

JUNE 2011 / Vol. 24 (1)

Report on 5th Triennial International Congress on Comparative Federalism, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 2010 (Michael Stein)

There were about 700 public official and academic delegates attending this 5th triennial conference on Comparative Federalism in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, co-sponsored by the Ethiopian Government and the Forum of Federations in December 2010. They included about 400 representatives from federal and multinational developing systems in sub-Saharan Africa, and about 300 representatives from mature federations, primarily in Europe and North America. This provided a good multicultural and regime institutional mix for discussing the potential applicability of federalism and liberal democracy to third world countries. Ethiopia is a special sub-Saharan African case; it was never fully colonized by Europe in the 19th and early 20th century. Rather, it was governed by indigenous imperial and military rulers during this period until the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in the early 1970s. However, due to its many ethnic and tribal groups, some type of decentralized regime such as a federation has recently been adopted and promoted as most appropriate for this country by its current rulers. They therefore welcomed an opportunity to host this conference and to debate the experience of other federations in the current global context, including both developing emergent and developed mature federal systems.

The congress convened for three days, from December 14 to 16, 2010, to discuss the following topics: 1) Federalism and the Democratization Process, 2) The Impact of Regionalization and Globalization on Federations, 3) Unity and Diversity through Federalism, 4) Federalism and Conflict Management, and 5) Fiscal Federalism and Equitable Development. These topics were initially addressed during the first two days in a large plenary session, and then debated in smaller group sessions treating individual case studies. Paper presenters in the plenary sessions generally applied one of the 5 themes to one or more emergent federations in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Sudan), mature and emergent federations in Europe (e.g. Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Spain), North America (e.g. the United States, Canada, Mexico), South America (e.g. Brazil, Argentina) or South Asia (e.g. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka). On the final day of the conference, each of the five themes and their applications were again debated in response to the overall group analyses and conclusions reported by each group rapporteur.

These discussions by an approximately equal number of public servants engaged in federal governmental practice and academic specialists in federalism were extremely lively, comprehensive in scope, multinational in context, and comparative. Leading statesmen and politicians from some major African countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria and the Sudan were also invited to address the conference delegates, and they offered interesting "insider" perspectives. A volume containing the major themes and issues of the conference is planned for later publication.

Report on Roundtable Session on "Multi-level Governance and its Consequences: Normative and Theoretical Perspectives", European Union Studies Association (EUSA), Boston, USA, March 2011 (Michael Stein)

A roundtable session on "Multi-level Governance (MLG) and its Consequences" was organized for the 2011 Conference of the EUSA in Boston, Massachusetts, USA on March 4, 2011. It was chaired by Berthold Rittberger (Universitat Mannheim, Germany), and included the following invited participants: Edgar Grande (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitat Munchen, Germany), Jonathan Hopkin (LSE, UK), Gary Marks (University of North Carolina, USA and Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands), Simona Piattoni (University of Innsbruck, Norway),

Fritz Scharpf (Max Planck Institute, Germany), and Michael Stein (University of Toronto, Canada).

The following themes and issues were outlined and debated by these participants (in order of presentation):

The presentation by Michael Stein emphasized the increasingly close and complementary relationship between federalism and multi-level governance approaches in political science, and particularly the ways in which changing patterns of economic globalization have altered our academic analyses and understanding of the former. MLG is considered by him to be a more fruitful current analytical approach because it enables one to encompass many more levels or tiers of political decision-making and many more political units or actors. He also argued that MLG and federalism share important characteristics such as the capacity to divide power and sovereignty in order to combat authoritarian governance; the balancing of societal unity and diversity in decision-making; and the fostering of a trend away from command and control structures toward policy-making that is more decentralized and cooperative.

The presentation by Simona Piattoni outlined twelve statements which she identified as the theoretical core of MLG, including expansion of the scale of governmental activity; the blurring of public and private economy; the blurring of normative and empirical analyses; and the blurring of equality and efficiency arguments. She tried to advance her previous theoretical analysis of these characteristics of MLG by portraying them in a more refined graphic form.

Edgar Grande asked two questions: 1) Where did the concept of MLG come from? and 2) Where is it going? In general, he praised the concept as a more successful and innovative approach applied to the European Union than earlier statist and neo-functionalist ideas. But he conceded that it still needs improvements in treating institutional complexity and normative aspects.

Jonathan Hopkin addressed "Political Parties and Electoral Politics in Relation to MLG". In it, he analyzed how the moving up of powers to the supranational level weakens the impact of the national party system in different countries, their central banks and their redistributive policies.

Fritz Scharpf focussed on the "problem-solving characteristics of MLG" and on their governmental rather than their non-governmental dimension. In answer to the question "Why do we have MLG?" he argued that the increasing interdependence of policy-making in the EU has pushed regulatory powers upwards to the supranational level, causing "some loss of efficacy on the input side of policy-making, but some improvement on the output side". He also noted that at the supranational European level there is a "joint decision trap" in European voting procedures that is disabling. MLG has also created multiple centers of problem-solving in policy-making and a supranational hierarchical mode of decision-making that has undermined the national capacity to solve economic policy problems, as evidenced in the recent global and European debt crisis and attempted rescue operations in it.

Gary Marks responded to Fritz Scharpf's normative criticisms of MLG by pointing out that with respect to the allegation that MLG blurs responsibility and reduces democratic accountability, he does not find that argument convincing, since even federal and unitary systems face such problems. However, he does admit that there is some intrinsic tension between MLG and democracy, particularly given the low level of citizen participation at the supranational European political level.

6th ECPR General Conference, RC28 sponsored panel “Balancing and Rebalancing Federal Systems: A Comparative & Cross-National Analysis”. Reykjavik, Iceland, August 2011 (Sonja Walti)

Our Research Committee was invited to host a Panel on “Balancing and rebalancing federal systems” as part of the upcoming 6th ECPR General Conference, held at the University of Iceland, 25th – 27th Aug. 2011.

For general information about this conference, please visit the following webpage: http://www.ecprnet.eu/conferences/general_conference/Reykjavik/default.asp

Section 43 – Themes and Challenges to Multi-Level and Regional Politics

Chaired by Wilfried Swenden (w.swenden@ed.ac.uk), Eve Hepburn, University of Edinburgh, and Klaus Detterbeck (Klaus.Detterbeck@GSE-W.Uni-Magdeburg.DE), University of Magdeburg

Panel 603 – Balancing and rebalancing federal systems: a comparative and cross-national analysis

Chair, co-chair: Thomas Lancaster (polstdl@emory.edu), EMORY University, Sonja Walti (walti@american.edu), American University, Washington D.C
Discussants: Richard Cole (cole@uta.edu), John Kincaid (meynerc@lafayette.edu)

Papers

A Crossnational Comparative Analysis of Patterns of Multi-level Governance in Federal and Decentralized Unitary Systems

Michael Stein (michael.stein@utoronto.ca) and Lisa Turkewitsch (lisa.turkewitsch@utoronto.ca) – University of Toronto

Demographic effects on the fiscal equalization system in Germany
Wolfgang Renzsch (renzsch@ovgu.de) – University of Magdeburg

Facing policy challenges in federated states: The need for coherent federalism

Jean-Francois Savard (Jean-Francois.Savard@enap.ca), Jean-Patrick Villeneuve (jean-patrick.villeneuve@idheap.unil.ch), Martial Pasquier (martial.pasquier@idheap.unil.ch), Francesco Maiani (Francesco.Maiani@idheap.unil.ch) – Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration

How decentralizing breaks deadlock in federal states

Annika Hennl (hennl@soz.uni-frankfurt.de) Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Jan Biela (jan.biela@unil.ch), Université de Lausanne, Gregor Zons (gz@mpifg.de), University of Cologne

Institutional Dynamics of Federal Systems: Problem of Stability

Mikhail Ilchenko (msilchenko@mail.ru), Institute of Philosophy and Law, Ural Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences

The Bargaining Game: Comparative Lessons from Canada and the European Union

Thomas Hueglin (thueglin@wlu.ca)

RC28 Business Meeting Agenda (Reykjavik, Iceland)

The next RC28 Business Meeting will take place in Reykjavik this August, during the 6th ECPR General Conference.

The preliminary agenda for the Business Meeting includes the following items:

- Introduction
- Financial Report
- Recruitment Committee update
- Proposal of a Conference Papers Section (password protected) on our website
- Madrid World Congress and RC28 participation
- Future RC28 Conferences

We invite all our Members participating in this conference to attend the Business Meeting and present their ideas about the topics for discussion.

22nd IPSA World Congress, Madrid: Call for RC28 Panels and Papers (Sonja Walti)

Things are getting underway for the next IPSA World Congress, to be held in Madrid, July 8-12, 2012. Its theme, “Reshaping Power, Shifting Boundaries”, should speak to a broad community of researchers on federalism, decentralization, and multilevel governance!

Here is what you need to know as an RC28 member or friend interested in participating: As in the past, the congress program will be composed of parallel panel sessions emanating from the RCs as well as from individuals; but unlike past conferences, the Madrid conference offers RCs a unique opportunity to work in tandem with independent panel proposals.

At this time, independent paper as well as panel proposals can be submitted. Proposals must be submitted online using this link and following the guidelines:

<http://www.ipsa.org/events/congress/madrid2012/congress-theme>

If you are interested in proposing and submitting a description of an independent panel, you have until **July 31** to do so. If you are interested in submitting an independent paper, you have until **October 7** to do so.

Independent panel proposals, if accepted, will be posted by August 8 and the convener of that panel will thereafter be tasked with administering papers submitted to that panel. So be sure to advertise your panel among potential participants. Also, if you decide to submit a panel or paper that pertains to federalism and related topics, our RC would appreciate receiving a copy so we can tailor our RC panel submission (due by August 18) accordingly and fully utilize our panel potential while accommodating the diverse interests in our research committee.

Feel free to contact us to receive input before submitting a panel proposal. You may also contact us to advertise your panel. In any case, please write to the RC28 Program Chair Sonja Walti (walti@american.edu).

Note that you do not need to be an IPSA member to suggest papers or panels until you register for the conference. By the same token, you do not need to be an RC28 member. However, we strongly encourage you to become an RC28 member so our Executive can effectively advocate on your behalf. As always, you can become a member in a few easy steps by consulting the pertinent information in [our website](#).

Call for Paper for RC28 Panels (Sonja Walti)

So far, we have received expressions of interest or communications about the following panel topics to be promoted by RC28 for the Madrid World Congress:

- Accommodating diversity reconsidered – shifting territorial, functional or cultural boundaries in democratic states
- Public attitudes toward governments and intergovernmental relations compared
- Balancing and rebalancing federal systems
- The status and role of local governments in federal systems
- Party competition across levels of government
- The Jurisdictions of Federalism or the Politics of Scale: Opportunities for Women's Activism? (jointly proposed with RC19)

Please Contact Sonja Walti, RC28 Program Chair, walti@american.edu by **July 31**:

- *if you would like RC28 to submit a panel proposal on your behalf.* Please include a panel title, a brief abstract, and the names of a chair and possibly a co-chair (including their affiliation and contact information), along with a list of potential contributors (including contact information),
- *if you intend to contribute a paper* to one or the other of the aforementioned topics,
- *if you wish to act as a chair, co-chair, or discussant on one or the other of our RC28 panels.* Please include your affiliation and contact information,
- *or to inform us about your independent panel or paper submissions* pertaining to federalism topics.

RC28 Executive Decisions and Requests of our Members

Following up on the recommendations of the last RC28 Business Meeting (September 2010, summarized in the Business Meeting Minutes published in the Fall 2010 issue of our RC28 Newsletter), the RC28 Executive has taken the following decisions:

- 1) A new RC28 membership for graduate students is now available, at a reduced price of US \$ 30 (triennial fee). We encourage our Members to advertise this and invite interested students to join our Committee.
- 2) A new life-time membership of US \$ 200 has also been adopted. This initiative gives our Members the convenience of a single payment for their membership. We also encourage our Members to advertise this new option and invite others to take it up.
- 3) We continue our efforts to recruit new members, particularly with the assistance of the Recruitment Committee chaired by RC28 Executive Member Rekha Saxena. We ask you to invite other federalism scholars around the world to become members and actively participate in RC28 affairs.
- 4) We remind our Members that the RC28 website provides a special Publications section for divulging and advertising recent publications (both book length authored and edited publications or journal length articles and book chapters) on federalism. All members are invited to submit the relevant information on these publications to Sebastian Baglioni (sebastian.baglioni@utoronto.ca).
- 5) We also express our concern about the comparatively low percentage of fully paid up members that RC28 currently has, and take this opportunity to remind our Members that the payment of fees is a crucial financial source for the Research Committee and its ability to carry out all of its regular activities. We express our great appreciation to all those members who

have already responded to this reminder. But we would like to ask those who have not yet done so to take a few minutes of their time to turn to this task as soon as possible. Please see the Membership Section on our website for detailed instructions on how to pay these fees, either by Pay Pal subscription or by personal cheque.