



Analyzing the Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria: An In-depth examination

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Abstract: This paper provided a comprehensive overview of the complex and multifaceted issue of ethnic conflict in Nigeria, delving into its conceptual explanations and the underlying factors that have perpetuated these conflicts. It explored the historical legacy of colonialism, socio-political dynamics, economic disparities, cultural dimensions, and weak governance as key factors contributing to ethnic tensions. The implications of ethnic conflict, including loss of life, displacement, economic disruption, political instability, and security risks, are discussed. The abstract also emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to address these root causes, involving inclusive governance, resource management, intercultural dialogue, and institutional strengthening. Ultimately, this analysis highlighted the urgent imperative of addressing ethnic conflict in Nigeria to pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous future for the nation.

Keywords: Ethnic conflict, Cultural dimensions, Weak governance, Corruption

Introduction

Ethnic conflict has been a persistent and deeply ingrained issue in Nigeria, a country known for its rich cultural diversity and complex socio-political landscape (Achimugu, Ata-Agboni and Aliyu, 2013). Ethnic, or interethnic, conflict is a form of conflict that arises when different ethnic groups, which primarily define themselves based on shared cultural, linguistic, or historical characteristics, engage in disputes (Banton, 2000; Ethnic conflict (2023)). These conflicts often revolve around competing claims to resources, territory, or political power, which are asserted on the basis of their collective rights as ethnic groups. Such conflicts can be driven by historical grievances, economic disparities, cultural differences, or political competition, and they often have the potential to escalate into violence or even civil war if not managed

effectively. Managing ethnic conflicts typically requires addressing underlying grievances, promoting inclusivity, and fostering dialogue and reconciliation among the involved groups.

The intricacies of these conflicts, often rooted in historical, socio-economic, and political factors, have posed significant challenges to the nation's stability, development, and unity. Nigeria, situated in West Africa, boasts a population of over 200 million people, representing more than 300 ethnic groups and languages. This remarkable diversity, while culturally enriching, has also been a source of tension and conflict over the years (Green, 2023). The nation's post-colonial history has witnessed a series of ethnic and communal clashes that have left scars on both the landscape and the collective psyche of its citizens. In recent decades, Nigeria has experienced a series of ethnic and communal conflicts that have claimed thousands of lives and displaced countless individuals. These conflicts have occurred in various parts of the country, from the religiously motivated violence in Jos to the pro-Biafra agitation in the southeast and the pastoralist-farmer clashes in the central region. The complexity and diversity of these conflicts underscore the need for a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of their root causes (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (n.d.)).

Understanding the causes and dynamics of ethnic conflict in Nigeria is paramount, not only for the well-being of its citizens but also for regional and global stability. Nigeria's influence extends beyond its borders, as it is not only the most populous country in Africa but also a major player in the continent's political, economic, and cultural spheres (West Africa gateway, 2012; United Nations, 2023). Thus, resolving ethnic conflicts in Nigeria is crucial not only for the country's internal stability but also for fostering peace and cooperation across Africa (Solomon & Matthews, 2009). This research aims to adopt a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, drawing from fields such as history, political science, sociology, anthropology, and economics. By doing so, it seeks to analyze the multifaceted nature of ethnic conflict, exploring historical antecedents, socio-economic disparities, political maneuvering, and the role of identity in shaping these conflicts. Additionally, it will investigate the impact of external factors, such as colonial legacies, global geopolitics, and resource competition, on Nigeria's ethnic tensions.

The findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the roots of ethnic conflict in Nigeria, providing valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and the international community. Moreover, it will offer potential avenues for conflict resolution, reconciliation, and the promotion of a more inclusive and harmonious Nigerian society. Ultimately, this examination seeks not only to dissect the complexities of ethnic conflict but also to pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous Nigeria, where diversity is celebrated rather than a source of division.

Conceptual Explanations

Conflict

The term "conflict" traces its linguistic roots to the Latin word "conflictus," which carries the fundamental meaning of a collision or clash. This etymology underscores the essence of conflict as a situation characterized by opposing forces, interests, or ideas that collide or clash, often resulting in tension, disagreement, or discord. Just as two objects collide in a physical sense, conflicting parties or ideas collide in the realm of human interactions, highlighting the inherent nature of conflict as a collision of differing perspectives or objectives. Understanding the word's Latin origin provides insight into the core concept of conflict as a pivotal aspect of human social and interpersonal dynamics, where contrasting forces or viewpoints come into contact and potentially generate friction, controversy, or competition.

Conflict is a complex and multifaceted concept, and its definition can vary depending on the context and the discipline from which it is being approached. According to Hussein and Al-Mamary (2019), conflict, in its general definition, encompasses an antagonistic state

characterized by opposition, disagreement, or incompatibility between two or more parties. It is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and can manifest in various forms, ranging from interpersonal disputes to international conflicts. Conflict arises from differences in interests, values, beliefs, goals, or resources, and it can be triggered by various factors such as miscommunication, competition, or external pressures. Conflict is a natural and unavoidable part of human relationships and societal dynamics. It can have both constructive and destructive consequences, depending on how it is managed and resolved. When handled effectively, conflict can lead to improved understanding, creative problem-solving, and personal or collective growth. However, if left unaddressed or mismanaged, conflict can escalate, causing harm to relationships, organizations, and societies. Effective conflict resolution strategies often involve open communication, active listening, empathy, compromise, negotiation, and sometimes, the involvement of third-party mediators or arbitrators. Understanding the nature of conflict and its underlying causes is essential for individuals and groups to navigate differences, promote cooperation, and ultimately achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. This definition encompasses the key elements of conflict, including the presence of opposing parties, the existence of differences or disagreements, and the potential for tension or competition. Keep in mind that the specific nuances and implications of conflict can vary widely, and different fields, such as psychology, sociology, international relations, and conflict resolution, may offer slightly different perspectives on the concept.

According to UNICEF, conflict, as defined in 2016, is a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by a clash or struggle between groups or parties. This clash occurs when these entities perceive that their needs, goals, or strategies are fundamentally incompatible, mutually exclusive, or antagonistic in nature. Conflict can encompass a wide range of situations, from interpersonal disputes to large-scale international conflicts, and it often arises from a divergence of interests, values, or resources among the involved parties. In essence, this definition highlights the complex nature of conflict, emphasizing that it goes beyond mere disagreements and can manifest in various forms and intensities. Conflict can have profound social, political, and economic impacts, affecting individuals, communities, and nations, making its understanding and resolution crucial for fostering peace, stability, and development on a global scale.

In his 1992 work, Nicholson provided a comprehensive definition of conflict as an intricate social phenomenon. He characterizes conflict as an activity that emerges when individuals or groups find themselves in a situation where they have conflicting desires, needs, or obligations. This definition underscores the multi-dimensional nature of conflict, emphasizing that it is not limited to a mere clash of interests but encompasses a wide range of discord arising from disparities in what individuals or groups want, require, or are obligated to do. Nicholson's definition highlights the inherent complexity of conflict, as it can manifest in various forms and intensities, from interpersonal disputes to large-scale societal conflicts. It acknowledges that conflicts often arise when parties find themselves at odds due to incompatible goals, competing interests, or conflicting responsibilities. Furthermore, by emphasizing the "mutually inconsistent acts," Nicholson underscores that conflict involves actions and behaviors that are in direct contradiction to one another, making resolution a challenging task. This definition serves as a foundational concept in the study of conflict resolution and management, as it encourages a nuanced understanding of the underlying factors contributing to conflicts and the need to address not only the surface-level disputes but also the deeper-rooted wants, needs, and obligations that fuel them. By recognizing the intricate dynamics of conflict, individuals and groups can work towards more effective conflict resolution strategies and ultimately foster more harmonious relationships and social environments.

In the work by Khan (n.d.), the concept of conflict is articulated as a multifaceted phenomenon that emerges when individuals find themselves at odds due to a variety of factors. Conflict, as described, transcends mere disagreements; it encompasses a clash that stems from

disparities in fundamental aspects such as thought processes, attitudes, comprehension, interests, needs, and occasionally, even perceptions. This definition highlights the intricate and often intricate nature of conflicts, emphasizing that they can arise from divergences in not just opinions but also in the very ways individuals perceive and interact with the world around them. By acknowledging the numerous dimensions of conflict, Khan's definition offers a comprehensive foundation for understanding and addressing conflicts in various personal, professional, and societal contexts.

Ethnic conflict

Ethnic conflict is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing political and social disputes centered around the identities of different ethnic groups (Banton, 2000). These conflicts emerge when individuals or communities emphasize their ethnic backgrounds as a defining aspect of their identity. The nature and intensity of ethnic conflict can greatly differ depending on historical context, geographical location, and specific circumstances. Factors such as historical grievances, economic disparities, political power struggles, and cultural differences can all contribute to the outbreak of ethnic conflicts. Therefore, ethnic conflicts manifest in diverse ways across various regions and periods, making them a complex and evolving challenge for societies worldwide. According to Banton (2000), asserts that a significant driving force behind many contemporary conflicts is rooted in ethnic hostility. This perspective highlights the role of deep-seated ethnic tensions and divisions as a key factor fueling wars and hostilities around the world in the modern era. Wikipedia (2023) said that n ethnic conflict is a complex and often deeply rooted conflict that arises between different ethnic groups. These conflicts can stem from a variety of sources, including political disputes over power and resources, social tensions related to cultural differences and historical grievances, economic disparities that disproportionately affect certain ethnic communities, or religious differences that lead to competition or hostility. Ethnic conflicts are often characterized by a sense of identity and belonging among the involved groups, and they can result in a range of consequences, from social division and discrimination to violence and even armed conflict. Resolving ethnic conflicts typically requires addressing the underlying causes and finding ways to promote tolerance, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all ethnic communities involved.

Tepfenhart, (2013) defined an ethnic conflict as a type of conflict that occurs within a state and is characterized by tensions, hostilities, or violence between two or more ethnic groups. In such conflicts, one ethnic group typically holds a position of dominance or power within the state, while another ethnic group is in a subordinate or disadvantaged position. These conflicts often arise due to historical grievances, competition for resources, political or economic inequalities, and differences in culture, religion, or language. Ethnic conflicts can range from low-intensity tensions to full-scale wars, and they pose significant challenges to peace, stability, and social cohesion within a country. Resolving ethnic conflicts usually requires a combination of political, economic, and social measures aimed at addressing the root causes and promoting reconciliation and equality among the affected ethnic groups. Ethnic conflicts have a long history globally, but in the past two decades, they gained prominence due to events like the Rwandan genocide, Eastern European upheavals, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union after the Cold War (Tepfenhart, 2013). The post-Cold War era saw a decline in state power to maintain stability, leading to violent conflicts as former superpower patrons withdrew support from Third World countries. These conflicts are marked by violence, death, destruction, and terrorism, often escalating from local to regional levels with severe casualties and long-lasting consequences. The article explores the causes of such conflicts using examples from Yugoslavia and Rwanda, highlighting that they typically result from a combination of factors. It emphasizes the role of aggressive leaders in sparking wars. Many states comprise multiple ethnic groups, often leading to conflicts between a dominant and subordinate group challenging the state's legitimacy. States

attempt nation-building through integration, sometimes coercively. Successful integration can offer benefits like better job opportunities, allowing ethnic groups to maintain their identity. However, if assimilation fails, states may resort to extreme measures such as genocide, deportation, or relocation, as seen in Rwanda and Chechnya (Tepfenhart, 2013).

Ethnic conflict is a complex and often deeply rooted form of political or social conflict that arises when one or more groups within a society are distinguished or identified by their ethnic identity (Gilley, 2004). This marker of ethnic identity can encompass factors such as shared cultural, linguistic, religious, or historical characteristics. Ethnic conflicts typically involve tensions, disputes, or violence between these distinct ethnic groups. These conflicts can manifest in various ways, including territorial disputes, discrimination, economic disparities, and sometimes even full-scale armed conflicts. The root causes of ethnic conflict can be multifaceted, including historical grievances, competition for resources, political power struggles, and external influences. Resolving ethnic conflicts often requires careful negotiation, reconciliation efforts, and addressing the underlying issues that fuel the tension among these identity-based groups.

The term "ethnic conflict" refers to conflicts that arise due to cultural incompatibility between different ethnic groups, often accompanied by a sudden increase in awareness of one's identity in relation to another ethnic group (Sotiropoulou, 2004). In such conflicts, at least one group defines its goals in ethnic terms, asserting that its distinct ethnic identity, and the perceived inability to preserve, express, and develop it, is the primary reason for the unequal distribution of rights and the inability to pursue its interests. This highlights the significant role played by ethnicity and ethnic identity in such conflicts, as they can generate strong emotions and nationalistic sentiments, which are often exploited by political elites to gain territorial and political power. In Egwu's perspective (2004), ethnic conflict in Nigeria is a complex and persistent issue. It becomes especially challenging to understand when the state is seen as favoring powerful groups while claiming to represent all. The root of the problem lies in strong ethnic loyalty, where individuals are deeply attached to their ethnic group and are willing to support or act on its behalf, often with a biased stance against outsiders. These conflicts are intricate and sensitive, making resolution difficult. When affected individuals experience loss and injustice without accountability, it can foster grudges, a desire for revenge, and hatred towards the alleged perpetrators, potentially leading to a cycle of violence and the resurgence of ethnic conflicts.

The Underlying Factors behind Ethnic Crises in Nigeria

The ethnic crises in Nigeria are complex and multifaceted, with several underlying factors contributing to their occurrence and persistence. These crises are often characterized by interethnic tensions, violence, and conflicts and they can be attributed to the following key factors:

1. The ethnic conflicts that continue to plague Nigeria today have deep historical roots, primarily stemming from the colonial legacy left by the British Empire. During the colonial era, which spanned from the late 19th to mid-20th century, the British established their dominance over Nigeria, a region characterized by its rich diversity of ethnic groups and cultures. One of the key factors contributing to these ethnic conflicts was the arbitrary drawing of borders by the British colonial authorities. Nigeria's boundaries were largely determined for administrative convenience and economic interests, without due consideration for the existing ethnic and cultural divisions within the region. This led to the amalgamation of various distinct ethnic groups into a single entity, Nigeria, without their consent or input. Consequently, these artificially created borders

forced different ethnic communities with their unique languages, traditions, and identities to coexist within the same geopolitical entity. Additionally, the British colonial administration system further exacerbated these tensions. It established a hierarchical structure of governance that often favored certain ethnic groups over others, leading to unequal access to resources and opportunities. This unequal distribution of power and resources fueled resentment and competition among the various ethnic communities, laying the groundwork for future conflicts. Nigeria, in its present form, emerged in 1914 through the amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups, notably the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, among others. These groups possessed their unique languages, cultures, and traditions, forming a rich tapestry of diversity. However, the enduring legacy of colonialism cast a long shadow over Nigeria's ethnic relations. Colonial rule profoundly impacted Nigeria's ethnic landscape, creating lasting disparities in the distribution of resources, power, and opportunities. The British colonial administrators exhibited favoritism towards certain ethnic groups, exacerbating a sense of injustice and inequality. This preferential treatment sowed the seeds of resentment and discord among the various ethnic communities. The injustices and grievances from the colonial era have endured into the post-independence period, shaping contemporary ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. These historical disparities continue to fuel tension, as ethnic groups vie for a more equitable share of the nation's resources and influence. Consequently, Nigeria grapples with complex and often volatile ethnic dynamics, with the historical legacy of colonialism playing a pivotal role in shaping the country's socio-political landscape.

2. The socio-political dynamics of Nigeria have played a pivotal role in the emergence and perpetuation of ethnic conflict. Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960, marking the beginning of a tumultuous journey towards nation-building. In the early years of independence, Nigeria was characterized by a series of military coups and counter-coups, which were often ethnically motivated power struggles. The first military coup in 1966, for instance, was largely led by Igbo officers and was followed by reprisal killings of Igbo civilians in the Northern region, sparking a chain of events that culminated in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) (Solomon & Leith, 2001). The Civil War, also known as the Biafran War, was a devastating conflict that further deepened ethnic divisions. It centered around issues of self-determination and resource allocation, with the predominantly Igbo Eastern region seeking secession from Nigeria. The war claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and left lasting scars on the collective memory of Nigerians. Although the war ended with the reintegration of the Eastern region into Nigeria, it did not resolve the underlying issues that fueled the conflict. In the post-Civil War era, Nigeria adopted a federal system of government, which was meant to accommodate its diverse ethnic and cultural groups. However, the distribution of power and resources at the federal level has often been a contentious issue. The competition for control over these resources has led to intense political rivalries along ethnic lines, with politicians often mobilizing ethnic identities for electoral gains. As a result, political parties and leaders have frequently exploited ethnic sentiments, exacerbating existing tensions and conflicts.

3. Economic disparities are another critical dimension of ethnic conflict in Nigeria. Despite its vast oil wealth, Nigeria continues to grapple with high levels of poverty and inequality. The uneven distribution of wealth and opportunities across different regions and ethnic groups has fueled grievances and feelings of marginalization. This economic divide is closely tied to the historical legacy of colonialism, as well as the mismanagement of oil revenues and corruption in the post-independence period. The Niger Delta region, located in southern Nigeria, holds the

lion's share of the country's oil reserves. Unfortunately, this resource abundance has brought about a series of deeply troubling issues that have disproportionately affected the region's environment and economy (Ewim, et al., 2023; Kadafa, 2012). Firstly, the oil industry's presence in the Niger Delta has led to severe environmental degradation. Frequent oil spills, gas flaring, and unregulated extraction practices have left a lasting imprint on the ecosystem. The Delta's waterways and mangrove forests, once teeming with biodiversity, have been contaminated and destroyed, affecting the region's fragile balance of life. Secondly, the economic benefits of the oil industry have not reached the local communities as they should have. Instead, the wealth generated from oil exports has often been siphoned off by a select few, leaving the majority of the population mired in poverty and lacking access to basic amenities like clean water, healthcare, and education. The frustration and marginalization felt by the Delta's inhabitants have given rise to militant groups and insurgencies. These groups, often rooted in local ethnic communities, have resorted to violence as a means of demanding a fairer share of the oil wealth and greater control over their land. This has not only perpetuated a cycle of conflict but also intensified ethnic tensions in the region. Moreover, the lack of equitable access to education and economic opportunities has contributed to a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment in many parts of Nigeria. Ethnic groups that perceive themselves as disadvantaged in this regard are more likely to support ethnic-based movements and engage in conflict to demand their rights and a fair share of resources.

4. Cultural dimensions are of paramount importance in understanding the dynamics of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. Nigeria is home to a multitude of ethnic groups, each with its own unique languages, customs, and traditions, which collectively create a mosaic of cultural richness. These distinct cultural identities are a source of pride for many Nigerians, reflecting the country's remarkable diversity (Omotosho, Ihekuna and Fakoya, 2020). However, these cultural differences can also become a double-edged sword, serving as potential triggers for conflict. When unscrupulous political or economic actors exploit these differences for their personal gain, it can lead to heightened tensions among ethnic groups. This manipulation of cultural divisions can take various forms, from pitting groups against each other in electoral politics to using ethnicity as a basis for resource allocation. In essence, while Nigeria's cultural diversity is a testament to its heritage, it also presents a challenge in terms of maintaining social cohesion and political stability. Recognizing and addressing these cultural dimensions is essential for fostering unity and peaceful coexistence among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. Religion is another cultural dimension that intersects with ethnic identity in Nigeria. The country is divided along religious lines, with the majority of the North being predominantly Muslim and the South being predominantly Christian. Religious identity is often used as a marker of ethnic belonging, and religious conflicts have sometimes overlapped with ethnic conflicts, resulting in violence and division (Okpanachi, 2013). Additionally, traditional rulers and institutions hold sway in many parts of Nigeria and can influence ethnic politics and conflicts. The competition for control over these traditional institutions has led to rivalries and disputes among ethnic elites (Ajayi, 1992).

5. Weak governance, corruption, and the absence of effective state institutions collectively form a fertile ground for the proliferation of ethnic conflicts. When a state lacks the capacity to govern effectively and is plagued by corruption, it becomes unable to address the legitimate needs and concerns of its diverse population (United Nations, 2023). This mismanagement creates a sense of disenfranchisement among various ethnic groups, leading to heightened tensions. Furthermore, in such a fragile state, there is often a lack of robust mechanisms for conflict resolution. Without accessible channels for dialogue and mediation, ethnic disputes are left to fester and escalate. The absence of responsive institutions to mediate conflicts and address grievances allows ethnic tensions to simmer beneath the surface, ready to erupt at any moment.

As a result, ethnic conflict becomes deeply entrenched and perpetuated in this environment. The absence of strong state institutions and the presence of corruption make it difficult to implement policies that promote inclusivity and social cohesion. This not only prolongs the suffering of affected communities but also undermines the stability and development of the entire nation, creating a vicious cycle of unrest and instability. To address ethnic conflict effectively, it is crucial to strengthen governance, combat corruption, and establish reliable mechanisms for conflict resolution within the state.

Implications of Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria

The implications of ethnic conflict in Nigeria are far-reaching and have profound effects on various aspects of the nation's society, economy, politics, and security. These implications create significant challenges that hinder Nigeria's development and stability. Some of the key implications include:

- 1. Loss of Life and Human Suffering:** Ethnic conflicts result in significant loss of life, including casualties among combatants and innocent civilians. This loss of life is tragic and hinders progress while causing immense human suffering.
- 2. Displacement and Humanitarian Crisis:** Ethnic conflicts lead to mass displacement, with internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees facing dire living conditions and limited economic opportunities. This creates a humanitarian crisis and strains government resources.
- 3. Economic Disruption and Development Challenges:** Ethnic conflicts disrupt economic activities, damage infrastructure, and deter investments. This economic disruption hampers growth, employment opportunities, and overall development, particularly in affected regions.
- 4. Political Instability and Social Divisions:** Ethnic conflicts often spill into politics, where politicians exploit ethnic identities for electoral gain, leading to divisive politics and a lack of national cohesion. This instability hinders effective governance and policymaking while fostering social divisions and mistrust among ethnic groups.
- 5. Security Risks and Potential Escalation:** Ethnic conflicts strain security forces, diverting their attention from critical concerns such as terrorism. This weakens security apparatus and increases the risk of insecurity. Additionally, if not effectively managed, ethnic conflicts have the potential to escalate into larger-scale violence or civil war, posing a grave threat to Nigeria's stability and security.

The way Forward

Addressing the root causes of ethnic conflict in Nigeria is a long-term endeavour that requires the commitment of government, civil society, and the international community. It necessitates a holistic approach that combines political, economic, social, and cultural strategies to foster unity, inclusivity, and lasting peace in the nation.

The colonial legacy, particularly the arbitrary drawing of borders and the imposition of an artificial nation-state, has had profound and lasting consequences on Nigeria's ethnic landscape. This legacy sowed the seeds of ethnic divisions by forcing disparate groups to coexist within the same political entity without their consent. This situation has led to ongoing tension and conflicts over resources, power, and identity. The historical resentment and competition among ethnic groups, stemming from colonial injustices, continue to influence contemporary politics and contribute to ethnic conflicts. Efforts to address this root cause should involve acknowledging past injustices and working towards a more inclusive and equitable national identity.

Nigeria's history of military coups, the Nigerian Civil War, and the subsequent power struggles have deepened ethnic divisions and created a legacy of mistrust. Politicians have frequently exploited ethnic sentiments for electoral gains, exacerbating existing tensions. The use of ethnicity for political mobilization remains a major driver of ethnic conflict. Reforms in electoral processes, party politics, and the promotion of inclusive governance are essential to mitigate these dynamics.

The economic disparities in Nigeria, exacerbated by the mismanagement of oil revenues, environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, and the concentration of wealth in a few hands, have fueled grievances and militant movements in the region. Economic disparities are a direct trigger for many ethnic conflicts. Addressing this root cause involves transparent management of resources, equitable distribution of wealth, and targeted development in marginalized regions to reduce the appeal of militant movements.

Nigeria's cultural diversity, while a source of pride, has also been exploited by unscrupulous actors to stoke tensions for political or economic gain. Religion, in particular, has sometimes overlapped with ethnic identity, leading to violence. Cultural and religious factors can be both a source of strength and division. Promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue, as well as tolerance education, can help mitigate cultural and religious tensions.

Weak governance and corruption have eroded trust in state institutions and hindered their ability to address the needs of diverse ethnic communities. The absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms has allowed tensions to escalate. Without good governance and mechanisms for conflict resolution, ethnic conflicts persist. Addressing this root cause involves strengthening institutions, improving transparency, and combating corruption to build public trust.

Conclusion

The analysis of the roots of ethnic conflict in Nigeria reveals a complex and multifaceted web of historical, socio-political, economic, cultural, and governance factors that have contributed to the persistence of these conflicts. Nigeria's colonial legacy, marked by arbitrary borders and unequal distribution of power, laid the foundation for many of the ethnic tensions witnessed today. The post-independence era was marred by ethnic power struggles and the devastating Nigerian Civil War, further deepening divisions. Economic disparities, particularly in the resource-rich Niger Delta region, have fueled grievances and insurgencies, exacerbating ethnic tensions. Cultural dimensions, including language, religion, and traditional institutions, intersect with ethnic identity, creating additional fault lines. Weak governance and corruption have allowed these conflicts to fester, as the absence of effective state institutions hinders conflict resolution and exacerbates disenfranchisement.

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