

Ethnic Conflicts in Contemporary Africa: The Nigerian Experience

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ABSTRACT Most developing countries are ethnically diverse. Ethnic diversity may lead to increased civil strife. This perception is tottered both by some graphic individual scenes of inter ethnic violence, and by an aggregate correlation: Africa has not only the highest ethnic diversity, but also the highest incidence of civil war. Potentially, this might account for the detrimental economic effect of diversity. In countries of traditional stability, ethnic conflict is becoming an increasing factor. Ethnic conflicts have become the serious challenge of our times, which perhaps explains why ethnicity is seen as the reigning concept in African studies at present. In Nigeria, the colonial masters provided urban setting, which constitutes the cradle of contemporary ethnicity. The colonialist while pretending to carry out a mission of uniting the warring ethnic groups, consciously and systematically separated the various Nigerian people thereby creating a suitable atmosphere for conflict. With the heterogeneous nature of the country, the tendency of the various nationals is towards parochial consciousness at the expense of national consciousness. This study, therefore, relies on content analysis as its methodology to examine ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. It also examines the effects of ethnic conflicts on the country's search for unity and identifies the possible issues for resolution. The study also proffered suggestions on how to curb ethnic conflicts in Nigeria.