

Inter-Ethnic Violence in Nigeria and the Proposed Solution to Address Them

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Abstracts:

Inter-ethnic violence in Nigeria refers to conflicts and tensions between different ethnic groups within the country. It is a complex issue with deep-rooted historical, social, and political factors. The subject matter of this paper is to examine the prevalence of inter-ethnic tensions in Nigeria, which is defined as an act of aggression or violence between clusters of two or more distinct ethnicities. It identifies the underlying reasons for this violence, which include sectarian strife, ethnic rivalry for resources, political instability, and economic disparity. It also examines the impact of this violence on Nigeria's population and economy, which has been linked to an increase in poverty, dislocation, and migration. Finally, this paper provides an investigation of the approaches employed by the government of Nigeria to tackle this issue, including their successes and failures, and proposes effective solutions to reduce the occurrence of this type of violence. To address these challenges, some proposed solutions include promoting dialogue and reconciliation between ethnic groups, implementing inclusive governance structures, and investing in education and economic opportunities for all communities. Ultimately, this paper emphasizes the need for inter-ethnic collaboration to reduce the incidence of this form of violence and promote security and stability in Nigeria.

Keywords: Inter-Ethnic, Violence, Nigeria, Proposed, Solution

Introduction:

Inter-ethnic violence in Nigeria and the proposed solutions to address it. This subject has received considerable attention recently following the democratic elections of 1999–2023, which were accompanied by outbreaks of violent ethnic conflict. International Crisis Group researchers have concluded that the risks are so great in Nigeria that all of these might lead to civil war or even state failure. Since its independence, Nigeria has seen several eruptions of deadly inter-ethnic violence. A parallel trend has been the increasing

politicization of ethnic identity and the instrumental use of such identity to advance political ambitions. Indeed, the recent violence has been in part attributed to political parties inspiring and funding these conflicts as a means to sway influence and jostle for control of state institutions. Few areas in Nigeria have been immune from this phenomenon. Some places that have seen the worst include the northern city of Kaduna, the middle-belt state of Plateau, the Niger-delta city of Warri, and the southeastern city of Aba. A study on the

macro-socio-economic and political nexus of inter-ethnic violence and a comprehensive peace-building strategy for Nigeria in light of recent events carries significant importance, especially given current trends. With the advent of recent Islamic fundamentalism and global terrorism, solutions to the problems addressed here are increasingly pertinent to Nigeria's security and well-being, and the international community cannot afford to ignore these issues. Economic stability and democratic government in Nigeria are vital not only to the country itself but to the entire West African region, given Nigeria's thrusting regional hegemony and its history of military intervention in the affairs of neighboring countries. Nigeria as "African Giant" is a diverse nation with over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own unique cultural heritage and traditions. However, this diversity has also been a source of tension and conflict, leading to inter-ethnic violence that has plagued the country for decades. The recurring cycles of violence have resulted in the loss of lives, the displacement of communities, and a significant setback to the nation's socio-economic development.

Historical Context of Inter-Ethnic Violence in Nigeria:

Inter-ethnic violence in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era, when the British administration employed a divide-and-rule strategy, exacerbating existing ethnic tensions for their political gains. The legacy of this strategy, combined with socio-economic disparities, political marginalization, and competition for scarce resources, has created a fertile ground for inter-ethnic conflicts to persist.

In Nigeria, inter-ethnic violence has been a problem for many decades. The main three ethnic groups in Nigeria are, the Yoruba in the southwest, the Igbo in the southeast and the Hausa/Fulani in the North, have been battling for political control since before Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960. The struggle for control has been intense and, at times, violent, and has seriously hindered the country's development. Since gaining independence and becoming a republic, Nigeria has endured several lengthy periods of

unrepresentative military or civilian government, each characterized by a weak state and considerable political violence. According to the IRIN, the transition from military to civilian rule in 1999 was marred by much inter-communal violence, and a further 200 people were killed in street riots in Lagos in October 2000, and more than a thousand died in the city in early 2002 in rioting being largely politically motivated around local government elections. This violence has been exacerbated by the presence of over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. Competition over scarce resources in the middle belt regions, which form the boundary between the predominantly Muslim north and predominantly Christian south, has also led to an increase in ethnic violence, most sharply exemplified in the hostilities between the Tiv and Jukun peoples, which have left up to 4000 dead since 1999. Economic problems have also led to an increase in competition for jobs and land and decreased the amount of government funding available to manage the situation.

The current ethnic divisions within the emerging multi-ethnic societies of developing countries are being discussed by various scholars. Ethnic violence in various countries is rooted in both contemporary and historical developments in multi-ethnic societies. The most pertinent factor in this regard appears to be not the degree of ethnic diversity within a polity but rather the degree to which members of that polity view that diversity as a source of conflict. The source of inter-ethnic violence is not the proportion of ethnically varied groups, but the fact that modern society is characterized by the political and economic separation of the population to compete for limited resources within the political entity. It has been established for an extended period that inter-ethnic violence is a major impediment to institutional and political stability in the Third World's multi-ethnic societies. However, different interpretations and explanations have been proposed for this phenomenon.

The competition for relative group value, the pursuit of mass-produced resources, and the utilization of electoral mobilization are all factors

that contribute to this phenomenon that is causing political instability. Other factors that may contribute to this phenomenon include the influence of elites, the formation of false beliefs, and the inadequacy of political institutions and national policies. (Diamond, 1987; Doorknobs, 1991 in Suberu R.T. 1996:4). This paper seeks to identify and propose solutions to the issues of inter-ethnic violence.

This study will focus on the following objectives:

1. This text seeks to provide an overview of the essential terms that can be misunderstood.
2. This text seeks to elucidate the causes of inter-ethnic violence in multi-cultural societies, especially in Third World nations.
3. This text seeks to examine the different forms and characteristics of violence.
4. This text seeks to explore and analyze the repercussions of inter-ethnic conflicts.
5. And exploring and proposing alternative approaches to the peaceful resolution of such acts of violence.

The main thrust of the study is based on the following four main propositions:

1. That government positions and policies can sometimes exacerbate or exacerbate ethnic grievances;
2. That peaceful resolution of ethical issues in plural societies can help to consolidate democratic governance and strengthen inter-community relationships.
3. That there are differences and discrepancies between different ethnic groups in a society;
4. And that the existence of deeply rooted cultural identities and distinctions should not impede peaceful cohabitation in a plural society.

Conceptual Issues:

It is essential to clarify the meanings of key terms in this context, such as inter-ethnic violence, ethnicities, crises, conflicts, and ethnic groups, due to the prevalence of confusion and interchangeability in the use of certain terms.

Inter-ethnic Violence: The term "inter-ethnic violence" is used to refer to the practice of violence between different ethnic groups made up of fractions of other ethnic groups. In 2019, the author of the paper "Nzongola Ntalaja (2019:9) on Inter-ethnic Violence in Zimbabwe" described this form of violence as the "practice of killing members of a particular ethnic group to eliminate their enemies." Violence between ethnic groups involving the killing of the enemy, as well as the burning and destruction of their homes, livestock, and farmlands". Inter-ethnic violence is a form of interpersonal violence between or between members of the same ethnic group. It is characterized by the hostile behavior of one ethnic group toward the members of another ethnic group, to harm, kill the members or even injure the members of the other ethnic group. This is a widespread practice among the various ethnic groups that comprise the nation.

Crisis: A crisis is a term used to describe a difficult or uncertain situation that has the potential to cause distress and discord between individuals or groups of individuals in a given society. It is thus seen as a source of conflict in a society, both in the plural and in the singular.

Conflict: The concept of conflict is based on the Latin word "confusa," according to Albert, cited in (Albert 2001:54). "Struck" translates to "struck together." This idea has been widely interpreted in a social context. According to Ottite (1999: IX), in the majority of the world, conflict is seen as a phenomenon that is abnormal, non-functional, and therefore fatal. In the view of Coser (1968) (quoted in Otite 1992:2), it is also viewed as a destructive force or as:

A dispute or conflict in which power, position, and resources are at issue and the object is not only the acquisition of desired outcomes but also the

elimination, inactivation, or elimination of opponents.

In Nnoli's (2002:1) view of the conflict, it is a contradiction between perceptions, behaviors' phenomena, and tendencies. In Miall (1992:114), conflict occurs when there is a clear contradiction or it is perceived to exist between two or more people who consider the outcome of the conflict to be of great importance. In other words, conflict involves struggles, competition, contests, or disagreements between the participants over the use of scarce and valuable resources. Conflict is therefore unavoidable in human relationships, as society is predisposed towards conflict, and conflict resolution is to facilitate the advancement of society and the development of individuals within it into better human beings. However, the potential for conflict to escalate into violence arises due to the inability or unwillingness of society to address and resolve the conflict in a manner that eliminates the negative effects of the conflict and maximizes its positive effects (Nnoli 1998:6). Conflict can be a useful tool for the resolution of crises in society; however, it must not be allowed to escalate into violence.

Violence: Violence is a form of behavioral action taken by individuals or groups of individuals out of anger to inflict harm, injury, destruction, or even the death of individuals or property. This type of behavior is most commonly observed by armed robbers while conducting their activities. When the conflict escalates to the point of killing, mutilating, or burning, it becomes a form of violence. The fundamental principle of violence is the unlawful use of force to coerce, or coerce a person or group of people into a decision against the will or wishes of others. According to Anifowose (1982: 50), violence is the intentional infliction of physical harm on a person, a group of persons, a political party or organization under a political system, or other persons, property, or other objects. The purpose of the offense is to injure a person or cause harm to property.

Akindele and Olaope (1999:117) consider violence to be a form of interpersonal violence. Violence, regardless of the form it takes (political or non-

political), is typically fostered by a perceived lack of fulfillment of human needs and expectations and the perceived inability to bridge the gap created by the same lack of fulfillment. Conflict between individuals is a common occurrence in social life, both in terms of judgment and the application of judgment in practice (Graham 1986:76).

All human societies, whether monolithic or multi-layered, are bound to experience one or more crises during their growth or development—economic, political, and social, etc. As a result, conflicts arising from differences in perception, ideology, orientation, interest, and concepts are inevitable. When these conflicts are not resolved through peaceful means, they lead to the development of violence, which is the last stage of the crisis.

Ethnic Groups: Ethnic groups are defined as a group of individuals who share a common identity, language, culture, or other characteristics, a common attachment to a geographical area, and a shared commitment to the propagation and propagation of that identity over an extended period. A large number of sub-ethnic groups make up an ethnic group, and an ethnic group is defined by its awareness of the common ancestral origin, culture, and language. For an ethnic group to be regarded as homogeneous, it must include sub-ethnic groups within the same group (Ibeanu and Onu 2001:13). Examples of ethnic groups are Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa.

Sub-Ethnic Groups: Studies have demonstrated that there is a form of sub-national identity in which a portion of a particular ethnic group may still possess a cultural, religious, and linguistic characteristic that is deemed to be exclusive to them but not shared by the entirety of the ethnic group. For example, the ethnic groups of Nigeria, such as the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa ethnic groups, may include a sub-ethnic group composed of several distinct groups, such as the Ikale, Ijebu, and Ekiti among the Yoruba, the Igbo sub-ethnic group consisting of Edo, Urhobo, and Tiv, while the Jukun, Mangawaaaa, and Kanuri were listed among Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups, etc.

Ethnicity: The definition of ethnicity will depend on the perspective from which it is viewed. For example, one way of viewing ethnicity is that it is the acceptance of an ethnic group and its discrimination against other ethnic groups. According to Otite (1975), "Ethnicity" is the discrimination of a member of a group by reference to another member of that group on the basis of different systems of social-cultural symbols." Similarly, according to Ibeanu, "Ethnics" refers to the fact of ethnic communities as social forces that operate in competition with other social forces (which may or may not constitute ethnic groups).

Ethnicity refers to the social identity of a group based on its culture, symbols, customs, and the loyalty of its members to each other. It is expressed in all plural societies, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Causes of Inter-Ethnic Violence in Nigeria:

Over the years, many multi-ethnic societies have experienced a variety of violent ethnic conflicts. This article will discuss the causes of these conflicts in greater detail, but in the interim, it is important to note that competition for resources between individuals, groups, sub-ethnic groups, and even different ethnicities within the same society is often the source of intra- and international violence.

Historical Factors:

The area now called Nigeria has an eventful history that dates back to 9000 BCE. Some key factors that happened during its history have left lasting impressions on the way Nigeria is today. Many different factors have led to the violence we see in Nigeria today, but this essay will focus on one, the colonial legacy. British colonial rule in Nigeria occurred between 1903 and 1914, a time when its policy was defined as indirect rule. Indirect rule was a British policy that was to run their colonial countries through existing indigenous power structures. They did this in the hope that the indigenous people would become a collective intermediary for British interests. The method they used to control the local population was by influencing those in power and only coming down

hard on the local people when there was a threat to their authority. The authorities sought to be insulated from the needs of the local people. This form of government had lasting effects on the country and has helped shape its history until today. One such lasting effect, which has been a cause of much violence post-independence, is the additional power that was granted to the Northern Emirates and the Sultan of Sokoto. Britain thought that giving more power to the North would maintain minimal contact with indigenous peoples and keep the peace to further their interests. To achieve this, they concentrated on the area economically and politically, and it was here that the colonial government invested most resources, recruited people into the armed forces, and trained them. It was from here that the first prime minister of Nigeria and most other political leaders were selected. During British rule, the North was thus brought closer to Nigeria than it had been before, and when the Northern Emirates agreed to an association with two southern protectorates, it was a significant change in the political landscape and the relationships between the differing ethnic groups. This change and the additional power that has yet to be effectively shed have been the cause of violent struggles for political power and economic resources both during colonial time and in the post-independence era, between not only the ethnic groups from the north but in the struggle to claim association with the north and the political power and economic resources that go along with it. This struggle continues today and is a major factor in the violence seen in Nigeria. Going back to colonial times leading up to independence, one more key event happened that has left a lasting conflict today. This event was the Richards Constitution of 1946. This Constitution was to establish regional houses of assembly in the Northern, Western, and Eastern regions of Nigeria, which had previously been three protectorates under the same name, and it also established the idea of the federal system. The significance of this was that the country was to be divided into autonomous regions. This was done without the consent of the people, and the South feared that they would be dominated by the North, and their

fears were quite justified. Two more constitutions to establish federal systems were made at independence, which once again left lasting impressions and led to political struggles over representation, resource allocation, and control between regions of Nigeria, which have often resulted in violence between ethnic groups today.

Colonial Legacy:

This term concerns such an enormous period of Nigerian history that it is under no circumstances plausible to claim that the consequences of colonial rule remain more substantial than those of the preceding era. Despite the absence of a physical colonial presence, Nigeria is still a neo-colonial state. The British system of administration has left a heritage of partition that has fixed the boundaries of reference and resource distribution between indigenous ethnic groupings. This has had a damaging effect on the relations of those groups placed together within the confines of the same state, especially in instances where it has left separate fragmented remnants of the same cultural entity. Colonial rule has much to say about the politics of divide and conquer as a means of maintaining control. While this has sown the seeds of discord between multiple ethnic groups, it is perhaps in the northern region that the starkest legacy has been left. With the implementation of indirect rule, the colonial administrators invested great power within the ruling Fulani class over their various Muslim Emirates, ensuring the status quo and balancing power by not meddling with pre-existing political structures. This has had a long-term effect, leaving the various ethnic groups inhabiting geographical evidence of dichotomous political power. This imbalance did much to precipitate the mass killings during the various coups and the Northern minorities' subsequent sense of political alienation from the very concept of the Nigerian state.

Ethnic Marginalization:

Ethnicity and ethnic identity are important aspects of the lives of Nigerians. Indeed, Nigeria's state structure is rooted in colonial assumptions about the distinctions between different ethnic groups. The clearest example of this was the decision in the run-up to independence to divide the country into three regions along ethnic lines, with the fourth region, the federal capital territory, not being

allocated to any specific group. This federal structure was further divided into states in 1967, thus further delineating lines of ethnic division. The fact that regional and state boundaries have changed several times since this period is indicative of continuous problems over land and boundaries. Although these regions have been reorganized into the present 36 states, Nigeria's federal structure continues to fuel ethnic competition for resources and political power, as control of the central state guarantees control of resources. Governments in the second republic, in particular, manipulated state creation to ensure support from different ethnic groups. This ethnicity-based federal structure was endorsed by the military during its numerous successions into power and continues to be seen by certain groups as the only way to ensure access to resources and security for those at the margins. This, in essence, defines the current federal system as a plural polity, the fundamental structure of which serves as a key root cause of ethnic conflict.

Throughout the Niger Delta region, with its dense population and ethnic diversity, tens of thousands have died and tens of millions have suffered as a result of the fighting between different ethnic militias. The fighting has led to political destabilization and the near collapse of civil institutions. The situation in the Delta is extreme but not unique; ethnic militias and organizations have been responsible for the huge number of inter-ethnic clashes in Nigeria over the past 15-20 years: in the Middle Belt, on the Jos Plateau, in Taraba, in Nassarawa, in the border region between Benue and Enugu, on the Ogoja-Port Harcourt axis, in Lagos, and also in the South West between the Ife and Modakeke. But more than all these, the situation in the Delta is symbolic of a deterioration in inter-ethnic relations throughout Nigeria, a deterioration that has resulted in high levels of suspicion, fear, and hatred between ethnic groups and a situation where inter-ethnic relations are dangerously unpredictable. The result of this has been a failure by Nigeria's leaders to work out what type of federalism is appropriate for Nigeria if it is to remain a united country, and a failure to find

peaceful solutions to inter-ethnic problems and conflicts in mainstream Nigerian politics and society.

The most challenged and contested resources have been classified as follows:

(1) Land Ownership

This is the primary source of ethnic conflict in any agricultural society, as the possession of land for agricultural purposes is associated with affluence. The Tiv-Jukun clashes in Benue and the Kuteb-Jukun conflict in Taraba states of Nigeria are the result of land disputes.

(2) Ethno-Religious Violence

The Kafanchan disturbance in March 1987, cited by Suberu (1996:52), As narrated by Ibrahim (1989) the misunderstanding, which began as a theological dispute between Christians and Muslims at the Teacher's College in Kaduna, Jema'a Emirate, Southern Zaria, Nigeria, quickly escalated into violence, spilling over into the town of Kafanchan and reigniting long-standing tensions between the two ethnic groups. Subsequently, the violence spread to other areas of Kaduna, such as the City of Kaduna, Kastina, and Funtua, where attacks on Christian and other immigrant communities in southern Nigeria by Muslim mobs, as well as the destruction of their properties, were reported. The most recent instance of such violence was the stoning to death and beating to death of Deborah Samuel, an academician at the Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto, for alleged blasphemy.

(3) The Establishment and Location of Local Government Council Headquarters

The establishment and location of local governments have been a source of conflict between competing ethnic groups due to the economic benefits accruing from the presence of a local government in both the state and the nation's ethnic origin. The establishment of local governments in Nigeria has led to the perpetuation of inter-ethnic conflicts, such as the long-standing Ife-Modakeke conflict in Osun State and the inter-ethnic crisis of the Ijaw-Itsekiri people of Delta

State, and in Ondo State, the Ijaws and the Ilaje conflict, both within Nigeria. The establishment of the Local Government Council Headquarters caused this violence.

(4) The challenges associated with the acquisition of public office and the allocation of resources

It is evident from Ajayi (2005:282) that, in addition to the civil war period, national politics has become increasingly competitive since the Fourth Republic's emergence. This indicates that competition for state resources has been a fundamental characteristic of the Fourth Republic since its inception. Competition for public office and the distribution of resources has always been linked to the mobilization of ethnic sentiments by the elites, leading to the emergence of several ethnic militias that act as a permanent army for their groups. A prime example of this is the appointment and removal (in April 1994) of the Jos North LGA Caretaker Management Committee Chairperson, Aminu Aminu Mato, who was the leader of the Berom tribe (Hausa Fulani) and the Anaguta/Afizeres tribe (Jubo, 2001:72).

(5) The Titles of Nobility (Kingship) and Chieftaincy.

Traditional positions of authority in Nigeria are highly sought-after due to the economic and social advantages they offer. However, the competition for these positions has become increasingly violent because, in many cases, different groups are vying for the leadership position. This is seen in the conflict that has occurred in the town of Oyo State, Igbo-Ora, as well as in other ethnic groups in the country (Akinteye, 1999:126). In Ekiti State, Nigeria, the conflict between the Adelabu family and the Adegoke family over the seat of Obaship (Ewi) since 1993 has pitted one family against the other. This conflict has also been reported to have occurred in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT) due to the government's decision to modernize the chieftaincy in the area (Jibo et al., 2001:84).

The Impact of Inter-Ethnic Violence:

One of the most notable instances of inter-ethnic violence in Nigeria occurred during the Biafra War from 1967 to 1970. The conflict between the Igbo

ethnic group, seeking secession, and the Nigerian government resulted in a devastating civil war that claimed the lives of millions and left lasting scars on the nation's collective memory. Since then, Nigeria has witnessed numerous episodes of inter-ethnic violence, including clashes between the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba communities, as well as conflicts involving smaller ethnic groups such as the Tiv, Ijaw, and Berom.

The consequences of inter-ethnic violence are far-reaching and multifaceted. Beyond the immediate loss of lives and destruction of property, these conflicts have deepened divisions among ethnic groups, eroded trust in the government, and hindered national unity. Moreover, the violence has had a detrimental impact on Nigeria's economic growth, deterring foreign investment and impeding social development.

The repercussions of inter-cultural violence have always been considerable, including the

Killings and mutilations of young and able-bodied individuals:

Ethnic conflicts across the country often result in the killing and mutilation of young and physically able-bodied individuals, resulting in a decrease in the human resources necessary for economic growth and an increase in the number of dependent populations in the communities affected. The resulting shortage of food is a significant indicator of these consequences.

Destruction Properties:

Violent clashes across Nigeria have destroyed several properties, including the Sabo market in Sagamu, Ogun State, which is estimated to be worth several million naira (source: *The Punch*, August 13, 2000:15). The Zaki-Biam market, which was Benue's biggest yam market in the country, was wiped out. ([http://www/worldpress.prg/Africa/100cfm](http://www.worldpress.prg/Africa/100cfm)), as well as the destruction of schools, banks, and residential houses, has had a devastating effect on the country's socioeconomic and political fabric.

Population Displacement:

Displaced persons from the displaced communities often take refuge in neighboring villages, refugee

camp, or towns, fearing for their lives. Most of these displaced individuals are unable to return to their ancestral homes due to the destruction of their dwellings as a result of the violence. Refugees often remain in camps for many years. The large numbers of refugees and IDPs may upset the demographic balance in a country or region, and this could be an underlying cause of future conflict. Populations displaced by violence may also move to seek permanent resettlement in a new location. This ongoing movement of populations, and especially the emigration of an entire ethnic community from their home country, may occur where the displaced community feels that there is little chance of restoring law and order or finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict situation. Emigration of an entire community tends to prevent reconciliation between the conflicting parties. The most common result of inter-ethnic violence is the displacement of populations. Populations may flee the violence to safer regions within their own country, or they may cross a border to seek refuge in a neighboring country. The most visible manifestation of this movement is the formation of refugee camps for those who have crossed an international border.

The Destruction of Economic Activities:

All economic activities are subject to constant disruption, resulting in a dramatic decrease in corporate entities, governments, and revenue for citizens. Under such conditions, it is necessary to take appropriate measures; it is not unusual for multinational corporations, other corporate entities, and individuals to close their businesses due to the potential risks to their operations and the lives of their employees.

Investors do not find warring communities appealing:

Due to the high risk associated with warring communities, investors are often reluctant to invest in them. Consequently, the few youths who are not affected by the violence often struggle with unemployment.

The militarization of youth has been a major issue in recent times:

Historically, inter-ethnic conflicts have led to the militarization of youth. After the end of hostilities, these young people formed themselves into different groups and ethnic militia groups, engaging in a variety of social activities, having been subjected to armed operations, and being left without a visible source of income. Groups such as the Egbesu Boys and Urhobo Youth, as well as the Bakassi Boys, are examples of this militarization.

The Psychological Effect:

The psychological and traumatic impact of witnessing the murder and destruction of their relatives cannot be easily erased. Furthermore, they are likely to develop suspicions towards other ethnic communities, and aggressive behavior, including the tendency to lash out with violence at the most inopportune moment, has been reported.

Contagious Effect:

The majority of inter-ethnic conflicts in one region of Nigeria have resulted in the spread of inter-ethnic violence in other regions of Nigeria, typically as a result of one act of retaliation for another. A prime example of this is the Hausa-Yoruba conflict in Kano State in 1999, which was the result of inter-ethnic clashes between the two communities in the Sagamu area of Ogun State.

The government's attitudes towards conflict resolution:

The government and its agent have not established a mechanism to address the emergence of conflict after it has already occurred, as evidenced by the displacement and massacre of the inhabitants of the Odi village, Bayelsa, and the reprisal attacks by Nigerian soldiers on the inhabitants of the five villages at the center of the conflict, Samkere, Vasse, Zaki-Biam-Ise-Adoor, and Gbeji, all in the state of Benue. This demonstrates the inadequate approach taken by the government to manage violence in Nigeria (see Chukwuma 2002:12).

Exploring Potential Solutions to the Issue of Inter-Ethnic Violence:

In pluralistic societies, the proliferation of inter-ethnic violence has highlighted the shortcomings of

the governmental system and its institutions, which are responsible for conflict resolution and the prevention of violence. Consequently, it is essential to seek solutions to problems that go beyond government and institutions. A variety of strategies are proposed to address the issue.

To address the persistent issue of inter-ethnic violence, various proposed solutions have been put forward. Firstly, fostering inclusive governance and political representation is crucial. Ensuring that all ethnic groups have a voice in decision-making processes and are adequately represented in political institutions can help address feelings of marginalization and reduce the likelihood of violence as a means of expressing grievances.

Convocation of the Sovereign National Conference:

The convening of the Sovereign National Conference is essential for all groups in a plural society to define how they will co-exist, regardless of their social and traditional beliefs. Soyinka (1949) states that to find and maintain peace in a society characterized by incessant and unending inter-ethnic violence, there must be a forum where the various interest groups, such as those of ethnic origin, the military, students' unions, and trade unions, can come together and express their opinions. At the end of the day, a pluralistic society necessitates a decentralized federal system that enables the components and nationalities to actively participate in the governance process, thereby realizing their aspirations and advancing their respective cultural development to the full extent of their innate capabilities and talents. This will ultimately foster a sense of belonging among the people and foster unity and harmony.

The concept of good governance can be achieved through a variety of means and Interpreted in three distinct ways:

(a) Providing Employment Opportunities:

To reduce the unemployment rate to a minimum and improve the quality of life for its citizens, it is essential to address the issue of unemployment with the utmost urgency. This will help to prevent

the recruitment of individuals who are capable of committing acts of destruction, such as armed theft, political violence, terrorism, sectarian strife, ethnic animosity, and communal conflict (Nwolise 2002:25). Honest and competent leadership and effective governance are essential for achieving this goal.

(b) Economic Policies that Promote Sound Economic Practice

It is imperative for any accountable government to be aware of the economic condition of its people and to implement policies that will have a positive impact on their lives and well-being. Consequently, a good government's economic policies must be designed to enhance the quality of life of its people. The government of Nigeria's decision to raise fuel prices has resulted in several conflicts. Furthermore, addressing socio-economic disparities is vital to mitigating inter-ethnic tensions. Equitable distribution of resources, inclusive economic policies, and targeted development programs in marginalized areas can help alleviate the underlying causes of inter-ethnic violence. By addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, and access to basic services, the government can reduce the sense of competition and resentment that often fuels inter-ethnic conflicts.

(c) Maintenance and Development of Infrastructure

The government should acknowledge its obligation to provide and maintain critical infrastructure for the well-being of its people, including electricity, water, transportation (including road, rail, sea, and air), and telecommunications, to foster an environment conducive to the employability of individuals and the growth of the general public sector.

Security Reform:

It is essential to reform, overhaul, and restructure the security institutions to ensure that they are not simply reactive to conflicts that have already occurred or have degenerated into violence. However, the security system is often caught off

guard and does not appear to be able to anticipate potential crises early enough to prevent them from escalating (Albert 2001:10). The health and safety of security personnel should be a priority, with particular attention to education, health, housing, and salary, training, and retraining, to expose them to modern methods of law enforcement and provide for the protection of human lives and properties. Strengthening security measures and law enforcement is crucial to preventing and responding effectively to inter-ethnic violence. This includes enhancing the capacity of security forces, improving intelligence gathering, and ensuring the impartiality and accountability of law enforcement agencies. Additionally, promoting community policing initiatives that involve local communities in maintaining peace and security can help build trust and prevent the escalation of conflicts.

The Establishment of a Peace Education Programme:

The government must initiate a comprehensive peace education program as soon as possible, which will be taught from primary school to university level based on appropriate syllabuses. Additionally, Christian and Muslim organizations must be involved in the effort to combat violence. The aim is to create a generation of young people who reject violence and, instead, adopt a culture of peaceful conflict resolution.

Equality before the law:

The concept of equality for all should be upheld before the law; however, the notion, conviction, and practice that certain individuals are superior to the law must be remedied. Consequently, the government must be honest in uncovering the identities and methods of those perpetrating conflict and violence for their own exclusive self-interest and punishing them under the relevant laws of the country. If the government is sincere in implementing the law, then the culture of killing, burning, and plundering the property of others will be replaced by a culture of human dignity and respect for the law. Promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation is essential for healing

deep-rooted divisions. This can be achieved through the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions, community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, and initiatives that encourage inter-ethnic cultural exchanges and understanding. By fostering empathy and promoting shared values, these efforts can help bridge the gaps between different ethnic groups and promote a sense of national unity.

Promoting sports among the various ethnic groups that make up the population:

Promoting sporting activities among the various ethnic communities that comprise the polity. Currently, sports (especially football) remain the most integral part of a multi-ethnic society. Therefore, it should be promoted so that the culture of sportsmanship is passed on to all individuals. Such an attitude should promote a harmonious inter-ethnic relationship.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is evident that conflict is unavoidable in any multi-ethnic society; however, its adverse effects should be managed positively. Inter-ethnic violence in Nigeria remains a significant challenge that requires comprehensive and multi-faceted solutions. Given the likelihood of conflict, the government needs to address any crisis promptly and prudently to prevent or reduce the likelihood of violent conflict. Ethnicity has become the primary factor in the identification of groups, with the public political elites playing a key role in this process. Political leaders who emphasize differences can create a vision of divisions, which are both visible and implicit, as well as the power to form groups and manipulate the objective structures of society. By addressing the root causes of these conflicts, fostering inclusive governance, promoting dialogue and reconciliation, addressing socio-economic disparities, and strengthening security measures, Nigeria can pave the way for a more peaceful and united nation. By doing so, the government can help to prevent violence and facilitate the peaceful resolution of crises between different ethnic groups in society, thus creating a favorable environment

for sustainable growth. It is important to approach this issue with sensitivity and a focus on long-term, sustainable solutions. It is only through collective efforts and a commitment to national cohesion that Nigeria can overcome the scourge of inter-ethnic violence and realize its full potential as a prosperous and harmonious society.

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