



## **Between Military Resistance and Democratic Consolidation Epochs: Is Nigeria's Civil Society Still Vibrant or Docile?**

Authors: Mike Omilusi, Olumuyiwa Amao  
Submitted: 9. June 2019  
Published: 12. June 2019  
Volume: 6  
Issue: 6  
Affiliation: University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand  
Languages: English  
Keywords: Civil Society, Democracy, Epochs, Military Rule, Nigeria.  
Categories: Humanities, Social Sciences and Law  
DOI: 10.17160/josha.6.6.570

### Abstract:

This paper interrogates the historical role of the civil society in Nigeria's political trajectory spanning through two fundamental epochs—military and democratic. Drawing inferences from a number of historical and comparative approaches, it argues that there is a seeming lull in civil society activism in Nigeria, since its return to democratic rule in 1999. This complacency, the paper argues, appears inextricably linked to Nigeria's prevailing social, political and economic environment, in contrast to what obtained under military rule. The paper concludes with suggestions on how the civil society can contribute meaningfully to the country's attempt towards democratic consolidation.

# JOSHA

[josha.org](http://josha.org)

**Journal of Science,  
Humanities and Arts**

JOSHA is a service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content



## **Between Military Resistance and Democratic Consolidation Epochs:**

### **Is Nigeria's Civil Society Still Vibrant or Docile?**

Mike Omilusi PhD

Department of Political Science

Ekiti State University, Nigeria

watermike2003@yahoo.co.uk

Olumuyiwa Amao, PhD

University of Otago, Dunedin,

New Zealand.

talk2smath@yahoo.com

#### **Abstract**

This paper interrogates the historical role of the civil society in Nigeria's political trajectory spanning through two fundamental epochs—military and democratic. Drawing inferences from a number of historical and comparative approaches, it argues that there is a seeming lull in civil society activism in Nigeria, since its return to democratic rule in 1999. This complacency, the paper argues, appears inextricably linked to Nigeria's prevailing social, political and economic environment, in contrast to what obtained under military rule. The paper concludes with suggestions on how the civil society can contribute meaningfully to the country's attempt towards democratic consolidation.

**Key Words:** Civil Society, Democracy, Epochs, Military Rule, Nigeria.



## **Introduction**

Within the social sciences, there are several methods of conceptualizing and defining civil society. One of the most detailed is provided by the London School of Economics which refers to civil society as the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values (LSE 2006). Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in degrees of formality, autonomy and power. It is often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups (LSE 2006). The concept is accepted in modern political science as an intermediary between the private sector and the state. Thus, civil society is distinguished from the state and economic society, which include profit-making enterprises, neither is it the same as family-life society. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between the state, civil society, family and the market are often complex, blurred and negotiated.

Historically, the concept, particularly in its earliest form, dates to the age of enlightenment in the 16th century, and more specifically in the ideas and thoughts of Adam Ferguson, a Scottish philosopher/historian. Ferguson linked the notion of civil society to the development of the economic state, and tied its emergence to the decline of despotism and the corrupt feudal order, and saw the development of a "commercial state" as a means of replacing the corrupt feudal order and strengthen the liberty of the individual (Masterson 2006). As an ideology, the foundation of civil society can be found in both the liberal and Marxist traditions of European political thought, for example in de Tocqueville's emphasis on the importance of voluntary associations in promoting democratic citizenship and in Gramsci's emphasis on the role of social institutions in either buttressing or challenging state power (Bratton 1994). A key factor conferring legitimacy on civil society organizations is their knowledge-driven ability which equips members with skills to investigate problems of society, proffer solutions and develop plans to facilitate buy on, by other segments of society and government (Ofoneme 2013).



Notably, however, the experiences of civil society groups the world over, has shown that while government must be held responsible for translating the will of the citizens into public policy, it is neither the most effective vehicle nor the sole vehicle for the delivery of development (Essia and Yearoo 2009). In Nigeria, the existence of repressive and unpopular governments for more than 24 years (1983-1998) engendered the emergence and proliferation of organizations which sought to challenge the legitimacy of policy, programs and, ultimately, the existence of these governments. No doubt, the existence of the civil society assisted considerably to open up space for the expression of dissenting opinions and what could be regarded as alternative voices. It is in this light that this paper interrogates the place of civil society in Nigeria spanning through two fundamental epochs - military and democratic - in the nation's political trajectory.

Specifically, the paper examines the factors which ignited civil society activism in Nigeria under military rule and asks if the same level of activism can still be accorded the civil society in Nigeria post-military rule. The paper also seeks to investigate the impact of Nigeria's prevailing socio-economic and political environment on the civil society movement since the return of the country to civilian rule. To answer the foregoing, the paper has been structured into five sections, with the first serving as introduction. The second considers the conceptual issues underpinning the notion of the civil society across different spheres. In the third section, emphasis is on the centripetal and centrifugal forces which shaped Nigeria's civil society during its three decades of military rule. The fourth section focuses on the role played by the civil society movement in Nigeria post-military rule, and its attempt towards democratic consolidation. The fifth and concluding section, offers insight into the changes that have occurred in Nigeria's civil society movement since the country's return to civilian rule in 1999, and how these issues can be addressed moving forward.

### **Civil Society: What does the Literature Say?**

The civil society is the bedrock of any civilized country. It is denoted as *civil* because it is predominantly for both enlightened and the not-so-enlightened members of the society who are united by a bond and aspiration which presuppose the existence of the rule of law, good



governance, demand for representative government and protection of the rights of the people, among others. The essential distinguishing elements of a civil society are the autonomy they enjoy from the state, (2) their public character which helps in setting a normative order for the state and help further a common good, and (3) their ability to function as grassroots social movements and draw their strength from solidarity, and the struggle against oppression (Osaghae 1997, cited Egwu 2008: 3).

The civil society refers to the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, self-supporting, and autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules (Diamond 1995). Essentially, it serves as a platform ‘which enables citizens to act collectively in a public sphere, express their interests, exchange ideas and information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and also hold state officials accountable’(Diamond 1995:2). As noted by Diamond, a vibrant civil society often functions as an intermediary or entity, standing between the private sphere and the state and, where efficiently-utilized, can function as a tool for democratic transition and democratic consolidation (Diamond 1995).

Indeed, civil society is distinguishable not only from the family and the state but also from the realm of social action known as ‘political society’. Whereas the civil society contains institutions like neighborhood associations, professional bodies, and organized religions, political society refers to political parties, elections and legislatures (Cohen and Arato 1992). A vibrant civil society can be a multiplier for all human rights, driving sustainable economic development and reinforcing good governance; and a force for stability and the rule of law. Economies and societies tend to thrive when people freely contribute ideas and hold their governments to account. A vigorous civil society is increasingly concerned about how nations compete in today’s interconnected world, where innovation, creativity, and a dynamic ‘knowledge economy’ confer comparative advantage (UK Report 2014).

Emerging from the above is the assumption that civil society encompasses a wide range of organizations concerned with public matters. They include civic, issue-oriented, religious, and educational interest groups and associations. Some are known as non-governmental



organizations, or NGOs while others are informal and loosely structured. This is evident in Carothers' explanation:

... at the core of much of the current enthusiasm about civil society is a fascination with nongovernmental organizations, especially advocacy groups devoted to public causes - the environment, human rights, women's issues, election monitoring, anti-corruption, and other good things (Carothers 2000:2).

Civil society, as Bratton further contended, offers an opportunity to understand, and influence, the process of democratization, and that the renewal of interest in democracy has placed civil society in a prominent position in both social science theory and development policy (Bratton 1994). This viewpoint has been re-echoed by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, who noted that the inclusion of a political component in the definition of civil society is a vital component in 20<sup>th</sup> century democracies (Almond and Verba 1963). The conclusion was informed by their research which sought to understand why some democratic societies survived the Great Depression, and others moved away from democratic governance towards various forms of nationalist and fascist government. The engagement alongside vitality of civic organizations as well as groupings, and their active and deliberate involvement in the political decision-making processes of government contribute to a democratic state's likelihood of survival (Almond and Verba 1963).

Of critical importance to a civil society is its inherent ability to enhance good governance by playing advocacy roles and addressing unidentified, unaddressed problems and bringing such to public discourse (Fadakinte 2013). Where a vibrant, inclusive, and connected civil society, peopled with citizens who are enjoying rights as citizens under responsive government is already established, anyone who suggests radical change is more or less obliged to make it evident that the changes will not involve any significant negative effects. Similarly, civil society organizations provide networks of communication among citizens, and between citizens and the state. It has been affirmed that, as instruments of political consent, the institutions of civil society can either provide political legitimacy to governments, or withhold it. According to Action Aid International,



Nigeria has a long and strong tradition of civil society, with the resistance movement primarily led by civil society groups... labour organizations, student associations, while the media provided a strong leadership and organized protests against unpopular policies..." particularly during the military regimes that pockmarked the nation's political development (Action Aid international 2007:2).

The historically-specific nature of the civil society notwithstanding, the concept has continued to generate interest and debate in Western and non-Western contexts (Lewis 2002). The academic discourse on civil society in Africa might be still growing, but it has continued to be haunted by persistent doubts regarding the nativity of the concept, and its applicability or otherwise to African social and political circumstances (Obadare 2004). The concept of civil society is one of the most controversial in cultural and political circles in Arab and African worlds. Yet, it has failed to receive the appropriate attention of both its advocates and detractors, who consider it an alien contraption. Furthermore, the concept of civil society was misused for political purposes, as some North African states enlisted it to exclude the formations of political Islam. On the other hand, Arab movements of opposition and political dissent, deployed the same concept to entrench themselves against state oppression and authoritarianism (Hassan 2009). In the late 1980s, the theme of state-society struggle reverberated through Africanist circles in North America and became the new prismatic lens for gauging the significance of events in Africa (Mamdani 1995).

Many Africanist accounts of civil society, as well as those of African scholars, seem to combine analysis with prescription, description with advocacy. The perspectives found in the literature on civil society in Africa can broadly be divided into the 'conventional view', as the dominant discourse, and alternative perspectives, which include Democratic socialist, Marxist and emancipatory viewpoints as well as critiques of civil society as a 'liberal project' (Whitefield 2002). A subject of interest to many political philosophers, 'civil society' has a long and complicated history. More significantly, the civil society concept reappeared in the late 1980s and its reappearance led to the increasingly popular exercise of constructing the genesis and genealogy of this idea. A component of the conceptual framework – viewing civil society from





the lens of a process - shows how and with what intentions scholars have created a genealogy of the civil society concept and how that informs their contemporary political analyses.

As noted by Obadare, the alternative genealogy of civil society seems partly to have grown out of the desire to respond to the misgivings associated with the concept, and to provide a description of civil society which, while not totally divorced from its original meaning, strikes out in newer directions, and takes into cognizance the radical ways in which the notion of civil society continues to be used in non-Western societies (Obadare 2004). The conceptual framework for understanding civil society as a process contains several elements that help in articulating these existing processes. It combines an abstract notion of state and civil society in a dialectical relationship with theoretical discussions specific to post-colonial African countries including the nature of state and society in Africa, analysis of power, and organizational aspects of collective action. This conceptual framework is not intended to be complete, coherent or unified, but rather it offers an example of what analytical tools might be employed to understand civil society as process (Whitefield 2002).

According to Chazan 1992:283, ‘the relaxation of official controls over associational life, the closure of alternatives to interaction within the state framework, and the expansion of communication networks’, constitute three essential conditions conducive to a flourishing civil society. However, in Africa, civil society faces multiple challenges that, if not addressed, will compromise its effectiveness and results. To begin, the civil society sector is increasingly becoming dangerously corporatized with limited connections to people’s daily struggles leading to loss of original grassroots-based social mobilization approaches as the sector is gradually leaning more and more towards meetings, workshops and boardroom advocacy. In environments of dictatorships, civil society practice self-censorship, it is cowed to submission by repressive regimes and has become vulnerable to infiltration.

In Nigeria, a critical study of its political history reveals that the civil society was well-developed and organized before the advent of colonialism, hence the right of the nation to self-determination was violently suppressed by the British colonial regime. In particular, the rights to freedom of association and expression were criminalized and prohibited. The emergence of civil





society in Nigeria, according to Imade dates back to the period preceding independence—largely informed by a national liberation struggle, characterized by the burgeoning activities of nationalist movements (Imade 2001). This development culminated in one of the fiercest battles against colonial domination anywhere in the world. On the basis of this single objective to get rid of colonial rule, it was relatively easy to mobilize support across internal ethnic and religious lines (Imade 2001).

Contemporary civil society activism in Nigeria, according to Akanle is traceable to the 1980s during the repressive reigns of the military governments of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha (Akanle 2009). The civil society organizations at the time arose in direct response to government's failure to deliver basic necessities of life to the people while trampling on fundamental human rights in the military's bid to discourage citizens from challenging rampant corruption or opposing their extended stay in power. This period was followed by what Adigun Agbaje captured as "mobilization by design"—characterized by government involvement in social mobilization at the elite and mass levels (Agbaje 1990: 34). This mobilization was foisted on Nigerians by the military dictator of that era, General Ibrahim Babangida. Darren Kew summarizes the experience thus:

Military repression and economic stagnation combined to whittle away the Nigerian state, forcing most Nigerians to seek civil society alternatives for political organization, expression, and protection...While many Nigerian politicians relinquished to blind political expediency and followed the military's transition paths to nowhere, civil society became the only sphere where democratic political activity and leadership in national democracy promotion could be found (Kew 1990:1).

However, the growth and development of civil society in Nigeria has been intermittent. Once the assumed missions had been accomplished, civil society disintegrated or retreated into isolation, only to surge again when threats reappeared. The state has played an enormous role in the development of civil society in Nigeria through co-optation, manipulation, and oppression since independence in 1960. As observed by Alamu, 'virtually all the institutions inherited from [Nigeria's] colonial masters are so thoroughly debased and deformed that they have become a



sick joke. The degeneracy of these vital institutions is so complete that there hardly exists a possibility of redemption' (Alamu, The Nation 8 July, 2012).

For instance, rather than building bonds across society along issues of shared interests, civil society groups are frequently organized along intergroup differences, reinforcing societal divisions. Similarly, too often, these civil society groups are highly personality-driven at times, serving the political interests of an individual rather than a broader social concern. Equally noticeable, these organizations are often governed with the same limitations on participation, expression, free and fair leadership elections, and accountability as a governing regime, making them poor training grounds for democratic models of governance (ACSS 2011). Also, divisions among the Nigerian civil society along the ethnic and regional lines have not helped democracy advocacy; this has led to disunity and disagreement among the Nigerian NGO practitioners in terms of decision-making and unity of purpose. This is further examined in subsequent sections of this essay.

### **Civil Society and the Military Epoch: “A Common Enemy”-Driven Struggle?**

The fast-expanding role civil society organizations have assumed in modern development has become so important that no government desirous of exploiting and harnessing the potentials of its citizens for national development can afford to ignore it (Essia & Yearoo 2009). Recent years have witnessed significant discussions regarding the composition of civil society in the African context. This is largely due to the role of civic organizations and groups in the struggle for liberation initially from colonial rule, and later in the quest for democratic governance. In many instances, analysts who conduct in-depth examination of the emergence and significance of groups and organizations within societies, and how these groups impact on the priorities of government and state institutions, omit a proper consideration of civil society as a concept within their context (Masterson 2006). As Lewis observes:



The global resurgence of autonomous popular organization, civic activism and political contestation has provoked a search for analytic tools to help us make sense of these historic shifts in state-society relations. Despite its origins in European political theory, the idea of civil society has often appeared as a universal verity in comparative analyses of democratic change. Yet the concept has revealed many permutations, even within the European context, and its applicability to African circumstances is by no means self-evident (Lewis 1995: 24).

The activities of civil society organizations have, over the years, engineered several forms of development in Nigeria. The activities range from protesting against certain government policies to organization of seminars, conferences and enlightenment programmes to educate the masses or citizens on human rights and how to kick against abuse of such rights (Ofoneme 2013). The crux of this section comprises history and character of relationship between government and civil society groups, especially the emergence of the human rights movement in the country and the role they played during the protracted transition-to-civil rule programs of successive military regimes in Nigeria, which began in 1986 and culminated in the inauguration of the Olusegun Obasanjo government on May 29, 1999 (Shettima & Chukwuma 2002).

If civil society is viewed as the panacea for freedom; protection and advocacy of the civil rights and liberties; resistance against state repression; the mobilizing arena for the protection and projection of substantive interests; the compelling impetus for state moderation; and the epitome of popular struggles and civil power (Ikelegbe 2001), it becomes expedient to examine how relevant it can be, or has been, within the context of this discussion. It is notable that Nigeria has long enjoyed a vibrant civil society and a rough-and-tumble media that is famous across Africa. It has a flourishing English language press, much of it in private hands. Trade unions, professional associations, business associations, traditional institutions, and religious institutions have also played critical roles in building democracy and sustaining the democratic yearning since Nigerian independence.

These older groups have been joined since the late 1980s by the NGO movement, a host of small, professional, fleet-footed organizations targeting a variety of social concerns, service provisions, or advocacy needs across the federation. (USAID 2016). During the military era, the



civil society organizations played prominent role as the mouth-piece of the citizens on issues of citizens' well-being, socio-political development of the society and political transition. As noted by Nwosu, the pro-democracy civil society groups during the military era included the oppositional press and human rights organizations (Nwosu 2014:157). These include—the Campaign for Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Campaign for Democracy, Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Labour unions especially the Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas (NUPENG), the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN).

The cutting edge of the struggle for democracy, aside from the political opposition – under the umbrella of NADECO and some ethnic nationalities – was the expanding nexus of human rights, libertarian and pro-democracy groups in the civil society. Indeed, an interesting characteristic of this period, in the words of Judith Ann-Walker was ‘the multiplicity of civil society organizational types that became locked in dangerous encounters with the state over issues of rights, liberties and good governance’ (Walker 1999:54). The above-mentioned groups were committed to various aspects of democracy (Amuwo 2001). Some emerged to struggle for the validation of June 12, 1993 presidential election which was annulled by the Ibrahim Babangida junta. Together with the activist press, they exposed the breaches of civilized standards of conduct by the military regime in the areas of human rights, corruption and other levels of misrule.

Intensification of repression by government through assassination of opponents, use of prohibitive decrees to suppress the media, human rights and democracy activist organizations, propelled some members of oppositional civil society organizations to political exile overseas. Indeed, they saw a common enemy in the military that needed to be fought and its obnoxious policies resisted. At the initial stage, the focus of most of the groups was on traditional human rights concerns such as police abuse, prison conditions, campaign against torture, long detention without trial, extra-judicial killings and general litigation on specific cases of human rights violation. However, as the military government of General Babangida became more vicious in



response to relentless exposure of its atrocities and growing public disenchantment with the inability of the government to adhere to its timetable to cede power to an elected civilian government, human rights groups began to agitate for termination of military rule in Nigeria.

These organizations' practice of lobbying the government on a wide range of human rights issues quickly moved them and activists who were mainly lawyers into the center of pro-democracy struggle in 1990s (Ikubaje 2011). The media was very active and contributed significantly to the anti-military campaign through its publications. Other professional bodies like Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) and Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) also embarked on strikes to campaign against the military hegemony. On their part, pro-democracy groups adopted civil disobedience, rallies of different kinds to show their hatred for the military rule and preference for democratic governance. Members of the pro-democracy group like Pro-democracy National Coalition, (PRONACO) fled Nigeria to the United Kingdom, USA, and Canada among other countries to continue their anti-military campaign in those places (Fayemi 2005).

Economic and political sanctions were imposed on Abacha's regime by Western governments as a result of PRONACO's activities abroad. At the same time, agents of democratic reverses in Nigeria's civil society, particularly, groups which, though claiming to be operating independent of government, began to act in furtherance of undemocratic political interests of the incumbent government, ostensibly to frustrate the transition to elective civil rule. It is remarkable that these groups also explored institutional approaches to their engagement with the state by resorting to court action, rallies, publications and mobilization of support for the regimes. The links between these rent-seeking groups and the government were usually noticeable in their funding or the extension of perks of corruption to their leadership from the top echelons of government (Nwosu 2014: 158).

The political crisis, arising from the annulment of June 12, 1993 elections by the military regime, had earlier pitched the civil society against the government. Usman affirms that 'the aftermath of the annulment of the election results was an unprecedented social uprising and civil disobedience



which brought about (sic) the country to the brink of civil war' (Usman 2009: 135). Because of the gulf between the public rhetoric of the Babangida regime on human rights and the gross violations of rights by its officials, a group of lawyers and journalists led by Olisa Agbakoba and Clement Nwankwo founded the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) in October 1987, to challenge the regime's human rights record and other misdeeds of the administration (Shettima and Chukwuma 2002).

Indeed and as Kukah notes, the annulment was a wake-up call for every segment of the Nigerian population (Kukah 1999:43. The most active segment of the population after the announcement of the annulment was the) human rights community. Adewumi aptly summarizes the civil society's intervention during the period:

...an attempt by a broad coalition of Nigerians to organize a national conference in 1990 brought the human rights groups frontally into the political fray, culminating in their robust involvement in the struggle to terminate predatory military rule by spearheading the campaign for the de-annulment of the results of the June 12 presidential election believed to have been won by the late M.K.O Abiola. Even when professional politicians were not forthcoming and were playing pranks, the civil society groups did not relent in the struggle until the military was forced out of governance and civil rule restored in 1999 (Adewunmi 2007: 112).

The relationship with the civil society degenerated because the regime of General Sani Abacha which came into power on November 17, 1993, was worse than the previous one in the area of hostility to dissent and repression of human rights activists and political opposition (Shettima and Chukwuma 2002). Having literally shot down the historic presidential election results of 12 June 1993, and the democratic political structures of his predecessor's transition program, Abacha, for the next five years (1993-1998), fought a ferocious battle of political credibility and legitimacy. To survive, he resorted to an admixture of force, comprising the stick or threat and the actual use of force against the political opposition; and the carrot or a reward system in relation to social forces, groups and individuals that supported the regime (Amuwo 2001).

As the Nigerian state progressively lost its 'stateness' and degenerated under consecutive military regimes, into a 'statist' cocoon, as succeeding heads of the junta became increasingly



hegemonic over both the junta and the polity, they were also subjected to increasing international pressure to democratize, especially following the annulment of Nigeria's June 1993 election. Between 1993 and early 1999, the European Union (EU) and other international bodies imposed limited sanctions on Nigeria. The United States, United Kingdom and other countries recalled their ambassadors. Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth, and both the United Nations and Organization of African Unity condemned Nigeria for its human rights abuse (Adetula et al 2010). The June 12, 1993 scenario was just one of the cases when the civil society had to confront the military establishment. However, the ultimate goal of having M.K.O. Abiola installed as the democratically-elected president could not materialize under the Abacha regime as the struggle began to suffer from ethnic politics and other selfish interests among civil society actors (and politicians alike) before the deaths of Abacha as well as Abiola under controversial circumstances. Civil society has not been able to cure itself of this cankerworm.

Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 however, civil society organizations in Nigeria do not present a formidable united front in approach to issues of governance as many contending interests come into play. The civil society, particularly the media, 'played a major role' in the fight against a third term quest by the incumbent president, Olusegun Obasanjo. This could be attributed to the visible support of an aggrieved faction of the political class whose interests were at stake. It was a rare alliance among the politicians (ferociously championed by the vice-president, Atiku Abubakar), civil society (with media as arrowhead) and the masses (mobilized in the process) meant to suppress the tenure elongation of Obasanjo. The campaign for, and against, the proposed third term was said to have been funded and sustained by politicians on both sides of the political divide (Omilusi 2013). The period of military rule was the most remarkable period for the civil society. The period witnessed the emergence of quite a number of civil society organizations. During that period, they were the main opposition to military (mis)-rule and were in staunch defense of the citizens' rights (Fadakinte 2013).

Thus, the roles and contributions of civil society to the process of democratization under Generals Babangida and Abdulsalami regimes from 1985-93 and 1998-1999 respectively cannot be overemphasized. Leading Nigerian and international scholars have argued that General





Ibrahim Babangida's decision to 'step aside'- voluntarily handing over to an Interim National Government (ING) on August 1993, and Abdulsalami Abubakar handing over to a democratically-elected government in May 1999, were due to pressure from the Nigerian civil society. Indeed, the civil society organizations did not only undermine the authoritarian military governments, they also succeeded in entrenching democratic governance in 1999. It can be said therefore, that the history of Nigeria's democratic rule will be incomplete without alluding to the struggle and critical roles played by the civil society groups in dislodging the autocratic military.

### **Emergence of Civil Rule and the Task of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: What has changed?**

Civil society has been defined not only as the engine of the transition to democracy in Africa and elsewhere, but also as equally crucial to the vitality of democracy. The importance of civil society in the democratization process cannot be overemphasized, as some scholars have described it as 'a most effective means of controlling repeated abuses of state power, holding rulers accountable to their citizens and establishing the foundations for durable democratic government'(Chazan 1996: 282). Traditionally, and as Amao et al, contend, 'CSOs are expected to inspire and ensure a bottom-up, citizen-centered, and a locally-owned environment capable of empowering communities and citizens at the grassroots to actively engage in the political process' (Amao et al., 2014: 77).

The civil society movement in Nigeria, despite the seeming lull in activism since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, has contributed significantly in this regard, particularly with regard to fight against corruption. Following Nigeria's return to democracy on May 29, 1999, the civil society movement has assumed a relatively different focus. This has seen its struggles gradually shifting from democracy restoration to 'a momentous new formation of social movements ostensibly aimed at protecting, accommodating and ensuring the adequate representation of a number of a particular social or political interests' (Ikelegbe 2001: 39). Following Nigeria's return to civil rule therefore, it can be argued that the civil society has concerned itself largely



with the nurturing of popular opinion, promotion of popular claims and mobilization of the public for civic action (Ikelegbe 2001).

This development is arguably a sharp contrast to what obtained in the dark era of Nigeria's military dictatorship, where governance, was reduced to the expression of the whims of dictators and their cabal (Aiyede 2003). Of the depictions of this 'state of nature', perhaps the scholar who captured it most succinctly is Balogun who noted that:

Up to the end of Babangida's rule in August 1993, the initiative on the shape, size, and powers of political units was taken by the military. If the military felt like creating new states or additional local governments, it simply issued a press release communicating the decision. Under Babangida, the hitherto subtle imposition of military wishes turned into direct promulgation of executive orders and decrees (Balogun 1997: 37).

Others have described it as a consummation of 'a second independence', which placed Africa's 'nascent' civil societies in the forefront of the struggle against such oppressive regimes reminiscent of what African nations suffered during colonialism, thus holding the promise of democratic expansion and the end of authoritarianism (Aiyede 2003:2). It is observable that, as democratic governments began to emerge in Africa, so also were expectations of the role and capacity of these civil society organizations to promote governance reform and deepen democracy exaggerated (Zakaria 1997).

Consequently, and following Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, many civil society organizations (CSOs) have sustained the level of momentum and passion similar to the NADECO approach in the dying days of the Abacha regime. Worthy of mention are CSOs such as the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room—an amalgam of more than 70 Nigerian civil society organizations working on good governance issues, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), CLEEN Foundation, Action Aid Nigeria, Campaign for Democracy (CD), and Enough is Enough. There is also Bring Back Our Girls Group (BBOG)—a body formed after the 2014 abduction of 219 school girls from Chibok in Nigeria's northeastern state of Borno by Boko Haram- to mount pressure on the Nigerian government towards ensuring the rescue of the girls among others (Maiangwa and Amao 2015).



Significantly, however, regardless of Nigeria's return to civil rule in May 1999, and the opening of its democratic space, which guarantees and protects the freedom of speech of the citizenry, civil society activism in Nigeria continues waning. Concurrently, extremist movements continue growing in leaps and bounds in tandem with ethnic and religious violence just as confrontation between the executive and the legislature has slowed down the process of governance reform (Aiyede 2003). This phenomenon, perhaps, explains the contention by some scholars that pro-democracy NGOs, and other CSOs are slacking or are ill-prepared for engaging the new democratic institutions and their challenges, and that because power seekers have dominated the political space, civic engagement has been very low (Aiyede 2003: 9).

The question arising from the forgoing is: What are the underlying reasons for the seeming lull in activism of the civil society movement since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999? A number of factors appear responsible for this. First, the dynamics of politics in Nigeria has changed, following the country's return to civil rule in 1999. This change in the polity indicates that civil society agitations, in prior times, were galvanized primarily by the desire to end military rule and restore democracy. Secondly, the end of military rule in Nigeria meant that the prevailing spirit of solidarity and hitherto unifying objective which CSO's shared under the NLC/NADECO umbrella got substituted with individual objectives.

Thirdly, in contrast to what obtained under military rule where civil protests and agitations were driven primarily by altruistic and nationalistic objectives, individual motives—some of which became highly personalized and compromised- took center stage in civil society activism, thus making many CSOs succumb to the intrigues of the Nigerian ruling elite and political class who became the power behind the throne in most cases. Lastly, and more importantly, most of the radical civil society movements, such as National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), Campaign for Democracy (CD), Nigeria Labour Congress (and other labour unions) and National Association of Nigerian Students (among other student movements) arguably lowered their guards, and yielded the center stage to less-ideologically inclined CSOs.



As a consequence, corruption, which has remained a major stumbling block to Nigeria and Africa's developmental growth, particularly, those emerging from decades of autocracy or prolonged military rule (Dumisa and Amao 2015), crept into the political consciousness of Nigeria's civil society movement. The labor and student movements equally lost their rhythm, and became polarized along political lines. Sequel to this, elected officials in government employed them to suit political objectives, and by extension, claim legitimacy. It is imperative to note that this phenomenon is not without precedence. Under military rule, while the leaderships of CSOs such as NADECO and the organized labor were hounded into detention most notably by the Sani Abacha-led junta, a number of others lost the fervor to fight for what their organizations represented and became supporters of the undemocratic Interim National Government (ING) left by Babangida, and a few others joined the cabinet of the Abacha junta that overthrew (Enemuo & Momoh 1999).

Consequently, the civil society (movement) was 'constrained by the sweeping expansion of state power as employer, consumer, manipulator, and by the attractions of the state as resources that could be appropriated through corruption' (Agbaje 1990: 34). The implication of declining civil society activism on Nigeria's attempt towards democratic consolidation did not begin to infringe on the country's polity until political interest groups and ethnic militias became major instruments for mounting political pressure. This development saw ethnicity-motivated groups such as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign States of Biafra (MASSOB), and the AREWA People's Congress (APC), take charge of Nigeria's democracy to question 'the institutional arrangements left by the departing military government, and strive to expand their spheres of influence and control' (Agbaje 1994: 34).

The aftermath of this on Nigeria's polity was catastrophic, given that a vast majority of these CSOs lacked the capacity to determine the direction of political change in Nigeria. Nigerian youths, majority of who were, and are still largely unemployed, became instant tools in the hands of the leadership of these organizations, leading to the birth of a number of militant groups with propensity for violence. Because only a blurred line existed between CSOs and these ethnic groupings, a number of the leadership of these pro-democracy groups either became supporters



or members of militant movements. This is evident in the case of Beko Ransome–Kuti, the leader of Campaign for Democracy (CD) who later became the national treasurer of OPC. Other prominent political figures, who were patrons to some of these organizations, had to work with groups with strong grassroots following, thereby lengthening Nigeria’s road to democratic consolidation (Agbaje 1994).

As a consequence of the apparent ‘mixture’ of ethnic and regional idiosyncrasies by members, pro-democracy organizations, which are the bedrock of Nigeria’s civil society movement, have not been able to command grassroots following. As well, they have not been able to construct a strong national network for the promotion of liberal democratic values in governance. This weakness or the seeming inability of pro-democracy civil society organizations to sustain the momentum they gained during the battle to end Nigeria’s tyrannical military dictatorship under Babangida and Abacha’s juntas, as some have argued, was further exacerbated by the multiple governmental structures spawned by democratic rule (Agbaje 1994).

It is worth mentioning that regardless of the fact that Nigeria operated a federal system of three tiers of government under the military, the conduct of government concerns, to a large extent, reflected command structure, evocative of military rule. Under this system, sole administrators who presided over Nigeria’s 36 states and 774 local governments were appointed by, and accountable to, the head of state. It should however be noted that the civil society movement, since Nigeria’s return to civilian rule, has played commendable roles that have helped in deepening Nigeria’s attempt towards democratic consolidation. It perhaps bears mentioning that many investigations of allegations of corrupt practices by government officials were as a result of pressure mounted by civil society groups that demanded accountability in the face of scandals (Ukase and Audu 2015).

Similarly, the media, through its investigative and incisive reportage, have provided an important counterpoint to the abuse of entrusted power for private gains, and the basic knowledge with which citizens can hold public and private institutions accountable. They have also collaborated with anti-graft and other law-enforcement agencies to expose corruption in low and high places.



Cases in point include the removal from office of Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun; first female Speaker of the House of Representatives Patricia Etteh; Senate presidents, Minister of Education Fabian Osuji as well as his colleague in the Ministry of Health, Adenike Grange and former Governor of Bayelsa State, Dimipreye Alameiyeghsea.

It also bears mentioning that useful contributions have been made by the civil society, especially Save Nigeria Group, Occupy Nigeria Group, NLC, Trade Union Congress (TUC), and a host of others to the inquiry into the oil subsidy scam unearthed after the removal of petroleum subsidy by the Goodluck Jonathan presidency, and the subsequent probe launched by the National Assembly into the corruption in the country's oil-and-gas industry. Similarly, a legal rights advocacy group, Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP) took the National Assembly to court, citing the Freedom of Information Act, (2011), to compel NASS members to state their actual salaries (Ukase and Audu 2015).

These positive contributions notwithstanding, the present paper contends that for Nigeria's civil society to continue to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's democratization process, concrete attempts must be made to get them well-structured. As well, where possible, this should be under a clearly-defined and interest-based coalition. Such arrangements, where properly executed, have a tendency to confer on CSOs, the audacity and ability to command respect, as evident in NADECO's ability to cause significant upset in the dying days of Nigeria's military junta.

In the concluding section, this paper briefly examines the major contrast between the performance of the civil society during civilian and military epochs, and the lessons that civil society can learn moving forward.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Evolving from the preceding discussions, the experience of Nigeria's civil society under the two epochs considered leads to a number of conclusions. The civil society movement under the military appeared united in their pursuit of a common objective—the desire to return Nigeria to democratic rule. This uniformity of purpose drove their ambition and defined the vigor with



which they pursued and achieved it. This development sharply contrasts with the trend under successive civilian administrations in Nigeria since 1999. If there has been any unifying force in Nigeria's civil society movement post-1999, it is the desire to maximize personal profit out of engagements with government.

Similarly, and as presently constituted, the civil society in Nigeria, operates in splinters, and lacks coherence, owing to the needless duplication of objectives and focus among the constituent entities. The resultant effect of this on Nigeria's democratization effort is that the regnant government feels relatively comfortable to ignore them. For example, between March 15 and April 10, 2016, Nigerians were subjected to very harrowing experiences occasioned by fuel shortage and extremely-erratic supply of electricity, which brought Nigeria to its knees.<sup>1</sup> Regrettably however, the civil society movement in Nigeria for much of the duration of the lockdown remained insouciant. More than anything else, this lull in activism stands at variance with what obtained during military rule, particularly during the Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) and Sani Abacha (1993-1998) regimes, when every action was met with an equal or (at times) greater reaction.

The development reinforces this paper's contention that numerous issues have been left unresolved by the civil society in Nigeria since the return to democracy in 1999. At the heart of the development is paucity of funds experienced by majority of civil society groups, particularly those with little or no financial base or affiliation to international donors. Consequently, they sometimes rely on the government, politicians, and corporate organizations to finance their programmes. This has compromised their ability to boldly confront intimidation and discharge their statutory responsibilities to the larger society. It further implies that they lack transparency in how they spend funds from donors and, this breeds corruption in the final analysis.

Rather than sustaining the tempo of activism launched during the military era in the 1980s and 1990s, in some ways, CSOs have comparatively gone passive under the current system. This could have resulted from fatigue, ideological conspiracy, complacency and short-sightedness as the activists appear to have concluded that they had won the 'real' battle, assuming that





democracy would naturally protect the civil society (Akanle 2009: 233). Arguably, majority of Nigeria's civil society arguably manifest as a motley assemblage employed for mundane biddings by political opportunists, shuttling between wage rancor and opposition party politics at the same time.

Unlike what obtains in other developing democracies, members of Nigeria's large professional associations, such as Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Academic Staff Union of Universities, and a host of women's groups, have arguably failed to provide the required leadership to check the government since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999. Despite their multiplicity in numbers (post-military rule), majority of the civil society movement in Nigeria, though active, remain fragmented, politicized, local in orientation, and have not yet transformed into strong and cohesive interest-based national organizations (USAID 2006).

Since the transition from military dictatorship to the current civil dispensation, Nigeria's quest for effective democratic governance has been confronted by many challenges. Indeed, the emergence of democratic rule and the challenges of its sustenance and overall development that facilitates its stability have foisted new perceptions on civil society. According to Ikelegbe the dominant view is that CSOs should now focus on social action, advocacy, development issues and governance (Ikelegbe 2013: 439). This perception shifts CSOs from a predominantly adversarial, confrontational, combative and oppositional formation to a more dynamic, creative and constructive movement which embraces dialogue, cooperation, collaboration, mutual support and consultation. While this paper aligns with Ikelegbe's submission, it also contends that, if expedient, CSOs' strategies could accommodate civil disobedience.

The paper submits that civil society should be taken into account at different stages of Nigeria's decision-making, particularly on issues of governance and development. This has become pertinent given that civil society has the capacity to provide the all-important input for the identification of key challenges confronting the citizenry, and which areas the government can, and should, prioritize. Another is that by being closely connected at grass-roots level, civil



society can provide constructive inputs into the formulation of policy options reflecting broad public interests, opinions and demands, thus complementing government efforts. The paper submits that a vibrant and actively-engaged civil society in Nigeria will ultimately highlight authoritarian abuse(s) and help build a domestic and international momentum vital for change.

Finally, the re-emergence and sustenance of a robust civil society movement, as witnessed during Nigeria's dark days, can provide for, and also lead to, peaceful mass mobilization. Inarguably, this will help in getting the public involved and sustain their commitment to accountable leadership alongside other governance deliverables. This can also help create in them a sense of inclusiveness and involvement in the way they are being governed contrary to what obtained during Nigeria's dark days of military dictatorship.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example: Despite petrol scarcity, Nigeria destroys 400 modular refineries in 3 months. <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/201549-despite-petrol-scarcity-nigeria-destroys-400-modular-refineries-3-months.html> (accessed, April 10, 2017).

## References



Action Aid International Nigeria, (2007). Civil Society in Nigeria: Contributing to Positive Social Change. [https://www.civicus.org/ew/media/CSI\\_Nigeria\\_Country\\_Report.pdf23](https://www.civicus.org/ew/media/CSI_Nigeria_Country_Report.pdf23) (accessed 16 February 2017).

ACSS. (2011). Africa and the Arab Spring: 'A New Era of Democratic Expectations'. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Special Report, No (1) November, Washington, D.C.: 26.

Adetula V. Kew D. & Kwaja, C. 2010. 'Assessing Democracy Assistance: Nigeria'. FRIDE, Project Report: Assessing. [http://fride.org/descarga/IP\\_WMD\\_Nigeria\\_ENG\\_jul10.pdf](http://fride.org/descarga/IP_WMD_Nigeria_ENG_jul10.pdf). (Accessed 12 March 2017).

Adewumi, F. (2007). The Challenge of Repositioning Civil Society for Responsive and Accountable Governance in Nigeria. In Anifowose, R & Babawale, T. 2007. (eds) *An Agenda for a New Nigeria: The Imperative of Transformation*. Lagos, Concept Publications Limited: 112.

Agbaje, A. (1990). 'In Search of the Building Blocks: The State, Civil Society, Voluntary Action and Grassroots Development in Africa. *Africa Quarterly*, 30: 34-40.

Aiyede, R. (2003). The Dynamics of Civil Society and the Democratization Process in Nigeria. *Canadian Journal of International Affairs*, 37(1):2.

Akanle O. (2009). Caught in the Morass: Road Map for Civil Society Organizations in Democratic Nigeria. In Olutayo, Olorode. et al. (eds). *State and Civil Society Relations in Nigeria*, Ibadan, Hope Publications Ltd: 233.

Alamu, T. (2012). Coping with Kolonic Entropy. *The Nation*, 8 July.

Almond, G. & Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Amao O. B, Ettang, D, U. Okeke-Uzodike, U. and Tugizamana, C. (2014). 'Revisiting the Utility of Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms in Africa: Any Role for Civil Society? *Peace and Conflict Review*, 8:77-97.

Amuwo, K. (2001). Introduction; Transition as Democratic Regression'. *Institut français de recherché en Afrique*, IFRA-Nigeria, No (6):17.

Balogun, M.J. (1997). sEnduring Clientelism, Governance Reform and Leadership Capacity: A Review of the Democratisation Process in Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 15: 37-26.

Bratton, M. (1994). Civil Society and Political Transition in Africa. IDR Reports, No 11: 6.

Carothers, T. (2000). Think Again: Civil Society. *Foreign Policy Magazine*: 19-20. London School of Economics. 2006. 'A Definition of Civil Society'. London, England.

Chazan, N. (1992). 'Africa's Democratic Challenge'. *World Policy Journal* 9(2):283



- Cohen, J. & Arato, A. (1992). *Civil Society and Political Theory*. Cambridge, M.A.: M.I.T. Press, 1992): ix.
- Diamond, L. (1995). 'Rethinking Civil Society in Crossroads'. USIS Newsletter, Lagos.
- Dumisa, S & Amao O.B. (2015). The utility of moral philosophy and professional ethics in the fight against corruption in South Africa: any role for Ubuntu? *Ubuntu: Journal of Conflict Transformation*, 4(1): 85:111.
- Egwu, S. (2008). 'Civil Society in Nigeria'. Research Report Submitted to Action Aid International Nigeria, November.
- Enemuo F. & Momoh, A. (1999). *Civic Associations in Nigeria: Politics of Transition and Governance, (1986-1996)*. In Oyediran, O & Agbaje, A. (Eds.) Nigeria: Politics of transition and governance 1986–1996. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Essia, U & Yearoo, A. (2009). Strengthening Civil Society Organizations/Government Partnership in Nigeria. *International NGO Journal* 4(9): 368-374.
- Fadakinte. M. 2013. Civil Society, Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria: 1999-2012. *International Journal of Modern Social Sciences*, 2(2):143.
- Fayemi, K. (2005). Out of the Shadows: Exile and the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Nigeria. Centre for Democracy and Development, Nigeria: 146.
- Hassan, H. (2009). The State and Civil Society in Africa: A North African Perspective. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3(2): 66.
- Imade, L. (2001). Democratizing Democracy in Nigeria: The Role of Civil Society Organizations. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 3(2):12.
- Ikelegbe, A. (2001). Civil Society, Oil and Conflict in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria: Ramifications of Civil Society for a Regional Resource Struggle. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39(3):437-469.
- Ikelegbe, A. (2001). The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society: Evidence from Nigeria. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39(1):1-24.
- Ikelegbe, A. (2013). 'State, Civil Society and Sustainable Development in Nigeria', Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED) Monograph Series No 7: 439.
- Ikubaje, J. (2011). Authoritarian versus Democratic Regimes: The Changing Roles and Contributions of Civil Society to Democratization process in Nigeria (1985-2005). *African Community of Practice*.
- Lewis, D. (2002). Civil Society in African Contexts: Reflections on the Usefulness of a Concept. *Development and Change*, 33(4): 569-586.
- London School of Economics. (LSE). (2006). *A Definition of Civil Society*. London, England.



Kew, D. *Nigerian Civil Society in the 1990s, Democratic Political Structures and Political Culture*, John Archers Publishers Limited, Ibadan: 1.

Kukah, M.H. (1999). *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria*. Lagos: Spectrum Books: 43.

Ofoneme, C. (2013). *The Impact of Civil Society Organization on Nigeria's Socio-Political Development: An Appraisal of Civil Liberties Organization*. Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Political Science Caritas University, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Omilusi, M. (2013). *Democratic Governance in Nigeria: Key Issues and Challenges*, Akure, Adex Printing Press, 446.

Maiangwa B. & Amao O.B. (2015). Daughters, Brides, and Supporters of the Jihad: Revisiting the Gender-Based Violence of Boko Haram in Nigeria. *African Renaissance*, 12(2): 117-144.

Mamdani, M. (1995). *A critique of the state and civil society paradigms in Africanist Studies*. Codesria Publications.

Masterson, G. (2006). *Defining Civil Society in the Context of the African Peer Review Mechanism*. Elklit J., Matlosa, K. & Chiroro, B. (eds). (EISA Publications): 5

Obadare, E. (2004). *The Alternative Genealogy of Civil Society and Its Implications for Africa: Notes for Further Research*. *Africa Development*, Vol. XXIX, (4): 1-18.

Nwosu, B. (2014). *Two Faces of Civil Society and the Military in Nigeria's Democratisation*. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(13): 157.

Shettima, K. & Chukwuma, I. (2002). *Crime and Human Rights in Nigeria*. Paper Presented at a Review Seminar on Crime, Public Order and Human Rights, organized by the International Council on Human Rights Policy, and the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, in New York, October 21-22.

Ukase P & Audu, B. (2015). *The Role of Civil Society in the Fight against Corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Problems, Prospects and the Way Forward*. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(2) 171-195.

UK Corporate Report, (2014). 'Human Rights and Democracy Report'. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2014/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2014> (accessed 2 March, 2017).

USAID, (2006). 'Democracy and Governance Assessment of Nigeria'. April 10, [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pnadi079.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadi079.pdf). (Accessed 15 January 2017).

Usman, A. (2009). *Historical Genesis and Trends of Political Instability in Nigeria*. In Olutayo, O.A et al, (eds) *State and Civil Society Relations in Nigeria*, Hope Publications Ltd, Ibadan:135.



---

Walker, J. (1999). Civil Society, the Challenge to the Authoritarian State, and the Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria'. *African Issues* 1: 54-58.

Whitfield, L. (2002). Civil Society as Idea and Civil Society as Process: The Case of Ghana. Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies, University of Oxford, United Kingdom: 15.

Zakaria, F. (1997). The Rise of Illiberal Democracy. *Foreign Affairs*, 76: 28-45.



Mike Omilusi studied at Ekiti State University and obtained a PhD in Political Science in 2014. He has, for over a decade, been teaching and researching issues related to political sociology, democratisation, gender and conflict studies. Before 2009, he had worked with civil society organisations in Nigeria for seven years and awarded the *Best Democracy Monitor* in Nigeria by the Justice, Development and Peace Commission. He has wider exposure as a researcher, humanitarian volunteer, essayist and consultant with government, civil society groups and international organisations. He is an active player in the current democratization process in Nigeria with particular reference to civic education and election monitoring.