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Fragile Federation: Violent Conflict and Attitudes toward Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia

Abstract

Ethnic federalism has long been a cornerstone of Ethiopia's political system—and a recurrent source of violent conflict. Despite its centrality to the country's governance and conflict dynamics, there is a notable absence of large-N quantitative research examining how exposure to violence shapes public attitudes toward ethnic federalism. This study addresses that gap by leveraging nationally representative data from rounds 8 and 9 of the Afrobarometer surveys (n = 4,778). To estimate the causal effect of violent conflict on attitudes toward ethnic federalism, we employ an instrumental variable approach that exploits the distance from respondents' geolocation to the nearest international border as an exogenous source of variation in conflict exposure. Our findings reveal that exposure to violent conflict increases support for ethnic federalism. Qualitative interviews with participants across four regions in Ethiopia suggest that violent conflict erodes trust in the central government, weakens national belonging, and strengthens ethnic identification.

JEL: D63, D74, J15

Keywords: Ethiopia, ethnic federalism, ethnicity, violent conflict, marginalization, governance

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Fragile Federation: Violent Conflict and Attitudes toward Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia

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Article Outline

1 Introduction

Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (Raleigh et al. 2010) indicate that 2024 was the year seeing the most number of incidents of violent conflict in Ethiopia since 1997.[1] In those 12 months alone, 2,503 such incidents were recorded—an 86 percent

1 We define "violent conflict" as any occurrence falling under any one of the following three categories: battles, violence against civilians, and explosions/remote violence. In other words, we exclude events classified as protests, riots, and strategic developments.

increase compared to the 1,364 documented in 2023. The events of 2024 resulted in 7,592 direct fatalities, averaging approximately 21 deaths per day. Given the persistence and scale of the violence, it is unsurprising that a 2023 Afrobarometer survey found that 58 percent of Ethiopians believe the government to have performed poorly in preventing or resolving violent conflict nationwide.[2] Furthermore, 20 percent identified insecurity as the most pressing issue facing the country—second only to concerns about the economy and the government's management of it.[3]

The Afrobarometer survey also highlights the deep salience of ethnicity in Ethiopian society. A majority—57 percent of the adult population—believe that members of their ethnic group are treated unfairly by the government. Additionally, 20 percent identify either exclusively with their ethnic group or more strongly with it than with the Ethiopian nation. Ethnic mistrust is also widespread: some 20 percent of Ethiopians say they do not trust people from other ethnic groups at all, while 21 percent express discomfort with having neighbors from a different ethnic background. Reflecting these sentiments, 57 percent of the population support a federal system in which regional governments are organized along ethnic lines, viewing it as the most suitable form of governance.

Ethnicity, territorial disputes, and struggles over the federal structure of the Ethiopian state have been central to the major conflict episodes the country has experienced over the past five years. One of the most significant of these was the Tigray War (2020–2022), primarily fought between the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). With an estimated 800,000 deaths—a figure likely undercounted given the millions still displaced or missing—the Tigray war stands as the deadliest conflict of the twenty-first century (Weldemichel 2025). Direct hostilities began when the TPLF launched an attack on a federal military base in Tigray, prompting a large-scale offensive by the federal government in conjunction with Eritrean troops as well as Amhara regional forces and militias. A core issue in the war was the TPLF's staunch support for ethnic federalism and its opposition to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's reforms, which were widely perceived as efforts to centralize power and undermine the ethnic federal structure that had long benefited the TPLF (Weldemichel 2025; Okeowo 2024; Plaut & Vaughan 2023; Ishiyama 2023; Uluer 2022; International Crisis Group 2021).

A similar dynamic is evident in the ongoing Amhara conflict, also known as the Fano insurgency, which began in 2023. Like the Tigray conflict, one of its primary triggers was concern about ethnic marginalization among the Amhara and the federal government's attempt to integrate Amhara regional special forces into the national military command. This move was met

2 For the Afrobarometer data and survey questionnaire, see: https://www.afrobarometer.org/.

3 The estimate of 20 percent was derived by totaling up respondents who identified any of the following four items as the main problem facing the country: civil war, political instability, political violence, and/or crime and security.

with strong resistance from Amhara nationalists, who accused the central government of eroding regional autonomy and failing to defend Amhara interests in territorial disputes—particularly those involving Tigray and Oromia (Tesfaye & Debebe 2025; Aljazeera 2024; Yibeltal 2023; Ford 2023). Beyond these high-profile conflicts, Ethiopia has also experienced persistent ethnic violence in Benishangul-Gumuz and other peripheral regions such as Gambella, Somali, and parts of the Southern Nations (Gashute et al. 2025; Demsash & Bekele 2024; Mulugeta et al. 2024; Hagos 2021; Adeto 2016). These conflicts are largely driven by contestation over land ownership, identity, political representation, and perceived marginalization (Feyissa 2011).

Although ethnic federalism in Ethiopia has been the subject of extensive scholarly attention (e.g., Demerew 2024; Aragaw 2024; Ishiyama 2023, 2023a; Fiseha 2012; Abbay 2004; Samatar 2024; Abbink 2006), there remains a significant gap in large-N quantitative studies that examine how Ethiopians' perceptions of it are shaped by exposure to violent conflict. This study seeks to address that gap by leveraging data from rounds 8 and 9 of the Afrobarometer surveys, conducted in Ethiopia in 2020 and 2023 respectively (n = 4,778). Specifically, we assess the causal effect of exposure to violent conflict on public attitudes toward ethnic federalism. We measure support for the latter using an additive index based on responses to two questions: (1) the extent to which respondents believe ethnic federalism is the best form of government and (2) the extent to which they support defining administrative regions along ethnic lines. To quantify exposure to violent conflict, we calculate the total number of such incidents that occurred within a 30-kilometer radius of each respondent's dwelling. This conflict exposure variable was constructed using QGIS software, drawing on geocoded information from both the Afrobarometer and ACLED datasets.

We estimate the causal effect of violent conflict on attitudes toward ethnic federalism using an instrumental variable (IV) approach exploiting the distance from respondents' geolocation to the nearest national border as a source of exogenous variation in conflict exposure. Our regression results show that exposure decreases opposition to ethnic federalism—meaning that those directly experiencing violence are more likely to support that governance model. This effect is particularly pronounced among members of the three major ethnic groups—Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray—as well as among individuals who believe their ethnic group to be treated unfairly by the central government. Importantly, the results are robust to alternative specifications. They hold when we use total fatalities, rather than incident counts, as the measure of conflict exposure; when we rely on conflict data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's Georeferenced Events Dataset (UCDP-GED) (Sundberg & Melander 2013)[4] and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism 2022)[5] instead of ACLED; and, when we restrict the sample to individuals who experienced at least one conflict incident within a 30 km radius of their dwelling.

4 See: https://ucdp.uu.se/.

5 See: https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/.

To better understand the mechanisms underlying our quantitative findings, we draw on in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with interlocutors from four regions across Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, and Tigray) between December 2023 and December 2024. This qualitative evidence reveals that violent conflict erodes trust in the central government, weakens national identification, and reinforces the salience of ethnicity. It also shows that support for ethnic federalism is rooted in the historical marginalization experienced by members of various groups under the imperial and Derg regimes. These experiences lead many to view that form of governance as a viable mechanism for addressing past injustices and securing recognition for Ethiopia's diverse ethnic communities.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows: The next section examines the central role of ethnicity in Ethiopian society, followed by a discussion of theoretical premises and our guiding hypothesis. We then introduce the data, define the variables used in the regression analysis, and outline our empirical strategy. The subsequent section presents and interprets the regression results, as well as the qualitative results. Finally, we conclude with a summary of the findings and discussion of their broader implications.

2 The Role of Ethnicity in Shaping Ethiopian Society

Scholarly interest in how individuals' exposure to conflict and instability shapes their preferences regarding systems of governance has increased (Bester 2024; Tuki 2024). In the Ethiopian context, however, significant gaps remain—particularly concerning how experiences of marginalization and conflict influence support for ethnic federalism (Gebissa 2021). This section examines the relationship between historical experiences of marginalization and conflict, support for ethnic federalism, and perceptions of the opportunities and challenges posed by the current governance model. Ethiopia's complex historical trajectory is essential to understanding these dynamics (Levine 2011).

The foundation of the Ethiopian state was laid during the imperial era dominated by the Solomonic dynasty, which ruled with few interruptions until its fall in 1974 (Crummey 1988; Levine 2011). The empire was consolidated under Menelik II, who significantly expanded Ethiopia's territorial boundaries following military victories such as the Battle of Embabo in 1882 and the decisive triumph at Adwa in 1896, which set back Italian colonial ambitions (Caulk 1975; Zewde 1991; Vaughan 2003). At its height, the empire was a multinational and multilingual polity, but one characterized by hierarchical control and cultural imposition (Markakis 2011). Rulers from central Ethiopia institutionalized Amharic as the language of administration, thereby marginalizing many ethnic groups—especially those in newly annexed areas where Islam prevailed—and sowing deep-rooted grievances (Markakis 2011; Vaughan 2003). As Vaughan notes, "by alienating the territories of the annexed societies and imposing Abyssinian culture [the culture of the people of northern Ethiopia], the conquerors sowed the seeds

of national and class antagonisms" (2003, p. 110). Recurring cycles of instability and marginalization ensued.

This imperial legacy inspired early struggles for equality and cultural recognition (Zewde 1991). In particular, the Ethiopian student movements of the 1960s and 1970s called for justice and inclusion for the country's different ethnic groups (Legesse 1979). These movements contributed to the overthrow of the imperial monarchy and ushered in the Derg regime—a Marxist-Leninist military junta that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991 (Legesse 1979). The Derg pursued radical reforms but governed with an iron fist, as epitomized by the Red Terror campaign that involved mass arrests and executions (Zewde 2002; Teffera 2012). In the 1980s, Ethiopia suffered from famine, economic decline, and civil war, further destabilizing the country (De Waal 1991; Gill 2010).

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) overthrew the Derg in 1991 and introduced ethnic federalism via the 1995 Constitution, dramatically changing the structure of the state (Feyissa 2011; Tadesse 2007). This federal arrangement granted political and territorial autonomy along ethnic lines and was intended to empower historically marginalized groups and accommodate social diversity (Alem 2005). The introduction of ethnic federalism by the TPLF marked a significant political shift away from the previous model of governance in aiming to decentralize power to defined regional units (Abbink 2011). This system constitutionally recognized nondominant groups and emphasized ethnicity in politics over a unified pan-Ethiopian identity. With the adoption of the Constitution, ethnic and cultural rights were formally recognized and long-marginalized regions experienced a new economic dynamic. In practice, however, the ruling party pursued a more centralized state, which restricted local autonomy and thus exacerbated ethnic tensions (Abbink 2011). Moreover, the EPRDF adopted the language of self-determination to win over disaffected and rebellious ethnic groups, suggesting that support for ethnic federalism was strongest—even if not universal—where historical grievances were most acute (Young 1999).

Ethnic identity has historically shaped not only social organization but also political struggles, often becoming a source of violent conflict and instability (Markakis 2011). Ethnic federalism, introduced to address these divisions, remains controversial. It has enabled some historically excluded groups to participate more fully in the country's social and political life (De Waal 2015) by organizing federal states around autochthonous populations (indigenous or native groups), while often excluding allochthonous groups (migrants or nonindigenous people perceived as outsiders) from regions beyond their ancestral homelands (Abbink 2011; Feyissa 2011; Schlee 2013). Van der Beken (2015) emphasizes the challenges this poses for safeguarding Ethiopia's ethnic diversity and integration of migrants and displaced persons. He notes that many citizens now live outside their ethnically defined regional states, making political inclusion and minority protection more difficult. In addition, the system must confront issues such as the politicization of ethnicity, regional power imbalances, and tensions over territorial claims (Alem 2005; Tadesse 2007).

The EPRDF's developmental model achieved impressive economic growth and social development, with poverty rates falling significantly between 2000 and 2016 (Asayehgn 2019; IMF 2018). However, despite gains in representativeness, the EPRDF failed to lead Ethiopia to full democracy and political inclusivity. Scholars argue that the ruling coalition governed with an iron fist in concentrating power in their own hands, frequently favoring the TPLF faction, and brutally suppressing dissent (Bach 2011; Merera 2003; Tronvoll & Hagmann 2011). Parliament merely approved decisions made by the regime without meaningful debate or opposition—and the latter relied more on clientelism than genuine political reform (Lefort 2018; Hagos & Winczorek 2018). These shortcomings fueled popular discontent and protests, which culminated in a change of leadership in 2018.

However, the incoming Prosperity Party (the current ruling party) further centralized state authority and undermined constitutionally guaranteed self-governance, exacerbating ethnic tensions and secessionist sentiments (Gebissa 2021). Ever since Abiy took office in 2018, ethnic federalism in Ethiopia has faced growing challenges (Gebissa 2021; Weldemichel 2025). His government has pursued policies aimed at centralizing power and limiting the self-administration of regional governments, especially those led by ethnicity-based political parties (Gebrewahd 2024; Weldemichel 2025). These measures have provoked significant opposition from several regional states, particularly Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions, leading to heightened political tensions and in some cases violent conflict (Gebissa 2021; Gebrewahd 2024; Weldemichel 2025). The contested balance between federal authority and regional self-governance continues to characterize Ethiopia's political landscape, underscoring the ongoing struggles within its ethnically structured federal system (Gebissa 2021).

3 Theoretical Considerations

In his influential book *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Horowitz (1985) argues that ethnic affiliations are powerful and enduring, often rooted in shared language, religion, and culture. While not inherently conflictual, these identities become politically charged when groups deem themselves to be subject to social inequality or exclusion. A central theme in Horowitz's work is how perceived threats and intergroup competition are key drivers of ethnic conflict. These dynamics are particularly pronounced in divided societies, where ethnic groups compete for resources, power, and status within a zero-sum framework—where one group's gain is viewed as another's loss. Horowitz also emphasizes the significance of historical experiences in shaping mobilization. Legacies of domination and marginalization often leave deep-seated grievances that can be reawakened in the course of contemporary political struggles. Groups that see themselves as historically disadvantaged may be especially susceptible here. Building on this insight, Stewart (2000) develops the theory of "horizontal inequalities," showing how

community leaders strategically invoke episodes of historical marginalization to heighten group consciousness and foster internal cohesion, thereby increasing the likelihood of conflict.

Regardless of the underlying causes of such strife, the challenge of accommodating diverse groups is a persistent reality for many multiethnic states. One leading approach to the study of ethnic conflict and political adaptation is "consociationalism," as first formulated by Lijphart (1977). This classical perspective holds that ethnic diversity in divided societies is best managed through institutional mechanisms of power-sharing, including federalism or decentralization, proportional representation, and parliamentarianism. Consociationalism emphasizes inclusive governance by granting autonomy to ethnic groups and ensuring their representation in policymaking, thereby reducing grievances and the potential for violent conflict. By enabling different communities to maintain their cultural, linguistic, and political rights within a shared state framework, consociational institutions promote stability in multiethnic societies (Lijphart 1977; Doorenspleet & Pellikaan 2013). "Ethnofederalism"—an institutional framework that organizes federations along ethnic lines—is one such approach to managing this diversity.

In contrast, scholars such as Horowitz (1985, 2014) advocate for an alternative model known as "centripetalism," which challenges the assumption that ethnic accommodation necessarily promotes peace. He contends that the formal institutionalization of ethnicity as a basis for political mobilization can entrench related divisions, creating incentives for elites to exploit identity cleavages for electoral advantage or as part of ongoing power struggles. Rather than mitigating tensions, this may in fact deepen them. Accordingly, Horowitz favors institutional designs that encourage political competition along nonethnic lines such as ideology, policy preferences, or socioeconomic interests, thereby fostering cross-ethnic cooperation and diluting the primacy of ethnic identity in politics (Horowitz 1985, 2014; Gisselquist 2013).

While consociational systems aim to reduce conflict through power-sharing, they have also come in for criticism for reinforcing ethnic cleavages. In particular, ethnofederalism can inhibit the formation of broad-based alliances and entrench "thick" ethnic identities that limit flexibility in terms of political affiliation and behavior (Anderson 2014; Roeder 2007; Wimmer 2008). By institutionalizing ethnicity through mechanisms such as territorial autonomy, separate governing bodies, and ethnic security apparatuses, these systems may also fuel ethnonationalism and elevate the risk of secession or state collapse (Anderson 2014; Roeder 2007; Brancati 2006). This aligns with Wimmer's (2008) argument that state institutions incentivize political actors to emphasize ethnic boundaries, which then become central to political mobilization and aspirational goals.

Despite the criticisms often leveled at ethnic federalism, it can serve as a pragmatic solution in contexts where existing state models have failed to accommodate diversity—particularly in the face of long-standing grievances rooted in systematic marginalization, as seen in the case of Ethiopia (Habtu 2003; Anderson 2014). Anderson (2014) contends that ethnofederalism often arises as a last-resort institutional arrangement in deeply divided societies, especially

where unitarist frameworks have either collapsed or proven unworkable. This is consistent with Wimmer's (2008) concept of "cultural compromise," wherein partially overlapping yet divergent group interests lead to negotiated institutional settlements that stabilize ethnic boundaries while sustaining political contestation. Importantly, the author highlights also how the meaning and salience of ethnic boundaries are shaped not only by formal institutions but also by underlying power hierarchies and informal political networks. From this vantage point, ethnic federalism represents a negotiated compromise among groups seeking recognition and access to resources within a fragmented political landscape.

While historical marginalization can foster grievances and incite conflict, violence—particularly when perpetrated by the state—can also erode national belonging and deepen ethnic identification. State-led violence may exacerbate segregation along ethnic lines, thereby reducing intergroup contact and fostering mutual distrust (Ezcurra 2017; Corvalan & Vargas 2015; McDoom 2014). Tuki (2025), using representative survey data from Nigeria, found for example that individuals exposed to violent conflict were more likely to identify strongly with their ethnoreligious ingroup and to express greater hostility toward out-groups. In a related study focused on Kaduna State in northern Nigeria, a region marked by recurring ethnoreligious violence, Tuki (2024a) observed that conflict exposure significantly increased the likelihood that individuals would prioritize their ethnoreligious identity over their national one. This shift was driven by the perception that ethnoreligious solidarity offers greater protection in the face of violence, particularly when the state is perceived to have failed to uphold its responsibility to provide security. In such contexts, the threat of violence catalyzes group-based mobilization, as individuals turn to their ethnic communities for safety and support.

We thus anticipate that, in the Ethiopian case, greater exposure to violent conflict will lead to increased support for governance structures organized along ethnic lines. This expectation stems from the centrality of ethnicity in Ethiopian society and the capacity of violent conflict to reinforce in-group identification. Moreover, major recent conflicts such as the Tigray War and the ongoing violence in the Amhara region have involved direct confrontation between ethnic groups and federal forces. These dynamics are likely to shape public opinion by undermining confidence in the central state and strengthening ethnic allegiances. Additionally, credible reports of human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings by government forces may further erode national identification, particularly when individuals perceive their group as being specifically targeted (Gebrewahd 2024; United Nations 2024; Human Rights Watch 2023; Ellis 2023). In such contexts, ethnic identity may become a more salient and protective basis for belonging and political expression. Building on this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: *Exposure to violent conflict increases support for ethnic federalism among Ethiopians.*

4 Data and Methodology

This study draws on data from Rounds 8 and 9 of the Afrobarometer survey, conducted in Ethiopia in 2020 and 2023 respectively. Round 8 included 2,378 observations and Round 9 amassed 2,400, yielding a combined total of 4,778 observations. These two rounds were selected because they contain the specific questions used to construct the dependent variables. All respondents were at least 18 years old, with equal representation of men and women (50:50). As Afrobarometer employs probabilistic sampling, the data are representative of Ethiopia's population at large.[6] However, a notable limitation is that the survey excludes areas affected by conflict. Section 4.1 discusses the variables used to estimate the regression models. While large-N quantitative data offer broad scope and generalizability, they often fail to capture the nuance to individual experiences. To address this limitation, we supplemented our quantitative findings with in-depth qualitative interviews conducted, as noted, across four regions of the country. Further details on the qualitative analysis are provided in section 5.3.

4.1 Operationalization of the variables

4.1.1 Dependent variable

The dependent variable, Oppose Index, is an additive indicator that measures the degree to which respondents oppose ethnic federalism. To create the index, we totaled up the ordinal values associated with two questions in the Afrobarometer survey. Each consisted of two opposing statements, and respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with them. The two questions and the corresponding statements are presented below:

Question 1:

Statement 1: Because of Ethiopia's cultural and linguistic diversity, some type of federalism with independent regional governments is still the best form of government.

Statement 2: Because federalism based on cultural and linguistic identity sometimes leads to conflicts, Ethiopia should change to a unitary government in which the central government has more authority in decision making.

Question 2:

Statement 1: If Ethiopia remains a federal system, then the current system of federalism, where regions are defined based on nations, nationalities, and peoples' identity should be kept.

6 On Afrobarometer's chosen sampling strategy, see: https://www.afrobarometer.org/surveys-and-methods/sampling/.

Statement 2: If Ethiopia remains a federal system, it should change to a system where regions are based only on geographical boundaries, not on where different nations, nationalities, and peoples live.

Each question was accompanied by the following responses:

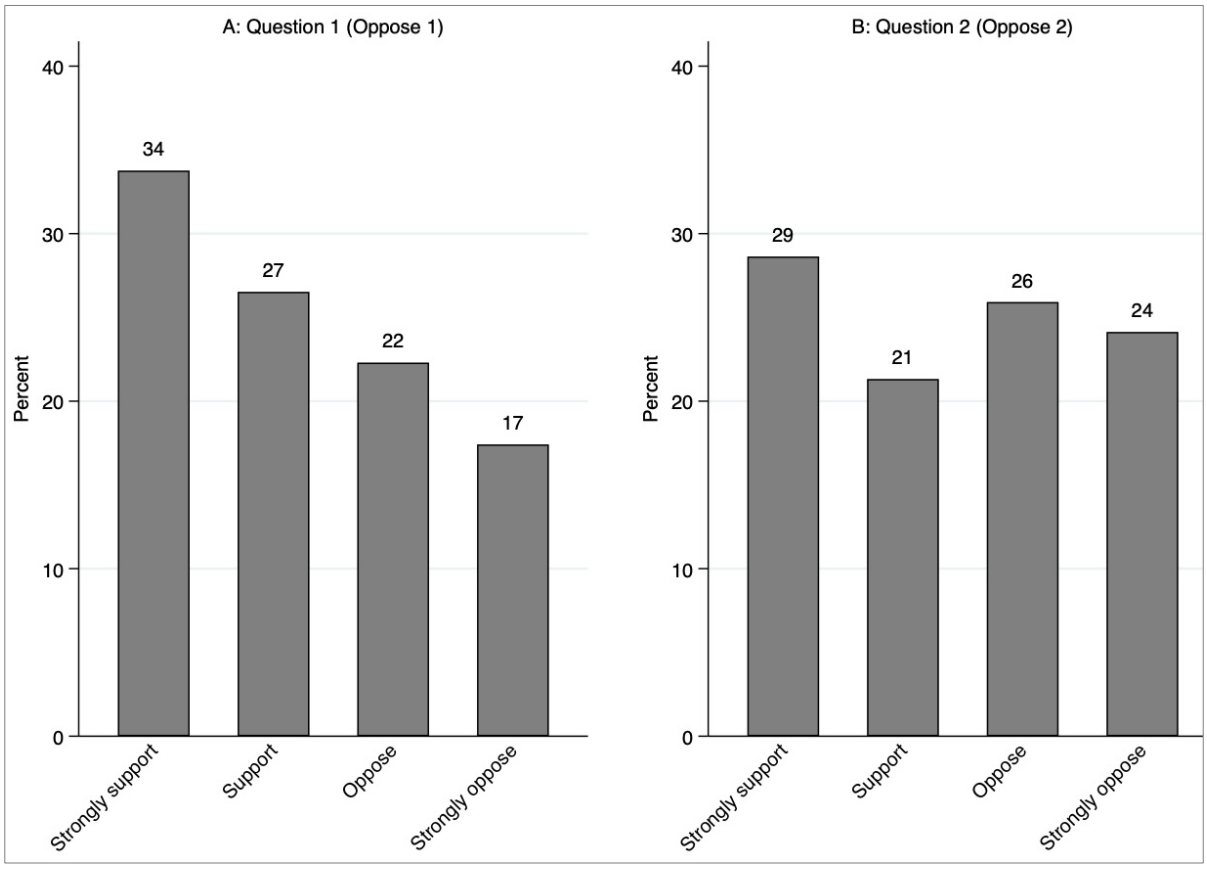
1 = Agree very strongly with Statement 1

2 = Agree with Statement 1

3 = Agree with Statement 2

4 = Agree very strongly with Statement 2

Figure 1. Attitudes toward ethnic federalism among Ethiopians



Notes: Panel A illustrates responses to a question about whether Ethiopians support ethnic federalism as the best form of government. Panel B visualizes responses to a question probing the extent to which they believe regions should be defined based on people's ethnicities. The horizontal axis shows the different levels of support or opposition to ethnic federalism, while the vertical axis represents the percentage of respondents at each level. The figure is based on pooled data from Rounds 8 and 9 of the Afrobarometer surveys, conducted in 2020 and 2023, respectively.

From the first question, we derived the variable Oppose 1, while the second question informed the variable Oppose 2. The scores for each of these variables range from 1 to 4. We treated "Don't know" and "Refused to answer" responses as missing observations, applying this rule

to all variables derived from the Afrobarometer survey. Additionally, we coded the few respondents who agreed with neither of the two statements in both questions as missing observations. These adjustments resulted in a marginal decrease in the overall number of observations. Because the two questions are similar—each presenting one statement that supports a system of governance based on ethnicity (i.e., supports ethnic federalism) and another that opposes it—we totaled up the ordinal values associated with the responses to create an additive index, the Oppose Index, which ranges from 2 to 8.[7] The two items yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.63, indicating moderate internal reliability.

Since the responses to Statement 1 indicate support for ethnic federalism, while those to Statement 2 reflect opposition to it, the response categories in the bar charts were relabeled to facilitate ease of interpretation: "1 = Strongly support"; "2 = Support"; "3 = Oppose"; "4 = Strongly oppose." Figure 1 presents responses to the two questions using simple bar charts. Panel A, based on the first question, shows that most Ethiopians view ethnic federalism as the best system of government, with 61 percent expressing their support and 39 percent their opposition here. Panel B reveals more evenly divided opinion on whether regions should be defined by ethnicity, with support and opposition each standing at 50 percent.

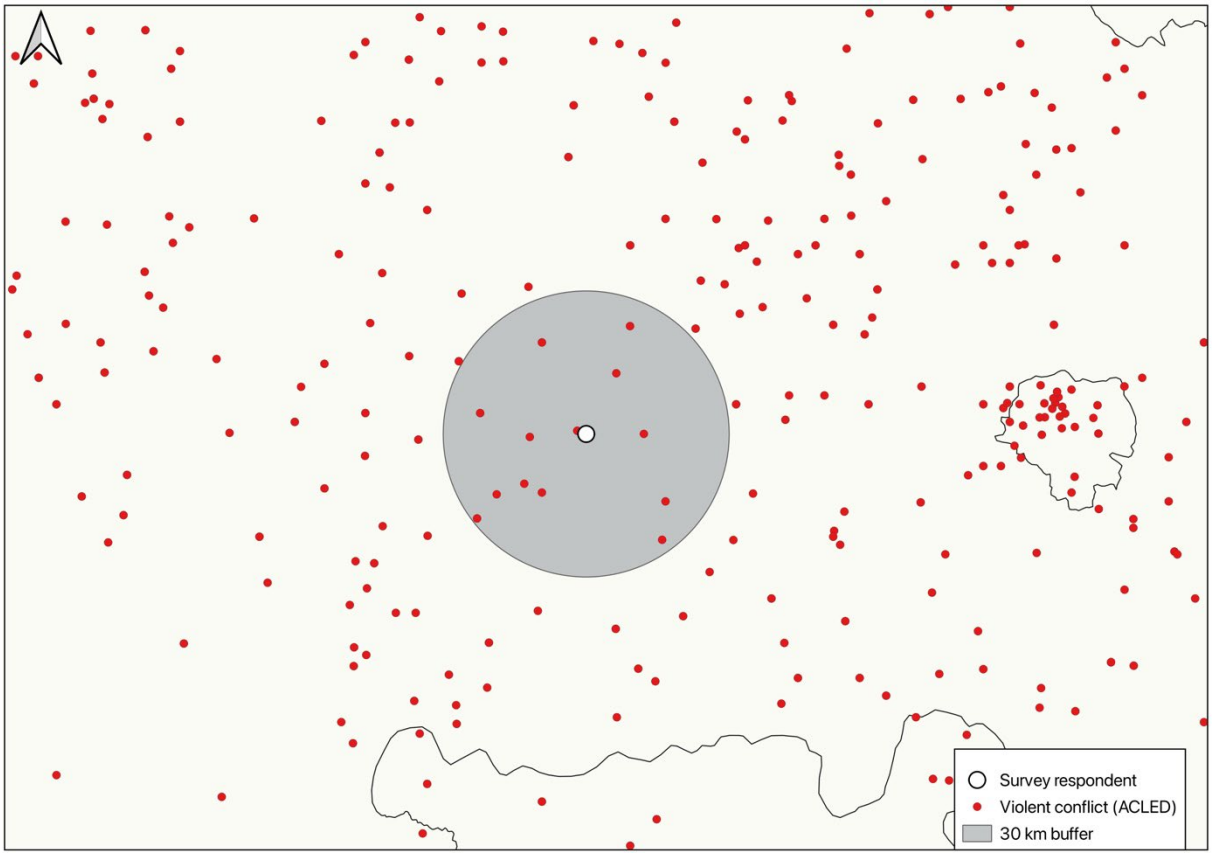
4.1.2 Explanatory variable

The explanatory variable—Violent Conflict—measures the cumulative number of violent incidents that occurred within a 30 km radius of respondents' dwelling from 1997 up to one year prior to the survey (see Figure 2). For example, for data collected in 2023, the variable reflects conflict events from 1997 to 2022. This one-year lag is introduced to reduce the risk of reverse causation, as it is not possible for present perceptions to influence past exposure to conflict. We deliberately focus on long-term exposure, given that the effects of violent conflict are often enduring and not easily mitigated (Tuki 2024b, 2025a). Conflict data are sourced from ACLED (Raleigh et al. 2010).

We also calculated the total number of fatalities resulting from incidents of violent conflict, using this measure in a subsequent robustness check to assess whether conflict intensity produced effects similar to those of conflict incidence. Additionally, to ensure our findings are not biased by reliance on a single data source, we constructed alternative measures of conflict exposure using data from the UCDP-GED and the GTD. The latter records terrorist attacks, whereas the former includes only incidents that resulted in at least one fatality. It is worth noting that the ACLED and GTD datasets, unlike the UCDP-GED one, do not apply a fatality threshold. Some 89 percent of Ethiopians were found to have experienced one conflict incident within a 30 km radius of their dwelling, while 50 percent had lived through at least ten such occurrences.

7 This implies that we totaled up Oppose 1 and Oppose 2.

Figure 2. Measuring exposure to violent conflict



Notes: The figure shows the geolocation of a hypothetical respondent, a 30 km buffer around their dwelling, and the geolocations of violent conflict incidents.

4.1.3 Control variables

We consider a series of control variables derived from the literature that could potentially confound the relationship between the explanatory and outcome variables. Each is discussed below:

Urban. This variable is coded as 1 if a respondent resides in an urban center and 0 if they live in a rural area. Individuals resident in the latter might be more supportive of ethnic federalism than those living in the former because they have limited exposure to diversity and tighter kinship and communal networks.

Economic development. This variable measures the mean annual nighttime light intensity within a 30 km radius of respondents' dwelling (Ghosh et al. 2021).[8] It is lagged by one year for observations in 2020 and by two years for observations in 2023, due to the most recent available nighttime light data being from 2020. Prior research has shown that nighttime light is a reliable indicator of socioeconomic wellbeing, particularly in contexts where subnational economic data are unavailable (Weidmann & Theunissen 2021; Mellander et al. 2015). The var-

8 See: https://eogdata.mines.edu/products/dmsp/.

iable ranges from 0 to 63, with higher values indicating greater light intensity and, by extension, higher levels of economic development. Poor economic performance is often accompanied by limited job opportunities, stagnant wages, and declining public services. During such periods of hardship, individuals may increasingly rely on ethnic networks for support, reinforcing the salience of related identities. Economic grievances, in turn, can be redirected toward out-groups, particularly when another community is perceived to benefit disproportionately from state policy—further deepening identity-based divisions.

Trust prime minister. This variable was derived from the question: "How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? The Prime Minister." Responses were recorded on a scale with four ordinal categories, ranging from "0 = Not at all" to "3 = A lot." As the symbolic figurehead of national unity and state legitimacy, the prime minister plays a central role in fostering public trust in government. When that trust erodes, it can extend to the broader state apparatus, prompting individuals to retreat into more local and familiar forms of identity such as ethnicity-based ones for a greater sense of security and belonging.

Ethnic discrimination. This variable was derived from the question: "How often, if ever, are [respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government?" Responses were recorded on a four-point ordinal scale ranging from "0 = Never" to "3 = Always." We recoded this variable into a binary form by assigning a value of 1 to all respondents who reported any experience of discrimination—regardless of frequency (i.e., always, often, or sometimes)—and a value of 0 to those who did not. We opted for this binary measure because it facilitates ease of interpretation regarding regression coefficients. Moreover, we are not specifically interested in the frequency with which respondents perceive discrimination to occur against members of their in-group. In the face of exclusion or mistreatment, ethnic identity can serve as a source of psychological resilience. Experiencing discrimination often leads individuals to embrace their ethnic identity more strongly—as both a form of resistance and a reaffirmation of self-worth.

Educational level. This variable measures the highest level of education attained, using a scale with ten ordinal categories ranging from "0 = No education" to "9 = Postgraduate." Education—particularly in urban or diverse settings—exposes people to others from a variety of ethnic, geographical, and religious backgrounds. This interaction can help reduce prejudice and soften rigid in-group versus out-group boundaries, thereby making ethnic identity less central to one's sense of self.

Gender. This variable is coded as 1 for males and 0 for females.

Age. This variable is measured in years.

Table 1 presents the summary statistics of the variables used to estimate the regression models.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Total observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Oppose index	4511	4.677	1.914	2	8
Oppose 1	4588	2.234	1.097	1	4
Oppose 2	4592	2.455	1.142	1	4
Violent conflict	4778	35.406	50.289	0	365
Violent conflict (From 2015)	4778	20.778	28.705	0	135
Violent conflict (From 2018)	4778	12.468	19.428	0	121
Total fatalities	4778	271.09	679.847	0	12868
Violent conflict (UCDP)	4778	16.975	24.21	0	112
Violent conflict (GTD)	4778	4.737	13.196	0	57
Urban (Ref: Rural)	4778	0.33	0.47	0	1
Economic development	4778	0.741	2.138	0	9.48
Trust prime minister	4733	1.627	1.135	0	3
Ethnic discrimination	4478	0.557	0.497	0	1
Educational level	4772	2.486	2.331	0	9
Male (Ref: Female)	4778	0.5	0.5	0	1
Age	4775	35.009	13.448	18	120
Distance to border (km)	4778	225.31	116	10.319	451.69

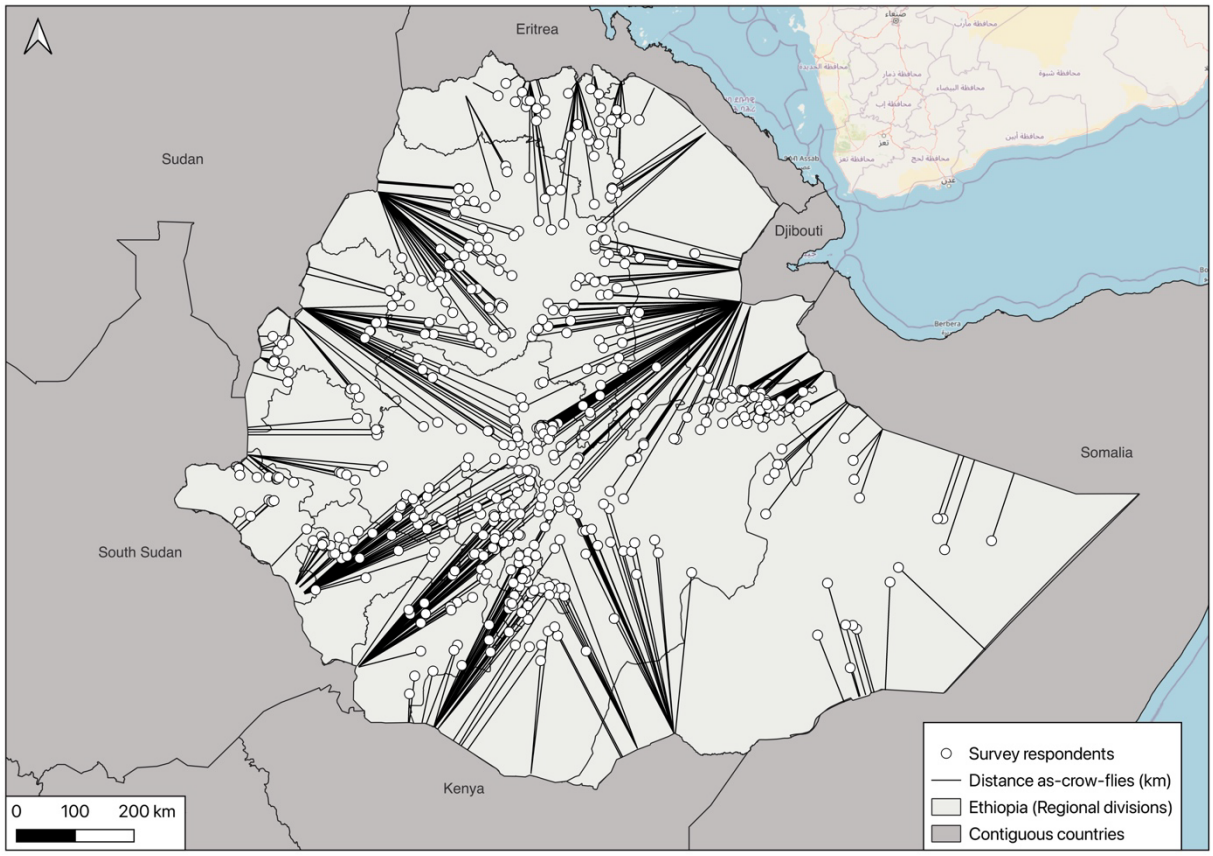
Note: "Ref" indicates the reference category. All statistics are based on pooled data from Rounds 8 and 9 of the Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2020 and 2023, respectively.

4.2 Empirical strategy

Although this study seeks to identify the causal effect of exposure to violent conflict on Ethiopians' attitudes toward ethnic federalism, the possibility of reverse causality cannot be ruled out. That is, while conflict exposure may erode trust in the central government and intensify ethnic identification (Tuki 2024, 2024), the reverse may also hold true: strong ethnic identification could itself contribute to the onset of conflict. This is particularly plausible in contexts marked by vicarious retribution, where individuals may engage in or support violence in response to perceived harm against their ethnic group (Lickel et al. 2006). To mitigate the potential problem of reverse causation, we lag our measure of conflict exposure by one year, as current perceptions toward ethnic federalism are unlikely to influence past conflict events.

However, omitted variable bias remains a concern, since it is practically impossible to account for all factors that might confound the relationship between the treatment and outcome variables. To address this, we employ an IV approach—specifically, a two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression—that leverages the distance from respondents' geolocation to the nearest international border as a source of exogenous variation in conflict exposure (see Figure 3 above). Our model is underpinned by the assumption that distance to the border plausibly influences attitudes toward ethnic federalism only through the mechanism of violent conflict—an assumption that constitutes the exclusion restriction.

Figure 3. Constructing the measure for distance to the border



Notes: The figure shows the geolocations of the respondents, Ethiopia's administrative regions, the countries surrounding Ethiopia, and the distance from the respondents' geolocations to the nearest point on the border, measured in kilometers (km) and as the crow flies. We developed the figure using QGIS software.

We consider distance to the border a suitable instrument for measuring conflict exposure due to the contagious nature of violence (Sarigil 2021; Cunningham & Sawyer 2017; Forsberg 2014; Buhaug & Gleditsch 2008; Sambanis 2001). In his influential book *The Bottom Billion*, Collier (2008) highlights proximity to "bad" neighbors as one of the development traps that can hinder a country's progress. This argument is particularly relevant in Ethiopia's case, given its contiguous borders with fragile states such as Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia (Badri & Dawood 2024; Brosché 2023; Tadesse 2023; Sharma et al. 2022; Mawejje & McSharry 2021). The instability in these neighboring countries can provide fertile ground for rebel and terrorist groups, as well as facilitate the unregulated flow of small arms and light weapons across borders, thereby increasing the risk of violent conflict within Ethiopia (Guta et al. 2024; Love 2021). Moreover, border regions are particularly vulnerable to attack by hostile governments (Associated Press 2024). This dynamic was clearly evident during the Tigray War, when Eritrean troops joined Ethiopian federal forces in launching attacks against the TPLF in the border region of Tigray (Center for Preventive Action 2024; Uluer 2022). Such examples underscore how proximity to volatile borders can directly influence conflict exposure.

One might argue that proximity to the border correlates with other factors such as economic activity and cross-border trade, which can influence a person's economic wellbeing and their opportunity cost of engaging in violence. To attenuate this concern, we controlled, as noted, for economic activity using the mean annual nighttime light within a 30 km radius of respondents' dwelling (Ghosh et al. 2021). If areas closer to the border are indeed more prone to conflict, then our findings might be disproportionately influenced by respondents living in close proximity. To address this, we conducted additional analyses using restricted samples that included only respondents residing at least 50 km and 100 km away from the border. Another potential threat to our identification strategy is if violence has led to migration. This is particularly relevant given that our conflict measure spans a long time period—from 1997 to one year prior to each survey (i.e., 2019 and 2022). If individuals moved in response to violence, our estimates might be biased. However, this issue may be mitigated if exposure to violence affects attitudes toward ethnic federalism through the internalization of communal norms, as individuals may adopt the prevailing mores of the areas in which they settle. Nonetheless we also estimated additional models using a more recent time frame, focusing on violent conflict incidents that occurred within a 30 km radius of respondents' location (starting from 2015 and 2018, respectively).

If our contention is indeed correct, we expect to find a negative correlation between our IV—distance to the nearest national border—and exposure to violent conflict. In other words, as the distance from the border increases, the number of conflict incidents occurring within a 30 km radius of respondents' dwelling should decrease. This relationship satisfies the relevance condition, which is essential for ensuring the validity of our identification strategy.

To estimate the causal effect of exposure to violent conflict on attitudes toward ethnic federalism, we thus estimate 2SLS regression models of the following form:

$$Violent\ conflict_{ijkt} = a_0 + a_1 Distance\ to\ border_i + a_2 \varphi'_i + L_j + \lambda_k + \tau_t + u_i \quad (1)$$

$$Oppose\ index_{ijkt} = b_0 + b_1 Violent\ conflict_i^* + b_2 \varphi'_i + L'_j + \lambda_k + \tau_t + e_i \quad (2)$$

In the first-stage regression model specified in equation (1), $Violent\ conflict_{ijkt}$ indicates the cumulative number of such occurrences within a 30 km radius of Respondent $i's$ dwelling, who belongs to ethnic group j and lives in region k at year t. $Distance\ to\ border$ measures the distance from respondents' geolocation to the nearest point of the border. φ' is a vector of the control variables discussed in section 4.1.3; L denotes fixed effects for respondents' ethnic group, accounting for group-specific factors such as cultural norms, language, and historical patterns of marginalization that remain constant over time; λ denotes fixed effects of the regions where respondents live, capturing unobserved time-invariant factors such as physical geographical terrain, contiguity to the border, and distance to the administrative capital; τ denotes fixed effects for the year in which the survey was conducted, spanning nationwide events

such as changes in the central government's security policies that may influence all observations in the dataset but vary across years; a_0 is the constant term; a_1 and a_2 denote the coefficients of the distance variable and the control variables, respectively; u_i is the error term.

In the second-stage regression model specified in equation (2), we regress our main dependent variable—$Oppose\ Index$—on the treatment which measures the predicted values of violent conflict derived from equation (1)—i.e., $Violent\ conflict_i^*$. b_0 denotes the constant term; b_1 and b_2 denote the coefficients of the treatment and control variables, respectively; L, λ, and τ are as described in equation (1); e_i is the error term.

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Correlational analysis

We begin the analysis by conducting simple correlations, which are reported in Table 2 below. In Model 1, where we include only the measure for conflict exposure, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant at the 1 percent level. This result, which supports H1, suggests that exposure to violent conflict is negatively correlated with opposition to ethnic federalism. In other words, the more Ethiopians are exposed to violent conflict, the more likely they are to support ethnic federalism. Violent conflict generates a sense of existential threat, particularly when events are perceived to play out along ethnic lines. In such contexts, individuals often turn to their in-group for protection and solidarity, with ethnic identity serving as a psychological anchor amid fear, uncertainty, and insecurity. Conflict also tends to polarize communities, reinforcing "us versus them" dynamics. People increasingly view their ethnic group as a source of safety and moral belonging, while perceiving out-groups as a potential source of threats. This intensified ethnic identification can, in turn, lead to stronger support for governance structures organized along ethnic lines.

In Model 2, where we include control variables, the size of the coefficient for violent conflict doubles, even though its sign and statistical significance remain unchanged. All the control variables are statistically significant, except for gender and trust in the prime minister. In Model 3, where the relevant fixed effects are included, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) statistic is 16,715, which is lower than that in the preceding models, indicating that Model 3 has the best fit. Violent conflict maintains a negative coefficient and remains statistically significant at the 1 percent level. However, all the control variables become statistically insignificant; the exception is the measure of perceived ethnic discrimination, which maintains a positive coefficient and is statistically significant at the 1 percent level.

This suggests that individuals who believe members of their ethnic group to be treated unfairly by the government are more likely to oppose ethnic federalism. At first glance this finding is surprising, since prior research shows that discrimination often strengthens ethnic

identification (e.g., Branscombe et al. 1999; Leach et al. 2010). One plausible explanation, however, is that those who have faced discrimination may view ethnic federalism as entrenching ethnic divisions and making ethnicity the dominant axis of political life. In turn, their experiencing of exclusion may heighten the demand for an alternative system that prioritizes citizenship over ethnicity. It is important to note that this result reflects an average effect across the population and may obscure important variation by ethnic group and relative group size.

Table 2. OLS models regressing opposition to ethnic federalism on exposure to violent conflict

Oppose index†	(1)	(2)	(3)
Violent conflict	-0.002***	-0.004***	-0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Urban (Ref: Rural)		0.155**	0.066
		(0.074)	(0.069)
Economic development		0.061***	0.031
		(0.015)	(0.027)
Trust Prime Minister		0.029	0.019
		(0.027)	(0.027)
Ethnic discrimination		0.23***	0.164***
		(0.06)	(0.058)
Educational level		0.033**	0.015
		(0.015)	(0.015)
Male (Ref: Female)		-0.08	-0.057
		(0.061)	(0.056)
Age		0.005**	0.001
		(0.002)	(0.002)
Constant	4.74***	4.311***	2.752***
	(0.035)	(0.117)	(0.344)
Region FE	No	No	Yes
Ethnic group FE	No	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes
Observations	4511	4216	4216
R-squared	0.002	0.017	0.185
AIC statistic	18652.93	17432.76	16715.98
BIC statistic	18665.76	17489.88	17014.28

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. The dependent variable ranges from 2 to 8 and is an additive index measuring the degree to which respondents oppose ethnic federalism. "Ref" indicates the "reference category." AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.

5.2 IV regressions

The results reported in Table 2 above are correlational and do not account for potential endogeneity. To address this limitation and move toward a causal interpretation, we estimate a series of IV regressions. We begin by presenting and discussing the results of the first-stage regressions, followed by an analysis of the second-stage ones.

5.2.1 First-stage regressions

Table 3 presents the results of regression models examining the relationship between distance to the national border and the incidence of violent conflict. In Model 1, which includes only the distance variable, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant at the 1 percent level. This suggests that individuals living farther from the national border experience lower levels of conflict. In other words, exposure to violence increases as proximity to the border increases. This relationship remains robust in Model 2, which includes control variables, and in Model 3, which adds fixed effects for ethnic group, region, and survey year. Notably, these findings align with our outlined a priori expectations.

Table 3. OLS models regressing exposure to violent conflict on distance to the border

Violent conflict†	(1)	(2)	(3)
Distance to border (km)	-0.056***	-0.153***	-0.141***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.01)
Constant	47.937***	51.419***	38.454***
	(1.921)	(2.927)	(4.662)
Control Variables	No	Yes	Yes
Region FE	No	No	Yes
Ethnic group FE	No	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes
Observations	4778	4432	4432
R-squared	0.016	0.308	0.586
AIC statistic	50921.38	45619.11	43410.94
BIC statistic	50934.32	45676.68	43711.58

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. † denotes the dependent variable. The dependent variable measures the cumulative number of violent conflict incidents within a 30 km radius of respondents' dwellings. "Ref" indicates reference category. Control variables include economic development, trust in prime minister, ethnic discrimination, educational level, gender, and age. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.

5.2.2 Second-stage regressions

We now turn to the second-stage regressions, in which the dependent variable is regressed on the predicted values of conflict exposure from the first-stage regression. Table 4 presents these results. In Model 1, which includes only the instrumented measure of violent conflict, the coefficient is negative—mirroring the direction observed in the correlational analysis—and statistically significant at the 1 percent level. This finding, which lends further support to H1, suggests that exposure to violent conflict has a negative effect on opposition to ethnic federalism. In other words, as Ethiopians are increasingly exposed to violent conflict, they become more supportive of that governance model. We also tested whether endogeneity was present. Both the Chi-square and the F-statistics are significant at the 1 percent level, suggesting that endogeneity was indeed present and our decision to estimate the model using IV regressions appropriate. Model 2 demonstrates that the negative effect of violent conflict on opposition to

ethnic federalism is robust to the inclusion of control variables, while Model 3 shows that it holds after accounting for region, ethnic group, and survey year fixed effects.

Table 4. 2SLS models examining the effect of violent conflict on opposition to ethnic federalism (full sample)

Oppose index†	Main results			Robustness checks		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Violent conflict	-0.023***	-0.008***	-0.015***			
	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.003)			
Total fatalities				-0.002***		
				(0.00)		
Violent conflict (UCDP)					-0.055***	
					(0.014)	
Violent conflict (GTD)						-0.3***
						(0.063)
Urban (Ref: Rural)		0.215***	0.126*	0.341***	0.11	-0.095
		(0.079)	(0.072)	(0.099)	(0.077)	(0.081)
Economic development		0.097***	0.17***	0.037	0.183***	1.853***
		(0.022)	(0.043)	(0.028)	(0.052)	(0.392)
Trust Prime minister		0.027	0.024	0.024	0.043	0.003
		(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.03)	(0.029)	(0.028)
Ethnic discrimination		0.235***	0.23***	0.265***	0.287***	0.229***
		(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.065)	(0.072)	(0.063)
Educational level		0.036**	0.005	-0.004	0.007	0.019
		(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.015)
Male (Ref: Female)		-0.082	-0.053	-0.037	-0.052	-0.063
		(0.061)	(0.057)	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.059)
Age		0.005**	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Constant	5.476***	4.379***	3.04***	3.609***	4.077***	2.19***
	(0.216)	(0.122)	(0.344)	(0.419)	(0.504)	(0.358)
Region FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic group FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4511	4216	4216	4216	4216	4216
R-squared	0.00	0.009	0.142	0.00	0.00	0.082
Chi-square statistic	17.297***	4.836**	17.656***	22.791***	22.146***	22.695***
F-statistic	17.462***	4.83**	17.714***	23.266***	22.549***	23.146***

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression. Only the second-stage regression results have been reported. The dependent variable ranges from 2 to 8 and is an additive index measuring the degree to which respondents oppose ethnic federalism. "Ref" indicates the reference category. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.

To assess whether our results are sensitive to the source of conflict data or the way conflict exposure is operationalized, we conducted a series of robustness checks. In Model 4, we shift the focus from conflict incidence to conflict intensity, measured by the total number of fatalities occurring within a 30 km radius of respondents' geolocation. This variable also carries a negative coefficient and is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. In Model 5, we use the

alternative measure of conflict exposure derived from the UCDP-GED. The coefficient for the latter measure is likewise negative and statistically significant at the 1 percent level. As an additional robustness check, we use the measure for exposure to terrorist attacks derived from the GTD. Model 6 shows that exposure to terrorist attacks also has a negative effect on opposition to ethnic federalism. Notably, the main regression results remain robust when we restrict the sample to include only respondents who experienced at least one conflict incident within a 30 km radius of their dwelling (see Table A2 in the Appendix). Additionally, Table A1 in the Appendix presents the first-stage regression results for Models 4, 5, and 6.

Our measure of attitudes toward ethnic federalism is an index constructed by combining responses to two questions that assess the extent to which respondents endorse the salience of ethnicity in governance (see section 4.1.1). The first question (Oppose 1) probes the extent to which respondents believe ethnic federalism to be the best form of government. The second question (Oppose 2) measures the extent to which respondents believe regions should be defined based on ethnicity. To assess whether the index masks any heterogeneous patterns, we disaggregate it and estimate models using its two subcomponents. The results, presented in Table A3 in the Appendix, show that—consistent with the main findings reported in Table 4—conflict exposure continues to carry a negative coefficient and is statistically significant at the 1 percent level.

To ensure that our findings are not driven solely by respondents living in close proximity to the border, meaning those who may have experienced higher levels of conflict, we estimated additional models restricting the sample to individuals residing at least 50 km and 100 km away from it. The results from these models remain consistent with our main regression findings (see Table A4 in the Appendix). Furthermore, given the potential concern that measuring conflict over a long period may introduce bias—particularly if violence induced out-migration—we estimated additional models using conflict exposure measured from 2015 and 2018 respectively, thereby focusing on a more recent and potentially less distortion-prone time frame. As shown in Table A6 in the Appendix, these results are also consistent with the main findings presented in Table 4 above.

5.2.3 Heterogeneous analysis based on perceived discrimination and ethnic group size

To assess whether the negative effect of violent conflict on opposition to ethnic federalism varies according to perceived discrimination against one's in-group as well as to group size, we disaggregate the data along these two dimensions and estimate models using the respective subsamples. For perceived discrimination, we divide respondents into those who believe members of their ethnic group are treated unfairly by the government and those who do not. For group size, we distinguish between members of the three largest ethnic groups—Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray—and those who belong to smaller ones (see Table 5).

Models 1, 2, and 3 are based on subsamples disaggregated by perceived discrimination. Model 1 focuses on respondents who believe members of their ethnic group are treated unfairly by the government. For this group, violent conflict has a negative coefficient and is statistically significant at the 1 percent level, suggesting violent conflict increases support for ethnic federalism among individuals who believe they are treated unfairly by the government. Notably, the magnitude of the coefficient is larger than that observed in the full model (Model 2 in Table 3). Model 2 examines respondents who do not believe their ethnic group to be subject to discrimination. In this subsample, the coefficient for violent conflict is statistically insignificant, with a p-value of 0.29. Additionally, both the Chi-square and F-statistics are statistically insignificant, suggesting that endogeneity is not a concern in this subsample and an IV approach unnecessary. Accordingly, we re-estimate the model using ordinary least squares (OLS), as shown in Model 3. In this specification, violent conflict has a negative coefficient and becomes statistically significant at the 10 percent level, though the magnitude of the coefficient is significantly smaller than in Model 1. These findings suggest that the negative effect of violent conflict on opposition to ethnic federalism is primarily driven by individuals who perceive their ethnic group to be unfairly treated by the government.

Table 5. 2SLS models examining the effect of violent conflict on opposition to ethnic federalism (ethnic discrimination and group size)

Oppose index†						
	Ethnic discrimination (subsamples)			**Ethnic group size (subsamples)**		
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**
	2SLS	**2SLS**	**OLS**	**2SLS**	**2SLS**	**OLS**
	Yes	**No**	**No**	**Majority**	**Minority**	**Minority**
Violent conflict	-0.021***	-0.005	-0.002*	-0.019***	-0.004	0.00
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.001)
Constant	3.589***	2.396***	2.372***	3.764***	4.969***	3.635***
	(0.464)	(0.458)	(0.464)	(0.203)	(0.295)	(0.528)
Control variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2380	1836	1836	2839	1635	1635
R-squared	0.152	0.181	0.184	0.134	0.097	0.171
Chi-square statistic	19.719***	0.454		17.181***	0.266	
F-statistic	19.838***	0.443		17.394***	0.263	

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression, except for Model 3 and 6, which are estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. For the 2SLS models, only the second-stage regression results have been reported. The dependent variable ranges from 2 to 8 and is an additive index measuring the degree to which respondents oppose ethnic federalism. Models 1 to 3 disaggregate the data based on discrimination status, while Models 4 to 6 disaggregate the data based on ethnic group size. "Ref" denotes reference category. Control variables include economic development, trust in prime minister, ethnic discrimination, educational level, gender, and age. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.

Models 4 to 6 are based on subsamples disaggregated by group size. Model 4 focuses on respondents from the three major ethnic groups—Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray. In this model, violent conflict has a negative coefficient and is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. Model 5 examines respondents from minority ethnic groups. Here, the coefficient for violent conflict is statistically insignificant, with a p-value of 0.61. Moreover, both the Chi-square and F-statistics are statistically insignificant, indicating that endogeneity is not a concern in this subsample and an IV approach unnecessary. Accordingly, we re-estimate the model using OLS in Model 6, where the coefficient for violent conflict remains statistically insignificant. These findings suggest that the negative effect of violent conflict on opposition to ethnic federalism is primarily driven by individuals who belong to the country's three major ethnic groups.

Stronger support for ethnic federalism among individuals from the latter may stem from their perception of this governance model as a sound mechanism to consolidate local power, manage their own affairs, and benefit from decentralization—particularly when they control large or resource-rich regions. In this context, federalism serves as a means to retain local control over wealth and resources, potentially circumventing redistribution via the central government. Moreover, majority groups may view ethnic federalism as a way to preserve and promote their language, cultural traditions, and historical narratives without interference from the central state or from minority peers.

In contrast, the comparatively weaker support for ethnic federalism among those not belonging to these three groups—reflected in the statistical insignificance of violent conflict—may be rooted in concerns over marginalization. Ethnic federalism often results in regional dominance by a single group, raising fears among smaller ones of exclusion from access to power and resources at the subnational level. In Ethiopia's ethnically defined regions, for instance, smaller groups such as the Sidama in the Southern Nations Region have demanded their own administrative units to avoid domination (International Crisis Group 2019; Gedamu 2019).

5.3 Qualitative evidence

To gain deeper insight into the mechanisms underlying our quantitative findings, we draw on qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews conducted with 14 individuals across Addis Ababa, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, and Tigray between December 2023 and December 2024.

The empirical data were gathered through semi-structured interviews facilitated by local partners fluent in the respective languages of our interviewees. This methodological approach not only enhanced communication but also helped establish rapport, leading to richer data collection. The selection of participants was achieved by snowball sampling, leveraging the social networks of the first author—who has established connections within the country. This

allowed us to gain access to a diverse array of voices, ensuring a balanced representation of different genders and professional backgrounds.

Recognizing that experiences and perceptions of violence and discrimination may differ significantly by gender, we ensured a balance here in our sample by interviewing seven men and seven women. Respondents ranged in age from 29 to 62 years old. To capture a wide range of perspectives reflective of the broad diversity of the Ethiopian population, we selected participants from various professional and social backgrounds, including lawyers, teachers, professors, student activists, community organizers, healthcare workers, civil servants, and employees of nongovernmental organizations. With the exception of two interlocutors who were interviewed online (using Zoom), our local data collectors conducted face-to-face interviews with the remaining 12. Additional details on the participants and the interviews are provided in Table A8 in the Appendix.

Before conducting the latter, those to be spoken with were thoroughly briefed on the study's purpose, the topics to be discussed, and the confidentiality measures in place. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, as also made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. To maintain confidentiality, all personal identifiers have been anonymized.

A simple text transcription method was used for all empirical data (see also, Mayring 2014; Dresing et al. 2015) before conducting the content analysis. This approach allows for both inductive and deductive engagement with the material. First, as regards our inductive approach, themes and categories are permitted to emerge organically from the data hereby, facilitating a deeper understanding of conversation partners' lived experiences without being constrained by preexisting theoretical frameworks (Patton 2015). This phase was informed by Kuckartz's (2014) guidelines for qualitative analysis, which emphasizes the importance of capturing the subtleties of participants' narratives.

Once the themes were identified, a deductive approach was employed to refine and finalize the categories, ensuring that our analysis was both rigorous and comprehensive. This iterative process allowed us to triangulate findings and validate the themes against the broader context of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The interviews and our investigation focused on two interrelated questions: (1) How do experiences of marginalization and conflict shape regional support for ethnic federalism in Ethiopia? and (2) How do different individuals articulate the perceived opportunities and challenges coming with the current system of governance? By integrating interlocutors' own perspectives, we aimed to illuminate the complex dynamics that underpin the favoring of ethnic federalism within Ethiopia's diverse sociopolitical landscape.

5.3.1 Historical marginalization, conflict, and perceptions of ethnic federalism

The interviews revealed that experiences of historical marginalization and conflict play a crucial role in support for ethnic federalism. Those spoken with emphasized that language, culture, and political rights having been previously denied fueled a strong desire for regional autonomy and self-governance, as promised by ethnic federalism.

> "Under the imperial and later the Derg regime, our people were denied basic rights such as the use of Tigrinya as an official working language […]. Development was almost nonexistent: hospitals, universities, roads—everything was lacking."
>
> (History teacher, 58 years old, Tigray, November 2024)

> "Before 1974, our voices were almost invisible in Gambella. […] School lessons were exclusively in Amharic […] no roads, no clinics […]. We were told to 'be more Ethiopian' but we were always 'different' and rarely 'included.'"
>
> (Former teacher, 62, Gambella, December 2024)

> "I remember knuckles rapping on desks if a child were caught speaking Nuer—especially in classrooms run by regional appointees from Addis. We felt ashamed of our own names; I had to take an Amharic nickname, 'Alem,' when I was very young, because my teachers said my real name was 'too tribal.'"
>
> (Nurse, 45 years old, Gambella, December 2024)

> "The recent war from 2020 to 2022 has shaken us […] the federal government's military campaign, Eritrean intervention, and human rights violations have shaken our confidence. Many are now advocating secession because they feel betrayed by a system that was supposed to protect autonomy."
>
> (University lecturer, 47 years old, Tigray, November 2024)

These accounts illustrate a common trend: systematic oppression and marginalization under the previous regimes led to calls for ethnic federalism, as deemed necessary to protect culture, language, and local governance. They also indicate that people's concerns extend beyond material needs like infrastructure to include a desire for recognition by the state—specifically, the removal of barriers that prevent their customs and habits from flourishing. This qualitative evidence is consistent with our quantitative results, which reveal that support for ethnic federalism is particularly strong among individuals exposed to violence and who believe members of their ethnic group to be treated unfairly by the government.

In light of the recent episodes of violence in Ethiopia, the interviews also depicted an upward progression in political demands—from calls for regional autonomy to aspirations for full secession. Perhaps reflective of stronger ethnic identification nowadays, this is driven by distrust in the central government, alleged human rights abuses, and the failure of ethnic federalism to fulfill people's expectations. Notably, this provides further support for H1's validity.

5.3.2 Perceived opportunities and challenges of ethnic federalism

Building on the influence of historical marginalization and conflict, those we dialogued with expressed a nuanced view of the country's current governance model, highlighting both the positives and negatives here. The constitutional recognition of ethnicity and regional autonomy was found to be generally appreciated.

> "Ethnic federalism gives regions like Tigray the legal ability to protect their languages and cultures […]. We have universities and hospitals that did not exist before. Regional autonomy is important for cultural survival and local development."
>
> (Lawyer, 35 years old, Tigray, November 2024)

> "After 1991 we could speak Anuak in school, see signs in our language, and have local officials from our communities. For the first time, our youth could preserve oral traditions instead of being forced to learn everything in Amharic."
>
> (Nurse, 45 years old, Gambella, December 2024)

> "In 1993 a small primary school was opened with Gumuz as the medium of instruction—identity in ink. For the first time, our people held local office and saw their language rights realized."
>
> (Public facilities expert, 45 years old, Benishangul-Gumuz, December 2023)

> "The 1995 Constitution has given unprecedented local representation to ethnic groups like the Berta and Gumuz. In principle, ethnic federalism provides a framework for self-determination and cultural revitalization."
>
> (Civil society activist, 42 years old, Addis Ababa, December 2023)

In addition to recognizing the potential benefits of ethnic federalism, many interviewees raised significant concerns—particularly about its inadequate implementation post-1991 and the resulting gap between constitutional provisions and practical realities. They also noted the continued centralization of power and control over resources, as undermining genuine autonomy.

> "The federal government or investors lease large tracts of land without consulting local farmers. The Constitution says that the land belongs to the nations, but nobody asks what our council thinks."
>
> (Nurse, 45 years old, Gambella, December 2024)

> "Decision-making remains centralized […] even if our kebele wants to reserve land for local families, Addis Ababa can overrule us. This is not real local governance."
>
> (Community representative, 38 years old, Benishangul-Gumuz, December 2023)

> "But federalism on paper did not always become federalism in practice. For it to work, regions must truly control land, resources, and local policing—without Addis Ababa's interference. They must make their own budgets, levy taxes, and decide developmental priorities."
>
> (Political scientist, 50 years old, Addis Ababa, December 2023)

> "When protesters in Gonder and fierce student movements in Bahir Dar demanded real regional autonomy, federal security forces targeted Amhara youth who cited the 1995 Constitution. Suddenly we understood: federalism was conditional. If a region even hinted at resisting central directives—say, on land leases or investment deals—the center withdrew funding, imposed caretaker governors, and deployed federal police."
>
> (Civil society activist, 42 years old, Addis Ababa, December 2023)

Concerns about Ethiopia's ethnic federalism also stem from the fact that related identities are institutionalized as fixed political and territorial boundaries, a process enshrining ethnicity as the primary basis for governance and social organization. This arrangement often leads to the political marginalization of minorities residing within regions dominated by a single group or pressures them to assimilate, thereby fueling fears of exclusion and a loss of rights. These findings lend support to our heterogeneous analysis, which shows that the effect of violent conflict on support for ethnic federalism is particularly strong among individuals belonging to the three largest ethnic groups (Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray), while the effect is relatively weaker—statistically insignificant—among those from smaller ones.

> "This system reinforces ethnic differences and competition by embedding ethnic categories in political institutions and territorial governance. Such demarcation can exacerbate tensions, as disputed borders often result in violent conflicts over land and resources."
>
> (Entrepreneur & cultural organizer, 39 years old, Addis Ababa, December 2023)

> "The system forces people to choose a single ethnic identity and alienates those of mixed heritage. This rigid categorization corrodes national cohesion."
>
> (NGO program officer, 31 years, Addis Ababa, December 2023)

Nevertheless, interviewees expressed concerns about abolishing the current system without first developing a viable alternative that truly accounts for diversity, promotes inclusivity, and ensures effective self-governance.

> "Critics warn that ethnic federalism could deepen divisions, but the bigger problem is that no convincing alternative has been presented. The dismantling feels like losing hard-won protections, especially after the trauma of war."
>
> (Lawyer, 35 years old, Tigray, November 2024)

> "If ethnic federalism is replaced by geographical zones, small groups like us risk becoming invisible minorities who have no voice. We fear a return to marginalization."
>
> (Former teacher, 62 years old, Gambella, December 2024)

6 Conclusion

This study examined the causal effect of violent conflict on attitudes toward ethnic federalism in Ethiopia using nationally representative survey data from Afrobarometer. It was found that exposure to violent conflict has a negative effect on opposition to ethnic federalism. In other words, the more Ethiopians experience such occurrences, the more likely they are to favor a governance system organized around ethnic identity. This effect is especially pronounced among individuals who believe their ethnic group to be treated unfairly by the central government, as well as among members of Ethiopia's three largest ethnic groups—Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray. Complementary qualitative interviews shed further light on the mechanisms at play, revealing that violent conflict erodes trust in the central government, weakens national belonging, and intensifies ethnic identification. Interlocutors emphasized that historical legacies of marginalization continue to shape perceptions of the central state, ethnic federalism, and respective group positions within the existing political framework.

These findings have important implications for governance in conflict-affected, multiethnic states like Ethiopia. Where violence diminishes trust in national institutions and exacerbates perceptions of exclusion, efforts to rebuild state authority through recentralization or pan-national narratives alone are unlikely to succeed. Rather than weakening support for governance based on ethnicity, conflict may in fact entrench it—particularly among communities deeming themselves to be historically marginalized or politically sidelined. This underscores the risks associated with efforts to dismantle or dilute ethnic federalism without first addressing the underlying grievances and deficits in institutional trust at work here.

Broad consultation with the different constituencies involved is therefore likely to be essential to ensuring the subsequent legitimacy of any constitutional reforms enacted. Moreover, strategies to promote national cohesion must confront the role of perceived injustice—both distributive and procedural—in sustaining ethnic loyalty over national identification. Investing in credible, transparent institutions that advance interethnic parity—such as truth commissions, inclusive governance, and resource-sharing frameworks—may help restore credibility and reduce polarization.

Ultimately, despite the well-documented problems with this governance model—such as the entrenchment of ethnicity in society and the increased risk of secession or state fragmentation—it continues to command strong public support in Ethiopia, particularly under conditions of insecurity. Reform efforts must therefore work with, rather than around, this reality by pursuing systems of governance that reduce zero-sum competition while preserving meaningful group autonomy.

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Appendix

Table A1. First-stage regressions using alternative measures of conflict exposure

Dependent variables:	Total fatalities†		Violent conflict (UCDP)†		Violent conflict (GTD)†	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Distance to border (km)	-1.264***	-1.265***	-0.027***	-0.035***	0.037***	-0.007***
	(0.126)	(0.142)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.00)
Constant	555.872***	715.483***	23.003***	29.686***	-3.676***	-1.022***
	(37.268)	(145.694)	(.908)	(2.318)	(0.345)	(0.341)
Control Variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Region FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Ethnic FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	4778	4432	4778	4432	4778	4432
R-squared	0.047	0.185	0.016	0.576	0.108	0.97
AIC statistic	75657.78	69815.65	43935.78	37102.5	37671	19391.71
BIC statistic	75670.73	70116.29	43948.73	37403.14	37683.94	19692.35

Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using OLS regressions. † denotes the dependent variable. The dependent variable in Models 1 and 2 is based on ACLED data; that in Models 3 and 4 is based on UCDP data; that in Models 5 and 6 is based on GTD data. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.

Table A2. Replicating the main regression results using the subsample of respondents who experienced at least one conflict incident within a 30 km radius of their dwelling

Oppose index†	(1)	(2)	(3)
Violent conflict	-0.016***	-0.007***	-0.014***
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Constant	5.274***	4.303***	3.298***
	(0.164)	(0.131)	(0.367)
Control Variables	No	Yes	Yes
Region FE	No	No	Yes
Ethnic FE	No	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes
Observations	3988	3734	3734
R-squared	0.00	0.013	0.146
Chi-square statistics	14.738***	3.275*	18.652***
F-statistics	14.882***	3.27*	18.842***

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression. Only the second-stage regression results have been reported. The dependent variable ranges from 2 to 8 and is an additive index measuring the degree to which respondents oppose ethnic federalism. Control variables include economic development, trust in prime minister, ethnic discrimination, educational level, gender, and age. "Ref" denotes the reference category.

Table A3. 2SLS Models examining the effect of violent conflict on the two distinct subcomponents of the index measuring opposition to ethnic federalism

Dependent variables:	Oppose 1†			Oppose 2†		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Violent conflict	-0.01***	-0.004***	-0.006***	-0.012***	-0.004***	-0.009***
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Constant	2.592***	2.131***	1.515***	2.866***	2.274***	1.572***
	(0.112)	(0.069)	(0.19)	(0.117)	(0.072)	(0.216)
Control Variables	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Region FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4588	4283	4283	4592	4285	4285
R-squared	0.00	0.009	0.09	0.00	0.009	0.129
Chi-square statistics	9.367***	3.179*	6.608**	16.576***	4.62**	24.502***
F-statistics	9.415***	3.18*	6.581**	16.731***	4.614**	24.653***

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using 2SLS regressions. Only the second-stage regression results have been reported. *The dependent variables, Oppose 1 and Oppose 2, range from 1 to 4, and measure the degree to which respondents oppose a form of federalism in which ethnicity is considered in the creation of regional governments.* Control variables include economic development, trust in prime minister, ethnic discrimination, educational level, gender, and age. "Ref" denotes the reference category.

Table A4. Restricting the analysis to respondents living at least 50 km and 100 km from the border

Oppose index†	At least 50 km from border			At least 100 km from border		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Violent conflict	-0.014**	-0.005**	-0.015***	-0.011	-0.003	-0.02***
	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.002)	(0.004)
Constant	5.191***	4.388***	2.878***	5.101***	4.417***	2.662***
	(0.204)	(0.123)	(0.354)	(0.257)	(0.127)	(0.414)
Control Variables	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Region FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Ethnic FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Observations	4271	3977	3977	3868	3591	3591
R-squared	0.00	0.016	0.134	0.00	0.017	0.151
Chi-square statistics	5.157**	0.059	16.294***	1.464	3.023*	13.25***
F-statistics	5.167**	0.058	16.35***	1.464	3.023*	13.304***

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using 2SLS regressions. Only the second-stage regression results have been reported. The dependent variable ranges from 2 to 8 and is an additive index measuring the degree to which respondents oppose ethnic federalism. Control variables include economic development, trust in prime minister, ethnic discrimination, educational level, gender, and age. "Ref" denotes the reference category.

Table A5. First-stage regression results associated with results in Table A4

Violent conflict †	At least 50 km from border			At least 100 km from border		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Distance to border (km)	-0.058***	-0.167***	-0.133***	-0.055***	-0.181***	-0.108***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.01)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.009)
Constant	48.699***	54.388***	35.983***	47.589***	58.882***	44.156***
	(2.18)	(3.007)	(5.07)	(2.341)	(2.835)	(5.775)
Control Variables	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Region FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Ethnic FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Observations	4532	4188	4188	4116	3791	3791
R-squared	0.016	0.338	0.607	0.014	0.426	0.742
AIC statistics	48210	42822.18	40713.01	43207.48	37624.26	34660.92
BIC statistics	48222.84	42879.23	41010.99	43220.13	37680.42	34929.26

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using OLS regressions. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion. Models 1, 2, and 3 are based on the subsample of respondents living at least 50 km from the border, while Models 4, 5, and 6 are based on respondents living at least 100 km from the border.

Table A6. Measuring conflict using shorter time frames, starting from 2015 and 2018 respectively

Oppose index†	Incidents from 2015			Incidents from 2018		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Violent conflict	-0.028***	-0.013***	-0.022***	-0.033***	-0.021***	-0.053***
	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.011)
Constant	5.239***	4.384***	3.192***	5.08***	4.408***	3.838***
	(0.136)	(0.122)	(0.354)	(0.095)	(0.124)	(0.44)
Control Variables	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Region FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Ethnic FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Observations	4511	4216	4216	4511	4216	4216
R-squared	0.00	0.02	0.153	0.00	0.01	0.029
Chi-square statistics	13.706***	1.914	17.296***	12.664***	4.446**	22.954***
F-statistics	13.814***	1.909	17.277***	12.724***	4.439**	23.276***

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using 2SLS regressions. Only the second-stage regression results have been reported. The dependent variable ranges from 2 to 8 and is an additive index measuring the degree to which respondents oppose ethnic federalism. Control variables include economic development, trust in prime minister, ethnic discrimination, educational level, gender, and age. "Ref" denotes the reference category.

Table A7. First-stage regression results associated with results in Table A6

Violent conflict †	**Incidents from 2015**			**Incidents from 2018**		
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**
Distance to border (km)	-0.043***	-0.091***	-0.092***	-0.034***	-0.057***	-0.039***
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Constant	30.538***	31.124***	32.12***	20.174***	20.51***	26.04***
	(1.043)	(1.651)	(3.437)	(0.739)	(1.213)	(3.245)
Control Variables	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Region FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Ethnic FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Observations	4778	4432	4432	4778	4432	4432
R-squared	0.031	0.28	0.598	0.042	0.21	0.459
AIC statistics	45494	40862.12	38350.81	41708.7	37966.47	36359.11
BIC statistics	45506.94	40919.69	38651.45	41721.64	38024.04	36659.75

Notes: † denotes the dependent variable. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.0. All models are estimated using OLS regressions. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion. Models 1, 2, and 3 are based on the subsample of respondents living at least 50 km from the border, while Models 4, 5, and 6 are based on respondents living at least 100 km from the border.

Table A8. Background information on interview participants

	Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Profession	Interview date	Location
1.	Gebre Meskel	Male	58	History teacher	Nov 16, 2024	Mekele
2.	Mehari Abebe	Male	35	Lawyer	Nov 18, 2024	Mekele
3.	Woini Aregawi	Female	48	Public institution worker (Council representative)	Nov 20, 2024	Mekele
4.	Trihas Awalom	Female	47	University professor	Nov 22, 2024	Mekele
5.	Abulla Odol	Male	62	Former teacher	Dec 15, 2024	Gambella
6.	Nychoul Jock	Female	45	Nurse & community organizer	Dec 17, 2024	Gambella
7.	Jakob Tadesse	Male	29	Student leader & civil society activist	Dec 17, 2024	Gambella
8.	(Unnamed)	Male	55	Teacher	Dec 05, 2023	Benishangul-Gumuz
9.	Nyala Haruna	Female	45	Public institution expert	Dec 06, 2023	Benishangul-Gumuz
10.	Genet Kelifa	Female	38	Community representative	Dec 07, 2023	Benishangul-Gumuz
11.	Dr. Alemu Tadesse	Male	50	Political scientist	Dec 12, 2023	Addis Ababa
12.	Selam Yared	Female	42	Civil society activist	Dec 15, 2023	Addis Ababa
13.	Dawit Gebremichael	Male	39	Entrepreneur & cultural organizer	Dec 19, 2023	Addis Ababa
14.	Hana Solomon	Female	31	NGO program officer	Dec 23, 2023	Addis Ababa

Note: The table presents the respondents' pseudonyms along with background details such as gender, age, occupation, and the date and location of each interview.

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