

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

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The author has presented a compelling look at the significance of the GERD project for nation-building in Ethiopia and a well-researched overview of the theoretical concepts underpinning nation-building. My suggestions are as follows.

1. The paper would improve with an introduction that frames the paper and provides motivation for the research. It should ideally include a research question, as well as an argument as to why this topic, and specifically the case of Ethiopia and GERD, are important to study.
2. Relatedly, the author would be wise to present, either in the introduction or at the beginning of the discussion of the case of Ethiopia, some specific context about Ethiopia's challenges. That is, give the reader an understanding of the political, cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic challenges that Ethiopia faces, which necessitates the kind of nation-building and state building approaches that GERD provides.
3. In the author's discussion of the Ethiopian case, they would be wise to delineate between the concept of state and nation-building more thoroughly. It seems to me that GERD is a "state-building" initiative that will have positive implications for "nation-building." This has not been made thoroughly clear in the author's writing.
4. The author may want to consult the work of Jeffrey Herbst who argues that state and nation-building in Africa has been significantly impacted by geographic and territorial factors. His work is seminal for understanding this topic.
5. The paper's section on ethnic federalism in Ethiopia could be expanded. More details about Ethiopia's particular cleavages and their politicization would be helpful (the 2005 election, for instance, should be explained).
6. Some background context on GERD would be helpful for readers unfamiliar with it.
7. Much of the language in the last two section is predictive, in that it predicts what the dam project "will" do. This is problematic in this kind of analytical paper.
8. There is a problematic lack of evidence in the last two sections of the paper. For instance, the author mentions that there is broad support for the dam, which has a "unifying force"; however, they fail to present evidence to support this claim.
9. Relatedly, there are areas in these sections in which the author can provide more details about how the dam has the potential to contribute to nation-building. For example, how does the dam have social cohesion power and how will contribute to alleviating poverty? More explanation is needed.