

# The Dangers of Inordinate Racial and Tribal Identity in Africa: Warnings from Ezra 9:12

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## **Abstract**

Inordinate racial and tribal identity has long been a source of division, conflict, and underdevelopment in Africa. Its impact in every facet of life in African has been enormous. The enormity has engendered growing levels of underdevelopment on the continent that has resulted in clarion calls for steps and modalities to revamp the ugly situation on the continent. This paper joins in such calls by exploring the implications of excessive racial and tribal affiliations. Employing a close reading of Ezra 9:12, the paper warns against the entanglements that lead to spiritual and social decay. The paper achieves this by drawing parallels between the warnings in Ezra and the experiences in contemporary Africa to contend that an overemphasis on ethnic identity can hinder national unity, economic development, and social harmony.

**Key words:** Tribe, race, inordinate, Africa, social cohesion.

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## **Introduction**

Africa's rich tapestry of ethnic and racial diversity has often been a source of both pride and division. While the continent boasts of over 3,000 distinct ethnic groups, these diversities and blessings have also fuelled conflicts, stalled development, and exacerbated social inequalities (John Campbell, *et al*, 2003, 12). These negative impacts of the continent's diversity and blessings have partly been products of racial and tribal exclusivisms and improper interpretation of the worth of one's tribe or race, thereby creating the sociological distinctions of the "ins" and "outs", where a clear difference from the "others" helps to strengthen one's own identity. Then, the "outs" are denied basic rights (Hangs-Georg Wünc, 2021, 876) and are deemed unfit for them. Such a social disposition is inordinate. It presents a sense of immoderate exaggeration of one's tribe and race over the others.

Desiring to propose a befitting solution to the problems caused by inordinate racial and tribal affiliations, this paper employs close reading to examine Ezra 9:12 to underscore the dangers of the distinction into "ins" and "outs" in the African context along tribal and racial lines. It contends that the demands of

Ezra in the pericope are based on an extravagant interpretation of his Jewish identity which entangled him into decisions and instructions that caused moral and social decay among the returned exiles. Following from the study of Ezra 9:12, this article argues that since Christianity is a dominant religion in Africa with a sizeable population reasonably spread among its constituting States, and following that the Bible is hallowed among Christians, a widespread inordinate racial and tribal identity expression in Africa will pose significant challenges to peace, unity, and development on the continent.

### **Historical and Literary Context of Ezra 9:12**

Ezra's mention of Cyrus II in Ezra 9:9 locates the historical context of the text of this article in the post-Babylonian period (Jacob Myers, 2008, 24). According to Laurie E. Pearce (2018, 98), the era began through a decree of King Cyrus of Persia in 538 BC for exiles to return to their homeland. This decree was made after Cyrus had made military victories which put him in possession of the largest empire of the world of that time (David B. Weisberg, 2018, 218). However, prophet Isaiah asserts that the victories were directed by God, who anointed him as messiah (Isa 45:1) to achieve military successes and accomplishments against the Babylonians in order to free His people and grant them permission to return to their homeland. The vast empire that ensued under Cyrus' control naturally fell into the pressure of the conflicts of reordering and organisation necessitating the need for exiles to return to their natural and ancestral homes to resettle. This development and Cyrus' policy of tolerance and respect for all races and tribes of the empire to exist and express themselves unhindered, ennobled Cyrus to allow displaced exiles to return to their native land and rebuild themselves unconstrained. The decree to return encouraged the *Golah* to journey back to Jerusalem for the rebuilding of the Temple and their lives (David B. Weisberg, 2018, 218) and their Jewish identity.

Ezra 9:12 reflects a part of the events and happenings about the Jews of the post-Babylonian epoch, which included their struggle to return to their native land to rebuild their cultural and social identity. But this passage's events take place some 80 years after those of Ezra 4. The actual event is that when Ezra comes to Jerusalem, he is approached by some officials, but it is not clear who these officials were. At any rate, they bring a matter to Ezra's attention and Hans-George Wüncch describes the matter in these words:

After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, "The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites (2021, 878).

Following the above report and desirous to preserve and perpetuate their race's identity, and faced with the fear of harsh competition over material resources

with their neighbours, Ezra made the prescription of Ezra 9:12. This order, aimed at preserving their Jewish identity and at averting the possibility to idolatry, came to have a far-reaching consequence realised in the demands of Ezra 10 for the Jews as a matter of religious and moral purity to expel their foreign wives (Emmanuel Usue, 2012, 158-169).

Nevertheless, the remote literary context of Ezra 9:12 cannot be easily determined. Suffice it to say it is nestled in Ezra 7:1-10:44 usually called the Ezra Memoir. It consists of narratives told by Ezra (or by someone who wrote in his name) in the first person (7:27-8:34; 9:1-15), as well as third-person narratives about Ezra in 7:1-11; 8:35-36; and 10:1-44 (Ralph W. Klein, 1999, 715). According to Giuseppe Bettenzoli (1998, 729-732), this memoir relates Ezra's own return with the letter of Artaxerxes (7:1-26). He argues that it is followed by another list of returnees among whom were Zadokites and the posterity of Abiathar who had been removed from the Temple (cfr. 1 Kings 2:27), and other priests and Levites in which thanksgiving offerings were made by the repatriates at the Temple. Bettenzoli (1998, 729-732) advances further that Ezra 9:1-15, that is predominantly a prayer block where the issues of mixed marriages were talked about, concludes with Ezra 10 in which there was a practical demonstration of Ezra's reforms which caused the call for the expulsion of foreign wives.

From the foregone, we establish that both the historical and literary context of Ezra 9:12 furnish information of the teething problems of the new socio-political situation faced by the returnees in their moments of change and self-discovery. They were tensed moments which generated the strong desire to define and perpetuate their own identity.

### **Exegesis of Ezra 9:12: Delimitation, Structure and Close Reading**

Ralph W. Klein (1999, 735-736) locates Ezra 9:12 in Ezra 9:6-15 pericope. In Ezra 9:6-15, Ezra offered prayers on his knees with his hands extended as a sign of helplessness or dire need in a possible search for divine solution to the problems reported to him of the returnees' association with their neighbours. While this prayer is a prayer of confession of sin; in it, Ezra underscored God's constant presence among the exiles to the extent that He sent Cyrus to deliver them to the freedom of self-expression and the right to return to Jerusalem. In the prayer, Ezra equally highlighted the teething problems of settling down faced at the return of the exiles which have subjected them to the guilt as great as that of their fathers (Myers M. Jacob, 2008, 77).

Klein (1999, 735-736) has broken the nine verses of Ezra 9:6-15 into verses 6-7, 8-9 and 10-12. This division collocates Ezra 9:12 in the subpericope of Ezra 9:10-12 which begins with the Hebrew language conjunctive/adverbial phrase, *wē'attā*. This phrase is loosely translated as "and/but now". In verse 10, it marks the transition from the previous events of the narrative to the present. Before verses 10-12, Ezra asks the community what its present ethical response should be in the light of its long history of sin (vv. 6-7) and its recent experience of

divine grace (vv. 8-9). In response, Ezra and the community jointly accepted they had done wrong by confessing that they had abandoned the commandments given by God's servants and the prophets, because of their sins. The fact of their wrong was further supported by Ezra's references to both pentateuchal and prophetic texts (vv. 11-12), with the former far exceeding the latter. Clearly for Ezra, Moses is to be numbered among the prophets (Deut 18:15; 34:10; Hos 12:13) and the words attributed to him in the Pentateuch are prophetic words. This informs Ezra's appeal to Moses' authoritative teachings against the people's disobedience through associating with other nations. Indications are that Lev 18:24 may have provided Ezra with the vocabulary for articulating the prophetic commandments given by God's graciousness, which the people had disobeyed by associating with the nations (Ralph W. Klein, 1999,736). At the point in history in which Ezra was offering this prayer, Moses had taken up an institutional and hallowed position among the Jews, and to have disobeyed him and his teachings was to have gravely done wrong.

Locking down to Ezra 9:12 of the prayer, Ezra makes a remarkable "exhortation": a statement with grave racial and tribal implication. An assertion which smacks off the suggestion that Ezra was calling for an exclusive preservation of the identity of the race of and tribe of the Israelites irrespective of whose ass is gored. Three key issues are noted in his "exhortation" to his listeners:

- a) Ezra enjoined the returned Jews not to intermarry with their neighbours.
- b) Ezra discouraged them from being attracted to their neighbours' economic and social affluence.
- c) The benefits of heeding his exhortation and prescription are:
  - They will become strong
  - They will enjoy the produce of the land.
  - Their children will inherit the land.

The words of his "exhortation" enjoining the men to expel their foreign wives is inspired by Deut 7:1 which described them as polluted and unclean people, by Deut 7:3 where the Israelites are commanded not to give their daughters to their neighbours and not to marry their daughters, and finally, by Deut 23:7 in which the demand is made of the Israelites not to seek their peace and their good forever. But L. W. Batten (1913, 335) argues that there is nowhere in the Pentateuch where Palestine is called a polluted land; on the contrary, it is called "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Nu. 13:28), "a good land, a land of brooks of water," etc. (Dt. 8:7 f.). Nevertheless, Baten contends that the idea of polluted land is found in Lv. 18:24-30, where the land is called unclean by reason of the abominations practised by the peoples who preceded Israel in its occupation. Irrespective of the foregoing, considering the level of difference between Ezra's time and the amount of progress made in the understanding of

their neighbours, the prescription of Ezra outrightly spelt out discriminatory race and tribal expressions from the returnees against their neighbours. To buttress that Ezra did not mince words in his order to the Israelites, he announces the three-fold gains of tenaciously holding to his prescriptions. The gains are expressed in military might, economic growth and socio-ancestral perpetuation. This paper will explain the nature of the gains in the following paragraph.

The military might underscored in this passage is showcased in the Hebrew verb used in describing 'being militarily strong' in the pericope. The verb is *chāzah* and it literally means "strong". The particular verb form employed to express it is *qal*. F. Hesse (1980, 302-303) argues that when the *qal* form of *chāzah* is used to address a nation and their representatives throughout the history of Israel up to the post-exilic age as implied in Ezra 9:12, it means growing strong militarily; and it can also refer to the result of such increased strength, namely superiority over someone else and the ability to subjugate him (Jos 17:13; Judges 1:28; 2 Sam 10:11; = 1 Chron 19:12; 1 Kings 16:22; 20:23.25; Ezk 30:21). He further contends that in a more general sense, the superior nation is capable of exerting pressure on the weaker to get them to do some particular act (Exod 12:33; 2 Chron 28:20). Ezra by telling the people that being strong is one of the gains of expelling foreign wives implies to say to the Jews that they will experience growth in military power and regional influence and control. With military power and strength in their control, Ezra believed that they will have the capacity to expand their territories and influence. This means they will acquire more lands for greater and better agricultural yield, and the land can be easily passed on to their progeny as a valuable patrimony. This development smacks off the Deuteronomistic prescription of being with Yhwh and living according to His principles attracts blessings (fr. Deut 30). Consequently, Ezra having presented the gains of expelling foreign wives to the people, under oath and religious obligations, He, in Ezra 10:5–15, ordered the returnees to act by eventually expelling their foreign wives. His reason for this command was that they had sinned by marrying them and the guilt of doing so can be cleansed by the expulsion. But above all, it will preserve their racial and tribal identity. The gains to be achieved for the expulsion of foreign wives became the compelling reason for them to do so.

Ezra's drive for the preservation of their racial and tribal identity does not really make sense, despite the compelling reason to do so, because a close examination of the historical context of Ezra 9 and 10 reveals that "the peoples of the land" or "their neighbours" were largely Israelites like them. They were those Israelites who were not forcefully taken into exile during the Babylonian invasion of 597 and 586 BCs. These had been often addressed as the "remnants" (Emmanuel Usue, 2012, 160). They constituted the unimportant people at the time of the deportations, who were not taken into exile, because Israel's *crème della crème* were those picked to form the deportees taken to Babylon. These remnants could have possibly intermingled with the "nations" about them through

marriages during the course of the exile as they associated and interacted with them. This connection could have led to the remnants being interpreted as the people of the land or the neighbours. The officials who approached Ezra to complain against the people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites who have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations were referring to these remnants. Even if the officials listed the people to include the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites, it was an exaggeration that is historically contested because some of the listed nations may just be euphemistically drawn out, since by Ezra's time they were no longer in existence (Hangs-Georg Wüch, 2021, 876-78). We could leave this historical misplacement to the redactors of the text, but the fact that there is a misplacement of the identity of this people, who were Israelites, did not give the grounds for Ezra's prescription (Ezra 9:12). For if he was afraid that intermarrying with their neighbours (Ezra 9:2) can lead the returnees to idolatry and its consequences like in the case of Solomon (1 Kings 3-11) (Myers M. Jacob, 2008, 77), Ezra could have made efforts to educate the returnees to be examples to their neighbours on the value of sticking to God's teachings that their forefathers handed to them. Teachings that should have included that prior Solomon's era, during the days of Israel's settlement in Canaan after the Exodus from Egypt, marriage between Israelites and the people of those nations had been prohibited (Ex 34:16; Deut 7:1-4) for fear of religious syncretism and apostasy (David A. Smith, 1995, 382). Therefore, Ezra's "exhortation" in Ezra 9:12 could not be employed to create and support inordinate tribal and racial identity promotion and sustenance, because of the advanced knowledge and understanding gained in social-anthropology.

From the foregoing explication, we deduce that Ezra was simply interested in preserving his "holy race" from the contamination as the people of Yahweh, in order not to soil their true relationship with Yahweh as a holy people, chosen by a holy God (Lev 11:44; Isa 6:13), the seed of Abraham (2 Chron 20:7) and set apart for God (Deut 7:6) to be His servant (Isa 42:1) and a light to the nations (Isa 42:6). He vigorously pursued their identity defense and protection irrespective of the economic losses that might follow since their neighbours were in fairly better economic circumstances, while the returnees were poor and, because of drought and crop failure (Hag 1), were, in some instances at least, reduced to want. Ezra ignored the fact that this situation of poverty made many returnees to take the easy way out when offered the opportunity for economic gains through intermarriages. He forced them to divorce their "foreigners' wives" (Myers M. Jacob, 2008, 77) in an attempt to nip a dangerous situation in the bud. Doing this, Ezra threw caution to the wind and proposed a deed that encouraged exclusivism showcased in inordinate racial and tribal profiling. A proposition further borne out of the fear of losing their economic existence, their racial and tribal superiority and the interpretation of themselves of being purer than their own kith and kin (David A. Smith, 1995, 382). By implication, since Ezra ignored all the socio-anthropological consequences of his order as he

locked his mind into racial and tribal profiling, his prescription is a historical exhortation to those of our time not to attempt his style of self-preservation and perpetuation.

### **Implication of Ezra's Deeds**

It goes without saying it that the Ezra's order created religious and social problems with moral implications for the men and the children of the expelled wives. The prescription of Ezra and the people's eventual expulsion of their foreign wives have generated a number of scholarly remarks and reactions to which Emmanuel Usue (2012, 158-159) has put out a supposition. He supposes that the call by Ezra was an attempt to preserve the identity and culture of the returned exiles, and to maintain religious purity. His opinion holds that socio-anthropological and religious motives were not the only reason behind the decree of Ezra, hence Usue observed that the quest for the economic stability of the Province of Yehud threatened by its land base also necessitated Ezra's social reforms. Viewing his order through the current social and political orientation of the time, Ezra could be said to be acting within the conventions of the era. Evaluating it through the historical facts of the time and through the lenses of human development and growth down through the millennia to contemporary thought patterns and human-social interactions, a lot in the directives of Ezra is not fitting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Ezra 9:12's order had immediate grave consequence within its larger literary context. The order which was occasioned by their blind pursuit of tribal superiority pushed them to race-profile the others. Hence, the order engendered decisions to embark on some social change with far reaching implications. For instance, the men of the community resolved to send away all their foreign wives and children (10:3), wives who were simply non-exiled Israelites. They were not real foreigners. This serves as a consequence of blind ethnic promotion because the returning migrants tried to protect their ethnic identity on the perception of themselves primarily as a cultic community. An identity they felt compelled to maintain and carry forward into the future. Such a staunch self-perception obliged them to remain apart from "other" people (Chingboi Guite Phaipi, 2021, 2-3). One can only imagine the psycho-social impact such an orientation would have caused on the expelled wives.

The consequence of the racial and tribal bigotry in Ezra's orders is not only in expelling "foreign wives", but also in the returnees rejecting the offer of the people living in and around Jerusalem to lend a hand of help in the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 4:1-3). This people, their kith and kins, were labelled "adversaries" (Ezra 4:1) thereby tagging them as the "outs" because of their "religious and social impurity", while they, the returnees, are classed as the "ins". Funny enough, this social identity was a mere construct because they were essentially Israelites like the returnees (Hangs-Georg Wünc, 2021, 872). One major encouraging factor of the hardline stands of the returnees could have been because they desired to retain the high societal position they had before

the invasions of 597 and 586 BCs. To succeed in repositioning themselves to their pre-exilic social status will grant them advantages over the ordinary people who were left behind at the deportations.

### **Racism and Tribalism in Africa**

The racial identity talked about in this paper hinges on the significance and meaning of race to an individual's self-concept (Sellers, *et al* 1997). It is by it that an African defines himself or herself. The African's sense of pride in group membership is rooted in it. This includes his evaluation of the relative merits of being an African, and it expresses Africans' beliefs about how non-Africans view them. Sadly, racial identity can play a role in the development of African race-related social cognition that can drive to events of discrimination against fellow Africans (Stephanie J. Rowley, *et al*, 2008, 1538). Notwithstanding, in Africa, tribal and racial identities have often played a dual role. While these identities provide individuals with a sense of belonging and cultural pride, they have been painfully manipulated by the elites, leading to ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and even genocide, as seen in Rwanda in 1994 (Prunier, 1995). This must be taken note of. This is essentially what happened with Ezra. As an elite who had the permission of Cyrus to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the Jewish people as a whole, he pursued a constructed image and perception of who an Israelite was or not, as to cause the social upheaval that moved him to order the expulsion of the "foreign wives" of his fellow Israelites.

It is difficult to define the terms 'tribes' and 'tribalism' and to place both within a suitable context in order to clarify their importance. This difficulty is partly due to the multidimensional characteristics of the features of the term, tribe. For instance, it is a blood-based relations that can align with other tribes and take over territories. Hence, a tribe is explained as a group of people who share blood ties, but tribalism is the act of mobilisation based on tribal identity. The nature and level of mobilization is what drives people of different tribes to project the sociology of inclusion and exclusion. They recognise and project those who belong to their tribal identity and exclude those who do not belong. This notion applies to tribes of people who share a common social class or belong to a particular social league. Those who do not belong to this class or league are regarded as the excluded. And those members of the either a blood-tie-tribe or social class or faithful members who work for the tribe at the detriment of the excluded as the 'Ideal' group members. They follow precise guidelines and behave as true followers of the group and community. They could be arrogant and unapologetic about how they maltreat the excluded even to the unfair advantage of their fellow tribe's members (Abdulla Al-Etaibi, 2023, 45). Such belonging has caused terrible conflicts in Africa, and Nigeria is a true case of such development. The Sahel region is currently bedevilled by some of these tribes who carry the conqueror mentality and want to run over not only other major tribes but nations.

Where members of an African tribe work to callously promote their own single endogamous identity according to their common dialect, single government, common purposes and name, and religious orientation, they tend to be dangerously directed like that of Ezra. It implies that the tribe has not grown to fit the signs of the time and was unwilling to face contemporary reality. Many family ties have been destroyed because of this notion of tribe in Africa. Marriages as well have been destroyed on this basis and would-have-been successful marriages in African have not been allowed to see the light of the day because of this perception. While it is good to respect and uphold our tribal identity, it is better to innovate aspects of it that need so. Living completely in past prescriptions that fit their millennia should not be the direction of contemporary African nations. African nations have to go beyond what the colonial powers did in Africa. The colonial Lords often exacerbated tribal divisions by favouring certain ethnic groups over others. This led to entrenched systems of inequality and resentment. This “divide and rule” strategy laid the groundwork for post-independence conflicts, as seen in countries like Nigeria, where the Biafran War (1967-1970) was largely fuelled by ethnic tensions (Achebe, 2012).

### **The Political, Economic and Social Dangers of Inordinate Tribalism in Africa**

Excessive tribal manifestations in Africa have been linked to numerous problems located in three broad areas. These areas provide compelling reasons for tribal and racial discrimination like Ezra gave persuasive reasons to the Israelites. They areas are political instability, underdevelopment and social division or fragmentation.

#### ***Political Instability***

Okechukwu Ibeanu (2025, 11) has struggled with the conundrum of how to define and explain political instability. He argues that political instability is the lack of the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures. Then he adds,

Sometimes political instability is the absence of this institutionalization, and at other times the lack of institutionalization is an explanation for political instability. In the end, it all sounds like a circular argument: there is political instability because political organizations and procedures are not institutionalized, and at other times political organizations and procedures are not institutionalized because of political instability. More serious is that sometimes instability is used as a definition for itself. Consider this, political instability is the lack of the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures. At the same time, lack of institutionalization is expressed as the absence of “value and stability.”

The foregoing explicatory rigmarole explains the difficulty in defining political instability. But the value and stability arising from institutionalisation is

essentially important for economic development and progress. A number of factors have been underscored as responsible for political instability in Africa. They include the failure of state institutions, colonial legacy, ethnic divisions, ethnic bigotry, internal and external factors, unequal development, poverty, disease (Antony Otieno Ong'ayo, 2008, 2-3), corruptions and bad political structures. The nonexistence of political stability has given room for tribal bigots to manipulate state institutions to their advantage. Hence, in countries like Kenya and Nigeria, elections are often marred by violence as politicians exploit ethnic divisions to gain power (Cheeseman, 2015). The 2023 Nigeria's general election is the most recent case of such ugly manipulation of tribal identity and religion, where Northern Nigeria's political class desirous to impose their oligarchic pride and control on the nation, insisted that the vice president must be a Muslim. This went against the balance system which had predominantly existed in which when the president is a Muslim, his vice will be a Christian. This sharing formula enables the inclusion of all stake holders in the Nigerian project. But when such balance is rejected through manipulated tendencies and developments, there have arisen civil unrest, protests and even conflicts in many African nations (Ruwandan genocide). At such moments, coup *d'etats* and political struggles have happened along tribal lines. The further consequence is the lack of nationalism and patriotism (Chanda Chansa Thelma, *et al*, 2024, 27-33).

### ***Economic Underdevelopment***

Senanu Kwasi Kutor (2014, 16) asserts that development has to do with qualitative and quantitative improvement in all aspect of human endeavour comprising the economic, political, cultural, environmental, social, etc. Where a geopolitical entity does not meet these conditions in its development indices, it is underdeveloped. Most African nations fall under the conditions of underdevelopment.

One of the causes of underdevelopment in African is tribalism. It has hindered the development of national economies, as resources are often distributed along ethnic lines, leading to inefficiencies and corruption (Easterly and Levine, 1997). Furthermore, those who manage the resources are not appointed on the basis of merit, qualification and expertise but along tribal and racial lines. Many African nations have such internal problems and there has been international issues affecting the quality of relations between African nations along that line. This has not helped the economic development of African nations. With its vast material and mineral resources, the continent is substantially poor. Many African leaders use the economic resources of their nations to seek relevance with the West on a trade-by-batter strategy that is imbalanced and unfair to Africa's economic development.

### ***Social Fragmentation***

Inordinate tribal identity weakens national cohesion, making it difficult to build unified societies (Mazrui, 1986). This is because it brings with it the

formation of different social groups distinguished by the type of the economic, social level and job position they hold. It has led to public discrimination, dishonesty and other psychosocial issues. Such social fragmentation caused the Rwandan genocide and it rears its ugly head in most African nations. These fragmentations arise from marginalisation of economically and/or politically disadvantaged groups, creating rivalry between social groups within the society (Godwin Yao Gaaku and Selina Ewoenam Ahorsu, 2023, 286). Where such socially unproductive social distinctions exist, there arises problems that are grave.

### **Ezra 9:12 and Urgent Actions for Social Cohesion in Africa**

This paper's exegesis has underscored the dangers of inordinate attachment to racial and tribal identity. And a number of measures need to be adopted for cohesion in African for development and growth. Below is a list of a few that are not new to the academia.

#### ***The Need for National Unity***

All was not ugly in the prescription of Ezra. He called the Israelites to maintain their distinct identity to ensure their survival. African nations must find ways to promote national unity without erasing the rich cultural diversity that exists within their borders. This requires a delicate balance between celebrating ethnic heritage and fostering a sense of belonging to a larger national or pan-African community (Eyitayo Francis Adanlawo and Mpho Chaka, 2024; Xolani Thusi, 2024).

#### ***Promoting Inclusive Governance***

Inclusive governance that transcends ethnic lines is crucial for stability and development in Africa. The leadership of such governments must be selected on the basis of competence, experience and experts. The purpose is to look for individuals that will work for the greater good of the nation and the continent. Therefore, all African governments must work to ensure that all ethnic groups feel represented and that resources are distributed equitably. This will help reduce the resentment that often fuels ethnic conflicts. It is more important to keep peace through this means that build it (European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2021; Toyin Cotties Adetiba and Aminur Rahim, 2013).

#### ***Encouraging Inter-Ethnic Cooperation***

The biblical injunction against intermarriage in Ezra was specific to the context of preserving religious purity. In Africa, however, inter-ethnic cooperation, including intermarriage, can be a powerful tool for breaking down barriers and building more cohesive societies. Promoting dialogue and understanding between different ethnic groups is essential for fostering peace and unity (James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, 1996).

## Conclusion

Inordinate racial and tribal identity remains one of the most significant challenges facing Africa today. The warning in Ezra 9:12 against entanglements that lead to spiritual and social decay is highly relevant in the African context. To overcome the dangers posed by excessive tribalism, African societies must prioritize national unity, promote inclusive governance, and encourage inter-ethnic cooperation. By doing so, the continent can harness its diversity as a strength rather than allowing it to become a source of division and conflict. Furthermore, African societies must balance the celebration of cultural diversity with the promotion of broader national and pan-African identities to overcome the challenges posed by tribalism.

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