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An ethnic conflict is a conflict between two or more contending ethnic groups. While the source of the conflict may be political, social, economic or religious, the individuals in conflict must expressly fight for their ethnic group's position within society. Explanations of ethnic conflict had several theories such as functionalist, frustration and aggression and primordialism , Relative Deprivation and such.

Let us take the Rwanda genocide as an example of ethnic conflict. It started between two ethnic groups known as the Tutsi and the Hutu. The two ethnic groups are actually very similar - they speak the same language, inhabit the same areas and follow the same traditions. However, Tutsis are often taller and thinner than Hutus, with some saying their origins lie in Ethiopia. During the genocide, the bodies of Tutsis were thrown into rivers, with their killers saying they were being sent back to Ethiopia.

When the Belgian colonists arrived in 1916, they produced identity cards classifying people according to their ethnicity. The Belgians considered the Tutsis to be superior to the Hutus. Not surprisingly, the Tutsis welcomed this idea, and for the next 20 years they enjoyed better jobs and educational opportunities than their neighbours. Resentment among the Hutus gradually built up, culminating in a series of riots in 1959. More than 20,000 Tutsis were killed, and many more fled to the neighbouring countries of Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda. When

Belgium relinquished power and granted Rwanda independence in 1962, the Hutus took their place. Over subsequent decades, the Tutsis were portrayed as the scapegoats for every crisis.

This was still the case in the years before the genocide. The economic situation worsened and the incumbent president, Juvenal Habyarimana, began losing popularity. At the same time, Tutsi refugees in Uganda - supported by some moderate Hutus - were forming the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by Mr Kagame. Their aim was to overthrow Habyarimana and secure their right to return to their homeland. Habyarimana chose to exploit this threat as a way to bring dissident Hutus back to his side, and Tutsis inside Rwanda were accused of being RPF collaborators. In August 1993, after several attacks and months of negotiation, a peace accord was signed between Habyarimana and the RPF, but it did little to stop the continued unrest.

When Habyarimana's plane was shot down at the beginning of April 1994, it was the final nail in the coffin. Exactly who killed the president - and with him the president of Burundi and many chief members of staff - has not been established. Whoever was behind the killing its effect was both instantaneous and catastrophic. In Kigali, the presidential guard immediately initiated a campaign of retribution. Leaders of the political opposition were murdered, and almost immediately, the slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutus began. Within hours, recruits were dispatched all over the country to carry out a wave of slaughter. The early organisers included military officials, politicians and businessmen, but soon many others joined in the mayhem. Organised gangs of government soldiers and militias hacked their way through the Tutsi population with machetes, or blew them up in churches where they had taken refuge. The extremist ethnic Hutu regime in office in 1994 appeared genuinely to believe that the only way it could hang on to power was by wiping out the ethnic Tutsis completely. The point here is that for

that amount of destruction to happen, for people to get to the point where they think the only solution is genocide that means it's not just something of today. It comprises years of pent up frustration and aggression. We know that people can be mobilized on the basis of frustration. The Rwanda crisis was an identity conflict fueled by this theory.

Another conflict is the Aguleri-odeke kogi feud over the ownership of Anambra basin crude oil. Anambra and kogi state share a boundary. The Ibaji local government of Kogi state was reported to have brought a lawsuit against Enugu-otu Aguleri over the ownership of some portion of the land in Anambra River Basin and lost the case. However the conflict between Aguleri and the Odeke community of Anambra and Kogi states respectively has escalated. Although it appears to be a boundary issue there are several cases for this conflict. Ibaji communities in Kogi have been living along the borders of Anambra East and West council areas and had co-existed peacefully with their neighbours until the commencement of oil exploration by Orient Petroleum Resources, believed to be owned by Anambra indigenes. Ibaji people, on whose land the oil is situated, alleged illegal encroachment by Anambra people into their land with a view to taking over their oil rich fields. The Anambra government was believed to have set up a security team comprising soldiers, policemen and vigilante groups to protect the vital area and assets at the refinery. The odeke and Aguleri communities of Kogi and Anambra states as well as Uzo-uwanni in Enugu state claim that they are exclusive owners of the oil in the disputed area. The management team of the oil exploration company that is involved in oil drilling in the area are from Anambra state which lead to the belief that the oil belongs to Anambra state. The other scenario that is also causing the crisis is the claim by Anambra that it had invested N4 billion on assets in the bush. To protect that investment from vandals and

unwanted enemies, it was gathered that Anambra State decided to set up a joint patrol team to ensure the assets are protected.

This conflict involves in my opinion Relative Deprivation which is a deliberate action aimed at preventing others from what they are originally entitled to. That is what brought this conflict. The feeling of missing out all the privilege that being the owner of crude oil in a state is entitled to. These are all ethnic conflicts too.