

# Rethinking Ethnic Divide in Nigeria: The *Ubuntu* Approach to National Unity

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## Abstract

This paper discusses how the *Ubuntu* philosophy could be harnessed to address the negative impact of ethnic rivalry in Nigeria. The paper observes that with over 250 ethnic groups with diverse cultural values and backgrounds, Nigeria has become a hotbed of ethnic-based and nepotistic tensions and rivalries, which are threatening the very existence of the nation as a single entity. The paper further opines that ethnic rivalry stunts national development, breeds suspicion, causes violence among contending ethnic groups and thus creates loss of confidence, trust and faith among members of the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. The paper contends that if ethnic nationalities will adopt the *Ubuntu* philosophy of "I am because we are, since we are therefore I am", then peace and conflict management will be based on the understanding that the good of an ethnic group translates to the good of all. This paper therefore argues that the emotional bond of an individual citizen first to his/her ethnic group before Nigeria as a nation is detrimental to the country's unity, development and peaceful coexistence. To address this, the paper calls for a national rebirth and a re-orientation of the citizens towards a common national ideal.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Ubuntu Philosophy, Nigeria, Unity, Diversity, Peaceful Co-existence.