

**THE ACTIVIST’S DILEMMA: UNPACKING THE COMPLEXITIES OF ETHNICITY,
TRIBE, NATIONALISM, AND STATE-BUILDING IN AFRICA**

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Abstract

This multidisciplinary examination of Tenure Ojaide’s novel ‘The Activist’, delves into the intricate relationships between ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building in Africa. By examining the intersections of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing African states in their quest for cohesion and stability. The paper adopts a qualitative research methodology that combines Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and literary analysis. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis framework, the study reveals the ways in which power dynamics, identity politics, and social justice intersect in the novel.

Keywords

Ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, state-building, Critical Discourse Analysis, qualitative research.

Introduction

Africa’s post-colonial experience has been marked by complex relationships between ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building in which individuals and groups struggle to break even. These relationships have often been fraught with tension, conflict, and competition for power, justice, and resources. Tanure Ojaide’s novel ‘The Activist’, offers a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of these complexities. This article argues that The Activist provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Africans and their continent in their quest for cohesion

and stability in a world where developed countries lord it over third-world nations. It is noteworthy that Africa is home to over 2,000 languages and more than 3,000 ethnic groups, according to the Language figure (2020) and Ethnic group figure (2022), respectively, making it the most ethnically diverse continent. This characteristic of the continent, added to the rich natural resources if positively harnessed and utilized like the Asian continent and others, would make Africa one of the best globally.

Unfortunately, European colonial powers often created artificial boundaries, ignoring existing ethnic and tribal affiliations of the people of Africa, leading to divisions, tensions, and conflicts. This has made some African countries prioritize tribal identities over national and international unity, leading to difficulty in state building. In the foregoing, African Nationalism can be said to have emerged as a response to colonialism, with leaders like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, and others advocating for independence and self-determination.

In the wake of this struggle, the African Literary Writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa'Thiongo, Ayikwe Armah, Dennis Brutus, and their contemporaries were not left behind in the fight for self-government. They used their voices and threw their weight in the best possible way they could by producing works that opposed colonialism, neocolonialism, as well as corrupt national indigenous governments in the new independent nations. Their works and those of contemporary literary writers like Tanure Ojaide, Helon Habila, Chimamanda Adichie, Okey Ndibe, and many others in this generation have, while discouraging ethnic and tribal rivalry, propagated unity, stability, and cohesion in Africa and the nations within it. The march to freedom has not been an easy one, as the monster of ethnic and tribal rivalry, external influences and actors such as foreign powers and international organizations, have often influenced African state-building processes, which most times undermined local agency and autonomy. If the war against ethnicity and tribalism is to be won, then all and sundry must unanimously engage in the campaign, as is seen in the novel 'The Activist' by Tanure Ojaide, which this paper uses to frame the study.

Literature review

Available studies on the issues of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building in Africa debate the reality and challenges of nation-states in achieving cohesion and a just African society, with internal rather than external factors. This is evident in studies such as those by Ikenna Alumona, Nnaemeka Azom, Tatenda Mukwedeya, and Gabrielle Lynch.

Among these, one group focuses on the evidence that identity politics is inimical to nation-building in Africa. For example, Alumona and Azom examine the various challenges of building a unified nation and continent that emanate from populist concerns and sentiments of ethnicity, tribe, religion, and sectionalism, which are mobilized and manipulated by politicians to secure cheap political advantage at the expense of sustainable nation-building on the continent. The deduction of their interrogation is that Africa has not fared well in nation-building and sustainable

development, which may likely linger on in the foreseeable future owing to the daunting challenges posed by identity politics to the national democratic project.

Tatenda's discussion reveals the mixed possibilities of nation-building in Africa by delving into various resultant cases of Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Namibia. According to his findings, Tanzania's stability over a long period is presently reaping benefits for the country as it has become a prime destination of foreign direct investment, registering positive economic growth. He observed that in South Africa and to a lesser extent in Namibia, the sustainability of state-building is being called into question by persistent inequality that is threatening unity. Tatenda, in his interrogation, highlighted several pitfalls of nation building, particularly related to minority groups that can lead to conflict as well as poor policies of government. He concludes his inquiry by showing that for nation building to remain relevant, it should generate African unity, whilst at the same time allowing its diverse communities to flourish.

More research on ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building in Africa has highlighted the complex and multifaceted nature of these relationships. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of understanding the intersections between ethnicity, tribalism, nationalism, and state-building (Lynch 2011). Further, to the above, Gabrielle Lynch (2011), in uncovering the Kenyan Kalenjin's roots, examines the ways in which ethnic groups are socially constructed and renegotiated over time. She demonstrates how historical narratives of collective achievement, migration, injustice, and persecution constantly evolve. As a consequence, ethnic identities help politicians mobilize support and help ordinary people lay claim to space, power, and wealth. Lynch reveals that ethnic politics encourages a sense of ethnic difference and competition, which can spiral into violent confrontation and retribution.

Her study hinges on the 2007 disputed Kenyan election, which erupted into a two-month political crisis that led to the deaths of more than a thousand people and the displacement of almost seven hundred thousand. Much of the violence fell along ethnic lines. Drawing on the rich archive of research and vivid oral testimony, in one of her popular articles, analyzes the creation, development, political relevance, and popular appeal of the Kalenjin identity as well as its violent potential to undermine cohesion within the country. In conclusion, her study advocates for united efforts by all in dismantling the enigma surrounding ethnicity and tribalism and rather harness them in positive ways that foster peace, unity, and development in the society.

Adama Charity, in her thesis dissertation (2016), using Tanure Ojaide's novel "The Activist" as anchor text, presents a powerful exploration of the socio-political and environmental issues faced by the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. According to her study, the novel can be seen as a national, ethnic, and tribal prototype text because it addresses the broader national struggle for environmental justice, while also focusing on the specific ethnic and tribal experiences of the Niger Delta people. She further states that by weaving together environmental, political, and sociocultural themes, Ojaide's novel offers a nuanced portrayal of the complex interplay between

national identity, ethnic heritage, and tribal traditions, which is significant in understanding the postcolonial and neocolonial dynamics in contemporary African literature and society. From the above studies reviewed, it is clear that none has carried out a study as is intended by the present study, “The Activist’s Dilemma: unpacking the complexities of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism and state-building in Africa.”

Methodology

This paper adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theoretical framework in carrying out this study. Founding figures of the framework, Wodak and Meyer (2001), define Critical Discourse Analysis as fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. CDA is an important theoretical framework of analysis which investigates both written and spoken texts by bringing out deep and hidden meanings of discursive elements. The major founder, Van Dijk (1998), defines CDA as a field that is chiefly concerned with scrutinizing written and spoken texts for the discursive source of power, dominance, inequality, and bias in the social and political context.

Description of the Research Design and Approach

This theory is suitable for this paper because, through close reading, it exposes the various dynamics of language use in the primary text “The Activist” by showing the interplay of identity and power in laying claim to space and resources using ethnic and tribal rights. There is also the use of language to create and establish dominant narratives by the minority ruling group and the countering of these assumptions through language by the marginalized group. These claims, as will be interrogated in the text made using language. The text employs various narrative styles such as polyphonic narrative voices, including the Activist’s inner monologue, dialogue with other characters, and third-person narration, creating a rich tapestry of perspectives. Non-linear narrative technique portrays the story unfolding non-chronologically, with flashbacks and fragmented narrative structures that reflect the Activist’s disjointed and traumatic experiences. Through the narrative styles used in the text, the marginalization of the Niger Delta peoples and the conscious degradation of their environment by the multinational oil companies backed by the Federal Military Government is revealed. This was achieved through the analysis of the language use by the characters in the text, which represent different ingroup and outgroup formation, thereby creating as well as consolidating popular narrative and ideology in the society.

Explanation of the Selection of the Activist as a Case Study

“The Activist”, is a text that is apt in its representation of the power of ethnicity, tribe, and identity in shaping individual and group ideologies and allegiance. The novel is set in a Nigerian University consisting of people from different tribes, which is a microcosm of the country’s ethnic diversity. This context and setting allow for a rich exploration of ethnicity and tribalism and how not handling it well unleashes horrendous crises on the masses. Diversity in the creation of characters

from different ethnic backgrounds presents a platform to examine the interactions, tensions, and relationships between these groups. There is a highlight of tensions and conflicts between different ethnic groups, illustrating the challenges of ethnicity and tribalism in Nigerian society. The Activist's struggles with his own tribal identity and his relationship with others from different tribes catalyze exploring the complexities of tribalism in Nigeria and other nations in Africa. A close reading of the novel shows that national identity critically intersects with ethnic and tribal identities while nationalism shapes individual and collective identities and loyalties. In the early part of the text, the protagonist narrator has this to say on the 1967 civil war that erupted in Nigeria,

“When the Biafran forces entered the Midwest Region in 1967, the Nigerian Army posted to defend the State's borders melted away and the invading forces that called themselves liberators took over the entire state....The boma boys organized themselves into a kind of guerrilla force and took on the rebel army that invaded their town. They not only killed many of the rebel soldiers, their rising sun uniforms still trophies among the old, but also succeeded in driving them out of the town. The above conflict is one of many regional crises that have rocked the Nigerian nation in her bid to evolve as an independent egalitarian society.

The above excerpt is in total agreement with Fairclough (1995), that states that “critical discourse analysis aims to systematically explore...relationships of causality and determination between wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes; to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.” Of course, there is always a struggle for control of power in societies where there is a social, economic, and political divide arising from ethnic and tribal inclinations, as is represented in the novel being used to frame this study.

Of course, the dream is not foreseeable, as it seems that African leaders are not yet mature in embracing nationalism for what it means. The level of labor and success invested and attained by the Activist in his Niger Delta native home in the text is a testament that cohesion and stability can be actualized in the country and continent, if individual and group forces are positively harnessed for the purpose. This revealing aspect of Tanure Ojaide's “The Activist” makes it a fit choice of discourse in carrying out this study.

Discussion of the Analytical Framework used to examine the novel.

The novel portrays the power dynamics between the university administration, the government, the student activists, the women, organized institutions, the area boys, and other individual characters in the text to highlight the struggles and tension between individuals, groups, and institutional oppression. These struggles, conflicts, and tensions were presented and countered through language discourse. Language manifested dominant relationships, discrimination, and social inequality and also opposed it.

Close reading of “The Activists”

i. **The protagonist’s experiences and relationships.**

The Activist’s disjointed life and relationships right from the United States are a mirror of the complexities of the ethnic, tribal, and national conflicts that have bedeviled the Niger Delta people of Nigeria in the text since the discovery of crude oil in the region. The protagonist’s unsettled life overseas and his search for stability are symbolic of the disheveled state of affairs in his native home in the Niger Delta. His decision to return home to Nigeria marks a step-in striving at winning a protracted economic and socio-political war that has ravaged the area. This is shown in “The Activist” (2006), using the protagonist’s inner monologue, “He saw the problems at home as a tug of war between the dictatorial military government and the civilians, in which the stronger side would triumph. He wanted to throw his small weight on the civilian side that wanted democracy in place of the tyranny of the gun”. In the foregoing, the Nigerian nation has witnessed not a few ethnic and tribal conflicts that always threatened her peace and unity since independence, resulting from the inability of the leaders, both military and democratic, to address ethnic and tribal problems as is presented in the novel.

Tanzania, as mentioned earlier, has achieved relative progress and attracted foreign investments for intentional steps taken by her leaders in nipping the ethnic and tribal problems in the bud.

Unfortunately, Nigerian leaders, instead of taking advantage of the rich endowment of human and natural resources in developing the nation in the regions and ethnic groups, manipulate them to their political gains. This is the reason Nigeria has experienced and is still experiencing unrest and conflicts as a result of the philosophical and ideological divide arising along ethnic and tribal lines.

Further to the above, the Activist’s experience as a refugee in the United states where the immigrants are subjected to racism and treated as second-class citizens, is key to his returning to his country. His return was not only to regain his true identity as a normal person having human rights as others from other races of the world, but most importantly to contribute to making things right in his own ethnic homeland where there have been incessant unrest and conflicts. An excerpt from the text describes him thus, “various area boys heard about the Activist. They listened to him at the barber’s shop as he railed against the powerful countries that were stifling small ones to maintain their high standard of living. They heard him talk about their Niger Delta people being cheated of their inheritance by the multinational corporations.

The Activist was plunged into several relationships in his bid to study as well as understand the depth of marginalization and exploitation of his region by the Federal Military Government and the Oil Companies in order to proffer solutions to the people. His relations with individuals and groups below his status were for the above purpose. In the text, this is presented thus, “Pere asked

himself many questions. Was this American returnee genuine or playing on his people's intelligence? How could he have left the United States willingly to come to the warfront of a place?... Time would tell what type of person he was...The Activist wanted to know Pere too... He had asked his barber, a young man in his mid-twenties, about Pere when his name first came up in their conversation. He was curious to know this leader of the area boys. From the above excerpt, it is clear that the protagonist stooped below his social status to relate to gather information needed to tackle the problem at hand. This goes to explain that for the larger crisis in the region and the nation to be resolved, the local people, the elite, and the ruling class have a role to play.

The representation of ethnicity, tribe and nationalism

“The Activist” by Tanure Ojaide is a thought-provoking novel that explores the complex relationships between ethnicity, tribe, and nationalism in Nigeria. Ethnicity is a dominant theme in the text, as it explores the tension and conflicts between different ethnic groups in Nigeria. The novel highlights how ethnicity can be a source of identity and pride, but also a source of division and conflict. From the text, we can clearly see this in the horrendous uprising that broke out among the three major tribes in the Niger Delta: the Urhobo, Itsekiri, and the Izon in the struggle for ownership of Warri, a major city. The excerpt states, “...it was at this same time that the ownership of Warri became a contentious issue. The Itsekiri argued that the town's name was theirs; the Izon people made a similar argument, and the Urhobo did the same. The three groups used their separate languages and history to claim what they had jointly owned and shared in peace”.

This reality is further presented in the text through the inner musings of one of the few patriotic chiefs:

“Chief Tobi Ishaka took a long look at the situation in the Niger Delta area and saw no simple solution to the community's problems in the short term. He saw no easy way that the minority groups would seek a political solution to the revenue sharing formula of the country. The majority groups were rivals and even hostile to each other, but they united on one issue: ganging up against the minority groups from whose ninety-nine percent of the nation's revenue was derived.

The above situation implies that there is a dire need for inclusive governance and representation in addressing ethnic and tribal problems so as to create a healthy society where there is no ethnic and tribal divide. The novel underscores the urgency of also addressing historical grievances and injustices that have contributed to ethnic and tribal uprisings in the country.

Examination of how the novel reflects and challenges dominant narratives around state-building and social justice in Africa.

The text challenges the popular and conventional idea that assigns the national government with the primary responsibility of providing development and social justice in Africa. Provision of public goods and services such as quality education, efficient healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare programs should be catered by the regional sections of the nation. The above is achievable in the nation if the federal government promotes economic development through policies, regulations, and investments, as well as allowing the regions to manage a reasonable percentage

of resources from their areas to foster economic growth and development. Further to this, countries should ensure social justice by protecting human rights, promoting equality, and addressing social inequalities.

The protagonist, as a symbol of change in the text, became the voice of reason in awakening the entire Niger Delta people to wrest their rightful God-given resources from the exploiter. But he would achieve this by dialogue, diplomacy, creating awareness, organizing peaceful protests, and many more tactics. The people, including the students, youths, and women, needed to be enlightened about what is at stake and how to dismantle the wrong dominant narratives that had held them down for decades. The Activist's first target audience would be the students, who he believes have talents and the right kind of energy required for the herculean task. So, he started by organizing talks with them on campus. In one of the gatherings, he addressed them thus,

“From the second month of his arrival at the university, the Activist started to be invited by many students' clubs to make presentations on local, national, and international issues ranging from cultural and social to political ones, and he was always ready to address any challenging topic. He spoke to small groups of students and promoted dialogue with them. ... According to him, one must be on the side of humanity.... He was at last creating a base work for the change that he sought”. To succeed in challenging dominant narratives in an unequal society, one has to create awareness of popular misconceptions and wrong assumptions upheld by the ruling group and organized state institutions. In doing this, the people stand a chance of knowing their civil human rights. This the Activist did and reoriented the people at different levels in his native homeland.

Having been educated on the right course in claiming back their environment and the resources, the students set to work, though unfortunately taking laws into their hands in carrying out jungle justice by burning a university Don alive, for being on the side of the exploitative oil company. An excerpt from the text reveals that, “The situation suddenly became rowdy and chaotic, and in the commotion that followed, a group of students forced a tire over the don's neck. All of a sudden, the ebullient don had become a sacrificial animal that was bound and helpless. The students dragged him out to the open field, filled the tire with petrol and set him ablaze”.

Resisting dominant narratives in a society where the masses have been marginalized and subjugated beyond measure is usually horrendous. This situation is replete in Nigeria and most African nations with the leaders paying deaf ears to the suffering of the led. In the novel, the students, made up of individuals from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, organize themselves to oppose the corrupt Federal Military government, the exploitative oil companies, and demand inclusion in the oil exploration of their area. Their demand also extends to advocating for the development of their degraded region and the provision of basic and social amenities. The students' union government tells the representative of the Military government and Bell Oil Company that “We were not just fighting for our rights as students; we were fighting for the future

of our country. We were fighting against the corrupt and oppressive system that had held our country back for so long. We were fighting for a Nigeria that was just, equitable, and free from the shackles of colonialism and neo-colonialism”.

These expressions reflect the novel’s interrogation and emphasis on the agency of civil society, the importance of local knowledge and culture, and the need for Pan-Africanist solidarity. Civil societies such as the student bodies are known to be objective in tackling issues that hinge on poor leadership and social injustices in the society. This is as a result of the fact that they are neutral and view things from an objective perspective. Local knowledge and culture are the exclusive right of every member of a society to enable people to chart the right course that will foster unity and stability.

The novel highlights the agency of civil society, specifically the contribution of student activists, in driving social change and promoting social justice. Promotion of Pan-Africanist vision of African unity and solidarity, highlighting the need for regional cooperation and integration. The above excerpt emphasizes the imperative nature of radical transformation of Nigerian society, showing the inevitability of challenging the existing power structures and promoting social justice. This philosophy agrees with the fact that the dominant narrative requires gradual reforms and incremental changes, which are sufficient for promoting development and social justice in Africa. Highlights of struggles and resistances of various groups, including women and area boys, against dominant narratives and oppressive systems abound in the text. The contributions of women and area boys in challenging popular opinions and assumptions around state-building and social justice in Africa are multifaceted and significant. For a long time, dominant narratives have perpetuated a simplistic and misleading account of Africa’s development, often portraying the continent as a passive recipient of external aid and intervention. However, women and area boys are challenging these narratives, asserting state-building and social justice. Women’s groups and activists are at the forefront of this challenge, highlighting the gendered dimensions of state-building and social justice. They emphasize the importance of women’s participation, representation, and rights in shaping Africa’s future. “The Activist” presents women’s contribution in the light of the struggle by stating that, “The women of the community had had enough. They had had enough of being marginalized, enough of being excluded from decision-making processes, enough of being treated as second-class citizens. They organized themselves, mobilized their resources, and demanded to be heard”. (Chapter 12)

By centering women’s voices and experiences, they are challenging dominant narratives that often marginalize or erase women’s contributions. Women are also promoting alternative narratives that advocate inclusive governance, participatory democracy, and equality. They advocate for policies and practices that address the needs and concerns of marginalized communities, including women, children, and the poor. Further illustration of women’s role in the struggle for unity, cohesion, and stable nations in Africa, as exemplified in the novels, reveals that, “The women’s group had become a powerful force in the community. They had organized themselves, mobilized their

resources, and were now demanding to be heard. They were no longer just victims of circumstances, but agents of change.” (Chapter 18)

The above excerpt highlights the empowerment of women, as they organize themselves and demand to be heard.

On the part of the Area boys, redemption shows how the Area boys are redeeming themselves by forming a community organization and providing training and employment opportunities. The effort of the Area boys cannot be overlooked as it is portrayed as legitimate and important, even though they operate outside of traditional legal frameworks, because their struggle is against existing narratives and systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice. The novel portrays the area boys’ resistance as a response to the failures of the state and the oil companies to provide for their needs and protect their environment. In the text, we have this to support the above opinion’ “The area boys were not just thugs; they were a product of a system that had failed them. They were young men who had been denied access to education, to employment, to opportunities. They had been forced to survive on the margins, to eke out a living in the shadows. But they were not just victims; they were also agents of change.”(chapter 15)

The novel contextualizes the illegality of these groups’ actions by highlighting the ways in which the state and other powerful actors have failed to provide for their needs and protect their rights. Overall, the novel suggests that the efforts of these groups are important and legitimate, even though not organized under the auspices of law.

In conclusion, the contributions of the student body, women, villagers, and area boys in challenging dominant narratives around state-building and social justice in Africa are vital. They promote alternative narratives, foster social change, and advocate for inclusive governance and community-led development. By representing the voices of the different groups and marginalized communities, the text is engaging in dynamic ways of redefining the terms of state-building and social justice in Africa.

Implications of the analysis for understanding the complexities of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building

The analysis of “The Activist” offers profound implications for understanding the complexities of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building in Nigeria and African states generally. By examining the novel’s portrayal of the intricate relationship between these concepts, we have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise when striving to build a cohesive and just society. One of the primary implications of the analysis is the recognition that ethnicity and tribe are complex and multifaceted concepts that cannot be reduced to simple and essentialized categories. The article did justice in highlighting how ethnic and tribal identities are constructed and negotiated through intrigues created by historical, cultural, and socio-economic

factors. This clear understanding of ethnicity and tribe challenges traditional assumptions that often rely on simplistic or stereotypical representations of these concepts.

Furthermore, the analysis of “The Activist” suggests that nationalism is a highly contested and context-dependent phenomenon that can be both a unifying force and a source of division and conflict. The novel shows the tensions between different nationalist movements and ideologies, highlighting the ways in which these tensions can be both creative and destructive. This complex understanding of nationalism challenges popular assumptions that often rely on simplistic or binary representations of nationalism as either good or bad.

In addition, the analysis of the novel highlights the critical role that civil society, social movements, and community-based initiatives play in shaping the complexities of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building. It also portrays the ways in which these actors can both challenge and reinforce existing power dynamics, often in creative and innovative ways. This understanding of the role of civil society and social movements opposes dominant narratives that often rely on simplistic or state-centered representations of political change and social transformation. Finally, the analysis of “The Activist” suggests that the complexities of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building are deeply context-dependent and require a clear and historically informed understanding. The novel portrays the ways in which these complexities are shaped by specific historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors, highlighting the need for a contextualized and multidisciplinary approach in understanding them. This understanding of the context-dependent nature of these complexities challenges dominant narratives that often rely on simplistic or universalized representations of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building.

In rounding off this section, the analysis of “The Activist” offers profound implications for understanding the complexities of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building in Africa generally. By highlighting the nuances and complexities of these concepts, the novel challenges dominant narratives and offers a more nuanced and contextualized understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise when trying to build a cohesive and just society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the complexities of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building in Africa pose significant challenges to building cohesive and just societies. Dominant narratives often oversimplify or essentialize these concepts, neglecting the nuances and complexities of African societies. This oversimplification can lead to inadequate policies and interventions that fail to address the root causes of poverty, inequality, and social injustice. That is the reason this study, “The Activist’s Dilemma”: Unpacking the Complexities of Ethnicity, Tribe, Nationalism and State-Building in Africa”, provides a nuanced and multidisciplinary exploration of the intricate relationships between the concepts in Nigeria and the African continent. Through a critical analysis of the complex dynamics at play, the article challenges dominant narratives and beliefs and offers

a more nuanced and diversified understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise when trying to build a cohesive and just society. It is noteworthy that the article's findings have significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars working on issues related to state-building, social justice, and economic development in Africa. By highlighting the complexities and nuances of ethnicity, tribe, nationalism, and state-building, the article emphasizes the need for more contextualized and historically informed approaches to addressing these challenges. It also contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities of African societies and the need for more nuanced and multidisciplinary approaches to addressing the challenges of state-building and social justice on the continent.

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