

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.

First of all, I would like to appreciate the writer for his interest in providing a contribution to one of the most controversial conceptions in Ethiopian politics: the nation-building process. But the writer needs to differentiate nation-building from state-building. I think the manuscript should be designed to make an analysis of state-building rather than nation-building. The reason for this is that the concept of a nation-building project could not be applied in multi-national countries like Ethiopia.

In any country, communities seek to link some events and history to the state-building process. In the same token, this manuscript attempted to link GERD to the so-called nation-building process in Ethiopia, which was a historically failed project of the imperial and socialist regimes and is still extremely controversial and a source of violent conflict in the country. The concept and practice of nation-building are extremely inconsistent with multinational state-building. Then how is the author going to treat Ethiopia when the concept of nation-building is not clear? Is it possible to build a nation in a multi-national state whose formation is not yet completed? If the past history of the country is contradictory conceived, how could the construction of a dam serve as a national brand (catalyst) for communities with multiple identities, cultures, religions and with competing/conflicting national pride? For instance, the EPRDF, under the auspices of TPLF, is the architect that starts the construction of the GERD. But TPLF gets into conflict with the federal government given the construction of the dam, which the author conceives as a catalyst for the nation-building process.

Under the abstract, the writer put that "Ethiopia's nation-building endeavor is still in progress. "Emperor Haile-Selassie has been consolidating the Ethiopian nation-building process, though it has been curbed by the EPRDF government." I am not sure if the writer equates nation-building with state-formation. I thought this emanated from a mis-conception of the state and nation. In the Ethiopian case, the writer needs to see the contradicting nationalism (pan-Ethiopian nationalism and multi-cultural nationalism) before making such a one-sided determination. How is Ethiopia said to be in the process of nation-building? Has Ethiopia ever completed state formation? Do the existing conditions indicate that Ethiopia is in the process of nation-building? Do you think that it is possible to build Ethiopia as a nation? Under the definition of nation-building the author states that "nation building primarily refers to a domestic process when political elites (or state agents) strive to construct a national identity by bridging existing cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or religious divides. The process through which the borders of the contemporary state and the national community converge might be referred to as nation-building." According to this definition, the aim of nation building is creating community with same language, culture, ethnic and religion. In this manner, it is must to design which national identity should be considered as a common identity that governs the country. But how one could design common national identity which all nation in Ethiopia embrace? As Ethiopia lack share national identity since its inception as multi-national state by Minilik the 2nd, how could construction of

dam create such a share national identity is a critical question that needs critical examination? In Ethiopia there are a lots of nations (Amhara, Oromo, Tigre, Gurage, Sidama, ...) and religious identity (Orthodox, Muslim, protestant, Chathilic,...). Therefore, are we need to build other identity for all or are

Three things are necessary for coexistence: (1) a sizable legacy; (2) agreement; and (3) the desire to preserve the value of the history one has inherited in its totality. This idea aims to express that the people's historical and cultural heritage is the primary factor in "creating a nation." In Ethiopia, as we know both in history and contemporary political discourse, these three conditions are lacking. Each nation in Ethiopia claims its own distinctive (even conflicting) historical values, legacy and lack national agreement. How do you consider that construction of the dam could be a catalyst in this condition? If one nation needs to secede from Ethiopia, do you think that the dam will stop them to do so?