



DETRIBALIZATION, IDENTITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT: *'Detribalization' is an idea that has been increasingly floated in the political circle in Nigeria, since the return to civil rule in 1999, as a feature of patriotism that should ultimately lead to national unity and state development. The argument is that the peoples of Nigeria have to de-identify with their ethnicity to elevate to being 'detribalized Nigerians', an identity of some sort. The implication is that detribalization is an end that all patriots must achieve and exude. This paper argues that such ideas at best amount to (national) self-delusion, and at worst seeks to cleanse folks of their long held, time tested identities, criminalize identities, prejudice cultural heritage, asphyxiate ethnic evolution, and ultimately undermine national development. We observe that the notion of a 'detribalization' amounts to abuse of concept, misapplication of concepts, and the dearth of ideas. Such ideas in the national discourse, as of today, should be replaced with 'ethnicity' as that is what it seemingly refers to. Ethnic diversity however is a gift rather than a curse and should be harnessed for development. The centre should be disincentivised to check hostile inter-ethnic competition for resources by modelling federalism in its ideal form and practice.*

KEYWORDS: Detribalization, Detribalized Nigerian, Ethnic Identity, National Development

INTRODUCTION

The history of Nigeria is the history of colonial political occupation and subjugation, economic exploitation, and disarticulate forceful integration of independent and distinct peoples and their cultures into a modern monolithic state for the purpose of the maximization of exploitation by Britain. Following the exploration of the African interior by European powers and their merchants for trade through the periods of the 18th and 19th century, the powers of Europe ultimately settled for direct political control of the continent for the maximization of exploitation. The Berlin conference of 1884 was to achieve that end in an amicable manner for the Europeans, thus paving the way for the orderly scramble, partition, and pillaging of the African continent. Britain, in that process acquired the 'right' to appropriate, administer, and exploit the territory today known as Nigeria. This territory comprised of different nations and there, sometimes, distinct cultures. While some of these nations had historical exchanges with others on account of geographical proximity, some others never had any form of trade or cultural exchanges.

The history of the peoples of Nigeria is a vast historical accounts, legends, myths, and tales of creations, migration, and thousands of years of evolution engineered by their unique historical experiences. The Igbo, the Yoruba, the Hausa, the Fulani, the Tivs, the IZONS, the Idomas, the Jukuns, the Ibibios, amongst hundreds other ethnic groups have different accounts of their history and origin. Accounts passed down from generations on end through cultural practices, folklores, oral traditions, songs, etc.



The bottom line being that the different ethnic groups have different historical experiences and cultural norms that have spanned hundreds of years, distinct in their own right, and different from the experiences of others.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Social Identity Theory

Social identity refers to the ways that self-concepts people are based and their membership in social groups (leaper, 2011). This theory was first proposed and advanced in social psychology in the works of Tajfel (1978); Tajfel & Turner (1979). This theory tried to underscore the dynamics at play with regards to individuals inclining and experiencing identities within a similar collective whole. Social identity theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) suggests that individuals advance and experience collective identity arising from their membership in a group. Such groups might include racial/ethnic and gender identities. Social identity allows individuals to categorize themselves and other salient groups into the dynamics of “us” versus “them” realities.

Social identity theory essentially interrogates, providing a logical explanation to the ways in which social identities affect people's attitudes and behaviours regarding their in-group and the out-group interactions. Social identities are most influential when individuals consider membership in a particular group to be central to their self-concept and they feel strong emotional ties to the group. Affiliation with a group confers self-esteem, which helps to sustain the social identity (Leaper, 2011). It is based on the notion that social identities are part of the self-concept, and that people are motivated to derive a clear and positive image of their social identities through comparisons with other social categories (Sanchez-Mazas and Licata, 2015).

Considering the socio-formation of Nigeria, its diversity and pluralist state system, dynamics of social identity has become necessary in the interrogation of the management of identities with regards to National Development. This theory essentially captures the in-group and out-group behaviour and tendencies of citizens who tend to be conflicted due to a multiplicity of identities and loyalties. The efficient management of complex identities in a pluralist political system is essential for the exploitation of its inherent benefits towards the achievement of National Development.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study relies on the documentary method of data collection with data mainly from secondary sources. This covers data from published scholarly articles, textbooks, newspaper reports, and personal observations. The analysis of data was done by qualitative descriptive technique, ultimately leading to incisively dissecting contents in secondary documents to gain insight as to the subject matter.

RESULTS

Nigeria is composed of different peoples brought together by colonial fiat, against their will and for the purpose of maximizing their exploitation. This was started and completed over the



period of two centuries. The singular act of forcing these groups with different cultures and historical experiences together is at the centre of ethnic conflict Nigeria.

There is an abuse, misappropriation, and misconception of tribe and detribalization. The word tribe is seen as derogatory, referring to primitive people on the one hand (which does not absolutely apply to ethnic groups as composed in Nigeria today, hence the use of the word 'tribe' and its derivative 'detribalization' may be demeaning), and a misappropriation of the concept to refer to ethnic groups in Nigeria, as presently composed. In the latter case, it is seen as necessary for national unity. This implies that folks and members of different ethnic groups will somehow have to purge themselves of their "tribal" identities to achieve a state of being and take up a "detribalized Nigerian identity", whatever that means.

The idea of a detribalization assumes that ethnic groups, ethnic consciousness and identity is a hindrance to national cohesion and progress. An obstacle that must be done away with to make progress. This is actually a misrepresentation of reality. Ethnic groups and diversities are actually advantageous if harnessed.

The ethnic diversities, ethnic identity and consciousness are not the problem of Nigeria. Nigeria, as presently organized is the problem of its ethnic groups. It chokes and asphyxiates its ethnic groups identity, evolving a state of identity disarticulation. Nigeria must be reorganized to guarantee the survival of ethnic groups, for only in such a situation can a Nigerian identity be guaranteed.

DISCUSSIONS

National Development

Development is the aspiration of every nation of the world. To produce its sustenance, reproduce its kind, and advance its collective cause and interests. Development then must necessarily catalyse into advancement in knowledge of the environment, application of such knowledge for the advancement of well-being through the development of the man, his social, political and economic environment. It is embedded, primarily in the directions and dynamics of the social system. Nations therefore, exert all efforts to achieve this end. By nation, we mean that cohesive gamut of people who, sharing the same history, culture, experiences and aspirations, evolve largely as one people and reasonably so. The nation state approximates the nation. It is a collection of peoples bound by the strings of a state, having coexisted with each other, shared a common historical experience, and an understanding that their collective progress is best served by bounding together and emphasizing common interests.

Identity

Identity is the definition of the self, an individual with regards to social groups. Such behaviour reinforces socio-political consciousness and offers certain protections and privileges within a defined umbrella of social identity. Identity is therefore located in the creation of group consciousness which involves the categorization of one's in-group in relations to out-groups with the tendencies to subscribe to one's group with positive bias. When groups pose a threat to one another, the effects of identity and identification becomes more visible. Identity is



central to whom people are. It defines a people and a society. Without social identity, there is no society (Haralambos et al, 2013).

Identification with one's in-group in itself is nothing to abhor as the dangers do not lie therein. However, it is a state of apprehension created by inter-group struggles and hostile competition that throws-up toxic identity reactions. "Because social identity effects are based on protection and enhancement of self-concept, threat to the self-concept would intuitively be related to the strongest identity effects" (Islam, 2014:1782).

Mankind have evolved and developed along the line of group identities and consequently eliminating some discriminatory practices pertaining to race, gender, disabilities, etc. group identities have further enriched the human heritage heterogeneity of culture and civilizations. When positively harnessed, it displays a thousand rays of humanity's beauty.

Detribalization

Detribalization as a concept and an idea is increasingly gaining traction in the political lexicon within the Nigerian political space. The concept and the meanings convey are a derivative of 'Tribe'. Tribe refers to a group of people who share a common socio-political and economic tie, descended from a common ancestor, sharing a common culture, tongue, and political organizational structure. Owing to the identity frictions, conflicts and competition amongst ethnic groups in Nigeria, groups and individuals more concerned with 'order' advocate for the 'detribalization' of the citizenry. Enjoying its highest mention, former president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, while eulogizing his predecessor Alhaji Musa Yar'adua, referred to him as a 'detribalized' leader who left a worthy impression. Detribalization therefore appears to be a state of the absence of prejudice and bias. Other public figure and their supporters have continued to latch on to the concept of being detribalized as a measure of acceptability and cosmopolitanism. Bishop M.H. Kuka saw tribe as a:

Unit of organization that holds together a community that shares a sense of common ancestry, history, mythology, language and culture. These go on to produce feelings and bonds of affinity. (<https://guardian.ng/opinion/tribe-and-tongue-in-nigeria-from-detribalisation-to-retribalisation/>).

Furthering, he held that: Tribalism is the 'instrumentalisation', and manipulation, of identity as a platform for organisation and negotiation, or the application of that identity to secure advantage for the group. It appropriates identity, draws boundaries and excludes other members from the privileges. (<https://guardian.ng/opinion/tribe-and-tongue-in-nigeria-from-detribalisation-to-retribalisation/>).

Some have also drawn attention to the derogatory underpinnings of the concept. Giving its historical use, tribe, and consequently all its derivatives such as detribalization have been seen as a demeaning and derogatory concept giving its historical application. Though tribe has been used in reference to patriarchs of Israel, and in reference to the ancient peoples of Europe, it is most associated with primitiveness and uncivilised cultures. Kperogi (2018) associated its use with "past attitudes of white colonialists towards so-called primitive or uncivilized peoples living in remote undeveloped places." Though the concept of tribe in its full meaning can hardly apply to most ethnic groups in Nigeria today, some still prefer to refer to these groups as tribes. The case of 'detribalization' then, to an extent, amounts to either abuse of concept, appropriation of concept, or outright misconception.



Detribalized Nigerian

What then does it mean to be a detribalized Nigerian? Amongst many things, to be a detribalized Nigerian requires, it seems, that people out-do themselves in being ‘more Nigerian’ than others, appear routinely uninfluenced by ‘tribal’ considerations; indulge in cultural cleansing i.e. to lose one’s ethnic or cultural characteristics either by adopting a different custom or purging oneself of autochthonous culture.

These features apart from being self-serving and opportunistic, do not ultimately lead to sustainable social developments. In most cases where folks want to be seen as being more Nigerian than other Nigerians, there is usually primordial motive and self-gratifying end being sought. This may manifest in matters of national discourse on issues that border on political arrangements and on questions on the character of the state, its wealth, and the disbursement of social goods. Raising issues that highlight the weaknesses of the state and injustices suffered by some sections is seen as undermining the state rather than an opportunity to clean-up acts and develop progressively. The influence of social considerations on the individual and social groups can only be managed and not out-rightly jettisoned. The identity of social groups is ingrained in the subconscious of its members. Being wholly detached from group identity and behaviour may be difficult. What should, however, be approximated is the sense of duty and responsibility, of fairness and of justice. What this mean is that people do not necessarily have to purge or cleanse themselves of their identities. They, in fact, should be encouraged to harness the positive vibes from their identity for national development. What detribalization aims at ultimately, is cultural cleansing. Except if we mean overcoming sentiments and behaviours of primitivism amongst a group of communities in rural and antiquated settings (which is largely not the case with most ethnic groups in Nigeria), only a culturally cleansed or purged can be said to be ‘detribalized.’

Table 1: Showing selected statements on ‘detribalization’ by some prominent Nigerians

Subject	Position held	Occasion	Statement	source
Goodluck E. Jonathan	President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010-2015.	On the 7 th anniversary of the death of former president Umaru Yar’adua	“seven years ago, you left this world leaving behind a legacy of detribalized leadership and a soil that was fertile enough to grow trees whose shade you will never enjoy”	https://thenationonline.net/yaradua-detribalized-leader-jonathan/
Olusegun Obasanjo	President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999-2007	On the reception of 2019 presidential hopeful and former Governor of Sokoto State, Attahiru Bafarawa,	“Obasanjo described his visitor (Bafarawa) as a detribalized Nigerian and said Nigerians should see themselves in this light if they really want a new Nigeria.”	https://aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/obasanjo-no-right-thinking-person-will-applaud-nigeria-situation/



Atiku Abubakar,	Former Vice President of Nigeria (1999-2007) and candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2019 presidential elections.	In response to the allegation levelled against him by Chief Paul Unongo, former Minister of Steel Development, that he (Atiku) was the chief financier of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria.	Atiku is "a thoroughly detribalized Nigerian that would never favour one ethnic group over another."	https://www.tostvnetwork.com/i-am-a-thoroughly-detribalized-nigerian-that-would-never-favour-one-ethnic-group-over-another-former-vice-president-atiku-abubakar/
Atiku Abubakar,	Former Vice President of Nigeria and candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2019 elections,	On his suitability as candidate for president of Nigeria, at a meeting with stakeholders of the People's Democratic Party, in Enugu State, ahead of the presidential primary election of the party.	"I present myself to be elected president based on my experience as Vice President when our economy was creating more jobs, my experience as an entrepreneur of note and my credential as a detribalized Nigerian.	https://theeagleonline.com.ng/i-am-better-qualified-to-be-elected-president-in-2019-atiku/
Atiku Abubakar,	Former Vice President of Nigeria and candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2019 elections,	On the death of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, first executive President of Nigeria and elder statesman.	"President Shehu Usman Shagari was a completely detribalized Nigerian."	https://www.concisenews.global/2018/12/28/atiku-expresses-sadness-shehu-shagaris-death/ https://twitter.com/atiku/status/1078752287923814401
Dr Bukola Saraki	The President of the Senate	On the death of elder statesman, Alhaji Yusuf Maitama Sule	Saraki, in a statement by his Special Adviser, Media and Publicity, Yusuph Olaniyonu, described the late Dan Masanin Kano, as a detribalized Nigerian who spoke truth to power at all times during his lifetime.	https://punchng.com/maitama-sule-a-detribalised-nigerian-says-saraki/



Dr Bukola Saraki	The President of the Senate	On the death of Mallam Adamu Ciroma, former Minister of Finance and Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN),	“We have lost a detribalized Nigerian, bridge builder and a strong pillar for nation’s unity.”	https://nigerianobservernews.com/2018/07/adamu-ciroma-nigeria-has-lost-a-legend-says-saraki/
Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode	Governor of Lagos State	On the death of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, first executive President of Nigeria and elder statesman.	“He was also a detribalized Nigerian who was committed to the course of a united, indivisible and prosperous Nigeria.”	https://lagosstate.gov.ng/blog/2018/12/29/ambode-mourns-death-of-shehu-shagari/ http://www.lagostelelevision.com/ambode-mourns-death-of-shehu-shagari/
Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode	Governor of Lagos State	On the death of Dr. Alex Ekwueme, first Vice President of Nigeria and elder statesman.	“He was also a detribalized Nigerian who was committed to the course of a united, indivisible and prosperous Nigeria.”	https://silverbirdtv.com/politics/40300/ambode-expresses-sadness-ekwemes-death/
Bamanga Tukur	Former chairman of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP)	On the conferment of chieftaincy title on him by the Igbo community in Lagos	“I believe all these honours coming from different parts of Nigeria is an attestation to the fact that I am a detribalised Nigerian.”	https://www.informationng.com/2014/03/im-a-detribalized-nigerian-tukur-says-at-conferment-of-igbo-chieftaincy-title-in-lagos.html
Professor Epiphany Azinge,	Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), the Initiator of the Epiphany Azinge Foundation	At the 2017 Lecture & Award Ceremony of the Epiphany Azinge Foundation	"Governor, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, SAN, is not only detribalized but a complete Nigerian who represents sterling qualities that must be present in anyone aspiring to lead this country"	https://www.timenewsng.com/2017/11/gov-akeredolu-bags-most-detribalized.html



Mrs. Ibukun Awosika	Chairman First Bank Nigeria	At the 18th edition of the NECCI PR Roundtable in Lagos,	“Nigeria needs young visionary and detribalized leaders to achieve progress.”	https://www.proshareng.com/webtvchannels/BUSINESS-VIDEOS/2542/1
Department of State Services (DSS)	Department of State Services (DSS)	On the appointment of Mr. Yusuf Magaji BICHI as Director General, Department of State Services (DSS)	“He is an astute and versatile administrator; a highly detribalized Nigerian and an Intelligence Officer of immense repute.”	https://prnigeria.com/2018/09/14/dg-dss-bichi-resumes-in-office/
INEC	INEC	On the appointment of Mrs. Rose Omoa Oriaran-Anthony as the Secretary to the Commission on December 6, 2018	“The Secretary to the Commission is a thoroughly detribalized Nigerian with roots spread across different parts of Nigeria and enviable speaking, reading and writing proficiency in major Nigerian languages.”	https://www.inecnigeria.org/home/secretary-to-the-commissioner/
National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC)	National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC)	On the appointment of Pa Bankole Runsewe as the Director General, NCAC.	“A detribalized Nigerian, he holds several titles from different parts of the country...”	https://www.ncac.gov.ng/about-us/meet-dg-ncac/

Source: compiled by author

Inter-Ethnic Competition in Nigeria

The discourse on ‘detribalization’ stems largely from hostile and politicised inter-ethnic interactions and competition. The character of inter-ethnic competition and the politicization of ethnicity has always posed an existential challenge to the Nigerian corporate (Osimen et al, 2013). As observed by Kalejaiye and Alliyu (2013), the nature of ethnic politics and competition has thrown-up consequences for the Nigerian state and its people, slowing down development rate and escalating poverty. They also observed that ethnic politics in Nigeria has led to social conflicts, amongst which are the first military coup, the second military coup and the civil war that followed, the Traditional Market Union leadership tussle between the Hausa and the Yoruba in Ketu in 1992 and 1999 that led to a Mayhem, the crisis that followed the annulment of the outcome of the June 12th election in 1991, numerous inter-ethnic violent clashes and a host of some other clandestine hostile activities.



Inter-ethnic competition was particularly visible at the culmination of the efforts for independence. Fearing ethnic domination, the northern region through its leaders rejected the initial call for decolonization and independence. While there was consensus, eventually, amongst all the regional leaders on the need to decolonize, there seem not to have been a finely worked-out plan to address ethnic fears and to engender healthy inter-ethnic interaction. Actors increasingly reached out to ethnic sentiment in pursuit of political goals. Some nationalist leaders formed political parties along ethnic and regional lines. The leading political figures at the time included Alvan Ikoku Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. From the infamous cross-carpeting in the Western Region that saw 'Zik' lose most of his followers and consequently his position over night and the sequel to that in the Eastern Region, ethnic politics grew even bolder and became more pronounced and entrenched. Particularly amongst the major ethnic groups, the struggle for control of political power has been scaled up and the stakes raised. Series of political events culminated into a civil war with ethnic lines and deepening inter-ethnic divisions.

The struggle for the control of political positions were ultimately aimed at controlling economic wealth and overseeing the allocation of social goods. While Nigeria and its regions had previously relied largely on wealth from the export of cash crops like cocoa, groundnut, and palm produce, as the source of wealth, the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in 1959 and the economic import of oil export ushered in a new phase of the struggle for control and domination. Crude oil simply meant great wealth. Great enough to acquire the control of it by any means necessary. In a few words, the control of political positions and the economic wealth therein, determines where roads get built, where amenities are channelled and what section of the country gets guaranteed of a better and brighter future. And more so, the mere thought of being in charge is gratifying enough.

Table 2: Showing Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria

S/No	Groups in Hostility	Date	Place
1	Hausa, Berom and Igbo	1945	Jos
2	Hausa and Igbo	May 1953	Kano
3	Hausa and Southern Ethnicities (Especially Igbo)	May-Sept, 1966	Northern Nigeria
4	Igbo and Hausa	June, 1966	Eastern Nigeria
5	OPC (Yoruba) and Hausa traders	July 18, 1999	Sagama
6	OPC (Yoruba) and Hausa traders	Nov. 25, 1999	Lagos
7	Yoruba and Fulani	May 18, 2000	Shaki, Oyo State
8	Ijaw and Urhobo	July 21, 2000	Delta State
9	Igbo and Hausa traders	Oct 16, 2000	Alaba, Lagos
10	Ijaw and Itsekiri	May 12, 2001	Delta State
11	Yoruba and Hausa	Feb. 2, 2002	Idi-Araba, Lagos
12	Yelwa and Shendam	Feb. 2004	Plateau
13	Muslim (Hausa) and Christian (Igbo and other Christian majority ethnic minorities)	2006	Kano, Bauchi, Borno, and Plateau
14	Reprisals (Igbo and Hausa)	2006	Onitsha, Owerri, Umuahia, Aba, and Okigwe
15	Yoruba and Hausa	2017	Ile-Ife

Source: Author's Compilation



The Beauty in Diversity

Diversity is more of a gift than a curse. As against seeking to dissipate it, it should actually be harnessed for sustainable development. The United Nations General Assembly (1987: 43) conceptualised sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This should be understood to cover anything that is necessary for the survival of the generation of the future, ranging from their environment to their culture, language, and everything that defines them. This therefore means that we have to take seriously into consideration, the peoples and their future, while making political decisions that impacts on the character of the members of our diversity. The logic of sustainability also applies naturally to political and social development.

As with the diversity in our ecosystem, the cultural and ethnic diversity of human society is more of a heritage to mankind that should be preserved. Nigeria is not the only multi-ethnic country in the world today. While some have been able to manage their diversity, others have found it nearly impossible to fashion out a way to harmoniously co-exist. In the so called first world, in post-colonial societies and in the third world, the march of humanity and mutual coexistence is gaining currency.

Referring to the implications of cultural and ethnic diversity in Nigeria, Okpalike, (2015) held that the ethnic diversity in our country is more of an advantage and could prove useful in delivering good governance. He decried the demonization of ethnic identity in the bid to create a ‘detribalized Nigerian identity’ as an effort in futility. The different ethnic groups possess very rich cultural heritage, exciting art and fascinating history. The lingual beauty and the unique historical experiences that forged them, the people, their environment, their food, and their entire way of life are wonders of the world.

The individual is first a member of his ethnic group before being a Nigerian for the sole reason that his role and place in his ethnic group is more autochthonous with their peculiar way of life passed from generations to generations. This line of cultural identity was the case before the formation of Nigeria, and after. However, the position of the individual as he relates to his ethnic group and cultural identity should not necessarily be in conflict with his membership of the Nigerian state. The individual’s identity as a member of the Nigerian state actually thrives better within the context of the survival of his ethnic identity. Filial relations cannot be wished away or decreed out of being. It should be recognized, accepted, and managed.

Nigeria is not the only multi-ethnic country in the world. Both in the past and in the present, there has been states that have composed of diverse ethnic groups. While some have managed their situation well, leading to progress and wealth creation, peace and harmony, others have failed in that venture, resulting in endless acrimony and subversive actions, leading in some cases, to violence and loss of lives.

Some Countries Where Ethnic Diversity Has Been Better Managed

In some countries, ethnic diversity has been managed in such a manner that gives credence to the merits of pluralist societies. Most of these states mobilize, and deploy their diversity towards the achievement of National Development objectives. This, they did by allowing ethnic groups within the state the capacity to modulate its existence and survival, and sustaining its identity in concurrence with the larger state structure. The mode of state organization in the societies often reflect a significant centripetal-centrifugal equilibrium. With this in operation,



there is no need to galvanize support for “detrribalization” in any sense. This is because the ethnic or “tribal” identities are not seen as hitches to National Development, but are spices to the progress of society. Some of these countries include the following:

- i. **The United Kingdom:** The UK is a country made up of four dominant ethnic groups – English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish. Over the years the UK has evolved a system of power devolution in which ethnic groups within her, govern themselves directly, and the Westminster having an oversight, wherein the exercise of such powers is restrained by structure. Wales has its own government, so does Ireland and Scotland. Having maintained their ethnic identities, one comes to the realization of a concurrence within ethnic and national identities. There are English, British, and UK identities. The implication is that not all British are English, and not all of the United Kingdom is British. This country, despite its diversity, without a clear dominant ethnic group, has evolved its system of power devolution in the management of Ethnic identities, channelling such energy towards development. At the moment, the United Kingdom is one of the leading Economies in the World, and also, one of the most powerful states in terms of military might and international strategic positioning.
- ii. **Switzerland:** This is a multi-ethnic country in Europe, having a significant number of German, French, and English population groups within its territory. Over the years Switzerland has been a beacon of political and economic stability. Due to the reality of its plural composition, Switzerland evolved a functional three tier federal structure which allows the diverse people of the country to express their identity in their municipalities and cantons, as well as advancing these identities side by side with the Swiss identity. The cantons and municipalities have a significant degree of autonomy in governance. The presidency is a council of which all members are equal – the President being nothing with regards to his colleagues, other than a Council Chairman. Under this arrangement, the propensity for manipulation of realities, and emotions for inter-ethnic hostility is reduced to a negligible bare. The result being a very long experienced and continuing political and economic stability.
- iii. **Canada:** Canada is another multi-ethnic country which has managed its diversity, by strengthening its core, without undermining its pluralism. There are Metis, Inuits, South Asians, Aborigines in Canada, including the people of Quebec who are linguistically delineated from the rest of Canada given its history of French colonialism. Canada also has a high immigrant ratio, especially in recent years. Despite these, Canada remains stable and progressive. The common denominator for that is the political system in operation. Canada is a parliamentary federation in which component units are delineated based on its history and peoples. These units have significant autonomy in the management of its own affairs within the framework of a wider Canadian state. Their regional and provincial identities remain side by side with the Canadian identity. In fact, with this practice, there is no need to galvanize for “detrribalization”.

Some Countries Where Ethnic Diversity Has Been Mismanaged

Ethnic Diversity has been mismanaged in many countries, making the idea and operation of pluralist societies appear doomed to instability and retrogression. In contrast to states that have evolved efficient ethnic diversity management systems as stated supra, some other states continue to asphyxiate its ethnic groups due to inter alia, fear of secession, quest for national



assimilation, fear of loss of power and subtle apartheid, quest for continuous control of resource allocation and distribution etc. Many of these states are ethnically diverse states but maintain a unitary state structure or a unitary federalism which does not allow its diversity retain and express their identities in a manner that promotes their interest which are not mutually exclusive. States like this continue to front the “detrribalization” mantra as if it were a magical solution to its woes. Some of these states include the following:

- i. **Kenya:** This is a multi-ethnic country with over thirty ethnic groups, with the Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo, Kamba and Kisii making up the dominant groups. Kenya was governed as a unitary Republic from independence till 2010 when a new federal Constitution came into force. Ethnic hostilities continue to militate against political stability, as tensions climaxed in 2007 which saw to the killing of over 1400 people (Brownselli, 2013), in a post-election violence which had significant ethnic colouration. Even the federal constitution in force in today’s Kenya does not allow Ethnic groups express their identities in a manner which does not threaten the fabric of the entire society. This explains why the competition for power at the centre has remained intense. The result of Kenya’s governance structure is political instability and continuous inter-ethnic hostility. A situation that does not allow for development.’
- ii. **Myanmar:** Myanmar is another country that has severe challenges in the management of its ethnic identity. The case of Myanmar happens to be a situation where state machinery is used to advance the interests of certain preferred groups. This has created and sustained strife, mistrust and hostility between and amongst different ethnic groups, especially minorities. As Nnoli (2008) rightly asserted, the use of governmental power to advance ethnic agenda breeds hostility. Myanmar is a unitary parliamentary Republic which asphyxiates its ethnicities especially minorities. In fact, the government has a significant military presence, which by the character of military stratification and operation, has little flexibility. The result of Myanmar’s inflexibility, is instability. Violence Continue in Myanmar in recent years as Rhohingya ethnic minority in the state of Rhakine clash with the security forces.
- iii. **Philippines:** For the Philippines, management of ethnic identities took the course of national assimilation. The multi-ethnic context of national polity was submerged under the dominance of sub-ethnic loyalties which formed the cornerstones of political organization of colonial and post-colonial Philippines (Kreuzer, 2006). The state recognized ethnicities only to such extent that it wanted to extend control of national fringes – that is overseeing such territory within its purview which it cannot adequately supervise without falling back to the ingredient of ethnic aid. Here, the basic position was assimilation or extinction (Kreuzer, 2006). This pattern of ethnic identity management has overtime shown itself to be highly retrogressive, especially in societies with large minorities. Philippines has remained a weak state with fledging institutions and seemingly perpetually unstable – at least the extent of its operation, and syntheses for future possibilities.

Ethnic Groups and Political Development in Nigeria

The ethnic groups in Nigeria are not its problem. Nigeria is the problem of its ethnic groups. The numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria have been here thousands of years and have survived the times. The ethnic groups are more natural and indispensable compared to the Nigerian state.



The Nigerian state will have to adapt a measure of harmoniously coexisting with its ethnic groups. Ethno-linguistic heterogeneity is not peculiar to Nigeria. Canada, Ethiopia, Ghana, south Africa are, just to mention a few, states with a heterogeneous composition of ethnic groups.

The Character of Nigerian State and the Asphyxiation of Natives

The Nigerian State over the years, continue to choke the idea of retaining indigenous identities by ethnic nationalities. This is manifested in the manner of state creation which divided ethnic groups with a view to breaking their ranks. Also, asphyxiation of Ethnic groups happens when the state appears to favour one or some ethnic groups to the utter disregard or marginalization of others. The character of the Nigerian state as a post-colonial and rentier entity with a “federal” in books and “unitary” in reality and practice constitution, and a policy of national integration, which indeed is properly manifested as national assimilation by fiat, allows ethnic groups very little space for expression.

Pitfalls of States that Seek to Erase Some Ethnic Groups to Evolve a ‘Detribalized’ Society.

States that seek to erase some ethnic groups with a view to evolve a “detribalized” society often face certain pitfalls due to the inherent contradictions in forcing a national assimilation. Some of these pitfalls include:

- i. **Mistrust and Hostility between ethnic groups and central government:** In this situation, there is a perpetual state of suspicion of government actions on the part of ethnic groups. Every step of the government is interpreted as being against an ethnic group. This is the reality of Nigeria as the Igbo people of country often view the government as an oppressor trying to strip it of its identity. Same happens among Hausa people of Northern Nigeria who feel that their culture and religion is being taken away from them when government embarks on certain policies. Often times, this mistrust snowballs into violence against the ethnic group of the leader in office at the time of policy plan and implementation.
- ii. **Political Instability:** Instability remains the reality of states that seek to erase ethnic identities in favour of evolving a “detribalized” society. In such societies, there is always tension and quasi militarization of natives. At the slightest spark, there is violence.
- iii. **Weak and Fledging Economies:** This is a logical outcome of political instability. So long as a state continues to grapple with instability, its economy will be on downward slope until it can no longer support the population. This is also determined by the extent and length of political instability.

**Table 3: Showing ethnic groups and their population strength by percentage**

S/No	Ethnic Groups	Population (estimated at 200 million)
1	Hausa	25%
2	Igbo	21%
3	Yoruba	18%
4	Ijaw	10%
5	Kanuri	4%
6	Fulani	4%
7	Ibibio	3.5%
8	Tiv	2.5%
9	Others	12%

Source: Author's Compilation

CONCLUSION

The management of identity for national development in plural societies are often important due to the intrigues of power relations and struggles inherent within the system. However, the strength in this diversity manifests upon a proper harnessing and management of its core by evolving, maintaining and sustaining a significant degree of federalization of political power. As seen in Switzerland, Canada, and the devolution in the United Kingdom, equilibrium via centripetal-centrifugal balance is imperative for political stability, economic prosperity, social harmony and international strategic power projections. Therefore, in a situation of proper management of identities in Nigeria, in such a way that allows integration by concurrence of indigenous and Nigerian identities, and a corresponding freedom to exercise power by indigenous people within their demographics, dire competitions for power at all levels, which usually fuels inter-group hostility diminishes. Conflicts will arise from time to time, but the system of identity management will evolve veritable resolution. Consequently, the need to promote and advance a vague concept of "detrribalization" is invalidate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To help the Nigerian State maximize the beauty of its diversity, and its potentials, we recommendations thus:

- i. The centre should be disincentivised to check hostile inter-ethnic competition for resources by modelling federalism in its ideal form and practice.
- ii. A constitutional recognition of ethnic and dual identities in Nigeria.
- iii. A continuous federalization of indigenous identities. Though ethnic and religious identities in Nigeria are not mutually inclusive, there is a degree of uniformity in ethnic and religious identities. By indigenous people, the researcher means ethnic identities.



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