

## RESTRUCTURING NIGERIAN FEDERALISM: A CONTINUATION OF #ENDSARS PROTEST MOVEMENT

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### Abstract

*The study explains the character and nature of Nigeria's federalism as a catalyst to the provocation of #ENDSARs protesters and further demands of Nigerians. Restructuring of Nigeria's federalism has become a common yennings of Nigerians. The equitable distribution of national resources has been jeopardized by divided ethnic groups. The establishment of the federal character commission instead of adjudicating justice and fairness in their statutory rights has enthroned ethnic politics of marginalization and discrimination. Many ethnic and regional entities are agitating over the structural imbalances incorporated in Nigeria's federalism. The character and nature of federalism in Nigeria is inappropriate with its inherent lopsided structure. The study employs the documentary method of data collection and our data analyses are based on content analysis. Group theory aided our theoretical understanding of the subject matter. The study concludes that the nature of Nigerian federalism serves as catalyst to ENDSARs protest and further revolutionary struggle in Nigeria. The study recommends the restructuring of Nigerian federalism and decentralization of power to avert revolutionary movements in Nigeria and possible curbing of genocide attempt by Nigerian security operatives.*

**Keywords:** Restructuring, ENDSARs, Protest, Federalism, Resource Allocation, Political Class

### Introduction

The endemic decay of the Nigerian Police Force generally is a product of her inconsistency in her constitutional framework. Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, various problems of great magnitude have challenged her socio-political system. Social science researchers have identified these issues within social-political and economic difficulties. This they often analyzed in their different disciplinary method and methodology. Public administration scholars have argued that the chain of policy inconsistency by different administrations in Nigeria has resulted in the economic quagmire and increased poverty rate in the country. The economists believe that the underlying economic model for Nigeria's economic growth and development is inappropriate to produce an overall healthy economic and social progress. The sociologists attempted to quantify culture and cultural differences in Nigeria as the root cause of her problem.

In the limelight of the opinions and projections comes the philosopher's identification of the ideological gap in Nigeria's political leadership and political party practices as seen in developed societies. The ideological gap in Nigeria's political system is the very understanding of Nigeria's problem of today as opined by philosophical description. Political scientists are of the view that Nigeria's association and relationship with her colonial master could be the possible problem to her growth and development. Some renowned political scientists believed that growth, development deficit, and security challenges in Nigeria are seen as a product of imbalances in her political economy approach while other social scientists have attached social value decay to

Nigeria's present problem.

However, the #ENDSARS protest in Nigeria has shifted and defiled this multi-disciplinary focus and debate to the argument of restructuring of Nigeria's federalism. The constitutional development in Nigeria is marked by a divide and rule strategy. The British colonial strategically empowered the Northern part of Nigeria over other parts of Nigeria. This they did with impunity. The wave of the protest movement in Nigeria for example, #OccupyNigeria, and #ENDSARS protest is a symptom of structural imbalance in her political system. The Nigerian political class has cut deep into these structural imbalances in Nigeria's political system to perpetrate all forms of corrupt practices using their public offices. These constitutional development imbalances are an offshoot of the federal police act establishment in Nigeria. The focus of this study is on the structural imbalances in Nigeria's constitutional framework which is federal and written. The character of Nigerian federalism is lopsided and ethnic bond. It spreads marginalization, poverty, unemployment, economic depression, and endemic corruption to mention but a few.

### **#Endsars Protest**

This is a movement directed towards the ban of Nigeria's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). SARS is a special unit within the Nigerian Police Force feared for its brutality and human rights violations. #ENDSARS was formally used against these officers of the law back in 2018. SARS are accused of countless violations of human rights including kidnapping, extortion, bribery, and extra-judicial killings. There have been attempts by the federal government of Nigeria to structurally change this unit of the Nigerian Police Force with little or no success. Recently, a boy was shot dead at the street of Delta state Nigerian in October 2020 which leads to an uproar on social media. The photos of the shooting went viral on different social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. It was the activities of celebrities and human rights activists that gathered the #ENDSARS protests that shook the power seat of Lagos state, Abuja, and Benin-Warri areas demanding an end to SARS criminal operations.

The government responded adequately to the protest that was fast becoming a national protest in every state of the federation. This is because the protest gradually moved against the ills and maladministration of the present government of Nigeria. This made the federal government of Nigeria disband the activities of SARS thereby creating a new unit known as SWAT. The protest took another shape when the innocent protesters were killed openly by the Nigerian military force at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos state. Many were feared injured and wounded by a stray bullet, as the nation was thrown into turmoil. This and more drew the attention of the international community. This led to the aggrieved mass movement of #ENDSARS protesters to destroy the property of the government and those that instigated the Lekki toll gate shooting and killings. A national curfew was announced to curtail the protest which was hijacked by hoodlums and revolutionaries.

### **Federalism and Restructuring Conceptualized**

Federalism can be referred to as a system and a structure of government. The United State of America serves as the originator of the federal state. K.C Wheare, an American is notable with the federal system of government. Kenneth Wheare desired to provide a working limitation of federalism to the political system of the United State of America. This he applied to the United States, which made it an ideal federal system. The United States of American federalism serves as a global federal practice. Federalism has been defined as a philosophy of government or system that is neither referred to as a theory or an ideology. This was expounded by Vile 1977:1, thus he stated that the theory of federalism does not exist in such a manner that does not make allowance for a sustained theoretical structure to stand.

Wheare (1963) observed that federalism was not defined in a manner that is consistent with contemporary practice. This is because federalism was conceived as a league of states before it was convened to be as a system and practice. According to Friedrich 1963 and 1968, Federalism means a process rather than a design. Thus he stated, "...any particular design or pattern of competencies or jurisdiction is merely a phase, a short-run view of a continually evolving political reality. It is a Process by which autonomous societies come together under previous unitary systems to decentralize powers to federalize..." (Friedrich, 1964: 1). He meant by the following assertions that by the word federalizing, it means given direction to societal differentiation and initiating integration. The theory and practice of federalism according to Malcolm (2012) is linked to the issue of present, and past middle ages, thus he argues that the lowest level of government is capable of exercising authority effectively over other regional units if permitted to do so.

However, Riker (1964) stated that in a peripheral federation, the rulers of the subordinate units dominate the rulers of the federation. This is distinguished by a federal written constitution he analyzed. Riker further believed that a constitution is federal if it has two independent levels of government that are ruled by the same land and people. Ajayi (1997) agreed with Ricker when he stated that the juxtaposition of two levels of power of a central government otherwise called the federal government and other states labeled as state or regions, republics, cantons, or unions makes up federalism. Federalism as a system is defined as the power to govern shared duties between the central and state governments, creating what is often called a federation (Akindele and Olaopa, 2002).

Furthermore, Sagay (2008:11) conceptualized federalism as "an arrangement whereby powers within a multi-national country are shared between a federal government and component units in such a way that each unit, including the central authority, exists as a government separately and independently from others, operating directly on persons and prosperities with its territorial area and with a will of its apparatus for the conduct of affairs and with an authority in some matters exclusive of others". Hence, in this study, we defined federalism as the constitutional division of functions, lists, duties, and powers of the state among the tiers of governments namely the federal or central government and the federating unit, or state or regional government with inter-jurisdictional cooperation and multijurisdictional relations. Hence, the study explains the character and nature of Nigeria's federalism as a catalyst to the provocation of #ENDSARs protesters and demand.

### **Restructuring**

The concept of restructuring simply means to change from an existing protocol. It is a change from status quo to a better-refined mode or state. It is normally used in a positive sense to denote moving from bad to good. According to Rooney (1999), it means to change the basic structure of something. To restructure means to renewable, reorganizing, or repositioning a political system in order to correct the structural imbalances for better functionality. Bello (2017) defined restructuring as "the process of increasing or decreasing the number of parts that make up a system and re-defining the inter-relationship between them in such a way that the entire system performs more efficiently" (Bello, 2017 para 10). Restructuring is of different typology. It can be political, economic, educational, social, accounting, administrative typology of restructuring e.t.c.

The focus of restructuring typology to this paper is socio-political and economic dimension. Political restructuring is structural arrangements that build up the political system. It is situated at the realm where power and authority operations of a country are laudably inappropriate in favor

of the federal government or major ethnic group at the disadvantage of the component units. This is the case with the Northern Nigerian region that is advantageous over other regions of the federation. In a working federal state or system, powers are shared between the central and regional units.

However, restructuring of a federal state entails decentralization of power over-centralization of power, in this case, the region will be semi-autonomously independent but not controlling of the center or altering of the status quo. Federalism is usually guided by ideological linings and notions. Bouchat (2013) stated that the populace, citizens, and groups under a federal structure tend to align on issues of centripetal or centrifugal positioning base on economic gains. This he called the 'balancer' of a federal state. Federalism in Nigeria debates indeed centers on restructuring rather than on disintegration by agitators which means that power brokers in Nigeria are in the oneness that there is unity in diversity. Osisu (2015) argued that the Nigerian socio-political system operates as a unitary system. This is because the enormous powers are zoned by the constitution on the executive arm of the federal government.

### **Methodology**

Considering that this paper is exploratory, the study, therefore, employed the secondary method of data collection. The study gathered data were analyzed using content analysis. The basic problem of political communication is closely associated with the nature and quality of evidence to measure (McNair, 2011). Most of the study data are downloaded and collected from online publications, newspapers, the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, and media articles, etc. The secondary method of data collection and analyses suited this study because they are easily described within the content description. The study analyzed and reviewed different revolutionary struggles or agitations in Nigeria. Most of these agitations are politically motivated and others are against bad governance. The #ENDSARS protest movement is treated in line with the latter. The protest movement was an agitation not only to end police brutality but more also a quest to end bad governance created by the political class in Nigeria.

We identify that the constitutional development in Nigeria is faulty and doesn't foster unity among diversities as encouraged by her federal practices. Indeed successive past presidents or heads of state in Nigeria have contributed to the decay of the political system in Nigeria. The system has moved from military hegemony to federal hegemony that is lopsided towards favoring ethnic lines. This lopsidedness of Nigerian federalism has brought about serious carnage caused by the #ENDSARS protest which has destroyed life and property. It was on this note that the data analyzed can stop the second wave of #ENDSARS protest.

### **Theoretical Framework**

It was Arthur Bentley (1908) that developed the group theory of analysis in studying political phenomena. The group theoretical framework has a multi-disciplinary dimensional approach but is more related to the study of politics (Isaak, 1985:265). Group theorists believe that group behavior is at the center of politics. Group activities are thus assumed to be political activities. It was Bentley (1908:208-9) who made it clear that "When groups are stated, everything is stated". Truman (1971) argued that although that group behavior is at the prime of political inquiry. However, he rejected that group activity is politics. He further stated that "a political group exists when men with shared interests organize, interact, and seek goals through the political process". According to Isaak (1985), "An interest group is a shared group that makes certain claims through or upon any of the institutions of government". The major aim of every political interest group is to satisfy its demands. Interest becomes the guiding motive for group establishment and achievement of the aim. Groups achieve or influence governmental decisions according to their



relative strength and power. This leads the study to the cardinal features of the Group theory of analysis. They are,

- Some interest groups have more access to decision-making channels than others. They influence the government at will or favorably. "Their development and improvement of such access is a common denominator for the survival of the group" Truman (1971:269). This is evident in Nigerian polity today as some definite group interests have more access to the government and the corridors of power but more also, to the benefit of governmental decisions.
- Few institutional or personal interests command the flow of wealth and power in Nigeria. They are the political class of the Nigerian state. They are members of the judiciary, legislators, executives, top bureaucrats, and national business personalities. They dictated and influence a governmental decision that is serviced by personality cult.
- The level of cohesion existing among members of the interest group. The more each group is conscious of the interest of their members the more they rise to power and influence. In Nigeria, the elites are conscious of their group thus, they command power and influence. The poor masses are servitudes to the powerful interests of the ruling elites. The masses are the end product of the elite interest group. The benefit of power and resources are enjoyed by the Nigerian political elites.
- The ranking status of every group determines the influence of the group. The status or placement of every group determines the resources enjoyed by the group. The high-status ranking of certain groups in Nigeria creates room for the benefactors to have access to the political and economic structures of the nation.
- Strong leadership of a group is one of the shared attitudes great interest group command and demands. The political class and other institutions in Nigeria have strong leadership which they protect at all cost. This leadership gives them political will to attract economic gains to their group interest. The rest of the masses in Nigeria don't have cohesive leadership and strength.

The following are what the masses have come to bear by organizing the #ENDSARS protest movement. The study literature review on the subject matter will be guided by the following-themes.

### **Structures of Nigerian Political System**

The structure of the Nigerian political system is interplay of her federal practices and her social dynamics. Nigerian federalism hinges on her constitutional development. Clifford's constitution of 1922 gave a clear-cut expression of the South-North dichotomy in Nigeria. The Richard constitution of 1946 and Macpherson constitution endorses different shades of Nigerian federalism. It was the Lyttleton constitution that gave Nigeria its true federal structure. This was done by constitutionally sharing power between the central and regional units. This empowered each region to administer the peculiarities of their regional problems without the intervention of the center. Here the constitution abolished the powers of the central government to give directives to the regional governments which must be obeyed to the latter.

It was during the military era of late Major General Aguiyi Ironsi that he attempted to turn the system into a unitary structure with decree No. 34 known as "Unification Decree". This attempt was stopped by Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon; Gowon divided the country into 12 states in 1967. On the account of more state creation as viewed by the Eastern part of Nigeria as marginalization. Other catalysts consume the whole country in three years of civil war. Many other states were created by other military heads of states in Nigeria. The present thirty-six states of the Nigerian federation were put in place by General Sanni Abacha on October 1, 1996.

Apart from the constitutional creation of federal and state governments, Nigerian federalism still contains local government administration. They are concerned with the localities and grass-root governance. It is regarded as the third level or tier of government that is subordinate to the federal and state governments respectively. The local government is an establishment of the federal government which functions is allocated to them by the state government. The following are some of the features of Nigerian federalism,

- Division and sharing of governmental powers between the federal and regional governments.
- Adoption of a written and rigid constitution.
- Existence of bicameral legislature in Nigeria.
- The supremacy of the constitution.
- Existence of Supreme Court for judicial interpretation and judicial review.
- Existence of different levels of government that derives their powers from the constitution.

There exist pyramids of problems in Nigerian federalism. These problems have been the creation of dysfunctional constitutional development which has hindered the prosperity and unity of the Nigerian state. The following are the major challenges of Nigerian federalism which serves as the recent catalysts for #ENDSARS national protests.

One of the problems of Nigerian federalism is the issue of revenue allocation otherwise known as fiscal federalism. Revenue allocation refers to the sharing of revenue and other resources generated in the country. These resources are shared among the federal and state government following their constitutional responsibilities. It was the Richards constitution of 1946 that granted internal autonomy to different regions of the country. The major issue here has been the generally agreed formula of sharing these resources. On this account, Nigeria has set up nine different commissions between 1946 and 1988. None of these commissions could settle the resource allocation problem. It was the Okigbo Commission of 1980 revenue formulae that was close to general acceptability by different shades of tribes in Nigeria.

The second problem of Nigerian federalism is the minority issue and state creation problems. The multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria brought about minority issue which militates against national development. Different ethnic units have continued to call for the creation of more states as a panacea to the problem of them has been marginalized. Nigeria has three major ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani) with a multiplicity of minority ethnic groups. In effect to address the problem of the minority in Nigeria body polity, Sir Henry Willink Commission was set up in 1957 to look into the matter, the fears of the domination of minorities. The commission recommended among the following; that there should be constitutional provisions to allay the fears of the minorities. It also recommended long lists of fundamental human rights in the constitution. Finally, the commission stated clearly that no state should be created before independence in 1960.

Inter-ethnic rivalry and secession problem saddle the establishment of Nigerian federalism since her independence. It was the problem of the multi-ethnic variance of the Nigerian state that made its structure and political system not functioning well. There has been an intractable conflict among the three (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani) dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria on who dominates her political leadership. This political leadership struggle has an economic dimension and interest. This economic dimension and interest have made all of the major ethnic groups threaten to secede at a different point in time. The proposals to separate Lagos from the Western region (The Yoruba region) which was rejected in October 1954 meeting almost made them

secede. The self-government motion by Anthony Enahoro of 1953, made the Northern (Hausa-Fulani) part of Nigeria introduce the "Eight-Point Programme", of which if it had been implemented will see the North secede from Nigeria. The Nigerian civil war with the Eastern region (the Igbo's or Biafrans) threatens to break up Nigerian polity.

Lastly, the problem of federal character and boundary dispute consists of another issue of Nigerian federalism. The components states of Nigeria have continually clashed and fight over time because of the boundary disputed problem. These boundaries are rich in mineral resources. For example, the boundary dispute between Oyo and Osun states, Nasarawa and Plateau state, Enugu and Anambra states, and Anambra and Kogi states among others. The federal government of Nigeria established the Federal Character Commission. The Commission is to see that merit is upheld in regards to the appointment, selection, promotion and admission, and dismissal into federal establishments. In true essence, the federal character has deepened the demerit and one-sided exaltation of one ethnic unit of the federation over others. It has established institutionalized ethnic favoritism in Nigeria.

### **Political Stability and Group Agitations**

The major objective of the government of the day is to create a social system that provides for political stability, social cohesion, and economic growth. Political stability enables development and growth which is the antithesis of political instability which produces crises and underdevelopment. The restoration of Nigerian political stability demands justice, equity, and fairness which must be respected by all. It must be demonstrated inaction of the government and the citizens. A nation that breeds constant injustice, unfairness, and inequality is usual thrown into crisis. The rise of groups and revolutionary factions in Nigeria is targeted towards changing the order of governance in Nigeria. This is done with their variants reasons and inspirations. These groups range from militancy to constructive civilians movements in Nigeria. Here are some of the selected groups of this research investigation; MASSOB-IBOP, Boko Haram, Shaitte Moslem, and the #ENDSARS Protesters.

The Movement for the actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) or its splinter group-The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is believed to be associated with Igbo nationalism which supports the restoration of the defunct state of Biafra. The Igbo are believed to be marginalized and disenfranchised in Nigeria's body polity. They are treated as third-class citizens of their nation. This has prompted their quest to secede from Nigeria. Most recognized public office and positions are controlled and if not owned by the Northern part of Nigeria. The present administration of President Buhari has continually ignored the Igbo's in various public positions in the country. This negligence has brought about the separatist agitations by the group. The Boko Haram terrorist organization was created by Yusuf who established it in Maiduguri State, Nigeria. Its purpose was to exterminate western education in Nigeria most especially in Northern Nigeria. The group was known for its attacks on police stations, military or police checkpoints, and other government establishments, killing scores of security officers and citizens. They kill, destroy, kidnap and burn churches and mosques at random. The following are major demands or agitations of the dreaded group;

- To establish Islamic religion in Northern Nigeria.
- To create a Northern independent state in Nigeria.
- To stop the propagation of western education in the North.
- To control resources domicile in northern Nigeria, etc.

The Nigerian Shiite Islamic sect is a revolutionary group that metamorphosed in Iran as a distinct movement of Islam. The visionary leader of the sect is Ibrahim Zakzaky. The sect is known for

chaos and violent teachings across the Islamic world. The leader of the sect in Nigeria was arrested and imprisoned after the numerous crisis caused by his members. The group has continually agitated for their common rights in Nigeria. The following are the reasons for their agitations.

- Their freedom of worship pattern throughout the federation.
- Rebuilding of their major facilities constantly destroyed by Nigerian security agents across the federation.
- Free trial and release of their members, including their leadership in various open and secret detentions across the federation.

Finally, the #ENDSARS protest started in 2017 as a wave to restore good governance in Nigeria. It was carried out by activists and general concerned Nigerian against the oppression and torture of the Nigeria Police Force. It took another dimension when it moved to end the federal Police unit called, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). SARS, as it is popularly known, has a bad reputation for abusing its power. It was established by Amnesty International that over 82 cases of SARS abuses have been recorded in the past three years, including beatings, extortion, hangings, mock executions, sexual assault, and other criminal-related activities. Protesters have continued to post their grievances on social media handles like; Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Nigerians abroad have also consistently chimed in. The #ENDSARS movement has also been financed by celebrities, Nigerian youths, and other influencers with millions of world leaders around the globe.

The structure of the Nigerian socio-political system has a low capability to endanger into the state of crisis. The political instability is challenging though but has been managed and control since Nigerian independence in 1960. Thus, we establish our gap in the literature that the structural deficiencies of Nigerian federalism are sufficient enough to lead towards civil and political unrest in the country (#ENDSARS protest). This structural problem of Nigerian federalism serves as catalyst to #ENDSARS protest movement.

### **Catalysts of Civil Unrest and Nigerian Political System**

Political, social, and civil unrest are characterized by the contradictions of Nigerian systemic practices (Federal system). The structural effect of the Nigerian federalism serves as some of the major problems or causations of the #ENDSARS protests in Nigeria. The nature of her federalism has metamorphosed into ethnic support by beneficiaries from the federating unit. This has resulted in the separatist quest by some regions which feel that the federal-presidential structure has not favored them. Subsequently, this has lead to the #ENDSARS protest nationwide. We can factor this protest within the internal framework of Nigerian federalism which is moribund, archaic, and does not accommodate the interest of all Nigerians. The following are the end product of Nigerian federalism which leads to the civil unrest (#ENDSARS protests);

### **Unemployment**

Most Nigerian graduates are either unemployed or not employable. This has defeated the why Nigerians don't value education anymore. Formal skill acquisition has become lucrative than formal education. Many youths are either in the street hustling or abroad finding greener pasture.

Unemployment in Nigeria has lead to a brain drain among talented educated Nigerian graduates.

In 2020, the estimated unemployment rate in Nigeria is at 8.7 percent, according to



International Labour Organization. This unemployment rate of Nigerians means that the youths between the ages of 15 to 24 years are most likely the hit of this crisis. Uzodigwe N. A., et.al (2023) argues that the effect of globalization has increased the rate of unemployment in Africa.

After the great recession of 2016 in Nigeria and the government crisis with higher education unions which has resulted in strikes and protests. The following statistics reveals unemployment rate in Nigeria from 2008 to 2020, according to National Bureau of statistics; 2008, (3.54%) 2009, (3.72%) 2010, (3.77%) 2011, (3.77%) 2012, (3.74%) 2013, (3.7%) 2014, (4.56%) 2015, (4.31%) 2016, (7.06%) 2017, (8.39%) 2018, (8.24%), 2019, (8.1%), and 2020, (8.7%). As of the time this research is done, there is a measurable increase in last three years. This can also be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic effects.

### **Increased Poverty**

The rise in food prices and the united state of America and their dollar increase has brought increased poverty in Nigeria. There is widespread poverty in Nigeria today. The salary of the Nigerian Police force is nothing to write home about. The high price of foodstuffs and other home essentials is on the increase. The miniature nature of the take-home salary and allowances has aggravated the police unit, SARs to take the root of extortion, brutality, kidnapping, stealing, bribery, and killing of innocent citizens. The brutalities of the SARs' operative got worsen during the global pandemic era. The advent of the novel disease Coronavirus in Nigeria have witnessed troll of deaths of Nigerians not by the novel disease but by hunger and starvation.

The worse is that the government officials withheld public palliatives of the poor masses in different warehouses and states during the pandemic. This has aggrieved Nigerians to the street to protest against not just police brutality but against bad governance generally. The two dominant states in Nigeria living below the poverty line in 2019 are Sokoto and Taraba, in the Northern part of the country. It is recorded that the lowest poverty rate is in the South and South-Western states. This is evidenced in Lagos state a South-western state with a record of 4.5 percent. The following are the rate of poverty rate as of 2019, by states; Sokoto (87.73%), Taraba (87.72%), Jigawa (87.02%), Ebonyi (79.76%), Adamawa (75.41%), Zamfara (73.98%), Yobe (72.34%), Niger (66.11%), Gombe (62.31%), Bauchi (61.53%), Enugu (58.1), Nasarawa, (57.3%) Kastina (56.42%), Kano (55.1%), Plateau, (55.1%) Kebbi, (50.2%) Kaduna (43.5%) and Abuja (38.7%). From the above-mentioned states, it is clear that the northern part of Nigeria has the most increased poverty rates due to the security challenge in that region. The presence of Boko-Haram, Banditry, and Herdsmen terrorists in the northern region has destabilized their entire economy.

### **Endemic Corruption**

Corruption has become the bane of the Nigerian political system, as it affects all her well-being. The danger of every corrupt system lies in the progress and prosperity of the common people. The political class in Nigeria has gradually institutionalized corruption in every sphere of life in Nigeria. The stealing of public treasury has become the other of the day. Nigeria is 146 out of 180 countries in the world corrupt index according to 2019 Transparency international. Businesses owned by Nigerians in Africa and globally are seen as dishonest because of the culture of

corruption in Nigeria's value system. Despite the efforts put in place by President Muhammadu Buhari as the African Union Awareness Campaign leader yet Nigeria still rank very high in the world's corruption index.

According to Transparency International, nearly 50% of the Nigerian populace who engage in public service are involved in corruption. Muhammadu Buhari anti-corruption campaign investigations have indicted many high-profile politicians and have recovered billions of naira with Nigerian anti-corruption agencies. However, Nigerians are worried that the recovered loot has not been injected into its economy.

### **Human Right Violation**

The Special Armed Robbery Squad has violated human rights, which include; right to life, right to expression, freedom from torture, fair trial, right to privacy, etc. These rights are protected by the Nigerian constitution. On the right to life, this has manifested in form of shooting and killing innocent Nigerians, extrajudicial killings, and other unauthorized killings. The Human Right Watch estimates that over 10,000 people were killed by the Nigerian police in the last eight years. FSARS (Federal Special Armed Robbery Squad) has engaged in routine torture from suspects for “confessions”. Some of this torture leads to the death of the suspect in question. Amnesty International has provided shreds of evidence coming from SARS detainees. The Nigerian Police in general extorts the following, sex, money, and other forms of violence display.

It is on record that the special police unit, SARS has engaged in an uncivil rampage many times. They went after or arrest youths that they presume to engage in internet fraud without due investigations. They stop vehicles and people in the street demanding their phones and other personal items. The unwarranted searching of the so-called “Yahoo Boys” vehicles and homes is against the right to privacy and family life. Many have reported that they were arrested for owning iPhones, android phones, and good laptops. Lastly, the right to liberty has been abused by the Nigerian police force. SARS most times lock up people without any reason and often without a trial before the court of law. This is an unconstitutional act to Nigeria's federal law practices.

### **Marginalization and Ethnic Sentiments**

The demand and agitation by different ethnic groups in Nigeria are becoming alarming. They claim that they have been greatly marginalized in place of appointments, promotion, admission, and revenue allocation sharing. This agitation by marginalized and this ethnic sentiment is often pushed forward by people of the southern equator, most especially the Igbo tribe of the east. The administration of Mohammadu Buhari has deepened this obvious truth of marginalizing the people of the south in his appointments and promotion of top civil and cabinet members of the country. This can be verified in his statement that he stands with “95% votes cast for him in the North and 7% votes cast” from the southern part of Nigeria in his appointment. Uzodigwe A., et.al (2020) noted that religion and religious believes greatly affects the way the people are treated.

### **Economic Recession and Depression**

The impact of COVID-19 on micro and macroeconomic status of Nigeria is overwhelming because of the lockdown of nations. Oil indeed represents Nigerian 78% of its exports, banking-sector credit, and 50% of its government revenue. During the pandemic virus break out in Nigeria, oil prices dropped in the international market from \$53 to \$15 per barrel. This brought about untold hardship in Nigeria. This is because the price of oil on which the Nigerian budget is made cannot finance the 2020 budget. The Nigerian GDP dropped drastically to 5% in 2020. This is coupled with the task to combat the novel virus disease which is far spreading.

### **Lessons On #Endsars Protest and Nigeria's Restructuring Agenda**

The #ENDSARS Protesters agitation have taken another dimension due to solidarity reached by the general masses on social media handles like; Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Nigerians that are staying overseas have consistently chimed in. The protest took another stage when their finance reached over 20,000,000 million naira few days into the protest. Celebrities and popular personalities added to their support in other to end police brutality. The protest is engineered by socio-political and economic imbalances inherent in the Nigerian federal structure. The Nigerian youths should joined hands with other influencers to protest against the brutality of SARS officials and possibly bad governance.

The protest became more serious as thousands of Nigerian protesters were sleeping in the streets, even after some states like; Lagos, Abuja, Jos, Enugu, etc, implemented a 24-hour curfew. Their finance was ceased without any investigations. The protesters continued without the help of the federal government. They eat, sleep and wake up in the street protesting with play cards. In some states like Lagos, protesters blocked roads and build a stage outside a busy toll booth plaza in the upscale suburb of Lekki toll gate. It should be clear that the protest was very peaceful. This was before the government-sponsored hoodlums hijacked the peaceful protest.

Protesters were seen carrying different demands on their play cards including waving Nigerian flags across the streets of Nigeria. The Nigerian federal authorities accused them of criminal activities of different magnitude which include, looting buildings belonging to individuals and federal or state and unleashing terror on citizens. The protesters made other critical demands different from, police brutality which includes,

- Immediate release of all the protesters.
- Justice for all diseased victims of police brutality and appropriate compensation were given to their families.
- Establishment of an independent body to oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reports of police misconduct (within 10days).
- With the establishment of the new police Act, psychological and restraining of all disbanded SARS officers before they can be deployed.
- There should be an urgent increase in police salary to cover the hazardous nature of their job

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that the character and nature of Nigeria's federalism serves as a catalyst to the provocation of #ENDSARs protesters demand. This is hinged on the nature of the lopsidedness of the system practiced. The special Police unit, SARS has been politicized towards ethnic lines. The structure of Nigerian police is motivated towards brutality. This brutality is usually targeted at the southern part of Nigeria. The police act of Nigeria encourages this lopsidedness. This is seen in the manner of their recruitment, promotion, discipline, and dismissal. The police act and establishment of SARS is an offshoot of the Nigerian federal constitution.

Nigeria's federal constitutional framework doesn't provide for diverse ethnic peculiarities. Different catalysts that resulted in the protest are the hindrances obtained and observed in the

Nigerian federal structure. We itemize that restructuring of Nigerian federalism and its constitution is eminent to avert the second wave of the #ENDSARS protest and possible genocide attempt by Nigerian security operative.

### **Recommendation**

The study recommended that to curb #ENDSARS protest and other protest agitations from appearing subsequently, thorough implementation of some of the items in the 2014 Nigerian National Conference with special focus on, power-sharing and rotation, resource control/derivation principle, governance, anti-corruption probity, and local government. An overhauling of Nigeria's federal structure practices in other to accommodate different ethnic diversities. Nigeria should be restructured, most especially her written federal constitution in the following regards; regionalization of the police force, regionalization of the judiciary, and the regionalization of the civil service.

Through regionalizing of the police force, there will be a better salary structure for every regional police unit in the region. A more accountable and effective special police unit is established by each region. Well-equipped, principled, and trained police forces are going to be ensured.

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