A Theoretical Discussion of Citizenship Contestations and Identity Politics

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A Theoretical Discussion of Citizenship Contestations and Identity Politics

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Abstract
The wave of democratization that swept the continent of Africa in the 1990s, came with the encouragement and commitment to citizenship participation in governance. However, the democratization processes did not in practical terms, come with the political liberalization for social justice and equality on which democracy and its cherished ideals of citizenship rights and obligations are built. Consequently, in daily encounters, identity and its politics are the bases of contestations over citizenship rights and obligations in the struggle for inclusions in opportunities and rights as exclusively monopolized and benefited by others. Expectedly, scholars across disciplines have interrogated this social inequality induced factors, which are considered antithetical to liberal democratic norms from specific selected case studies. However, not much emphasis has been devoted to the theoretically embedded discussion and exploration of the inherent basic concepts, compared to the avalanche of the investigated practical issues. This paper, which is exclusively, a derivative of library research, is an effort to fill this gap.

Keywords: Identity, Self, Citizenship, Settlers, Indigenes

Introduction
Citizenship is a bundle of rights the citizens are expected to enjoy within and outside the territorial sphere. However, there are some contradictions inherent in the definition of citizenship arising from identity formation and contestation. This process and developments has paradoxically created some contradicting explanation of sub-identities consciousness viz two independent tendencies: one that increases the commonalities of the world nations, and the other that makes much more clearly the differences of the sub identities.

Within these margins of the global line of action, some concepts deserve a reevaluation since they have become the determining facts of our socio – political relationship. We have had these concepts for more than centuries, and we will continue to have them in the future. However, what makes them important is the changing role and dynamic meaning of these ‘old,’ or known, concepts and the inherent emerging values. Walker (1994:4) aptly explained thus:

The self-consciousness of nations is a product of the nineteenth century. This is a matter of the first importance. Nations were already there; they had indeed been there for centuries. But it is not the things which are simply ‘there’ that matter in human life. What really and finally matters is the thing that is apprehended as an idea, and, as an idea, is vested with emotion until it becomes a cause and a spring of action. In the world of action apprehended ideas are alone electrical; and a nation must be an ideal as well as a fact before it can become a dynamic force.

The above explained self-consciousness can be said for the role of ethnic identities that have always been effective. From the very beginning, people have identified and differentiated themselves and their societies to other people by using their ethnic-oriented motives and values. Esnام (1994:1) further re-emphasize the emerging role of identity consciousness as follows:
Indeed the world has gone through painful experiences of citizenship syndrome and identity politics. This paper analyses the theoretical underpinning of Identity Politics and contestations with emphasis on conceptual exploration of the inherent concepts. The paper is divided into four segments. The first part is the introduction, which provides background and focus for the study. The theoretical framework, which is the channel for the scientific guides for this study, is the second section. The third section dealt with the conceptual exploration and explanation of concepts, while the fourth part is the concluding remarks.

**Theoretical framework**

The idea of adopting a theory for a multi-disciplinary conceptual research such as this has always been a herculean task. Thus, the need to seek for an all embracing theory and/or to combine two or more theories to examine the problem becomes inevitable. Several inter and multi-disciplinary theories like the elite theory, Games theory, Self theory and identity theory are in one way or the other relevant to this research. However, on a critical examination thus, this research requires theories that can provide the; how and why of an action by who and not what. On this, Okoli (2007:2) aptly averred that, “instead of asking the basic descriptive question ‘what’? Political scientists now ask the explanatory questions: ‘how’? and ‘why’?”. Consequently, this research endeavor is limited to self and identity theories as the adopted tools for explanation. This is because of the embedded efficacies in the chosen theories, in probing the causes and antecedent causes of an action, which “is the essence of explanation and the basis of modern political analysis” (Okoli 2007:2). Obviously, an individual or group of individuals may claim certain identities, which they are not, while others may also be denied of certain identities that they are. Consequently, adoption of the Self and Identity theories for this research is aimed at striking a balance with the overlapping disciplines involved in this study. The theories so selected are both sociological and political that can be crossbreed. The predictive power of the Self theory is tested against the Identity theory. In the process, we are aptly positioned to identify the scope of the self theory (where it does and does not apply), and the ways the Identity theory can extend the scope reciprocally.

**The Self Theory**

Rosenberg (1979) defined the concept of self as the sum total of our thoughts, feelings, and imaginations as to who we are. Later conceptions elaborated and refined this view suggesting that the self-concept was made up of cognitive components (given the collection of identities) as well as affective components or self-feelings including self-esteem (Franks & Marolla, 1976; Stryker, 1980). Cooley (1902) presented archetypal “reflected” or “looking glass self” with three principal elements: “the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification” (1902: 184). Specifically, the mind is the thinking part of the self. It is covert action in which the organism points out meanings to itself and to others (Mead, 1934). In general, the self concept is the set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves. It is based on our observations of ourselves, our inferences about who we are, based on how others act.

Glance at headings in the early 1990s: pitched battles between Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia, between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, between Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria, Read of IRA bombings in London, of threatened genocide by Arabs against Dinka in Sudan, of riots involving African-Americans, Whites, and Koreans in Los Angeles. The ethnically defined successor states of the defunct Soviet Union contain restive minorities whose competing claims and status must be confronted and managed. Canada is threatened with the peaceful secession in Quebec, led by the French-speaking majority, now “masters in their own homeland”; India is coping with a violent Sikh secessionist movement in the Punjab; the minority Sunni Arab regime in Iraq struggles to maintain control over rebellious Kurds and Shi’a Muslims; Belgium has periodically tedious negotiations between representatives of its Walloon and Flemish peoples; French and German public affairs are roiled by conflicts over the status of large immigrant diasporas,. The catalog of brutally violent and of more or less civic manifestations of ethnic conflict includes all continents.
toward us, our wishes and desires, and our evaluations’ of us. According to the reflected appraisal process, which is based on the "looking glass self" (Cooley, 1902), significant others communicate their appraisals of us, and this influences the way we see ourselves. Presumably, individuals’ learn the group standards and then apply those standards. In turn, when group members judge individuals, they use the same standards that individuals originally applied to themselves. Thus, we find a correspondence in self-appraisals and others appraisals’ of the self.

Cast and Burke (1999) use identity theory as a theoretical framework for the integration of these different conceptualizations of self-esteem. They argued that self-esteem is intimately tied to the identity verification process. They point out that: 1) high self-esteem has been found as an outcome of the identity verification process, 2) high self-esteem that is generated from the identity verification process can act as a buffer or resource when the verification process fails, and 3) the desire for self-esteem may be what motivates people to create and maintain situations or relationships that verify one’s identity.

The Identity Theory
Identity is rooted in James’ (1890) notion that there are as many different selves as there are different positions that one holds in society and thus, different groups who respond to the self. This is where identity enters into the overall self. The overall self is organized into multiple parts (identities), each of which is tied to aspects of the social structure. One has an identity, an “internalized positional designation” (Stryker 1980: 60), for each of the different positions or role relationships the person holds in society. Specifically, identities are the meanings one has as a group member, as a role-holder, or as a person; religion, ethnic, family (nuclear and extended), sex, profession among others.

The common views of identity theory are a general set of principles that Stryker (1980) enumerated as underlying the structural symbolic interaction perspective. These include: (i) that behavior is dependent upon a named or classified world and that these names carry meaning in the form of shared responses and behavioral expectations that grow out of social interaction. (ii) That among the named classes is symbols that are used to designate positions in the social structure. (iii) That persons who act in the context of social structure name one another in the sense of recognizing one another as occupants of positions and come to have expectations for those others. (iv) That persons acting in the context of social structure also name themselves and create internalized meanings and expectations with regard to their own behavior. (v) That these expectations and meanings form the guiding basis for social behavior and along with the probing interchanges among actors shape and reshape the content of interaction, as well as the categories, names and meanings that are used (Stryker & Burke, 2000, Serpe & Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982, Burke & Cast, 1999).

The multiple layers of identity as pointed out by Stryker (2000) include; cultural, political, occupational, professional, biological, and historical among others. In Nigeria for example, an individual may assumed an identity as a Nigerian based on; region, zone, state, Local Government, ethnic group (majority or minority), citizenship (indigene or settler), family (extended or nuclear), religion (Christian or Muslim) and many other complex form of identities.

However, the most important influence of an identity is the degree of commitment one attached to it. Commitment has two dimensions: a quantitative and qualitative aspect (Stryker & Serpe, 1982, 1994). In the former, reflecting the individual’s ties to the social structure, commitment reflects the number of persons that one is tied to through an identity. The greater the number of persons to whom one is connected through having a particular identity, the greater is the commitment to that identity. With respect to the qualitative dimension of commitment, the stronger or the deeper the ties to others based on a particular identity, the higher the commitment to that identity. According to identity theory, when negative emotion is felt, actors may either change what they are doing (the output end of the model), or they may think about the situation in a different way (the input side) in order to achieve greater congruence (Burke, 1999).
Intersection of the Self and the Identity Theories

We have argued that the overlap between the Self theory and the Identity theory is striking. For example, the process of self-categorization into groups in social identity theory (Turner et al., 1987) is analogous to the process of identification into roles in identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1978). In self-categorization, people compare themselves to others, and those who are similar to the self are categorized with the self and are labeled the in-group while those who are different from the self are categorized as the out-group. In identification, persons identify themselves as an occupant of particular roles. Rather than seeing others as similar to oneself in interaction, individuals see themselves as set apart from others in the counter-roles others assume in the interaction. For example, sons and daughters are different from the corresponding counter-roles of mothers and fathers. What theorists in both traditions share is the idea that when persons categorize themselves as a member of a group or role, they do so by seeing themselves as an embodiment of a (group or role) prototype or standard. This prototype/standard contains the societal meanings and norms about the social category or role, serving to guide behavior. Broadly speaking, theorists in both traditions recognize that individuals view themselves in ways defined by the social structure. Therefore, persons are born into a particular society with social categories pre-existent to the individual (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Stryker, 1980).

While self theorists and social identity theorists see somewhat different consequences when individuals take on an identity, these varying consequences are equally important in understanding intergroup relations. According to social identity theorist, when individuals take on a group-based identity, there is uniformity of perception and action among group members (Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, Reynolds, & Egging, 1996; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). According to role identity theorists, taking on a role based identity results in different perceptions and action between individuals, as roles interact with counter-roles (Burke, 1999).

A sociological approach to self and identity begins with the assumption that there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society (Stryker, 1980). The self influences society through the actions of individuals thereby creating groups, organizations, networks, and institutions. Reciprocally, society influences the self through its shared language and meanings that enable a person to take the role of the other, engage in social interaction, and reflect upon oneself as an object. Understanding the self and its parts (identities) means that we must also understand the society in which the self is acting, and keep in mind that the self is always acting in a social context in which other selves exist (Stryker, 1980). Individuals act, but those actions exist within the context of the full set of patterns of action, interaction, and resource transfers among all persons, all of which constitute the structure of society. Social structures do emerge from individual actions, as those actions are patterned across individuals and over time, but individual actions also occur in the context of the social structure within which the individuals exist.

Conceptual Exploration
(a) Citizenship

Citizenship according to Marshall (1965) cited in Osaghae (1990) is the status bestowed on the individual who has full membership of a community. The word "citizenship" as Anh Nga Longva noted (as French citoyennete) derives from the root word, city. As a historical concept, it arose in the context of the town and reflects the relationship between the individual and the city. Indeed, the word originally referred to the freeman of the city (Longva, 1995: 201). Thus, citizenship may be conceived as an urban phenomenon (Longva, 1995: 201). Perhaps the notion of citizenship being viewed in a city or urban context may be partly related to the fact that most of the states in the medieval and ancient periods were conceived as city-states, small in territory and largely urban in nature. In a broader conception, citizenship is viewed as the right of the individual to the protection of life, liberty, property and welfare (Bodin, 1945). In this way, a citizen may choose to be passive, so long as his activities are not subversive of the state. In modern times, citizenship is conceived in a symbiotic manner between the state and the individual. It is defined as a regime of rights, privileges and duties. Marshall breaks those rights into three categories: civil, political and social rights (Marshall, 1965). These include: the right to free speech, association, due process, and equality before the law, franchise, and social welfare. The duties or obligations of the citizens include, tax payment, military conscription if necessary to defend the state, loyalty and allegiance to the state.
Although consensus exists that citizenship is a form of state-individual relations, there are relative variations among scholars, both modern and early political theorists on what citizenship means and its content. Tilly cited in Adesoji (2003) argues that citizenship can be interpreted from four main angles; category, role, tie, and identity. As a category, citizenship designates a set of actors—citizens — distinguished by their shared privileged position vis-a-vis a particular state. As a tie, citizenship identifies an enforceable mutual relation between an actor and state agents. As a role, citizenship includes all of an actor’s relations to others that depend on the actor’s relations to a particular state. As an identity, citizenship can refer to the experience and public representation of category, tie or role (Tilly, 1996: 7- 11). In all the categories, Tilly opted for citizenship as a tie, and defines it as "a continuing series of transactions between persons and agents of a given state in which each has enforceable rights and obligations uniquely by virtue of (1) the person's membership in an exclusive category, the native born plus the naturalized and (2) the agent's relation to the state rather than any other natural authority the agent may enjoy" (Tilly, 1996: 8).

Generally, the criteria for citizenship differ from country to country. Three differing criteria can be identified. The first is citizenship by birth (jus soli). The second is citizenship by descent or ancestral claims (jus sanguinis). The third is citizenship acquired through naturalization. In most cases, countries adopt a combination of two or all of these criteria. The first criterion is more inclusive and liberal in nature. This is adopted more impulsively in a country like the United States. Countries like Germany deny citizenship on the basis of birth, permanent or prolonged residency. In a country like France, children born in the country cannot lay claim to citizenship except under certain conditions. That is when they reach the age of eighteen, have lived in France for five years and have committed no crime (Kerber, 1997: 834). What is important though is that every state stipulates rules through which it defines its citizens and those who are not. In fact, there have been concerted attempts to create typologies of classify citizenship based on the level of the social engagement of the individual with the state. These range from the passive to the active citizenship, the thick or the thin, and the oppressed, alienated and pluralist citizen.

Globally efforts are being made by some nation states to internationalize; through regional organizations – European Union (EU), Economic Community of West African States – (ECOWAS) to pull-down the territorial barriers by creating "regional citizens" to enjoy a wide range of rights and benefits not as citizens of their respective countries, but as citizens of the union.

Indeed, in most parts of Africa, the concept of citizenship has a dual derivative. There was the primordial citizenship, defined by ethnic, communal and ancestral affinities, and the civic citizenship (Ekeh, 1972). The latter tends towards egalitarianism while the former move towards exclusivity. However, it is the former that often serves as the functional basis of defining citizenship even in a constitutional sense and in the distribution of public goods. As Osaghae ably demonstrated with a Nigerian example, who is a citizen of Nigeria as stipulated in the 1979 constitution (reproduced as the 1999 constitution - as amended) is rooted largely in primordial origins. An individual's membership or origin in an ethnic group or community is a major criterion for the qualification of citizenship. Thus, citizenship gains expression more from the primordial, than the civic perspective in Nigeria (Osaghae, 1990). This situation reinforces the bifurcation of citizenship as local and state governments remain exclusionary in their norms and practices, and the rights and privileges they confer on the people. In the localities, there is usually a clear distinction between the "natives" or "indigenes" of those areas, who are considered as the "local citizens" and the "immigrants" or "settlers" who are considered as "non-citizens" (in spite of the fact that they are all nationals of the same country).

This leads us to the relationship between social pluralism or multiculturalism and citizenship. Some argue that the former has negative effects on the latter. That is, multiculturalism creates multiple and competing identities for the individual which attenuates his loyalty and allegiance as a citizen, to the state. Sectarian identities like nationality, ethnicity and religion are believed to be exclusive identities, which generate inequalities, while citizenship is basically inclusive and equality oriented (Oomen, 1996:20). The goal of equality embodied in citizenship and multiple identities can co-exist and complement each other, provided the constitutive rules in the socio-political space are well defined. In other words, multiculturalism or pluralism should not necessarily be conflictual or subversive of national citizenship or the state. Indeed, the idea of a nation-state is a plurality of nationalities bound together by a
common state identity. Pluralism offers multiple layers of organizational participation or interaction for the individual in the state, which should enhance his citizenship qualities. As Walzer rightly noted, "the citizen stands to the state not only as an individual, but also as a member of a variety of other organizations (class, professional, racial, ethnic, etc.) with which the state must relate, in relating to him (i.e., citizen)" (Walzer, 1970:218). Multiple identities of the individual should not detract from his/her allegiance or commitment as citizen, to the state, but should complement and enrich it. Indeed, human beings are gregarious and thereby essentially identity seeking.

However, it is when citizenship is more nominal than substantive, that is, when citizenship rights and benefits are largely denied and the state seems out of reach, that pluralism may be subversive to or endangers the state. Those sub-national identities then form the basic source of support to the individual and may constitute a platform of resistance against the state. As Oomen (1966: 213) puts it "all patriots are potential traitors". In this context, those groups may take precedence over the state as primary object of identity and allegiance and may seek to contest political space with the state.

(b) Indigenes

In choosing to conduct a research on the concepts of indigenes and settlers, we are apparently aware of the fluid nature of both concepts and therefore shall attempt to invoke specific and general meanings of the concepts beyond what other previous scholars have examined. For instance, while the definition of a settler is reasonably straightforward, that of indigene is not. Mamdani (2001) argued that indigene and settler categorisation is interconnected and interloping as one defines the other. In other words, settlers exist because some people have succeeded in defining themselves as indigenes. In fact, the concept of “indigeneity” which is the idea that there is a meaningful distinction to be made between “host” and “settler” communities—is not entirely an artificial construct (Human Right Report 2006). This is because there is a universal position that the feeling of ‘indigeneity’ is a natural phenomenon. In fact, even within the territorial sphere of animals, birds, insects and reptiles have apparently been coded with territorial ownership and control instincts by nature, such that encroachment over the principle of “first-to-arrive, first-to-posses” are met with fierce conflict (Alubo 2004).

However, there are inherent contradictions in the definition of indigenes as; “people who are the first to have settled permanently in a particular area and who are considered traditional natives” by Egwu (2004:2). This is because, in the light of the mass movement of people over time and across cultures and spaces, attempt to lay claims to any place as origin, one will be surprised to discover that, one’s ‘ancestors’ “had come from another place to that another place, and perhaps from another place to that, another, another ……… place” (Odiniya 2008: vii). Similarly, Dening (1999) cited in Avril (2004:1) averred that;

There is now no Native past without the Stranger, no Stranger without the Native.
No one can hope to be mediator or interlocutor in that opposition of Native and Stranger, because no one is gazing at it untouched by the power that is in it. Nor can anyone speak just for the one, just for the other. There is no escape from the politics of our knowledge, but that politics is not in the past. That politics is in the present.

In the literature of inter-group relations with particular focus on migration and settlement, diverse terminologies; aborigine, autochthonous, indigene are commonly used in two quite distinct and overlapping ways; to refer to ‘natives’ and ‘First Peoples’. Firstly, an indigenous, autochthonous or aboriginals person is ‘native’ to a place whose ancestors were born there or somebody whose parent’s parents founded the communities, rather than an immigrant. Secondly, indigeneity as the ‘First Peoples’ is used to confer a particular status on peoples who retain historical, often tribally articulated connections to place. In addition, the usage of the ‘First Peoples’ equally carries three meanings that are simultaneous in nature. First, it distinguishes who came first from those who came later, secondly, it articulates the specific sense of identity and belonging of those peoples in contrast to others and thirdly, it conferred the status of colonizers over “other” people within the colony. While the relationship to place of ‘First Peoples’ is not attributable to colonization, the need to assert this belonging in the relative of “first-ness” points to the centrality of colonization in claims of indigeneity (Avril 2004: 16).
(c) Settlers

The term ‘settlers’ are used to identify group of people at specific location whose status is regarded as those “who came after”. The specificity of settler peoples points to the limitations of any universalized understanding and rights involving two distinct groups, “us and them”. The settlers occupy a particular location between culture and politics of the imperial centre and those of the colonized. Moris (1992:471) has dubbed settlers ‘human hinges’, who are “accustomed to being the objects as well as the subjects of the indigenous peoples” in socio-political and economic relationship. Consequently, the settlers are caught in between the twin strength of other cultures; aboriginal and metropolitan. In fact, settlers are not defined merely by immigration more so that almost all African groups and peoples somehow, have migrated from one part of the continent to another over an enduring period of time. The concept of a settler is a political construction with roots in conquest, state, power, coercion and law. The settler can never become an indigene or a native since the basis of differentiation is the denial of full citizenship rights through political imposition of a permanent and exclusionary oral history of origin. A settler is regarded as a stranger, a sojourner who may have been born in a location but is regarded as a bird of passage who would ultimately go “home” (Alubo 2004). Indigenes insist sojourners have a home where they periodically visit for celebration and where prominent members of the former are conveyed for burial. Herein lies an illustration of the nature of identity as both self-defined and other imposed. Most of the people defined and treated as settlers do not regard themselves as such. In the Nigerian experience, being an indigene or a settler is a permanent identity, as there is no provision for the latter to convert to the former.

The particular tension in the relationship between settler and indigene lies in the fact that both claim ‘native’ status. Central to the identity discourses of each is the claim to be the people ‘belonging to’ a particular territorial space. For indigenous peoples this claim is based on their occupation prior to the arrival of the settlers and hence their status as ‘first people’. For settlers, this claim is based on their (counter) assertion of the general citizenship and decades of cohabitation in the territory. These two claims are distinguished temporarily and morally, both dimensions favouring the indigene. In temporal terms, indigenous peoples are simply ‘first’ peoples. Settlers then can never be better than ‘second’. In addition to the competing claims of territorial belonging, settler and indigenous identity narratives are based in the typical characteristics – genealogical/biological and cultural distinctiveness – that mark all national claims to people-hood. The substance of the identity discourses of indigenes and settlers are therefore woven from three strands, genealogical/biological, cultural and territorial. Takaya critically distinguishes citizenship from indigeneity as;

While citizenship refers to the rights and privileges of belonging to a nation-state as nationals of a wider sovereign polity at the macro political level, indigeneship, on the other hand, refers to the individual or family identity of constituents at the local, microcosmic, communal levels. While citizenship refers to a wider, societal affinity that is at once political in nature, indigeneship regresses towards ancestral identification with patriarchy; almost always tinged with a myth of origin, evolution or advent (2010:1).

The population of every state and local government for instance, in Nigeria is officially divided into two categories of citizens: those who are indigenes and those who are not. The indigenes of a place are those who can trace their ethnic and genealogical roots back to the community of people who originally settled there. Everyone else, no matter how long they or their families have lived in the place they call home, is and always will be a non-indigene.

Concluding Remarks

From the forgoing, both the objective and subjective components of identity was established. Clearly, an identity is a distinguishing label that objectively exists, is subjectively felt, and enables its bearers to experience individually and collectively a sense of solidarity. As a label, it can be assumed by, or imposed on bearers. Identity is also a prism by which objects, people, and collectivities are sorted, organized, mapped and ordered into meaningful social stratum. That is why it is socially constructed, dynamic and multifaceted in nature. Subjectively, identification with a category
is simultaneously a definition of self, so that groups come to identify themselves as ethnic, religious, occupational, national and other terms. Objectively, individuals do not identify in general, but do so in relation to others’ definitions of themselves and the boundaries implied in such definitions (Alubo 2004).

The complex and often contentious nature of the concept make identity politics a natural outcome. Identity politics is used in this work to explain the process of categorizing and de-categorizing people into groups on the bases of shared and presumed similarities. More often than not, such similarities may be based on assumptions and stereotypes rather than actual traits, attributes or characteristics.

The struggle for the determination of who is “in” and or who is “out” is the theme of identity politics. Similarly, the struggle and contestations to either change or maintain the status quo for inclusion or exclusion makes identity politics a volatile conflict issues in a heterogeneous and fragmented state as Nigeria. Consequently, in Nigeria, identity in its ethnic and religious forms is central to the citizenship question because it is a basis for inclusion and exclusion. Infact, the issue is even more compounded because of the African exclusive narrow definition and perception of citizenship, which is tied to group rights. In effect, identity is a form in which the citizenship question is posed and practically experienced. Perhaps, this explains the widespread of identity politics, most especially in terms of distribution of common material benefits across the countries of the world.

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