicts, primordialist elements, including historical grievances and the resurgence of ethnic identities, exacerbate tensions and fuel the conflicts further.

To effectively address these conflicts, it is crucial to consider both instrumentalist and primordialist perspectives. Resolving the disputes over land and resource allocation, addressing political grievances, and promoting inter-ethnic dialogue are essential steps to mitigate tensions and promote peaceful coexistence between the Oromo and Amhara communities in Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts. Further research and analysis are needed to deepen our understanding of the specific dynamics and underlying causes of the conflicts, as well as to explore potential strategies for conflict resolution and long-term reconciliation in the region.

Based on the analysis of the Oromo-Amhara ethnic conflicts in Gidda Ayana and Kiramu districts, North-Eastern Wallagga, and the integration of instrumentalist and primordialist theories, the following recommendations can be made: Facilitate structured and inclusive dialogues between the Oromo and Amhara communities to foster understanding, empathy, and reconciliation. Encourage community leaders, civil society organizations, and local authorities to play an active role in promoting peaceful coexistence and resolving conflicts through peaceful means. Establish mechanisms for resolving land disputes and breaches of contractual agreements. This may involve strengthening legal frameworks, ensuring fair and transparent land allocation processes, and providing avenues for affected parties to seek legal redress. Additionally, consider implementing land reform policies that address historical injustices and promote equitable access to land for all ethnic groups.

Promote economic development initiatives that benefit both the Oromo and Amhara communities. This can include investment in infrastructure, job creation, and skills development programs. By addressing economic disparities and ensuring equal access to economic opportunities, tensions arising from resource competition can be mitigated. Improve governance structures and institutions to enhance accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. This includes ensuring equal representation and participation of all ethnic groups in decision-making processes, addressing corruption and nepotism, and strengthening the capacity of local authorities to effectively manage conflicts and maintain peace. Moreover, promote cultural exchange programs, educational initiatives, and awareness campaigns that encourage mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation of the diverse cultural practices and histories of the Oromo and Amhara communities. This can help counteract the reemergence of historical resentments and foster a sense of unity and shared identity.

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