AIPGG Journal of Humanities and Peace Studies Vol. 3. NO 2.2022
ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

Flogging a dead horse: The realities and the futility of anti-government protests in Nigeria

Oluyinka Olutola Olajire
Department of Behaviojural Studies
Redeemer's University, Ede.

Abstract

Anti-government protests in post-independence Nigeria have assumed a more noticeable dimension due to their increasing frequency. The recent surge and regularity of these protests is a clear indication of the pervading unequal economic and social conditions and perceived consciousness of injustice among people in the country. Thus, the trajectory of anti-government protests in the country is a testament that people now see such demonstrations as a viable means to facilitating desirable social change. In reality, however, only very few anti-government protests in Nigeria have translated to tangible improvement in the conditions of people or have pressured the government to rescind its decision/s. Based on the abovementioned, this article considers some popular anti-government protests in Nigeria and highlights some major factors responsible for the failure of most anti-government protests in Nigeria and why they have failed to make significant political concessions.

Keywords: Realities, Futility, Anti-government, Protests, Nigeria

Introduction

Anti-government protest is not a novel social activity in the world. Its occurrence predates the 21st century and mainly results from the activities of many people who are disinterested in the status quo and, at the same time, demanding change. In the recent past, many revolutionary mass anti-government protests have occurred globally. Indeed, the world at large had witnessed many of such between the years of 1830-1848, 1917-1924 and 1939-1945 - those that occurred as direct fallouts of First and Second World War; and there is no sign of the problem abating even in the 21st century[1].In the past, anti-government protests were regarded as an unconventional way for the public to express their discontent with the government or its policies. Recently, in many regions of the world, it has entered the reigning political toolbox and is now widely acknowledged as one of the few extreme options left for people who have been locked out of all traditional and institutional ways to demand change, especially from the government[2, 3].

Generally, a protest is defined as a planned public demonstration against a course of action or policy. People frequently congregate to protest local, national, or international events, particularly political ones involving the government. Recent global events and developments have shown that societies

with centralized governments are not immune to the state-society conflict, otherwise known as anti-government protests. It has become an effective tool through which members of the public influence governments' policy-making and implementation[4]. The recent spasms of massive uprisings from countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, America and other parts of the world have in no small measure caught the attention of media sources(Print, electronic and mass)and the generality of people globally. In contrast to previous centuries, anti-government protests in recent times have increased in size, frequency, speed, and regularity in many of the world's most populous regions. Indeed, the enormity and frequency of mass anti-government protests that occurred in countries like Hong Kong, Chile, Iran, India, Pakistan, Syria, and Turkey between 2015-2019 have eclipsed the huge anti-government demonstrations of the late 1960s and late-1980s which made the epoch to be dubbed the eras of mass protest[5].

The rate, rapidity and commonness of mass protests targeted at governments and governments' initiatives globally in the 21st century have made many commentators and researchers remark that we now live in the age of mass protests. Citizen protests are occurring more frequently than ever in many parts of the world (See Table 1). For instance, countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Brazil, Burundi, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Iraq, Japan, Lebanon, Macedonia, Malaysia, Moldova, and Venezuela, to mention but a few, recorded a considerable number of protests in 2015.As a whole, 114 countries worldwide witnessed anti-government protests in 2019 alone. Out of this lot, 37 countries experienced massive and prolonged anti-government protests[5]. The core reasons for many of these protests have been the subject of analysis and comments by experts, who have predicted that there will be more protests and that they will last longer in many nations.

Recently, the spike in mass anti-government protests globally has gradually become a trend of great concern in the international arena. Aside from the fact that protests are increasingly becoming the order of the day in many parts of the globe; the sheer size of people participating in anti-government protests in modern times has unexpectedly significantly soared. For instance, in the 2019 Hong Kong protest, almost 2 million out of the 7.4 million inhabitants of the city came out en mass to demonstrate the type of change they desired. Precisely, on October 25 2019, in Santiago, Chile, a quarter of Santiago's population, around 1.2 million people, came out to protest[5].

There are a variety of causes for the present wave (upsurge) of anti-government protests across the world. More people are becoming politically and economically informed nowadays. They are also becoming more aware of their rights and the need to hold the government and those in positions of authority more accountable to the aspirations of the governed[5, 6].As frequently referenced in the literature, a new era of greater instability has evolved due to the increased number of individuals who demand things from their governments and encourage others to do the same. In essence, the gap caused by the government's incapacity to satisfy the many demands, wants, and

expectations of individuals is a fundamental cause of the social unrest known as anti-government protests. Correspondingly, many governments have used various law enforcement strategies to stifle such requests since they are unprepared for the many demands that people make.

Additionally, the steady expansion in the global population in the 20th and 21st centuries has led to an increase in the number of individuals who push for change in the potpourri of human undertakings within their social environment. Zbigniew Brzezinski, a former U.S. National Security Advisor, coined the phrase "global political awakening" in 2008 to explain the causes of the escalating and reverberating activism that swept through various parts of the world. This was due to the persistence of anti-government mass upheavals in the 21st century. The assertion that practically all people on the planet have become politically engaged, politically aware, and politically interactive was well conceived by him.

Table 1Number of Protests between 2006 and 2020

	2006-2010	**2011-2015**	**2016-2020**	**Total**
East Asia and the Pacific	98	144	136	378
Europe and Central Asia	119	319	368	806
Latin America and the Caribbean	92	164	171	427
Middle East and North Africa	53	85	70	208
North America	44	111	126	281
South Asia	26	37	38	101
Sub-Saharan Africa	76	138	155	369
Global Protests	68	83	88	239
Total	567	1081	1152	2809

Source: ORTIZ ET AL., 2020

Many additional elements have been cited as some of the causes of large-scale anti-government protests, including people's demands for democracy, better public services, civil rights, social justice, more employment, the cessation of abuse, corruption, and austerity. The common factor in all mass anti-government protests, regardless of the language, creed, age, or location of the participants, is governments' failures on all sociopolitical and economic development fronts, which nevertheless culminated in citizens' lack of faith in governments' capacity to meet their demands.

Frankly, of all the factors influencing mass anti-government protests globally, none is ranked higher as the harbinger of protests than structural inequality and injustice. The current level of inequality in the 21st century is staggering, unprecedented and noted to be unparallel in the world[7,8,].Evidently, the huge effects of four decades of neoliberal policies, which consistently decreased income and welfare for individuals in lower and medium income strata, have increased inequality throughout the world1. What is more worrisome is the

extent to which the COVID-19 outbreak has contributed to the economic instability in most parts of the world[9, 10]. Additionally, however, factors such as political manipulation of misleading information, the preservation of public space, and advancements in communication technology also have a big impact on the growth of recent anti-government demonstrations around the globe[6].

More inequality has been created throughout the world as a result of the massive impact of four decades of neoliberal policies, which have persistently reduced income and welfare for those in lower and medium-income strata[1].However, what is even more worrisome is how significantly the COVID-19 epidemic has contributed to the upheaval[9, 10]. In addition, the political exploitation of false information[5], the preservation of public space, and the advancement of communication technology are also playing significant roles in the escalation of recent anti-government protests throughout the world[6].

In line with the preceding, this article critically evaluates some well-known anti-government protests in Nigeria to determine whether or not they succeeded in achieving the organizers' goals. The rationale stems from the common conception that protests are simultaneously products and generators of change as they always engender either micro or macro changes within society[11]. In the words of Sanches[11], protests may not always produce the changes desired by the participants socially or politically. However, they often produce emotional or cognitive feelings and echoes, what Sheldrake (2006) defined as morphic fields. These authors believe that protest experiences should consistently engender feelings of empowerment, solidarity, and a new way of thinking that will fuel future protests. Therefore, if the protest does not produce any tangible or concrete result as desired by participants, it will be viewed as effective when it generates novel morphic fields consisting of shared memories, identities, and experiences that can generate future protests. As part of its commitment to contribute to scholarly discussions on anti-government protests' role in social and political change, this article builds on recent scholarship to examine and identify some of the probable causes that have contributed to the failure of anti-government protests in Nigeria.

Popular Anti-government Protests in Nigeria: Realities

Over the years in Nigeria, public members have participated in protest demonstrations to express their discontent with governments and governments' policies. Nigeria had its fair share of anti-government protests even before independence in 1960, and many more erupted after the country became a sovereign state. There have been many anti-government protests in various parts of the country, as many protesters challenged the arbitrariness of state rule. More often, these protests have been triggered by grievances, localized issues and demands that later degenerated into collective actions. Certaininternational events influenced very few protests. These protests varied in terms of what caused them, the amount of support they garnered from the populace, their points of origin, methods, and goals. While there are some

differences between what occasioned these protests, they all share common characteristics (causes), including a high cost of living, authoritarianism, poor government performance, and political and civil rights[12].

In Nigeria, anti-government protests have become a viable tool for people to show their grievances and resistance to harsh socio-political or economic policies and objectionable activities of the governments. Over the years, protests have been adopted to show people's disapproval of government initiatives/policies, while many others have engaged in protests to demand government attention regarding their wishes.

Before Nigeria gained independence in 1960, there had been several anti-government protests due to the large number of people who turned out at different times and places to protest colonial regulations they found offensive and interfering with their socio-political and economic participation in their local communities. Specifically, the last three decades before independence saw a wave of protests among the very 'petite' sex in the country, women. These protests became particularly outstanding because women solely organized and coordinated them at different times in the country's Eastern and Western regions. The first protest was a two-month-long Aba women's protest in 1929. This anti-government protest was triggered by the colonial government's imposition of a direct tax on women in the Eastern region who were supposed to be tax-exempted according to Igbo tradition[13, 14].

In the 1920s, the British government was desperate for devising newmeasures and means to recover from the financial losses incurred during the Second World War. This partly led to the colonial government's imposition and introduction of direct taxes on women in the Eastern part of the country. This singular act made the matter more challenging for the women who had witnessed a substantial drop in their earnings due to the economic upheaval associated with the depression of the 1920s. In the wake of the global economic depression, these women experienced steady drops in the prices of their products while the prices of other goods sourced overseas skyrocketed[16].

As a result, the women's income dropped, leading to their further impoverishment, and they became more disconcerted and resistant to the so-called exploitative direct tax introduced by the colonial government. Another factor in the literature that influenced the protest was the exploitative tendencies and high-handedness of the Warrant Chiefs appointed by the colonial government to administer communities and collect the newly imposed tax on women. According to different sources, many British-appointed Warrant Chiefs were using their new offices/positions to enrich themselves. In their bid to compel people to pay the tax, they were found acting disapprovingly of the traditional rules and the prevailing unwritten laws that prescribe humane treatment for all. Also, the fact that the colonial government poorly remunerated these Warrant Chiefs made them engage in unwholesome practices to sustain their newly acquired prestigious lifestyles as warrant

ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

officers. However, despite the success of the Aba women's protest in the Eastern region of the country, measured by the colonial government's discontinuity of the newly introduced direct tax on women, its toll in terms of the destruction of properties and amenities traceable to the colonial government, death of some of the participants and the incarceration of many others, no doubt left an indelible mark on many people[15].

In a similar version, the literature is awash with another tax-induced protest solely conceived and organized by women in 1946 in Abeokuta, Ogun State. Unlike what caused Aba women to protest in the Eastern part of the country, the reluctance of Alake of Egbaland, Oba Sir Ladapo Ademola II to accede to the pleas of women led by Madam Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, to intervene on their behalf to convince the colonial government to abolish tax on women eventually caused the protest. The decision of the colonial government to fine Madam Ransome-Kuti the sum of 3000 pounds or be imprisoned later boomeranged and resulted in the occupation of the King's palace for two days by over 10000 women, who ensured they made life unbearable for the King and other notable people within and around the palace[26].

The pressure generated by this protest culminated in the abolition of the tax and the eventual abdication of the throne by the King on January 3, 1949. The success recorded by women in Abeokuta buoyed other women protesters who also protested to ensure the abolition of the tax imposed on women in Lagos. The exploits of Madam Ransome-Kuti and her group provided the group of women in Lagos the impetus and resilience they needed and which eventually made the government grant their wish[17, 18].

The 'Ali Must Go' protest in 1978 was the first anti-government demonstration after independence, with the most remarkable national outlook regarding its organization and the ethnic representation/colouration it attracted. In essence, the general acceptance it gained from Nigerians from all walks of life is unprecedented. The government's unwillingness to give in to the demands of the national student union leaders, who wanted the government to reverse its decision on reforms to university finance, sparked the protest. Although it was not the country's first student demonstration, it was the first to draw more than 10,000 people to the streets to confront the government on students' welfare[16].The demonstration sparked students' anger about rising university boarding costs at federally funded universities (accommodation and food). Numerous people and students from across Nigeria took to the streets to protest the increase in student boarding expenses. This happened due to the then-escalating economic crisis brought on by the global decline in oil prices[24].

As the protest raged on, the majority of the demonstrators and the student delegates sought the resignation of Colonel Ahmad Ali, the then-Minister of Education, as part of their strategy to make their demands clear and persuade the government to comply. However, the General Olusegun Obasanjo's (the then Military Head of State) administration resorted to clamping down on protesters

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as demonstrators continued to swarm the nation's streets. As a result, one student died, and several others were injured. Eventually, the authorities shuttered schools, detained several students' unions executives, and finally instituted the increased charge while protests continued unabatedly in the streets.

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was implemented in Nigeria, and the detrimental economic consequences that followed the adoption of the policy also sparked massive protests across the nation. The SAP was implemented by Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida's military regime in 1986. It was praised by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a way to strengthen and stabilize the national currency as well as a way to lessen the nation's overdependence on the oil industry and promote economic growth[17]. However, the programme's promise to rebuild Nigeria's already-battered economy and make it self-sufficient and productive was not realized in practice. Instead, implementing SAP resulted in significant economic strains/problems, forcing the government to reduce budget and programme financing. Consequently, the naira was devalued, inflation spiked, and the unemployment rate increased sharply[24].

Like in countries that implemented the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), such as Algeria, Bolivia, Ecuador, Jamaica, and Mexico, many Nigerians protested against the programme's implementation because their standard of living was steadily declining. The unemployment rate was constantly rising[18].As the Nigerian economy further nosedived; organized labour unions, individuals and civil society groups criticized the adoption of SAP and equally joined the ensuing fray. The protesters, as a whole, voiced their displeasure at the rising cost of crude oil products and the failing state of the educational system. Eventually, the federal government cracked down on students, people, and other elements of civil society that participated in the protest. Consequently, the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) was outlawed, while several students were jailed, tortured, and arrested.

The annulment of the results of the 1993 General elections and the subsequent failure of the Military government of Ibrahim Babangida to allow the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to announce the winner of the general election was the cause of the June 12 protest. Many international and local observers adjudged the election as the best in post-independence Nigeria because it was declared peaceful, free and fair. The regime of Babangida was eulogized for the conduct of the election because it was void of thuggery and political skullduggery that characterized elections in Nigeria. Indeed, the pattern of the 1993 general elections showed it was not influenced by religious and ethnic sentiments that typified previous elections in the country. The fact that many Nigerians saw MKO Abiola (the undeclared winner of the 1993 presidential election) as a detribalized Nigerian, and the fact that they had become tired of prolonged military rule and wanted the enthronement of democracy were some of the reasons for the peaceful conduct of the election[24].

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The 1993 presidential elections annulment sparked violent protests across the nation; the National Association of Nigerian Students, notable Nigerians operating under the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), and numerous other civil society organizations organized and vehemently opposed the annulment. All the groups that participated in the protests demanded that MKO Abiola be recognized as the winner of the 1993 presidential election which the military junta declared null. While it is true that Nigerians vehemently protested the cancellation of the presidential election, the South-Western States of Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States witnessed the majority of the mobilization of protesters. In the consequent face-off between security agents and the protesters who blocked significant highways/roads, particularly in Lagos, people were killed, and many others sustained various injuries. MKO Abiola was later arrested and incarcerated by the military regime. This was because he declared himself the winner of the 1993 election and claimed to be Nigeria's president. He later died in confinement under controversial circumstances in 1998.

Another anti-government protest with landslide effects that made the government rescind its decision to suddenly increase of pump price of Premium Motor Spirits (PMS) from N65 to N140 per litre in 2012 was 'Occupy Nigeria'. One of the excuses of the government then was that the whole process of PMS subsidy was enmeshed in grand corruption. The subsidy removal of the government was hinged on the claim that many major distributors of PMS were found selling the already subsidized PMS at exorbitant prices to other neighbouring countries, thereby making illegal profits at the expense of other Nigerians[19]. People ignored the government's appeals that any gains from the elimination of subsidies would be used to strengthen other weak areas of the economy.

However, a turning point in the history of protest in the country was reached with the implementation of the subsidy removal on January 1, 2012. The public, higher education students, and members of organized labour organizations banded together to protest the elimination of PMS subsidies. They ignored the multiple attempts and assurances from the government that it would mitigate any suffering brought on by the loss of subsidies. The consequences of the subsidy removal were unpleasant and noticeable right away; in addition to the rising price of PMS at the pump, other commodities' prices, particularly those related to the cost of the country's transportation, were also negatively impacted. People who considered the PMS subsidy the only safety net they had from the government felt misled and let down by the administration's decision. Later, these people teamed up with the country's labour union leaders and other concerned Nigerians to participate in Occupy Nigeria[28].

The 'Occupy Nigeria protest lasted for over two weeks; protests spread throughout the country. Nigerians overseas joined the fight by organizing protests and occupying numerous Nigerian diplomatic posts, seeking an explanation for the root causes of corruption at home. The Diaspora population

urged an investigation of the fuel subsidy programme. They also questioned the government's credibility for failing to take swift action against the "cabal" charged with diverting money intended for subsidies into their own private and individual pockets[28]. Just two weeks after the protest, the government and the leaders of the labour organizations reached an agreement on a partial subsidy that sets the pump price of PMS at N97.Due to the organized labour leaders' compromise with the government, a planned strike by labour unions was ultimately called off; as a result, the protest lost its direction. Eventually, labour leaders were accused ofbeing bribed by the government in exchange for blocking the planned strike action. The government later used the labour union's exit from the protest to suppress the demonstrators in the streets. By the middle of January 2012, seventeen protestors had died as a result of security personnel's violent removal of demonstrators from the streets[28].

EndSARS protest was mainly a youth-led uprising demanding an abrupt end to incessant police brutality in Nigeria. In 1992, a specialized police squad known as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was created to combat the rising number of armed robberies and kidnappings for ransom carried out by criminal elements operating throughout Nigeria. The unit's effectiveness initially depended on its secrecy and method of operation because it was created to function autonomously to target criminal organizations. To assist police operations in responding to community distress calls about armed robberies and other violent crimes, SARS agents performed covert operations using plain clothes and unmarked vehicles. However, SARS employees have been linked to numerous human rights cases of abuse over the years, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape, killing and extortion[29].

The protest began due to the extra-judicial shooting of a young man at Wetland Hotel in Ughelli, Delta state, on October 3, 2020, by the operatives of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The dastardly act of SARS agents was recorded and posted online with the hashtag #EndSARS. This incident became viral and sparked a massive outcry throughout the country, particularly among the teeming youths relying heavily on social media. Thousand of youths had various grudges against SARS because of the brutality they had experienced in the past at the hands of these special government operatives. On October 20, 2020, the protest reached a crescendo in Lagos when some of the protesters (youth) that gathered at the Tollgate in Lekki to protest peacefully were allegedly shot. At some point, 15 of these youths were reportedly killed by the military personnel sent by the government to quell the protest[29].

Why Anti-government Protests Record Low Success in Nigeria?

As highlighted earlier in the body of this work, a series of anti-government protests have taken placebefore and after independence in Nigeria. Many of these protests occur as direct fallouts ofthe ‘so-called’ profoundly important governmental activities and policies that a significant number of Nigerians saw as obnoxious and anti masses. For umpteen times, Nigerians have poured outin

ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

tidal waves of humanity to show their disappointment and grievances towards government policies and structures of power they felt were inimical to their cooperate existence and survival as Nigerians. So far, every anti-government protest in the country has undoubtedly shown that Nigerians could muster the needed capability and political will to fight for their rights and make attempts to salvage their motherland from the hands of elites whose policies and activities in government are seen as anti-people.

However, of all the anti-government protests so far organized in the country only very few can be said to have recorded huge success based on the anticipation and expectations of the organizers and various groups that participated in them. Many of these protests have failed to engender or produce the changes desired by the participants socially or politically. Only a few of them could be described to have elicited the cognitive feelings and echoes that Sheldrake referred to as morphic fields. In the literature, manifold reasons have been adduced as to why most anti-government protests in Nigeria have failed to achieve their ultimate aim. Myriad factors that point to the fact that Nigeria is a fractured society ridden with issues such asprimordial sentiments, unbridled corruption, public ambivalence, and irreconcilable religious, cultural and ethnic differences have all been advanced[20]. Another well-known factor is the coerciveness and highhanded nature of the government and the gross disrespect of the various law enforcement agencies of the government for the human rights of protesters.

Apart from the protests organized by women against the Colonial government (Aba in 1929 and Abeokuta in 1946), no other protests successfully made the government rescind its decision/s that prompted a protest and thereafter maintain the status quo in Nigeria. For instance, the tactics employed by women during the Aba protest made the British Colonial government not only jettison its bid to make women pay taxes but also replace the warrant chief system with the village council system[21]. Similarly, the 1946 women's protest in Abeokuta equally recorded an enviable feat which resulted in the British Colonial government's abandonment of levying tax on women and the eventual abdication of the throne by the Abeokuta monarch who refused to table the request of the women before the government.

The ignoble role that ethnicity played in reducing the effectiveness of the June 12 anti-government protest cannot be overemphasized. Even though Nigerians from all ethnic groups voted Bashorun Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola -a philanthropist and a detribalized Nigerian, as president-elect during the 1993 General elections, only people from the southwestern part of the country participated actively in the ensuing protest that the cancellation of the election generated. The consensus, however, was that the non-participation of other ethnic groups in the protest marred its effectiveness. This is succinctly described in the Africa Watch of August 1993:

ISSN: 2756-5831 (ONLINE)

> The tragedy of the present crisis is that Nigerian citizens, who in the election seemed to have overcome a legacy of ethnic conflict by crossing ethnic and regional barriers to vote for Mr. Abiola, have been forced once again tonarrow their sights and put their ethnic identities first, rather than their citizenship as Nigerians ….

Aside from the undesirable role played by many northern political and religious leaders for not speaking against or condemning the role that Gen Babangida played in the annulment of the 1993 general elections and the ensuing anti-government protest, many other Igbo leaders such as Arthur Nzeribe (Association for Better Nigeria) and Uche Chukwumerije through their propaganda worked to ensure that the anti-government protest generated by the annulment of 1993 general elections was unsuccessful[22].

The violent reaction of the government through repressive mechanisms of the law enforcement agencies particularly the police department is another major determinant of the failure of anti-government protests in Nigeria. During every anti-government protest in Nigeria, police personnel under the guise of maintaining law and order in society have seized such occasions to harass and arrest organizers of protests and protesters who they often described as inimical to the interest of the government. Oftentimes, members of the Nigerian Police Force and the Nigerian Army have used maximum force that consequently led to the death of protesters. Human Rights Watch reports of 2019 have described the Nigerian state as an entity that typically uses violent repression to cower protesters and organizers of protests. For instance, over 42 people were killed in Abuja by military personnel when members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) were protesting in October 2018[23].

Another factor that over the years has influenced the success or failure of any anti-government protest in Nigeria is the level of public support that any mass protest enjoys. The few successful anti-government protests have enjoyed unrestrained public support and sympathy while the ones that did not benefit from such public empathy made little or no impact as far as achieving their aim. A popular anti-government protest that benefitted immensely from public support was the one staged in January 2012 against the pump price hike of petroleum products by the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan. The moderate success that the protest recorded has been largely attributed to the massive public support it enjoyed. A popular example of another protest that suffered a huge setback due to its failure to attract enough public sympathy was Charley Boy's led protest that was demanding for the resignation of President Buhari in 2017 due to his deteriorating health condition[24].

One other factor that has been touted severally in many quarters is the corrupt stance of many labour leaders who many times have resisted the call for strike action or demonstrations among labour unions to strengthen anti-government

protests in Nigeria. Severally, labour leaders have been fingered to have reduced the intensity of anti-government protests by conniving with the government to abruptly call off ongoing strike actions embarked on by labour unions. For instance, the 2012 anti-government protest organized to counter the implementation of subsidy removal on the pump prices of petroleum products by the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan was truncated by the decision of labour union leaders in calling off the planned strike action envisaged to force the government to rescind its decision[28]. But while social movements have played a huge role in the political development of many countries in the western part of the world

Conclusion

The regularity and rapidity of anti-government protests by Nigerians since independence has been on the rise. For a long time now, Nigerians have employed anti-government protests and other forms of demonstrations as a veritable tool to show their disenchantment with some governmental policies and activities they perceive as intolerable and anti-people, with the sole aim of forcing the government to rescind such policies in the post-independence phase. But, unlike happenings in many other countries where anti-government protests had triggered the unseating of governments, broader movements against misrule and corruption, economic reforms; most anti-government protests in Nigeria have failed to achieve the aim of their organizers and that of the people that participated in them. The main thrust of this article has however been to present a synthesis of the realities of anti-government protests in Nigeria and the multiplicity of factors responsible for the low success of anti-government protestsin the country. The paper was motivated by the recognition of the fact that only very few anti-government protests have been successful in Nigeria measured by the lack of success recorded by the protesters to make government accede to their demands. Numerous factors ranging from ethnic and religious differences, activities of corrupt labour leaders, police high-handedness and brutal force on protesters, public ambivalence have all contributed to why anti-government protests have recorded little or no success in the country.

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