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## Revisiting the Civil Society and Democratic Governance in Africa: Present or Absent in Nigeria?

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### Abstract

The civil society midwife democratic government in 1999. They fought for it. Although, some died in the process of agitating for democracy, and the fundamental human rights and rule of law are firmly entrenched including the freedom of association, free movement, speech among others. The paper argues that today's democratic government was worked for but those who work for it did not participate in the transition program since the military in their characteristics are maradonic particularly that of General Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida keep transition program in perplexity and continuous. The failure of the leaders and members of civil organizations to participate is responsible for the crisis of governance. Those elected into governments across the states including the federal government largely masquerading behind politics as governance output. The paper is of the view that the civil society organization in the country cannot claim irresponsible to Nigerians, since they ushered in democratic rule, therefore, efforts must be geared towards validating the purpose of democracy and dividends of democratic governance in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Civil Society; Democratic Governance; Democracy; Civil Society Organization; Nigerian Citizens; Nigeria.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The idea of civil society is dated back to the eighteenth century in Western Europe where individuals congregated to participate fully in the unfolding socio-economic and political matters and to ensure political balance, and equality between the ordinary citizens and political elites before the law without compromising the liberty, standard of living, and access to the facilities of the state (Weill et al., 2017). The emergence of civil society in democratic societies anticipate to bring about good governance, rule of law, due process thereby reducing the level of inequality as well as reduce citizens' demonstrations and protests for government to provide dividends of democracy and put the governing elites on their toes. Perhaps, the complexity of modern states with the demands of teeming populations on governments in liberal societies is the vexed question and the imperative of civil society organizations to make government live up to the political mandate entrusted to the elected representatives by the electorates vis-à-vis the people during the election. The place of this institution as the intermediary between the government and the citizenry is to bridge the gap created by the political parties which have largely failed to protect the aspiration, agitation, and demands of the populace (Ihonvbere & Falola, 1985; Ogunwa & Ogunwa, n.d.; Omoruyi, 2002).

However, the political parties and party system and that of the civil society, though there is a resemblance in practice, they differ in operations and ideologies. The civil society is tailored towards "social mutuality" (Weill et al., 2017) and the altering the nature of society, the state as well as its citizens constantly and rapidly transformed for a better setting or political system (Gupta, 2000). The level of development, politically across African states today cannot be underestimated without the input of civil society organizations. At different levels in African

states, they fought imperialism and gained political independence, sacked military rule, dictatorial government, and stilled democratic governments, and indeed, the civil rule or democratic government today in Africa cannot be appreciated without them (Olukoshi, 2007; Omoweh, 2012).

The activities of civil society organizations in the Nigeria are a replication of states in Africa. The quest for a democratic government and good governance informed their formation. After formation, they agitated for democratic government and denounced the men in uniform which over decades have ruled through the barrel of the gun. The campaigns are large to have a democratic institution upon which elected civilians will preside over government and bring about the good governance in the country. This was painly achieved when the military rule transited to civil rule in 1999 (Adejumobi, 2010)(Ogunwa & Ogunwa, n.d.). Unfortunately, individuals in these none political platforms doubted the sincerity of the Military regimes and set themselves aside until politicians who were sacked and removed from power have now reoccupied the democratic institutions including presiding over the national resources and distributing the national resources at will. To what extent has the civil society organizations agitated for inclusive, participatory, and institutionalization of government and governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic? The rest of the paper is distributed into six segments, conceptualization, theoretical framework, civil society and military rule, civil society and democratic governance, and conclusion.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

### **Civil Society**

There is a gamut of definitions of civil society but it means a set of organizations constituting "a realm of autonomous associations and groups, formed by private citizens and enjoying independence from

the government ..." and operating at a "private sphere of life ..." (Chaturvedi, 2003). (Babawale, 2006) defines it in terms of elements they are "various voluntary associations, clubs or organizations to which people belong and through which they seek to promote and protect their interests". From the articulation, civil society is "unofficial members of the society" who in composition are "part of the society" but not "political" organization in terms of labor unions, professional groups, student bodies, craft groups, market women associations, religious organizations, the family, the media, and the education system (Akinbade, 2004). As the plurality of organizations, under the law, the groups are protected by various mechanisms such as the independent judiciary and free press (Bennett, 1984).

Civil society is not necessarily denoted by contractual agreement but within the sphere of contract (Hegel cited in (Chaturvedi, 2003). The civil society functions spontaneously in moderating the relationship between the state and government and protect our collective interest" (Babawale, 2006). They epitomize freedom, equality, and independence of nature (Seligman, 1995). (Hegel, 1979) infers that the organization is the arena where individuals in private organizations seek the actualization and activation of selfness, self-determination, self-freedom, satisfaction of expressions of personal idiosyncrasies among others.

Democracy, as it stands today, is largely rested on the canopy of the civil society organizations whose political doctrine is based on the liberal democracy where individual citizens do express personal opinion and belief system particularly in the society:

The growth and activities of civil society are matters of societal interest, are in response to the real or perceived contradiction between the interests of the state and those of the communities; between the interests of the agent of the

state, military or civil, and the interests of the people; between the processes of economics and those of the people and their natural environments; between the interests of patriarchal government and those of women. The growth of civil society is also to address concerns of the people in the basic sectors and at the community level (Onuoha et al., 2002).

In modern states, the civil society organization empowers the people by inculcating the civil responsibility to every citizen and teaching them to be aware and conscious of the governmental programs, and to key into the principles and objectives of the fundamental human rights and rule of law. These principles and others inform the citizens' importance of democratic participation and inclusion that the government must be accountable and transparent in policy formulations and implementations. According to (Onuoha et al., 2002), the civil society is an educator, socializer, mobilizer, aggregator, and particularly of the citizens' awareness "enables the people to appreciate the fact that it is in their interest and their responsibilities to sustain transition and institutionalize democratic attributes". As the largest political association, is an institution that can challenge governmental policies and change the face of socio-economic and political malignant in a society. By them, political independence was won in America, South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Libya and caused the military governments to transformed and instituted transition programs and handed over to democratically elected governments in societies (Huntington, 1991).

### **Democratic Governance**

Scholars of different persuasions have defined democracy differently. The word "democracy" is attributed and has its origin in the Ancient City of Anthem in Greek State with "demos" which stand for the people. This was further developed into an electoral lexicon by Abraham Lincoln to

mean “the government of the people, by the people, and for the people” (quoted in (Remy, 1993). (Schumpeter Schumpeter, 1942) gives a conditional interpretation of democracy to be “a method by which decision-making is transferred to individuals who have gained power in a competitive struggle for the votes of the citizens”. We can deduce from these definitions that democracy is a kind of technique or way whereby the people in a political system are at liberty to elect who would represent their interest in the government. This connotes the government by the people. The system centers on political equality, tolerance, popular sovereignty, popular consultation, majority rule, rule by consent, open society, and change of government through constitutional means, and the rulers *elected* are held accountable for their actions and inactions while in government and out of government (Schmitter & Karl, 1991)emphasis imported.

A democratic society is democratic when the people are allowed to exercise political will and partially surrender their sovereignties through participation in the election of the representatives. The representatives cover the political strata be it at the local, state, and national levels. The election is ‘more’ legitimate when exercise political mandate and programs that will uplift and improve the lives of the people. The whole question of people’s government rests on the ability of elected to provide ‘minimum’ governance to the people. Thus, democratic governance is “the art of governing people in line with the tenets of democracy” (Babawale, 2006). Also entails the ability of the government in a democratic society to make use and do with available national resources to promote the public good or the welfare of the people “within its ambit, the norms or values of a free, just, ordered, and law-governed society as well as those of happiness and the good life” (Eze, 2013). In other words, democratic governance connotes “the

extent to which it promotes sustainable improvement in human condition” of the citizenry (Ninalowo & Adebayo, 2005).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This particular work centers on a political system and Nigeria been a political system therefore, is a system with several parts. (Easton, 1957) postulates that political system is “a system of interrelated activities” because the environment is characterized by the civil society that makes demands and supports, while the political system makes decisions for the whole society. For him, a political system consisting of a “system of interaction in any society through which binding or authoritative allocations are made and implemented” (Easton, 1973 quoted in (Varma, 1982). A political system is composed of several elements with specific roles and functions but specific in the sense that the political system harvest demands from the environment and turn them into decisions for the society (Easton, 1957). In other words, the political system, although stand-alone within the state is hierarchical of authority but operates and exists “within an environment of other systems ... which affect it and are in turn affected by the political system through continuous transaction and exchanges” (Enemu, 1999). (Varma, 1982) observes, a political system is not limited to input, and output functions alone, it is a dynamic system with a purpose to transform demands into a decision and at the same time it is an ideological system that aims to face challenges and stabilize a political domain.

Easton says a political system receive input and support from society, turn societal demands into political decisions, and reform and reshape decisions for the society and its survival. “Input”, he argues includes various demands emanating from the civil society and foreign society which enters into the government agenda for decision-making process “an expression of opinion that an authoritative allocation

about a particular subject-matter should or should not be made by those responsible for doing so" (Easton, 1957). In this case, not all demands survive or make it to the agenda of the government because there is the problem of gate-keepers, cultural issues, communication problem, lack of clarity on the issues hence the ability of the political system to tackle "powerful demands, which might otherwise break up the entire system is very ingenious ways" (Varma, 1982). (Easton, 1957) succinctly says "many demands die at birth or linger on with the support of an insignificant fraction of the society are never raised to the level of political decision". Within the input side, the support that a political system received from the civil society without which the stability of the system is not guaranteed. The support from the civil society goes a long way for consolidating the administration and as well as demonstrating for or against the regime policies and programs "the maintenance of a minimal level of attachment for each of the three identified political objects. When the input of support falls below this minimal the persistence of any kind of system will be endangered" (Easton, 1957). In all, both the demands and supports given to the political system are expressions of approval of the people of the political community towards the government as well as its policy (Enemuo, 1999).

The decision of the political system comes out in form of output and "actions of the authorities". "Output" Easton insists "not only help to influence events in the broader society of which the system is a part but also, in doing so, they help to determine each succeeding round of inputs that finds its way into the political system" (Easton quoted in (Varma, 1982). Such outputs decisions like the free education, security, housing, health services, good governance using national resources for the betterment of the citizenry by the government "affect the environment as *outcomes* and in turn excite some form of

*feedback*, that is, changes in the intensity and volumes of demands and supports from the environment" (Enemuo, 1999). The feedback mechanism is an assessment and return of information on the performance of the effectiveness of a decision of the government on a particular issue enacted into law whether such demands emanated from the environment or otherwise. The actions of the government are not limited to the output by the government but the consequences of such policies get back to the government, that is, into the system which subsequently modifies the behavioral disposition of the decision-makers, this time around the political system for better decisions (Easton, 1957).

## DISCUSSION

### Civil Society and Military Rule

The nature of the Nigerian state which has been influenced by the colonial rule tilted in imbalance federation until the political departure of the imperialists in 1960 caused disaffection between the civil society and government in Nigeria. Before independence, even in the post-independent era, the structure of the Nigerian military was built toward the protection of one part of the country (Babawale, 2006). The military intervention in politics of the country beginning from 1966 promulgated several decrees that concentrated power at the center has been "a disease of governance, and its cause is the structure of power in the Federal Republic" (Fasehun, 2003). The centralization of the Nigerian state which also means "who controls the military controls Nigeria" accounted for the widespread discontent and disenchantment among the civil society in the country in the country (Adejumobi, 2010).

The military in government close to 30 years, psychologically the Nigerian civil society was visited with violence just as in the days of colonial rule and continue to "maintain control and hegemony in society



through the mechanics of violence” (Adejumobi, 2010). Under the military particularly its militarization of the polity and the people, the likes of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight others were murdered without a proper trial aided by the rule of law “the Nigerian military dictatorship survives on the practice of violence and the control of means of violence” (Saro-Wiwa, 1996).

Back in 1968, the government violently clamp down on the legitimate protests by the farmers otherwise known as the “Agbekoya uprising” without engaging them in a dialogue. The Nigerian students were not spared in 1978 by the Federal Military government. The students demanded and agitated for a reduction in the cost of feeding and accommodation. In the course of agitation for better pricing of food and accommodation “a short on sight” was ordered by the state against the students with many of the students killed and their association banned, union leaders arrested, detained, and later rusticated from the Nigerian universities (Adejumobi, 2010).

Under the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha, the personalization of the state, as well as the way power was concentrated to the center created contradictions and promoted ethnic loyalties and the distribution of social goods created polarization and division amongst ethnic groups to perpetuate misrule (Adejumobi, 2010). The political division among the ethnic groups under the two regimes is a re-enforcement of the colonial policy of indirect rule introduced to govern the people of Nigeria even after their amalgamation in 1914. The division continued till 1960 and still operated in the post-colonial era which causes further separation and conflicts between the communities in Ilorin, Kaduna, Kano, Funtua, Zaria, Kafanchan, Ile-Ife, Zlangon Kataf among others “it was therefore not by coincidence that inter-ethnic, religious and communal conflicts were unprecedented during those regimes.

From the north to the South, communities and religious groups, who hitherto have lived together in harmony suddenly took up arms against each other” (Adejumobi, 2010). The overwhelming influence of the state on the national organizations including the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) among other unions and associations such as the Human Rights and Pro-democracy groups were violently suppressed and forced to operate clandestinely, while others seek political refuge in their nationalities and new ones emerged to denounce the military dictatorship. For instance, the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), Ooduwa People Congress (OPC) came up to regic the annulled presidential election in 1993, while the latter sought to protect and defend the Ooduwa states following political injustice on their son, MKO Abiola who was presumed to have won the election.

Political “marginalization and social deprivation” accorded the people in the Niger-Delta region attracted attention. The region is a source of Nigeria's wealth and the place where resources were derived for national development and generate enormous revenue for funding national, state, and local government projects including recurrent expenditures of these governments. The region is neglected and marginalized and suffered deprivation as well as abject poverty for the sons and daughters, fathers and mothers except for the few political elites and foreign companies working in the area. The area suffers the crisis of governance in terms of industry, feeder roads, electricity, health care system, clean and drinkable water, housing, education among others. The marginalization has caused degradation of the environment, including fishing, planting, pollution, oil spillage, and other environmental inconveniences.

Babangida's economic policy was Eurocentric particularly the neo-liberal policies enacted to revamp the economy and improve the living standard of civil society in general. But the economic reforms were characterized by corruption and lack of autochthonous policies and brought unemployment, poverty, crime "one of the reasons for their noticeable visibility at this time was the need to protest against the negative consequences of the implementation of structural adjustment policies..." (Babawale, 2006).

Nigerian state coupled with the military rule is a type of state where the leadership is absent, public institutions are moribund, the centralization of power and economic relations between the elements that comprised the Nigerian state instead been the factors for growth and development, under the military it is "social injustice, marginalization, neglect, deprivation, and seeming insecurity for the people" (Adejumobi, 2010). And agitations by the civil society to better Nigerians was suppressed even the people were killed, while others took cover in foreign countries (Ogunwa & Ogunwa, n.d.; Oni et al., 2021) (Oni et al., 2021) opines that "the military uniform has, hence, become a symbol of terror" and "Nigerian civil populace in a prostrate state". Asobie (1990) says:

... Military rule and the attendant militarism breed violence because they block all chances for peaceful change. The structural inequality that is intrinsic to the socio-economic system of a rentier capitalist state, like Nigeria is compounded by military rule and militarism. Military rule and militarism breed not just physical violence but also structural violence as well" (quoted in (Babawale, 2006).

### **Civil Society and Democratic Governance**

Back to political independence in 1960, the crisis of governance has confronted the Nigerian state with both the civil, military, and now civil

administrations struggled to resolve these unpalatable challenges (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). Under military authoritarianism, governance was swept under the carpet. Although, it is a general agreement among scholars of politics that military involvement in politics is an aberration. This however was compounded with misuse of power, national resources, coupled with unaccountability and transparency. Military rule is characterized by the notion of suppression, suffocation, denial of the rights of the people as well as arbitrariness (Babawale, 2006). (Olukoshi, 2007) argues that governance under the military is "an inefficient and over-extended state system whose intervention in economic affairs of the state bred corruption and acted to discourage or stifle private initiative" emphasis mine. The crisis of governance resulted in "accumulated bad governance" in Nigeria.

The military has stunted growth and development, people's freedom to associate, elect representatives, and make a contribution to policy formulation as well as implementation for proper governance. For legitimacy to rule and absence of equity and justice for the civil society, the notable personalities and Nigerian protesters were greeted with live bullets, killed, arrested, and detained when they demanded good governance and removal of draconic policies and decrees that not only impoverish the people but sent them to seek refuge in their own and other countries. The people in desperate need to feed, stay alive, have engaged in different activities which are not acceptable to the state (OGUNWA, 2015). Despite the intimidation, the civil society in their quest for democratic government and people's rule have confronted the military regimes beginning from the 1980s until the regime of Abdulsalami Abubakar handed over to the democratically elected government in 1999 (Anifowose, 1999). After the country returned to democracy or civil rule in 1999, to what extent has the civil society engage

the government for better governance or delivery of dividends of democracy to the people of Nigeria?

In the previous section, we argued that the civil society in Nigeria fought for democracy or civil rule like their counterparts in African countries and elsewhere. In 1999, the Fourth Republic was ushered in after several attempts to democratize the country through the regimes of Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985), Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), and Sani Abacha (1993-1998). The dream was achieved in 1999 after national and international pressures were mounted on the military to democratize. Three political parties, namely: AD, APP, and PDP were registered and birth the civil rule. At the start of registration of political parties by INEC, the notable personalities who were the forerunner for the people government were skeptical about the sincerity of the transition program as proposed by Abubakar because hitherto the promises earlier made by the Babangida to handover to the people failed miserably when the regime postponed and maradonized handover dates and eventually culminated to the annulment of the presidential election in 1993 (Enefe, 2008) (Omoruyi, 2002). The transition program of Babangida was endless and described as a "transition without end" (Oyediran & Agbaje, 1999).

The politics of transition which never ended until Babangida step-aside in 1993, and the censorship of political associations before metamorphosing into political parties radicalized the civil society particularly the focal and radical members of the society to participate in the unfolding democratic dispensation. This doubt, for instance, under the regime of Abubakar was re-echoed "today we are witnessing replica of the IBB formula under General Abubakar. For instance, in his maiden speech to the nation on June 9, General Abubakar pledges to successfully implement the 'Abacha' transition program and keep the October 1,

1998 handover date. Now that has changed. The goal post is already shifting" (Bosah quoted in (Enefe, 2008).

Nonetheless, the regime kept to his second promise and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo succeeded him and became second Executive President under the platform of the PDP on May 29, 1999. With the political parties strategically taken charge at the national, state, and local government with the exclusion of those who actually fought the military and erranded democracy in the country, the civil society particularly those organizations such as Campaign for Democracy, Civil Liberty Organization, Defense of Human Rights and so on have withdrawn to their shells. During the military regimes, in their thousands have demanded democracy and educated and enlightened the downtrodden-populace on their fundamental human rights and evils that are associated with military rule and stilling benefits of democratic government. In the past, they organized seminars, conferences, workshops on civil liberties as well as used democratic means such as the press, billboards, posters, protests to press home their demands. As (Onuoha et al., 2002) articulated, they have served as "educator, socializer, and mobilizer, aggregator, and articulator of the citizens on their rights and responsibilities".

However, their none participation and involvement and lack of representation at all levels of government say as a governor, president, or members of national, state, and local law-makers even as councilors speak volumes of the absence of good governance. After 21 years of democratic governance, the crisis of social-economic and basic infrastructural facilities continues to mount higher and higher. There seem to be no end to misrule, mismanagement as corruption, insurgency, kidnapping, poverty is the order of the day. The political parties and party system that produced the elected representatives into government lacked ideological disposition.



Their ideologies are still “what’ will be done, and not ‘how’ the party intends to implement its programs” while the manifestoes are “a carbon copy of each other...” (Simbine, 2014). The opposition parties are on holiday waiting for the 2023 election program to be unfolded to register their presence. The cardinal objectives of Nigerian state policy on the political, economic, social, education, and environmental as entrenched in the 1999 Federal Constitution, Chapter II, Section 13 which says “it shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers, to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of this chapter of this Constitution” has been neglected by all the levels of government. The cosmetic approach was applied to the issue of governance. Little repairs on roads are tagged as the dividends of democracy (Ogunwa & Ogunwa, n.d.). Across the federation even under military rule, the citizenry has not had it so bad from the East to the West and from the South to the North. Amid these challenges, the civil society organizations seem to have contented with volumes of crises in the land.

The import of civil society organizations within two decades has turned to ‘wait’ and ‘see’ and ‘look’ and ‘see’. Although the citizens’ political culture is very low when compared to their counterparts in liberal democracies, Nigerians are not used to protecting and challenging government policies even when such policies are turning them into political ‘idiots’ in their fatherland. The labour organizations are even worse. The demands of labour usually culminated into several strike, but the strike they embarked upon is intestimal because demands on the government over the years, has partially been met when the organization either called off or suspend it. However, the populace is not too docile, they want leaders and individuals to lead them to

demand social-economic, and political rights and justice. Nigerians in their thousands have occupied major roads in urban centers for revalidation of the annulled election, the reversal of the structural adjustment program, reduction in the prices of fuel, kerosene, diesel, installation of Goodluck Jonathan as a president of Nigeria. All these protect and demonstrations, were led by civil society organizations such as the Campaign for Democracy, Civil Liberty Organization, Alliance for Credible Elections, Nigerian Labour Congress, Trade Union Congress of Nigeria, Nigeria Bar Association, Nigeria Medical Association, National Association of Nigerian Students among others. Indeed, they triggered the people “the import of these civil societies cannot be overemphasized because, in dark days, weeks, months, and years of Nigeria, these organizations fought the military and forced them to hand over to the elected representatives (Ogunwa & Ogunwa, n.d.). While many of the leaders, followers, and supporters suffered deprivation, killings, detention, political exile; undauntedly, the political instrument of the state even given provocation deterred them not to shed their blood for the political freedom of the Nigerian state. For instance, several members of the National Democratic Coalition were incarcerated. It is important to mention the political incarceration and death of MKO Abiola. He (MKO) was ‘condemned’ personally to reclaim the mandate freely given him by Nigerians through their ballots in June 1993, but was arrested and eventually lost his life in detention in Aso-Rock, Abuja (Aluko, 2021)(Omoruyi, 2002)(Anifowose, 1999).

Although, the individuals who are members of civil society organizations are not in government, perhaps to articulate and implement the peoples’ government and programs or “what ought to be”. However, the nature of the Nigerian state and the attitudes of the ruling government, and the inability of the civil society

organizations to properly indoctrinated the people “the time of resistance was short for the civil liberty organizations to inculcate the culture of civil disobedience into the citizens” (Onuoha et al., 2002). Notwithstanding, however, there are gaps between them and Nigerian people which the civil society can bridge through the imposition of democratic tenets and to “warding-off misrule, bad leadership”, or repeat what they did to “undesirable rule like a military dictatorship”(Onuoha et al., 2002). The gap also left the civil rule to be unchallenged as those elected by the people demonstrated incapacity to govern and provide a basic necessity for the people. No elected representative has resigned even with evidence of corruption and mismanagement of national resources. Within the space of 21 years, there were five general elections conducted in 36 states for governors and state Houses of assembly, 774 local governments for chairmen and councilors, president, the national assembly for senators and representatives. These elections were conducted every four years, while the incumbent can seek re-election into the same post or other position. In the periods, no elected person has taken responsibility for the failure of governance. For instance, the PDP and APC governments at the national level were characterized by socio-economic and political uncertainties. They lacked basic objectives of what a government should prioritize for the citizenry. Elected persons have come and gone. For instance, the PDP and APC rule at the national level there were socio-economic and political uncertainties. Several projects with billions of Naira paid to the contractors were abandoned. Insecurity across the federation manifested in the abduction of some Nigerians, students, teachers, and foreigners. Huge ransom was paid by the governments for their release from their captors. The nationalities have cried of been neglected and not covered with the security of the

apparatus of the state. Across the federation, the people’s lives and properties are now at the mercy of Boko Haram, bandits, and kidnappers. They have attacked villages, military barracks, police stations, markets, killed and destroyed lives and properties. Several Nigerians including those in uniform have been murdered. Under the APC rule, insecurity is even worse that the nationalities such as southwest, and Southeast, and Southsouth are clamoring for the disintegration of the country.

The civil society organizations which have been the bedrock and foundation of democracy seems susceptible to political mechanization and superiority of the government, perhaps the ruling parties who not only suffocating the people but as well caged the organization that made democracy possible in the country that they politicians took advantages but now prefer “politics to governance”. Although, civil society is a private organization whose resources are very limited to carry along the people impoverished under the military and whose miserable state also continue under civil rule. To get governance right under the current dispensation, it is a task the civil society organization even the entire population who’s code-named is “civil society” in itself

The growth and activism of civil society in matters of societal interest are in response to the real or perceived contradiction between the interests of the state and those of the communities, the interests of the agents of the state, military or civil, and the interests of the people, the processes of economics and those of the people and their natural environments ... (Onuoha et al., 2002).

## **CONCLUSION**

The study has revealed that since 1999, Nigerian civil society organizations have entrenched the civil rule cum democracy in the country. This was made possible when the organizations coupled

with foreign organizations including their governments pressurize the military government to democratize and leave the political governance to the people to be elected by the majority of the people in Nigeria. In no distant future, the then regime headed by General Abdulsalami Abubakar set up the transition program and eventually handed over the government of Nigeria to the former Head of State but now elected under the platform of the People Democratic Party. Then and now (2021), Nigerians have been governed by the elected representatives in all the strata, that is, at the local, state, and national levels. Election's losers have sought redress in the court of law. Two political parties remained dominant within the period. The PDP was in power between 1999 and 2015. The party controlled the national government, national assembly including several states as well as local governments. Politically PDP lost the presidential election in 2015 to APC. The APC currently manned the national government since 2015 to date. Just as when the PDP was in power, APC dominated the political scene. The party dominated the national assembly, many states government, and local governments.

However, the boycott or none participation in the transition program by the 'core' or 'radical' civil society members denied them the chance to control the machinery of government. Notwithstanding, the civil organizations liberalized the Nigerian political landscape when a Nigerian court ruled in favour of the registration of more political parties that swelled the number from three to thirty in 2002, fifty in 2007, sixty-one in 2011, twenty-eight in 2015, and ninety-one in 2019 (Anifowose, 1999) INEC, 2012; 2020). Having several political parties may not be sufficient to resolve the challenges of governance in Nigeria. The party system lacked ideological positions. They all tended towards neo-liberal ideology (Katsina, 2016; OGUNWA, 2015). The

politics of opposition is also not there to keep the ruling parties in check across the federation. For instance, an aggrieved member of the 'A' party and the supporters move at will from the original party to another to realize the political ambition, that is, the quest for power.

In 2010, a civil organization, the "Occupy Nigeria" was led by Pastor Tunde Bakare and demanded the installation of the Vice-President, Goodluck Jonathan as the President of Nigeria after the death of President Musa Yar'Adua. The political cabal in Aso-Rock attempted to manage Yar'Adua's death but for the intervention of the civil society, the secret was blown open. Again, in 2012, the government (Jonathan) that came to power through the agility of civil society, the Nigerian people were socked when his government announced the increase of the price of petrol from N65.00 per liter to N140.00. Earlier, at the wee end of the administration of Obasanjo, he has increased the price from N65.00 to N90.00 but President Musa Yar'Adua on assumption office in 2007 slashed the price to N65.00 per liter. Nigerians trooped out to denounce the increase.

The defeat of PDP in 2015 that President Muhammadu Buhari under the All Progressives Congress came to power capitalized on the weakness of the civil organizations including the labour unions, the price of petrol was increased from N87.00 to N140.00 per liter depending on the location in the country. Since the APC became the party in power at the national level, there is not demonstration and protest to called the government of APC to order by the civil organizations except few instances articulated above. The case of labour organizations is particularistic and interest-centric inasmuch that the organization only fights for the interest of their members. The number of Nigerians working under the government across the federation cannot be taken to the majority of Nigerians who are not under the labour unions. The endsars protests in 2020 were

actually coordinated by individuals. Nigerian youths occupied all major roads in capital cities and city centers and protested against the Nigerian police brutality and indiscriminate use of political instruments of the state bought by tax-payers. The state ended the youth's peace demonstrations when the Nigerian army in Lagos State brutally murdered some of them. The Nigerian flag: Green, White, and Green were stained with the blood of the youths. In Abuja, state officials also sent political thugs armed with woods, machetes, and other dangerous weapons and attacked the protesting youths.

The endsars protest exposed the nature of elected representatives because the Whare Houses owned by the Federal and State governments across the country stocked with palliatives were forcefully opened and Nigerians took items needed by them. The food items, including beverages and electronic materials donated by the local and international organizations to the vulnerable citizens to cushioning the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. The protests are worthwhile, although, several youths paid for it with the live bullets scattered and perforated their heads and bodies. Being a civil action, it was not organized by the civil society organizations, but the protests were supported as many leaders of the organizations featured and gave solidarity messages at the different spots where the youth staged the demonstrations nationally and internationally.

For the Nigerian people to benefit maximally in the democratic government, civil society particularly those organizations with a firm commitment to democracy and dividends of democracy, need to be more active in their disposition to governance issues. They did it during the military rule. If, they can survive under the military rule that talks with force, used force, and draconian decrees, then, the civil rule will still show elements of decency and democratic values. In other words, the civil rule will deal with them with civility.

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