The Dynamics of State-Society Relations and Democratization in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper focused on the understanding of state-society relations as a complex mix of interactions between the general citizens flanked by the masses and political leaders in determining the quality of governance in contemporary Nigeria. It draws from Easton's system theory as an analytical frame, underscoring the essence of democratisation as a continuum requiring the active input of critical citizens to impact on. It agrees that there is a rich culture of civil society in Nigeria, but appraises state-society relations as a larger umbrella with a greater incentive in public space construction. Focusing mainly on secondary data, the paper argues that all the factors facilitative of democratisation, free, fair, and periodic elections, protection of civil and political rights, political literacy, accountability, and freedom of the press, remain on the shoulders of constructive state-society relations. By implication, the democratic system at all times works as an equilibrium constructed by the general citizenry, either as followers or in leadership positions – the citizens generally construct the type of governance they desire by either punishing fundamental transgression or rewarding good governance. This is against the backdrop of multiple academic validations about the failure of leadership in Nigeria's political development. Leadership failure, though germane, does not tell the entire story, as leadership is never subject to auto-correct, the course of leadership is usually stirred by the critical citizenry. The paper concluded that Nigerian democratisation is troubled by the lopsided nature of state-society relations leading to the hijack of the state for private interest and impairment of democratic deepening. The work recommends the active role of critical citizens in effecting positive change to Nigeria's political development by driving the democratisation process. This is based on the understanding that democracies are never offered on a platter of gold; actively engaged citizens work towards the initiation, deepening, and sustenance (consolidation) of democracy.

Keywords: Democracy, democratisation, state-society, civil society, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria's 'second chance'[1] at democratization generally dubbed the Fourth Republic has remained in deficit, with enormous misappropriation of the public space. The electoral contest, the 'actor space', citizen participation, and even governance have been cobwebbed in the self-servicing of the power elites with the larger number of the general masses being rewarded with deficient governance. Nonetheless, the initiation, retention, and sustenance of

[1] By Nigeria's second chance at Democratization the study acknowledges the period 1999 up till date as a formidable long breadth in Nigeria's political development which has supplied an ample of opportunities for strengthening the polity without recourse to authoritarian rule (especially military intervention). To this extent it equates the inherited civilian rule at independence as the first of such opportunity to grow democracy, *ab initio*.

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the democratic system of government remain an outcome, not of the choice of the ruling elite but a consensus among the entire members of the society who appreciates the method as a 'state political best practice' with no credible alternative, and whose values equates good governance. To sustain and deepen democratic values, the various divisions and self-organizing units of the society are involved in an embryonic relationship with the state to shape the process and outcome of state practices (Ogbonna, 2020). Within these foci, the mass media remain a veritable instrument of alternative options, and also the membrane of social debate, 'interest marketing', probe and scrutiny of 'the political' in general.

The understanding is that democratisation is a continuum, the civil society in this process plays a major role as it was during the colonial era when the nationalists rounded up against the imperial power for independence. However, not long after independence, Nigeria experienced a democratic reversal into an authoritarian regime, spearheaded by the military, combined with the eclipse of civil society. From this time, state-society relations started suffering an enormous setback. Although the structure of the state was not affected, the form in which the state operated afterward changed totally. The disjointed periods of *Milito-autocratic* regimes saw their tentative end at the beginning of a new democratic wave in the late 1990s, following a

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significant state-society relation, which is a show of how important the 'society' is to democratic sustainability (Osita, 2006).

In 1999, Nigeria excitedly re-initiated a democratization process that has up to today remains the longest ever democratic process in the country. As evident in both advanced political systems and the literature, democracies vis-à-vis politics is not a spectator game, as such monologue and by implication, apathy remains the worst aberration of the system. The *democraticness* of any democratizing state rests on the product of state-society interactions typified by the aspirations and choices of the citizens as key in the formation of government and consideration of both policy options and policy actions. Every political society exists alongside a variety of self-organizing groups that interacts with and within the state. The Nigerian state is replete with such units, organisations, and institutions constantly interacting with the state to mold the authority of the state, give it practical meaning, and for the citizenry to remain at the receiving end of the purpose and process of governance. These self-organising units that interact with the state range from organised civil-society groups and pro-democracy movements, International Non-Governmental Organisations (Democracy Watch, Transparency International, etc), political parties (especially opposition parties), organised labor under the auspices of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress, the organised intelligentsia (in there various unions and

groups), artisan groups, market unions, neighborhood associations, student unions, etc. With the sustenance of Nigerian democracy in mind, this work appraises state-society as significant, in determining the quality and influencing the context of political development.

The dynamics of state-society relations is epitomized by the connection between socially mobilized and critical citizenry *vis-a-vis* successful democratisation anchored on the following assumptions (Ogbonna, 2016; Ogbonna, 2020);

I. Authoritarianism can only at first instance be repelled by active/critical citizens in order to institute first, electoral democracy. While same tempo of citizens' engagement, if not a heightened one, is needed towards advancing to other stages in the democratisation continuum (Schedler 2002), which includes liberal and advanced democracies.

II. The legitimacy of a government lies in the hands of the citizenry, therefore, authoritarian regimes crack when the citizens deflect its legitimacy and no regime can last without its legitimacy (Przeworski 1991) and, the legitimacy of a government is a product of continuous interaction of state-society relations. This was the situation from 1985 to 1998 in Nigeria and this became more pronounced in 1993 after the annulment of the June 12 election. Nigerian citizen groups under the umbrella of different civil society groups (CD, NADECO, etc) made

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manifest their complete intolerance to the military and fought to terminate General Ibrahim Babangida's transition without end. Yet, in as much as democratisation is an unending process, the citizens must remain perpetually alert to exercise eternal watch over the process.

III. An enduring proposition, in state-society relations, with regards to the interaction between critical citizenry and democratisation is Schmitter's (1986) submission, "that for an effective and enduring challenge to authoritarian rule to be mounted, and for political democracy to become and remain an alternative mode of political domination, a country must possess a civil society in which certain community and group identities exist independent of the state and in which certain types of self-constituted units are capable of acting autonomously in defense of their own interests and ideals".

IV. The 21st-century upsurge in information and communication technology vis-à-vis the social media revolution remains part of the evolutionary transition in human sociology that has strengthened democratisation globally. If the transformation of an authoritarian regime is not necessarily achieved by means of their overthrow, it may also result from the processes of evolutionary change (Martins 1986), which mainly centers on the capacity of the citizens to insist on a people-centered government as an irreducible value of governance, this was as well the situation in Nigeria that led to the military Regime

yielding to the conduct of democratic elections and handing over power to Civilian elected political officers in May 1999.

V. The fact that active political participation by critical citizens elicits government's responsiveness enunciated the assumption that the best way to influence the decisions of government should be being able to influence and contribute to those decisions in proportions equal to the stake one has as a citizen. The citizens must own the democratic process given that democracy works when people claim it as their own (Moyers 2013), and, "politics is too important to be left to politicians, [given that] government is prone to crime and a government devoid of citizen control is a potential criminal" (Ayoade 2010).

In a nutshell, authoritarian reversal, democratic initiation, sustenance and deepening, anchored beyond relapse waves and/or total reversal rest solely on the shoulders of the citizens. It also behooves on the citizens to construct a complex and self-enforcing system of democratic dividend that ensures good governance. The ability of the citizens to adequately perform their roles in sustaining the democratisation process lies in their capacity as social and political beings, imbued with the responsibility to act and hold those who govern them responsible with the capacity to reward good governance and punish fundamental transgressions.

David Easton's System Analysis

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This work adopted David Easton's system theory. Its significance is in analyzing political life in its entirety and capturing the process in which the political system and its agents relate in a continuum. Within this systemic process, state-society relation is evident, having a reverberating effect on the (democratic) nature of the political system. The theory explains how sets of interrelated political units interact and counteracts what seems to be a recycling progression. According to Easton, the political system's equilibrium and functionality are engendered as a result of active interactions within the system's units.

By the virtue of how the environment influences the system and vice versa, in resonance with a set of unit interactions, values are authoritatively allocated to society. This process does not take place in a vacuum, it is made possible through the input-output synergy, that is, relations and influences spanning from the environment into the system (the input), and the relations and influences from the system to the environment (the output).

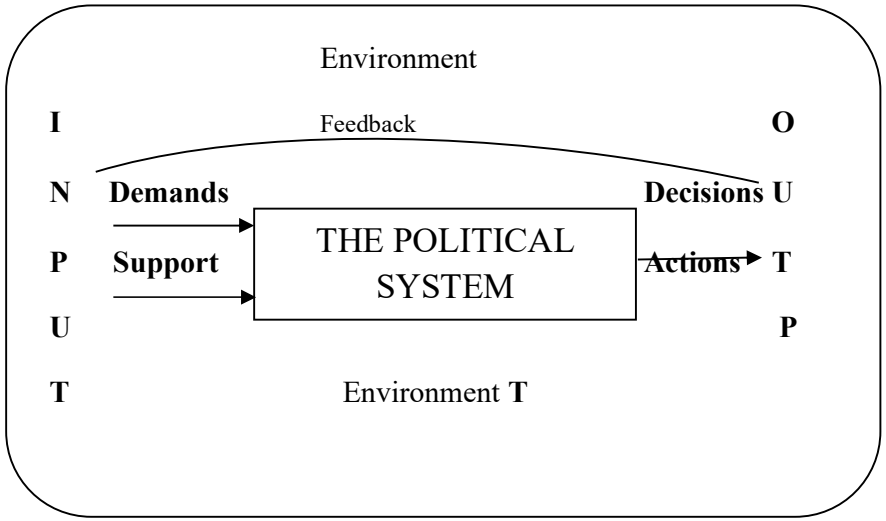


Figure 1: *David Easton's Systems Theory Model*

As shown in figure 1, Nigeria's political system comprises the input and the output units. While the demands and support comprise the people's set of needs, claims, desires, and wants which could be channeled through different civil groups, political parties, mass media, etc, and could also take the form of appeal and agitations; the support takes the form of election. As these demands are made, it is the responsibility of the political decision-makers within the framework of the political system to convert such into decisions and or actions. A critical society could in these ways influence the

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political system. Often, people demand increased political inclusion – the right to hold official positions and offices; to vote and be voted for; organised political associations; petition government bodies for the allocation of goods and services like education, roads, and transportation, as well as provisions of security, healthcare, and sanitation. However, some gatekeepers filter the inputs. Such gatekeepers in a democracy are the political parties.

Commensurate to the extent to which the government granted the people's demand is the support. Critical citizens often strategize from their pattern of support which determines the kind of values, contribution, obedience, and belief system of the people injected into the political system. This systemic process legitimizes the political system in one way or the other through obligations of the citizens to the state through; voting, payment of taxes/levies/duties, military service, respect to public authorities, and symbols.

However, what down-climbs a political system into becoming a less functional or failed system is the systemic breakdown emanating from input-output relations lopsidedness, where the feedback derived by the 'society' demand and support does not tally with the decision and policy output from the government. In this instance, citizens become less interested in supporting the system which most times leads to political apathy, giving more space for political actors to turn the political system into a kleptocracy, without being

checked by the populace. While the input-output process is central to the structural functionality of the political system, it also operates within the framework of the political environment composing the international societies, the international political system, the international economic system, the intervening national economy, personalities, the social structure, and culture.

On final analysis, a converse application of Warren's (2009) thesis of democratic deficits would suffice to accommodate the dynamics of Easton's input and output analogy. Conversely, Warren (2009), suggests that when both the level of political awareness and active engagement of the citizens in the democratisation process are at par, the situation results in democratic equilibrium, normatively, functionally, and empirically. Firstly, from a normative perspective, governments are in democratic equilibrium when political arrangements approximate the expectation that participation should elicit government responsiveness. Secondly, from an empirical perspective, governments are in democratic balance when their citizens come to believe that they can use their participatory opportunities and resources to achieve responsiveness. Thirdly, from a functional perspective, governments are in democratic equilibrium when they are able to generate legitimacy from the democratic sources they need to govern (Warren, 2009). In all, equilibrium in political arrangements, citizens' loyalty, and patriotic participation are

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sources of state-society relations that transits to legitimacy that fuel and energize a responsive government.

State-society Relations as a Conceptual Reality in Democratic Discourse

There is a varied interpretation of state-society relations in the literature. Most scholars of politics, political sociology, and allied disciplines more often than not reduce the concept of state-society relations to a narrower interpretation as civil society. The danger of such understanding is that civil society itself suffers from a great burgeoning of interpretational flux with scholars seeking relentlessly to pitch a border in this direction. It is by no means insignificant to define civil society to chart a theoretical pathway for this work. Civil society according to Juan Linz and Stepan (1996) refers "to that arena of the polity where self-organising and relatively autonomous groups, movements, and individuals attempt to articulate values, to create associations and solidarities, and to advance their interests. Civil society can include manifold social movements (e.g., women's groups, neighborhood associations, religious groupings, and intellectual organizations), as well as associations from all social strata (such as trade unions, entrepreneurial groups, and professional associations".state-society relations according to DFID (2010) refer to "interactions between state institutions and societal groups to negotiate how public authority is exercised and how it can be influenced by people. They are focused on issues such as defining the mutual

rights and obligations of state and society, negotiating how public resources should be allocated, and establishing different modes of representation and accountability" (Benequista in DFID 2010, p. 15).

To this extent state-society relations capture and explain the entirety of relationships that exist between the social units of the society – formal and informal – concerning governance. It accommodates both the civil society and or any other possible units that shape the course and tides of governance. The reality is that no state exists in a vacuum; effective states are based on an evolving relationship between the state and citizens (Eyben, Ladbury, 2006), and this relationship might take different patterns including groups like civil society and self-organising ones, individual and professional ties.

The Democratization Mantra and the Nigerian Case

> *"Nigerian regimes are all living witnesses of the fact that what they have enthroned in the country is a form of civilian dispensation and not real democracy"*
> (Wani and Suwirta, 2013).

Over the years, democratization in Nigeria has been punctuated with dots of military interventions, dictatorship, impunity, sit-tight syndrome, electoral fraud, and most other anti-democratic traits. The year 1960 is marked as the year Nigeria got independence from Great Britain and the beginning of constitutional democracy, which was interrupted by the military absolutists in 1966. Previously engaged constitutional democracy was

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reinstalled in 1979 and within four years, in 1983 was interrupted yet again by the military till 1993. Another election that was held in 1993 was as well nullified. The bumpy aftermath of the nullification of the presidential election led to the installation of an Interim National Government (ING), which was criticized for lacking legitimacy and lasted but a few days. General Sani Abacha staged a new coup d'état that reinstalled Nigeria into a full military dictatorship. Sani Abacha died in 1998 mysteriously and his death was celebrated by many Nigerians, as his regime lacked any substance of freedom and peace. In 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar reluctantly took over power, whose one-year regime was relatively peaceful, as his administration was passively democratically oriented. He handed power over to the democratic government of Olusegun Obasanjo, after a general election in 1999.

Following this phase, Nigeria's fourth republic of democratic rule has blossomed in life span and not in substance. From the Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007); Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2010); Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (2010-2015) to Muhammadu Buhari (2015-present) administrations, which amounts to more than 23 years of uninterrupted electoral democracy in Nigeria, there appears to be no assurance or indications that democratic consolidation is a possibility, as democratic consolidation which is the height and goal of every democratizing state, means a stage where democracy is

deepened to the extent it is unlikely to breakdown in reversal. However, obtainable in the Nigerian government is the alienation of the majority from political processes, unproductive leadership, ethno-religious violence, secessionist agitations, and an economic gap between the elected and the electorates, which are indicators of potential democratic breakdown and reversal. There is a general erosion of democratic values.

Additionally, if democratic consolidation means that democracy in all its full-fledged forms is the 'only game in town', behaviorally, attitudinally, and constitutionally, where none of the coalesced groups clamors for secession; where the majority accepts democracy as the best and appropriate form of government with no intention for change; and where all state's organs conform to democratic institutions (Linz and Stepan, 1996), then democratic consolidation in Nigeria is a mere ideal because Nigeria is besmeared with issues that do not seem to be heading its government in the directions of where democratic consolidation may be achieved.

Deductions from Linz and Stepan (1996) reveal that drives toward democratic consolidation mean more than mere election, to them, there must exist a democratic environment that allows the workability of civil societies, and not just mere group membership but freedom necessary for active society, rule of law, state capacity and institutionalized state-society balancing the

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state with the market. On the contrary, elections in Nigeria are characterised characterized by reoccurring violence and perpetual rigging, which often makes one doubt the credibility of the elections. To Williams, (2007) this crisis calls for overall electoral reforms. In the same vein, Nigerian politics is occupied by self-centered politicians and political parties with no ideological base, but a merger of previously dormant parties; hence, such reoccurring electoral crisis is inevitable. As this persists, the very legitimist base that undergirds the state remains questionable, meaning that Nigerian democracy is imbued with multiple contradictions.

The possibility of sudden breakdown and reversal into an authoritarian regime of the Nigerian democracy is likely, given the overwhelming clusters of the attendant democratic crisis. Drawing from Wani and Suwirta (2013), there is a six-way test to determine the extent of Nigeria's democratization performance, which are:

a) periodic free and fair elections that project people's will;
b) freedom of association;
c) right to disseminate information and freedom of the press;
d) effective separation of power between the legislature, executive, and judiciary;
e) respect for the rule of law and;
f) transparency and accountability in governance.

As earlier argument has shown, since 1999, apart from local elections, Nigeria has held about 6 general elections and none of them has the credibility of freedom and fairness. The complicating part is, that the election is the major means through which people can collectively engender regime change has been hijacked using the attendant poverty as a weapon by which the political elites strip people of their choice of candidate, by offering petite palliatives in return for peoples votes, where a larger percentage of the impoverished population constitute a significant percentage of the eligible voters. Apart from this, elections in Nigeria are faced with the problem of challenges of lack of a national electoral database, suffocating dependence on the independent umpire, and political parties' excesses and deficits.

There is a general clampdown on freedom recently. From interest in silencing outspoken critiques of government actions and inactions. Several attempts have been made by the regime of President Muhammed Buhari to gauge social media. Just recently, the Federal Government banned Twitter in Nigeria. The microblog had deleted a tweep by the President overusing languages that are considered genocidal. The FG in turn banned Twitter.

Encapsulating other tests to Nigerian democratization performance are the Nigerian constitution and weak institutions. The Nigerian constitution is overly voluminous, devoid of clarity, and lacks the autochthonism necessary

to address intrinsic democratic issues of rights and freedom, separation of power, accountability, and transparency. As Wani and Suwirta averred, "…the most important source of law operating in the country; simply told lie against itself, as ruefully observed by the patriots". Aggravated by ravaging kleptocratic nature, such an autochthonous constitution is a mirage, as the political elite benefits from this detriment, rendering the parliament and its incumbents democratically irrelevant. Recent trends in the present administration have also shown a high level of disregard for the basic tenets of democracy.

Implications of State-Society Relations on Democratization in Nigeria

Democracy, however, is defined, whether as a "meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups either directly or indirectly, for the major positions of governmental power" (Diamond 1994:4); a "cluster of rules and institutions permitting the broader participation of the majority of citizens in the selection of representatives who alone can make political decisions" (Held, 1993:20-21); or as a notion broadened to incorporate social and economic improvement of the masses (Ake, 1993:9), is never a stand-alone process, except in places (countries) where it is not functional.

Of all factors facilitative of the democratisation process: free, fair, and periodic elections, protection of civil and political rights of citizens, high

level of political literacy, accountability, freedom of the press, etc, constructive state-society relations stand as the sum. In a broader term, however, nexus exists between constructive state-society relations and sustainable democratic governance. State, society, and democracy are at once citizen-centered hence, when and where there are "constructive interactions between state institutions and societal groups, negotiating how public authority is exercised" (Haider, 2010: 6) there would be political involvement and democratic sustainability: "the promotion of political involvement is a major aspect of state-building, democratization and good governance" (Nett, Hollederer and Schafer, 2009: 5). Conversely, where a societal group is mobilized to the exclusion of others by the power elites to control state resources for their exclusive interests, it narrows participation in democratic processes and decision-making. For democracy to serve the people and be sustained, strong synergies must exist between states and societal groups. A plethora of growing research endeavors on state-society relations with a special interest in developing countries has pointed out the fundamentals of joint governmental arrangements within local society, or local societal groups, initiatives, and institutions, for effective governance and democracy sustainability (Pouligny 2010; Tsai 2006; Shaw 2005; Migdal 2001; Agarwal and Ribot 1999).

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Specifically, the two apt themes in Migdal's (2001) approach devolve around the image and the real practices of the state in a process of mutual engagement. Whereas the image of the state pertains to a perceptual process that revolves largely around a cultural formation, the practices of the state refer to the engagement of its apparatuses in society, raising the question of the social boundaries that exist between the state and society. To this end, we ask; what, then, are the dynamics of the social engagement between the state and society? In reconceptualizing the relationship between state and society, Migdal (2001) suggests that conventional theories of the state often concern themselves with the problem of obedience, including the sorts of structures and cultures that might facilitate it. In so doing, they tend to focus on the structural apparatuses of the modern state (such as parliaments, bureaucracies, and judicial systems), and in varying degrees tend to reproduce the "analytic isolation of the state (leading) to a mystification of its capabilities and power" (Migdal, 2001:232).

However, the democratization process and its attendant benefits themselves cannot be left in the ambits of these structural apparatuses alone. A constructive synergy must exist between these structural/formal apparatuses of government and the civil society/informal groups. For instance, the accountability of government, the delivery of electioneering promises, and constitutionalism of government, which are some of the

cardinal resultant benefits of a democratized society can rarely be maintained without civil society as an entity truly autonomous from government. The entire society, also, as a single national body must body. In-depth interaction with extant literature on state-civil society relations' roles in democratization processes reveals that civil society is cardinal to democratization anywhere in the world. Even though there is skepticism about the applicability of western conceptions of civil society in the African context, an increasing number of African scholars are affirming the importance of civil society for democratization and governance (Asnake, 2003). It is conceived that a functional civil society can facilitate democracy by promoting pluralism, and it can deepen democracy by embedding the values and institutions of liberal democracy within society at large.

Even though scholars such as Gordon (1993); Diamond (1994) scarcely converge around a consensus as to the definition of civil society, they disagree less about its organization and centrality to democratisation process. For instance, while Gordon believes that civil society is characterized by contradicting and inconsistent definitions and alludes to the fact that theorists did not clearly distinguish 'civil society' from the 'state' and often use the two terms interchangeably, Diamond conceives civil society as the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of

shared rules. Gordon argues that the use of civil society 'implies a certain power relationship between state and society such that there are limitations on the state's capacity to pervade and control society, and a certain power on the part of members of a society to insulate themselves from, and exert influence upon, the state.

A civil society organization (CSO) is a political community, possessing the capacity to organize and coordinate its activities to influence state policies. Again, civil society may be conceived as a society in which there are autonomous groups that aggregate the views and activities of individuals and which act to promote and defend the interests of those people, including against the state. This implies that there is a public discussion of issues, with questions of public policy being debated widely within the community rather than being decided solely by regime elites. It is through this public discussion of issues in part that autonomous groups act to defend the interests of their respective constituencies. Crucial for the existence of civil society is that both state and civil society recognize the legitimacy of the other, and acknowledge the right of the other to act unimpeded within certain defined spheres of competence.

In Nigeria's case, in a period around the late 18th century, major parts of Africa including Nigeria were dominated economically and politically by

the imperial powers. Indigenous rulers were accountable to the British, subjugated, and reduced to on-lookers in the determination of the political and socio-economic affairs of the people. During this period, the state-society relations were lopsided, as traditional rulers often do not consult the people in the determination of people-related affairs fearing the colonial administrators to make most decisions, in as much as their position as the traditional ruler is retained. This epileptic state-society relation was worsened by the utilization of indigenous police under the authority and organization of the native rulers to subjugate, oppress and intimidate the indigenous people, groups, and societies, whose opinions might contradict that of the imperial authorities. These acts of state-society alienation and brutality to Dudley (1982), launched "the beginning of a suspicious relationship between the state and the people in Nigeria". Most of these native rulers were among those that occupied the republican power space after independence.

However, this trend of brutality and alienating colonial agenda was dealt with a big blow, in the face of the coalition of emancipatory-oriented elites, who joined forces to see to the end of not only the state-society alienation, exploitation, and brutality but colonialism in its administrative form. It is this emancipatory process that birthed the National Congress of British West Africa in 1917, spearheaded by Joseph Casley Heyford, which was one of the notable formal organisations established for African

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emancipation. This society-inspired charge, engender the beginning of people involved in colonial administrative processes, like democratizing the selection of members of the legislative council and civil service (Dudley, 1982). In this sense, this led to the development of vibrant civil societies that later spearheaded the charge for independence, through the formation of political parties and civil groups like the Nigerian National Democratic Party, the first Nigerian political party founded by Herbert Macaulay in 1923 (this party went on to win all seats in the 1923,1928 and 1933 elections); the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1933 and the co-establishment of National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) in 1944, by Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikwe of which the later went on to become a major Pan-Africanist figure and nationalist leader.

This phase in time also experienced Nigeria's first national strike in 1945, organized by Michael Imoudu under the organization of the trade union. The media as well contributed to the charge especially the West African Pilot; launched in Nigeria by Nnamdi Azikwe in 1937 and the Nigerian Tribune founded in 1949 by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, which were majorly used in promoting the quest for Nigerian independence. On the whole, the nationalist agitations and movements that led to Nigeria's independence were proceeded by the efforts of these societies that existed in socio-cultural groups, parties, and mass media. Although independence was

quickly challenged by a military coup d'etat, similar to the trend in most African states at the period (Awofeso, 2003), the significance of civil societies in the determination of an independent Nigeria cannot be overemphasized.

Subsequently, the nature of Nigerian state-society matured overtime, from the early 1960s through the late 1990s. Most elite members of the society had organized several effective civil groups, devoted to democratic rule against military rule and the welfare of the people against oppression. Examples of them are the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Campaign for Democracy (CD), the mass media, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) as well as National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) which in the late periods of the 1990s challenged the Babangida and Abacha's regime.

However, the pre-fourth republic civil society in Nigeria could be referred to as the golden era of civil societies in Nigeria. This period showed how civil societies effected significant changes in the political system, where the decisions and outputs of the political system were laced with the demands of the people. Whereas, the present democratization process in Nigeria since 1999 though could be tagged as the longest sustaining without military interruptions, is now faced with contradictory state-society relations. The

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inherited leaderships have managed to forge disguising civil societies to suit their interest alone. Most civil societies are now ethnic-oriented and do not represent the interest of the general public. This situation by the virtue of the attendant political corruption in all its ramification makes substantive state-society relations difficult, having a retrogressive effect on Nigeria's democratization.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Ever since its inception and comparison with other systems of government, democracy by most commentators and intellectuals has been adjudged as a state's political best practice, however, recent trends have come to threaten the efficacy of democracy. To Feigenblatt, Pardo, and Cooper, (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about instability in African, American, and European liberal democracies, revealing the limitations to democracy in terms of protecting the core values of liberalism itself, such as freedom of press and speech and protection of life and properties. To them, while democratic core values in Europe and America are facing a compromise under the heat of the pandemic, the Asian countries experience relative stability and calmness engendered by their practice of corporatism and benevolent authoritarianism which makes enables them to not only maintain stability during a crisis but also succeed in protecting liberal

democratic core values. This projects that it is the substance of the political system that matters, irrespective of whatever name and form it takes.

To this end, it is justifiable that the Nigerian democratization process is highly problematic. The system suffers enormous deficits in state-society relations which on the other hand has given the crop of Nigerian political leaders the undue advantage to hijack the state for private interest and govern mostly at their wimps with little consideration of the general demands of the citizens. This illuminates that the substance and sustenance of Nigerian democracy revolve around state-society relations.

On the whole, deepening of democratic values in all areas of social life is a strong force that would return the country to the path of dynamic state-society relations: this is owed to the fact that democratic values are not always thrown to the bar once political leadership is assumed; deepening the culture of accountability would not be a willful act of political elite, critical citizens should constantly demand accountability from those whom they have democratically elected in different political positions. State-society relations must stand to strike an equilibrium in political leadership, making sure that already established democratic values are not eroded or that a reversal becomes impracticable. This paper therefore recommends as follows:

I. National orientation*:* the drawing of policy options for the orientation of the citizens on bracing the responsibility to participate and own the political process as the only conduit to achieving good governance. Citizens should be oriented to the understanding that political apathy is both irresponsible and that at no time can the citizens afford to ignore the process of determining both leadership and government configurations. National Orientation Agency of Nigeria (NOA) can work closely with education institutions to develop and disseminate orientation packages in this regard. Civil society groups should be empowered to take up the assignment of knowledge facilitation with regards to citizens' political responsibility education and social media import.

II. Political education: the provisions of this article also lay claim to a resonance of the need for consciousness formation through systematic inroad in formal education planning taking cognizance of the established gaps and/or deficits in the previous models of understanding with regards to the political development discourse as established in the research findings and recommendations herein. Political education should not be limited to studying and enunciating western models but investigating turbulent terrain associated with the locale of study. In contemporary time, globalisation bye product of an explosion in social media has quite enormous implication on every

citizen as a vital participant in the democratic process. If every citizen has advanced to such a center stage of political development, knowledge of how to discern and make a rational political decision is vital. With regards to the differentials that characterize Nigeria and its dilemmas, history should provide a critical source for a better understanding of the peculiarities of the Nigerian people and the development of homegrown templates for the restructuring of Nigeria and Nigerians' patriotic drives. The government as matter of urgency should liaise with Nigerian Political Science Association on the assignment of arriving at a homegrown investigation and template tended towards implementing the same as the political model.

III. Civic action and agenda for civil societies: members of civil society and other self-organizing groups with an interest in democratisation in Nigeria should easily find an investigation that could enrich their blueprint, especially in the study of the differentials with regards to social requisites running across the different regions of Nigeria.

IV. A call for Policy of 'Equal Opportunity Act' through the inclusion of Special Population: Despite the enormous provision by ICT through social media dubbed as the 'great equalizer', thousands of Nigeria's population are still excluded from active political life due to one impairment or the other. There is a need for government to come up with a policy and make necessary infrastructural provisions to involve

the special population in the electoral process through the use of ICTs. Nigerian populace with different kinds of impairment and deformity should be inculcated into active political life through ICT tools and their electoral capital secured through the enactment of requisite laws to permit the use of such tools.

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