

A Pragma-Dialectic Study of the Presidential #EndSARS Address in Nigeria

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Abstract

Problem: From the result of #EndSARS, street protest should not be the option because of its impotency as a corrective measure in Nigeria political context. So, this study investigates the argumentation processes involved in the Presidential #EndSARS address in 2020. The main thrusts of the study are to identify the audiences to the address, their commitments, the standpoint of the arguer, and explore the use of strategic maneuvering to accommodate multiple audiences in the speech. **Method:** The study sourced its data from the internet which is the full text of the Presidential speech on #EndSARS protest. Using the pragma-dialectic approach to argumentative theory, the study observes that the main standpoint in the speech is for the protest to discontinue. The study highlights audiences which include the hoodlums who misdirected the protest, the protesting youths, the Nigerians, international communities, the security agencies, and the traditional and religious leaders. **Conclusion:** It is also discovered that in persuading the audiences on the need to discontinue the protest, Mr. President seized the opportunity excessively to defend the position of his administration on the issue of maintaining peace and order in the country.

Keywords: #EndSARS, argumentation, pragma-dialectic, Nigeria, street protest, strategic maneuvering, Functionalization, socialization, externalization, dialectification

1. Introduction

In every argumentative discourse, there is always a proposition or a standpoint that a speech actor advances which stands to be defended or disputed. Pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation theory surveys all speech acts and combinations of speech acts in an argumentative discourse and provides the tool for reconstructing the process involved in the resolution of differences of opinion (Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2006). In reconstructing speech acts, the implicit standpoints are made explicit. Through the reconstruction of proposition, the relationship between standpoints of an arguer and challenges they have are made clear. Also, the relationship between the major standpoint and the sub-standpoints are shown. The pragmatic dimension of pragma-dialectics deals with the communicative aspect where speech acts and Grice's cooperative principle play important role (Betti and Ghadhad, 2020). Detecting the action taken by the interlocutors in their speeches is vital in every stage of argumentation as it enables the instantiation of standpoints or arguments. While the pragmatic dimension describes speech act and their argumentative functions, dialectics ushers in the norms that guide discussion. Therefore, pragma-dialectics can be used to analyze the argumentative patterns of discourses such as parliamentary debates, political speeches, legal or court proceedings, press conferences and many others. This study is based on political speech as delivered at a time of social unrest in Nigeria.

Social cum political instability are consequences of bad government where leaders do not show any regard for the rule of law and lack the spirit of nationalism. The problem that bedevils Nigerian politics is ethnicity. Nigerian politics is wrought with so many negativities ranging from nepotism, extortion, bribery, embezzlement, disregard for federal structure, (Adegbami and Adepoju, 2017). Eze (2019) asserts that any political leadership that embraces corruption hardly acts positively in a way to profit the country and its citizens. The primary obligation of any legitimate leader is to protect their subject and instill in them the spirit of oneness. However, this is hardly the case in Nigeria socio-political context.

A country where there is no respect for the law is just like a jungle where only the fittest survives. In Nigeria, the poor masses like the traders, civil servants, drivers and many others, on daily basis are accosted by armed police officers who commit human rights abuses against them in a way of extorting money from them. Those that fail to respond positively to their evil demands most times are arbitrarily arrested, detained and sometimes are inflicted with physical torture, sexual assault and even extra judicially killed in the process (<https://news.bbc.co.uk/z/hi/africa/8025260.stm>). These infamous experience by the citizens led to mass protest by Nigerian youths against police brutality in the country in the year 2020. The crux of the movement is the

demand for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) which is notoriously known for a long record of human right abuses (Omonobi, 2017). SARS was established in 1992 under the dictate of the then Head of state, Ibrahim Babangida with the objective of combating armed robbery, kidnapping, which were on the increase at the time. However, according to Singh (2020), SARS started derail from their initial objective. It was recorded in Singh (2020) that since 2014, the human right organization logged several allegations against the police unit which about 82 cases were documented between 2017 and 2020.

The protest started as a twitter campaign in 2017, according to Salaudeen(2017) and escalated to a full-fledged mass movement in 2020 following increased reports of human right abuse by the unit. The movement demanded for good governance in the country. The federal government of Nigeria did not hesitate to yield to the demand of the protesters and announced the dissolution of the unit in the police force. Due to citizens' lack of trust in the political leaders, the protesters saw the pronouncement as an act of dribbling. At the heat of the protest, hoodlums seized the opportunity to vandalize both public and private properties. It was at this juncture that Mr. President deemed it fit to address the public on the matter.

It is important to note that during the time of the social unrest hash-tagged #EndSARS, people waited a long time to hear from the President. It was believed that it is only the address from the President that would abate the agitation. However, the address aggravated the situation. It is on this note that this research intends to investigate the argumentative processes involved in the discourse. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the audiences of the #EndSARS, presidential address and their commitments, identify the standpoint(s) of the arguer and explore the use of strategic maneuvering to accommodate multiple audiences in the argumentative discourse.

This study adopts a qualitative research paradigm in the analysis of data. It employs the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation theory as the theoretical framework. The data used here is the President Muhammadu Buhari's address on #EndSARS protest in Nigeria and it is sourced from the internet. The content areas of this study is pragmatics and logic while the geographical area is Nigeria.

2. Literature review

In this section, theoretical framework, and empirical studies are carried out.

2.1 Theoretical framework

Pragma-dialectical approach is developed by Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 1992, 2004). It is an argumentation theory that aims at analyzing and evaluating argumentation in actual practice. It focuses on the study of entire argumentation as a discourse activity. Therefore, pragma-dialectic approach perceives argumentation as a

complex speech act that occurs as natural language activities which has specific communicative goals.

Pragma-dialectics sees argumentation as a communicative and interactional discourse event that is to be studied from a normative as well as descriptive standpoint. Pragma-dialectics as the name implies is of two dimensions – the pragmatics and dialectics. The pragmatic perspective is inspired by descriptive insight from speech act and discourse analysis while dialectical perspective is inspired by normative insights from critical rationalism and formal dialectics (Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004).

The four meta-theoretical principles that enable the systematic integration of pragmatic and dialectical dimensions in the study of argumentation are functionalization, socialization, externalization and dialectification., Functionalization is achieved while extending the speech act perspective to the level of interaction leads to socialization. Externalization comes about by capturing the propositional and interactional commitments created by the speech acts performed. Dialectification is attained by regulating the exchange of speech act to an ideal model of a critical discussion (Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004). The ideal model of critical discussion according to Eemeren (2017:326) “is dialectical because it provides rules instrumental in resolving a difference of opinion in a reasonable way by means of regulated exchange of argumentative moves”.

In resolving the differences of opinion in a reasonable way, four stages of critical discussion are identified. These are confrontation stage, opening stage, argumentation stage and concluding stage Eemeren (2017). In confrontation stage, different of opinion is identified. Opening stage decides to resolve the differences of opinion by defining the procedure in carrying such out. Argumentation stage is where the exchange of reasons is carried out in a way of defending one’s standpoint. The concluding stage establishes the outcome of the discourse; that is, the interlocutors determine the extent of the resolution of their differences and in whose favor. However, violation of any of these rules of critical discussion amount to what is known as “fallacy”. Fallacy in an argumentation is understood as invalid inferences or contextually improper argument.

Moreover, in order to connect the argumentation theory with the intricacies of argumentative reality, Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992) put forward a method for reconstructing real life argumentative discourse. This method states that an analyst needs to delete irrelevant elements, add implicit elements, permute dislocated elements and substitute equivalent elements. Eemeren and Grootendorst posit that this analytic transformation constitutes a systematic reconstruction of the argumentative discourse with regards to the model of critical discussion.

Another way of connecting the theory to the intricacies of real life argumentation is by incorporating an account of strategic maneuvering in the theorizing which aims at

bridging the gap between dialectic and rhetoric (Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2002). Strategic maneuvering is an act in argumentation aimed at simultaneously maintaining balance between reasonableness and effectiveness in an argumentative discourse. Arguers strategically maneuver in their selection of topics, adaptation of audience and their use of presentational devices.

This study sees this theory viable enough to be adopted as its study framework because it has a way of unveiling the implicit meanings inherent in a text or speech acts.

2.1.1.2 Empirical studies

Betti and Ghadhad (2020) undertake a pragma-dialectic study of the argumentative indicators in American electoral campaign debates. The thrusts of the study are to investigate the argumentative indicators and their functions in both Trump's and Clinton's electoral campaign debates in order to compare their speeches. Findings show that there are aspects of linguistic relatedness in both candidate's speeches. One area of their relatedness is the use of argumentative indicator of coordinative argumentation where they made their intention to fight ISIS clear though in different dimensions. In the same way their differences are highlighted which include the fact that Clinton uses argumentative indicator of subordinative argumentation more frequent than Trump being that she is a democrat and as such has a long history with politics. This former study is carried out in the area of pragma-dialectics just like the present one intends to, but their geographical contents, data and objectives are different.

Dambo, Ersoy, Auwal, Olorunsola, Olonode, Arikewuyo and Joseph (2020) investigate the claims of police abuse by Nigerian youths on social media. The study seeks to find out the dominant themes in Nigeria's #EndSARS campaign and also highlight the limitations to activism in Nigeria. Using the analytical program leximancer in the analysis of #EndSARS tweets which serve as the data, the study identifies four themes which are human right abuse, injustice, activism and corruption. The study also shows that Nigeria's political environment has shown the capacity to hinder the success of social movements. Even though the two works anchor on the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria, they differ in the aspects of data used, framework and objective.

Svačinová (2021) explores the nature of argumentation in inner dialogue. The study is intended to characterize crisis diary-writing as a type of argumentative activity. Using Anne Frank's diary as an example, the study concludes that crisis diary-writing is a stylized and deliberative activity type preconditioned by covert norms governing the conduct of argumentation. Although the two studies are anchored in argumentation, their objectives and the object of study are different. While the former studies argumentation in inner dialogue, the later studies argumentation in a political speech.

Having reviewed some related studies in this area, it is observed that not much works have been carried out on #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. Most importantly, no known work has been done on #EndSARS using any argumentation theory. Therefore, this study intends to fill the academic gap.

From the theory studied above, the researcher deems it suitable to adopt aspects of pragma-dialectical approach known as restructuring method and strategic maneuvering in the analysis of data. That will enable the researcher find out the arguer's standpoint and the extent to which the arguer balanced reasonableness and effectiveness in the argumentation.

3. Analysis

In analyzing a rhetorical text using pragma-dialectic approach to argumentation, the analyst is required to imagine the hearers as if they are listening and arguing with the speaker. Eemeren (2010) argues that audience consist of heterogeneous groups of people with different backgrounds and positions. Therefore, the speaker should envisage the argumentative moves of the varied audiences to craft the speech in a way to influence their final judgments. The data in the appendix are numbered from statement 1 to 31 to enable easier and clearer assessment.

3.1 Identification of the speech audiences

The #EndSARS presidential address in Nigeria is targeted at varied audiences. The first audience addressed in the speech is the hoodlums who hijacked and misdirected the genuine intention of the protest. These are the direct audience being warned to discontinue their evil activities which they perform in the name of #EndSARS protest. This is evident in statement 2, of the speech which goes thus: "I must warn those who have hijacked and misdirected the initial genuine and well-intended protest of some of our youths in parts of the country, against the excesses of some members of the now-disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)" (see appendix)

Another audience addressed in the speech is the protesting youths in the country. These are the major victims of police brutality in the country who deem it necessary to make their voice heard through mass movement. This is evident in statement 25, where the speech reads thus: "I therefore call on our youth to discontinue the protest and constructively engage government in finding solution" (see appendix).

Nigerians in totality are also addressed in the speech. Nigerian are fed up with the devastating turnaround of the event; the way the protest is manipulated by miscreants; people's shops are vandalized, cars are burnt, youths are killed on daily basis, the plans of the youth to correct some issues that are going wrong in the country are messed up and things like that. So to calm the tension, the statement 27, of the speech applies, (see appendix). Another audience observed in the speech is the international

communities. The speech tries to make them understand that not all that they hear about the issue on ground are correct – hence, the speech’s statement 21 in (the appendix),(nairametrics.com).

There are still other audiences which include the security agency (the police force), though, they are the people being accused of brutality which stimulated the protest, they are not neglected in the speech. The speech acknowledged their positive impacts in statement 27, (see appendix).Other set of audience in this speech are the state governors, the traditional rulers and the religious leaders who try in one way or the other to calm the situation. This is evident in statement 28, (see appendix).

3.1.1 Audiences’ commitments in the argumentation

At the injection of the hoodlums into the genuine mass movement/protest, things begin to go wrong. The hoodlums begin to destroy and vandalize both public and private properties all in the name of #EndSARS. At the new development, the security agencies try to forcefully stop the youth from continuing the protest and as a result, many lives are lost on daily basis in the course.

On realizing that the hoodlums and their activities in the name of #EndSARS are strategies designed to stop the protest, youths refuse to be stopped, insisting that the five-points demands must begin to take effect and that the whole world must hear their cry for help. At the same time majority of Nigerians are in support of the youth protest seeing it as an avenue to usher in the positive change that every citizen has been clamoring for. Members of international communities also started showing concern for the claims of Nigerian youths who are protesting believing that the government is oblivious of the pains and plights of its citizens.

It is all these commitments observed in the audiences that the speaker seeks to covertly change. He does that by acknowledging the good intention of the youth in respect to the #EndSARS protest. He also acknowledges good deeds of the police officers, youth leaders, state governors, traditional and religious leaders during the course of the protest and promises to improve the governance. He again takes their minds to the measures and initiatives put in place for empowerment of youth, women and other vulnerable members of the society, which are targeted at lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in the next ten years. This he does to appeal to their mental space so that they can see things from his own perspective.

3.1.2 Identification of standpoint

President Buhari appeals to the youth to discontinue the street protests. This main standpoint is supported in the speech by means of argument that relates to six issues that are sources of tension within the period of protest: killings, sexual violence, attack on correctional facilities, destruction and vandalization of properties, violation of the

sanctity of traditional ruler's palace and invasion of airport. He believes that all these vices contradict the genuine and legitimate expression of grievances of the youth of the country and as such, the protest has been hijacked and misdirected; therefore, it should be stopped. He also sees no reason why the protest should continue while the protesters' five-point demands have been accepted and the SARS scrapped. As he expresses pains over the tragedies, the president points out numerous initiatives and measures put in place by his administration to lift up to 100 million Nigerians (youths, women and other vulnerable members of the society) out of poverty in the next ten years. He also re-affirms his commitment to preserving the unity and improving the governance of the country.

Following the argument scheme proposed in Eemeren (2017:339) which goes thus:

1. Standpoint X should (not) be carried out

(1.1) X leads to positive (negative) result such as Y

(1.1) if X leads to positive (negative) result such as Y, it must (not) be carried out

President Buhari's argumentation in support of his main standpoint follows the following logical structure:

1 X should be done

1.1a X leads to Y

1.1b Y is needed

Fitting it to the discourse being discussed, it goes thus:

1. The youth protest should discontinue

1.1a Discontinuing the youth protest will help to protect lives, properties and right of the citizens

1.1b Protecting lives, properties and right of the citizens is desirable.

From this schema, it can be deduced that one has to accept that there is need to protect lives, properties and right of the citizens in order to accept that the protest should stop. In addition, in order to accept that the protest should discontinue, there is the need for one to accept that the six issues that are sources of tension during the period are as a result of the protests. Also in order to accept that the protest should discontinue, one should accept that the government does not just fold its hands watching the citizens suffer, but is committed to improving the lives of the citizens by bringing out so many measures and initiatives targeted at uplifting vulnerable members of the society especially youths and women from poverty. The text also asserted that the government with immediate effect accepted the five-point demands of the youth protesters and scrapped the SARS showing how the government is committed to the wellbeing and welfare of the masses.

In essence, the different audiences identified in the text could reason from different angles to accept the main standpoint. For instance, while someone who is concerned about respect for human right and protection of lives and properties will be convinced

that the protest should stop in order to save lives and properties and guarantee citizens' right, other whose concern is on seeing that the government responds positively to the yearning of the masses will accept the standpoint on seeing that the SARA has been scrapped and the demand of the youths are accepted so as to prevent more destructions. This shows how the text is crafted in a way to influence the final judgment of all the audiences.

3.1.3 Strategic maneuvering

Given that disagreement over the call to discontinue the protest is apparent as it progresses to end bad government, it is not surprising that the speaker has to defend his standpoint.

In many parts of the text, President Buhari advances arguments that support his standpoint in certain positions of his administration. These arguments defend the viewpoint by asserting that such position is for the welfare of the citizens especially youths and other vulnerable members of the society which are more reasons the protest should stop. Statements 5,6,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 and 20 in the appendix instantiate this claim. This argument in defense of his administration is in a bid to correct the notion created within and outside Nigeria which he believes is created through spreading of deliberate falsehood and misinformation, through the social media, that his administration is oblivious of the pains and plight of the masses (statement 11 in the appendix instantiates this belief). This is a clear case of strategic topical selection where he gained the opportunity to let the whole world know his commitment to the wellbeing and welfare of the citizens, and also for Nigerians in particular to appreciate his efforts in that regard.

Considering the complexity of the audience he addresses, President Buhari employs strategic maneuvering in defending the course of the protesting youths. Such could be seen in statements 2 and 10 where he describes the protest as 'genuine and well-intended' and 'legitimate expression of grievances' respectively (see appendix). In addition, he appreciated the members of the international communities, the efforts of the youth leaders, the officers of the police force, the state governors, and the traditional and religious leaders in their different contributions towards bringing tranquility to the country. Having observed the psychological state of the complex audience, where every audience in one way or the other supports the course of the youths in bringing sanity to the way masses are being treated in the country, President Buhari strategically maneuvers by making them believe that he also supports the same course of the youth. However, even though he acknowledges their commitments in the course at hand, he still acknowledges the necessity of any aggrieved group to operate within the law. He implicitly maintained that the protest should stop, being that it has been hijacked and misdirected. He persistently reminds the protesters of the

government's obligation to secure lives and properties, and the rights of the citizens to go about their daily businesses freely and be secured against acts of violence. This acknowledgement of the audiences' commitments is a strategy used to attract them to reason with him on why the protest should stop.

In as much as convincing the youth protesters to stop the protest is needful in President Buhari's speech, the defense of his administration's position on that, is more important. This is because the convincingness of the main standpoint depends on the details of the cases that are linked to it. In enumerating the government's initiatives and measures to tackle the problems of the youths and other vulnerable members of the society, the president not only addresses the youth protesters, the police force and other Nigerians, but also the members of international communities. Not just that, he also seized the opportunity to assert the resolve of his administration to review the salary structure of the members of the police force and other paramilitary services upward and also that the administration has proposed a new salary scheme and other incentives for teachers. However, by constantly reminding the protesters of their limit and responsibility to respect other citizens' rights and his administration's resolve to allow nobody or group to disrupt the peace of the nation as evident in statements 4, 21, 24, and 31 in the appendix, many consider the speech as threat to the protesters.

4. Conclusion

The above analysis is an indication that pragma-dialectic tools can be instrumental in analyzing President Buhari's #EndSARS speech in Nigeria. It aids in reconstructing the logic of Buhari's argument and brings to light how he deals with the need to address the aggrieved audiences. From the analysis, it is observed that the main standpoint or claim in the argumentation is for the protest to discontinue. The study highlighted many audiences which include the hoodlums who hijacked and misdirected the protest, the protesting youths, the Nigerians in totality, the members of international communities, the security agencies, the traditional and the religious leaders. It is also discovered that in the process of persuading the audiences on the need to discontinue the protest, Mr. President seized the opportunity excessively to defend the position of his administration on the issue of maintaining peace in the country. This made many to consider the address a threat to the protesting youths thereby aggravating the situation which made the protest to increase the more.

Therefore, this study is of the opinion that street protest does not yield any positive result in the Nigerian context and so, should not be the choice of any movement that has the security of life and property at heart in this country. The study also suggests that the public speech writers should endeavor to adequately balance the aspect of reasonableness and effectiveness in their discourse so as to carry the audience along in

the speech. This study also recommends that scholars in this field should try ploughing into the nature of the argumentation to find out if the argument is sound or fallacious.

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Appendix

#EndSARS: Full text of President Muhammadu Buhari's National address

Abiola Odutola Abiola Odutola

Fellow Nigerians,

1. It has become necessary for me to address you having heard from many concerned Nigerians and having concluded a meeting with all the Security Chiefs.
2. I must warn those who have hijacked and misdirected the initial, genuine and well-intended protest of some of our youths in parts of the country, against the excesses of some members of the now-disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).
3. On Monday 12th October, I acknowledged the genuine concerns and agitations of members of the public regarding the excessive use of force by some members of SARS.
4. The choice to demonstrate peacefully is a fundamental right of citizens as enshrined in Section 40 of our Constitution and other enactments; but this right to protest also imposes on the demonstrators the responsibility to respect the rights of other citizens, and the necessity to operate within the law.
5. As a democratic government, we listened to, and carefully evaluated the five-point demands of the protesters. And having accepted them, we immediately scrapped SARS, and put measures in place to address the other demands of our youth.
6. On approving the termination of SARS, I already made it clear that it was in line with our commitment to the implementation of extensive Police reforms.
7. Sadly, the promptness with which we have acted seemed to have been misconstrued as a sign of weakness and twisted by some for their selfish unpatriotic interests.
7. The result of this is clear to all observers: human lives have been lost; acts of sexual violence has been reported; two major correctional facilities were attacked and convicts freed; public and private properties completely destroyed or vandalized; the sanctity of the Palace of a peace-maker, the Oba of Lagos has been violated. So-called protesters have invaded an International Airport and in the process disrupted the travel plans of fellow Nigerians and our visitors.

8.All these executed in the name of the ENDSARS protests. I am indeed deeply pained that innocent lives have been lost. These tragedies are uncalled for and unnecessary.

9.Certainly, there is no way whatsoever to connect these bad acts to legitimate expressions of grievances of the youths of our country.

10.The spreading of deliberate falsehood and misinformation through the social media in particular, that this government is oblivious of the pains and plights of its citizens, is a ploy to mislead the unwary within and outside Nigeria into unfair judgment and disruptive behavior.

11.On the contrary, both our deeds and words have shown how committed this administration

has been to the wellbeing and welfare of citizens, even with the steadily dwindling revenues, and the added responsibilities and restrictions due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

12.Government has put in place measures and initiatives principally targeted at youths, women and the most vulnerable groups in our society. These included our broad plan to lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in the next 10 years; the creation of N75 billion National Youth Investment Fund to provide opportunities for the youths, and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Survival Fund, through which government is:

- a. paying 3-months salaries of the staff of 100,000 micros, small- and medium-enterprises
- b. paying for the registration of 250,000 businesses at the Corporate Affairs Commission
- c. giving a grant of N30,000 to 100,000 artisans
- d. guaranteeing market for the products of traders

These are in addition to many other initiatives such as:

- a. Farmermoni,
- b. Tradermoni,
- c. Marketmoni,
- d. N-Power,
- e. N-Tech and
- f. N-Agro.

13.No Nigerian Government in the past has methodically and seriously approached poverty-alleviation like we have done.

14.With regard to the welfare of police personnel, the National Salaries, Income and Wages Commission has been directed to expedite action on the finalization of the new salary structure of members of the Nigeria Police Force.

15.The emoluments of other paramilitary services are also being reviewed upwards.

16. In order to underscore the importance of education in preparing youths for the future, this administration has come up with a new salary structure and other incentives for our teachers.

17. Let me at this point re-affirm the Federal Government's commitment to preserving the unity of this country.

18. We will continue to improve good governance and our democratic process, including through sustained engagement.

19. We shall continue to ensure that liberty and freedom, as well as the fundamental rights of all citizens, are protected.

20. But remember that government also has the obligation to protect lives and properties, as well as the right of citizens to go about their daily businesses freely and protected from acts of violence.

21. To our neighbors in particular, and members of the international community, many of whom have expressed concern about the ongoing development in Nigeria, we thank you and urge you all to seek to know all the facts available before taking a position or rushing to judgment and making hasty pronouncements.

22. In the circumstances, I would like to appeal to protesters to note and take advantage of the various well-thought-out initiatives of this administration designed to make their lives better and more meaningful, and resist the temptation of being used by some subversive elements to cause chaos with the aim of truncating our nascent democracy.

23. For you to do otherwise will amount to undermining national security and the law and order situation. Under no circumstances will this be tolerated.

24. I therefore call on our youths to discontinue the street protests and constructively engage government in finding solutions.

25. Your voice has been heard loud and clear and we are responding.

26. And I call on all Nigerians to go about their normal businesses, and enjoin security agencies to protect lives and properties of all law-abiding citizens without doing harm to those they are meant to protect.

27. Let me pay tribute to officers of the Nigeria Police Force who have tragically lost their lives in the line of duty.

28. I would like to thank those State Governors, traditional and religious leaders who have appealed for calm and restraint.

29. I also thank youth leaders who have restrained their followers from taking the law into their own hands.

30. This government respects and will continue to respect all the democratic rights and civil liberties of the people, but it will not allow anybody or groups to disrupt the peace of our nation.

Thank you all.
God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

(Source: nairametrics.com)