

Review of: "GERD: A Catalyst for the Nation-Building Process in Ethiopia"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Reviewer Comments

GERD: A Catalyst for Nation-Building Process in Ethiopia

The author looks at ways in which the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is fostering unity by bringing the citizens of Ethiopia together regardless of culture, ethnicity, and political affiliations. This sense of national pride among the citizens, the author argue, constitutes a catalyst for nation-building. The author lays out the different approaches to nation-building that have been adopted by past leaders of the country, including the transition from the centralized governance system to the system of ethnic-federalism, which was pursued by the EPRDF government, and is currently generating some unintended outcomes. The author, thus, sees GERD as an opportunity to coalesce the country around a common purpose and to refocus the attention of the citizens to fighting poverty.

Overall, it was an interesting read. However, I have a few comments which I hope the author would consider. These are presented in what follows:

- In the abstract, the author states that "The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government has adopted ethnic federalism as a means of nation-building consolidation engine **though it strengthens the centrifugal force by weakening the centripetal one**". My concern is with the highlighted portion of the statement. Technically, there may not be anything wrong with it. However, this part of the statement is rather too "colorful" in my opinion. I would rather the author use simpler and more readable words (phrases) to convey his message. In the current state, it is not very clear what that statement means. The abstract is supposed to give the reader a window into what the paper is about. It should be as clear (readable) as possible to the general audience.
- Parts 1, 2 and 3 are all dedicated to definitions and theories which, in my opinion, have taken too much space. I understand that the author would like to provide a background to the issues he is looking to discuss. However, devoting too much time to this background information has the tendency to knock the reader of track. This is more suited for an academic exercise than for a public audience, especially given what the paper is about. The author could compress all three parts into one.
- In parts 4 and 5 (which are the most important parts of the paper in my opinion) the author does a good job providing a historical context to nation-building in Ethiopia, and how the inception of GERD offers another opportunity to rally the country. I would argue (as has the author in some sense) that the current solidarity in the country regarding GERD is

partly due to the potential benefits that the citizens anticipate getting after the project is completed. This would likely remain so until it is time to “share the cake”. The author could provide some information about how issues of equity, accountability, and transparency would be addressed. Clearly addressing these issues would help sustain the relative peace in the country, considering the current political and ethnic tensions in the country. In particular, the author could consider the following:

- a. What is the current power deficit in Ethiopia as a whole?
- b. How much of the current economic challenges is attributed to the lack of access to adequate power/energy?
- c. Considering the geographical location of the different ethnic and cultural groups, are there any differences in access to electrical power across the country?
- d. What jobs are created through GERD? Who are the beneficiaries? Are these jobs equitably distributed?
- e. What is the current plan in terms of how proceeds of GERD would be distributed? Plans for extending the power grid across the country, including when and how these would be done, would be important (critical).