

CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS, MILITARY REGIMES, POLITICAL PARTIES AND TRANSITION TO THE FOURTH REPUBLIC IN NIGERIA (1993-1999)

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the role of modern civil society groups in Nigeria between 1993 and 1999. Globally, there is an interface between the civil society groups and democratization. The focus of the research is to examine the political efforts of the modern civil society groups in the transition to democracy in Nigeria. Part of the political effort was the struggle against the military regimes for the actualization of the June 12, 1993 elections. The National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), Pro-democracy Group, and Campaign for Democracy (CD) across the country stood up against the military junta led by General Babangida and General Sanni Abacha to return to civil rule. The introduction of the Interim National Government (ING) and the killings of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight human rights activists from Ogoni community in 1993 resulted in the global condemnation of General Abacha government. The eventual collapse of military regime in Nigeria therefore reinforces the efficacy of civil society groups in promoting democracy. This is the focus of the current research paper. Thus, the research found that within this period the civil society groups confronted the military junta through public protests, public enlightenment, consultations and media advocacy. The research also found the efficacy of civil society's employment of public protests and enlightenment in dismantling Abacha regime. Thus, the overall assessment of the role of civil society and the transition to civil rule in Nigeria underscores the efficacy of civil society in democracies. In conducting the research, the theory of Democratic Peace is employed to discern the reason for civil society's insistence on democracy in Nigeria. The research employs qualitative content analysis and textual mining as data collection process.

Keywords: *Civil Society Groups, Democracy, Military Regimes, NADECO, Political Party*

Introduction

Modern civil society groups have become instrumental to democratic governance with multifaceted functions in delivering social services to humanity Keane (2013). The civil society groups are significant agents for entrenching democratic governance through the promotion of tolerance, transparency and accountability in all ramifications. Modern civil society groups are self-generating, self-supporting, and autonomous associations different from the state, business and family and bound by a legal backing which are open to the public Woods (1992). Therefore, civil society groups in Nigeria in particular is a recent phenomenon with active responsibilities under the military regimes Cross Road (2011). In this sense, inauguration of democracy in Nigeria interfaced with collective struggle of the civil society groups fighting the military regimes in all circumstances Ikelegbe (2007). The restless struggle of pro-democracy groups attained its feverish pitch after the inauguration of the Interim National Government (ING) in the country following inconclusive 1993 presidential elections. The civil society groups such as NADECO fought the military junta to hand over power to the winner of the June 12 election. The Afenifere group from the South West also

fought for the restoration of the June 12 1993 election. The death of the pre-summed winner in 1998 chief M.K.O Abiola added to the struggle of the pressure groups in the country.

The need to interface the civil society groups with good governance is germane to entrenching democracy, especially in emerging democracies such as Nigeria. The civil society groups are operating from the public space aligned with the reinforcing principle that emphasis effective governance in the overall interest of the majority of the people. Civil society groups therefore, becomes fully manifested when it is allowed to consolidate the gains of democratic governance in Nigeria in line with what Momoh (2006) referred to as a transitional process with mission and vision of falling the authoritarian regimes of the military between 1980s and 1990s respectively in Nigeria. Hence, the inauguration of democratic government in Nigeria on May 29, 1999 level no one in doubt that civil society groups have been at the forefront of the struggling for democratic rule in Nigeria. Akinrinade (2004) aptly noted that

today, civil society faces greater challenges and more onerous responsibility in helping to

consolidate democracy and make it sustainable as well as irreversible than it did in the struggle to enthrone it in the past

The activeness of the civil society groups promote democracy as well as reflects leadership performance on efficient representation and delivery of the dividends of good governance to the people Diamond (1999). The civil society groups are parameters that guides democratic governance in a way that maintains its principles such as advocating for economic opportunities, rule of law, freedom of the press, provision of basic infrastructural facilities, guarantee of oppositions, and a regular free and fair election etc. In a real sense, civil society groups are representing the interest of the people irrespective of the religion and culture affiliation especially in emerging democracies such as Nigeria Ikelegbe (2007), Hearn (2001). In view of the constitutional backing of the civil society groups, democracy is safe in Nigeria as civil society groups organized activities through protest and educating the people on leadership selection. A real example in Nigeria and even recently joined active politics, the Labour Union in Nigeria

metamorphosed into party which contest almost all electoral posts during the 2023 elections.

As Nigeria return to democracy governance in the Fourth Republic, political analysts, the academics and civil society groups have paid serious attention to the practice of democracy in Nigeria and are much more concerned about the consolidation of power among competing political parties. Consequently, on this development, there have been several challenges that confronted democratic practice especially during election. These include, human rights abuses, corruption, political thuggery, anti-party activities, god-fatherism, violence, ethnic and religious conflicts all of which have continued unabated. These challenges frequently emerged from the political elites who want power at all costs in the country. Therefore, democratic consolidation cannot be restored until sanity is restored in polity by reducing to the barest minimum or total elimination of the aforementioned challenges.

Democratic consolidation literally refers to the deliberate political process in a polity by which democracy is broadly legitimized among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down Ouyang (2009). It means a democratic process that cannot come to an

end suddenly or abruptly through unconstitutional acts such as military coups or dictatorships. It implies established stability in governance. A consolidated democratic system would mean the existence of an enhanced economic development, developed democratic culture, stable party system and a well refined political process that ensures continuous democratic practices. Thus, consolidating democracy reflects improvement of the practice in order to avoid democratic breakdown. This research focuses on the role of civil societies in Nigeria during the transition to civil rule between 1993 and 1999. The questions that arises from this stated objective is: how did the civil societies assist in the transition to civil rule in Nigeria during the period under study? What was the efficacy of the methods being used by some of the civil societies in Nigeria? These two questions thus establish the focus of the current research. In this way, the article is divided into sections to respond to the states objective. In conducting the research, we employ the use of Democratic Peace Theory which establishes the correlation between societal stability and democracy. It is the assumption of the theory that country that practices democracy stands a better chance of embracing peace than authoritarian regime.

Methods of Data Collection

The adopted methodology in carrying out data collection for this study are two methods (primary and secondary sources). The primary source, which employs qualitative techniques such as textual mining of speeches and interviews while the other means is content analysis of secondary sources data. The secondary sources of data collection included magazines, Newspapers, government publications and other scholarly materials on the study.

Concept of Modern Civil Society Groups

Modern civil society operate the realm of organised social life that are voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from the society in general that involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passion, preference, and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on state, to improve the structure and

functioning of the state, and to hold state officials accountable Diamond (1997). Similarly, civil society represents one of the conditions that is widely agreed to be an essential and integral part of a functioning democracy in a democratic space such as Nigeria. Additionally, civil society is an amalgam of a substantial network of actively autonomous, organised groups pursuing a multiplicity of diverse individual interests outside the sphere of the state authority. Group participation is voluntary, and groups are free to be formed around any set of socio-economic or cultural interests. There is widespread participation in group activity, and individuals have multiple group memberships reflecting aspects of their individuality Perlin (2008).

However, the concept of civil society according to Whitehead (2002: 73) means a lot, which includes: (a) civil societies are relatively independent of both public authorities and private unit of production and reproduction of firms and formulation, (b) civil societies are capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in promotion of their interests or passion, (c) civil societies do not seek to replace other state agents or private producers or to accept responsibility for governing the polity as a

whole,(d) civil societies do agree to act within pro-established rules of a civil or legal nature,(e) civil societies, therefore, is not a simple but a compound property which rests on three conditions or norms, which includes: dual autonomy, interrelated actions, and civility. The concept of civility is a form of voluntary association or organizations distributed evenly across the geographical and social terrain covered by the modern territorial state. These view are supported by Uadiale (2011), who notes that civil society is an inherent pluralistic realm distinct from, yet interacting with the state and processes of production, consisting of numerous associations and organized around specific interest with the following in common, communally organized, independent, voluntary autonomy, able to firm links with other interest groups and do not in any way seek to set themselves up as an alternative to the state.

In a similar vein, Diamond (1997) observes that civil society is the realm of organized social life that opens, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous state, and bound by a legal order or set of share rules. It is distinct from society in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their

interests, passion, preference, and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on state, to improve the structure and functioning of the state, and to hold state official accountable. Perlin (2008) opens that civil society represents one of the conditions that is widely agreed to be an essential and integral part of a functioning democracy in a democratic space such as Nigeria. Additionally, civil society is an existence of a substantial network of active autonomous, organise groups pursuing a multiplicity of diverse individual interests outside the sphere of the state authority, group participation is voluntary, groups are free to form around any set of socio-economic, or cultural interests, there is widespread of citizens' participation in group activity, and individuals have multiple group memberships reflecting aspects of their individual.

Jessop et al (2008) describe civil society as possible peace building functions, including the protection of citizens, monitoring for accountability, advocacy and public communication, community building, and facilitation between citizens and state. Afterward, civil society is also an organisation that involves in peace negotiation at local and international level to

assist in bridging the gap between the antagonist and protagonist groups. St. John and Kew (2008) support with the views that civil society groups can help bring greater public representation into negotiation during peace process. Civil society, however, speaks with many voices and stands in the shadow of domination by political elites. Civil society is not uniform; it comes in many organisational forms, it can have varying degree of autonomy from the state, and sometimes, it can even serve as a substitute for the state when government fail to serve their population needs. Orvis (2001) notes that the civil society as a public sphere of formal or informal, collective activity autonomous from recognizing the legitimate existence of the state. This definition allows the inclusion of a wide array of political activity, whether long-established or quite recent. It also consists with the broad range of the use of the concept.

Political Party, Party System, and Political Representation

The ultimate objective of political party is to capture power of the state which forms the basis of political representation be in the legislative, and the executive. What is political party? Political party is political group who work together to influence the

government. They try to get members of their party elected to political offices, such as, the presidency, the governorship, and the legislative assemblies. The concept is also an assembly of socio-political interaction. These members select party leaders depending on the size of the country. Thus, there is party identification by which they are known to the electorate (party logo). Therefore, a political party serves four interests to its members and the electorate. They are: (1) Recognition of the members and the public especially the electorate. (2) Recruitment of its members for representation through campaigns and selection of electoral candidates into public offices. (3) A political party which paves the way for leadership either in the legislative or executive arm. (4) A political party maintains alternative power under a presidential system of government Egwemi (2009).

Political party is defined by a central function of political office. The broad function of the political party starts from filling the political office and wielding of governmental power. The main functions are as follows: first, representation refers to political parties responding to and articulating the view of party members and the electorate. Secondly, the elites' formation and recruitment recognise the parties of all kinds and are

responsible for providing democratic states with their political leaders. Thirdly, goal formation is the responsibility of the political parties to capture power through viable manifestoes with open campaign promises. Fourthly, interest articulation and aggregation are mechanisms for the parties to develop nationally without any preferential treatment. Lastly, socialisation and mobilisation through internal debate and discussion as well as campaigns and electoral competition, whereby parties engage in political education and socialisation Anifowose and Enemuo (2005).

Party system is a network of relationships through which parties interact and influence democratisation process and condition for consolidation of the political system. The most popular way of distinguishing party system is the reference to number of parties competing for power. In these views, there are one party, two party and multi-party systems which are designed for participation and competition in a federal state. Thus, in one-party system, a ruling party effectively functions as a permanent government. In two-party system, power alternates between two major parties. In multi-party system, no party is large enough to rule alone, leading to a system of coalition government. The

significance of political party allows smooth running of a representative government by party system. Therefore, the total number of political parties in a democratic state constitutes the party system. The pattern of relationship among parties only constitutes a system it is characterised by stability and degree of orderliness. Furthermore, party system shapes the political process in various ways. It influences the range and nature of choice available to the electorate and affects the cohesion and stability of government. It also determines the relationships between the legislature and the executive as well as the general character of the political behaviour in this state Egwemi (2009).

The concept of democracy implies the ultimate authority of governance should rest on the people themselves. When this idea is sought to be implemented through the mechanism of representative democracy, it is possible that the people may become inactive after choosing their representatives for the next general elections. Moreover, when the size of a democratic society expands geographically and it includes a large population with a variety of characteristics in terms of race, religion, language and culture, the distance between the people and their representatives is likely to widen.

Modern democracy largely works through its representatives' institutions. The selection of electoral candidates from the experience he/she possesses in the community. The problem of selection occurs because to select a talents and good character take serious procedure at the constituency level. However, the proportional representation is guaranteed system, be it to elect persons or parties, citizens elect representatives who will literally represent their views in the legislative assembly. In voting for a particular party or persons under a proportional representation system, voters cannot make good predictions as to the effect of their votes on the final policy choices that will be made by the legislature. Policy outcomes will depend on the relative strengths of the parties holding seats and on voting rule aggregating their preferences. In a two-party system, voters know that the party they vote for will be able to implement campaign promises, if it wins elections Mueller (2000).

The practice of democracy has attained an ideological position and this attitude continues to wave authoritarian regime for democratic rule. Therefore, several features of democratic representation, such as, delegated political institutions, admission of

justice, basic human rights, credible elections, good governance, freedom of media, and civil society participation, democracy will flourish. It would also prevent, and help resolves social, ethnic, and regional conflicts. Indeed, the new democracies have fostered freedom, elections, and decentralisation but continue to suffer from poor governance, representation, and participation despite positive experiments at the beginning of democratisation. Tornquist *et al* (2009).

Representative democracy requires democratic transformation with reference to relationships between delegated members and the citizen. Representative democracy is placed on account of some elements, such as, nature, welfare, interest, and wants. Representative democracy also recognises adequate consultation of the constituencies by the constituent members. Representative democracy simply improves the statutory responsibility of members in the parliament when they are delegated to various committees in the state Pitkin (1967). Representative democracy was a powerful tool of legitimation of the actions of government that is in power, even if they have just lost an election, the alternation of power continues to deepen democracy. In this

construction, representative guarantees that legislature expresses the will of the people, who cannot wish to harm themselves, and the doctrine of the answerability of the executive to the legislature ensures that the delegated power is not abused, but an instrument of the checks and balances of democratic government Omotola (2009). Representative government reflects public interest from where legitimacy was established. The constituent units are represented as the parliamentarians are acting on behalf of the people that established democratic institutions by the votes. In this sense, the various constituencies of a state should relate with the legislative members in a way of changing the public opinions and this reflects political representation of Nigeria Civil Society in 2015.

Struggle of NADECO and Pro-Democracy Groups

Beforehand, Nigeria's socio-political interaction oscillated between democratic rules or military regimes until after the transition to the democratic regime of 1999. During this transitional period a lot of political issues manifested as a result of wishing to install democracy in the country at all costs. This era took different dimensions for the liberalisation of democracy in the

country. It is on record that Nigeria had hitherto established three democratic regimes; First Republic (1960-1966), Second Republic (1979-1983), and the Third Republic (1993-1998), which were aborted by the military regimes through coup d'état. The extension of the third democratic regime was a political proposal of General Babangida who annulled the June 12 general elections. The annulment was a fundamental issue that affected the corporate affair of the country in 1993. This annulment would eventually be the turning point in the transition to democracy in Nigeria because the country was not only tired of the military rule, but also the political groups of the six geopolitical zones wanted to rotate the power of the country in accordance with democratic principles (Omotoso and Oyeranmi (2014) .

The heads of military dictators, General Babangida and Lieutenant General Abacha established a political proposal that accommodated the transition to a democratic regime between 1990 and 1993. The idea of transition filled the political environment with the hope that civilian rule would become a real agenda in the country because the local government and gubernatorial elections were conducted in the federation of Nigeria. These elections were conducted by the Independent

National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1991. Three years after, a presidential election was also conducted under the military regime. The two contestants, Chief Moshood Abiola and Alhaji Bashir Tofa both accepted the results, as well as the international observers who claimed the outcome was free and fair in 1993 Ogbogbo (2009). The electoral mandate of the two political aspirants who won the 1993 presidential election (Chief Abiola and Basir Tofa) was free and fair in the country. Unsurprisingly, the military cabal established unending democratic projects because the presidential election was annulled without any reason Igbokwe (2013).

The political artistry of the two Army Generals in dealing with the transition project started from the registration of political parties which failed the electoral system in Nigeria. The failure of the political proposal was constraint by various predicaments, such as the non-readiness of the civilian population to actualise promises of the manifestos, non-commitment of the military to withdraw to the barracks, and the judiciary was a weak institution and it is not independent to challenge political atrocities of the military regimes then Agbase (1999). All of these characters dispelled the

democratisation process between 1990 and 1993.

The annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election by General Babangida and the establishment of the Interim National Government (ING) for six months made Nigerians vulnerable. Thus, the democratisation process in Nigeria involved active civil society groups together with electoral action that would engender democracy. This strategy of liberalisation towards democratisation also witnessed the activities of civil society movements which condemned the military regime at all quarters in the country. Therefore, this action translated to protests for the democratic government that would attend to the needs and demands of the people. The *modus operandi* for the liberalisation to democratisation in the country was motivated by both internal and external factors. One of the internal forces which heightened the quest for liberalisation in the political environment was the driving force of the pro-democracy activities in designing strong strategies as well as aspiration to organise democracy with the hope of electoral representation, such as a National Assembly, a governorship, local and presidential elections, which all respectively manifested a

full democratic wheel between 1991 and 1993. The effort of civil society group was to fall and lead the country to democracy by the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO); this anti-Abacha group was established in 1994 from the South-West geopolitical axis Adegbabiri and Chuks, (2015). The general objectives of the civil group was that the 1993, June 12 election must be actualised for Chief Moshood Abiola, and it would be a political forum for the Yoruba community to address other issues that bothered the country Omotoso and Oyeranmi, (2015).

The political strategy of the Campaign for Democracy (CD) jointly influenced the struggle against the military regime after the overthrowing of the interim national government (ING) by General Abacha in 1993. The political activities of the (CD) civil society in mobilising the people against the autocratic movement of the military regime and compiling the June 12 electoral results from the database of the National Electoral Commission (NEC). As a result of this struggle, massive protests from the South-West were organised. Correspondingly, other civil society groups, such as the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), the National Association

of Nigerian Students (NANS), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU), and the National Association of Lawyers (NAL) all took a stand in the promotion of democracy Ihonvebere, (1996).

General Abacha's military policy obviously worked against the transition to democracy between 1993 and 1998. Among the external factors which added to the struggle in the campaign against Abacha was the arrest of Ken Saro Wiwa, the leader of Ogoni ethnic minority group from the South-South of Nigeria. President Bill Clinton of the United States of America delegated Jesse Jackson as a special envoy to negotiate with General Abacha to rescind the death penalty passed against the detainees of civil protest Westra, (1998). The execution of human rights fighters and eight others took place successfully in 1995. This reflected on the Commonwealth after pleading for a non-violation of the international charter. The action of the military in the violation of human rights obviously resulted in the removal of Nigeria from the international organisation in 1995 Adebani, (2004). The motion was raised by President Mandela at the meeting on the ground that General Abacha had violated the international rule for publicly hanging Ken Saro Wiwa and eight

others after a military tribunal turned a deaf ear to the Commonwealth of Nations Mngomezulu, (2015).

The military regime was independent of its policies on socio-economic and political issues in the country. Evidently, Abacha's government was condemned both internally and externally because of the increase in the number of political detainees and the mismanagement of the economy. The three decades of military dictatorship was filled with corruption, abuse of human rights, and a decayed economy. Nevertheless, Abacha's government was terminated by the sudden death of the dictator in 1998 Mai-Lafia, (2015). The aftermath of General Abacha's death contributed to the growth of the democratisation in Nigeria. His second in command, General Abubakar Abdulsalam took over the government, and released all political detainees from prisons Maier (2002). The political agenda of General Abdulsalam was to lead the military back to the barracks in 1998. Based on this promise, elections were conducted in the federation of Nigeria for the posts of governorship, local government, National Assembly, and the presidency in 1999. The military regime handed over power to Olusegun Obasanjo in May 1999. The transition to democracy was

engaged by government through consent and this paves the way for democratic norms that would lead the character of democratisation and democratic consolidation. The pattern of transition to democracy in Nigeria accommodated the joint effort of the military, the people, and civil society groups, and each of these performed their tasks to achieve the same goals Lewis (1999).

The general obstacles to democratisation of the new democracies are as follows; first, it foresees the political inexperience of the new democratic governments. Second, the new political leaders that emerged established democracy in line with undemocratic ideologies that worked against the principles and mechanisms of democratisation. Political leaders may not want to leave power, and thus create authoritarian regimes, and those who remain long in power in such regimes usually become adamant, opposing democratisation. Third, the anti-democratic culture would impede the spread of democratic norms in the society, deny the legitimacy to the democratic institutions, and thus greatly complicate, if not prevent, the emergence and effective functioning of the institutions, e.g., Islam, traditional philosophy, and undemocratic movements. Lastly, high levels of poverty and inequality

impede the growth of democratisation. In this construction, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Sudan are mentioned as countries that witnessed these challenges between 1974 and 1983 Huntington (1991).

Socio-economic Issues in Nigeria and Democratic Struggle

The fluctuation of oil price in the Nigerian economy was a major challenge in economic sector between 1999 and 2015. This is because the country runs her socio-political and economic mainly on oil as the mono-product. At the tune of the 21st Century, the oil price dropped at the international market. This immediately affects democratic government in Nigeria with a process of manipulation of oil prices (hike) for the sustainability of democratisation process. The focus on the governmental policy is consistent in the country after re-democratisation of the Fourth Republic as the oil price is skyrocketed because successive governments increased the oil price from twenty naira to uncertainty price after the

initiation of democracy. Although, President Goodluck Jonathan increased the oil price to ninety-seven naira in 2012 from sixty-five naira after the death of President Umar Yar'Adua in 2009, his regime was down in political legitimacy in 2015 and this forced the price of oil to eighty-seven naira on the basis of his re-election Usman and Ibrahim (2012). Against this backdrop, the expectation of the Nigerian people remains the socio-economic development which could reflect reasonable on oil price in the country. Therefore, oil plays a significant role in democratisation process in Nigeria

since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in 1999. The resumption of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 was not a surprise to Nigerians. The oil price was hiked to one hundred and forty-five naira per litre. Comparatively, the magnitude in the oil price after the initiation of democracy in 1999 was skyrocketing as compare to the military regime of the past which maintained stable price in the country. Before the transition to democracy in 1999, the price of oil under General Abacha/General Abdusalam's regime was twenty naira in 1998.

Table 1: Petroleum Price Adjustment in Nigeria 2000-2015

S/N	Date	Administration	Price	% Change
1	2000	Obasanjo	#20	–
2	2000	Obasanjo	#22	+10%
3	2001	Obasanjo	#26	+18%
4	2003	Obasanjo	#40	+54%
5	2004	Obasanjo	#45	+13%

6	2007	Obasanjo	#70	+56%
7	2007-2009	Yar-Adua	#65	-7%
8	2010-2012	Jonathan	#65	–
9	2012	Jonathan	#97	+49%
10	2014	Jonathan	#87	-10%
11	2016	Buhari	#145	+67%

Source: [Bello-Imam 2012, 184]

Table 1 reflects the history of pump price fluctuation in Nigeria. Fluctuation of oil prices in the country from the administration of President Obasanjo who inherited the pump price from the military regime in 1999 was chequered. It has been shown in the table above that between 2000 and 2007, the percentage changes in the price of oil was unstable after the inauguration of democratic rule. Therefore, seven years of governance in Nigeria witnessed continuous changes in the oil price. Furthermore, President Yar'Adua's administration adjusted the price of oil down in the country and it favourably dropped to -7 per cent between 2007 and 2009. The trend in oil hikes manifested between 2012 and 2016 as elected president Jonathan and Buhari pronounced publicly after their official resumption to the office. Thus, one of the implications of oil hikes in the country is

that the economic livelihood of the common people is considerably affected as a result of inflation.

The implication is that Nigerians would spend more of their meagre income and that there may be inflation on some consumable goods in the country. However, the work of Huntington on the notion that oil hikes in some countries remained the major transition to democratic rule is refuted in the Nigerian case, particularly on the fluctuation of oil prices between 2000 and 2015. This position is quite different because every successive democratic government in Nigeria suggested the oil hikes as the only surviving means of sustaining the economy between 1999 and 2015.

Challenges to Civil Society Groups

Nigeria as a nation state is charged with the energy of civil society groups that operate for various developments, part of these developments is a quick transformation from the authoritarian government to a democratic rule in 1999. These achievements are in varying degrees, which include the successful elections that took place in the political space as well as the people hope of and aspirations that their rights would be protected. Dramatically, the civil society groups in Nigeria are exclusive associations that perform civic responsibility towards engendering and empowering the state and its people in all ramifications. The synergy that evolved these constitutional responsibilities are germane to vibrant and effective civic groups.

Some of these civic groups are: Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Constitutional Right Project (CRP), Campaign for Democracy (CD), National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), United Democratic Front (UDF), Nigerian Union of Journalism (NUJ), Academic Senior Staff of Nigerian University (ASSU), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Nigerian Student Union (NSU), Nigerian Association of Teachers

(NAT) etc. In the same sense, Imode (2002) mentioned further that: Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM), Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), and Arewa People's Congress (APC) altogether are part of civic groups, as well as they have participated in various struggles and democratic programmes in the state with regard to human right movement against the military rules particularly after the annulment of June 12 general elections and the brutal way of killing Ken Saro Wiwa by Sani Abacha in 1995, are manifestation that evolved with pressure to transform the country into an egalitarian system.

In view of these facts, Nigerians dreams were actualized in 1999 with the hope and fortunes that the principle and values of democracy would be entrenched in the system for future without any authoritarian interception. Therefore, the elections that declared Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the winners are living examples for the emergence of Fourth Republic and several elections that succeeded rekindled the image good of Nigeria. But the inherent challenge is that the civic activity declines after the transition into democratic rule. This is the rationale why the study is relevant to explain

the dilemma, as there is no smoke without fire. Diamond (1997) explicitly states that the social society movement and other civic society actors inevitably declines after the transition, as the authoritarian state disappears, political parties and more established interest groups dominate stage, and more people turn to more private concern. For example, in Africa (Nigeria) has not been adapting so much as retreat and dissipation of energy. The broad forms of religious, professional, student, labour, and other associations broke up once their common goal of bringing down a despised regime had been achieved. Class and ethnic divisions once again fragmented society, and the relationship ranks of civil society rapidly depleted as activists were drawn into politics, government and business.

As part of the challenge, the ethnic militias movement in each geopolitical political zone of Nigeria has weakened the corporate existence which came on board through democratic processes. In view of these findings, the Nigerian civil society groups can be categorised into two parallel opposite, one creating, and the other destroying. This has characterized Nigerian democracy as de-democratising. The concept of de-democratising was highlighted by Momoh

(2006) from the experience of Nigerian political system where the expectation of democracy is not forthcoming on the people but on the few elites that improve their material condition with their entourage. Adebani (2004) argues that the problem which impedes Nigerian civil society is of threefold, firstly, structural factors as connected to the government-civil society relations can be determined by the extent of division, inequality, and conflict between the rulers and the rest of the society as well as the extent to which every member of the society have sense of belonging and well-being. Secondly, institutional factors which maintain the administrative practices and law that enthrone secrecy in governance. Lastly, individual factors also contribute to this because the authority in various states and local government use the instrument of hegemony to control the people of their environment to ignore any social relations that may affect them, so, the civil society would not have access to these people for any discussion that are required.

It is no doubt that civil society organizations in Nigeria have had considerable influence on democracy and electoral practices in Nigeria. However, certain issues militate against the effective operation of civil society

organization in Nigeria, one of which according to Ogu (2011) is the issue of insufficient funds. Most civil society organizations rely on government funding for their various operations, which is not a healthy phenomenon as it breeds loyalty of civil society to government in power. Similarly, the appointment of civil society leaders into offices has also affected the character and ideology of such society. In the same connection, Adebani (2004) incorporates an enigma attitude of top officials toward corruption which is an internal problem that arises out of the civil society organization. The sincerity and transparency of civil society organization in the area of handling funds and support given to them by the donor agencies, politicians, corporate organizations, and government agencies for anti-corruption crusade is doubtful. Substantial amounts of the money given to some of them are frittered into private pockets of some Executive Directors and other senior members of the organization. Only little is spent on anti-graft programmes.

Furthermore, civil society groups in Nigeria failed to transcend ethno-religious and regional cleavages and some undermined the struggle to eradicate corruption in the country. Attempts by some sections of civil

society to check the activities of the state official from particular ethnic, religion, or region are usually interpreted by other sections of the civil society as ethnic and religious bias. A typical example was the case of former speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, Alhaji Salisu Buhari, who was removed from office for falsifying his age and educational qualifications. The immediate response of Buhari's constituency in Northern Nigeria to the allegation was to describe it as a fabrication aimed at destroying the political career of a budding politician. From the foregoing, it is observed that the civil society in Nigeria lacks strategy of tackling the problems. Similarly, much of the challenges that civil society face in Nigeria are self-inflicted as they have not been found to effectively utilize the strategy of mass mobilization and mass support from across the country.

Research Findings and Discussion

The overall assessment of the role of civil society and other entities within the national political space reinforces the importance of having resilient institutions that can sustain the tempo of political tension in Nigeria. In an attempt to mobilize the public against the

authoritarian regime of Abacha by civil societies, the study found the complicit role of security agents in victimizing the populace. Such victimization, the research found, led to the mass exodus of political and social activists to the western world, most importantly the United States and Britain. The collapse of military regime in 1999 and eventual transition to the civil rule has revealed that the general public in Nigeria was tired of military regimes of Babangida and Abacha. In addition, the research found that the ethnic tension within the national polity collapsed towards the tail end of the Abacha regime as Nigerians unanimously wanted Moshood Abiola to be declared winner of the annulled election. The tribal and ethnical tension that hitherto dictated the political landscape of Nigeria collapsed considerably as Nigerians wanted transition to civil rule. It needs to be stressed further here that between 1999 and 2023, Nigeria has not enjoined, in substantial term, the dividend

of democracy they all suffered to promote under the military regime.

Conclusion

Liberal democracy is charged with the energy of modern civil society groups that operate for various developments, part of these developments is a quick transformation from the authoritarian government to a democratic rule in 1999. These achievements are -in varying degrees, which include the successful elections that took place in the political space as well as the people aspirations that their rights would be protected. Dramatically, the modern civil society groups in the country are exclusive associations that perform civic responsibility towards engendering and empowering the state and its people in all ramifications.

The modern civil society is akin to democratic development in recent time. The concept of democratic development involves the political institutions as realms in the state, which accommodates several political demands from the people, especially in a fragmented environment political space like Nigeria. Democratic development is connected to the collective enterprise of the people in the political environment. Thus, people are the agents and means of achieving

democratic values in socio-economic development. Remarkably, if people are the end result of democratic development, their well-being is the supreme law of development. But the well-being of the people will only be supreme law of development if they have some decisions-making power. Additionally, public opinion is the only value that is principally essential in the democratic space of Nigeria. Therefore, the functions of the modern civil society groups are to channel these elements in a manner that will entrench people's general well-being.

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