

Understanding the Drivers of Mass Protests in Nigeria: A Case Study of the August 2024 #End Bad Governance Protest

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Abstract

The protests against poor governance in Nigeria in August 2024 mark a significant milestone in the country's ongoing pursuit of responsible governance and fair development. This study aims to elucidate the various factors that triggered these widespread demonstrations, encompassing economic, political, and social aspects. By examining the historical background, current socio-economic realities, and the influence of youth activism alongside civil society efforts, the study highlights key issues, including high unemployment rates, rising inflation, widespread corruption, weaknesses in democracy, security threats, and governmental repression. The findings indicate that, although the immediate causes of the protests may vary, deep-rooted structural problems like poor governance and systemic inequality lie at the core of ongoing public dissatisfaction. The study advocates for comprehensive reforms centered on economic recovery, political accountability, improved security measures, and inclusive civic participation. Understanding these dynamics enables stakeholders to develop more effective strategies to address public grievances and foster a fairer and more prosperous Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, mass protests, #End Bad Governance, governance, economic drivers, political drivers, social drivers, youth activism, civil society, reform, recommendations

Introduction

The political and socio-economic crises which many nations of the world are grappling with have serious effects on the lives of their people, and the people react to these crises by seeking change or reform through protests. Protests have

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been seen as a viable tool to make governments change their policies or programs (Tomere & Ajakaye, 2024; Gallagher, Reagan, Danforth, & Dodds, 2018).

Nigeria, with its vast population and abundant natural resources, stands as a pivotal nation in Africa's political and economic landscape. However, the country has continually grappled with profound governance challenges that have precipitated recurrent episodes of mass protests. These demonstrations serve as a barometer for public dissatisfaction and a clarion call for systemic reform. The August 2024 #EndBadGovernance protests are emblematic of this enduring struggle, reflecting the collective frustration of Nigerians with pervasive issues of corruption, unemployment, insecurity, and democratic deficits.

Nigeria has witnessed many protests, prominent among which are the Aba Women Riot of 1929, the Abeokuta Women Riot of 1947, the Enugu Coal Miners' Strike in 1949, the Ali Must Go Protest in 1978, the Anti-SAP riot of 1989, the June 12 1993, Occupy Nigeria in 2012, and the EndSARS Protest in 2020. The first two riots were over tax policies on women during the colonial period and the third one was on overdue salary payment of miners; the fourth protest centered on hikes in students fees; the Anti-SAP riot was organized because of the effects of IMF imposed SAP and the mass anger against real and perceived corruption in high places (Adesoji, 2024; Ogunyale, 2024; Adeoluwa, 2020; Editorial Board Socialist Worker Dialogue, 2017; Eboh, 1990); the June 12, 1993 protest was driven by the annulment of the June 12 Presidential Election; Occupy Nigeria protest was against the removal of subsidy and the EndSARS protest was against Police brutality. The August 1-10, 2024, protests, #EndBadGovernance, could be regarded as the mother of all protests in the country because of their widespread nature, with five of the six geopolitical zones participating in the riots, and they were driven by concerns over hunger, poor governance, and hardship (SBM, 2024).

An extensive body of literature exists on protests in Nigeria (Agbedo, 2012; Idiagbon, 2015; Asogwa, Edeh, Ajah, Omeh, Asadu, Ogbuabor, Ngwu, 2021; David-Ojukwu, Orabueze, and Okoye-Ugwu, 2021; Ndubuisi & Nneji, 2025). These studies focus primarily on domestic grievances and not on foreign direct government involvement. Put differently, previous studies treat the 2024 protests primarily as a homegrown response to bad governance and economic hardship, not as a foreign-orchestrated movement (Bassey, 2024; Ndubuisi & Nneji, 2025). However, there is a paucity of studies on the role of external factors in shaping protests in the country.

The most closely related research on foreign actors in Nigeria highlights their roles in violent conflicts (civil war, insurgency), where foreign states and companies have sometimes supplied arms, finance, or diplomatic cover, thereby escalating conflicts (Eyeh et al., 2023). Hence, this study fills the gap in the literature.

It is against this background that the study examines the drivers of mass protests in the country with a focus on the August 2024 protests as well as their implications on the socio-economic and political development of the nation. The study addresses the following questions:

- What were the drivers that triggered the August 2024 mass protests in Nigeria?
- What roles did social media play in the mobilisation and spread of the protests?
- To what extent did government responses (repression, concessions) escalate or de-escalate the movement?
- How did the international actors influence the #EndBadGovernance protests?
- How did the protests in other African countries shape Nigerian protesters' strategies?

The study is structured into seven, of which this introduction is a part. The second section examines the theories on which the study is anchored, and this is closely followed by pre-2024 protests in Nigeria. The fourth segment discusses the August 2024 protests and the drivers, and is closely followed by the role of external factors in shaping protests in Nigeria, and the sixth section analyses the impacts of the protests on the socio-economic and political developments of the nation, and the last section is the conclusion and recommendation.

Conceptual Framework

The figure below illustrates the conceptual framework of the study.

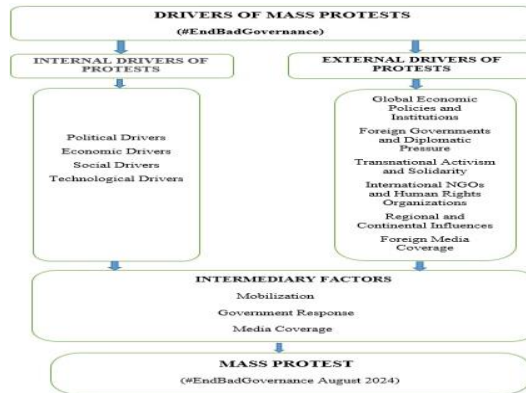


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework - Source: Authors, 2025

Theoretical Framework

This paper is based on three theories, namely Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), Political Opportunity Structure (POS), and Social Identity Theory (SIT). The primary focus is on RMT, with the others serving as supporting theories. The subsequent paragraphs explore the specifics of these theories and their relevance to the study.

❖ Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT)

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) was developed by McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977). Other proponents of this theory are Oberschall, (1973), Tilly, (1978), Jenkins, (1983) and Gamson, (1990). The theory argues that the success of social movements and protests largely depends on the availability and effective use of resources such as money, labour, media access, and organizational capacity. According to RMT, collective action is not merely a spontaneous response to grievances but is strategically planned and carried out when sufficient resources are mobilized.

In the context of the #End Bad Governance protests, RMT helps explain how protesters were able to organize and sustain their movement. Resources like social media platforms provided a critical infrastructure for communication and coordination, enabling rapid mobilization.

The role of civil society organizations, youth groups, and NGOs in providing leadership, strategic planning, and logistical support was crucial. These entities acted as resource hubs, channelling human and material resources towards the

protest efforts. International solidarity and media coverage can also be seen as external resources that amplified the voices of Nigerian protesters on a global scale, adding pressure on the government.

The use of hashtags like #End Bad Governance on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook facilitated widespread dissemination of information and calls to action, demonstrating the pivotal role of digital resources in contemporary protest movements.

❖ **Political Opportunity Structure (POS)**

Political Opportunity Structure (POS), a term coined by Eisinger (1973) and the theory was developed by Doug McAdam in the 1980s. Other exponents of this theory include Tarrow, (1998), McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, (1996), Meyer, and Minkoff, (2004). The theory posits that protests are more likely to occur when the political environment is favourable, such as when the government is weak, divided, or unresponsive to public demands. McAdam (1982) argues that when political opportunities are present, potential protesters are more likely to believe that their actions will have a meaningful impact on the system. This theory is relevant to mass protests in Nigeria, as many protesters have expressed a belief that their actions can lead to political change, despite the challenges posed by entrenched power structures.

The #EndBadGovernance protests occurred against a backdrop of perceived democratic deficits and governance failures in Nigeria. The lack of accountability and transparency created an environment conducive to mass mobilisation. POS highlights the importance of institutional weaknesses that allow for the emergence of protest movements.

For instance, ineffective security apparatuses and corrupt judicial systems can embolden protesters by reducing the perceived risks of participation.

The Nigerian government's initial dismissive response to the protests, followed by attempts at repression, exemplifies the closed nature of the political opportunity structure. However, sustained international pressure and domestic resilience kept the movement alive, indicating the dynamic interplay between state actions and protest dynamics.

❖ **Social Identity Theory (SIT)**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, and it emerged 1960s and early 1970s. The theory posits that individuals derive part of their identity from group memberships. It states that people tend to categorize themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups, which influences their attitudes and behaviors. Collective action often emerges when individuals perceive threats to their group identity or seek to enhance their group's status (Tajfel, 1981; Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

The #End Bad Governance protests can be understood through the lens of group formation based on shared grievances and aspirations. Protesters identified themselves as part of a larger collective fighting against systemic corruption and poor governance.

SIT helps elucidate how protesters constructed a collective identity centered on demands for good governance and accountability. Shared symbols, slogans, and narratives played a key role in fostering this sense of unity and purpose.

The theory also sheds light on the antagonism between protesters and the government, viewed as the out-group. This dichotomy reinforced the resolve of protesters to challenge the status quo and demand change.

The widespread use of the hashtag #End Bad Governance across various social media platforms served as a unifying symbol, fostering a strong sense of collective identity among protesters. The narrative of "us versus them" resonated deeply, galvanizing participants and sustaining their commitment to the cause.

The Resource Mobilization Theory, Political Opportunity Structure, and Social Identity Theory provide complementary lenses through which to understand the drivers and dynamics of the August 2024 #End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria. By integrating these frameworks, this study offers a holistic analysis of how economic, political, and social factors interact to shape the trajectory of mass protests. Such a multi-dimensional approach is essential for developing targeted strategies aimed at addressing the root causes of public discontent and fostering more inclusive and accountable governance in Nigeria. While all three theories, namely: Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), Political Opportunity Structure (POS), and Social Identity Theory (SIT), offer valuable insights into understanding

mass protests, Resource Mobilization Theory is the main theory for analyzing the August 2024 #End Bad Governance protest in Nigeria, because of the following:

- a) It emphasizes on practical organizational dynamics and focuses on the practical aspects of how social movements are organized and sustained. This emphasis aligns closely with the contemporary context of the Nigerian protest, where effective use of resources played a critical role in mobilizing and sustaining the movement.
- b) It highlights the importance of organizational structures and networks that enable collective action. In the case of the #EndBadGovernance protest, civil society organizations, youth groups, and NGOs acted as pivotal resource hubs, providing strategic leadership, logistical support, and coordination mechanisms.
- c) The use of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook was instrumental in disseminating information, organizing events, and rallying participants. RMT's focus on resource availability and utilization makes it particularly adept at explaining how these digital tools were leveraged to amplify the protest's reach and impact.
- d) RMT underscores that successful social movements are not spontaneous but result from deliberate planning and strategic actions. This perspective is crucial for understanding the dynamics of the # EndBadGovernance protest.
- e) The protest was characterized by strategic actions such as coordinated marches, online campaigns, and advocacy efforts aimed at specific policy changes. These activities required careful planning and execution, which aligns well with RMT's emphasis on the strategic deployment of available resources.
- f) Maintaining momentum over an extended period necessitated continuous resource mobilization. RMT provides a framework for examining how protesters managed to sustain their efforts despite potential setbacks and challenges, such as government repression or logistical hurdles.
- g) RMT considers both internal and external resources that contribute to the success of social movements. This comprehensive view is essential for capturing the multifaceted nature of the # EndBadGovernance protest.
- h) Within the protest movement, resources included human capital (volunteers, activists), financial contributions, and material supplies. RMT helps dissect how these internal resources were pooled and utilized effectively to achieve common goals.

External support, including international solidarity, media coverage, and endorsements from influential figures, played a significant role in amplifying the protest's message. RMT's ability to incorporate these external factors enhances its applicability in analyzing the broader ecosystem within which the protest operated. Resource Mobilization Theory stands out as the most appropriate theoretical framework for studying the August 2024 #End Bad Governance protest in Nigeria. Its focus on the practical aspects of organization, strategic planning, and resource utilization provides a robust analytical lens for comprehending the mechanics of this mass protest. By emphasizing the concrete steps taken by protesters to leverage available resources, RMT offers actionable insights that can inform strategies for fostering better governance and addressing public grievances in Nigeria.

This approach not only elucidates the immediate drivers of the protest but also highlights the pathways through which future movements can be effectively organized and sustained.

Pre-2024 Protest in Nigeria: An Overview

The history of protests in Nigeria is rich and is deeply intertwined with the country's colonial past and socio-political evolution. It dates back to 1861 when Lagos was ceded to the British and became a crown colony. Before that the Northern part of the country was influenced by external factors such as the spread of Islam and the large medieval kingdoms of West Africa. This set the stage for nationalist activities powered by the educated elites who were critical of colonial rule and its disregard for indigenous cultures (Kimpact Development Initiative, 2025). Since inception of Nigeria state, it has experienced many riots prominent among which are the Aba Women Riot of 1929, Abeokuta Women Riot of 1947, the Enugu Coal Miners' Strike in 1949, the Ali Must Go Protest in 1978, the Anti- SAP riot of 1989, the June 12 1993, Occupy Nigeria in 2012, and the EndSARS Protest in 2020. The paragraphs that follow discuss these protests, one after the other.

❖ Aba Women's protest

The riot occurred in 1929 and was organised by Women in Aba. It spread to other parts of Eastern Nigeria and led to the deaths of fifty women and several British officials. The riot was triggered by the imposition of exploitative tax policy on women, who were tax-exempt in the Igbo tradition. Despite the casualties, the riot

marked a watershed in the struggle for Nigerian independence and women's rights (Adesoji, 2024; Afigbo, 1966).

❖ **Abeokuta Women's Revolt**

The protest occurred on 27 November 1947 and was organised by Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) and led by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. The protest was against the imposition of taxes on women by the British colonial authorities and the Alake (king) of Egbaland (Adesoji, 2024; Udousoro, Daniel, & Iton, 2024).

❖ **Ali Must Go**

The protest erupted in April 1978, following the decision by the Olusegun Obasanjo-led military government to add 50k to the students' cost of meals per day. The increase meant that undergraduates cost of meal tickets rose from ₦1.50k to ₦2.00. The then Minister of Education, Col. Ahmadu Ali, announced the hike, but the students widely rejected the idea. Following the announcement, the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS), led by Segun Okeowo, the then-president of the union, made a move to address the issue (Adesoji, 2024; Udousoro, Daniel, & Iton, 2024).

❖ **Anti-SAP Riots**

The 1989 protests occurred between May and June 1989 and were against the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) prescribed by the IMF (International Monetary Fund). The programme was introduced in 1986 to stop the effects of falling oil prices and foster the development of local industries, a measure that made Nigeria qualify for IMF-issued loans. However, the policy increased the prices of petroleum, food prices and living expenses of people. The protest later escalated from being a student-led one to a nationwide event (Kimpact Development Initiative 2025; Adesoji, 2024; Udousoro, Daniel, & Iton, 2024).

❖ **June 12 protest**

The protests occurred as an aftermath of the annulment of the June 12, 1993, Presidential elections, widely believed to be the fairest and freest election in the history of Nigeria. The election was won by Moshood Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The annulment of the election by Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida led to strife and political unrest (Kimpact Development Initiative 2025; Adesoji, 2024; Udousoro, Daniel, & Iton, 2024).

❖ Occupy Nigeria

It was an anti-subsidy removal campaign and began on January 2, 2012, following the announcement by the then-President Goodluck Jonathan of the removal of subsidy on January 1, 2012. Protesters shut down petrol stations, forming human barriers along the road. Several trade unions also announced an indefinite strike and mass demonstrations unless the removal of a fuel subsidy was reversed. The protests led to the reinstatement of the subsidy and a review of the federal government's spending (Kimpact Development Initiative 2025; Adesoji, 2024; Udousoro, Daniel, & Iton, 2024; Agbo, Ugwuanyi, & Obieluem, 2022).

❖ EndSARS Protest

The #EndSARS movement was a series of mass movements calling for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), an arm of the Nigerian Police notorious for its abuse against Nigerian citizens. The protest was prompted by a viral video showing SARS officers dragging two men from a hotel and shooting one of them outside. A few days later, protests erupted across Nigeria and on 11 October 2020, SARS was disbanded (Kimpact Development Initiative 2025; Adesoji, 2024; Udousoro, Daniel, & Iton, 2024).

The August 2024 #End Bad Governance Protest: Background and Drivers

The #EndBadGovernance protests, which occurred from 1-10 August 2024 emerged as an expression of widespread discontentment with government policies in the country and were driven by, among others, frustration over poor governance, high cost of living, fuel hike, worsening economic conditions and exacerbated by economic policies under President Bola Tinubu's administration (Kimpact Development Initiative, 2025). The protesters demanded not just economic relief but also transparency, accountability, and good governance. They called for the reversal of the fuel price hike, the restoration of affordable electricity tariffs, and the reduction of import duties to their previous rate (Adesoji, 2024, September 2; Aye, 2024; Morgen, 2024; Tomere & Ajakaiye, 2024; Udousoro, Daniel & Iton, 2024). The protests inflicted a heavy toll on the country, with many lives lost, economic activities disrupted and properties worth billions of naira destroyed. The following is a daily record of the events that occurred during the ten-day protest.

❖ **Day 1-2: Mobilization and Early Reactions**

On August 1, 2024, demonstrators congregated in urban centers throughout Nigeria. The preliminary turnout was substantial, comprising individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The initial days were characterized by non-violent protests, with vocal expressions and signage underscoring the economic adversities confronted by numerous Nigerians.

❖ **Day 3-5: Escalation and Government Clampdown**

By the third day, the protest had acquired momentum and extended to additional regions. Nevertheless, this phase also signified the onset of the government's stringent countermeasures. Law enforcement agencies commenced the dispersion of assemblies, resulting in multiple detentions and accounts of disproportionate force. The emergence of Russian flags at certain protest locations intensified apprehensions regarding external interference, and demands for regime transformation surfaced, compelling the government to categorise such assertions as acts of treason.

❖ **Day 6-7: Violence and Human Rights Abuses**

Amid the protest, there was a notable increase in violence. Confrontations between security personnel and demonstrators became more common, and accusations of human rights violations, including beatings, tear gas usage, and shootings of protesters, came to light. The turmoil resulted in episodes of looting and arson, further exacerbating the crisis.

❖ **Day 8-9: Calls for Dialogue amidst Continued Unrest**

As the protests persisted, there was an increasing demand from civil society and international organisations for constructive dialogue. Notwithstanding the ongoing violence, certain government officials began to promote peaceful demonstrations in designated areas. Nevertheless, the damage had already been inflicted, and the public's confidence in the government's readiness to tackle their concerns was significantly diminished.

❖ **Day 10: Conclusion and Aftermath**

The protests officially concluded on August 10, 2024. While the streets slowly returned to normal, the fundamental issues remained unresolved. The protests succeeded in drawing international attention to Nigeria's economic and political

difficulties, yet the violence and contentious demands, such as calls for regime change, overshadowed the primary message. (Vanguard, 2024, August 10).

Drivers of the Protests

Several reasons have been advanced for the August 2024 protests in Nigeria, and some of these include:

❖ Political Drivers

Bad governance: Poor governance, which entails widespread corruption, lack of accountability, and ineffective public administration, has resulted in inadequate services and declining economic conditions.

Corruption: One of the reasons advanced for the protests was the widespread frustration caused by corruption. Corruption is pervasive throughout the country and at various government levels, undermining public trust and hindering development. Put differently, there was perceived large-scale corruption in government similar to the #EndSARS movement (2020), and this fueled the protests.

Electoral Fraud: Nigeria's 2023 general elections, namely: presidential, gubernatorial, and legislative, were marred by serious irregularities such as massive vote-buying and voter intimidation. Political parties and candidates openly bribed voters and used thugs to suppress opposition supporters. Moreover, manipulation of election results. The delayed uploads of results from polling units to the INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) server led to allegations of results tampering. Besides, the court rulings on disputed elections were perceived as politically influenced, further eroding confidence in the electoral process. The consequences of these were that many Nigerians, particularly the youth, felt that their votes did not count, leading to political disillusionment. Also, the failure of the electoral umpire (INEC) to deliver transparent electronic transmission of results deepened distrust in governance. Hence, protests became an outlet for citizens to reject a system they viewed as rigged and unrepresentative.

Government Repression: There were cases of law enforcement agencies using excessive force, including live ammunition, harassment of journalists and activists.

public frustration, prompting people to demand more effective government action to address these critical issues. The economic policies of the present administration of Tinubu, such as floating the national currency and the reliance on Investors' and Exporters' (I&E) window to determine foreign exchange rates, excessively impact people experiencing poverty. The policies made the naira lose more than half of its value and caused an almost 300 per cent increase in the price of electricity²⁶. With inflation reaching 34.2% in June 2024 and food prices surging by 40.87%, many Nigerians struggle to meet their necessities (Kimpact Development Initiative, 2025). The economic predicament confronting the citizens led the protest to be dubbed the "Hunger Protest". This shows the country's dire state of food security. According to the Global Hunger Index (), Nigeria was ranked 109 out of 125 countries, which further confirm the worsened economic cum hunger that the citizens are facing. As the situation worsened, widespread unrest began to snowball, culminating in the #EndBadGovernance protests. (Kimpact Development Initiative, 2025).

❖ Technological Drivers

Social Media: Social media played a pivotal role in the #EndBadGovernance protests of August 2024, serving as a key mobilization tool for organizers and participants. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube were extensively utilized to rally Nigerians, coordinate actions, and amplify demands (Lawal, Sain, Amadikwa, & Sain, 2025; Udoinyang & Nwazuni, 2024). As Hari (2014) observes, social media empowers activists by facilitating rapid, cost-effective communication and the digital dissemination of movement objectives. Similarly, Castells (2015) highlights how these platforms foster virtual networks of like-minded individuals, strengthening collective identity and solidarity. Supporting this, Iloamaeke's (2025) study found that X (Twitter) was particularly instrumental in galvanizing public participation and organizing collective action during the protests. The high level of public engagement on social media during the #EndBadGovernance demonstrations underscores its critical function as a channel for communication, coordination, and the expression of dissent.

The Role of External Factors in Shaping Protests in Nigeria

External factors play an important role in shaping protests in Nigeria, often influencing the scale, dynamics and outcomes of such movements. The paragraphs that follow examine these external factors:

❖ **Global Economic Policies and Institutions**

The policies imposed by international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank have led to austerity measures, subsidy removals, and privatization. These policies often trigger protests due to rising costs of living, unemployment, and reduced access to public services. For instance, under President Tinubu's administration, the Nigerian government adopted several economic measures recommended by the IMF and World Bank, such as currency devaluation, ending fuel subsidies, and reducing electricity subsidies, to secure a \$2.25 billion loan from the World Bank. However, former Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo criticized the policies imposed by the Bretton Woods Institutions, arguing that developing nations should be free to solve their economic challenges in their own ways. He stated, "While IMF and World Bank policies might suit advanced economies, they are not suitable for emerging markets. African nations must shape their own destiny." He added, "If we let the World Bank and IMF design our future, we will surely fail." (Financial Times, 2004, July 04). In addition, the fluctuation in oil prices also contributes to mass protests in Nigeria. Nigeria's major foreign exchange earning comes from oil exports. The reliance on this makes it vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. A fall in prices can lead to economic hardship, currency devaluation, and inflation, sparking protests over economic mismanagement and inequality.

❖ **Foreign Governments and Diplomatic Pressure**

International actors, including foreign governments and non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, often condemn human rights abuses during protests. For example, the #EndSARS protests in 2020 and #EndBadGovernance in 2024 drew global attention, with entities like the United Nations, the African Union, and foreign embassies calling for accountability and reforms. This encouraged protesters or force the government to adopt more conciliatory measures. There was an allegation of Russia's involvement in the #EndBadGovernance protests of August 2024. The Nigerian government accused Russia of supporting the protests, and the police arrested 31 protesters suspected of treason and serving foreign interests as they distributed Russian flags and called for anarchy during the protest marches (Mwambia, 2024, August 06).

❖ **Transnational Activism and Solidarity**

Nigerian protests often draw inspiration from global movements, like Black Lives Matter (BLM), the Arab Spring and the Gen Z protests in Kenya. It is important to

note that the Gen Z protests in Kenya influenced the #EndBadGovernance in Nigeria. The rise of Generation Z as a sociopolitical force in Kenya corresponds with youth activism worldwide, fueled by the internet, precarious job markets, and the need for transformative change. According to Nyabola (2024), Gen Z's demonstrations are a departure from Kenya's ethnic mobilized politics to more progressive activism. This change is remarkable in a nation where continuous ethnic loyalties have dominated politics and elections for decades. The protests were against the 2024 Finance Bill, which was ignited by a tweet from journalist Alenga Torosterdt on June 10, 2024 and evolved into a nationwide movement, fueled by Gen Z's adeptness with digital platforms and their dissatisfaction with unmet commitments (The Standard, 2025). The tweet drew attention to the bill's harsh tax measures and quickly gained traction, inspiring young people to mobilize demonstrations under hashtags such as #RejectFinanceBill2024 and #RutoMustGo. Put differently, the protests were marked by a lack of centralized leadership, digital activism, and a transition from ethnic to issue-oriented politics. These uprisings, triggered by concerns regarding economic disparity, corruption, and harsh taxation, utilized platforms such as TikTok and X to call for accountability (Musya, 2025). As the experience of Kenya has shown, Nigerian youths were greatly influenced by the anti-bad governance campaigns and protests in Kenya. Moreover, the Nigerian diaspora played a crucial role in organizing, funding, and amplifying protests. Social media platforms enable diaspora communities to mobilize support, share information, and pressure international bodies to act.

❖ Regional and Continental Influences

Regional bodies like the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) condemned government actions during protests. Their involvement lends legitimacy to protesters' demands or pressure the government to negotiate. . For example, during the protests under review, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), expressed its stance on the protests stating that it regrets reports of violence, looting, and tragic loss of life during the protests. According to the statement, the Organization has been following the developments, with such sad news of some protesters' deaths and destruction of public and private properties. The Commission extended condolences to the families of the deceased and expressed its solidarity with the government and the people of Nigeria (Yusuf, 2024). "The ECOWAS Commission recognizes the right of citizens to peaceful protests, as guaranteed by the 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of

Nigeria, as amended.” The Commission called on the protesting group and all stakeholders to consider calls by President Tinubu for all-inclusive dialogue designed to alleviate their concerns and guarantee peace and security in Nigeria and the ECOWAS region. The statement ended by calling for the maintenance of peace and security and for all to work towards an amicable solution to the current issues (Yusuf, 2024). Similarly, African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (2024), expressed concern over human rights abuses during the protests.

The Commission deplored the tragic loss of life of at least 13 individuals during the protests which the Commission attributed to the excessive use of force by security agencies. Such loss of life amount to violation of Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (African Charter). The African Commission reminded Nigerian authorities that the jurisprudence of the Commission on the use of force including in its General Comment on the Right to Life under Article 4 of the African Charter requires that law enforcement agencies do not resort to the use of excessive force. The Commission called upon the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to respect and ensure respect for the right to peaceful protest as enshrined under Article 11 of the African Charter. The Commission urged Nigeria to uphold and ensure respect for the right of Nigerians to engage in peaceful protests as part of the exercise of their freedom of assembly and association and adhere to the guidance issued by the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria (ACPHR, 2024).

There is no doubt that the roles played by ECOWAS and AU in the protests were minimal, cautious, and behind-the-scenes. Their primary functions were normative and precautionary upholding the framework of democratic stability and constitutional order while avoiding direct criticism of the Nigerian government. This was due to Nigeria’s dominant regional status, the principle of non-interference, and the organizations’ preoccupation with more acute constitutional crises elsewhere in West Africa. Their response highlighted the enduring challenge for African regional bodies in effectively addressing popular discontent against elected governments within major member states, especially when that discontent stems from economic pain with regional roots.

❖ **International NGOs and Human Rights Organizations**

Organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch record human rights abuses during protests, providing evidence that can be used to hold

the government accountable, and their reports attract global attention and pressure. The Amnesty International (2024), in its brief, condemned government handling of the protests as it failed to guarantee and uphold freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and called for an independent and impartial panel to investigate the allegations of attacks on protesters and bring to justice the perpetrators and also provide support services to survivors. Similarly, Human Rights Watch (2024) condemned the treason charge levelled against the protesters and urged the government to uphold the citizens' right to freedom of expression and listen to their grievances. In the words of the Nigerian Researcher in the organization: "Instead of equating protesting with a crime punishable by death, the government should uphold Nigerians' right to freedom of expression and listen to their grievances."

❖ Foreign Media Coverage

International media outfits such as BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera provide extensive coverage of Nigerian protests, shaping global perceptions and influencing domestic narratives. The BBC's coverage of the 2024 mass protests in Nigeria played a crucial role in shaping both local and international perceptions of the events. The coverage highlighted a graphic account of police brutality against protesters by detailing instances where law enforcement used excessive force, including live ammunition. It also recorded numerous reports of protesters being arrested without warrants, often targeting individuals merely for participating in peaceful demonstrations. Besides, the coverage noted attempts by the government to silence dissent, including harassment of journalists and activists, as well as censorship of media reporting on the protests. Moreover, there were reported cases of human rights violations in the detention. Detainees were mistreated, including torture and inadequate access to legal representation, which worsen the conditions of the arrested protesters. (Equere, 2024, August 11). The coverage of the protests by the foreign media, notably BBC, CNN and Aljazeera not only informed the public about these critical issues but also contributed to international awareness and scrutiny of the Nigerian government's actions during the protests.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The August 2024 #EndBadGovernance protest offers Nigeria an opportunity for transformative change. However, this opportunity needs to move beyond crisis management to address the structural drivers of recurring unrest: governance failures, economic mismanagement, youth exclusion, and democratic deficits.

Besides, this study identified external factors such as global economic policies and institutions, foreign governments and diplomatic pressures, transnational activism and solidarity, international NGOs and Human rights organizations, regional continental influence, and foreign media coverage have shaped mass protests in the country. The study contended that no single factor (internal or external) alone explained the causes of mass protests in the country. For a holistic understanding of the drivers of mass protests in Nigeria, both internal and external drivers are necessary. The recommendations outlined below provide a comprehensive roadmap for multiple stakeholders. Execution will require political will, sustained commitment, adequate resources, and genuine collaboration across government, civil society, youth movements, the private sector, and international partners. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

Transparency and reduction of governance costs: Governments at all levels should conduct audits of government expenditure and publish the findings. Besides, they should reduce the size of the political appointees and streamline government agencies. There should also be a strict limit on salaries, allowances and other benefits to public officials. The Code of Conduct Bureau should be empowered to be able to discharge its duties of ensuring that public servants actually declare their assets, and failure to do so should attract a heavy penalty.

Accountability and Anti-Corruption Reforms: Corruption and lack of accountability are fundamental causes of citizen grievances. Governments at all levels should set up an independent anti-corruption institution or strengthen the existing ones with real enforcement powers, operational independence and adequate resources to enable them to prosecute offenders. Furthermore, governments at all levels should establish whistleblower protection mechanisms with meaningful incentives and also set up citizen oversight committees for major government projects and programs.

Participation of the youth in decision making: Government at all levels should establish a youth council which will create a channel for citizens' participation in governance. Through such a forum, youth will influence budgeting mechanisms at all tiers of government.

Security Sector Reform: There is a need for the government to reform the security sector. This entails retraining of security forces on human rights standards and

crowd management. An independent body of inquiry should be established by the government to investigate the security agencies abused of human rights during protests and any member of the security agencies found to have abused the rights of the protesters should be dealt with according to the law. Put differently, security personnel should be held accountable for excessive use of force. Furthermore, community policing should be limited, as this model builds trust between citizens and security forces.

Private sectors also have a role to play in addressing some of the drivers of the August 2024 mass protests in Nigeria, and these include:

Corporate Social Responsibility: They should increase investment in youth employment and skills development programs. They should support education and healthcare initiatives in needy communities. Besides, they engage in public-private partnerships for service delivery with strong accountability mechanisms.

Advocacy for Enabling Environment: They should advocate for governance reforms that create stable, predictable business environments and also support anti-corruption initiatives that level the playing field. Besides, they should engage in policy dialogue on economic reforms that balance efficiency with equity. Moreover, they should resist government pressure to support repression or undermine civil liberties.

For the international community, they have these roles to play in addressing mass protests in Nigeria:

Diplomatic Pressure and Support: The international community, including the government of countries, international organizations and foreign media, all have a role to play in addressing protests in the country. They should publicly condemn repression of peaceful protests and human rights violations. Moreover, they should link development assistance and trade relations to governance reforms and democratic standards and should support independent investigations into protest-related violence and human rights abuses. Besides, they should provide technical assistance for governance reforms, anti-corruption initiatives, and security sector reform.

Economic and Development Assistance: They should increase support for social safety net programs to cushion economic reform impacts and also provide technical assistance for the transparent, equitable implementation of economic reforms. In addition, they support youth employment and entrepreneurship programs and condition assistance on transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance.

For civil society groups, they can contribute towards addressing the mass protests in the country through the following:

Sustained Advocacy and Monitoring: They should maintain pressure on the government to implement promised reforms through sustained advocacy campaigns and also set up a monitoring mechanism to track government commitments and hold officials accountable. They should also document human rights violations during protests for domestic and international accountability mechanisms. Besides, they should build coalitions across ethnic, religious, and regional lines to strengthen their collective voice.

Constructive Engagement: They should develop detailed, evidence-based policy alternatives to government programs and also engage in structured dialogue with the government when opportunities arise, without compromising independence. Furthermore, build relationships with reform-minded officials and legislators to advance change from within. They should also participate in oversight bodies and advisory committees where they offer genuine influence.

These are critical steps to rebuild trust, not mere appeasement. Nigeria's core choice is between a reactive strategy that risks perpetuating conflict and a transformative one that could unlock its potential for stability and inclusive growth. The moment demands deep, accountable reform, not cosmetic changes.

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