



## **ETHNIC AGITATIONS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN NIGERIA: THE AFTERMATH OF THE ENDSARS PROTEST IN 2020**

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### **Abstract**

Agitation in Nigeria continue to take different dimensions from the perceptive of political power sharing, economic and infrastructural development distribution, devolution of power between the federal, state and local governments, resource control between the Federal and the State (North and the South) religion perception and manipulations, various calls for political and economic restructuring, the gap between the rich and the poor and the near annihilation of the middle class. Good governance engenders peace, political stability, good social services delivery, improved social standard of living and reduction in poverty level, etc. This article seeks to interrogate issues that give rise to ethnic agitations and also examine the features of good governance that gives rise to political and economic stability, reduce conflict to it minimum, a professionally and corrupt free public service etc. the objective of this paper is to examine the role played by good governance in reducing the ever increasing ethnic agitation by Nigeria as a result of continue failed socio-economic bliss, corruption, bad leadership youth unemployment, political power etc. This qualitative paper adopted the Marxist class theory to analyze the struggle in the Nigerian political-economic domain. The method adopted was secondary data, were text, journals, newspapers, etc were consulted based on qualitative content analysis. The research design used for this work is thematic design. One main finding is that youth who form a greater part of the active class are unemployed. This continued challenge led to the #EndSARS protest which was high jacked by other element that led to a serious protest in the various states (North & South) and the socio-economy of Nigeria was brought to a standstill. Hence, the paper suggest among others that Nigeria must pursue vigorously the features and the concept of good governance for a stabilized and peaceful country.

**Keywords:** Agitation, Ethnic, Good governance, Protest and #EndSARS.

### **Abstrait**

L'agitation au Nigeria continue de prendre des dimensions différentes de la perception du partage du pouvoir politique, de la répartition du développement économique et infrastructurel, de la dévolution du pouvoir entre les gouvernements fédéral, étatiques et locaux, du contrôle des ressources entre le fédéral et l'État (Nord et Sud) la perception religieuse et manipulations, divers appels à la restructuration politique et économique, l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres et la quasi-anéantissement de la classe moyenne. La bonne gouvernance engendre la paix, la stabilité politique, la bonne prestation des services sociaux, l'amélioration du niveau de vie social et la

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réduction du niveau de pauvreté, etc. Cet article cherche à interroger les problèmes qui donnent lieu à des agitations ethniques et examine également les caractéristiques de la bonne gouvernance qui donne lieu à stabilité politique et économique, réduire les conflits au minimum, un service public libre professionnellement et corrompu, etc. -le bonheur économique, la corruption, le mauvais leadership, le chômage des jeunes, le pouvoir politique, etc. Cet article qualitatif a adopté la théorie marxiste des classes pour analyser la lutte dans le domaine politico-économique nigérian. La méthode adoptée était des données secondaires, étaient des textes, des revues, des journaux, etc. ont été consultés sur la base d'une analyse de contenu qualitative. Le design de recherche utilisé pour ce travail est le design thématique. L'un des principaux constats est que les jeunes qui forment une plus grande partie de la classe active sont au chômage. Ce défi continu a conduit à la manifestation #EndSARS qui a été détournée par d'autres éléments qui ont conduit à une sérieuse protestation dans les différents États (Nord et Sud) et la socio-économie du Nigeria a été paralysée. Par conséquent, le document suggère, entre autres, que le Nigeria doit poursuivre vigoureusement les caractéristiques et le concept de bonne gouvernance pour un pays stabilisé et pacifique.

**Mots-clés :** Agitation, Ethnique, Bonne gouvernance, Protestation et #EndSARS.

### **Introduction**

The Nigerian federation is a marriage of over 400 ethnic nationalities whose consents were not sought in its formation. This fundamental flaw is further deepened by the fact that these ethnic groups have very striking differences ranging from language, population, level of education and geographical terrain which was not factored into the crafting of the Nigerian State. Expectedly, the politics and governance of the Nigerian State continues to be rudely punctuated by very disturbing ethnic and ethnic related crises that threaten its continued existence as a Nation (Okeke, Ojukwu and Nnamani, 2020).

Nigeria as a heterogeneous society has continually faced the problem of ethnic consciousness as it has been entrenched in the Nigeria society to the extent that any activity or program of action initiated by the government of the day is seen as being influenced by ethnic considerations. This situation is fast becoming a value and consciously taught among each nationality in Nigeria and propagated to capture political positions has caused more harm than good to national integration and harmony (Idowu, 2015). Ethnicity is generally regarded as the most basic and politically salient identity in Nigeria. This claim is supported by the fact that both in competitive and non-competitive settings, Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of their ethnic affinities than any other identity (Achimugu, AtaAgboni, and Aliyu, 2013). Eriksen (2010) defined ethnicity as an aspect of social relationship between persons who consider themselves as essentially distinctive from members of other groups of whom they are aware and with whom they enter into Relationships.

Good governance implies presence of rule of law, safeguard of human rights, and existence of honest and efficient government, accountability, transparency, predictability and openness (Pierre and Ismail, 1991) Johnston (2004) defined, Good governance as: A competent management of a country's resources and affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people's needs. good governance is a normative concept by which society seeks to provide a guide and direction to itself through standard and norms embedded in the governance idea. The urge to steer state and society according to defined rules and procedures, and ensuring that governance in all its ramifications serves the interest of



the greatest number of people in society though a collective, participatory endeavor (Mohideen, 1997:9).

The EndSARS started in early October, when large youth led protests against police abuses have shaken cities across Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. The demonstrations emerged after video circulated on social media purporting to show an extrajudicial killing by members of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the national Nigeria Police Force (NPF) responsible for investigating violent offenses. SARS personnel previously had been implicated in extensive human rights abuses by what the U.S. State Department describes as —credible international organizations (Husted, 2020). This agitation opened up the ill governance structured in Nigeria.

This qualitative paper adopted the Marxist class theory to analyze the struggle in the Nigerian political-economic domain. The method adopted was secondary data, were text, journals, newspapers, etc were consulted based on qualitative content analysis. The research design used for this work is thematic design. One main finding is that youth who form a greater part of the active class are unemployed. The objective of this paper is to examine the role played by good governance in reducing the ever increasing ethnic agitation by Nigeria as a result of continue failed socio-economic bliss, corruption, bad leadership youth unemployment, political power.

### **Methodology**

Data collection for this study was mainly from secondary sources and the methods of analysis adopted was essentially qualitative, normative, analytical, conceptual and historical. Thematic design is adopted because it addresses the concept enunciated in this work. Thematic design is one of the foremost common shapes of examination in qualitative research. It emphasizes pinpointing, looking at, and recording designs (or "themes") inside information. Themes are designs over information sets that are critical to the portrayal of a wonder and are related to a particular inquire about address. Topical plan is best thought of as an umbrella term for a variety of distinctive approaches, instead of a solitary method (Guest, 2012).

### **Theoretical Framework**

At the centre of Marxist doctrine is the theory of class struggle. However Marx did not systematically explain this central idea of the struggle between classes, although one might say that the entirety of his writing is an elaboration of this theme. Nor did he specify clearly what constitutes a class. As is well known, Marx's only attempt to define a class is left unfinished (Andrew, 1975).

Marxian class theory asserts that an individual's position within a class hierarchy is determined by their role in the production process, and argues that political and ideological consciousness is determined by class position. A class is those who share common economic interests, are conscious of those interests, and engage in collective action which advances those interests. Within Marxian class theory, the structure of the production process forms the basis of class construction (Edward, 1983 and Parkin, 1979).

Class is a fundamental category of Marx's social analysis. The class of a person is determined by that person's ownership of various amounts of the productive forces. The productive forces are composed of labor power and the means of production. It must be stressed that the forces of production (labor power and the means of production) are material.

This means that what determines a person's class is whether they own labor power or a sufficient amount of the means of production. A person's labor power is their physical and organic



capacity to alter the natural world. The means of production are physical accumulations of resources produced by labor or natural raw material. An example of the former are machines and of the latter, coal or water (Arboleda, 2016 and Liotzis, 2018).

The Marxist divided the social relationship into classes such as Bourgeoisie, Proletariat and others. Specifically in the Marxian discourse the youths that protested will be in the proletariat class. The proletariat are owners of labour power (the ability to work), and mere owners of labour power, with no other resources than the ability to work with their hands, bodies, and minds. Since these workers have no property, in order to survive and obtain an income for themselves and their families, they must find employment work for an employer. This means working for a capitalist-employer in an exploitative social relationship (Hadden, 1999).

The EndSAR agitation is wildly accepted in the Marxian class theory. Youth are the most populated class in this analysis. Most of them are either undergraduates or graduate from a higher institutions across the country. They belong to the same class. In term of age, social standing and beliefs. This theory is relevant to the topic because the youths who are very active and are very articulate. They are powerful and could provide and sell the power according to the Marxian theory.

### **EndSAR**

The Arab Spring is seen as the progenitor to the EndSAR protest. The Arab spring started in 2011. In early 2011 came the seismic events of the Arab Spring. The Arab Awakening/Arab Spring is a concept denoting a revolutionary sweeping tide of demonstrations, protests and other forms of opposition to the authorities (both violent and non-violent), riot and protracted civil wars in the Arab territories which started on December 18, 2010. Up to this time, rulers in some parts of the Arab world such as Tunisia, Egypt (twice), Libya and Yemen have been dethroned from the mantle of leadership; civil rebellions have erupted in countries like Syria and Bahrain; major protests to show dissatisfactions with the government have broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan; and similar but small scale protests also engulfed places like Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Western Sahara, and the Palestinian territories. Similar occurrences outside of the Arab territories included among others, protests in Iranian Khuzestan by the non-majority Arabs in April 2011 and border skirmishes in Israel in May 2011 (Elfatih, 2015).

The —Arab Spring is generally believed to have been caused by the way and manner by which rulers ran the administrative affairs of local governments, though others have attributed it to the general income inequality. Several antecedents have led to the protests, including factors like authoritarianism, or absolute monarchic system of administration, violations of inalienable rights of citizens, political mismanagement and nepotism, economic downturn, unemployment, acute poverty, and a number of demographic structural aspects like a considerable percentage of educated but disgruntled youth within the population (Werbner, Webb, and Spellman-Poots, 2014).

Generally, the unequal distribution of the wealth of nations and its concentration in the hands of a few elements in the society, particularly those who control power for a very long time; inadequate openness in the redistribution of the societal wealth, corruption, nepotism, and the constant struggle by the youth to change the status quo were the main impetus for the Arab Spring (Mohammed, 2014). Electronic information networks and social media played a critical role in raising awareness of abuses (notably Muhammed Bouazizi's self-immolation which



triggered the Tunisia uprising), mobilising protesters, and in sustaining action and \_defeating\_ the security services during the uprisings (Idris, 2016). There was a definite demonstration effect driving the Arab Spring, evident from the speed with which uprisings followed each other across the region, as people saw what was happening in other countries and were inspired to follow suit (Berdikееva, 2020).

Youths form a greater percentage of Nigerian population. The Youths have been involved with championing for change since the post-colonial era that led to the independent of Nigeria. Nigeria Youths are very active and articulate. The likes of Obafemi Awolowo, Nanadi Azikiwe, Ahmadu Bello and others are youths that drive Nigeria's independence (Olaiya, 2021).

The dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century came with its challenges and the youths took hold of its with the power of the social media. End SARS is a decentralised social movement, and series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria. The slogan calls for the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a notorious unit of the Nigerian Police with a long record of abuses. The protests which takes its name from the slogan started in 2017 as a Twitter campaign using the hashtag #EndSARS to demand the disbanding of the unit by the Nigerian (Omonobi & Erunke, 2017).

By 1992, when SARS was founded, the precedent of controlling Nigerian people through excessive force had long been the norm: British colonizers had arrived in the 19th century and treated the land and its people as resources to be controlled and plundered. Their colonial enterprise had left behind a culture of violence and corruption so that even after Nigeria won independence in 1960, military coups became the norm. The army held power in Nigeria for much of three decades until 1999, including when SARS, the Special AntiRobbery Squad, was created ( Chow, 2020).

Dele Farotimi, a civil rights attorney who has reliable knowledge on the minds that worked to ensure the #EndSARS protests occurred, says in an interview on *Arise News*: —What the young people were asking for was essentially citizenship, their rights to be respected and what the Nigerian state has done is not unlike what it has always done when confronted with the demand for citizenship by any part of the citizenry.¶ The feelings of disenfranchisement suffered by the Nigerian youth can be traced back to the treatment the colonial authorities meted out to \_natives\_, depriving them of dignity and a sense of belonging in the land of their birth. Apparently, Nigerian youth still feel dispossessed with more than 14 million- according to the National Bureau of Statistics - of them currently unemployed and with very few, if any, prospects of securing jobs. And so it is inevitable that they would resort to protests to highlight their bleak lives and unfavourable circumstances. Of course, it would be typical of the state to respond via violence and repression (Osha, 2020).

And indeed, the Nigerian state did respond with force and violence. Amnesty International reports that at least 50 people were killed by the Nigerian army at the Lekki Peninsula toll gate. Many more were injured. The same army blatantly attempted to conceal evidence of the carnage by hurling off the dead on the scene. Apart from Lekki, other parts of Lagos such as Ikokun and the historic slave port of Badagry also experienced state terrorism. In the south eastern parts of Nigeria similar acts of state terrorism occurred during which at least 150 people died. However, in the age of social media, these acts are harder to conceal with global superstars such as Beyonce, Kanye West and Lil Baby all voicing their concern about the plight of protesters fighting against police brutality. Farotimi, who calls the Nigerian political leadership a —criminal, reprobate bunch of rulers¶, says nothing would come out of the investigations instituted by the government to probe the causes of the protests. In his view, there is absolutely



no desire or will to ascertain the causes and all efforts to that effect are merely a smokescreen (Amnesty International, 2020).

The #EndSARS started as a call for the disbandment of Nigeria's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police Force that has earned notoriety for its brutality and human rights violations. The hashtag was first used in 2018 to raise awareness of allegations of violence and exploitation by SARS officials. The government announced structural changes to SARS, but the alleged human rights violations and exploitation continued. In October 2020, reports of an unprovoked shooting of a boy in the streets of Delta State by SARS operatives were shared on social media (BBC News, 2020). Celebrities and activists rallied for support on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook and, in a matter of days, protesters lined the streets of Lagos and Abuja demanding an end to SARS. Pressured by the publicity that the protests had generated, the Nigerian government swiftly announced the disbandment of SARS (Uwazuruike, 2020).

In December 2017, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) announced that SARS had been banned from conducting stop and search operations following several reports of harassment. This ban was publicly re-announced by the IGP in 2018 and 2020, reflecting the ineffectiveness of previous orders. Similarly, in 2018, Nigeria's acting president announced an overhaul of SARS, stating that the National Human Rights Commission would investigate cases of abuse. This statement was followed shortly by the announcement of a centralised FSARS (Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad) which would come under the supervision of the Inspector General of Police as opposed to the previous version which was under state Commissioners of Police. Mere weeks later, the IGP announced the disbandment of FSARS, stating that the unit would go back to being decentralized and under the command of state commissioners (Amnesty International, 2016).

Below are the demands: (i). Immediate release of all arrested protesters. (ii). Justice for all deceased victims of police brutality and appropriate compensations for their families. (iii) Setting up an independent body to oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reported police misconduct within a period of 10 days. (iv). Carrying out psychological evaluation and retaining of all disbanded SARS operatives before they can be deployed (this should be verified by an independent body). (v). The government should increase police salary and they should adequately be compensated for protecting lives and property of the citizens (The Cable, 2020).

### **Good Governance: Solution to Nigeria's Emerging Problem**

Governance is a concept that is germane and relevant to corporate organisation; regional organisation; international organisations and institutions; among other groups and organisations across the globe (Adeleke & Adepoju, 2017). While according to the World Bank (1993) governance is a system through which 'power is exercised in the management of a country's political, economic and social resources for development'. Thus, governance is about securing political power in order to control economic power for the purpose of nation's development. Put differently, it is about using nation's wealth for the benefit of the nation only. Good Governance, on the other hand is about striving for the rule of law, transparency, equity, effectiveness/efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision in the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority. In other words, it could be seen as a process where public officers and institutions conduct public affairs, and manage public resources effectively through the above listed conditions (Johnston, 2004).



Transparency, accountability and participation are ‘three interrelated concepts’ that are indispensable to any governance system that will be termed ‘good’. Transparency, accountability and participation remain requisite for the nation’s development. This is because they provide the basis for ‘good’ policies formulation and implementation; emphasise the strategies for economic growth and development; and enhance efficient management of resources for the nation’s sustenance and general development (Thomas and Saskia, 2014).

Transparency in public offices means openness in governance, where the ruled can trust the rulers and be able to predict the rulers to some extent. Transparent governance could be said to be existing when the ruled have a very clear idea of what their government is doing. Transparent governance allows for transparent decisions and implementation; as well as enhances decisions made to be understood by those whom the decisions are binding on. It also enhances the decisions taken to be enforced in a manner that follows rules and regulations. Transparency brings about openness in governance and administration, and allows free flow of information on the nation’s economic matters, such that the citizens are briefed from time to time about precise information on nation’s state of economy. Through open operation of activities, government can secure the trust and confidence of the people in whom sovereignty lies (Adeleke & Adepoju, 2017).

Accountability, on the other hand, means ‘responsibility’ and ‘answerability’, where public officers are expected to perform their constitutional duties for the benefit of all the citizenry freely without discrimination. Accountability is about holding public officers accountable for their actions and inactions either while in the office or after leaving the office. Accountability enforces on public officers to give accounts of their stewardship and being held responsible for mistake(s) committed while performing their duties as public officers. Accountability has to do with maintaining honesty and probity in governmental businesses. Accountability reflects the need for government and its representatives to serve the public effectively and diligently (Srivastava, 2017).

Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point out that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision making. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand (UKEssays, 2018).

Transparency, accountability and participation are tripod stands of the concept of good governance which is expected to engender growth and development in the fabric of a state like Nigeria. Good Governance if enshrined in the governance of a country will reduce to the minimum conflicts and agitation that arise as a result of neglect or corruption of government policies (Adagbabiri, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

The five point demand of the #EndSAR protesters rightly highlight the decay in the Nigeria police institution and Nigeria at large. The protest was against police brutality and killing against Nigerians. The youths further demanded more from government. These are i). Respect for Human rights ii). Deepening of the country’s democracy iii). Revival of the educational and health institutions iv). A strong commitment towards job creation.



The discontent among youth was already simmering given the economic crisis sparked by the fall in global oil demand (and compounded by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic), institutionalized corruption, and state profligacy that have drawn more Nigerians into poverty. The foregoing coincided with eight months of closure of educational institutions due to strikes held by university lecturers, leaving many young people alienated and angry (Mckenzie, 2020). The second quarter of 2020 in Nigeria, saw the unemployment rate stood at a staggering 27.1 percent and the underemployment rate at 28.6 percent. Out of the 21.7 million that is unemployed, the youths account for a whopping 34.9 percent. They also account for 28.2 percent of the 22.9 million underemployed Nigerians (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Worsening economic conditions and bleak projections for the future have only fanned the flames. Youth were already incensed by reports of high-level elites' corruption, galloping inflation, and unprecedented levels of unemployment, and now the government has announced increases in the price of fuel and an electricity tariff. Against this background, the #EndSARS protests have become a symbol for broader resentment and opened the path for marginalized Nigerian youths to vent bottled-up grievances against the government, starting with the excesses of SARS, which the government has failed to address after several promises of reform (Oluwole, 2020).

Government has already responded to the some of the Demands of the EndSAR protest, first by proscribing the SARS Unit at the Federal and State. It also directed the state government to setup investigation panels to investigate police brutalities across the state. There is more for the federal government to do in term of pushing the economic up and deepen the political space in other to allow youths to participate in governance.

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