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Question: Based on a problem you perceive in your environment, follow the steps on research writing, and write a 3 page essay.

Effects of Ethnicity and Religious identity to security and social stability in Nigeria

Today, Nigeria is laced with some of the most obstinate conflicts, most of them constructed from differences in religious and ethnic identities. Religious and ethnic nationalism has led to conflicts about control of state power, unequal allocation of resources, citizenship issues, state collapse, economic decline and ethno-religious clashes.

However, From a socio-political perspective, identity bears a personal and a social meaning. Processes related to identity are 'located at the core of the individual and yet in the core of his community culture. Identity has been a significant aspect of the Nigerian political process, during the colonial period and in the post-colonial era. Ethnicity is a social phenomenon that is related to interactions among individuals of different ethnic groups within a political system where language and culture are the most prominent attributes. Both ethnicity and religiosity have emerged as the most basic and politically salient identities of the Nigerians. Despite some exceptions, such as the Yoruba being made up of both Christian and Muslim segments, ethnic identities generally overlap with religious identities in Nigeria. For that reason, it is difficult to distinguish ethnic conflicts from religious ones in this country. However, it can be said that ethnic differences in Nigeria would not have been such a prominent cause of conflict if they had not overlapped with the religious identities, or vice versa. In other words, in many instances, religion provides a mobilisation frame for conflict and this effect is amplified when religious and ethnic cleavages run parallel. The manifestation of ethnic identity instead of national identity is articulated in all aspects of democratic practice in Nigeria beginning from elections to appointments and location of projects where some ethnic groups are placed on the advantage against others. And there is

no doubt that inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria form part of the dynamics of identity politics.

In Nigeria, structures of political control are formed on the basis of ethnicity and religiosity via a custom-made patronage system. These identities have been a constant source of conflict and cleavage in the country. Since the restoration of democratic rule, ethnic and religious identity in the Nigerian political landscape has often resulted in political instability and constant conflicts. Take for instance, The **Boko Haram insurgency** which began in 2009, when the jihadist group Boko Haram started an armed rebellion against the government of Nigeria. The conflict takes place within the context of long-standing issues of religious violence between Nigeria's Muslim and Christian communities, and the insurgents' ultimate aim is to establish an Islamic state in the region. In other words, the militarisation of Boko Haram undermined Nigeria's stability and placed the country under constant threat. Apart from the group targeting national events, markets and churches, they are sometimes engaged in sporadic bombings in major towns in Northern Nigeria including Kaduna, Saria, Jos, Kano, Maiduguri, and in Damaturi.

Moreover, the 2019 presidential election revealed how ethnicity and religion can influence the chances of politicians winning elections in Nigerian politics. Looking at the 2019 state Election declared by the INEC, states won by the All Progressive Congress (APC) in North Eastern and West states are mostly Muslim dominated states such as Borno, Kano, Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. The voting pattern in these states were highly influenced either by religious cleavages, ethnic consideration or both. Some states won by APC in South-South/South West states such as Lagos, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo, Edo, Ogun are Christian dominated states with similar social

cultural and ethnic background which is at variant with their APC counterparts in North East, West and Central. What played out in these states was just the influence of party interest.

Nevertheless, the continued rise in the attack by Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria, is another threat on the security and social-economic stability of Nigeria. If not quickly checked, it may result in greater investor apathy for the country and resulting in low inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and would make institutional investors look for other stable economies to invest their money. On the state of the country, when people feel insecure, their appetite to invest, to buy or rent from the product of investment reduces; and that is why all over the world, any country that radiates an environment of insecurity naturally repels investment initiatives from both the international community and its own local investors. Hence, the activities of herdsmen is a threat to the economic, political and social security of a nation and a major factor associated with underdevelopment; because it discourages both local and foreign investments, reduces the quality of life, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states, thus undermining democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to promote development.

In conclusion, ethnic and religious problems have remained constant features of the nation's political and social-economic life. These factors have continued to generate tensions that sap the country of its vitality and create unhealthy competition centered on national economic control and political leadership.

