EXAMINING THE DIRECT AND MODERATING EFFECTS OF ETHNO NATIONALIST IDENTITY ON THE SOCIAL WELLBEING OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

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Abstract:

The study is a contribution to the existing studies on the effects of ethno-nationalist identity on the social wellbeing of the Nigerian state. The ostensibly unwieldiness of ethnic related violence and hate in the contemporary Nigeria has casted a vail of doubt on the achievability of a nation state status for Nigeria. This study utilized the major tenets of David McCrone's model on colonialism and nationalism as a theoretical leaning to understand the formation and perpetuation of ethnic nationality and consciousness. Applying the historical research design, data were collected from newspapers, magazines, television broadcasts, journal articles and textbooks and were analysed using content analysis method, so as to give explanatory clarity to the study. The study implicated some issues such as pervasive corruption, a faulty federal system, and a flawed indigenization policy as major catalysts for ethnic divide, and thus, called for a complete overhaul of the faulty social system, so as to create a fairer atmosphere for peace building.

Keywords: ethno-nationalist identity, ethnicity, nationalism, independence and colonialism

1. Introduction

Nigeria as a country, prides itself on the maxim of peace, unity, faith and progress. This presupposes faith in unity and peace in the country's efforts to progress. However, the country's 60 years' realities have shown a great level of titanic decadence in the very foundations on which it was built. The countrymen are lost to faith in unity and peace in

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their daily strives for progress. This grim reality animates the populace towards accruing their self-worth from distinctive ethnic alliances, hence the social construction of ethno nationalist identity. The growing inclination towards the identification of people based on their ethno nationalist alliances (i.e. their ethnic groups), spells a great deal of problem to the social wellbeing of the Nigerian state. Verdery (1993, p.181), commented rather passionately that "*how a polity defines the relationship between its 'ethnic nation' and 'citizenship' deeply affects its form of democracy*". Nevertheless, negotiations between the two, in a situation when they are diametrically opposite in fact, threaten the Nigerian society. Thus, it poses a critical problem for the social wellbeing of the Nigerian state.

The dwindling framework of socio-economic and physical security in Nigeria draws individuals into a one-sided cleavage, which fundamentally tilts towards ethnic allegiance. Most political elites in the history of Nigeria used this 'democratic defect' to their selfish ends, as they maximally exploited the disjointed social structures of ethnic division and hate to achieve personal interests, that often majored on removing competition as means of securing power or self-determination which they had failed to achieve in the wider community. To this end, they became ethno-nationalist, fostering directly or indirectly ethno-nationalist identity among people of their ethnic origin. This often results into hostility, contradiction and discrepancy, as well as denying, humiliating and negating other ethnic groups (İnaç & Ünal 2013; Ager 2001). This can be seen in people seeing themselves firstly as Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba and so on before regarding themselves as Nigerians, that is if they do. The Nigerian Nationalist, Obafemi Awolowo, argued that:

> "*Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh, or French. The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.*" (West African Pilot, 1946, p. 23)

This takes as fact, the latent notion of the nationalists, of further dividing the entity Nigeria into sovereign states. In terms of ethnic composition, Nigeria remains the most unique and complex country in the world (Ezeani & Agudiegwu, 2015). To Gordon (2005), Nigeria has 521 languages, of which 510 are living languages; two are second languages without mother-tongue speakers while nine are presently extinct. The sociology of Nigeria shows a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and a multi-cultural country; and this realism has a remarkable sway on the social wellbeing of the people. According to Njoku (2001:255), "*Nigeria is a multi-cultural state with about 250 ethnic nationalities. Of the nationalities, three are the largest – the Hausa/Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the East and the Yoruba in the West*". Ethno-nationalist identity in Nigeria is a 'truth that divides' the national development of the country. The first step towards destabilizing this 'truth that divides' would be an attempt to strip it off its argumentative premises by the means of historical, political (philosophical, social), psychological and critical content, in order to illuminate the nature of particular ideologies that feed off de-legitimation of a national

identity and thus legitimate the division and the power gained through division (ethno-nationalist identity). It is against this backdrop that this paper aims at examining the effects of ethno-nationalist identity on the social wellbeing of the Nigerian state.

2. Theoretical framework

The major tenets of McCrone's (1998) model on colonialism and nationalism was utilized as the theoretical leaning of this paper. McCrone's study on civic and ethnic nationalism, in his book "The Sociology of Nationalism" published in 1998, pointed out the differences between the development of the "Nation-State" in Europe and their colonies especially those in Africa. To achieve a tolerable illustration of the arguments of this paper, it is important to first, situate this study within a wider context of academic debates on ethnic relations and conflict, at least from an African point of view and secondly, it is necessary to associate the theoretical leaning of this study to the mainstream context of African socio-political life. The development of the Nation-State in the Western Societies such as France, Belgium and Britain were merely a product of 'modernity'. The study acknowledged that these societies developed the nation-state status through the decline of dominant religious thinking, rejection of fatalism, and a growth in the acceptance of secular political authority. Thus, it linked the emergence of nation-states to the break-up of empires, such as the Ottoman Empire, Russian Empire, Austrian Empire and so on (see page 890-891). As such, the transition emanated from the seeming similarities in ethnic identity, and close cultural uniformity.

The study disclosed still that ethnicity alone is never enough to create a nation-state, but it could help if ethnic nationalism is converted into civic nationalism, which the author defined as nationalist sentiments tied to a particular country, which increases the loyalty of citizens to that particular state. However, the transition towards nation-states in the colonies did not follow this process. This second type of nation-states formed when persons opposed to colonial rule appealed to, and mobilised members of different ethnic groups to unite against the oppression and ills of colonialism, and thus, advocated for free secular states. Nevertheless, the socio-political and economic failures of some of these states, has made nationalism in these states to be more associated with religion and ethnicity. The author also contended that people in many of the postcolonial societies have ambiguous identities, with religion and ethnicity all making claims on their loyalty to the secular state. Different identities came in competition for the allegiance of people in the new independent countries. Haralambos, Holborn & Heald (2008) commented that the nationalist movements towards the end of colonialism in countries like India, Algeria, Nigeria and so on, achieved independence with little appeals made to religious and ethnic sentiments, however, when they failed to deliver on the multitudes of promises made in the areas of 'economic, social, and cultural liberations', they instigated the growth of division through sentiments of ethnicity and religion, as a desperate way to stay in power. Glaring examples are the overthrow of the Shah of Iran by the Islamic

regime of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, and the bloody Nigerian military coup of July 1966.

Nationalist movements against colonialism in Nigeria, emerged from the identification of perceivable difference with someone else (e.g. against the colonial masters), and after the end of colonialism, the basic principle of nationalists defining their nation-based differences from other ethnicities, did not go away. Postcolonial nationalists in Nigeria has often exploited radical differences between the ethnicities of Nigeria to achieve selfish political and sometimes financial ends. It is quite interesting that while the nation created the state in the western world, the reverse is the case in most African societies as the state is trying unsuccessfully to create the nation. Fenton (1999) emphasised different degrees of intensity in ethnic identity; it could be "Hot Ethnicity" or "Cold Ethnicity"; and ethnicity may provide strong passions and lead to violence. These varying perceptions of ethnic groups have tendencies of either improving social relationships or creating hate and discord. Plausible from the Nigeria situation, pockets of distinctive and often heated sentiments of unity and social bonding, has the propensity to inculcate a severe degree of hate and thus, animate monstrosity. This can be seen in the growing crop of insurgent and terrorist groups in Nigeria such as Boko Haram, Fulani Militia, Militants and so on.

3. Trajectories of ethno-nationalist identity in Nigeria: The litany of struggles and conflicts

Ethnic and religious mobilization can often be found at the heart of political, economic and social competitions. As with all social cleavages, fault lines within societies formed along ethno-identities, generates contrasting interests-these variances of interest, in turn, offer themselves to probable or occasionally violent conflict (Adeline & Okechukwu, 2015). As a matter of fact, Nigeria is closely associated with yawning divisions which animates major political concerns to be vigorously and aggressively contested along the lines of complicated ethnic, religious and regional divisions. From the time of its independence, Nigeria has been driven hither and thither by repeated crises of provincial alliances, often militating efforts at democratization, stability, economic revolution and national cohesion. The climax of the crisis appears to have occurred during the civil war of 1967-70, which began shortly after independence (Okpanachi, 2010).

It is crucial to reflect upon the creation of the Nigerian state in order to catch a glimpse into the deep-seated issues surrounding the existence of Nigeria. Kehinde (2016) reminded us that the territories that make up Nigeria and other African states were drawn up artificially at the Berlin conference of 1885 for the economic convenience of the major colonial actors such Britain, Belgium, Portugal, France and so on, the mentioning of these countries is important since they had the largest legacies in Africa. After the second World War as it was called, most African societies engaged in nationalist movements as a medium to rally their people towards rejecting colonialism and fighting for their independence and in 1960 Nigeria gained her independence.

The struggle for scarce resources and ethnic dominance in the Nigeria politics distorted the sense of national identity and oneness among its citizenry. This reality can be traced to even as far back as the colonial era. During the colonial epoch, the white administrators endorsed the emergence and intensification of an 'us' versus 'them' mentality, where Muslims were pitted against Christians, Northerners against the Southerners, Hausa- Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo against each other, and so on (Okpanachi 2010; Adefemi 2003, p. 14). Before the much sorted after independence, pockets of aggravated conflicts animated by ethnic hate and struggle began to emerge in ugly forms. For instance, in Kano (an ancient industrialized city) founded around 7th century, which was a hub for trade in West Africa, saw an increase of violence against southern Nigeria immigrants mainly Igbos and Yorubas. The southern immigrants were referred to as Nasara (Christians) and Kafirai (infidels). This toxicity in relations led to the emergence of sectional cities as the immigrants lived in SabonGari and the indigenes settled behind walled cities called Birni Otite & Ogionwo (2006). The Birni areas were headed by the Emir of Kano, and the SabonGari area was administered directly by the British Colonial Authority, with these separate areas having very little contact, and on the 15th of May 1953 demonstrations erupted as the indigenes clamoured for the removal of the infidels leading to countless loss of lives and properties and normalcy was finally achieved by the police on the 19th of May 1953 (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006).

Shortly after the independence, the first military coup happened on 15th January 1966. It was believed by the north that the coup was championed to foster the dominance of the Igbos, and the unification decree of then leader Aguyi Ironsi an Igbo was viewed with severe distrust. This led to protests and revolts in the north and especially in Kano leading to the deaths of many Igbo immigrants, eventually a counter-coup was carried out in July of the same year leading to the death of the Igbo military leader, who was replaced by a Northerner. The 1970's cruised past without much noticeable ethnic violence, however this relative peace came to a halt in the early 1980's, as the growing influence of Christians in Kano could no longer be tolerated by the North, which led to a violent clash between Christians and Moslems in Fagge (a district near Sabon Gari) (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006). In other areas ethnic motivated conflicts has also altered social wellbeing. In Taraba State Nigeria, there have always been clashes of interest between the Jukun and the Tiv people, whether it concerns national political interest or even local economic and territorial interest, their conflicts often lead to disruption of peace and wellbeing. Take for instance, the tussle over the ownership and control of the Wukari area, with the Jukun regarding the Tiv as strangers (Otite & Albert, 1999). This conflicts between them led to what was finally referred to as the "Tiv riots" of 1959-1960 (Ogionwo & Otite, 2006). In the Eastern part of Nigeria, conflicts have endured between some clans that claim ethnic differences and often struggle over resources and political influence, such as the famous conflicts between Umuleri and Aguleri of Anambra State. Also, in the South-South, you would find pockets of conflict between the Kalabari and the Nembe, Igbo and Efik, Kalabari and Ikwerre, and these conflicts often revolve around land ownership, rights to petroleum oil and so on.

Ethnicity is sociologically significant, and may not merely accrue from a fact of ethnic pluralism, as is the case of many colonially created states in Africa and Latin America. Ethnicity is construed as a situation when members of one ethnic group discriminates and dissociates from other ethnic groups based on perceived or real differences in culture, dressing, symbols, language, marriage and kinship systems and so on. Ethnicity as a form of identity is often objective in manifestation, but may take a subjective leaning, when persons discriminates against others for particular purposes and particular contexts (Haralombos, et al., 2008). In Nigeria elections in Market Unions, Student Unions, Cooperatives and even in churches often take ethnic complements as campaigns usually points differences in ethnic bearings. For instance, vote comrade Chukwuka he is from Ebonyi state, and we need our brother or son as the Student Union President since the University is in our state. This becomes a mantra, that usually blindsides the skills of the aspirants and highlights merely their ethnic affiliations. In Nigeria, the June 12, 1993 elections saw Mashood Kashimawo Abiola emerge as the perceived winner, who overcame ethnicity for the first time in Nigeria, however, his apparent victory was annulled by the Military regime of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida on June 23, 1993. This undemocratic action of denying the democratic choice of Nigerians was generally interpreted as ethno-regional discrimination championed by the Hausa-Fulani elite (who aimed at perpetuating their region in power) backed by a military misuse of power (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006).

The return of democratic rule to Nigeria in 1999 has not mediated the upsurge of ethnic alliances and nepotism in Nigeria. The contemporary Nigerian state is bedevilled with a myriad of contradictions and problems. This is seen where the power elite negotiates a wedge amongst ethnic groups by perpetuating members of some identity groups in power and positions of relevance through appointments of ministers, service chiefs and so on. This increased nepotism and corruption, has led to an increase in the divide between ethnic groups in Nigeria. Also, there is a spate of what can be referred to as ethnic motivated violence. This violence appears in various forms that can range from communal clashes, gang wars and so on. However, the most notable forms of this ethnic violence can be found in the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram sect and Fulani militia. The Human Rights Watch in 2020, reported that at least 1,200 people died and nearly 200,000 people were displaced in the northwest in 2018 as a result of Boko Haram violence. They also reported that the communal conflict between farmers and nomadic herdsmen in the Middle Belt has claimed about 1, 600 lives and displaced another 300,000 people in 2018 (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Table 1: A list of Attacks carried out by Boko Haram
and Fulani Herdsmen from January, 2015- May, 2016

Attacks by Boko Haram sect 2015- May, 2016.		
Date	**City/State**	**Attack and Number of Casualties**
January 30, 2015	Dalori Village, Borno State	An organized boko haram attack left 86 people dead
June 4, 2015	Maiduguri, Borno State	A female suicide bomber killed two people near a military check point
June 4, 2015	Yola, Adamawa State	A blast ripped through a market in Yola, killing 45 people
July 1, 2015	Kukawa, Borno State	Suicide bombers attacked a hospital in Kukawa, during the visit of Vice president YemiOsibanjo, killing 118 people
February 9, 2016	Dikwa, Borno State	Two female suicide bombers of the Boko Haram sect snuck into a camp for internally displaced people in Dikwa and killed 60 people while 78 were left injured.
Attacks by Fulani Herdsmen 2015- May, 2016		
Date	**City/State**	**Attack and Number of Casualties**
December, 2015	Kwata, Jos South LGA, Plateau State	Fulani herdsmen attacked Kwata in Jos South LGA and killed no fewer than 22 persons
February, 2016	Agatu, Benue State	Suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked a village in Agatu, killing at least 300 persons. This attacked have been described as the worst ever by the Fulani herdsmen
April, 2016	Nimbo, Uwani LGA, Enugu State	About seven villages including Ugwuijoro, Ekwuru, Ebor, Umuome and Ugwuachara were attacked, with a recorded death of 40 persons, and no fewer than 10 houses including a church were razed.
April, 2016	Dori and Mesuma, Taraba State	Dori and Mesuma villages were attacked in Gashaka LGA of Taraba State, leaving 15 people dead with several houses burnt down, although the residents claimed that the actual toll was 40 persons
May 20, 2016	OkeAko, Ikole LGA, Ekiti State	Two persons were killed, and several others injured. It was alleged that assailants attacked the victims for refusing them access to graze in their farms

Source: Gbenro Adeoye and Jesusegun Alagbe (2016). B' Haram, Fulani Herdsmen kill over 3,000 under Buhari. *The Punch Newspaper*, Published May 28, 2016.

The above report is merely a tip of the iceberg, since issues of relating to ethnic mobilization against other ethnic groupings in Nigeria has become a common phenomenon. The above statistics may create the impression that the spread of this cataclysmic violence and terrorism is situated mainly in the northern region of the country. This is far from the reality, as threats to human and property security and its ramified consequences are a burden to all the regions of the country (Ordu, 2017; Nnam, et al., 2018).

4. Ethnicity and Nationalism

After the tragedies and atrocities of the holocaust and the Second World War, studies by modernization theorists emerged to look into the macro level significance of ethnic groups and nationalisms. These pioneering studies at least in the sense of social sciences, paved way for deeper and more specific studies into the causes of deep-seated ethnocentrism, xenophobia, racism and ethno-nationalist agitations. For the avoidance of doubts, racism and ethnic hate between groups have long been a character of human

societies. For instance, Queen Elizabeth I, issued a proclamation in 1601 to expel all "Negros and blackamoors" from England, on the accusations that they were 'infidels' and the cause of poverty and famine (Haralambos, et al., 2008). Also, the historian Curtin (1965) recorded that over 9.5 million Africans were shipped as slaves to North and South America and also the Caribbean where they toiled like animals. The London writer Joseph Bannister in 1901, was also very clear when he referred to the Jews as "Yiddish money pigs", who loath the taking of baths and thus, were particularly prone to skin and blood diseases. This hatred for the Jews unfortunately animated the Nazi rule of Adolf Hitler and led to one of the greatest crimes against humanity. Even revered scientists can be guilty of prejudice let's look at the case of a close and personal friend to Marx, Frederick Engels, who described the Irish in his 1844 writing *the condition of the working class in England*. Claimed that:

> *"The southern facile character of the Irishman, his crudity, which places him but little above the savage, his contempt for all human enjoyments, in which his very crudeness makes him incapable of sharing, his filth and poverty, all favour drunkenness."* (Engels, 1973, first published 1844).

For Woods, Schertzer & Kaufmann (2011), these modernists largely subscribe to the notion that nations are entirely contemporary phenomenon whose backgrounds can only be established in the sense of the ideological and mechanical transformations created by industrialisation and the rise of the 'modern state', rather than as genuine social entities that have endured over a period of time). Thus, nations from this view point would rather suggest "make-believe communities", whose traditions, customs, beliefs and history are false consciousness imposed by elites for the mere purpose of convenience (Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983; Anderson, 1991). However, the primordial perspective, would agree that some societies predates modern writing and the industrial revolution. This second perspective at least validates the importance of historical sociology. In Africa, societies existed and although it can be argued that a majority of the stories and narratives on these societies centres on the significant inputs of elitist culture, such as the stories of the sphinx, the pharaohs of Egypt, the Massai warriors of West Africa, the Oba's of ancient Nigeria societies and so on. These societies existed as nations in their own rights, even before the advent of colonialism. Ethnicity when viewed from a sociological perspective, focuses more concern on the cultural aspect of societies rather than their genealogy. Thus, a distinction is made on people primarily according to the distinctiveness of their lifestyles.

In Nigeria as with most Sub-Saharan countries in Africa, the issue of ethnicity and ethno-nationalism, became important after the independence of these countries from their colonial masters. The struggle for influence and resources have often sprouted claims of ethnic ancestry, and also the mobilization of support hinged on the factor ethnicity. Madueke (2018) in his study "*From neighbours to deadly enemies: excavating landscapes of territoriality and ethnic violence in Jos, Nigeria*", found that the development of

group concentration, the creation of discriminatory groupings of indigene and settler and their meanings for group relations in Jos spiralled into violence in September 2001. To him, at the heart of all this, is the decisive role ethnic relations and religious associations played during the creation of Jos North LGA, also how it kindled new attachment to territories, especially in relation to segregated neighbourhoods, along with the ban on the issuance of indigene certificates to members of the Hausa community. These factors culminated into violence and an unhealthy ethnic relation which still plagues Jos till this day. Attoh and Soyombo (2011), in their study "*The politics of ethnic balancing in Nigeria*", comments that ethnicity was born as a result of the pursuit of stately hegemony. Zolberg cited in (Nnoli, 1980), argues that this ethnicity in Nigeria, was fuelled by the colonial belief that certain ethnic groups were more intelligent, progressive and worthy of respect than the others. A study advanced by Salawu and Hassan (2011) on "*Ethnic politics and its implications for the survival of democracy in Nigeria*", clarified that, Nigeria as nation has performed below par on the political plane, this has resulted in poor economic infrastructure. It has also affected institutions such as welfare, tourism, infrastructural development and human development. To them, the major efforts and resources that should normally be geared towards economic and political liberation had been stupidly spent on political power tussle and primitive accumulation for "pecuniary emulation", all of which are compounded by the factor of 'ethnicism' and ethnic minded nepotism. Thus, previous literature corroborates the major assumptions and argument of this paper, which is that ethnic nationalism has immense consequences for the Nigerian State.

5. Discussions on the impacts of ethno-nationalist identity on the social wellbeing of the Nigerian state

The formation of ethno-nationalist identity is a goal driven activity by groups of people over their collective grievances against an established superior authority whose actions or inactions are viewed as incongruence to their existence. Ethno-nationalist identity when shared among members of a social group, breeds extremists, who are willing to sacrifice their lives and other valuable resources for the advancement of its cause- hence, attacking the social wellbeing of the superior authority (Nigerian state). The depth of the impacts of ethno-nationalist identification in Nigeria, densely affects the important areas of the country's socio-political life, and drives a morbid stake to the heart of the country's economic fortune and democracy (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006; Nnam, Ugwuoke, Njemanze and Akwara, 2020). Among the various issues associated with ethno-nationalist identity in Nigeria, these factors are especially important for the authors of this paper, since they have far reaching consequences for social development and the achievement of Nation-Statehood.

The dearth of national consciousness: every society has scarce resources; however, ethno-nationalist identity in Nigeria has made the access to scarce opportunities and resources in the country a matter of ethnic belonging. The issue of 'indigeneship' has become so important for the Nigerian social existence as the regular debate over who is

and who is not an 'indigene' is now a collective consciousness in Nigeria (Ehrhardt, 2017; Madueke, 2018). Aside from being a bona-fide citizen of the country, a person is also demanded to present a certification of citizenship from patrilocal communities. As such, an indigene certificate must be offered a person at his Local Government Area in order to assume the status of the 'son of the soil'. This singular practice differentiates between indigenes and internal immigrants (see Fourchard, 2015). This practice can be said to have taken roots from the colonial policy of local identification; however, it is especially more important in post-colonial Nigeria due to the ethnic diversity of the state. As a pursuance of a flawed federal character system, originally persuaded towards affording equal opportunities to all Nigerians, irrespective of region and to dissuade uneven development between the regions, the indigene identification policy has become a criterion to gain access to socio-economic rights and privileges (Madueke, 2018). The indigene certificate affords individuals access to school admissions, employment, social welfare, tenured positions and appointments into ministries and it even justifies scholarships and grant benefits (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Ostien, 2009).

This situation has occasioned a myriad of social problems for the Nigerian state, as in most cases, Nigerians residing in areas that are not their original indigeneity have been denied justice, opportunities, and welfare that has led to severe physical and emotional injuries. Also, there is a problem of protracted conflicts on the ownership of land resources caused by the 'indigene policy'. These conflicts lead to severe loss of lives and properties on a daily basis. Take Jos North township for instance. The Hausa inhabitants maintain that they are indigenes of Jos North township since they have stayed in the city for a long time, they also argued that the current Jos North was named Hausa settlements by the colonial powers at that time, and also the fact that Hausa chiefs have headed the community is an indication that their ancestors are the rightful owners of the land, and this conflict was also escalated by the creation of the tin company, which also created the struggle for ownership and control of production (Best, 2007). Madueke (2018), also observed that the creation of Jos North local government area and the subsequent embargo placed on the issuing of indigene certificates to members of the Hausa community has led to countless loss of lives and properties and a perpetual atmosphere of heated conflict. Thus, ethno-nationalist identities have dealt a heavy blow on the issue of national consciousness and the pursuance of a Nigerian nation-state.

Centrifugal tendencies: the struggle for self-determination among ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian state has led to centrifugal forces. Most of which has steered to crisis or war. Worthy of note was the 1967 – 1970 civil war commanded by Odumegwu Ojukwu which ended in favour of the Nigerian state. Prior to the civil war, in the middle belt region, the Tiv ethnic group and the present-day Niger Delta on February 23, 1966 formed the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (Awofeso, 2017). This secessionist group was led by Isaac Boro whose aim was the creation of Niger Delta Republic. The movement, however, was unsuccessful as the Yakubu Gowon government did not allow it to see the light of its thirteenth day (Awofeso, 2017). Other ethnic groups like the Boko Haram in the northern Nigeria calling for an Islamic state; and the undying quest of IPOB on the

south-eastern Nigeria for the creation of Biafran state are all evidences of deep-rooted social movement for self-determination among these ethnic groups.

As observed by Jacob (2012), the years between 1952 and 1966 brought a great deal of change in the socio-economic and political culture of the Nigerian state, but most interestingly, this change was seen more in the political culture of the country as there were visible transformations in the three regions of the country, and these regions eventually became political entities. However, the struggle for independence was reduced to a mere pursuit of ethnic dominance. Ethnocentric appointments, pervasive corruption and highhanded nepotism, degenerated into revengeful coups and counter coups. This led to deaths, and distorted the social system of Nigeria till this very date. The military made a mockery of democracy in Nigeria (a shaky country built on a faulty and selfish colonial enterprise). Even the return to civilian rule in 1999, the centrifugal forces fuelled by the consciousness of marginalization has not left Nigeria. It has stuck to the country like a plague. Instances like the Niger Delta Militia calls for the disintegration of the country and for the achievement of nation-states like Oduduwa republic in the southwest region, Arewa republic in the northern region and Biafra in the southeast region all points the fact that there are some problems in the Nigerian framework.

Economic decline: most scholars who had studied the conflicts among ethnic groupings in Nigeria, has often suggested the competition over the control of state resources as the major factor that comes to light. Otite & Ogionwo (2006) agreed that social conflicts in societies, especially in plural societies occurs when members of various groups desire resources which are relatively in short supply, and those with power in that society are the ones who can control these resources and thus, decides who gets what and when they get it. For Nigeria, the major factors that can assure this control are linked to the following: (i) primary control of important state resources such as the military, media (ideological propaganda), economy, religion (moral sentiment), the police (instrument of state violence) and so on, and (ii) overwhelming number (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006; Ake, 1981). These tools are coercively sorted by the Nigerian elite, and they serve specific needs of primitive accumulation. Furnival (1948), cited in Nnoli (1980, pp. 72-73) assuaged that "*the workings of economic forces permit tension between groups with competing interests*". The Nigerian situation is a little more peculiar. Take for instance the argument of Marx, who saw man's activities as influenced and only realisable within a sequence of social environments; thus, eroding the distinction between individual and group. For Marx, the capitalist system became a fundamental influence on social structure, since the means of production is owned by private individuals, the trade of labour for wages became necessary, ultimately creating two classes of people, the bourgeoisie and proletariats. However, Nigeria is not a typical capitalist system since other modes of production are nuanced within its framework, but the importance of classes cannot be overlooked.

Gurr (1993), emphasised that relative deprivation theory offers an explanation based on an ethnic groups' access to power and economic resources. This is especially important for us because the polarized nature of ethnic classification in Nigeria is

responsible for ethnic conflicts. The economic and political competitions in Nigeria, is a factor that has been implicated by a number of scholars as the cause of economic decline in Nigeria after independence (Nnoli, 1980; Ake, 1981; Otite and Ogionwo, 2006; Jacob, 2012). Ethnic nationalism hits a major blow on the development of a society, especially as it pertains to economic growth, since, the market forces are often manipulated to favour ethnic lines, either through state promotion of monopoly, nepotism in appointing economic advisors, providing cash transfers and bail outs to companies and individuals of certain ethnic groups at the expense of the economy. Ethnic nationalism also produces poor substantial government leadership and services (Williams, 2001).

Most currently, the violence meted out by rogue cattle herders in Nigeria, has led to a decline of the economic fortune of rural farming communities, due to fear, destruction of crops and retaliatory violence, which often leads to destruction of lives and properties by causing casualties on both sides. This trend has continued to plague farming communities, which has even led to the consideration of a grazing bill by the Nigeria parliament. Ogbonna and Jiménez (2017) pointed out some of the negative consequences of terrorism on agriculture and ultimately the economy, they said:

"The consequence of terrorism on the agricultural sector is largely based on a perceived fear by farmers of the risk of being attacked by insurgents. Outside that, farmlands have become a hideout for insurgents, who then target the agricultural sector for daily supplies. Consequently, there is a huge decline in agricultural production due to constraints in human mobility and attacks on storage facilities. The amplified fear of attack has made other factors such as transportation riskier and therefore more expensive, thus adding extra pressure and cost to economic outputs. The general impact has been exhibited in food scarcities, increased price of food items, poverty and hunger." (Ogbonna & Jiménez, 2017, p. 14)

Nnam, et al., (2020), comments that a majority of roads that lead to markets and towns formerly serving as economic hubs are deserted. They argue that this is especially worrisome in the north-eastern region of Nigeria, as roads to markets and even markets in some communities in Maiduguri continue to be empty, resulting to a huge blow on the economic fortunes of the people in these communities. Ethnic related violence such as the Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria, presents deteriorating consequences on the economy, as Shahbaz, Shabbir, Malik, & Wolters (2013) confirmed that terrorism alters macroeconomic stability and organization. This is evident when governments redirect resources from growth-stimulating activities to comparatively less productive activities such as defence and welfare for internally displaced people and refugees. Thus, the effects that ethno-nationalist identification has on the Nigeria state is diverse and may present severe negative impressions on the major wellbeing of the people.

6. Conclusion and policy implications

This paper illustrated how the conniving quest to achieve more and more influence in forms of economic and political dominance has torn apart the Nigerian state and bedevilled her with numerous social problems with their ramified consequences. Using the major tenets of McCrone's theory on 'civic and ethnic nationalism' as the paper's theoretical leaning, we were able to implicate the faulty foundation of the country, and afterwards, the selfish alliances of interest that has further torn apart the thin veneer of nationhood the country had. The quest for primitive accumulation and corruption among the political elites in the country continues to eat away at the heart of the nation, as it emphasises cultural differences which are sometimes given racial compliments as the justification for their need to differentiate the people of the country. Among these tactics is the indigene policy in the country and the faulty and very short-sighted federal character system. These systems allow the political class to indulge in pervasive nepotism.

The issue of competitive federalism where the winner takes all is not a sustainable system. Ethnic fears emphasised by so called nationalist and political jugglers often create a situation where the indigenes invoke autochthonous and ancestral attachment to patrilocal villages and towns, thus, labelling the immigrants as strangers, and in extreme cases attack their families and business. These behaviours have cost the country lives and millions of dollars in property lost. The over attachment to religious and cultural social bonding, has become an avenue for conflict mounting, mobilisation, solidary and aggression against perceived enemies. It also animates terrorism, as this is now common in the northern region of the country.

We conclude that, factors such as constructed categories of differentiation such as the "indigene ideology", and the faulty or skewed federal character system, glorifies nepotism, corruption, and hate over meritocracy and fair play. The federal character principle that claims to provide fair opportunities to all the regions of the country, is often manipulated for ethnic guided nepotism and the perpetuation of certain ethnic groups in important positions, thus, creating feelings of discontent and hatred amongst other Nigerian ethnicities. Also, the issue of "identity" is important, since it can be mobilised towards ethnic conflicts and cleansing, but identity tensions on its own may be a wider stretched symptom of underlying illnesses such as corruption, severe inequality, marginalization and sectional alienation, so, attacking the issue of identity and ethnic tension alone may not address the root causes of the problem. Achieving a true nationhood and a watchful peace in Nigeria means that measures must be taken to improve upon the conditions of Nigeria federalism and restructure the country's democracy to emulate global best practices.

We zoomed in on the place of religious and cultural mobilizations as way to account for the creation and sustenance of certain group identities. These identities are reinforced and used to mobilize people towards group actions, such as the perpetuation of group claims to lands and resources, and even for group propaganda. Of notable

consequence, this paper reiterates that some measures must be taken to salvage the Nigeria nationhood. First, the electoral body in Nigeria known as the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) must become independent, this independence must be shown in their ability to conduct and mediate elections without the interference of the federal government, this will allow the right and desired people to take over political offices, rather than the current circulation of politicians in Nigeria. Secondly, the federal character system must be abolished, this will allow for increase in appointments based purely on merits, rather than as a source of political and ethnic settlements. This federal character has always been flawed in Nigeria, as nepotism and corruption have bedevilled the process and some ethnic groups have been accused of exerting undue influence and dominance in governance and political appointments. Thirdly, the "indigene policy" must be reviewed, this is because Nigeria as a federal system must exemplify what a federal system is to be. Thus, citizens of Nigeria should be able to accrue all the benefits of being a citizen, irrespective of the region they are.

Finally, the issue of government and administrative corruption must be tackled and eliminated from the Nigerian social system if any meaningful progress may be made in the pursuance of good lives for the citizens. This is owed to the fact that where corruption fester, it must always create an advantaged group and a disadvantaged, which will ultimately connote ethnic interpretations for lack and powerlessness amongst the disadvantaged group. This connotation grows into an overwhelming ethnic consciousness, that further develops into ethnic mobilization, that may develop hate and degenerate into violence, as such, it harms the drive towards achieving nationhood in the country. Irrefutably, this paper is not in the slightest conclusive. Instead, it is a whetstone to sharpen the appetite for more research. There is an overwhelming need to conduct more studies on how groups and ethnic consciousness are constructed within geographical and political contexts, the various underlying and perceivable meanings attached to group actions and interrelations. A practicable inroad towards studying this group relations, would suggest a look into how mundane activities develop into altruistic consciousness and sometimes atrocious violence. Thus, a comparative study of various societies on a micro sociological context would be invaluable.

Conflict of interest statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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