

EndSARS Protest in Nigeria: A Call for Nation Building

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Abstract

No nation survives without security, which is the protection of lives and properties. For any country to engage successfully in nation-building, adequate security remains a sine quo non, and to achieve this, nations whose leaders know their onions try to steer their countries clear from issues that would brew insecurity, especially at the domestic level. Internal insecurity is a bane to nation-building. The EndSARS protest added a new dimension to Nigeria domestic insecurity. A country battling already with insecurity challenges of Boko Haram terrorism, Killer Herdsmen, Banditry, Armed robbery and Kidnapping should not have afforded to allow another avoidable domestic upheaval, especially from her youths, the future of the nation and a major player in the process of nation-building. This study tries to look at the implications of EndSARS to nation-building in Nigeria by looking through the timeline of its cause and course. Oral interviews, personal visits, observations and relevant literature were used as sources of data collection. The method adopted was historical narrative, with thematic and analytic approach. The study sees the EndSARS as a revolutionary movement against bad governance in Nigeria and will attempt to proffer solutions to forestall future occurrence. It concludes with recommendations on how to handle the aftereffects of the EndSARS in form of the lessons, remedies and panacea to the benefit of nation-building in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria; Police; EndSARS; Youths; Nation-building; Protest

Introduction

Politics refers to as the struggle and quest for power; that process of controlling the authority to distribute the values of society by the government as supreme arbiter. Thus, it is the process and institutions for seeing “who gets what, how and when,”¹ from the available resources and assets in Nigeria as the case may be. Therefore, in Nigeria politics, there are expectations of religious and ethnic conflicts, some pursuit of the common good, conflict of group interest, use of power, and struggle for power. But the big question remains: is these all within the dictates of fairness and justice? The question therefore borders on the following: In what direction will this phenomenon operate? How will these factors cooperate and combine to shape the future of Nigeria? What are the variables that shape the political trend? What are the input of political state actors vis-à-vis the non-state actors? What are the likely eventualities? Are the eventualities influenced by external forces or pressure, or arrived at by looking through the periscope of National interest? According to E.C Banfield, politics, always involves the use of, or struggle for power. Politics denotes “those considered process of human action by which conflict concerning on the one hand, the common good, and on the other hand, the interest of group, is carried on or settled”.²

The 2020 EndSARS protest presented another political trend for many, who saw the event as a reflection of the prevalent poor political leadership of the time. The protest was largely effective due to the use of digital technology, particularly the internet. Nigerian youths tagged the 'soro soke' generation started the protest from Twitter before taking it to the streets. 'Soro soke' is a Yoruba phrase which means 'speak louder'. EndSARS is a decentralized social

movement of Nigerians, especially by the youths with no actual leaders that resulted in series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria. The protest took its name from the slogan started in December, 2017 by Segun Awosanya as a Twitter campaign, with the hash tag “EndSARS” to demand the disbanding of the police SARS unit by the Nigerian government.³ The police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), was adjudged to be notorious since its formation. There were numerous public outcry and complain against SARS overtime and some of their officers were implicated in extrajudicial killings, torture, indiscriminate arrest and unlawful detention of citizens. Due to public outcry, the Federal Government made attempts to reorganize the unit.

The Anti Robbery Squad (ARS) was first formed in 1984.⁴ to combat violent crimes which included robbery, carjacking and kidnapping. Like the case of most Nigerian institutions, SARS at its initial years performed creditably towards combating and reducing crimes, however with time corruption and lawlessness began to be associated with the activities of the unit. It was reported that the incident that inspired the formation of the later SARS was the death of Colonel Ezra Dindam Rindam of the Nigerian Army, killed by a police officer at a check point in Lagos in September, 1992.⁵ The police officers were arrested which infuriated the entire police officers who went on strike in response. This resulted to an increase in crime wave, thus ushering the formation of SARS to curtail the surge in crime, as a masked police unit to perform undercover operations against violent crimes. Before the formation, for two weeks police officers fled from their duty posts, as the military men came out in their search for retaliation in Lagos streets. The withdrawal of the police officers from duty and checkpoints, some were reported to have resigned, created loophole for surge in crime, which led to the formation of SARS in response, with an initial force of fifteen (15) men and two (2) Peugeot station wagons.⁶ SARS was founded by a former commissioner of police Simeon Danladi Midenda, he distinguished his squad by naming it “Special Anti-Robbery Squad”. It is of note that three (3) police anti-robbery squad existed then, the first being the one earlier established in 1984.⁷ However, after two weeks of dialogue the Army and the Police reached a compromise and resolved their differences, leading to the normal resumption of police duties again in Lagos. The official commissioning of the SARS unit was done on November, 1992 in Lagos, then one of the fourteen (14) units in the Police Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (FCIID), headed by then Deputy Inspector General of Police Anthony Ogbizi.⁸ Thus a viable and effective security force ensures stability in the polity and enhances nation-building process and programs.

Nation-building aims at unification of the people within the state in order to ensure its political stability and viability. Political stability and viability transcend into social and economic spheres that bring about cohesion among the citizenry. The primary objective of nation-building is to maintain a peaceful nation, it also helps to make a violent society peaceful. Political, economic and social stability are assured once there is provision of security, food, shelter, basic amenities and services to the citizenry. Thus one of the major challenges of nation-building is the rise of popular but avoidable movement, like the EndSARS, which any sensitive government would not have allowed to happen in the first place. As a conscious effort by the government to promote unity through cultural, political and economic development in a country, the youths are supposed to be an integral part of those efforts.

Prelude to #EndSARS: Remote Causes

Nigeria in the Fourth Republic under Buhari's Regime was obviously over politicized but under governed. The various past regimes of the Nigeria Republic have not impressed the citizens as expected, but it seems to have gotten worst under President Buhari. Nigeria stood and operated on a tripod of Injustice, Religion and Ethnicity, as widely perceived, which the government of Buhari laboured to disprove to no avail. However, the mirage of sectional agitations, especially from the eastern and western parts of the country pointed to the obvious fact that the regime was marred with bigotry, nepotism, tribalism and insecurity. The incessant spate of mass killings, kidnapping, Boko Haram terrorist activities, armed herdsmen, bandits, unknown gunmen, police brutality and extortion, not to talk of the endemic corruption underscored that Nigeria's response under Buhari's presidency did not reduce violence, insecurity, police brutality and corruption spreading across the country's north and south geo-polity. It is a major duty or the fundamental obligation of any state or government to provide citizens with human security, but it baffles one that those whose duty is to provide such, as the military and police forces, instead trigger violence or exacerbated conflicts in Nigeria through their actions and inactions.

The Federal government response was largely ad-hoc, an admixture of federal military actions, state negotiating with the criminal gangs and the allegedly payment of ransom, and even rehabilitating purported repentant Boko Haram terrorists, which some of them reportedly went back to terror ways. The key points of the sectional agitators and the wide spread condemnation of police brutality or their mode of operation, especially the Special Anti Robbery Unit (SARS) from the youths across the country were unexplainably neglected. Obviously there was no effective coordination or response among federal and state authorities to listen and put a stop to police reported excesses. According to various perception or persuasion, the system of things and situation in Nigeria was blamed on the existing constitution, for some others, to the system of government, or the political actors/class and furthermore on the prevalent injustice, inequality and unfairness in the scheme of things. Furthermore, the systematic utter neglect of the youth population of the country portrays Nigeria as a country without plan for the future, for tomorrow. A country with a vibrant youth population stands the chance of accelerated development with an assured future, but the reverse has been the case in Nigeria. From the educational system, the employment opportunity, to the political leadership, the youths have been disfavoured and shut out. Therefore, people complained of the need for equity, dialogue, justice, restructuring of the governmental system and constitutional amendment from terminus a quo to terminus ad quem.

Justice and equity are obviously lacking in the Nigerian socio-economic and political system, which have continued to negate efforts towards nation-building. Poor governance and lack-luster leadership has been the bane in Nigeria's march towards structural and infrastructural development, as such development in the areas of social environment, economy, politics and security are nothing to cheer about. To ordinary Nigerians, remotely, the EndSARS protest goes beyond the call to end police brutality. It entails a holistic restructuring of Nigeria, as a transition from a lopsided federal political structure to a true federalism "characterized by political inclusiveness, people-oriented constitutional amendments, resource control, electoral process, political representation, equitable sharing of offices, citizen's rights, protection of lives and property, and building of enduring political (and social) infrastructures".⁹

Protest about ending SARS illegal activities first emanated in December, 2017, championed online by Segun Awosanya. The online advocacy campaign by Segun demanded an end to SARS brutality in Nigeria. The social media campaign with the hashtag #EndSARS on Twitter,

according to report came from a Twitter user, @Letter-to-jack, who posted that the Federal government should scrap SARS unit of the police. In response many Twitter posters supported the idea, with many narrating their own personal and perceived ordeal they and their relatives or friends suffered in the hands of SARS operatives. Within a short time, the international media also became involved in spreading the EndSARS campaign.¹⁰ The hysteria created by the EndSARS campaign led to the staging of protest against SARS in Abuja by mid December of 2017.¹¹ The Nigerian Senate of the 8th National Assembly gave their support to the demand to scrap SARS.¹² However, after the initial promise by the Federal government of Nigeria to carry out SARS reforms, probably to douse tension, nothing changed. Another futile effort was made on August 14, 2018, when the Acting Vice President of Nigeria, Yemi Osibanjo ordered for the immediate overhaul of SARS, as deafening reports against SARS and their illegal activities echoed once again.

Osibanjo was more emphatic as he ordered the then Inspector General of Police (IGP), Ibrahim Kpotun Idris to carry out independent investigations on SARS activities and ensure that reforms are made. The response resulted in the IGP renaming the Police unit the Federal Anti-Robbery Squad.¹³ The new reform created Human Rights officers in the unit to check abuse reports, also a new head was appointed for the SARS unit. Yet these seemingly lip-service measures without any back up practical changes made no tangible change in the way SARS unit operated. Another effort at reform was the decentralization of SARS unit carried out by the IGP Mohammed Adamu on January 21, 2019. Before this time the unit was centralized from the Force Headquarters in Abuja. With this new format, the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) of Force Criminal Investigations Department and the various Commissioners of Police in each state became in-charge of the SARS units, which now was under them in Abuja headquarters and states respectively.¹⁴

Severally in the past were calls to draw the federal government attention to the atrocities associated with SARS and its operations. Despite those calls the government remained inactive and irresponsible towards addressing the excesses of members of the SARS unit. Over the years various complains against the SARS unit included, links with extra-judicial killings, extortion, torture, framing, forced disappearances, kidnapping, blackmail, armed robbery, illegal organ trade, home invasions, child arrest, invasion of privacy, rape of men and women, and polluting bodies of water with the illegal disposal of human remains. As a result, SARS was investigated, especially when people staged protests, but without any tangible outcome to assuage the people's yearning by bringing to book accused officers. At the heat of any major protest, the federal government would promise reforms like they did in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019.¹⁵ However, the mother of SARS protests so far, the EndSARS of October, 2020 showed that the previous of government reactions were nothing but paying lip-service to the continuous illegal SARS activities. Another salient feature among some of the SARS members was the issue of their mode of dressing, which appeared unconventional to the police force, like the wearing of dread-lock hair style and wearing of earring became a norm, and also wearing of knickers and slip-on foot-wears while on duty. These were observed and frowned at by the citizens, who are the tax-payers that funded their maintenance. Their pay masters, they have turned to hunt. There was obviously general lack of proper orientation among members of the SARS unit.

#EndSARS: Immediate causes

The EndSARS protest started on October 8, (Wednesday), 2020, simultaneously on the following Nigerian states of Lagos, Abuja, Enugu, Rivers, Oyo, Anambra, Ebonyi, Abia, Osun, Delta, and Ogun, then gradually other youths in other states joined.¹⁶ Prior to the spontaneous

protest that commenced on October 8, 2020, was the killing of a young man on October 3, 2020. Protests were sparked by a viral video that allegedly showed Nigerian police SARS officers killing a young Nigerian man at a location in Delta state. The Police authority worsened the matter when they claimed that the purported video was fake and even arrested the video maker, which angered the people more, especially the youths across Nigeria.¹⁷ This singular event mobilized Nigerians on the social media as the hash tag #EndSARS took over on top of the global media trends on Twitter. With massive Twitter trending and in other world social media, coupled with the support of notable Nigerian artists in the movie and music industries and their international counterparts, it escalated to a world-wide concern and condemnation. Thus demonstrations across the major cities of Nigeria erupted and Nigerians, mainly the youths started protesting against the death of the young man killed on October 3, 2020 in Ugheli, Delta state. The video that trended showed a SARS officer shooting a young motorist, at Ugheli, then pushing his body out of the car and driving off with the dead man's Lexus SUV. This resulted in the spontaneous movement of young Nigerians, who gathered in major Nigerian cities to demand the disbandment and abolition of SARS. The magnitude of this latest EndSARS protest of October 2020, led to instant reaction by the federal government to disband the SARS unit on October 11, 2020.¹⁸

#EndSARS: Timeline and Consequences

The protest against the controversial SARS unit went sporadic that lasted over two weeks. Nigerians, majority who are youths took to the streets to demonstrate and demand that the Federal Government disband the SARS unit and prosecute officers indicted in the commit of atrocities against citizens. There were citizens' complain of extortion, harassment, torture and murder against the SARS unit, which went viral in the social media with the hash tag #EndSARS, where people register their anger which now extends beyond SARS to include deep-rooted social grievances. A timeline of the event showed that October 3, 2020 incident of a viral video allegedly showing SARS officers that killed a young Nigerian man in Ugheli, Delta state and took away his SUV car, was the event that sparked off the nation-wide protest.¹⁹ Twitter went agog with the hash tag #EndSARS tweets by world famous musicians, film actors and media personalities, whose support gave a massive boost to the movement. By October 8, 2020, Nigerians massively took to the major cities protesting and the police force came out to disperse protesters with tear gas.

On October 9, 2020, in Oyo a protestor Jimoh Isiaq was shot dead by the police while protesting. This increased the anger nation-wide, and included in Twitter hash tag #Remember Jimoh, trended.

On October 10, 2020, a police station in Ijebu-Ode was attacked by angry protestors over the death of Jimoh Isiaq and similar others in the hands of the SARS unit. Protestors also marched to the Lagos House of Assembly, who held an emergency session, allowing some protestors to observe proceedings. The Lagos House of Assembly passed a motion in support of the protestors to disband the SARS unit and communicated same to the Federal Government.²⁰ On October 11, 2020, the IGP Mohammed Adamu announced the dissolution of SARS unit "with immediate effect" as demanded by protestors.²¹ The IGP said the disbanded SARS officers will be redeployed to other police units and formations. Later a new unit named Special Weapon and Tactics (SWAT) was formed as replacement. However, the disbandment of SARS by the Federal Government as announced through the IGP did not deter and abate the nation-wide protests, as it continued with more vigor, seeking justice for victims of police brutality

and a reorganization of the police force and even an end to the newly formed SWAT, hence a new hash tag #EndSWAT began trending.

As the protest gained momentum across the country, though there was no EndSARS leaders, but there were protest organizers in cities across Nigeria, who created WhatsApp groups, and protestors on ground were adequately supplied with basic needs of food, medicine, with doctors on ground to administer first aid to protestors.²² Ambulance services were provided and lawyers were available who went from city to city to provide legal services to arrested protestors. Funds were raised by supporters in Nigeria and abroad to sustain the movement. Civil society personalities, activists and celebrities like Aisha Yesufu, Davido, Wizkid, Don Jazzy, Paul of PSquare, Rinu Oduala, D J Switch, Adenkule Gold, Burna Boy, the Feminist Coalition (FEMCO), also provided support to the EndSARS movement, others were Modupe Odele, Temilola Balogun, Praise Ogonna, Toke Makinwa, Simi, and a host of others.²³

On October 15, 2020, as the intensity of the protest increased the Nigerian army released a statement warning to “all subversive elements and trouble makers”. The army went further to say that they “remain highly committed to defend the country and her democracy at all cost”, and also “ready to fully support the civil authority in whatever capacity to maintain law and order and deal with any situation decisively”.²⁴ On this same October 15, 2020, the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo informed Nigerians via Twitter that a meeting he held with the 36 states governors, the FCT minister and the Nigerian Human Right Commission had agreed that Judiciary Panels of inquiry would be set up to ensure that justice is served to all victims of the EndSARS atrocities.

On the October 16, 2020, the CEO of Twitter Jack Dorsey revealed a new #EndSARS emoji on Twitter that has the colors of Nigerian flag that was added to tweets of #EndSARS hash tag, as a sign of support to Nigerian protestors.²⁵

On October 18, 2020, the Nigeria Army announced the annual training exercise “Operation Crocodile Smile VI”, which now included a cyber warfare component that sought to identify, track and counter “negative comments on social media across the country”,²⁶ as a new dimension.

On October 20, 2020 (Tuesday), what was widely regarded as the height of the EndSARS event happened. The Lekki massacre on that night by the Nigerian Armed Forces, who it was widely claimed shot at peaceful protestors, some among them were carrying Nigerian flags and bore no arms at Lekki toll gate in Lagos. This was nationally and internationally condemned. The number of casualties was disputed, while witnesses and Amnesty International claimed that about 12 persons were shot dead, the Nigerian government and Army claimed there were no person killed, but only about 25 persons wounded.²⁷

#EndSARS: The Aftermaths’ Statistics, Response and Remedial

In reaction to the underrated and surprise protests that emanated from the EndSARS movement, the Federal Government of Nigeria responded with the following remedial moves, hereunder discussed. Earlier on October 4, 2020, the IGP Mohammed Adamu had announced that the Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad and other tactical squad must stop activities like road block, traffic check with immediate effect.²⁸

On October 11, 2020, came the immediate disbandment of the SARS unit by the Federal Government announced by the IGP. Few days later he named Special Weapon and Tactics (SWAT) as the new replacement. Even with that some Nigerians took to Twitter with the hashtag #EndSWAT.²⁹ Most Nigerians have lost confidence in the Buhari led Federal Government and doubted the possibility of genuine reform and proper training for the new SWAT members, hence the demonstration continued thereafter. Sequel to the October 15, 2020 National Executive Council (NEC) meeting headed by the V.P Yomi Osibanjo with the 36 state Governors, the FCT Minister and the Nigerian Human Rights Commission representatives, was the setting up of Judicial Panels of Inquiry, to investigate the allegations of human rights violations against the SARS operatives. The panels were chaired by retired state judges with members from the civil society organizations, Human Rights Commission, Citizens Mediation Centre and two Youth representatives. The panels were empowered to receive petitions and investigate same concerning police brutality and extra-judicial killings in order to bring justice to victims and their families. Most states quickly set up their panel of inquiry in order to help douse tension in their states. State Governors were asked to oversee henceforth the activities of police in their respective states.³⁰ On October 21, 2020, the United Nations (UN) condemned the Nigerian government and Army for using “excessive and disproportionate force” against peaceful protestors. The same day the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights advised “Nigerian authorities to take urgent steps to deal decisively with the underlying problems of persistent violations committed by the security forces”.³¹

On October 22, 2020, President Buhari confirmed in his address that SARS has been scrapped and berated some of its members for using excessive force while carrying out their duty. He also said that those found guilty would be prosecuted accordingly. On the same October 22, 2020, the African Union Commission Chairman in strong worded terms condemned the spate of violence as witnessed in Lagos and urged all parties to engage in “privileged dialogue”. The Chairman, Moussa Faki Mahamat statement read “strongly condemned the violence that erupted on October 20, 2020, during the protests in Lagos, Nigeria that resulted in multiple deaths and injuries”.³²

On November 9, 2020, surprisingly the Nigerian Police filed a law suit challenging the legality and constitutionality of the panels in the states claiming that state Governors had no constitutionally granted powers to oversee the police.³³

On December 3, 2020, the IGP ordered an investigation to know how the police law suit originated. But in a swift move and without explanation the police withdrew their law suit.³⁴ However, not all state government established the Judicial Panel of Inquiry, while in states that established theirs, some were more serious and coordinated than others. Through November and December, 2020, there were issues of EndSARS protestors who were continually harassed by the police. Some had their bank accounts frozen, some had their international passport seized and many remained detained in police cells against one of the protestors’ demand of unconditional release from police detention.

A major aftermath was the wanton destruction of lives and property during the EndSARS protests. Majority of states in southern Nigeria were badly affected, a few in the Northern part of Nigeria. However, Lagos was the worst hit in the level and manner of destructions during the EndSARS protests. According to report 62 persons were killed in EndSARS protest in Lagos. Out of that figure, 51 killed were civilians, while 11 others were policemen.³⁵ In another

report a whopping amount of N47.12 billion in damages during the EndSARS protests were recorded.³⁶ The damages recorded were on both private and public properties. Government buildings and properties and mostly police stations and correctional facilities were targeted. There were in the month of October, 2020 alone, 13 police stations, 11 government properties and 25 private properties across Nigeria that amounted to the estimated losses to the tune of N47.12 billion. Government and private properties razed, destroying revenue generation channels, hence reports estimate over N47.12 billion in damages from raids. With 2021 budget riddled with uncertainty, current events aggravate unfavorable economic conditions for Nigerians in the near future. Prior to what we addressed as EndSARS loot, following the discovery of COVID19 palliatives, demonstrations became a tad more intense. Particularly, correctional centers in Edo and Ondo State felt the bite of the mobs leading to the alleged escape of over 2000 inmates. And according to reports, timely intervention of security personnel foiled similar attempts at Ikoyi, Lagos.³⁷ In the same vein, felons destroyed many police stations, razing vehicles. The magnitude of effect of this destruction on the economy is unfathomable. Likewise, a recent Dataphyte report which noted over 27 razed police stations, with 10 missing AK-rifles, ³⁸ questioned the compounded effect on an already sinking economy, serviced by debt. Not to mention the opportunity cost of repairs which the country would have channeled to other areas of the country. Worse, though, there was also no distinction between government and private property, as raiders plundered indiscriminately. To this effect, Dataphyte compiled some of these damages outlining property, location and state, thus:

The Rundown of Police Stations affected

Station	Location	State
Pako Layeni Police Stations	Amukoko and Ajegunle	Lagos
Nworieubi Police Divisional HQ	Mbaitoli LGA	Imo
Ekeaba and Kpiri Kpiri police divisions	Abakaliki	Ebonui
Ugbekun Police Station	Benin	Edo
Dutse Makaranta police station	Kubwa	Abuja
Dragon Squad unit of the State police command	Aba	Abia
Iseyin Police Station	Iseyin	Oyo
Central Police Station	Nnewi	Anambra
SARS Office and a Police Division	Akure	Ondo
Police Station	Ijebu-ode	Ogun
Division HQ Police Station and Vehicles	Ikere	Ekiti
Two Police Station	Benin	Edo

Police Station	OrukAnam	Akwa Ibom
Destroyed Properties		
Government Property	Location	State
Nigerian Ports Authority	Marina	Lagos
Post office and local market	Osogbo	Osun
FRSC and VIO	Ojodu	Lagos
FRSC	Asaba	Delta
Local Government house	Enugu north	Enugu
Town hall	Aba	Abia
Operational van of the Nigerian Airforce	Benin-agbor road	Benin
Akwa Ibom state broadcasting corporation (AKBC)		Akwa ibom
BRT and police vehicles		Lagos
Vandalized warehouse of COVID-19 palliatives and looted food items	Bukuru	Plateau
Federal High Court	Igbosere	Lagos
Private Property	Locations	State
Cars and tents	Central	Abuja
Trucks		Ekiti
TVC and lekki toll gate		Lagos
Samsung showroom and 18 other personal shops, which includes MTN stores, boutiques down to ShopRite	Bode Thomas, Surulere	Lagos
Oluwarotimi Akeredolu campaign office		Ondo
Oba palace of Lagos		Lagos
Shoprite, banks and ATM	Lekki and Surulere	Lagos
First bank	Aba	Abia

Nations Newspaper		Lagos
Vehicles		Lagos
ATMs	Presidential road	Enugu
First bank, Access bank and 6 ATM machines	Abakpa	Enugu
Otigba Statue	Otigba roundabout	Enugu
Cars	Berger	Abuja
Nollywood actress Uche Elendu's shop vandalized, looted	Lekki	Lagos
AIT Office	Edo	Benin
Palace of the Soun of Ogbomoso	Ogbomosho	Osun
Vehicles, galaxy shopping mall, the lodge summit and chicken republic		Kano
Fumi Morris	Sapele	Delta
De choice mall, Anchor Insurance, IG showroom, Zenith, FCMB and Access bank	Uyo	Akwa ibom
Shoprite mall, Femkem electronics and phone store, agro mall, Ilorin cargo terminal stores and customs house	Ilorin	Kwara
Senator's farm, APC secretariat, office of the health insurance scheme campaign office and others		Osun
Senator loses property worth over ₦200m to vandals in Ibadan	Ibadan	Oyo
Actress Lilian Bach stored vandalized and looted	Surulere	Lagos
Protesters set Ondo APC secretariat ablaze, attack chairman's house	Akure	Ondo
Lagos Oriental Hotel	Lekki	Lagos
Oil Tankers set ablaze	Warri	Delta
Estimated Losses		

Property	Number	Unit Cost	Total Cost
BRT Buses	84	\$100,000 & \$200,000	₦3.9 billion
ATM	15	\$20,000 (₦7.6 million)	₦114.2 million
Oil Tankers with products	3		₦90 million
Police Stations, vans and barracks (Lagos)	25, 20 & 3		₦10 billion
Lekki Toll Gate		\$85 million ,	₦32.5 billion
Senator's property	—	—	₦200 million
Vehicles	57	₦1.5 million	₦85.5 million
Lekki toll gate revenue	—	—	₦234 million
Total			₦47.12 billion

Source of Chart and information: Dataphyte.

However, it was obvious from eye-witness account that the EndSARS apostles were not the ones that carried out the massive destruction of private and public properties, but hoodlums who later infiltrated into the movement, some of them evidently sponsored by government from video account in the internet. Hoodlums hijacked the protests and were the ones that carried out the massive destruction of properties.³⁹

Another worrisome aftermath was its disservice as end product to the nation. Consequently, the EndSARS has empowered criminality, humbling and intimidating the Nigeria Police Force; illegal increase and release of arms and ammunition into the Nigeria society; widening of the gap of cooperation between the security forces, especially the Army, Police and Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corp (NSCDC) and Nigerians. Also the Special Tribunal inability to instill trust and hope for positive change in the way security agencies carries out their duties subsequently. People in some areas choose to cooperate with the terrorists and bandits, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria as reported, than with security agents.⁴⁰ The above as reported was similar with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)/Eastern Security Network (ESN), where some individuals in Eastern Nigeria are cooperating with them as against security agencies due to lack of trust on government and its agencies. This has affected the fight against insecurity adversely. Security personnel, especially the Army and Police have become easy targets of attacks. Many have been killed thereafter while performing their official duty.

Another remarkable aftermath was the phenomenon of “Unknown Gunmen”, which started in the Eastern part of the country in November, 2020 and has spread to other parts of the country. They were initially called “Men in Black” when they first started operating in Imo state as a result of their all-black outfit.⁴¹ However, in ascription to their swiftness and mode of operation, apart from their all-black outfit, which made them appear invisible and elusive, the name “Unknown Gunmen” became the most appropriate, and they began to be referred to as such.⁴² Some referred them as members of the IPOB or their militant wing, ESN, especially from government perspective. But the IPOB group had denied any association with Unknown Gunmen. Other cases of Unknown Gunmen attacks have been reported in other parts of Nigeria, including in the North. The security agencies are yet to unravel the mystery behind the Unknown Gunmen and make their real identity known.

#EndSARS, Appraisal Years After: The Expositions

EndSARS was a paramount challenge to nation-building in Nigeria. It exposed Nigeria’s fault lines, which clearly showed that the Nigeria nation has not really emerged. What is called Nigeria is a political society held together by legal and geographical ties, a mere geographical expression as popularly said. The binding force of shared historical experience with its inter-related growth is yet to be seen. There is no unified political philosophy which shapes the thinking of all Nigerians. The EndSARS event has again brought to the fore the inability of Nigerian government under President Buhari to take proactive action against the security agencies who engage in violence against unarmed protesting youths and activists, as suggest of conspiracy to perpetually relegate the youths of the country who are meant to be future leaders. The crop of the Fourth Republic politicians have continued to perpetuate and recycle themselves in political governance for the past four decades or a little more and have refused to retire in order to enhance the advancement of the teeming and majority of marginalized Nigerian youths, who statistically made up 40-70% of the Nigerian population.⁴³ The Buhari administration appears to be rudderless without a figure head who calls the shot, in the sense that most actions emanates from the Presidency, and not the President and when it backfires no particular person takes responsibility, and the government seems to dwell more on propaganda than to face and tackle the reality. In the same vein, any opposition to government’s anti-people programs and policies was viewed to be sponsored by their ‘perceived enemies’, instead of relying on such constructive criticism to heal and build the nation.

There was palpable insecurity in every part of the country before the eruption of the EndSARS protest. The threat from terrorist groups- Boko Haram, Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), bandits, killer herdsman, kidnappers, armed robbers, ritualists, major separatist groups of IPOB/ESN and Yoruba Nation group, etc had already kept Nigeria at the brink of collapse before the EndSARS came on board. One would have expected that the Federal government handled this latest threat involving her youths with caution. Their shabby handling on the contrary underscored that Nigeria’s response was not reducing the violence and insecurity spreading across the country. Providing citizens with security is one of the most fundamental obligations of any state, but it was baffling that those whose duty is to provide security, such as the military and police forces, instead trigger violence or exacerbated the conflict. There seems to be a nexus between the EndSARS and Boko Haram because the October 20, 2020 state-led killings of protestors in Lagos seem to have something in common with the November, 2020 massacre of about 43 farmers in Markudi, or the December 11, 2020 abduction of hundreds of school students in Kangara, Katsina and others.⁴⁴ In the sense that all the three episode could easily be recorded as just further situations in Nigeria long history of violence. But these happenings underscore the obvious failure of the government to provide

security for its citizens, thereby further deepening the trust deficit of Nigerian citizens that is vital for nation-building.

Information had it that by January, 2021, there was approximate estimate of 375,000 as the total number of Policemen in Nigeria.⁴⁵ Whereas a UNO report said Nigeria population has hit 211 million people in the period of January, 2021.⁴⁶ If the arithmetic is done, there is a ratio of 1 police to 562,666 Nigerians. The disparity is quite enormous, yet the Buhari administration has remained insensitive to that. Nigerian Defense Minister Magashi Bashir (Maj. Gen Rtd.) in a press interview after a National Security Council meeting on April 22, 2021 (Thursday), said “the Nigeria nation is bleeding” caused by perceived “political enemies”.⁴⁷ This goes to show the level of despair as frankly expressed by the country’s Defense Minister. Nigeria is regarded presently as one of the most dangerous place in the world to live in, specifically identified as the “third most affected by terrorism, this is according to the 2020 Global Terrorism Index.⁴⁸ While the Economic Intelligent Unit (EIU) reported that Lagos was the 2nd least livable city in the world for the year 2021.⁴⁹ The executive director of Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), Akinbode Oluwafemi pointed out that “the ‘increasing intolerance’ of the Nigerian government towards the call by youths for an end to police brutality is elevating the #EndSARS protest into an ‘undying movement’”⁵⁰ Furthermore he said, “Believing that you can suppress and cow this generation to submission will never work. The government cannot rule a digital generation using analog, no matter how they try, they will fail”.⁵¹ Dataphyte in its report noted thus “how the stern and tone deaf Presidential response was the match that lit the ongoing demonstrations, which are anything but peaceful.”⁵²

The Nigeria Federal government has been in a running battle of accusation and denial with the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), supported by Human Rights Organizations, both local and international as a result of how the Federal security agencies handled EndSARS protest, especially the Lekki toll gate shooting. In an international conference to mark the one year Anniversary of EndSARS protest in Abuja on 20 October, 2021, Amnesty International insisted and repeated that 12 persons were killed at the Lekki toll gate shooting of October 20, 2020 during the EndSARS protest. In response, at a press conference to address the EndSARS one year anniversary in Abuja on the same day of October 20, 2021, the Federal government through the Federal Minister of Information Lai Mohammed, on their part maintained that nobody was killed. According to the Minister, there were no evidence to show killing at Lekki, no dead body found, no blood flow in the vicinity and nobody came forward to claim that any of his/her relation was missing or killed as a testimony. He went further to demand an apology from CNN and Amnesty International to the Federal Government of Nigeria for their false reportage, supported by footage of the purported shooting and killing at Lekki toll gate, Lagos.⁵³

An important exposition was some information that came from the set up Judicial Panel of Inquiry. Though some of the panel’s findings are yet to be made public officially, some information that came out during their proceedings was a pointer that government did not respond appropriately to the protest. It was reported that there were about 3000 petitions altogether to the various panels across the states. The report said that out of 36 states, 28 states and FCT, Abuja established judicial panels as instructed, 8 states refused to establish. 11 of the states as at October 20, 2021, one year after concluded and submitted their reports, while 17 states did not conclude their proceedings to submit report as stipulated and expected. It was also reported that some of the states suspended their proceedings shortly after commencement,

but resumed few days to one year of EndSARS anniversary (October 20, 2021), like Ekiti, Edo, and Bayelsa states. While states like Anambra, Kogi, and Benue did not resume or conclude before the one year EndSARS anniversary. Preliminary report from Lagos state panel showed that a total of 99 persons were killed in Lagos EndSARS protest.⁵⁴

Lessons from EndSARS Protest

This could be summarized in the question and answer narrative, thus: Few years after the EndSARS protest in Nigeria, has anything really changed? The answer is capital NO. However, there are some obvious and as well salient lessons learnt from the EndSARS saga. From all indications youth representation is missing in government, despite the Buhari administration's "not-too-young to run" political mantra. There was no concerted effort on the part of government to include the youths in the Buhari administration's cabinet. The least in age of the administration's cabinet members was the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and National Disaster, Sadiya Umar Farouq at 44 years, whereas the National Youth Policy recognizes a youth to be between the age of 15-29 years.⁵⁵ The President and his government showed no empathy on the number of youths that died during the protest by their words and actions. Therefore, it was a wakeup call that Nigerian youths should invest in knowledge of politics and governance. They have the numerical strength (70% of the population) and should be able to utilize it to create a niche in political decision-making.

Another lesson is the gullibility attitude among the youths, a situation where some of them were easily deceived and bribed over with money to drop their philosophy and ideology or even made to turn against their fellow youths and their own ideology. Government officials see them as hungry, gullible and frustrated desperate youths that cannot be relied upon. The EndSARS movement also showed the ability and workability of the Nigerian youths to unite together irrespective of tribe religion and region. It demonstrated freedom from the ethno-religious tension that usually plague the framing of Nigeria's domestic, security and political issues. Such was unprecedented among the Nigerian youths in pursuit of a national cause, similar to what obtains when the national football team is playing a match. This shows that the Nigerian youths have the potentials to unite and fight a common cause. Therefore, the potential for nation-building in Nigeria, no doubt is available, it only needed the right leader to ignite it. Another propped up question that would have suited the Buhari administration, to provide them with guide to have a change in policy against the militarization of Nigeria democracy and society, would have been: Does the presence of armed men or armed forces, weapons and ammunitions deter war, conflict or revolution? No.

The Federal government under Buhari as it appeared did not learn any lesson from the EndSARS protests by the way they responded and operated, it was business as usual thereafter. The government was reluctant to focus on how to address the demands raised by the protestors, rather the focus then remained on the still to come 2023 general elections. This highlighted the level of insensitivity on the part of the politicians. Most state governors were not keen about the judicial panel of inquiry and the Federal government was dormant on the other demands of the protestors, apart from the initial disbandment of the SARS unit. Instead of trying to satisfy the popular demands of her citizenry, attempts were made by the Federal government through its officials to bring in ethnic and religious fault-lines of Nigeria to break the movement, which did not work due to the united stand of the protestors. Therefore, government should avoid divide and rule practice or is it tactics? This is negative to nation-building.

Another lesson is that the government should not wait for issues to get out of hand before initiating reforms or remedy, government should be proactive. If government had responded to the citizens' outcry against the police SARS unit things would not have degenerated the way it did. Government should henceforth be proactive and responsive to public demands to provide for the wellbeing of its citizens, for the people are to be served, it is through the tax-payers money that government is maintained. Nigerians were taken for granted by the Buhari government and regarded as the most docile society as being taunted, but the people during the EndSARS seemed to have woken up to assert their rights. The protest is not a vote against democracy, rather a vote to strengthen democracy, deepen the rule of law, against corruption, insensitivity, and reckless leadership at all levels both in public and private institutions that were anti-people. The protests have proved that the people are the custodians of power, the power to protest, the power to liberate the society is in their hands, and not with any leadership. It has proved that Nigerians are not the problem but the leadership. Nigerians can be effectively mobilized with the right people leading them on the route for a better society, which saw demonstrations held in at least 25 of the country's 36 states.⁵⁶ The movement's organizational ability showed that it is possible to have an accountable and transparent civil society that is responsible to the needs of its citizens, that nation-building in Nigeria is attainable with the right leadership and policies.

Recommendations

Scholars of war and conflict have noted that human beings are the first instrument of battle, the first weapon of war, and the most important one for that matter. Therefore, every government in power must ensure that good governance is maintained. Governance should not be politics, but leadership. There is need for un-political governance towards nation-building in Nigeria. As the first weapon of conflict, maladministration can push and activate citizens into unleashing unrestrained chaos and revolts, which could result to avoidable mayhem, wanton destruction of lives and properties, which retards nation-building. The EndSARS protest also provided the answer to the question: Does the presence of armed men or Armed forces, weapons and ammunitions deter war, conflict or revolution? No, rather in most cases it spurred or aggravated it the more as witnessed during the protest. A sensitive government practicing true democracy should employ political solution and diplomacy in handling volatile issues and not with the use of the armed forces of police and army. The government of Buhari militarized the Nigerian society and indulged in Militarized Democracy with excessive use of force, which was not good for nation-building. There is no alternative to good governance that hinges on equity and justice. Government must remain fair and just to all and sundry, disregard of ethnicity, religion or tribe. Government should be sensitive and proactive with the ability to muster the political will to act justly at all times, effect changes like the clarion call for Police reform when necessary, avoid procrastination on urgent national issues and respect the rights of its citizens at all times.

Not much was seen from the Judicial Panel of inquiry set up to soothe frayed nerves and administer justice to victims of SARS and EndSARS brutality. Apart from the Lagos panel and few others, most of the panels were suspended as soon as they were inaugurated, without any cogent reason and explanation to the people and in disregard to their feelings and the EndSARS protestor's demand. The Federal government should have shown enough sense of purpose and sincerity in coordinating the establishment of the Judicial Panel of inquiry in all the states to ensure uniformity and seriousness in the business of the panels. They left in solely in the hands of the states, who chose whether to establish or not and some did not, this also gave the Nigeria Police the courage to challenge the legality of the panels of the states initially. Government at

all levels must ensure that the panel's findings and decisions are honored and enforced, this will restore the citizen's confidence and a sign of government responsiveness and willingness to right the wrongs of the past. There should also be a holistic Police Force reform which has been variously canvassed, but up to the penning of this work, there was no tangible sign of any police reform seen so far.

The youths should be given a sense of belonging, a show of concern and the enabling environment for their voice to be heard. The federal government should show this concern on her youths by officially instituting a commemoration day of remembrance for the EndSARS casualties, backed by government organized seminars and symposium to mark the anniversary. This will go a long way to reassuring the Nigerian youths that their affairs are in government heart and agenda. In addition, youth's education, employment and empowerment should be given an emergency status by the Federal government to enhance the youth's adequate preparedness as leaders of tomorrow, the above gesture will enhance nation-building.

On their part, youths had demonstrated clearly that with determination and unity of purpose a lot could be achieved through self-help to emancipate themselves from the shackles and fetters of selfish politicians, who are bent on perpetuating themselves in governance for selfish gains. If the youths can replicate such resilience and determination as seen during the EndSARS movement, by coming together to form a political force, they could muscle the old brigade politicians out of power and be in the position to correct some of the ills in governance. However, the making of a corporate objective is one of those difficult task which the government of Nigeria must tackle as a duty, this is also incumbent on political leaders the world over. A sense of equity and social justice is fundamental to achieving peace, security, sustainable development and nation-building, which only good governance can achieve. Governance should not be politics, but leadership. A country cannot have sustainable development, peace and security without good governance. It is practically not possible, hence as a precondition there must be good governance, championed by visionary, effective and transformational leadership.

For effective democracy and nation-building to thrive in Nigeria, every government in place must ensure and maintain the rule of law, sustainable and wide-spread development, and enhancement of the living conditions of the citizenry in a secured, peaceful and equitable atmosphere. Equity is the fulcrum of peace and justice, when it is seen to be done and maintained, it douses unnecessary tension and agitations, while nation-building thrives. The government should also be proactive and responsive at all times to events that border on her citizens' welfare, security and development. Procrastination they say is the thief of time, if government had reacted positively, the protest would have been nipped in the bud before it escalated to the destructive level.

Summary and Conclusion

The EndSARS campaign went beyond the literal call for the scrapping of the SARS unit. It was a broader call by the Nigerian youths for social justice. It went from a five-point (5) demand to extend to a twenty-three point (23) demands. The movement came to re-echo as the Nigerian version of the United States' #BlackLivesMatter protests. Its significance hinges on the merit of being a movement that cuts across the whole youth spectrum in Nigeria devoid of religious, ethnic, or tribal identity. Another significant feature of the movement is the organizational ability of the conveners. Despite the absence of any leadership or figure head, the organization of the protest and the fundraising structure created a microcosm of how a

properly organized and functioning nation should be. It shows that unity and transparency are achievable if given the right environment. The EndSARS campaign grew from a national to an international concern. It attracted attention all over the world, from the major world Presidents, corporations, entertainment industries, the media, sports personalities, etc. The protest attracted solidarity on a global scale, especially after the Lekki shooting incident by security forces of unarmed protestors on October 20, 2020, where 12 persons were reportedly killed. After the disbandment of the SARS unit by the Federal government as demanded by protestors on October 11, 2020, the protest however continued which jolted the political class and scared them out of their wits, due to the fact that the demand was nothing less than wholesome change of how Nigeria was governed, this informed the violent response from government.

The EndSARS could be seen as both a political and social rebellion backed by radical empathy, devoid of ethnicism, tribalism and religious bigotry. Despite the loss of lives and properties, the pain and grief, there is a re-birth, a new found spirit of patriotism, transparency, love and unity that bounded the genuine protestors in their vision for a better Nigeria. The same burning spirit was also found among Nigerians in the Diasporas, who joined and gave support in one form or the other. The EndSARS as a unique, strategic and decentralized movement, without leadership, yet very effective in structure poised to fight for a system change, a fight for their lives, a fight for justice over the killing of their peers, is to a greater extent a demand for existence and a chance for Nigerians to reset their nation towards nation-building.

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