**NAME: CHIMA-DIM UCHENNA NICHOLAS**

**DEPARTMENT: ACCOUNTING**

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**ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA**

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation-state with socio-cultural differences among its component

ethnic groups all of which have resulted into cultural dissimilarities. These cultural

dissimilarities have been manifested by, the differences in culture which may include language, diet, dress and type of social system. The ethnic virus has been one of the most important causes of social crisis and political instability in Nigeria; and ethnicity has been perceived in general as a major obstacle to the overall politico-economic development of the country. Ethnicity has been considered to be the cause of the 1967-1970 Civil War in Nigeria, elections which have been rigged and those which have failed can be blamed on ethnicity, the manipulation of census figures can only be understood from the ethnic dimension.

An ethnicconflict 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. Ethnic conflict may be violent and may be non violent. In a multi-ethnic society where freedom of speech is protected, we can see ethnic conflict every day. For example, conflict on the base of distribution of resources must link directly or symbolically with ethnic groups. In democratic countries the institution runs these conflicts for our personal purposes. But democratic countries cannot obviate the violent ethnic conflict. But ethnic peace means an absence of violence, not an absence of conflict.

Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria arise as result of scarcity of political resources, multi-culturalism, religion, militarization of ethnicity among others. These conflicts cannot be ignored. One such factor, poverty, the most powerful, is the ever-increasing level of poverty-typified in joblessness, deteriorating infrastructures, etc. All these clashes are due to the fundamental crisis of underdevelopment; there is widespread poverty and this gives rise to a scramble for limited resources. Most of these communities are no better than slums. Industries are shutting down with the attendant consequences of job losses; most families find it difficult to feed themselves. There are no potable water, no good roads, proper medical facilities, social infrastructures, and no good schools. Environments such as these generate fear distrust hatred, frustrations, anger, etc. Under such circumstances, it is easy to believe that if the other ethnic groups go away there will be enough. Another factor called manipulations which provide classic hot beds for ethnic clashes. Recognizing this the ruling class consciously exploits the poison of ethnicism as a means of keeping the working class permanently divided and diverting their attention away from the real problems confronting them - the crisis of Nigerian capitalism. Nor is this policy of "divide and rule" an exclusive phenomenon. It is the resort of the ruling class internationally. It is a conscious policy of the ruling class that allows for t heir continuing oppression and exploitation of the poor working masses, their continuing hold onto power. The manipulation of ethnic differences reflects the fear of the ruling class of the potentials of the Nigerian working class and its capacity for unity, a unity that cuts across ethnic lines. The conscious manipulation of ethnic consciousness under terrible social conditions gives rise to periodic explosions of ethnic clashes. This is also a reflection of the inability of the ruling class to foster genuine unity among the masses. It confirms the fact that capitalism and ethnic violence are interlinked; you cannot have the former without the latter. Ethnic conflicts have proved to be the most violent instances of intergroup crisis in Nigeria. Hence, instability, chaos, and uncertainty are but part of the negative features that shape the nation’s polity. In spite of its huge potentials in both human and mineral resources, the foreign direct investment indices of Nigeria are increasingly becoming quite devastating on the nation’s economy. These conflicts have negatively impacted on the economy over the years. This statement is however supported by the fact that, these incessant conflicts have made Nigeria’s economic climate in conducive, hence unattractive for investment.

To overcome the problems of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and reach the principle goal which is national unity, it is necessary to unite people in as many aspects of life as it is possible. Economic cooperation is necessary to provide the citizens with the universal system of goods and unite regions depending on the natural resources. For example, the Edo supply country with cocoa, but receive sugar cane from the Sokoto people. The same interaction can be introduced in the other sectors of the economy. The creation of common political parties and the creation of road and railway transport connection between the lands of different ethnic groups must be taken into account. Besides, the government itself has to start thinking, how can ethnic conflict be resolved and the government has to be interested in solving the current problems of ethnicity. There must be representatives of all (and even minor) cultures in the parliament to satisfy the interests of all people of Nigeria. It is more difficult to influence the opinion of senior people who can still somehow (maybe because of personal reasons) support ethnic conflict in Nigeria than to influence the formation of another worldview of the young people. The subject of intercultural interaction must be included in the curriculum. Children have to attend the meeting with the representatives of other Nigerian cultures. There they can exchange the history of cultures, the cultural experience, believes, food recipes, cultural heritage, and traditions. Nothing stops aggression, discrimination, and hatred better than broad worldview provided by education. The encouraging of intercultural marriage on the governmental level will surely solve the problems of ethnicity. Intercultural tribes can be supported financially and officially congratulated to show respect to people who contribute to the creation of a united Nigerian nation. This will ensure economic justice and equity. It will make central political power less attractive and less corrupt and contests over national political offices less contentious. The use of religious and ethnic appeals as tools of political mobilization will become less attractive and find a diminished reception in a climate of justice, equitable resource distribution, and equal opportunities for all