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Federalism, Citizenship and National Identity in Ethiopia

Edmond J. Keller and Edith M. Omwami

Introduction

Can federalism enhance the consolidation of democracy in deeply divided societies? Can the institutions of a federal system be designed in such ways that the policies they elicit engender popular support and a popular culture of ethnic tolerance and cooperation? In deeply divided societies attempting to democratize, is there an inherent tension between the notions of civic republican citizenship and liberal citizenship?

A common assumption of modernization theorists, as well as of third world political activists of that era (1960s), was that the process of modernization would lead inexorably to the breaking down of and the ultimate demise of traditional institutions based upon communalism.¹ In their places would emerge modern liberal institutions characterized by individualism. Moreover, it was assumed that as a result of conscious national government policies of political integration, cultural diversity would give way to more homogenous national cultures. Yet, almost five decades later, in many parts of the developing world this has not completely happened. Craig Calhoun notes that, "Neither nationalism nor ethnicity is vanishing as part of an obsolete traditional order. Both are part of a

¹ Weiner, Myron. "Political Integration and Political Development," in Claude Welch, Jr. ed. *Political Modernization: A Reader in Comparative Political Change*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1969; Rustow, W.W. *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960; Leys, Colin. *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996; Enloe, Cynthia. *Ethnic Conflict and Political Development*. Boston: Little Brown, 1973; Azikwe, Nnamdi. "From Tribe to Nation: The Case of Nigeria," in Onigu Orite. *Themes in African Political and Social Thought*. Enugu, Nigeria: Dimension Publishers, 1978.

modern set of categorical identities invoked by elites and other participants in political and social struggles."² In a similar vein, Benjamin Barber contends, "... the planet is falling precipitously apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment."³

In many parts of the developing world, the challenge facing state- and nation-builders is to construct viable multi-ethnic or multi-national states. Nowhere is this truer than in Africa, where, even though they have been eroded, traditional values, institutions and mores continue to exert considerable influence over various segments of social life.⁴ For example, even though national governments routinely seek to instill in the general population a sense of liberal citizenship and to organize political life accordingly, civic republican citizenship is often found to be at odds with such objectives.⁵ This reality presents particular problems in deeply divided society, where national governments have attempted federal solutions to reduce the perception among some religious, ethnic or nationality groups that they have been and continue to be systematically discriminated against at the expense of other more favored groups.⁶

² Calhoun, Craig. "Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19(1993), p 211.

³ Barber, Benjamin. *Jihad Vs. McWorld*. New York: Times Books, 1995, p 4.

⁴ So, Alvin Y. *Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency and World Systems Theories*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990.

⁵ The notion of civic republican citizenship considers rights not as inherent but as acquired through civic practice that upholds obligations to the community. By contrast, the idea of liberal citizenship assumes that rights inhere in individuals and exist prior to belonging to a community. Liberal citizenship rights are guaranteed with minimal obligation to the community. Within the post-colonial state, liberal citizenship qualifies a person to participate in the national community, while in the ethnic community, civic republican citizenship requires members to participate in the group's preservation, particularly as this relates to competition or conflict with similar groups and even in some cases as this relates to the national community. See Stephen Ndegwa, "Citizenship and Ethnicity: An Examination of Two Transition Moment in Kenyan Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 3(1997), pp 603-604.

⁶ Enloe, Cynthia. *Ethnic Conflict and Political Development*, 89-134; Horowitz, Donald. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, *passim*.

Ethiopia provides the most recent example of an attempt by an African government to introduce federalism in an effort to create an enabling environment for democracy and development. On assuming the lead role in a transitional government following the overthrow of Ethiopia's Marxist-Leninist regime in 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)⁷ declared its intention to pursue an administrative path of *ethnic federalism*.⁸ The Transitional Government asserted that it was committed to forthrightly addressing the claims to self-determination being expressed by a number of ethnic groups styling themselves as "nations" or "nationalities." Until the early 1990s, Ethiopia's entire modern history had been characterized by the ethnic chauvinism of the politically dominant Amhara ethnic or nationality group. Under both the imperial (1855–1974) and Marxist-Leninist (1974–1991) regimes, ethnicity was extremely politicized and polarizing. The imperial regime simply repressed the ethnic or nationalist sentiments, attempting to impose in the population at large a sense of belonging and allegiance to a multi-ethnic nation. Some, but not all, came to strongly believe in this ideology, particularly among the Amhara nationality group and the elites of other ethnic groups who had embraced the Amhara cultural ideology.⁹ However, in the end, this strategy proved a failure, and the imperial system was deposed in 1974.¹⁰ In contrast to the policies of the imperial regime, the new Marxist-Leninist regime, pursuing what it claimed was a "scientific socialist" development strategy, attempted to make ethnic identities irrelevant, creating instead people's organizations (e.g. revolutionary peasant's, worker's, women's, youth organizations). The regime declared that these

⁷ The EPRDF is an umbrella political organization made up of five ethnically based parties, and dominated at its core by the Tigrean Peoples' Liberation Front.

⁸ *Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Ethiopia (December 8, 1994); Keller, Edmond J. "The Making and Remaking of State and Nation in Ethiopia," in Ricardo Laremont, ed. *Borders, Nationalism, and the African State: Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sierra Leone*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005.

⁹ Levine, Donald. *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multi-ethnic Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

¹⁰ Keller, Edmond J. *Revolutionary Ethiopia: From Empire to People's Republic*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988.

groups, along with the Worker's Party of Ethiopia (WPE), were vanguards in a worldwide class struggle. However, this strategy also proved ineffective, and ethnic tensions and conflicts eventually brought down the Marxist-Leninist regime in 1991.

This essay critically assesses the complex interplay between Ethiopia's policy of federalism and the notions of citizenship and national identity. The term "nation" or "nationality" within the context of Ethiopia refers to distinctive ethnic groups that comprise the federal state of Ethiopia.¹¹ National or ethnic self-determination in Ethiopia most often refers to a desire on the part of certain ethnically identifiable citizens to govern their own affairs but within the context of a federal state. At the same time, at least in principle, any nationality group is constitutionally able to vote for their state to be separated from the federal state.¹²

The Ethiopian state uses a mixture of according nationality groups the right to govern their own affairs, sharing the national wealth equitably among ethnically based states and communities, and promoting policies that involve ethnic states in the affairs of the federal state. The government's policy of administrative devolution, revenue sharing, and national development are designed to elicit popular support for these policies broadly lumped under the rubric of "ethnic federalism," while at the same time facilitating the central state's desire to lead the national development process.¹³

¹¹ The term "ethnicity" is hotly debated within academic circles. It is generally agreed that ethnicity is a non-ideologized form of identity; while, nationalism is an ideologized form of the same concept. For the purposes of this essay, the ethnic groups is characterized by the following: 1) a myth of a common group ancestry, 2) shared historical memories, 3) common language and/or culture, 4) a putative shared geographic homeland, and 5) a sense of solidarity with others considered legitimately a part of the group. There is nothing biological about these connections; but instead, ethnicity is a subjective concept that is malleable and situational. See, Sandra Joireman. *Nationalism and Political Identity*. New York: Continuum, 2003, pp 9-10, and J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith. *Ethnicity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

¹² Keller, Edmond J. "The Making and Remaking of State and Nation in Ethiopia", loc.cit., p106.

¹³ Keller, Edmond J. "Ethnic Federalism and Democratization in Ethiopia, *Horn of Africa*, XXI (2003), 30-43.

One of the primary questions this article addresses is: “Does the average Ethiopian citizen see her/himself as a citizen of the state of Ethiopia first, and her/his nationality group second or, do these identities coexist?” In other words, has the federal government been successful in promoting the acceptance of liberal citizenship among Ethiopia’s disparate populations or is there a lingering hold of civic republican citizenship that serves as a drag on the development of the liberal notion of citizenship that the federal government seeks? Stephen Ndegwa found in his research on Kenya that the failure of liberal democracy to take effective hold in that country is very much related to the tension between civic republicanism, based upon communally based rights and obligations, and a sense of liberal citizenship that would be more conducive to the advancement of individualism and a national culture of democracy.¹⁴ On the other hand, Michael Bratton, Robert Mattes, and E. Gyimah-Boadi, employing empirical evidence drawn from the *Afrobarometer Project*, have suggested that it is common in Africa for people to recognize the distinct settings in which one form of identity or another should hold sway. They comment:

We expected that Africans would declare primary allegiance to ethnic identity. A vast literature has created the powerful impression that Africans remain embedded in solidarities of kinship and language and that these ethnic identities constitute the principle obstacle to nation building. Against the grain, we find diverse patterns of subjective group attachments in which ethnicity is not uppermost. And we discover that many types of group loyalty—including ethnic identity—readily coexist with nationalism [meaning acceptance of citizenship within the larger state entity].¹⁵

The present article seeks to contribute to the debate on this issue, by considering the case of federalism, citizenship and national identity in Ethiopia. The remainder of the essay is divided into two sections. The first

¹⁴ Ndegwa, Stephen. “Citizenship and Ethnicity,” pp 612-614.

¹⁵ Bratton, Michael, Robert Mattes, and E. Gyimah-Boadi. *Public Opinion, Democracy and Market Reform in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p 187.

describes the broad contours of Ethiopia's efforts to build a federal state largely centered on ethnic or nationality groups. It is important to note that in the context of contemporary Ethiopia, an individual is considered to be a citizen of Ethiopia, but also a member of a particular nation or nationality group included in the federal state. The discussion here concentrates on the institutional mechanism employed in implementing the policy of federalism. The second section reports on the findings of an empirical study conducted in Ethiopia in 2002–2003 that asked questions intended to elicit respondents' attitudes about the adequacy of central authorities in ameliorating ethnic tensions and perceptions of less than first class citizenship among aggrieved groups, as well as creating a widespread sense of identification with the federal state and support for its policies.¹⁶

The Choice of Federalism

Federalism is a form of power-sharing that at a very fundamental level involves the devolution of governmental power and authority from the central government to sub-national units or states. There is no ideal-typical form of federalism, and such systems usually are constructed as a consequence of elite choice. In its purest form, federalism involves a bargain that is willingly entered into by relevant parties through their elite representatives. Each party weighs the advantages and disadvantages of such an arrangement, and bases its decisions or choices upon what appears to

¹⁶ It should be noted that the data employed here were gathered two years prior to Ethiopia's most recent national elections in 2005. The build-up to the elections was relatively free, fair and transparent, but following the elections opposition parties cried "foul," and "vote rigging." The government responded violently to suppress protests, and by November more than one hundred protesters had been killed; more than 200 had been wounded and 10,000 had been detained. At present, 111 people from opposition groups, the media and civil society are being tried for various acts of sedition. This being the case, there is little doubt that if this study were to take place now it might yield some different results since ethnic concerns have in large measure fused with the political concerns of the regime's opponents. For our purposes, it is important to bear in mind that the findings we present here are based on popular attitudes and opinions in 2002-3.

maximize their group benefits. For example, leaders at both the national and state level might want to enhance their control over the sub-national unit.¹⁷ A frequent justification for such a choice is to create conditions that mitigate against group conflict, while at the same time demonstrating respect for a society's diversity of cultures and a commitment to protecting the integrity of the constituent cultures.¹⁸

Alfred Stepan, seeking to refine some of the classical conceptualizations of federalism, identifies three variations on the federalism theme. The classical manner in which federal agreements are arrived at, similar to that described above, can be defined as a "coming together federation."¹⁹ In this situation, individual sovereign polities choose to join with similar polities mainly for security and development purposes. They agree to abide by a federal constitution which requires that each entity surrender some of their sovereignty to a federal government and to abide by new rules and regulations that grow from this new arrangement.²⁰

Stepan's second model of federalism is what he calls a "holding together federation." This is said to involve a deal struck among cultural brokers in a unitary state characterized by significant cultural divisions in an effort to avert the balkanization of the state. The classical African example of this involved the independence settlement in Nigeria, when Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo political leaders chose to "hold" this multi-ethnic state together by employing a form of federalism.²¹

Although coming together and holding together federations both exhibit democratic elements, the third model that Stepan articulates is most often arrived at through undemocratic means. He calls this model,

¹⁷ Riker, William. *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance*. Boston: Little Brown, 1964, p 12.

¹⁸ Elaigwu, J. Isawa and Victor Olorunsola, "Federalism and the Politics of Compromise," in Donald Rothchild and Victor Olorunsola, eds. *State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1983, p 282.

¹⁹ Stepan, Alfred. "Towards a New Comparative Politics of Federalism, (Multi)Nationalism, and Democracy: Beyond Rikerian Federalism," in Alfred Stepan. *Arguing Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p 320.

²⁰ Keller, Edmond J. "Ethnic Federalism and Democracy in Ethiopia," p 31.

²¹ Suberu. Rotimi T. *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*. Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2001.

"putting together federalism." Federalism in such cases is imposed from the center, rather than being arrived at through elite bargaining among all relevant elites (e.g. the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, and Nigeria following the military coup of 1966). Ethiopia's strategy of *ethnic federalism* closely resembles Stepan's putting together federation model.

When it came to power in 1991, the EPRDF government made a conscious decision not to suppress the national aspirations of ethnicities that made up this multi-ethnic state of more than 70 million people. In 1995, a government spokesman, citing the historic failure of the imperial and Marxist regimes to address the issues of ethnic tensions, mistrust and conflict, stated, "We must find a solution which is beneficial to the Ethiopian people today; therefore, history will not provide the answer."²² The Transitional Charter asserted that all of Ethiopia's nationalities had the right to self-determination and the right to govern their own affairs.

Within two years after coming to power, the new government announced its decision to administratively reorganize the country, creating states based on the principle of ethnic federalism. The leaders saw this approach as the best way to demonstrate that the new regime was committed to social equity and democracy. The policy of ethnic federalism initially began to unfold through a series of proclamations, and eventually the right to self-determination was enshrined in the Constitution of 1994, entitled "The Rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples."²³ Article #39 of the Constitution spells out the procedure that nations and nationalities must follow in order to separate themselves from the federal state. It also establishes the rights of all states to write their own constitutions, and to write, speak, promote and develop their own languages.²⁴

²² Quoted in Kjetil Tronvoll and Oyvind Aadland, "The Process of Democratization in Ethiopia: An Expression of Popular Participation or Political Resistance," *Human Rights Report No. 5* (Oslo, Norway, Norwegian Institute of Human Rights, 1995, p 47.

²³ Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, *The System of Regional Administration in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1994.

²⁴ All of the nine states have their own constitution, which were established over the 1995-98 period. Whereas the creation of a federal constitution involved an elaborate process of drafting by a special commission, deliberation by the public as

Significantly, the right to self-determination accorded to every nationality group also includes the right to secede from the federal state of Ethiopia. The constitution establishes that this action can be taken when at least two-thirds (2/3) of the legislature of the nation, nationality or peoples concerned vote to do so, and the decision must be ratified in a statewide referendum after a three-year period during which the vote is reviewed by the Constitutional Court and the Council of the Federation.

How has Ethiopia's novel experiment with ethnic federalism worked in practice? It is clear that this policy has not resulted in a widespread consensus in the population at large that this is a good approach to coping with the challenges of extreme cultural diversity in the country. In fact, there are many in the public who see the policy as fatally flawed. Some even believe that this policy will ultimately result in the breakup of the federation.²⁵

Despite this, on many occasions, government representatives and representatives of the ruling political party, the EPRDF, have reasserted that their primary goal is to promote social justice for all of Ethiopia's constituent nationality groups. In 2002, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated that his regime was, "... resolved to empower and promote democratic principles giving affirmative actions (sic) to historically disadvantaged groups and relatively backward states."²⁶

well as the Constitutional Assembly, and finally adoption by the Constitutional Assembly, state constitutions, after being drafted by committees of the respective state legislatures, were simply adopted by the state legislatures. See, Tsegaye Regassa, "State Constitutions in Federal Ethiopia: A Preliminary Observation," (unpublished paper 2004).

²⁵ Aberra, Worku, "Tribalism Rules in Ethiopia," *New African*, (September 1993), p 20; Brietzke, Paul, "Ethiopia's 'Leap into the Dark': Federalism and Self-determination in the New Constitution," *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 40 (1995), pp 19-38; Gudina, Merere, *Ethiopia: Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and the Quest for Democracy, 1960-2000*. Addis Ababa: Shaker Pub., 2003; Alemayehu, Abate Nikodimos, "Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Challenges and Opportunities," MA Thesis, Faculty of Law, University of Lund, (Fall 2004); Serra-Horguelin, Arnault, "The Federal Experiment in Ethiopia: A Socio-political Analysis," *Travaux Documents: Centre d'etude D'Afrique Noire*, No. 64 (1999).

²⁶ *Ethiopian Herald*, "Forum discusses decentralization affirmative actions", (August 6, 2002).

In the process of "putting together" this federal system, the EPRDF regime has created a devolved system of administration. The stated intent is to bring government closer to the people and to create circumstances that facilitate popular empowerment. However, it is clear that there are real limitations in this policy, as the central government has retained a good deal of power and influence at the federal level. For instance, most of government's taxing powers rest with the federal government. It has the responsibility for collecting most taxes, including import and export taxes, setting national economic and social policies, and establishing national standards in such areas as commerce and trade, finance, and transportation. Also, it has the exclusive responsibility in the areas of foreign policy, national defense, monetary policy, and interstate transportation and commerce.²⁷ Whatever powers are not assigned to the federal government are the purview of regional state governments. Regional state powers include the implementation of state constitutions as well as social (e.g. language, education, housing, health) and regional economic development policies and plans; the policing function, the administration of land and natural resources according to federal law; taxation in such areas as personal income (except for federal and international employees), certain producer and manufacture taxes; and certain joint taxes with the federal government.²⁸

Important facts to take into account when attempting to evaluate ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is the large population (over 70 million people), inadequate transportation and communications infrastructure, general economic underdevelopment, and the abject poverty of large segments of the population both at the communal and regional levels. In addition, the governmental capacity required of a complex federal system is limited in most parts of the country and particularly in poor regions. Certain states are barely able to independently finance a small fraction of their public works expenditures (e.g. Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Harari, Somali, Afar).²⁹ Consequently, poverty and weak and uncoordinated ad-

²⁷ Keller, Edmond J. "Ethnic Federalism and Democratization in Ethiopia, loc.cit.

²⁸ Ibid, p 36.

²⁹ Ibid, p 37.

ministrative institutions have generally proven to be drags on the successful implementation of devolved federalism. For example, in some cases the federal government has devolved the power and authority to implement development policy, but without providing local administrators with adequate resources to accomplish their assigned responsibility.³⁰ In general, the necessary technical, administrative and material resources are in short supply and are spread particularly thinly as one proceeds down the administrative hierarchy.

State governments, because of the dominance of the central government in revenue generation, have had to rely extensively on funds transferred to them via revenue sharing and block grant arrangements. The result has been vertical imbalances with mismatches between the states' expenditure responsibilities and their revenue generating capabilities. In 1993–4, for example, out of a total expenditure of more than Birr 3,100 million by the states, only about a quarter of this figure (Birr 807 million) was generated by the states themselves.³¹ The remainder of what they spent came in the form of block grants and subsidies from the federal government.³² Another thing to consider is the fact that the expenditure patterns of the states are centrally monitored, which gives the federal government an added measure of control and influence over them. Since 1994, the percentage of state budgets collected by the states themselves has dipped to below one fifth.

Theoretically, the governments of regional states have the authority and power to identify policy preferences and to formulate their own development plans. This includes the authority to set their own budgets and to make independent decisions about capital and recurrent expenditures. However, in fact, the priority setting and expenditure strategies followed by the states are considerably influenced by central administrators.³³

³⁰ "Decentralization and Local Economic Development," *Capital*, (August 4, 2002), p 13.

³¹ \$1 US = Birr 8.3.

³² Chipande, Graham H.R., "Decentralization of Macroeconomic Management in a Post-conflict State: The Ethiopian Experience," Addis Ababa: United Nations Development Program, (June 1997), p 23.

³³ World Bank. *Ethiopia: Regionalization Study*. Report No. 18898-ET (February 1999), p 8.

Moreover, states are required to give their recurrent needs the highest priority, followed by ongoing non-capital projects. New investments in development projects are given the lowest priority. Consequently, the poorest regions are most often only able to meet their recurrent needs.³⁴ By contrast, the better off states including Addis Ababa and Oromia are in more advantageous positions to act autonomously in making some policies.

As suggested above, the lack of the administrative capacities of some states, particularly the poorest ones, has a profound negative effect on the ability of the ethnic federalist system to show progress in socio-economic development and thereby to elicit popular support for the regime and its policies. This shortcoming is highlighted by the significant difference in the availability of skilled administrative and technical staff from one regional state to the next, particularly from the more well-endowed states to the poorest ones.

In an effort to address this problem, the government has introduced a system of "pooling" qualified person-power at the state as well as the district (*woreda*) levels. This involves the sharing of civil servants with needed administrative training and talents among offices in different branches of government (e. g. executive, judiciary and legislative) or in different policy sectors (e.g. health, education, agriculture, etc.). However, this approach is not always adequately effective or efficient.³⁵

Perhaps most importantly for our purposes, official efforts to create a form of government that is closer to the people and that involves the populace more in the determination of development and spending goals have been handicapped by administrative shortcomings at the state and district levels. In most regions, basic public services such as the provision of adequate potable water and sanitation services, education, public health, food security, police and judicial services, and public works are generally available only on a limited basis.³⁶ This reality has noticeable effects on the attitudes of average citizens about public service delivery as well as

³⁴ Keller, Edmond J. "Making and Remaking State and Nation in Ethiopia," loc.cit., p 113.

³⁵ Ibid, p 113.

³⁶ Ibid, pp 115-123.

about how their needs as citizens are being addressed by the government. Related to these general attitudes about public services is how people tend to feel about their situations in relation to the situations of other ethnic communities. These are the issues presented in the following section.

Citizenship and National Identity within the Federal Context

The present section of the essay is based mainly on a survey of a purposively selected sample of 277 respondents in the regional states of Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State (SNNPR), Tigray, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Ethiopia's capital city, Addis Ababa. A structured questionnaire covering the issues of interest to the present research was administered to all the respondents with the data being gathered over a two year period between 2002 and 2003.³⁷ These data were supplemented by personal open-ended interviews of government officials at all levels of administration, bilateral and multilateral development experts working in Ethiopia, and average citizens. The survey focused on opinions and perceptions regarding issues of national identity, citizenship, government service delivery, equity and popular participation. A leading assumption of this project was that the perception of the salience of the respondents' national (ethnic) identities as opposed to their citizenship identity would vary across ethnic communities. Another assumption is that respondents from different ethnic groups would have a keen concern for social justice for their own group versus other ethnic groups in the country. The primary questions that constituted the dependent variables were:

- How effective has the central government been in trying to solve problems among the different peoples of the country?

³⁷ We are grateful for the research assistance on this project provided by Lahra Smith, Dawit Zegaye, Debelu Goshu, Habtamu Alabachew, Yemane Zeray Mesfin, and Mismak Ta'ame Hagos. We also thank James Polhemus for his keen insights on the dynamics of Ethiopian development and change.

- Do you agree that the central government of Ethiopia represents the interests of most of the peoples of Ethiopia?
- Do you feel that the interests of the Ethiopian people as a whole are more important than the interests of particular nationality groups?
- Is it more important that a certain nationality group have the right to determine its own future rather than the country as a whole have a sense of common purpose and unity?
- Do you agree/disagree with the statement that you are proud to be a member of your nationality group?
- Do you agree/disagree that all people born in this country, regardless of nationality, should be treated equally?
- Do you agree/disagree that you feel stronger ties to your nationality group than to other Ethiopians?
- Do you agree/disagree that you would want your children to think of themselves as having a close affinity to your nationality group?

Methodology

A stepwise linear regression analysis was used in order to determine the contributory effect of each independent variable on the dependent variables. The dependent variables were the opinions of respondents on the various issues under investigation, primarily those that dealt with respondents' perceptions of government effectiveness in pursuing policies to reduce inequities across ethnic or nationality groups, and their perceptions of the plight of their own nationality or ethnic group compared to other groups in Ethiopian society. The independent variables used were gender, age (18–33, 34–49, 50 plus), education level (0–9 years, 10–12 years, some college–college degree, college plus), nationality (Amhara, Tigrayan, Oromo, Amhara, Berta, Sidama; other southern), and place of residence (Addis Ababa, Oromia, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Tigray, SSNPR). Five statistical models were used, and the independent variables

were added one at a time, in order to determine the impact of each variable individually and relative to the other independent variables. These independent variables were entered in the regression analysis in the above order and the final regression model contains all the variables.

The categorical data was recoded into dummy variables in order to use linear regression analysis. This method helped explain the variance in the resultant responses and offered insight into the magnitude of change in outcomes that resulted from a unit change in the independent variable.³⁸ New dummy variables were created from the categories of each independent variable. The number of new variables is one less than the number of groups because one group was used as the baseline. For each independent variable, the category with the most representation was the baseline and was valued as 0. These reference categories are indicated in the results tables below. In each dummy variable, the category to be compared to the baseline was assigned a value of 1. In the regression models, when an additional independent variable was added, all the dummy variables were placed into the regression at the same time. The results of the analysis are presented in the following section.

Findings

Overall, for all of the survey questions, the model that included all the independent variables (model 5) best explained the variance in the response pattern. Independently, gender was rarely a significant predictor of response, while nationality group was the most significant factor in explaining the variance in the responses for most questions. Residence of respondents was also a significant predictor in a number of cases, particularly where it intersected with nationality group.

³⁸ The method and process of post-coding and analysis are described by Andy Field. See Field, Andy. *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*. London: SAGE, 2005, p 208.

Governmental Effectiveness

Table 1: "In your opinion, has the present central government been effective in trying to seek solutions to the problems among the different peoples of the country?" (Agree/Disagree).

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	.041 (.069)	.032 (.069)	.023 (.068)	-.012 (.066)	.001 (.066)
Age 34-49	—	-.140* (.070)	-.167* (.070)	-.178* (.065)	-.161* (.064)
Age 50 years plus	—	-.144 (.101)	-.237* (.111)	-.213* (.104)	-.172 (.103)
Education level 0-9 Years	—	—	.108 (.077)	.157* (.076)	.124 (.079)
Education level 10-12 years	—	—	.116 (.089)	.238** (.085)	.155 (.088)
Education College Plus	—	—	-.386* (.157)	-.256 (.145)	-.226 (.143)
Nationality Tigrayan	—	—	—	.451*** (.078)	.409** (.128)
Nationality Oromo	—	—	—	-.116 (.073)	.046 (.123)
Nationality Sidama	—	—	—	.094 (.115)	-.027 (.156)
Nationality Berta	—	—	—	.090 (.228)	-.065 (.244)
Nationality SNNPR	—	—	—	.167 (.124)	.078 (.144)
Residence Addis Ababa	—	—	—	—	-.065 (.136)
Residence Amhara	—	—	—	—	-.089 (.148)
Residence Oromia	—	—	—	—	-.322 (.179)
Residence SNNPR	—	—	—	—	.109 (.162)
Residence Benishangul-Gumuz	—	—	—	—	.159 (.172)
R Square	.001	.021	.065	.250	.303
N	251	249	248	240	240

Significant levels: * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001

Standard error in parenthesis. Constant omitted.

Reference variables: gender: Male; age group: 18-33 years old; education: Some College/College Degree; Nationality: Amhara; Residence: Tigray.

Some interesting patterns emerged in the responses to the question of whether or not the central government has been effective in finding solutions to problems among the country's disparate ethnic communities. The model that included all the explanatory variables of interest (model 5) in Table 1 explained 30.3 percent of the variability in the response pattern, with nationality as the most significant contributor. The results of the analysis show that gender and region of residence did not predict the respondent's opinion about government effectiveness in finding solutions to intergroup tensions and conflicts. In terms of age, the 34- to 49-year-olds tended to disagree more with the assertion that the government was effective, when compared to the 18- to 33-year-olds. When education was added to the model, those over 50 years of age also tended to disagree with this assertion. This difference disappeared when residence of the respondents was included in the model.

Level of education significantly predicted the amount of agreement with the statement in models 3 and 4, but it was no longer significant when both nationality and residence of respondents were included in the model. Only Tigrayan nationality and ages 34 to 49 showed statistically significant values in the response pattern in the most inclusive model, model 5. Tigrayans were more likely than Amharas to agree that the central government was effective in seeking solutions to problems among all the peoples of Ethiopia. Region of residence did not show any statistically significant effect on the responses of any particular groups.

Group Pride

**Table 2: "You are proud to be a member of your nationality group."
(Agree/ Disagree).**

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	-.047 (.053)	-.046 (.053)	-.044 (.054)	.024 (.054)	.044 (.051)
Age 34-49	—	-.051 (.054)	-.065 (.055)	-.072 (.053)	-.051 (.048)
Age 50 years plus	—	-.077 (.078)	-.128 (.087)	-.076 (.084)	-.057 (.076)
Education level 0-9 Years	—	—	.088 (.059)	-.003 (.061)	.036 (.059)
Education level 10-12 years	—	—	.015 (.070)	-.029 (.071)	-.069 (.069)
Education College Plus	—	—	-.052 (.130)	-.076 (.124)	-.107 (.114)
Nationality Tigrayan	—	—	—	-.139* (.064)	.290** (.103)
Nationality Oromo	—	—	—	-.108 (.061)	-.199 (.102)
Nationality Sidama	—	—	—	.387*** (.095)	-.187 (.129)
Nationality Berta	—	—	—	-.191 (.155)	-.385* (.161)
Nationality SNNPR	—	—	—	.051 (.111)	-.386** (.123)
Residence Addis Ababa	—	—	—	—	-.001 (.112)
Residence Amhara	—	—	—	—	-.341** (.113)
Residence Oromia	—	—	—	—	-.136 (.147)
Residence SNNPR	—	—	—	—	.422** (.139)
Residence SNNPR	—	—	—	—	.422** (.139)
Residence Benishangul-Gumuz	—	—	—	—	.048 (.138)
R Square	.003	.009	.020	.155	.322
N	244	242	241	233	233

Significant levels: * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001

Standard error in parenthesis. Constant omitted.

Reference variables: gender: Male; age group: 18-33 years old; education: Some College/College Degree; Nationality: Amhara; Residence: Tigray.

To determine the relative importance of the respondents' national identity on their opinions, the survey asked respondents to indicate their relative pride in belonging to their particular group. The model that included all the predictor variables of interest explained 32.2 percent of the variability in the response pattern to this question. Nationality and residence of respondents accounted for 16.7 percent of the variability in the response pattern. Gender, age, and education were not statistically significant predictors of the variability in the response pattern.

When nationality of the respondents was added to the model, Tigrayan respondents were more likely to disagree with the assertion that they were particularly proud to be Tigrayan; the Amhara were close behind. Sidama, on the other hand, were significantly more likely to agree with the statement of pride in nationality group than either Tigrayans or Amharas. The difference for the Sidama was no longer significant when place of residence was added to the regression, while the values for Tigrayan nationality changed from negative to positive (more likely than Amharas to agree with the statement). The Berta and SNNPR nationalities were more likely than Amharas to agree that they felt pride in their nationality group. Residents of SNNPR were more likely than residents of Tigray to agree with this position, while residents of Amhara were more likely to disagree. These findings suggest that Tigrayans and Amharas are more likely to believe that their Ethiopian national identity is also significant to them.

Strength of Ties to Nationality Group

Table 3: "Do you feel stronger ties to your own nationality group than to other Ethiopians?" (Agree/ Disagree).

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	.077 (.068)	.063 (.068)	.054 (.068)	.140* (.070)	.118* (.059)
Age 34-49	—	-.065 (.068)	-.051 (.069)	-.037 (.067)	.000 (.055)
Age 50 years plus	—	.222* (.107)	.272* (.114)	.334** (.110)	.308*** (.091)
Education level 0-9 Years	—	—	-.089 (.074)	-.145 (.077)	-.016 (.069)
Education level 10-12 years	—	—	.026 (.088)	-.023 (.090)	-.020 (.079)
Education College Plus	—	—	-.076 (.159)	-.139 (.153)	-.199 (.126)
Nationality Tigrayan	—	—	—	-.245** (.085)	-.102 (.121)
Nationality Oromo	—	—	—	-.062 (.076)	-.133 (.114)
Nationality Sidama	—	—	—	-.011 (.116)	-.676*** (.142)
Nationality Berta	—	—	—	.431* (.191)	.071 (.182)
Nationality SNNPR	—	—	—	.385** (.137)	-.139 (.136)
Residence Addis Ababa	—	—	—	—	.566*** (.129)
Residence Amhara	—	—	—	—	-.158 (.135)
Residence Oromia	—	—	—	—	-.137 (.168)
Residence SNNPR	—	—	—	—	.801*** (.159)
Residence Benishangul-Gumuz	—	—	—	—	.513** (.160)
R Square	.006	.032	.041	.157	.447
N	227	225	225	217	217

Significant levels: * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001

Standard error in parenthesis. Constant omitted.

Reference variables: gender: Male; age group: 18-33 years old; education: Some College/College Degree; Nationality: Amhara; Residence: Tigray.

This question was asked in order to determine how strongly respondents felt more attached to their own national group than to other Ethiopians. The comprehensive model, model 5 in Table 3, which included all the independent variables, accounted for 44.7 percent of the variance in outcome, indicating that group identity is important across groups. When nationality and residence were added to the regression, women were more likely than men to agree that they feel stronger ties to their own nationality than to other Ethiopians. Across the board, as might be expected, respondents in the older age category (50 years plus) said they had stronger ties to those from their own nationality group compared to the reference 18 - to 33-year-old group. The education level of respondents was not a statistically significant predictor in any of the models.

When nationality was factored into the model equation, the Tigray and Sidama respondents indicated that they did not feel stronger ties to their own nationality group than to other Ethiopians, relative to the reference Amhara group. Nationality accounted for 11.6 percent of the variability in the response outcome. This statistical significance was lost, however, when residence of respondent was added to the model. The Berta and SNNPR minority nationalities said they felt stronger ties to those from their own nationality group compared to the Amhara respondents. In their case too, the statistical significance was lost when residence was included in the model. Residents of Addis Ababa, SNNPR and Beneshangul-Gamuz felt a stronger tie to those from their own nationality group compared to the reference Tigray residents. The location of the respondents' residences was the most influential predictor in the observed variability in the response pattern, accounting for 33 percent of the change.

Hope for Children's' Pride in their Group Identity

Table 4: "You would want your children to think of themselves as whatever your nationality group is." (Agree/ Disagree).

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	-.010 (.054)	-.011 (.054)	.006 (.055)	-.027 (.059)	-.044 (.054)
Age 34-49	—	.016 (.054)	.001 (.055)	.003 (.057)	-.021 (.051)
Age 50 years plus	—	.038 (.083)	-.043 (.092)	-.053 (.094)	-.076 (.084)
Education level 0-9 Years	—	—	.114 (.060)	.148* (.066)	.110 (.063)
Education level 10-12 years	—	—	-.058 (.070)	-.030 (.076)	.014 (.073)
Education College Plus	—	—	.076 (.128)	.131 (.131)	.135 (.118)
Nationality Tigrayan	—	—	—	.155* (.068)	.389*** (.107)
Nationality Oromo	—	—	—	.082 (.065)	-.049 (.106)
Nationality Sidama	—	—	—	-.028 (.109)	.357* (.138)
Nationality Berta	—	—	—	.034 (.164)	.209 (.167)
Nationality SNNPR	—	—	—	-.060 (.122)	.240 (.129)
Residence Addis Ababa	—	—	—	—	.090 (.116)
Residence Amhara	—	—	—	—	.447*** (.118)
Residence Oromia	—	—	—	—	.530*** (.153)
Residence SNNPR	—	—	—	—	-.120 (.145)
Residence Benishangul-Gumuz	—	—	—	—	.069 (.143)
R Square	.000	.001	.026	.061	.273
N	232	231	230	222	222

Significant levels: * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001

Standard error in parenthesis. Constant omitted.

Reference variables: gender: Male; age group: 18-33 years old; education: Some College/College Degree; Nationality: Amhara; Residence: Tigray.

As shown in Table 4, neither gender nor age was a statistically significant predictor of differences in response to the question regarding the desire to have children think of themselves as members of a certain nationality group. Model 5, which included all the independent variables, accounted for 27.3 percent of the variance in the response patterns. When nationality was included in the model, those with 0 to 9 years of education were more likely to want their children to think of themselves as members of their own nationality group than were those with some college or a college degree. Respondents from the Tigrayan nationality group agreed with the position that they wanted their children to think of themselves as Tigrayan, even when residence of respondents was factored into the equation. The Sidama respondents indicated feeling this way only when residence of respondent was factored into the model. Residents of Amhara and Oromia were also more likely to want their children to be proud of belonging to their particular ethnic group than were the respondents residing in Tigray.

Relative Importance of Interests of all Nationalities and Own Nationality

Table 5: "The Ethiopian people as a whole are more important than the interests of any nation, nationality, or people in the country."
(Agree/Disagree)

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	-.046 (-.707)	-.044 (-.678)	-.048 (-.736)	-.017 (-.261)	.048 (.760)
Age 34-49		-.049 (-.748)	-.032 (-.475)	-.003 (-.048)	-.036 (-.600)
Age 50+		-.066 (-.685)	-.004 (-.042)	-.069 (-.666)	-.066 (-.678)
Education level 0-9 years			-.086 (-1.190)	-.064 (-.870)	-.043 (-.573)
Education level 10-12 years			-.023 (-.269)	-.074 (-.876)	-.066 (-.793)
Education college plus			.102 (.637)	.109 (.722)	.076 (.527)
Nationality Tigrayan				.055 (.724)	-.155 (1.262)
Nationality Oromo				.363*** (4.920)	-.132 (-1.076)
Nationality Sidama				.016 (.140)	.104 (.701)
Nationality Berta				.638** (3.106)	.221 (1.028)
Nationality SNNPR				-.156 (-1.326)	-.113 (-.859)
Residence Addis Ababa					-.244 (-1.889)
Residence Amhara					-.354* (-2.546)
Residence Oromia					.386 (2.208)
Residence SNNPR					-.330 (-2.160)
Residence Benishangul-Gumuz					.183 (1.103)
R ²	.002	.004	.010	.158	.285
N	256	255	254	245	245

Significant levels: * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001

Standard error in parenthesis. Constant omitted.

Reference variables: gender: Male; age group: 18-33 years old; education: Some College/College Degree; Nationality: Amhara; Residence: Tigray.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the collective interests of all Ethiopians, as opposed to that of individual ethnic groups were most important. Model 5 in Table 5 that included all the independent variables accounted for 28.5 percent of the variation in responses. None of the coefficients for the first three models were statistically significant. In model 4, members of both the Oromo and Berta nationality groups were more likely than Amharas to agree with the statement that the interests of the Ethiopian people as a whole are more important than the interests of any single nation, nationality, or people in the country. When region of residence was included in the regression, only residence in Amhara showed a statistically significant response pattern compared to the Tigray reference group. Amhara residents were more likely to disagree with the statement than residents of Tigray, prioritizing the interests of their own nationality group.

Adequacy of Central Government Representation of the Interests of all Ethiopians

Table 6: "The central government of Ethiopia represents the interests of most of the peoples of Ethiopia." (Agree/Disagree)

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	.053 (.773)	.046 (.656)	.047 (.665)	.090 (1.285)	.086 (1.237)
Age 34-49		.026 (.372)	.040 (.556)	.037 (.539)	.017 (.249)
Age 50+		.011 (.110)	.080 (.712)	.041 (.379)	.003 (.025)
Education level 0-9 years			-.046 (-.596)	-.031 (-.391)	.029 (.352)
Education level 10-12 years			-.011 (.119)	-.026 (-.301)	.068 (.749)
Education college plus			.261 (1.656)	.167 (1.128)	.114 (.776)
Nationality Tigrayan				-.326*** (-4.026)	-.351* (-2.474)
Nationality Oromo				.140 (1.839)	-.085 (-.677)
Nationality Sidama				-.133 (-1.132)	-.098 (-.610)
Nationality Berta				-.664** (-3.148)	-.566* (-2.468)
Nationality SNNPR				.105 (.828)	.142 (.338)
Residence Addis Ababa					.050 (.341)
Residence Amhara					-.052 (-.323)
Residence Oromia					.325 (1.716)
Residence SNNPR					-.104 (-.609)
Residence Benishangul-Gumuz					-.187 (-1.030)
R ²	.002	.002	.017	.185	.241
N	245	243	242	234	234

Significant levels: * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001

Standard error in parenthesis. Constant omitted.

Reference variables: gender: Male; age group: 18-33 years old; education: Some College/ College Degree; Nationality: Amhara; Residence: Tigray.

To determine the level of satisfaction respondents had with the policy performance of the central government, they were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that the government represents the interests of all Ethiopians. Model 5 in Table 6, which included all the independent variables of interest, predicted 24.1 percent of the variability in the response pattern to this statement. In models 1 through model 3, none of the coefficients were statistically significant. In models 4 and 5, members of the Tigray and Berta nationality groups were significantly more likely to disagree with this statement than were the Amharas.

Relative Importance of Group Rights versus National Unity

Table 7: "It is more important that a certain nation, nationality or people have the right to determine their own future than it is for the country to have a sense of unity and common purpose." (Agree/Disagree)

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	.190** (2.672)	.187** (2.624)	.207** (2.901)	.226*** (3.261)	.202** (2.933)
Age 34-49		.077 (1.086)	.060 (.825)	.058 (.867)	.082 (1.255)
Age 50+		.074 (.710)	-.011 (-.093)	.084 (.770)	.089 (.835)
Education level 0-9 years			.133 (1.659)	.109 (1.388)	.153 (1.830)
Education level 10-12 years			.022 (.243)	.015 (.172)	.016 (.178)
Education college plus			.281 (1.727)	.202 (1.367)	.194 (1.325)
Nationality Tigrayan				-.383*** (-4.703)	-.457*** (-3.248)
Nationality Oromo				-.507*** (-6.601)	-.293* (-2.241)
Nationality Sidama				-.091 (-.792)	-.328* (-2.080)
Nationality Berta				-.699*** (-3.311)	-.613** (-2.609)
Nationality SNNPR				.013 (.106)	-.150 (-1.061)
Residence Addis Ababa					.018 (.120)
Residence Amhara					-.173 (-1.083)
Residence Oromia					-.394* (-2.046)
Residence SNNPR					.137 (.810)
Residence Benishangul-Gumuz					-.178 (-.945)
R ²	.028	.033	.054	.256	.306
N	248	247	246	236	236

Significant levels: * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001

Standard error in parenthesis. Constant omitted.

Reference variables: gender: Male; age group: 18-33 years old; education: Some College/ College Degree; Nationality: Amhara; Residence: Tigray.

When asked whether group self-determination was more important than national unity, the respondents supported the idea that national unity was somewhat important. Model 5 explained 30.6 percent of the variance in the response pattern. In contrast with most of the other regressions presented here, gender was a statistically significant predictor across all the models. Women were more likely than men to agree that it is more important that certain nations, nationality or peoples should have the right to determine their own future than it is for the country to have a sense of unity and common purpose. Neither age nor level of education was a significant predictor of response. Members of the Tigray, Oromo, Sidama and Berta nationality groups were more likely to disagree with the statement than Amharas, although the coefficient for Sidamas was only significant when region of residence was included in the model. Finally, residents of Oromia were more likely to disagree than residents of Tigray.

Equal Treatment of all Nationality Groups

Table 8: "Should all people born in this country, regardless of nationality, should be treated equally?" (Agree/Disagree)

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Gender	-.003 (-.199)	-.003 (-.187)	-.003 (0.151)	.001 (.057)	.001 (.065)
Age 34-49		-.006 (-.335)	-.005 (-.296)	-.006 (-.308)	-.007 (-.335)
Age 50+		-.020 (-.750)	-.021 (-.713)	-.019 (-.630)	-.022 (-.708)
Education level 0-9 years			-.007 (-.365)	-.016 (-.751)	-.010 (-.438)
Education level 10-12 years			-.025 (-1.039)	-.030 (-1.177)	-.024 (-.845)
Education college plus			-.026 (-.552)	-.025 (-.516)	-.029 (.595)
Nationality Tigrayan				.000 (-.017)	-.012 (-.299)
Nationality Oromo				.008 (.337)	-.015 (-.374)
Nationality Sidama				.041 (1.218)	.031 (.627)
Nationality Berta				-.001 (-.014)	-.006 (-.094)
Nationality SNNPR				-.015 (-.415)	-.022 (-.490)
Residence Addis Ababa					-.002 (.967)
Residence Amhara					-.022 (.612)
Residence Oromia					.017 (.284)
Residence SNNPR					-.007 (-.131)
Residence Benishangul-Gumuz					-.012 (-.224)
Nationality Tigrayan					
R ²	.000	.003	.008	.017	.020
N	254	252	251	243	243

Significant levels: * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001

Standard error in parenthesis. Constant omitted.

Reference variables: gender: Male; age group: 18-33 years old; education: Some College/College Degree; Nationality: Amhara; Residence: Tigray.

Regardless of their own nationality group, respondents appeared to believe that all of Ethiopia's nations, nationalities and peoples should have equal rights as citizens. Even the most comprehensive model, Model 5, explained only 2 percent of the variance in response pattern. None of the coefficients in any of the models on this issue were statistically significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been twofold: 1) to critically examine Ethiopia's policy of ethnic federalism as an instrument designed to elicit popular support for its policies and to create in the general population a sense of tolerance and equality for Ethiopia's disparate nationality groups; and 2) to gain insights into the attitudes and orientations of average citizens on these issues. An assumption of this study was that it would be possible to evaluate the perception of citizens' satisfaction with government efforts to achieve ethnic harmony and tolerance if not with the effectiveness of the policies themselves.

The EPRDF regime has introduced administrative policies that are designed to give people a sense that they are closer to the government and are more in control of their public affairs than at any other point in history. The government claims that its approach to administrative devolution is particularly suited for achieving democratic consolidation in a multi-ethnic society. New administrative institutions and rules have been created, and sub-national authorities are indeed more involved in making and implementing public policies than ever before. At the same time, Ethiopia continues to suffer from severe underdevelopment, abject poverty, and social inequalities. Most importantly, these conditions track clearly along regional and ethnic or nationality lines. The study assumed that these conditions impact the perceptions of nationality groups and residents of particular regional states regarding governmental effectiveness in service delivery.

Moreover, in reality, Ethiopia's experiment can only be considered a form of "quasi-federalism." Rather than it being characterized by administrative and political symmetry between the central and regional state

governments, the relationship is heavily weighted toward the central government. Even though the country is characterized by some federal institutional forms, it does not function on a day to day basis as though it is a truly federal system. It is highly centralized, and this hyper-centralization makes Ethiopia operate very much like a unitary system.

In an effort to assess the perceptions of average citizens of the government's policy effectiveness, a purposively selected survey sample was asked about the respondents' satisfaction with the government's efforts to ameliorate ethnic tensions growing out of real and perceived inequalities across groups; about whether the respondents felt the government was even-handed in its efforts to protect the interests of all peoples in the country; and about the possibility of biases in the government's policies and programs that favor particular groups over others. The survey also asked questions about the perceptions of different groups about their own ethnic or national identity; the relative position of their group as citizens in comparison with other similar groups; and about the strength of their ethnic or national group identity relative to their levels of support for a multi-ethnic nation-state in which all constituent groups are treated as equals. A primary assumption was that the most significant independent variable in the study would be the national identity group of individual respondents. To gauge the relative importance of this variable, the other independent variables used were four demographic characteristics of our respondents: gender, age, education level, and place of residence. Overall, the respondents seemed to feel comfortable expressing their attachments to their particular ethnic or nationality group, as well as acknowledging that all the ethnic groups in Ethiopia should have equal citizenship rights.

All respondents, no matter what their nationality group, indicated pride in their particular group. This is an important finding which supports the findings of Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi,³⁹ and dispels the

³⁹ Bratton, Mattes, Gyimah-Boadi, *Public Opinion, Democracy and Market Reform in Africa*, loc.cit, p 187.

conventional wisdom that ethnic identity constitutes a potent negative political factor. What the findings presented here seem to suggest is that the respondents generally did not see contradictions between their group identity and their identity as Ethiopian citizens.

An analysis of the survey results indicates that the EPRDF, at the time the data in the study were collected, was making some progress in winning the trust and respect of the general population.⁴⁰ However, there were significant differences among ethnic groups in terms of how much they viewed the government in a favorable manner. Tigrayan respondents, for example, were more likely than Amhara and Oromos to feel that the government was even-handed in its application of policies. The core of the EPRDF regime is the TPLF, which no doubt explains some of the support it gets from Tigrayans and the Tigray state. The same pattern held when controlling for place of residence. This is understandable given that the policy of ethnic federalism results in states that are dominated by particular ethnic groups. The other demographic variables proved not to be very significant. Interestingly, however, the youngest group of respondents (18–33 years old) at the time seemed to have more faith in their government than the older generations, even after controlling for level of education. This could be an indication that, at least in terms of policies relating to social services, young people tended to feel that what the government was doing in 2002–2003 was somewhat positive. However, given the dramatic protest among young Ethiopians over what many people saw as flawed national elections in 2005, the young might be less inclined now and in the future to support the political policies of the regime. At the time of this study, more educated individuals were most likely to express dissatisfaction with government policy performance and leadership. The fact that the most active among those protesting the election results were the more educated classes suggests that this group's negative evaluation of the policy performance of the EPRDF regime has continued to grow.

⁴⁰ Keller, Edmond J. "Making and Remaking State and Nation," *loc.cit.*

Book Review

Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. 355 pp.

Nelleke Bak

Among all countries, South Africa has one of the most progressive bodies of gender policy legislation, especially around reproductive and marriage rights. It is far ahead of most of the developing world in this area. Yet, this impressive record of policy accomplishment goes hand in hand with rates of rape and domestic violence that are among the highest in the world. This contrast is symbolic of the tensions that lie at the heart of Shireen Hassim's book, and should render it of great interest to readers who study gender politics even if they have had no prior focus on Africa.

Hassim's impressive study is sure to become a key source for scholars of women's historiography. Although it is focused on the development of women's organizations in the democratic transformation in South Africa, especially from 1980 to the mid 1990s, the detailed and sophisticated analysis provides rich insights into the nature of women's movements' relation to broader political movements. Chapter 8 provides an elegant synopsis of the historical narrative analyzing women's contribution to the national liberation struggle in South Africa and the dynamic relationship between feminism and nationalism. However, the richness of the narrative lies in the details of the preceding chapters with their archival contributions and personal testimony of key agents, revealing the internal tensions within social movements.

Telling such a complex and contested story in a coherent way requires a theoretical framework that illuminates and explains tensions, rather than one that obscures particularities through a blurry ideological lens. Hassim manages to avoid the counter-productive polarization of appealing exclusively either to feminist arguments or to the political discourse of liberation and nationalism. The careful and academically responsible explanatory framework which she develops sees nationalism and feminism in a dynamic relationship: both inform and shape the other, albeit not without tension. She shows how "the articulation of concerns