

# Ethiopia: Ethnic Conflict and Tragedy. A Comprehensive Analysis of the Hamar, Karo, and Arbore Communities

Temesgen Woza WONBERA

**Abstract:** Ethnic conflict is a prevalent issue in numerous countries worldwide, including Ethiopia. One common challenge faced by multi-ethnic federal states is the emergence of nationalism among ethnic-regional communities. Nevertheless, I contend that ethnic diversity alone is not typically the primary cause of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. Considering these factors, the study centered on ethnic conflict among the semi-pastoral communities of Hamar, Karo, and Arbore. This study adopted a qualitative research approach and used informant interviews and survey methods to collect primary data and examine relevant literature from secondary sources. As a result, the study found that the desire for self-determination, competition for resources, arms smuggling and marginalization, lack of good governance, poor cultural traditions, and political interests are the factors driving destructive ethnic conflicts in the study area.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Ethiopia, federalism, Karo, resources.

**Acknowledgments:** I would like to thank the local people, translators, and district administrators for their cooperation and support during data collection. I must recognize and acknowledge my colleagues for sharing their experiences and thoughts.

**Funding:** The author received financial support for the research activities from Jinka University.

## Introduction

Various governments have ruled Ethiopia for centuries, but have failed to provide political and legal protection for the country's

Temesgen Woza WONBERA  
Lecturer,  
Researcher and Head, Department  
of History Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Jinka University, Jinka, Ethiopia  
E-mail: temuwoza@gmail.com

Conflict Studies Quarterly  
Issue 47, April 2024, pp. 64–79

DOI: 10.24193/csqa.47.5  
Published First Online: April 05 / 2024

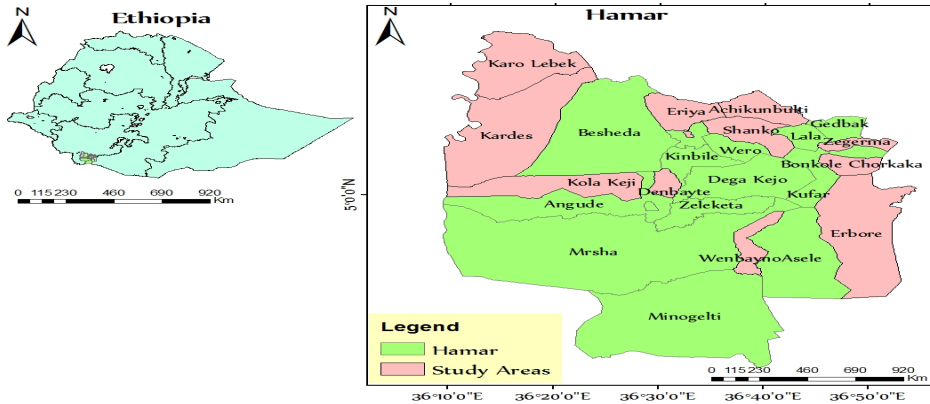
core multicultural and multilingual realities. Ultimately, this led to the pursuit of national identity and demands for equal opportunity, justice, and self-determination. For example, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were created to liberate the people (Bekele, 2021).

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front (EPRF), which overthrew the military regime in 1991 and replaced the ruling government, established a new form of political governance called 'ethnic federalism'. Among the EPRF's reforms were the decentralization of the state, the protection of the rights of ethnic groups and nationalists, the liberalization of the command economic system, and the self-determination and democratization of political parties, which allowed for the creation of a pluralistic organization. Although the new reforms have made significant progress in the country, significant limitations remain. These include demands for equal benefits from national economic and infrastructural development, cross-border and cross-border issues, marginalization of minority groups, corruption, and poor governance. The introduction and acceptance of a new political system designed to provide answers to long-standing questions about ethnic identity and development has led to the birth of new problems of ethnic rivalry and conflict throughout the Federation (Sarah, 2004; Bekele, 2021).

The area around South Omo is one of the areas rich in mosaic culture and natural resources. The area is home to many pastoralists and agro-pastoralists and has a diverse landscape. There are 16 indigenous peoples living here. That is, the Ari, Maale, Hamar, Benna, Tsemai, Brail, Erboore, Karra, Murle, Koigu, Nyangatom, Dassenech, Bodi, Bacha, Mursi, Dime, and other peoples from Konso, Basketo, and Amhara lived together in different parts of the region. Economically, the region is extremely marginal and limited due to poor infrastructure (Central Statistical Authority [CSA], 2013).

The ethnic conflict that has dominated the country in general and the southern Omo region in particular since 1991 has been a legacy of ethnic federalism. Weak governance, corruption, low levels of development, and lifestyle characteristics combined with competing access to pastures and fresh water have exacerbated existing problems in the region (Yohannes *et al.*, 2005).

The Hamar, Erboore, and Karo ethnic groups inherited from the Hamar region have a common linguistic and cultural tradition, a history of conflict, drought and famine, and economic interdependence, and ethnic groups that share poor governance. As a result, the trends, nature, and behavior of ethnic conflicts vary across places and times, manifesting new forms and dynamics with negative consequences in the country. Studies by several scholars have shown that the ethnic conflict between the Hamar, Erboore, and Karo communities is a legacy of the inadequate implementation of the recently adopted government system of ethnic federalism. Despite attempts by ruling institutions to resolve and reduce ongoing conflicts, the situation in the region has at times worsened due



**Figure 1:** Map of the study area

**Source:** South Omo Zone Economics and Finance Department

to poor governance, competition for limited resources, involvement of multiple actors, and political interests. Escalation of inter-communal conflict, from simple confrontations using traditional weapons to modern firearms, results in high casualties, destruction of infrastructure, population displacement, and drought. Therefore, this study aimed to explore ethnic conflict, the experiences of the Hamar, Erbore, and Karo ethnic groups, and the challenges they face in the context of ethnic federalism. The study also examines the dynamics of the conflict and its root causes, aggravating factors, attempts to resolve the conflict, and its impact on the community.

### Statement of the Problem

Like socialism, communism, and liberalism, federalism is an ideology that involves power sharing among autonomous nations and promotes the values of “unity in diversity”. Ethiopia is a diverse country with cultural differences between its constituent ethnic groups. The adoption of federalism in Ethiopia in 1991 appears to have been driven by the need to find an appropriate government structure that could manage the country's complex ethnolinguistic diversity and serve as a tool to reduce conflict. The newly created institutions were developed in response to the demands of all citizens and nationalities for equal rights, self-determination, and equal interests in the national economy, while the development of public services created more problems at different levels of the country (Vaughan, 2003; Bekele, 2021).

Several studies conducted on the causes of ethnic conflict between ordinary and pastoral communities in Ethiopia have identified factors such as unclear border differentiation, lack of understanding of political authority, timely intervention and resolution, land disputes, lack of proper governance, and competition for resources. Rangelands continue to be hotspots for ethnic conflict among the country's pastoralists (Mekonnen, 2016;

Assefa, 2001; Bekele, 2021). Therefore, the nature and causes of conflict varied depending on the region. The above factors are similar in Ethiopia as a whole and in the study area in particular. However, this study is generally consistent with research conducted on the causes and management of ethnic conflict between surrounding communities in the South Omo region and the Hamar, Erbore, and Karo ethnic groups. Studies carried out by (Gebre *et al.*, 2005; Sagawa, 2010) are weak in understanding the fundamentally dynamic nature and provide a naive explanation of the complex factors behind ethnic conflict in the region. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to resolve ethnic conflicts by considering the country's broad socio-cultural, economic, and political mechanisms as well as historical and environmental factors. This study explores and examines the root causes and consequences of conflict between these three communities and various options for community-led peace-building through implementing ethnic federalism. The study used key informant interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions to achieve these goals. Attempts have also been made to explore and organize the lessons and experiences of communities directly and indirectly affected by the conflict to gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding and insight.

## **Methodology**

The authors used a qualitative approach to conduct this study. Both primary and secondary data sources are used. Key informant interviews, document analysis, and archival material were also used. To collect the necessary data, the author followed the unstructured interview method.

Individuals, elders, representatives of religious institutions, government officials, and local appointees were interviewed. Articles, protocols, reports, and research papers were also evaluated. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with representatives from three purposively selected ethnic groups and each gender were conducted in four groups of eight people each. The researchers visited the research site from 8 November 2021 to 17 April 2021 and the Ethiopian Institute of Studies (IES) from 2–10 May 2021.

## **Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In this study, qualitative and quantitative data analysis and interpretation were used to realize the purpose of the study. This includes narrative, content, and qualitative comparative analysis (insights such as case studies).

## **Discussion**

### **Ethnic Conflicts, the Ethiopia Experience**

More than 80 ethnic groups live in Ethiopia, each with its own unique culture and traditions. In Ethiopia, after the fall of the Derg regime and the TPLF/EPRD's return to power in 1991, territorial administration and political representation were reorganized

along ethnic lines. As for the ethnic question, not because it substantively addressed the issue, but because government policy for the first time officially recognized ethnicity as a major tool for protecting the rights of ethnic groups and as a government measure to resolve past problems. Injustice or lack of justice and ethnic identity are often used to create differences where none previously existed, logically implying that people who identify differently culturally and historically will act or choose to act based on their ethnicity (Temesgen, 2023).

The Constitution formally introduced a new federal policy called “ethnic federalism”. The new Ethiopian Constitution represents a unique development in Africa, and perhaps globally, in its recognition of the rights of states, nationalities, and peoples (ethnic groups) to self-determination, including secession (Article 39 of the 1994 Constitution). Overall, the country's ethnic reorganization is causing ethnic conflict in various geographical areas of Ethiopia due to the ethnic political structure and lack of resources among various ethnic groups. Ethnic conflict is a major form of political instability in multi-ethnic societies such as Ethiopia and has become a global problem in the 21st century (Abbink, 1997).

The causes of conflict vary from country to country. For example, in northern Ethiopia around the former Shewa region, the causes of conflict were economic and social. In economic terms, land and other property are very important, and in social relationships, married partners fight against each other due to adultery, alcoholism, selfishness, insults, etc. (Admassu, 2019). In the South, people are fighting among themselves due to differences in religious doctrine, corruption, abuse of power, and lack of resources. Moreover, resource conflict is a major cause not only in the southern region but also in most regions of the country. The methods and procedures used to identify criminals also varied from region to region and society to society (Wondimu, 2008).

In the southernmost border areas, conflict arises due to a lack of resources. The scarcity of pasture and water or lack of pasture is reinforced by cattle rustling for marriage and sources of wealth accumulation, etc. First of all, for all ancestral peoples, living in permanent settlements has become one of the main problems of society. The issue has reached a peak and has become a major problem causing displacement of people from many parts of Ethiopia. In general, the main causes of conflict are the need for more power and land, inequality in development, the existence of various religions, and the biased perception of some religious leaders who believe that their religion is superior to others. For others, problems included the lack of clearly defined boundaries between regions and ethnic groups, marginalizing and discriminatory practices of local governments, lack of rule of law, lack of land use policies in pastoral areas, and provision of investment land for large plantation investors. Such discriminatory sentiments and actions have led to conflict situations and the forced displacement

of thousands of people. However, most conflicts in Ethiopia can be easily resolved at the grassroots level using society's local mechanisms without direct government intervention (Wondimu, 2008).

According to Awash (2005), different Ethiopian societies also have their own local institutions and conflict resolution mechanisms. They use traditional mechanisms to resolve inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts.

### **Historical Background of Hamar, Erbore, and Karo**

Before discussing ethnic conflict, it is important to first understand human interaction, history, settlement patterns, and community traditions.

#### **The Karo**

Information obtained through oral reports indicates that the area currently occupied by the Karo is not their original homeland. There are two oral accounts of the early population movements of the Karo. According to the first reports, they came to the Omo River from southern Sudan. While one of the segments stayed behind to form Dassaneh, the rest moved to Woyito to form the Arbore. The remaining part reached modern territory via Hamar Bashada and Bodi. The second account suggests they came from three directions: southern Sudan, Dassaneh, and Arbore. They moved to the highlands of Hamar- Banna formed the Karo. Except for the Bashada, who is considered one of the settler groups, the rest of the people who made up the Karo moved to the lowlands and settled in their modern territory, where they lost their herds and populations to tsetse flies and sleeping sickness. These included smaller groups such as the Moguji and Bogudo who may have been in the area, and the Gomba who, like the Karo, claim to have come as one of the migratory groups. The Karo people are a settled agricultural people of the lower Omo Valley. The Karo people make a living by cultivating sorghum, corn, and beans (Informant: Agumo).

The social organization of the Karo is considered to be its pattern of settlement and interaction among its members. The basis of Karo's social organization is the transition of individuals from close-knit peer groups to integrated age groups. The formation of age groups consists of several procedures, during which the younger Karo must give the older ones gifts in the form of beer and goats. In the formation of age groups, the transformation of status by jumping across the cattle and relationships established through marriage and bridewealth transactions grant adult status to young people (Informants: Wondemagegn Abebe and Azemach Totoro).



**Figure 2:** Karo Youth and Karo Parliament House based on Generation and Age Set

**Source:** Photo taken by Researcher

### **The Hamar**

According to oral reports, “The Omotic-speaking Hamars were originally inhabitants from the neighboring regions of Ari, Banna, Borana, Maale, Tsemay, and Alle (Informant: Shada Bulle). The “Boa” clan originated from the Gamu Goffa region, occupied the area south of present-day Turmi, and settled around Ghito, northeast of Fejej. Boas was a shepherd and later disappeared. Another tribe, the Boas, called the “Korre”, came from a southern direction, probably from the north of Samburu (a place located in modern-day Kenya), and settled in territory previously occupied by the Boas.

They also exploited the entire grassland area that existed between the shores of Lake Stephanie and Lake Rudolph. Like most of their neighboring peoples in the South Omo region, the Hamar people are agricultural pastoralists and have long lived with a degree of autonomy in the region. Like the Oromo, the sociopolitical organization of Hamar society is egalitarian, dominant, or ‘polycephalous’ In other words, they live in a kind of “regulated anarchy” where there is no central leader, and seniority and investigative skills play important roles in daily activities and conflict resolution. They had two ceremonial leaders, locally called Bitta, one from the Gatta clan and the other from the Worla clan. They were responsible for the spiritual well-being of the country but had no political power. They have 24 exogamous clans under two moieties. During the reign of Emperor Menelik II (c. 1844–1913 ) and Emperor Haile Selassie (r. 1931–1974), Hamar became part of the Ethiopian monarchy. After the end of the constitutional monarchy, the socialist Derg regime (ruled from 1974 to 1991) developed schools, roads, market plans, and emergency relief programs. The fall of the Derg rule in 1991 paved the way for the emergence of ethnic federalism in the country. Likewise, each ethnic group had its own ethnic identity and territorial unit, which became one of the factors in the ethnic conflict with more than 80 ethnic groups across the country (Strecker, 2013).



## The Erbore People

The Erbore/ Arbore are one of three ethnic groups living in the modern Hamar district. According to reflections received from local elders of Arbore... The name Arbore is a combination of two words: "Ar" and "Bore". "Ar" means a lively, rated Ox and symbolizes patriotism doing extraordinary things, while "Bore" refers to the gray soil on which the first settlers lived. The general meaning of Arbore is "land of the brave" or land of warriors. The Arbore consists of two parts or segments called "Ulde" and "Marle" (Informant: Hora Sora). They settled along the confluence of the Sagan-Woito River in the northern direction of Lake Stephanie or Lake Chu-Bakhir. Previously their number was about 3,000–3,500. However, this figure reached 6,840 (CSA, 2007). Regarding Arbore's sources, the informant's information reflects the following:

"Erbore originated from the northern region of Somalia. Their genealogy is rooted in the Cush family. They speak Aoho, a Cushitic language. The Arbore people consisted of two clans: Merla and Arbore. They were collectively called 'The Horror People'. Other people from Konso and Borena also joined Arebor and lived together for a long time. The Arbore people are believed to have first settled throughout Kenya. The pastoral lifestyle led people to move from Kenya to Dassenech and settle around the Woyito River. Because of their origin, they often came into conflict with the Hamar people".



**Figure 3:** Gnaar, Arbore Power Transition Ceremony

**Source:** Photo taken by Researcher

Arbore's social and political organization has three major community organizations: These include: A/ The Birr or clan organization; C/ Age Generation System; B/ "Lyuba" or Genealogical System. Arbore describes his clan as descendants of Borana, Gabra, and Rendille. These clans formed 20 exogamous patrilineal tribes that supported each other during marriage and dowry. Gabra (Kenya) settled in Arbor; Furto, Rees, Garora and Hasgaletch, Eabure, Hugussa and Feqaylle. The age organization system is organized



chronologically and genealogically, and this age organization is similar to the Gada system of the Oromo people. Arbore believes in a super-god named Waq, the English equivalent of the word "God" above. Kawat is responsible for the welfare of the community and ensures peace and abundance for the Arbore lands, residents, and livestock.

## **Findings**

The Horn of Africa is home to the largest pastoral community in the world. It was estimated pastoralism covers 61% of Ethiopia's land area and 12% of its population. Pastoralism requires both extensive use of land and freedom of movement. The pastoral communities of the South Omo River, Boran, Afar, and Somali are the major ethnic groups living on the country's borders with neighboring countries. In addition to their role in promoting national growth, Ethiopian pastoralists face natural and human threats to their way of life and survival (Mohammad, 2005). According to most scholars' studies conducted in various pastoral communities in Ethiopia, the main causes of conflict among pastoral groups in Ethiopia are periodic and unpredictable resource shortages, increasing animal and human populations, recurrent droughts, lack of proper governance, climate change, and the ecosystem (Assefa, 2001; Admassu, 2019; Menbere *et al.*, 2013).

The Hamar, Erbore, and Karo pastoralists are people who live in the South Omo region of southern Ethiopia. For centuries they mingled and interacted with their neighbors in peaceful and friendly terms. Likewise, these three ethnic groups had constant conflicts between themselves and their neighbors. However, these communities have experienced frequent ethnic conflict over the past three decades. The causes of conflict between the three ethnic groups are multidimensional and dynamic. The Hamar community, located between the two clans, borders Karo to the north and Erbor to the east of the region. Hamara and Karo share family ties and common cultural values. Because of this relationship, conflicts are less frequent and less severe than those that existed between the Hamar and Arbore people. Therefore, this area is the site of the most frequent conflict between the Hamara and Arbore people. The Hamar-Banna clan is the best example of the widespread kinship between the Hamar and Karo ethnic groups. Whenever conflict arose between these clans, they tried to resolve the problem by using their commonalities. Therefore, the extent of engagement between Hamar and Karo is shorter than between Arbore and Hamar.

### **• Causes of ethnic conflicts**

The conflict has many causes. The severity of each varies. The author argues that the heterogeneity of ethnic groups in the region cannot lead to ethnic conflict. This section explains what caused the crash. This study therefore raises important questions that need to be answered. What factors contribute to the emergence of ethnic conflict in the study area?

## **I. Colonial impacts**

The history of ethnic conflict between the Hamar and Arbore people dates back to colonial times when Ethiopia was under Italian occupation. During the Italian occupation, Arbore land was one of the places where Italian military bases were stationed. After establishing a military base at Gondorob, the Italians established friendly relations with the Arbore residents. The Italians used some locals as directional signs and developed hostile relations with the Hamar community. Hamar accuses Arbore of bringing Italians to their land. According to my sources, the Italians had poorer relations with the Hamars than with Arbore. The Italians used the Hamars as a labor force and treated them as spies for Ethiopian patriots from central Ethiopia. When the Italians left the country after the bitter struggle of the patriots, the relations and good neighbors between Arbore and Hamar turned into hostility. Therefore, the emergence of ethnic conflicts in the region is also due to the continued impact of colonial rule, which was one of the main reasons and historical factors for the start of the existing hatred and hostility between the two ethnic groups.

## **II. Resource**

In pastoral communities, the availability of land and rivers for drinking water is very important for animals. As the population grew and the number of animals each household owned increased, the demand for pasture increased. Especially during the dry season, grass loss forces communities to move to riverbanks where they can find small bags of green. Lack and unwise use of limited resources lead to brutal wars and violent conflicts. The map of ethnic conflict in the region is increasingly complex and anxious due to factors such as drought, chronic poverty, unemployment (especially among youth), unequal distribution of resources, and fierce competition for dispersed resources. According to the political map of the South Omo region, the Hammar region is located between the Woyito and Omo rivers. Arbore owns land along the Woyito River that extends to Chew Bahir and believes the green space around the river is theirs. They fought with their neighbors to protect their pastures. On the Hamar side, the growing demand for arable land and pastures is so high that these territories are sometimes openly encroached upon. It is therefore a resource factor that exacerbates ethnic conflict between the two ethnic groups in the region.

Another resource issue is territory. Territory is one of the most frequent conflict issues in the region. It was argued that when there is a conflict between individuals, groups of youth move to territorial borders, displacing people from border areas between conflicting ethnic groups. The border areas these groups claim are not legally known or defined by the government. For example, the Arbore claim that the lowland plateau that exists beneath Mount Hamar belongs to their ancestors. As a result of the conflict, Hamar retreated to the mountains, but this story was not accepted by the people of

Hamar. Pastures and territorial claims are therefore the main conflict issues between Hamar and Arbores.

### **III. Politics and administrative quests**

Uneducated and irresponsible politicians take political positions, whether legal or illegal and always oppose the problems of other ethnic groups (neighboring ethnic groups) to protect the interests of their ethnic groups. This leads to inter-ethnic competition and sparks already existing inter-ethnic conflicts regarding resources in the study area. So, in most cases, the conflict in the area ends up giving rise to political problems rather than being perceived as normal as before. This shows that politicians' interests are always behind conflicts. Politicians and elites have also played a significant role in fomenting conflict by misrepresenting their political agendas to the public. As a tool, they hire and use militias to carry out violence on their behalf, simply polarizing the discourse against their opponents. When they lose acceptance from the administration, they join the community and further fan the flames of existing conflict. As the elders said, politicians often have a great influence on the violent mobilization of conflict dynamics. For example, by exploiting regional divisions to provoke violence to weaken internal opposition between groups and force them to stand together against other ethnic groups. Although the desire for self-determination has not been officially declared. Rumors spreading within the community, especially among leaders removed from local and district positions are another factor that promotes hatred between conflicting ethnic groups. In particular, Arbores elites believe that creating their district administration will solve all of the region's problems. This desire for administrative independence is widespread among young people and is also confirmed in official meetings. Some politicians who have been demoted are using this as a means to regain power. It therefore becomes a means of intense competition among elites even in stable political environments of rent-seeking. Imbalance in political appointments based on racial composition is another political factor in the conflict. In particular, Hamar's dominance in the administration of local administrations is one of the political issues raised by Arbores as a reason for pushing for an independent local administration. Hamar's ruling elite also laid claim to their region. Arbores finally brought together all the representatives of the region.

### **IV. Animal raiding**

Cattle and goats are the main assets of lowland pastoral communities. Animals are everything to society. They are a source of food, a source of finances, and a way to gain the respect of the rich. A man with a huge herd of cows and goats has the goods because he treats the cows the same as cash. Under normal circumstances, cattle are not a cause of conflict. For centuries there has been a long tradition of rustling cattle for prestige and bride price. So this time, people travel to very distant villages to collect animals and raid them for bride price. This is one of the causes of conflict involving different

ethnic groups. Hamar, for example, is widely known for this practice. The victims of this culture are the Arbors, animals that Hamars regularly raid. Nowadays, animals are raided not only for social purposes such as prestige or bride price but also for sale to traders coming from the city. But this commercial cattle rustling, accompanied by excessive violence, is spreading hatred among city dwellers and herders. Local youths act as middlemen and sell animals in large quantities to defraud residents. The number of people involved in the large-scale trafficking of animals is increasing, and conflicts are increasing.

### **V. Revenging**

The main reason why the problem persists in this region is actually because people are thinking of revenge and setting the stage for the coming reaction. The main factor that makes this so serious is that it is deeply rooted in the soul of the community. The community as a whole views other communities as enemies to some degree and must be punished by outside organizations or the next generation of the affected group. One of Arbore's respondents said he compared this to foreign invaders taking advantage of a community's resources. He also said that if the government does not try to stop them, the community will always take steps to keep them peaceful. The Revenge campaign is seasonal. Hamar is known to attack Arbore in the summer, but Arbore attacks Hamar every winter. The young men of Arbore promise each other to return the land taken by Hamar. According to my informant, Hora Sora, the Arbore and Hamar originally used bows and arrows, but when the Italians left their homeland, they left behind ancient pistols (old firearms) such as Minishir, Alben, and Demotfer. Arbore was the first to go armed. An Italian base camp was established at Gondorob, and some of the Arbore's men served the Italians as bandits and were recruited as infantry by the Italians. Few of the Arbore residents interacted with the patriots and secretly provided information about the Italian troops invading the colony. As a result, friendly relations between ethnic groups were distorted, and people began to suspect each other. Hamar attacked the Arbore in revenge after the Italians fled the country.

### **VI. External actors**

Another important factor is accessibility to small arms or firearms trade from neighboring countries. The border between Ethiopia and Kenya is open and uncontrolled. Smuggling is therefore widespread in the region. Small armies secretly trade and exchange livestock. Ammunition trade is common in the study area. Ammunition is constantly supplied by smugglers. Sometimes replacements are provided to conflicting groups through sales or support from neighboring ethnic groups in Kenya. Merchants of each race have a mission to supply vital weapons to their communities. Merchants are the most loved and respected in the community. Merchants also take it upon themselves to teach and show small armies of buyers how to use them. Along with owning livestock, it is believed that having a small fire brigade and knowing how to use it is

vital for men to protect their families and communities. Therefore, the head of every household will own at least one firearm. Filming takes place in Konso and Borena. Unrest around the Konso region is another external factor. Additionally, external support for conflict parties can be considered another important factor. The support of neighboring pastoralist communities across the border and other pastoral neighbors in nearby areas, such as the Borena region in the Oromia region, has brought people into conflict, especially for Arbore. The Arbore community has more ethnic and historical ties with the Oromo community. Although there have been rare clashes with Borana, Arbore has received support from Borana while fighting Hamas. The Arbore either seek to join their northern neighbors, the Tsemai, or claim to be part of Oromia, with which they have historical links. For this, they spoke with Aba Geda.

### **Consequences of the Conflicts**

Due to poor governance, frequent conflicts in Ethiopia have undermined the principles of peaceful coexistence, strengthened existing social bonds, and threatened national unity. Violence broke out in several parts of the region, forcing millions of citizens to flee their homes. In places where conflict and violence have occurred, government institutions and other infrastructure and social services, especially health, education, and electricity, have been destroyed and damaged (Mendo, 2023). According to the South Omo Region Peace Management Department, the conflict between Hamar and Arbore was caused by hostility, suspicion, deaths on two sides, livestock theft, and grazing, as mentioned above. Below is an example of the results of ethnic conflicts between the Hamar and Arbore tribes.

- These attacks result in human casualties and animals being abducted and killed.
  - Conflicts affect livestock production by reducing the spatial redistribution of animals outside of conflict grazing areas, which exacerbates the problem of overgrazing on relatively safe lands and leads to land degradation due to overgrazing.
  - Trade routes, market areas, and market prices were affected by the conflict. When conflict breaks out, markets are often destroyed and retail stores close. Food, medicine, water, and firewood are not available.
  - Conflicts lead to the closure of sectors providing social services such as schools, health centers, projects, and other important economic services.
  - Food insecurity has become a problem and people are dependent on food assistance.
- Let us discuss the consequences of racial conflict in detail.

#### **• Influence on human life**

Today, the dynamics of conflict are changing in such a way that every fight that occurs between individuals in society is becoming politicized and creating administrative difficulties. Every season, managers spend time resolving disputes. Security issues are another headache for regional administration. Local administrators primarily invest their

time and budget in conflict management. This has created challenges for leadership, especially in other development sectors. Compared to the relatively peaceful surrounding areas, this area is underdeveloped with poor infrastructure and poor educational facilities. As respondents repeatedly pointed out, especially from 2015 to the present, the color of the conflict has changed to pure politics, with conflict participants in the Arbore region demanding a new administrative structure (their independent district). Actors are provoking people to raise political issues to undermine other development activities taking place in the region. Some of the political issues people always raise about local administrators are when comparing the number of people holding public office at the local level. They recalculated their political positions and concluded that Hamar had been helped by local leadership during the conflict. This makes life difficult for local governments and weakens acceptance in society.

- **Influence on economy/property**

This area is a pastoral community where people live by following animals in a semi-arid region where water is scarce. They build small temporary villages where they stay for short periods. Even in winter, people are very busy. In particular, the period from January to June every year is a time when sparsely grown vegetables and serial plants dry out due to lack of water droplets. This season there is always conflict between neighboring Hamar and Arbore over control of the relatively green river base for grazing. During the conflict, the enemies burn the small village, taking all the food they had gathered to feed the children for months. Similarly, on other days, victims organize and demolish villages in other areas. This worsened poverty in the region and increased unwanted demands on informally organized groups, putting pressure on politicians. The large-scale depredation of enemy animals is another very distressing fact and shows how negatively the conflict affects the local economy and the wealth of the people. Animals are anything that is considered cash equivalent or equivalent to the people living in that area. Especially when conflict is too severe, young people travel to nearby settlements and bring back animals. This is especially true for poor people who invest everything they have in animals.

## **Conclusion**

Ethnic conflict has been one of the persistent problems facing Ethiopia over the past three decades. Therefore, this study assesses ethnic conflict between the Hamar, Karo, and Arbore communities. The causes of ethnic conflict may vary from region to region. This study shows that one of the factors driving ethnic conflict between these semi-pastoral ethnic groups was greed and disregard for fair use of scarce resources that promote regional harmony and peaceful coexistence. Demands for autonomy are another factor sparking ethnic tensions in the region. Likewise, the hidden cause of the conflict was the elite's manipulation of ethnicity to satisfy their own needs, mainly



political goals. Including the above-listed factors, the causes of ethnic conflict among the people of the Hamar region, the above are socio-cultural practices such as rustling cows as symbols of heroes and killing neighbors. Problems of good governance and extreme corruption are other problems in the region. Gun smuggling has heightened tensions and sparked conflict, particularly between Hamar and Arbore. Several attempts were made to resolve the conflict. To resolve the escalating conflict, two forms of conflict management have been implemented: local mechanisms and mechanisms adopted by the formal judicial system. In traditional conflict mediation; Differences between ethnic groups were resolved through negotiations with local negotiators, elders, and notables. Sources suggest that traditional conflict resolution methods are more effective than government arbitration and formal court systems in the region. The latter is why society is reluctant to hand over criminals and the long process and remote location of local courts. Finally, the study recommends promoting peace and coexistence among the Hamar, Karo, and Arbore tribes by promoting the rule of law and accountability at various levels of the government structure. Likewise, independent civic groups that promote integration between ethnic groups should also strive for people's coexistence and peace. Additionally, it would be better for the government to create a platform to help all stakeholders and improve the social conditions of these communities.

## **References**

1. Abbink, J. (1997). Ethnicity and constitutionalism in contemporary Ethiopia. *Journal of African Law*, 41(2), 159–161.
2. Admassu, M. D. (2019). Causes of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia and its effect on development: The case of 'Amhara' and 'Gumuz' communities. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 21(3), 65–66.
3. Assefa, A. (2001, May 11–12). Indigenous mechanisms for the prevention of conflict: The experience of the Oromo. Paper presented at the Workshop on Conflict in the Horn: Prevention and Resolution organized by the Ethiopia Chapter of OSSREA, May 11–12, 2001, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
4. Bekele, T. (2021). Factors of ethnic conflict in the Ethiopian Federation. *Religación, Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 6, 19–21.
5. Central Statistical Authority. (2013). *Summary and statistical report of the 2013 of total estimated population of regions by age group, sex and place of residence*. CSA.
6. Gebre, Y. M., Hadgu, K., & Ambaye, Z. (2005). *Addressing pastoral conflict in Ethiopia: The Case of the Kuraz and Hamar sub-districts of South Omo Zone*. Africa Peace Forum, Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association, Inter-African Group, & Saferworld.
7. Gebre, Y. (2012a). *Environmental change, food crises and violence in Dassanech, Southern Ethiopia*. Research Unit Peace and Conflict Studies.
8. Gebre, Y. (2012b). Inter-atker Discord: The Case of the Nyangatom and the Turkana. In G. Mulugeta and J. B. Butera (Eds.), *Climate change and pastoralism: Traditional*

- coping mechanisms and conflict in the Horn of Africa* (pp. 351–374). Institute for Peace and Security Studies and University for Peace.
9. Mekonnen, D. (2016). Major features of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*, X(11), 1–3.
  10. Menbere, A., Feye, B., & Getahun, Z. (2013). Local conflicts and ethnic relations among Konso and Derashe of Southern Ethiopia: Case Study. *Open Science Repository Anthropology*. DOI: 10.7392/openaccess.23050403.
  11. Mendo, T. (2023). *Ethnicity and conflict in Africa: The contemporary conflict of ethnicity in Ethiopia*. Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
  12. Sagawa, T. (2010). Local potential for peace: Trans-ethnic cross-cutting ties among the Daasanach and their neighbors. In E. C. Gabbert and S. Thubauville (Eds.), *To live with others: Essays on cultural neighborhood in Southern Ethiopia*, 53–56.
  13. Strecker, I. (2013). Berimba's resistance: The life and times of a great Hamar spokesman as told by his son Aike Berinas. *Aethiopica*, 19(1), 298–300.
  14. Vaughan, S. (2003). *Ethnicity and power in Ethiopia*. The University of Edinburgh.
  15. Wondimu, H. (2008). Challenges of cultural pluralism for the democratic development of Ethiopia: A social-psychological perspective. Paper presented at the Ethiopia Chapter of OSSREA Proceedings of National Workshops, *Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*.