Public Goods and Ethnocultural Diversity: A Case of Nigeria

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my own research. It contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any university.

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10/11/2016
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my family, whose unwavering support made the production of this thesis so much easier, and my supervisor, Benjamin Reilly, whose comments allowed me to produce this study to the highest level possible. Any errors and flaws which remain at the time of printing are mine.
Abstract

Ethnic and other cultural diversity has become something of an ideological holy of holies in Western societies. However, in spite of idealistic shibboleths surrounding the concept, academic literature broadly supports the contention that ethnocultural diversity is negatively correlated with public goods provision, political stability, economic growth and the like. As such, a broad reexamination of diversity’s inherent desirability is necessary. This paper takes a two-pronged approach by conducting a critical review of relevant literature, and cross-referencing it with the case study of Nigeria. Whilst multicultural “settler societies” such as the USA or Canada boast a number of fundamental differences to postcolonial, “primordially” diverse societies such as Nigeria, the latter nonetheless offers a number of generalizable lessons which can be broadly applied to Western statecraft and policy making as well. Broadly speaking, an analysis of Nigeria provides considerable circumstantial evidence to support the academic consensus on ethnocultural diversity, and allows one to conceptually link big-picture, longitudinal studies with micro-level studies. At the same time, it provides considerable nuance to those broad conclusions, indicating that even though ethnocultural diversity is broadly correlated with lower levels of public goods provision, precise causes for this state of affairs tend to differ and diversity is far from the be-all, end-all of political instability, low levels of development and the like.
Introduction

Recently, “diversity” has become a buzzword in the Western world. The advent of multiculturalism has turned it from a neutral description of objective reality into a blueprint for a supposedly functional social and political system. Supporters defend multiculturalism, claiming it entails a sense of ‘shared national belonging and respect for diversity’, as well as common values, equality of opportunity, freedom of cultural expression and conscience.\(^1\) The desirability of ethnic and other social diversity is the conceptual, ideological and empirical foundation of the pro-diversity discourse. Therefore, determining its consequences is not a purely academic exercise, but is pressing from the policy making perspective as well. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the reevaluation of this policy by answering two major questions. The first is to establish the causal relationship between ethnic and other social diversity and good governance, economic growth, political stability and public security. To this end, I will conduct a critical review of relevant literature. The second part of the study will cross-reference the scholarly findings with a case study of multiethnic, multicultural Nigeria, which is famous for high levels of political corruption, developmental and economic crises and political instability. As such, the second major query is whether Nigeria’s problems are driven by some universal, diversity-related dynamic, historically contingent, localized issues or a combination of those factors.

If one accepts the basic premises of the pro-diversity discourse, the more varied and diverse the country, the better-off it should be. However, even though Nigeria is a veritable microcosm of social, linguistic and cultural diversity, it plainly contradicts this basic assertion. It encompasses three major ethnic groups (the Ibo, the Yoruba and the Hausa), in addition to numerous minorities, two major religions (Christianity and Islam, in addition to a number of minority creeds and traditional beliefs), four major languages (English, Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa, in addition to a myriad of local dialects) and a complex history of local

political structures, British colonial influences and post-independence crises. However, it is beset by religious strife, ethnic conflict, spectacular disproportions in wealth distribution, a history of persistent economic downturns and endemic corruption. All those issues severely inhibit the provision of public goods.

Public goods refer to a broad number of concepts and phenomena, which are used collectively, belong to no one exclusively and remain available even to free riders, even though in an ideal model all users will contribute to their generation. They are divided into three major categories. The first of them are “pure” public goods, which can be used by anybody without diminishing it for anyone else (such as public security or scientific discoveries). The second type are “network” public goods, which become stronger and offer increasing utility as the number of users increases (languages and cultures are a prominent example). “Rival” public goods are the last type. They are defined by their finite nature, which means their availability decreases with each user (housing, transport infrastructure and the like are good examples). In the ideal model the level of individual contribution directly influences the quality and quantity of the public good on offer. From this perspective, political stability, public safety and good governance can be considered “pure” public goods, whereas economic development can be either “pure” or “rival”, depending on the budget available, political culture and the like. Indeed, I shall argue that patronage networks, described in detail in the second part of the study, make economic development in Nigeria highly “rivalrous”, which contributes to the country’s perennial instability. Moreover, the above four are preconditions for the provision of all other public goods.

Granted, post-colonial and, to some extent, primordially ethnoculturally diverse societies such as Nigeria boast a number of fundamental differences to long-standing settler societies such as Australia or the United States. Settler societies were originally built by mostly white, European migrants, who came there to improve their lot in life, bringing their own cultural values and political systems with them and building the new societies on those foundations. As a consequence, settler societies developed in an organic way over extended periods of time, which gave them the time to iron out the differences between various migrant groups and establish a fundamentally cohesive society, at least until the advent of multiculturalism as

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a normative ideology. Conversely, the same process has never occurred in post-colonial states such as Nigeria wherein borders were drawn rather arbitrarily, almost overnight merging drastically different and, on occasion, historically antagonistic groups into a single polity. As such, basic trajectories of both kinds of state bear considerable differences, and methods of social consolidation and state building which apply to one do not necessarily work in the other. However, both the post-settler, multicultural societies and “primordially” diverse societies share one key common denominator – ethnocultural diversity. As such, bearing the above caveats in mind, Nigeria still offers a number of lessons broadly applicable to developed multicultural societies as well.
Social Diversity: The Theory

A limited analysis of the United States and Canada conducted several years ago suggests that ‘there is no evidence of a negative effect from multicultural policies and some limited evidence for a positive effect, but only in the first generation.'³ This conclusion is rather non-committal and unsatisfying, as it ignores the question of whether the host populations are affected in the same way, and what the long-term consequences are. Likewise, the above claim does not take under consideration the specificities of sundry ethnic and cultural groups, instead lumping them together into a sweeping category of ‘immigrants’. Cultures are not necessarily cognate; they can be defined as sets of normative values and behavioural heuristics shared by a group large enough to make them into a norm. Those normative underpinnings can and do differ wildly across cultures. Theoretically, when two or more such different value systems attempt to coexist in the same political space, the probability of misunderstanding and conflict increases, both in “primordial” and settler societies, especially if the latter make it a point to preserve immigrant cultures rather than promote assimilation. This, in turn, may generate instability, lack of social trust and, in extreme cases, individual and collective physical clashes. Granted, ideological differences, ethnic politics as well as a lack of social cohesion are not the only indicators of violent conflict, as low levels of economic development and government incompetence are critical as well.⁴ Nonetheless, the former three are a significant part of this primordial mélange. As a corollary, two or more cultures which share the same core ideas and values are, theoretically, more likely to coexist in peace, both in multicultural settler societies and “primordial” communities. If those basic assumptions are correct, the relationship between ethnic and other social diversity and public security is not binary, and depends more on the alignment of values and loyalties than it does on the mere existence of multiple cultures in the same geographic space. These theoretical assertions will be tested in the case of Nigeria.

Part 1: Diversity: The Academic Consensus

A survey of relevant literature significantly contradicts the idealistic shibboleths concerning diversity. La Porta et al. (1999) and Alesina et al. (2003), amongst others, indicate ethnic diversity is negatively correlated with infrastructure and educational attainment, but positively correlated with child mortality. According to Dayton-Johnson (2000), canal (a useful shorthand for public goods) maintenance is negatively correlated with ethnic diversity and unequal land distribution. The same dynamic seems to hold true in Pakistan, where project maintenance is negatively correlated with ethnic, tribal and religious fragmentation. Collier and Garg (1998) indicate that, in Ghana, ethnic fragmentation tends to lead to rent-seeking behaviour and nepotistic hiring practices in public sector. In addition, unless this tendency is countered through uncompromisingly enforced legislation, kin hires tend to extract higher wages, which leaves less budget available for public goods provision.\(^5\) Easterly and Levine (1997) argue that whilst ethnic diversity is far from being the be-all, end-all of public policy and economic growth, it exerts a strong negative influence on them. Consequently, ethnic diversity does not automatically limit growth, but may generate policies which adversely affect economic development.\(^6\) In another study, Easterly (2001) asserts that negative effects of ethnic diversity can be mitigated or averted with well-developed institutions, though it is unclear which negative effects he is referring to, or how institutions can be effectively developed in a multi-ethnic context. Barr (2001) demonstrates that collective action and social trust are less effective and arithmetically more modest in ethnically diverse Zimbabwean villages, as opposed to more homogenous communities. Collier (2000) argues that high levels of ethnocultural diversity create a danger of a shift from performance politics to identity politics, with accountability based on economic and political performance taking the back seat to sectarian divisions.\(^7\) Likewise, Easterly, Alesina et al. (2003) show that linguistic and ethnic fragmentation is inversely correlated with per capita GDP and economic growth.\(^8\) What remains to be settled,

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\(^{7}\) Collier, “Ethnicity, Politics, and Economic Performance”.

However, is whether low GDP is caused directly by fragmentation, or whether poor economic performance drives fragmentation. This author would argue that the relationship may well be a self-sustaining positive feedback loop, with its starting point depending on the kind of society we are dealing with. The economies of countries which begin ethnically fragmented, such as Nigeria and Sudan, are likely to be adversely affected by the pre-existing ethnopolitical issues, as will be demonstrated in the next part of the study. On the other hand, countries which start off more or less homogenous but later acquire sizeable minorities may struggle with assimilating them into their economic systems, which slows economic growth. Conversely, the authors claim there doesn’t seem to be a negative correlation between religious fragmentation and the quality of government. However, this assertion requires two clarifications. First of all, absence of correlation tells us nothing about the objective quality of said governments. Likewise, in case of quality governance it may well be the case that religious diversity forces the authorities to govern in a way that irons out potential religious conflict. The exact causal relationship remains to be discovered, though.

When exploring the relationship between ethnicity, governance and public security one caveat must be borne in mind. Ethnicity is a highly contested concept, based on criteria such as language, culture, race, and self-identification. Likewise, “ethnicity” can exist for extended periods of time, but its nature can change. For instance, the division between the Hutu and the Tutsi in what is now Rwanda had existed for centuries, but was quite fluid. A successful Hutu could become a member of the Tutsi “aristocracy”, and a failed Tutsi could be “demoted” to Hutu. The Belgian authorities, however, introduced a system of ethnic identification which ended up unwittingly consolidating ethnic identity and encouraging exploitation of the Hutu on the Tutsis’ part. This is not to assign blame for the Rwandan genocide of 1995 solely to the Belgian colonisers, as the native Rwandans were still fully accountable for their actions, but this case illustrates the mutable nature of ethnicity and its possible grim consequences. As a corollary, some scholars believe that preferences for public policies depend largely on ethnic identity, largely constructed though it may be. For instance, preference for job-generating policies in Nigeria seems to differ between the three major ethnic groups (59 per cent for the Igbo, 47 per cent for the Yoruba and only 37 per cent for the Hausa). Others claim ethnic diversity leads to socioeconomic inequalities because of ethnic nepotism, but

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9 Ibid
that the core preferences remain largely the same across all the ethnic groups in each society.

In order to test these propositions, Lieberman et al. (2012) examined several ethnicities split between different countries (the Yoruba divided between Nigeria and Benin, the Chewa inhabiting Malawi and Zambia, and the Luos spread across Kenya and Uganda). Their basic assumption was that if preferences were caused by ethnic identities, the former would be consistent across the borders. They discovered that ethnic identity is a strong factor in policy preference, albeit not the only one. As a corollary, the differences between public policy preferences appear to differ depending on ethnicity in a number of other cases, though factors such as socioeconomic conditions, gender, education, level of access to information, political awareness and the like contribute, too. Still, even though the above factors were statistically significant in terms of policy preference, ethnic identity was the most powerful of them.

Social polarization is strongly correlated with bad policies and slow development. Whilst many paths lead to polarisation, ethnic diversity appears to be positively correlated with corruption and ethnic patronage, which themselves can lead to polarization. Ethnic diversity accounts for about 28 per cent of the policies adapted in ethnically fragmented countries, which in turn are largely responsible for the difference in growth between East Asia and Africa. Each group uses the common resources to benefit only themselves without instituting policies capable of replenishing said resource. For instance, in post-independence Kenya, presidential candidates received the greatest majority of support in regions inhabited by their tribal countrymen. Tribal fragmentation also has a profound effect on the provision of public goods such as roads and health care. Whenever a member of a given tribe (Moi, Kalenjin, and the like) came to power, their tribal lands would be given disproportionate attention and investment, at the expense of the losers, thus resulting in disproportionate development and ethnically-based resentment.

A large body of empirical research on the USA seems to replicate some of these conclusions in the developed world, though there is no direct evidence that those findings are universally applicable. According to it, public goods provision is noticeably inferior in ethnically fragmented American communities, which bear higher expenses on average, yet provide

11 Ibid
12 Ibid
13 Easterly and Levine, “Africa’s Growth Tragedy”.
14 Ibid.
fewer public goods. New York and Los Angeles have to constantly deal with issues of racial fragmentation and conflict, but they also rate high on innovation in arts and business, to name a few. As such, circumstantial evidence suggests that even though ethnic or racial diversity may pose a distinct set of problems, it can either contribute to innovation or at least do not interfere with it in a decisive manner. Likewise, social spending is much lower in the more racially and ethnically diverse USA than it is in European countries boasting comparable socioeconomic development levels. Still, the above might have more to do with differing cultural values than with diversity per se, as the US culture generally stresses autonomy, financial and otherwise, and invention more than ideological notions of social solidarity.

However, there are several notable alternate explanations of the relationship between ethnic and other social diversity and the form societies take. Diversity apparently is beneficial to the overall production function of a given society, even though it does not include the cost, such as cultural differences, linguistic difficulty, and the like. O’Reilly, Williams and Barsade (1997) indicate that higher levels of heterogeneity generate more conflict and communication problems, but also higher productivity in richer economies. However, as an experiment by Habyarimana et al. (2007) indicates, people may be more willing to share resources with co-ethnics than with other ethnolinguistic communities. Alberto et al. (2005) suggest that if production variety is possible without sharing public goods, defined groups may prefer to establish smaller jurisdictions to take advantage of their homogenous autarky. Additionally, limited empirical data from Kenya suggests social sanctions appear to be more effective if imposed from within groups than from outside. If the same dynamics hold true in larger communities and broader political contexts, the implications would be profound, as whenever standards and sanctions of the broader national community and the ones emanating from within groups contradict each other, the latter would prevail. Likewise, if all the above premises are accurate, they demonstrate a dynamic wherein ethnic groups have a distinct preference to form closed, self-sufficient communities with their fellow ethnics. At worst,

17 Ibid
18 In this case, ‘production variety’ means a basic, functional socioeconomic system.
19 Ibid
20 The original data deals with educational institutions, so extrapolations do not necessarily apply to different institutional contexts.
this dynamic may translate into ghettoization and secessionism. The history of the Nigerian Civil War provides limited evidence to support this assertion, and will be explored in more detail in part two of this study. By the same token, this proposition needs to be tested in further research.

Wimmer (2015) provides an alternate explanation. According to his study, public goods provision and the quality of governance aren’t directly influenced by ethnic diversity. Rather, all three are a product of long-term patterns of state formation. The ideal model suggested is as follows: favourable climate permits effective agriculture, which, in turn, makes high population densities possible. High population densities, when combined with favourable geographies, result in state formation. When the same dynamic occurs among neighbouring peoples, a propensity for conflict develops, thus forcing further consolidation of rival states and homogenization of their peoples, which, in turn, forces the state to develop public goods (such as education and infrastructure) provision networks in order to remain competitive.

Thus, ethnolinguistic homogeneity does not improve public goods provision – rather, they are both products of the long-term historical process, and do not affect each other in meaningful ways. For instance, France used to be divided into dozens of local identities until the 17th century. Around that time, France had become centralised enough as a state to develop national and cultural infrastructure as a matter if policy, thus ironing out local identities and further homogenising the country. In other words, the correlation between public goods provision and ethnolinguistic diversity is a mere accident of history, and the true underlying cause for both are long-term patterns of state formation.

The model, if accurate, throws the usual explanations of Western colonialism being the root cause of instability and poverty out of the window. The effects of colonialism would be relevant only inasmuch as they affected the legacy of statehood. Long-term factors are critical, as early state formation allows for the creation of institutions and the time to iron out their flaws, master techniques of public goods provision and become a fixture in public perception. Ethnolinguistic diversity may or may not support or impede state formation, as seen by the examples of Botswana and Somalia. The former is one of the most stable states in Africa, whereas the latter remains in a state of perpetual civil war, even though both enjoy


22 Ibid
high levels of ethnolinguistic homogeneity. Since the process of homogenization had been present in pre-colonial Africa, and was continued or even accelerated under the colonial governments, it would follow that Western empires could not have been responsible for arresting this dynamic. As the second part of the study will demonstrate, the case of Nigeria broadly supports one aspect of Wimmer’s theory, but provides limited evidence against another.

Likewise, Habyarimana, Macartan, Posner and Weinstein (2007) find no evidence that ethnic diversity adversely affects core preferences for public goods. In a series of empirical experiments conducted in a Kampala slum, they had people of differing ethnicities participate in a number of games to discover whether cooperation, generosity and preferences for public policies differ between homogenous and heterogeneous teams. The anonymous dictator game indicated individuals are, on average, as generous towards other ethnicities as they are to their fellow ethnics. If representative of broader trends, this would indicate that the mere presence of ethnic diversity, even in highly impoverished conditions (the neighbourhood of Kampala where the experiment took place is the most underdeveloped and impoverished of all), is not enough to stimulate violent conflict. Another game required randomly assigned individuals to cooperate in order to solve a puzzle, but there appears to have been no difficulty in communication and solve ratio, despite the players’ differing ethnolinguistic backgrounds. This would suggest that ethnocultural diversity does not necessarily impede basic, micro-level collective action.

Several major objections can be raised about the general applicability of Habyarimana et al.’s conclusions. As noted above, the area of Kampala all participants came from is the most impoverished of all. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, human beings require a number of things to achieve optimal quality of life. Basic survival is the foundation of all others, meaning that culture-related preferences will come into play only once basic physical needs are met.

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23 Ibid
24 In a game of Dictator, one player receives a fixed amount of money which he can than either share with other players, or take all the cash instead. The remaining players have to acquiesce to the ‘dictator’s’ decision. At the end of each turn, another player becomes the ‘dictator’ and the cycle repeats. The game has been used by social and political scientists to test individual and group behaviour.
requirements have been satisfied. Since the Kampala slum’s denizens had just to scrape by, it is safe to assume the seeds of preference-based conflict might have been there, but had yet to come to the fore since the participants were concerned with daily survival. As such, it would be a good idea to conduct comparable tests in non-impoverished neighbourhoods boasting comparable levels of ethnocultural diversity in order to support or rebut this possibility. As a notable corollary, there was a distinct shift in favour of co-ethnics when the games were no longer anonymous. If the same dynamic translates into the broader world of politics, it becomes evident that politicians would favour their fellow ethnics through increased public goods provision at the expense of other groups. This is broadly consistent with the Kenyan findings. Finally, there is no obvious evidence that the case of Kampala is a representative sample of interethnic relations everywhere and at all times. As such, it would be advisable to conduct comparable tests in a number of municipalities and countries to see if a broader pattern emerges.

In another study, Wimmer (2015) indicates that ethnic inequality and exclusion (as opposed to diversity per se) hamper political stability, economic growth and public goods provision. He stresses the significance of internal factors, as a lengthy imperial legacy does not appear to be correlated with high levels of ethnic exclusion. Likewise, exposure and affiliation with the new globalized order appears to only minimally affect the levels of ethnic inclusion. The key example quoted is Switzerland, an ethnolinguistically diverse country which has nonetheless managed to build a stable, prosperous nation well integrated into the global system. Wimmer argues that effective provision of basic public goods (security, infrastructure, economic growth and the like) can allow citizens to build alliances and connections between different ethnic groups, as opposed to clientelist patterns of public goods provision. It can be argued, however, that Switzerland’s success is produced largely by the fact that all three major ethnolinguistic groups are culturally cognate to a significant extent, and share comparable histories of statehood and socio-political development. As a consequence, Switzerland does not reach the levels of diversity correlated with conflict. Likewise, the study does not explore the possibility of an ethnolinguistic group making a demand unacceptable to others, which is one of the major drivers of ethnocultural conflict in Nigeria, and will be explored in detail in the second part of this study. Besides, the theory is

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26 Ibid
still preliminary and highly impressionistic, as the dataset which demonstrates its basic validity is self-confessedly limited and incomplete. As such, it must be taken with a grain of salt, but it represents a testable explanation of the relationship between public goods provision and ethnolinguistic diversity.

Collier (2000) offers a different theory. He concludes the relationship between ethnic diversity and political violence combined with poor economic growth is akin to a bell-curve, in that the countries most predisposed to ethnic violence are the one which occupy the mid-range of ethnic diversity. As a consequence, extreme fragmentation and extreme homogeneity apparently produce stability, as high fragmentation makes the formation of unified rebel outfits increasingly difficult. Importantly, most developing countries occupy the peak of the “hump”. Also, low income is positively correlated with a high risk of rebellion/civil war, and high levels of diversity on both local and national levels are correlated with prevalence of identity politics. In other words, countries with low income, no political rights/representation and mid-range fragmentation are the ones most likely to experience a bout of civil war. Good governance and public goods provision, however, are not cognate with the lack of political violence, even though they may overlap in specific cases. As such, the weaknesses of Collier’s theory are that he does not explore the relationship between extreme levels of diversity, social trust and the quality of governance. Even if extreme fragmentation may bring ‘stability’ of sorts, it is not at all clear that it would generate quality policies comparable with those of a unitary society. Likewise, a ‘stable’ state is not necessarily prosperous or blessed with high levels of social trust. Finally, the nature of the ethnic groups is arguably important, as demonstrated by the case of Switzerland, which occupies a spot close to the top of the ‘hump’, yet remains both stable and prosperous.

To summarize, whilst many other factors go into successful governance and public goods provision, very high levels of ethnic diversity do not appear to be universally beneficial, and the nature of the groups is a significant factor as well. The above may be linked to the ongoing pro-multiculturalism discourse, since some scholars believe pursuing multicultural policies serves to increase social cohesion by ensuring the security of minority groups (Duyvendak, Pels, Rijkschroeff, 2009; Borevi, 2013; Entzinger, 2013). This, in turn, allows the society to retain a key aspect of public safety while fulfilling an ideological imperative. However, if Collier’s assertions are correct, a country which aims to produce a multicultural society will still have to pass through the potentially violent ‘hump’, which makes the probability of societal and political collapse far higher than it would be in a consistently homogenous society. This would be broadly consistent with the assertions of scholars critical
of multiculturalism who assert that artificially maintained differences will only turn national communities into ‘clusters of tribes’ (Blainey, 1984; Gitlin, 1995; Miller, 1995; Scheffer, 2000; Goodhart, 2004; Huntington, 2004), thus decreasing social safety due to the emergence of competing social and cultural mores as well as potentially contradictory political loyalties. The ‘clusters of tribes’ appear to be another name for the ‘hump’ phenomenon postulated by Collier.

Nigeria provides a useful example to test many of the above proposition for several reasons. First of all, its size and complexity make it a “bridge” of sorts between the macro, big-picture studies which deal with broad correlations, and micro-level studies, which tend to fail to prove their broader applicability. Sa such, Nigeria allows one both to test broader hypotheses such as the ones postulated by Collier and Wimmer, and discern specific causal relationships. Second, Nigeria is a veritable microcosm of all the relevant issues, such as cultural, ethnic and religious diversity and complex historical legacies. As such, it could be argued that, in spite of it being a product of specific historical contingencies, it also offers a number of generalizable lessons. Finally, contrary to so many inconsequential African statelets, Nigeria is worth examining for its own sake, as it boasts the potential to become a true powerhouse if it ever overcomes its many problems.
Part 2: Nigeria and Its Problems

What is today Nigeria bore witness to complex developments before the arrival of Europeans. The natural environment of Nigeria is hostile to human habitation, earning it the title of ‘white man’s grave’ during the colonial times. Whilst the indigenous population are better adjusted to those conditions, struggle over better land defined much of the relations between over two hundred tribes speaking over a hundred languages. As a consequence, the Yoruba established something resembling a proto-nation-state and subjugated their neighbors through conquest and diplomacy. The northern groups adopted Islam as a result of contacts with merchants from northern Africa and the Middle East and a Fulani jihad shortly before the advent of the Europeans. The Ibo ran a network of independent city states and dominated other groups through commercial acumen rather than might. By the time the first European traders from Portugal appeared, a patchwork of city states and minor empires had emerged. However, the local state structures eventually decayed as a result of corruption among their elites and infighting, thus setting indigenous tribes and proto-nations for the fall. The British took control over what is today Nigeria in the 19th century. The conquest, conducted through a combination of military might and deft diplomacy, occurred in two parts – southern Nigeria was steadily taken from 1850 to 1897, whereas the Muslim-dominated north submitted by 1914. At the outset of British domination of the region, Lord Lugard struck a deal with Northern Islamic rulers, gaining their support for leaving their customs (including Sharia law and religious education) mostly unchanged. As a consequence, the North remained ignorant and underdeveloped, whereas the Western and Eastern Nigeria enjoyed the benefits of a broad, secular education which translated into relatively greater accomplishment. This imbalance generated significant political tensions, which will be explored in more detail in the next part of this study. The political colonial entity which would later become Nigeria was established the same year.

One legacy of British colonialism in particular stands in the way of effective public goods provision. As the British advanced inland, they incorporated vast swathes of territory

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30 Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (Greenwood Press, 1999), 1-54.
inhabited by culturally diverse people with no shared history of statehood. As a result, when the British granted independence to their former subjects, ‘Nigeria’ existed only on paper and not in the hearts and minds of its inhabitants. In many ways, it was the functional equivalent of annexing Bulgaria, Turkey and Egypt and later granting them independence as a unitary state. The three major groups had had different statehood experiences, as the Yoruba had run something resembling an empire, the Hausa had established Islamic emirates whereas the Ibo had operated a loose network of nation-states. This, in addition to historical antagonisms and the lack of common national identity would present an obstacle to security and political stability. In Europe, a semblance of common identity had been established before the formal creation of nation states, but in the case of Nigeria the dynamic was reversed. The nation-state was established by fiat, and common national identity has yet to catch up.\(^{31}\) Likewise, the system of indirect rule instituted by the British relied largely on appointing indigenous rulers and preserving local customs, many of which were inimical to development. This problem was especially acute in the North, as indicated above.\(^{32}\) As a consequence, the case of Nigeria is broadly consistent with Wimmer’s thesis about the relationship between organic state formation and public goods provision. Moreover, Nigeria appears to fall into the middle of the violent “hump” postulated by Collier (2000), as it is too ethnoculturally diverse to reach homogenous stability, but not divided enough to make the formation of organized factions impossible.

Indeed, regionalism has been a defining problem of Nigerian governance since independence. The threat of domination by other ethnic groups remains the bogeyman of Nigeria’s peoples, especially the minorities. The same fear has also contributed to serious administrative problems during general Mohammad’s regime, as many ethnic groups struggled to obtain states of their own to receive as much of the ‘national cake’ as possible, as services and revenues were to be distributed on the state rather than purely numerical basis.\(^{33}\) Economically, Nigeria has been a long-standing ‘rentier state’, deriving much of its income from oil extraction since mid-1960s, which makes it susceptible to global price fluctuations. It also discourages the development of indigenous service sector. Furthermore, prebendalism, or turning public offices into tools of self-aggrandisement, originated in pre-independence Nigeria and continued into the First Republic period, but it was taken to new extremes by a

\(^{31}\) Ibid, 60.
\(^{32}\) This point will be explored in the next parts of this study.
\(^{33}\) Osaghae, *Crippled Giant*, 7, 76, 86.
succession of military governments. However, Eghosa (1998) argues that prebendalism, ethnic politics, poor governance and the like do not fully explain the accelerated political and economic decline of 1980s and 1990s. According to the author, self-serving attitudes of foreign governments and businesses (including the Western ones) supposedly kept Nigeria in a peripheral state. However, whilst there is no doubt that states and businesses pursue their self-interests first and foremost, they are far from all-powerful. None of Nigeria’s woes would have been possible if not for the venality and incompetence of a succession of governments, military or otherwise. Arguably, competent and visionary governments could have used Nigeria’s oil wealth to generate its own well-educated workforce, productive industry and competitive services, thus becoming a significant player in its own right. The fact that virtually every government since the end of the civil war was so malleable suggests an internal problem. Moreover, military and civilian governments during the First and Second Republics lacked the vision and competence to generate sustainable growth. They used the funds obtained as a result of the oil boom to fund spectacular projects such as new universities and the current capital of Abuja, but did so primarily to spread their influence, preserve and expand patronage networks and pander to the locals rather than as a part of consistent vision. This was true for both the national and state governments.

After a succession of military governments, six regions were established (South-East, South-South, South-West, North-East, North-Central and North-West) to ensure no interest group would seize complete power, with most important governmental positions rotated between them. However, this still left a number of minorities, especially the ones in the Niger Delta, squeezed between the major ethnic groups (the Yoruba, the Ibo and the Hausa/Fulani), with a sense of alienation. This was one of the major reasons for the subsequent insurgency (examined in detail in the next parts of this study), as local politicians would (unofficially) sponsor militias blowing up oil installations and kidnapping foreign workers to force the Abuja government to share power with them. They would then use their position to maintain their patronage networks.

Finally, Nigeria is beset by a set of endemic problems which have nothing to do with ethnic and other social diversity. Traditional societies remains profoundly irrational, attributing bad policy, lack of economic growth and the like to gods and impersonal forces of evil rather than

34 Ibid, 28-29, 50, 311.
empirically verifiable dynamics.\textsuperscript{37} Whilst the precise degree of social credulity is unclear, it remains a testable proposition that, if prevalent, perception of events in purely or mostly religious terms is likely to divert the populace from real underlying dynamics of violence and corruption. Likewise, Nigerian medical facilities and services are still grossly inadequate. On average, there is only one hospital bed for 900,000 persons, and the ratio of doctors to population is 1:16,000. Child mortality is high, as one out of twenty-one babies dies, a globally significant figure. Blindness, malaria and meningitis are common, and are especially dangerous due to insufficient medical facilities. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that much of the populace remains ignorant of medical advances and subscribes to various superstitions, which prevents many Nigerians from even seeking medical assistance.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{37} Toyin Falola, \textit{Culture and Customs of Nigeria} (Greenwood Press, 2001), 29-34, 48-49.  
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 14-15.
2.1 Political Stability and Ethnic Diversity

Political instability epitomised by a succession of coups and ethnic conflicts defined much of Nigeria’s history.\(^{39}\) Clashes between tribes were a regular occurrence in the period between the end of the Second World War and independence.\(^{40}\) As of the time of writing (2016), religious conflict is ever present, with pressures from Muslim groups to introduce Sharia law, and a number of radical Islamist factions. Likewise, ethnic tensions underpinned Nigeria’s politics during the brief period of the First Republic democracy, which culminated in the civil war of 1967-70. To clarify, the unpopular government of Chief Akintola used anti-Ibo rhetoric to remain in power and to distract the populace from more pressing internal problems, such as endemic corruption. His warnings of ‘Ibo Empire’ were unwittingly borne out by a coup against the (largely Hausa/Fulani) elites of the First Republic, whom the plotters (mostly Ibo military officers) perceived as corrupt and nepotistic. Expending Ibo influence was not the purpose of the coup; rather, the Ibo had been greatly over-represented in the pre-war and pre-independence Nigerian military. However, it occurred within the context of regional politics, with the Hausa-Fulani Northerners, Ibo Easterners and Yoruba Westerners forming the most influential factions, and mistrusting one another.\(^{41}\) As a consequence, even though the coup targeted politicians perceived as corrupt, Northerners were disproportionally represented among its victims.\(^{42}\)

The coup thus unwittingly fuelled conspiracy theories about ‘Ibo plots’, which would play a major role in the conflict’s escalation. The surviving government handed over power to General Ironsi (himself an Ibo), who would head an Ibo-dominated government in the aftermath. He decided to force through a unified political system, turning Nigeria from a federation into a unitary republic. This attempt to impose unity by fiat, however, inflamed fears among various tribes that their traditional ways of life were threatened, and that a new system would mean greater competition for high government posts, which the North (whose educational attainment was the lowest in the country as a result of, among others, insufficient number of schools and a highly conservative Islamic culture) was bound to lose. Tensions run

\(^{39}\) Falola, *Culture and Customs of Nigeria*, 21-25.
\(^{41}\) Falola, *Culture and Customs of Nigeria*, 21.
\(^{42}\) Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (Public Affairs, 2000), 13.
high, resulting in a number of highly-publicised Ibo massacres in the North, with body count as high as 100,000.\textsuperscript{43} Things escalated from there, with Ironsi assassinated by Northern officers and the Ibo attempting to secede and form their own state of Biafra, rich in oil reserves. This triggered the civil war which would consume over a million lives, the majority of them Ibo. Even though the war had a strong economic overtone, as the secessionist state of Biafra boasted massive oil reserves and was thus too important for Lagos to lose, it would never have began without the combination of regional rivalries and ethnic clashes.\textsuperscript{44}

From the diversity perspective, two major conclusions can be drawn from this case. First of all, “ethnic hatreds” did not start the conflict – rather, ethnic tensions underpinned much of Nigeria’s politics and were inflamed to breaking point as a consequence of the coup. Second, taking the above caveat under consideration, ethnic and cultural diversity nonetheless played a significant part in starting the conflict. This author would argue that cultural values are not merely the cherry on top of civilizational cake; rather, they inform the actions of their carriers, thus indirectly shaping the environment in which they live. As a consequence, drastically different cultural practices may result in significant differences in socioeconomic attainment. It was indeed a case in Nigeria, as cultural differences between the North and the South had resulted in different educational attainment and thus uneven socioeconomic prospects in a unitary state, and ethnic identity politics permitted for Ibo scapegoating. In other words, the consequences of competing cultural values and practices within the same political context set the stage for the conflict, with ethnicity being secondary and instrumentalized.

The so-called Second Republic (1979-1983) was born after a period of military dictatorship following the end of the civil war. In 1979, the military, after a series of coups and countercoups, handed over power to civilian authorities. However, the new Nigerian democracy survived only four years. As electoral fraud and widespread corruption weakened the foundation of the state, the army moved in and took power once more. This time, however, it enjoyed the support of the people tired of long-standing corruption and dysfunction. Still, the army was far larger than was necessary to defend the country. Its massive size was a result of the civil war wherein the military’s numbers swelled in order to

\textsuperscript{43} Osaghae, \textit{Crippled Giant}, 64-69.
\textsuperscript{44} Maier, \textit{This House Has Fallen}, 13; St. Jorre, \textit{The Nigerian Civil War}, 44-45, 60-64; Elizabeth Isichei, \textit{A History of Nigeria} (Longman, 1983), 468-479; Robert Collis, \textit{Nigeria in Conflict} (Secker & Warburg, 1970), 181-206.
regain control of the country. This, however, carried over to post-war order, and consumed disproportionate percentage of national expenditure, which could have otherwise contributed to public goods generation.\textsuperscript{45} As a consequence, the consequences of the army’s size unwittingly contributed to lower public goods provision.

A new constitution was adopted, which was based on the principle of federalism Ironsi had tried to eliminate. However, the new states were established with little regard to actual ethnic composition of given territories, which means numerous minorities ended up dissatisfied and underrepresented in the “new” federal state. Likewise, the major groups controlled most of the states, and fears of domination by the North remained endemic, thus promoting the formation of de facto ethnic parties and the prevalence of identity politics.\textsuperscript{46} As such, ethnic identity and socioeconomic factors mutually reinforced each other. As a consequence, this episode broadly supports the conclusions of Wimmer’s study. This period witnessed economic decline, political corruption, authoritarian politics as well as a rise in Jihadist activities in the North. National dysfunction reached its apex with the electoral fraud of 1983, which the military used as, along with gross economic mismanagement, as a pretext to seize power once more.

The triple regimes following the fall of the Second Republic were essentially variations on the same themes as Ironsi, Muhammed and Obasanjo’s regimes. Muhammad Buhari, who wielded power in the years 1983-1985, oversaw further economic decline and the fall of the middle class which had emerged in the decade following the civil war, thus moving Nigeria closer to the ‘civil war’ end of Collier’s (2000) spectrum. Political corruption ran rampant, as Buhari’s brutal regime used it as a tool of management. Even though his regime staged highly publicised trials of corrupt officials, the standards were inconsistent and the punishments had a distinctly ethnic flavour, as the Southerners were punished far more severely for the same crimes.\textsuperscript{47} The greatest problem, however, was a lack of consistent vision on the part of the military. The vast majority of its measures were haphazard and substituted accuracy for speed and decisiveness. Likewise, its application of economic measures was highly selective, as the army never lacked funds for ever more expansive projects. Whether it was driven by cynical opportunism or mere myopia is of little consequence; one way or another, it cost the Army

\textsuperscript{45} Falola, \textit{The History of Nigeria}, 7-12.
\textsuperscript{46} Osaghae, \textit{Crippled Giant}, 115-117.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 175.
much of its legitimacy. The above is significant from the perspective of this study, as it indicates that ethnic conflict was far from the sole “villain” responsible for bad policies during the military regimes. Rather, prevalent incompetence resulted in dysfunctional policies, which, in turn, were made more aggravating to the populace by ethnic politicking. Ibrahim Babangida’s reign of 1985-1993 exacerbated the economic decline, finishing of the middle class and increasing unemployment. As a consequence, Nigeria’s public safety fell to new lows, damaging its international reputation even further. General Sanni Abacha’s regime (1993-1998) continued this grim trend. He took the by-then proverbial Nigerian corruption to new heights, openly taking money from Nigeria’s Central Bank and privatising public property, which he and his cronies would then buy at dumping prices. The legacy of those two decades was a dysfunctional, corrupt, economically ravaged country internationally famous for its failures and shortcomings.48 To summarize, the fundamental problems of Nigeria’s post-civil war military governments were corruption, lack of vision and prevalent incompetence, with ethnocultural diversity playing a secondary, but not insignificant role.

2.2 Ethnocultural Cleavages and Public Security

The relationship between democracy, stability and ethnic diversity is arguably complex and highly contingent on local factors. States such as Canada or Belgium have been able to use democracy to channel ethnic tensions in a non-destructive way, whereas the ethnic conflicts in many African states or Sri Lanka, to name a few, have been exacerbated to a level making them impossible to be resolved via democratic process alone.\(^4^9\) Other relevant determinants are the level of cultural similarity between two or more ethnic groups, the causes and the nature of the process through which their territories became a single state, their history, and (in some cases) the existence of ethnic or religious supremacist movements (such as the Serbs in pre-WWII Yugoslavia, or radical Islamists in a number of contemporary countries). For these reasons, whilst ethnic diversity almost invariably generates challenges unheard of in ethnically homogenous societies, it merely creates a possibility of true strife. As such, even though Nigeria broadly supports the correlation between ethnic diversity and conflict, it is still necessary to examine these ethnic conflicts within their own context to determine whether they are driven by contingent and therefore surmountable factors, or whether they are far more fundamental and thus a permanent obstacle to public goods provision.

At the same time, whilst the mere existence of ethnic diversity is not a sufficient cause for strife, there is nonetheless a powerful correlation between ethnic diversity and internal conflict, especially if one of the constituent ethnic groups happens to be disproportionately successful, economically or politically. A classic example of this dynamic are the Ibo of Nigeria, who are sometimes referred to as the “Jews of Africa” due to their considerable commercial acumen, which transcends the boundaries of Nigeria, and the resulting economic power they wield in the region.\(^5^0\) However, it is an unfortunate aspect of human nature to experience jealousy of others. At best, it may stimulate effort to match the accomplishment of the successful party. However, at its worst jealousy, both individual and collective, reaches pathological levels and results in a backlash against the more successful party, regardless of


whether it is actually responsible for the weaker party’s shortcomings and failures. This
dynamic applies to both individuals and groups.

Nigeria is an example of this broad dynamic. The divide between the mostly
Christian/animist South and the Muslim-dominated North is one of the most serious in
Nigeria, as numerous Muslim leaders, including the moderate ones, have aggressively pushed
for Islamic legislation. The short-lived Second Republic saw a spike in jihadist activity in the
North, which was driven by a new variety of Islam created and promoted by a radical cleric,
Muhammadu Marwa. The conflict was driven by a characteristic combination of
uncompromising, hardliner leadership and poor socioeconomic conditions in the North which
generated a fertile recruitment pool. On a broader level, it was a manifestation of a long-term
rivalry and conflict between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. 51 Likewise, in 1999, several
Northern governors demanded the introduction of the Sharia law, the support of which is
believed to be a duty of true believers. This, however, further inflamed tensions. 52 Moreover,
this dynamic is aggravated by the fact that religion and politics are fused into an indivisible
whole in Islam, which rests on universalism and an expansionist imperative. 53 Extreme levels
of corruption and underdevelopment further contributed to those tensions, as did the fact that
the religious split largely overlaps with the ethnic one, as the majority of the Hausa are
Muslim, whereas the Christians advocating a secular state are overrepresented among the
Yoruba. 54

The incident in the city of Kaduna illustrates this broader principle and demonstrates the
possible consequences of two fundamentally incompatible viewpoints occupying the same
political space. Following the announcement that elements of Sharia would be introduced, the
radical Christian Association of Nigeria staged an illegal anti-Sharia demonstration, bearing
provocative banners. This resulted in a violent backlash from the Muslim community. The
subsequent clashes lasted for two days and claimed approximately two thousand lives until
the army restored order. 55 To make things worse, many of the Christian victims were Ibo,

51 Ibid, 130-132.
52 Maier, This House Has Fallen, 144-148, 165-176.
53 Rafal Krawczyk, Pieczej Mahometa: Islam jako system społeczno-gospodarczy (The Seal
54 Falola, Culture and Customs of Nigeria, 8-49.
55 Maier, This House Has Fallen, 146.
which resulted in violent counter-purges in the South. It was a case of a primarily religious conflict in the clothing of an ethnic one.

These tensions continue as of the time of writing (2016). The religious conflict is embodied by Boko Haram (also known as Wilayat al Sudan al Gharbi following its declaration of loyalty to the Islamic State), a well-organised, if somewhat divided Islamist organisation. It is highly secretive and enjoys significant support networks in north-eastern Nigeria, especially among the minority Kanuri ethnic group, which their leader Abubakar Shekau hails from. It receives financial support from other Islamist movements, such as al-Qaeda, and is suspected of receiving aid from a number of Nigerian Government members as a way of pressuring the central government for concessions.\(^{56}\) It has conducted some spectacular attacks throughout Nigeria, but its main stronghold are the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.\(^{57}\) In 2015, Boko Haram controlled significant swathes of territory in Northern Nigeria, including a number of towns in north-east, which made the state of Borno essentially ungovernable until the government counteroffensive in 2016. Even though it was eventually pushed out from most its gains, the Nigerian military had to contend with severe logistical problems, poor equipment and low morale, as several units outright refused to engage Boko Haram in battle.\(^{58}\) The problem is further compounded by the fact that Boko Haram is not the only jihadist outfit active in Nigeria, with Iran-sponsored Islamists also destabilising the country. The latter, however, is a part of the long-standing conflict between Israel and USA on one hand, and Iran on the other, as the Iran-sponsored outfits usually target USA and Israeli missions and organisations in Nigeria, rather than Abuja itself.\(^{59}\) The above case studies provide some evidence against Easterly and Levine’s (1997) claim that there is no correlation between religious fragmentation and the quality of government, as it was precisely religious fragmentation which made swathes of the North ungovernable. More precisely, on the basis of the above it could be argued that mutually exclusive sets of ideas, religious or otherwise, are unlikely to coexist in peace, especially if at least one of them boasts a universalist, expansionist message.

\(^{56}\) The relationship between patronage networks, support for rebel outfits and parliamentary politics will be explored in the next part of this thesis.

\(^{57}\) Stratfor, “Nigeria's Unsustainable Peace Deal with Boko Haram”, October 18, 2014;


Another significant example of ethnic conflict was the wars between the Jokun and the Tiv peoples, who inhabit the state of Taraba. Even though they have both coexisted in the same geographic space, the relations between them have changed substantially over the past hundred and fifty years or so. Initially, the relations between the two peoples were quite cordial, until the advent of the British who governed through the so-called Indirect Rule system, wherein they delegated authority to indigenous rulers to govern in their name. In case of the Tiv and the Jokun, however, the system backfired spectacularly. Aku Uka, the chief figure of the Jokun people, got the job, and was to govern both people in the name of the colonial overlords, but before long he and his successors began to abuse their power and influence. As a consequence, relations between the Tiv and the Jokun steadily deteriorated, reaching the level of outright hostility which occasionally erupted into minor civil wars, the most recent of which occurred in late 1990s and 2000s. This dynamic provides some evidence to support the broad contention that ethnic and cultural diversity undermines public safety and stability, just like the division between the Muslims and the Christians/Animists.60

This is just a case in point, however, as tensions between minor ethnicities and the Hausa/Fulani Muslim in the so-called Middle Belt which houses over half of Nigeria’s ethnic groups remain tense and flare up occasionally.61 At the same time, it also illustrates the mutable nature of ethnic relations, as the relationship between the Tiv and the Jokun is driven by historical factors rather than some primordial, fundamental incompatibility.

Several key conclusions can be drawn from the above cases. First of all, the broad academic consensus, while generally accurate, arguably misses some critical nuance, since what truly drives the North-South conflict is not cultural diversity per se, but long-term consequences of competing values and cultural imperatives. As a consequence, it could be argued that what really matters is not the raw number of cultures, but the convergence (or lack thereof) of values and imperatives. Second, even though those differences are the root cause of the conflict, vast socioeconomic disparities resulting from them can make recruitment far easier for ideological true believers. In a case of grim irony, impoverished masses may end up supporting the very ideologies which had made their poverty possible in the first place. Third, the much-overused concept of “ethnic hatreds” is highly relative, as the conflict between the

60 Maier, This House Has Fallen, 193-208.
61 Ibid, 208-225.
Tiv and the Jokun peoples is a product of historically contingent circumstances rather than some primordial hostility. Finally, the above cases studies offer some evidence to refute one aspect of Wimmer’s proposition, as in the case of Nigeria the negative consequences of ethnic diversity indeed appear to adversely affect both state formation and public goods provision, as opposed to his ideal model wherein diversity and public goods provision do not affect each other.
2.3 Economic Development

Effective provision of public goods is predicated on a healthy, competitive economy. On paper, Nigeria has all the necessary tools to fuel its growth and provide the required infrastructure. Its current population is approximately 180 million, and is projected to increase to 300 million (the rough equivalent of the population of the United States) by 2050.\textsuperscript{62} If properly educated and competitive, these yet-unborn Nigerians could be a power to reckon with, and might conceivably forge Nigeria into a pre- eminent power in Africa. Likewise, the country has significant oil reserves, which are responsible for approximately 40 per cent of its income.\textsuperscript{63} In 1970s, Nigeria became a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and its oil revenues allowed it to significantly expand the infrastructure, education and the like, though they are obsolete by now.\textsuperscript{64} However, a succession of governments squandered much of those revenues through inefficiency and corruption, producing increasing inequalities in the process. The 1970s oil boom was a pivotal moment, and, in retrospect, could have been used to kick-start Nigeria’s potential. However, General Gowon’s regime misused it. In spite of a massive increase in revenues, he invested them in greater salaries for civil servants and prestige activities, such as culture festivals and foreign aid to poorer African nations, rather than the expansion of competitive, productive capacity. National infrastructure was significantly expanded, but it did not translate into higher standards of living for the populace, and is already obsolete as of the time of writing. The twin regimes of Mohammed and Obasanjo would compound this mistake by spending oil revenue on imports without building up productive capacity capable of taking over.\textsuperscript{65}

In addition to short-sighted, incompetent governments, Nigeria suffers from extreme levels of corruption.\textsuperscript{66} If anything, no developing country embodies the adverse effect on public goods by corruption and dysfunctional government more than Nigeria. By 1998, Transparency

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid
\textsuperscript{64} Falola, \textit{The History of Nigeria}, 14-15.
\textsuperscript{65} Osaghae, \textit{Crippled Giant}, 78, 100-102.
\textsuperscript{66} Kingsley, “Nigeria”. 
International declared Nigeria to be the most corrupt country in the world due to the epic levels of economic looting by the contemporary governments. There is a finite amount of money in any economy, and public goods come with a price tag which cannot be covered if public funds are embezzled instead. Nigeria is a textbook example of such an internal dynamics and their consequences.67

Likewise, a functional judicial system and consistent application of the law are other public goods the lack of which is both a cause and a symptom of endemic corruption. As a consequence, Nigeria saw a succession of military regimes, many of which abrogated the rule of law entirely. This generated a frenzy of looting which effectively arrested development of the country and, by extension, the provision of public goods. The consequences were staggering – between 1960 and 1999, a succession of Nigerian governments expropriated USD440 billion which otherwise could have served to generate public goods.68 The dynamic is essentially a vicious cycle, as the lack of the rule of law contributes to underdevelopment, which, in turn, promotes corruption, preventing the rule of law from being effectively introduced and enforced.

As a consequence of corruption, incompetence and international sanctions per capita income decreased by 80 per cent since 1970s, in spite of the oil boom. Crime rates have risen as a result (both organized and petty). These problems are further exacerbated by relatively low foreign investment levels due to the country’s bad reputation, which leads to a vicious cycle – no investment means no revenue, no revenue means weak budget, weak budget means fewer public goods. This pushes many to a life of crime, which, in turn, preserves the bad reputation which made the problem so severe in the first place.69 The problem is further compounded by sundry rebel outfits operating in the oil-rich areas of Nigeria. The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) is representative of this trend, and has been targeting oil interests for decades now. Likewise, the Niger Delta Avengers attack foreign oil installations, severely curtailing production and hampering the Nigerian economy. Since much of Nigeria’s income depends on oil sales, the Delta rebels do not improve the locals’ lot


69 Falola, The History of Nigeria, p 16.
in any meaningful way, but limit the amount of resources available to the central government, thus making everyone in Nigeria worse off in the long run.\textsuperscript{70} However, corruption is not just a problem sui generis, but a product of social and cultural mores incompatible with modern nation building and good governance. Nigerian politicians, including those from the oil-rich Niger Delta, see the redistribution of resources and political power as a zero-sum game. This is further compounded by a deeply ingrained and historically prominent culture of patronage networks, wherein the socially dominant groups or individuals provide the weaker ones with resources, protection or status in exchange for loyalty and political support.\textsuperscript{71} The case of Alhaji Adegbeke Adelabu, a prominent late-colonial and post-colonial patron, illustrates the nature of the system. Adelabu built his political power using the uneducated, impoverished majority of Ibadan, capitalizing on their shared Islamic faith and uniting them against the ‘alien’ ethnic minorities. He eventually rose to the post of chairman of the Ibadan council, and used his new position to provide his ‘electorate’ with funds and resources from the state treasury. Lamidi Adedibu, an ally of Obafemi Awolowo, was another prominent patron, who used his economic influence to provide public goods (basic education, infrastructure, and the like) to his clients in the countryside.

This system contributes towards the tense situation in the Niger Delta. Nigerian government members have unofficially supported rebel outfits through patronage networks, using the former to force concessions from the central government, which allows them to strengthen and expand their local influence. To make things worse, the insurgent movements in the Delta region are split along ethnopolitical lines and have clashed in the past, further destabilising the region. The region entered a period of relative calm during the rule of Goodluck Jonathan as a consequence of an amnesty campaign ran by the president. However, a number of rebel outfits remain and may strike again in the future.\textsuperscript{72} Thus, these conflicts are driven by a combination of corruption and underdevelopment, both of which are buttressed by patronage networks. Ethnic diversity per se does not cause it, but uneven development resulting from patronage networks tends to be split along ethnic lines, inspiring a sort of

fundamental causal attribution error on behalf of the common folk and demagogues alike. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the basic causal process behind the Niger Delta insurgencies does not necessarily apply to every conflict in Nigeria.

Alutayo et al. (2015) assert the pre-colonial patronage systems were functional and beneficial.\(^73\) The claim, however, is spurious on three grounds. First of all, the lack of reliable primary sources makes it uncertain that the original system was truly as beneficial as they claim. Moreover, even if it was, it is unlikely it would have been suitable for modern nation building and equitable public goods provision, since one of the fundamental aspects of a modern nation state is providing public goods to all citizens, regardless of personal relationships and bias. Since even the ‘pure’ patronage system was predicated on personalized relationships, it would have been inimical to impersonal bureaucracy. Finally, the patronage system is inherently unstable. Whilst it can provide public goods to a specific group of people on one hand\(^74\), its highly personal nature makes it vulnerable to periodic upheavals. The death of the patron can result in a halt to public good provision, whilst disparities resulting from the system may result in conflict, especially when they run along ethnic and religious lines.

The relationship between corruption and ethnic diversity in Nigeria thus supports the broad academic consensus that there is a strong correlation between ethnic diversity on one hand, and corruption on the other. However, closer analysis suggests the true underlying problem is a broken political culture, as Nigerian patronage networks and corruption have been endemic even within the same ethnic groups. As such, ethnic diversity exacerbates the problem rather than single-handedly cause it.

\(^73\) Olutayo et al., *Contemporary Development Issues in Nigeria*, 39-52.
\(^74\) Ibid, 77-87.
Conclusion

The academic consensus broadly supports the assertion that ethnocultural diversity and political stability, public safety and economic growth, to name a few, do not go together. However, a number of dissenting and/or more nuanced views exist, which attribute diversity and public goods provision to long-term patterns of state formation, political representation or lack thereof, and the exact level of fragmentation, to name a few. The ‘big picture’ studies, however, tend to get lost in correlations and broad associations to such an extent that they fail to explain the specific causal relationships. Conversely, micro-level studies tend to be spatially and temporally limited, which limits their broader applicability. For this reason, Nigeria presents an excellent case study, as it is massive enough to permit broad, theoretical and longitudinal approach, but also limited enough to make specific causal relationships possible to identify.

In broadest terms, an analysis of Nigeria adds nuance to the academic consensus, but it still presents us with a discouraging picture of ethnic and other social diversity. Upon the country’s independence, Queen Elizabeth II stated that the country’s future was ‘full of promise (…), its people working towards the (…) path of progress’. Future events belied that cheery vision. Nigeria’s fundamental problems were historical and structural, as constituent peoples had had different experiences of statehood, and cultures tended to be based on mutually incompatible ideals, many of which translated into uneven accomplishment, as was the case in the North. Those socioeconomic inequalities made it easier for hardliner ideologues to increase their movements’ numbers, a dynamic which continues to destabilize swathes of Nigerian territory. Likewise, even though Nigeria’s persistent failure to reach its full potential was driven largely by a combination of incompetence, short-sightedness and dysfunctional political culture shared by many ethnicities, developmental inequalities and coups have tended to overlap with ethnocultural identities, largely constructed though they may have been. As a consequence, even though perceptions of ethnicity played a significant part is driving conflict and damaging Nigeria’s

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75 Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 255.
political and economic realms, it also served to obscure other serious factors, such as culturally-mandated patronage networks and lack of vision on individual leaders’ and governments’ part. Unless those underlying problems are addressed, Nigeria is likely to continue going on in violent circles. Another key nuance is that even though conflicts in Nigeria have tended to run along ethnic lines, their root causes tended to differ. The North-South split, driven primarily by religious divisions and its consequences, and the Tiv-Jokun conflict, which is driven by historical factors, are cases in point.

Theoretically, even though the above dynamics have recurred with monotonous regularity, they are not cast in stone and utterly impossible to mitigate or effectively manage. However, by the same token Nigeria provides strong circumstantial evidence that ethnic, cultural and other social diversity is not inherently beneficial, and may indeed destabilize the state. As a corollary, whilst the essential nature of long-standing settler societies such as Canada or USA, and of primordially tribal societies such as Nigeria, exhibits profound differences, the case of Nigeria still offers a number of lessons significant from the policy making perspective. First of all, culturally-rationalised practices are not mere decoration, and are likely to have significant socioeconomic consequences. As such, unless those practices are discouraged and eventually eradicated through vigorous, and, if need be, ruthless legislation, large-scale migration from cultures with fundamentally different concepts of right and wrong will bring those same attitudes with it. As a corollary, if said practices result in inferior socioeconomic attainment and ghettoization, social instability and decreased public safety are likely. Whilst the case examined in this study (Muslim North versus Christian South) is set against the backdrop of a “primordially” divided society, the same dynamic could conceivably be replicated in the developed world through misguided immigration and cultural preservation policy. These facts offer circumstantial evidence against the belief that ethnocultural diversity is inherently desirable. As such, further research into the topic, free of bias or politically correct notions, is both necessary and urgent.
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