THE
JONATHAN
PRESIDENCY
JUNIOR & SENIOR YEARS

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The Jonathan Presidency
Junior and Senior Years

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## Dedication

TO ALL PATRIOTIC NIGERIANS, DEMANDING AND SUPPORTING POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING THAT THE HOUSE CALLED "NIGERIA" MAY NOT COLLAPSE!
Acknowledgments

Editing or writing a book imposes a debt of gratitude on the editor(s). This one is no exception. First, we acknowledge the Contributors to this book because they made it possible. Contributing to the book is an intellectual service in the overall interest of knowledge production. Keeping deadlines was not easy and the necessary and regular but constant reminders sometimes invaded the privacy of innocent Contributors.

We also acknowledge the Nigerian electorate who, with great patience and high expectations, went to the polls in February 2015 to elect for themselves a President to grow, nurture, and advance their interests. Democracy is built on the secular faith of an unwritten social contract. We acknowledge their steadfast faith which takes them to the polls time after time even when their experience would suggest otherwise.

It is particularly appropriate in the case of this current volume to thank the person who did the word processing. The editing necessitated doing it over several times. It was a nice experience to work with someone who was ready to pay for the mistakes of other people cheerfully. John Archers Publishers also falls into this category. They have facilitated the work by beating deadlines.

We want to acknowledge the readers, Nigerians and others, who will read this volume. We hope, by this series on the Presidency and Presidents in Nigeria to add value to political office holding and political performance in Nigeria. We believe that there is a need to institute a system of intellectual reminder to the political process. It may be slow and imperceptible but it will surely add value. This is why the book on the Buhari Presidency is on the way. Meanwhile, we want to treat Readers to some aspects of the last two Years of the Jonathan Presidency 2013-2015.

Preface

Nigerian politics is an interestingly complex phenomenon just as Nigerian politicians are a rare breed of creative clumsiness. The combination of Nigerian politics and Nigerian politicians is an egregious complexity unequalled anywhere else the world over. The Nigerian environment which threw up Nigerian politics and Nigerian politicians is said to be rich in ecological and human diversity that is capable of producing complex challenges that only politicians who have learnt not to be part of the problems can resolve. Where politicians themselves are at the centre of national challenges as in Nigeria, the problems can only multiply exponentially. Nigerian politicians have always accused diversity as an alibi and justification for the inoperability of the nation. They have made frantic efforts at reducing the salience of diversity but usually made more strenuous efforts at frustrating their home spun solutions. The reality is the expertise of the national political class to violate national political future on the altar of sub-national interests. The Nigerian electorate is also, by and large, fixed at its ethnic pole and even when the politicians hop from one party to the other for personal advantage, they carry the ethnic baggage. There is a thick envelope of personal political interest enveloping subnational interests which at convenience venerate nationhood. The ethnic survive all political weather making any political party a tapestry of sorts. The parties therefore operate under various sorts of encumbrances particularly because the parties are deliberately deprived of a political curriculum. Instead, the parties endorse programmes which hang loose because they are not tethered to an overarching body of ideas and principles. Thus, politicians can change political parties, win the nomination of their new parties and receive the electoral endorsement of the public a few weeks after. Oftentimes, such politicians continue to be loyal to their old parties and work against the electoral interests of their new parties. The parties are therefore rudderless and inefficient political guides to the public in evolving standards of civic accountability.

Elections are held after candidates have advertised their programmes
and their supposed competence to implement those programmes. Unfortunately, from the foregoing, the public is not provided the parameters with which to assess either the parties or the candidates. The personalities of the parties are ill-defined just as those of the candidates are confusing. Some of the candidates had contested elections on the platforms of the parties they now oppose without espousing new political philosophies. They only chant political slogans that effectively mask their political direction. Any government that is produced under such politically opaque circumstances by political dramatis personae that lack sound political principles is ipso facto unserviceable. This is further complicated by the constitutional requirement that ranks geography over competence in executive recruitment. The product of such a muddled political process is a self-serving administration unhinged from its legitimate constituency.

Paradoxically, the political class routinely claims that it derives a mandate from the people. Unfortunately, the environment of the campaigns is deliberately made incongenial for sober presentation by the politicians or careful deliberation by the electorate. The politicians move from constituency to constituency with clumsy dance steps, inmelodious music that taunt opponents without enunciating clear-cut programmes, flowing garments that conceal ignorant political insincerity padded with recitation of ill-digested infantile clichés and vacuous promises. Constituents get away from campaign venues without an idea of the direction that the party intends to lead them. There is therefore a disconnect between the people and the government that emerges. The politicians have either proved that they are incapable of presenting winning issues or they wilfully manipulate the election results. The proverbial unreliability of the electoral process was aptly depicted in a short dialogue where somebody inquired of a supposed officer of the election management body if the EMB had got everything ready for the election. The officer responded that even the election result was ready. There is so much skepticism of the electoral process that Nigerians think that there is no comfortable choice between the political parties. As Dr. Azikiwe said in a different context in 1946, the parties are similar bottles of poison with different labels. Such skepticism explains why many registered voters refuse to collect their voters’ cards. Many people believe that the votes do not count anyway and even when the votes are counted, the elected officials are neither responsive nor responsible. This feeling also explains another pervasive anti-democratic behaviour of vote-selling and vote-buying. Many prospective voters think that it is more rewarding to sell the vote than to expect that their elected officials will deliver the much-touted “dividends of democracy.” They also value individual pecuniary advantage over the common good. All the above are evidence of inadequate political education, bad political culture and wrong political socialisation.

The Nigerian electoral process raises the critical issue whether the right political culture can be gathered successfully on the street or whether it is more successful with deliberate civic education. The Babangida Administration made serious efforts at reforming the political process through deliberate civic education. There were three notable attempts, namely: the Two-Party Option, MAMSER, and the Centre for Democratic Studies. The Political Bureau which was empanelled to recommend the most appropriate political arrangement for Nigeria recommended two official political parties so as to neutralise the ethnic-based parties of the First Republic. The Two-Party experiment had prospects of forcing political integration through ethnic alliance building since no ethnic, large it may be, could satisfy the constitutional requirement of spread. The Two-Party experiment would have neutralised the fissiparous ethnic phenomenon. Unfortunately, the experiment was not perfect. It violated the democratic requirement of the voluntary membership of political parties.

While the Two-Party experiment was an institutional reform, the MAMSER was established to educate and mobilise the general public. Its mission was to effect behavioural and attitudinal change in order to improve the total society. Unfortunately, it was turned into an arm of the Ministry of Information, thus, becoming an instrument of propaganda. This negated the advice of the consultants who advised that the best way to create support for any government was through the performance of government in meeting the needs of the people. No amount of propaganda will replace job creation, improve health, housing, education and welfare. As it turned out, an excellent instrument of civic education was mis-applied.
The Centre for Democratic Studies (CDS), Abuja was conceived as an institution for the political class. It was to conduct research into the causes of anti-democratic behaviour and recommend corrective measures. It was also to conduct training for party leaders, women, youths, workers, among others, on different aspects of the democratic process. This was thought to be necessary after a long period of military rule. It was a civic debriefing process for transition from military rule. It was remarkable as long as it lasted. Paradoxically, it did not last before it made an impressive impact. What wiped out the commendable reforms of the Two-Party experiment and the behaviour a change programme of the Centre for Democratic Studies was the selfsame Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida “Transition without End" using Oyeleye Oyediran's book title on the subject. The last straw was the stupendous disaster of the nullification of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election by President Babangida. President Babangida was the most astute programmatic leader who systematically addressed Nigeria’s political problems. He would easily have gone down as the Maker of a Democratic Nigeria. But he was dissatisfied with his own achievement when he annulled what Nigerians believe to be the best electoral outing in their political history. That catastrophic act threw Nigeria back into the wilderness of political despair.

The last two years of Jonathan Administration exemplified the rudderless situation that a government of “business as usual” will get into. President Goodluck Jonathan’s Party, the Peoples Democratic Party witnessed a period of unbundling as members sought individual, regional and/or ethnic political comfort zones. Previous political associates diverged on issues that previously united them and became more accommodating of previously opposing positions. Of course, this is to be expected in situations where a political party is just a creative opportunistic contrivance for capturing political power. The dissatisfaction with the application of power in resource allocation coupled with the promises or prospects on the opposite political turf could create political restiveness that challenge the existing political order. Unfortunately, the Nigerian political class has never paid serious attention to the scientific administration of political parties. Parties have remained soft political gels which are malleable at the pleasure of the politicians. Parties are not cast in any ideology and nothing changes when a politician hops from one party into another party. The electorate does not hold such a politician accountable even when he lies against them that the change is the difference between six and half-a-dozen. Soft parties thrive in soft political environments of weak constituency control. In such environments, it is the elected official that determines the political agenda which he or she can change almost at will. Election periods present an opportunity for such re-ordering which occurs with the electorate falling in line with a little prodding. The Nigerian political terrain witnessed politicians criss-crossing previously abominable political lines and justifying the hug and handshake with previous political opponents.

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Dr. Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan's penultimate and final years as Nigeria's President were as interesting as they were perplexing to the student of Nigerian Politics. They were interesting because of the heightened political activities of the political parties and politicians. The President’s Party, the Peoples’ Democratic Party witnessed a period of unbundling as members sought individual, regional and/or ethnic political comfort zones. Previous political associates diverged on issues that previously united them and became more accommodating of previously opposing positions. Of course, this is to be expected in situations where a political party is just a creative opportunistic contrivance for capturing political power. The dissatisfaction with the application of power in resource allocation coupled with the promises or prospects on the opposite political turf could create political restiveness that challenge the existing political order. Unfortunately, the Nigerian political class has never paid serious attention to the scientific administration of political parties. Parties have remained soft political gels which are malleable at the pleasure of the politicians. The parties are not cast in any ideology and nothing changes when a politician hops from one party into another party. The electorate does not hold such a politician accountable even when he lies against them that the change is the difference between six and half-a-dozen. Soft parties thrive in soft political environments of weak constituency control. In such environments, it is the elected official that determines the political agenda which he or she can change almost at will. Election periods present an opportunity for such re-ordering which occurs with the electorate falling in line with a little prodding. The Nigerian political terrain witnessed politicians criss-crossing previously abominable political lines and justifying the hug and handshake with previous political opponents.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Understanding Popular Struggles and Resistance During the Jonathan Administration

Abubakar Momoh and Adelaja Odukoya

Introduction

Colonialism is the patrimony of authoritarian rule in Africa. This legacy was grafted on Nigeria at independence in 1960 through the inherited state apparatuses. The First Republic (1960-1965) suffered the pains of despotism and arbitrariness occasioned by the legacy of decades of colonialism and the authoritarian character of the political order that foisted civil rule. From 1965, the military, an instrument of colonial repression and hegemony, took control of the state and governance in Nigeria dismissing any pretense to civility, accountability, and rule of law, constitutionalism, human rights and citizens' participation in governance. The Second Republic 1979-1983, under the presidency of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, unable to free itself from the entrenched culture of despotism that had historically characterised the Nigerian State, was neither civil nor democratic. This, amongst many reasons, accounted for the democratic deficit and the return of the military on December 31, 1983.

From the military administration of General Muhammadu Buhari administration, January 1, 1984-August 27, 1985, through the military presidency of General Ibrahim Gbadamasi Babangida, August 27, 1985 – August 26, 1993; and General Sanni Abacha, November 17, 1993 – June 8, 1998, Nigeria became systematically and qualitatively dictatorial. Against the background of decades of military government and the husbandry of the transition to democracy by the military,
which as a professional group had become not only politicised but corrupt, those who inherited political power were socialised into militarist political culture. The political elite that inherited power in 1999 were mostly former military officers, cronies and protégés of the military. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who became the president, was a military Head of State between February 14, 1976 and October 1, 1979 when he formally handed over power to the civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. This explains the apt description of the government of the country from 1999 to present as being controlled by militicians.1

Thus, the institutionalisation of civil rule without democrats and excessive presence and control by military and civilians with strong military pathology, the culture of impunity, human rights violations, absence of rule of law and constitutionalism, marked by lack of public accountability, grand corruption, executive highhandedness and lawlessness and increased exclusion of citizens from governance became the rule rather than the exception.

While the failure of government to deliver the much expected “dividends of democracy” did not result in popular struggles for social justice and collective action, increased and extreme deprivation and the failure of the people to find justice in an atmosphere of vulnerability and disempowerment promoted the culture of self-help and banal self-definition of rights and freedoms which found expression in the development of militia political action in challenge of the state monopoly of physical violence. The Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), the Bakassi Boys, the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra Republic (MOASSOB), the Niger Delta Vigilante and Patriotic Force (NDVPF), Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPFV) and many other militia groups particularly in the Niger Delta were movements response to the hydra-headed crises of the Nigerian State.

The death of President Umaru Yar’Adua, who was Olusegun Obasanjo’s successor in office, and the politics that characterised the transition of power to the Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a minority from the South-South geo-political zone, was the catalyst that dynamised the civil society into political resistance.

As a result of the refusal of what is euphemistically referred to as the “Aso Rock cabal” under the alleged control of (then) First Lady, Hajia Turai Yar’Adua to hold on to power, the civil society led by the Save Nigeria Group (SNG) and Joint Action Front (JAF) staged mass protests to the National Assembly in Abuja, demanding that power should be ceded as constitutionally stipulated to the Vice-President to act as Nigerian President.2

This study examines why the SNG and JAF waged popular struggles against the Jonathan Administration. Some of the questions we seek to answer are: What were key demands of the protests? What forces were mobilised? What was the nature of the alliances formed and were the alliances cohesive and what outcomes were achieved?

Social Movements and the Nigerian Social Construction

Social movements remain one of the most prominent phenomena in contemporary national and international politics. The reasons for this are not far-fetched but two of them stand out. First, social realities and material hardship have created a group of subalterns and vulnerable citizens. Second, new information and communication technology have provided the platform for the externalisation and internationalisation of domestic actions, thereby providing the platform for local groups to pursue national, regional or international groups’ actions. It is this capacity to ‘internationalise domestic actions’ that made it possible for the self-immolation of an ordinary Tunisian produce seller, Mohammed Bouazizi, in a little known Sidi Bouzid village to generate municipal, national and international actions in a contagious series of events that is now referred to as the ‘Arab Spring,’ ‘Arab Awakening’ and ‘Revolution.’

In this section we seek to answer three questions. First, what are social movements? Second, what logic and processes guide their existence and how do they operate? How do social movements carry out their activities or wage their struggles? What framing processes explain their existence? Third, is there such thing as Nigerian social movements? Do social movements exist, striceto sensu, in Nigeria? What factors mitigate the existence of such movements?
Social movements have gained recurrent usage in the social sciences. They reflect the changing dynamics that societies have been subjected to. It is this that explains why some have attempted to differentiate between traditional social movements and the New Social Movements (NSMs). Social movements are cohesive and non-cohesive groups bound by a common cause in resistance and struggle for justice. This could take the form of civil disobedience or violent resistance. The object of struggle often has popular and generalised appeal to majority of citizens. Social movements overlap to some degree with other social forms such as collective behaviour and interest groups. Yet there are different types and forms of Social Movement Organisations (SMOs) such as single SMOs, multiple or networked SMOs, tightly-coupled SMOs, and loosely-coupled SMOs. Yet the roles of social movements have continued to be characterised by the nature of society both at the national and international levels:

Indeed, rarely does a day go by in which a major daily newspaper does not refer to social movement activity in relation to one or more of the hotly contested issues of our time: abortion, animal rights, civil rights, human rights, democratisation, environmental protection, family values, gay/lesbian rights, gender equality, governmental intrusion and overreach, gun control, immigration, labor and management conflict, nuclear weapons, religious freedom, terrorism, war, world poverty, and so on. In fact, it is difficult to think of major national or international social issues in which social movements and related collective action events are not involved on one or both sides of the issues.

Snow, Soule and Kreisi proceeded further to conceptualise social movements as collectivities acting with some degree of organisation and continuity outside of institutional or organisational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether such authority is institutionally-based or culturally-based, in the group, organisation, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part. For Charles Tilly, the term social movement applies “most usefully to a sustained interaction between a specific set of authorities and various spokespersons for a given challenge to those authorities.”

While McCarthy and Zald view social movements as those set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents the preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution in a society, others have conceptualised social movement as one form of collective behaviour similar to mobs, riots, fads, sects, cults, religious revivals, and revolutions. Most scholars perceive social movements as a principal social form through which collectivities express their grievances about social conditions that concern them or others through a number of ways but especially through street protests to demand that such conditions are changed. But beyond such definitions and conceptualisations, the examination of social movements has reflected varying viewpoints. Morris and Herring note that although there has been “an explosion” in the number of theoretical and empirical writings on the subject matter, scholarly consensus on its definition will probably never happen.

They proceeded to identify six typologies of social movements that are embedded in approaches such as Marxian, Weberian, collective behaviour, relative deprivation, mass society, and resource mobilisation.

The Marxian approach sees revolutionary movements as the product of historically structured social relations of production. While noting that the “history of all hitherto existing societies (such as slavery and feudal societies) is the history of class struggle,” Karl Marx argues that capitalism especially sows within it the seed of its own destruction. Under capitalism, the dialectical conflict and contradictions between the class that owns the means of production and distribution (or the bourgeoisie) and the workers and their affiliates make the emergence of movements a normal process of historical advancement. For Marx, it is the workers that would champion the revolutionary movement, with its affiliate oppressed classes joining in the struggle. Such workers will through economism or for that purpose form Trade Unions, and then national and international networks against the logic of capital. The workers’ political struggle is shaped in a “class for themselves,” in transition from “class in itself,” thus, marking a consciousness in proletarian class-activities. At this class conscious stage, some segments of the bourgeoisie will join the working class struggle. Marxian-orientation thus emphasises
the class origin and interests of social movements.

The Weberian conceptualisation of a movement is grounded in the role and responsibility of charismatic authority and charismatic leaders in social change. For Max Weber, charismatic movements are obtainable in societies that are undergoing stress and incapable of meeting the demands of a significant number of its population. It is against this background that charismatic leaders emerge, owing to their qualities, as a natural leader of the people. The charismatic movements are often unstable and non-routine forms of collective action as they emerged independent of the existing social organisation, norms and bureaucracies. To endure for a longer period, Weber noted that charismatic movements must routinise their activities to resolve administrative, economic and leadership succession problems they might face.12

The collective behaviour theorists conceptualise social movements as non-institutional social change efforts aimed at the establishment of a new social order. For this group, social movements are non-routine forms of collective action geared towards social change. This view maintains that social movements are by definition non-institutionalised group action that ceases to be social movements the moment they become institutionalised. Neil Smelser is a major exponent of this perspective.

On their part, mass society theorists argue that certain characteristics make social movements possible. This includes cultural confusion, weak cultural integration mechanisms, social heterogeneity, and lack of attachments to secondary group structures. As aptly captured by Buechler: “With the demise of small social groups, modern society becomes a mass society in which isolation, depersonalisation, and alienation prevail.”13 It is this seemingly ‘uncaptured groups’ of individuals, to rephrase Goran Hyden in his study of the Tanzanian peasantry, that gravitates towards social and collective action. Though the difference between the position of the collective behaviour theorists and mass society theorists is thin, the difference between the two is essentially that while the former examines social movements as a phenomenon, the latter situates social movements within the context of the personalities that constitute such movements. Specifically, the mass society theorists analyse the properties of society by specifying personality traits and the psychological state of the society that produces them.

The relative deprivation thesis as advanced by scholars such as Ted Gurr focuses on the genesis of collective action and social movements especially as it leads to revolution and violent attacks. In this case, collective action is hinged on the extent to which groups of individuals assess their social-psychological levels against those of various reference groups or past or anticipated future situation.14 Within this theory, James Geschwender examines what he terms ‘cognitive dissonance’ which Ted Gurr conceptualises as ‘frustration-aggression,’ thesis; collective action is thus explained in psychological terms as a response to social reality. This view contends that specific level of deprivation in a society leads to some sort of collective response by those that are affected for purposes of change and improvement in their lives.

The resource mobilisation adherents argue that society has social movements whether or not there is collective action. They note that while the political party is a tamed and nationalised social movement, the social movement is a party with broad aspirations and a unifying belief system.15 Charles Tilly of the New York School of Social Research, while questioning the claim that strain and breakdown consistently produce anomie and that anomie in turn produces either individual or collective disorder, contends that “group solidarity is the key factor in explaining collective action.”16 He thus undermines the argument that there is a sharp distinction between routine political struggle and violence by contending that the same political dynamics and solidarity underlay both. Hence, Tilly remains a major exponent of the resource mobilisation view.

To a large extent, and from the foregoing, it is apparent that studies on the workings of social movements have not only transversed the social sciences but numerous theories have been used to explain their emergence, survival and demise in society. But how do social movements carry out their activities?

Frames and Processes of Social Movements

Interest in the study of social movements has increased with the
increase in group and collective action, globally. Between 1980 and 1990, a significant increase in social movements and collective actions was witnessed in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States. In recent times, global economic depression and recession led to street protests in European countries. China witnessed the Tibetan monk-led street protests in the restive region of Tibet. The anti-globalisation movement has also held protests at various G8 Summits. This was soon to be followed by what is christened the “Arab Awakening” and “Arab Uprising” that started in Tunisia but led to the change of governments in Egypt and Libya while also leading to violence in Syria and Bahrain. In between these violence, “occupy movements” were witnessed on the streets of the United States, Israel and Nigeria, among others.

While social movements and SMOs raise funds from the state through redistribution, others do so from grants and/or from individuals. It must be noted that leading actors in social movements, according to Kriesi, tend to over estimate the opportunities that collective action provides. In doing this, they must convince ‘other’ participants that their cause is the right one and that their goals would therefore be accomplished if they persist. In realisation of this, numerous tools have been used to ensure recruitment, mobilisation and therefore collective action. But what is the nature of contemporary social movements and collective action? How do they operate and what is the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in this regard?

Social movements operate within a context that is socially and culturally fluid. For instance, Kriesi identifies three variables that underline such framework: structures, configuration of actors and interaction contexts. By structures he means ‘political opportunity structures’ that influence the choice of protest strategies to be used. These structures could be open (allowing access to the political system) or closed (constraining access to the political system) structures. In general, the degree of accessibility of political structures of political systems could be “distinguished between exclusive (repressive, confrontational, and polarising) and integrative (facilitative, cooperative, and assimilative) strategies.” By configuration of actors Kriesi maintains that movements exist within an ecological context that has three configurations/components of actors: the protagonists or the configuration of allies (policymakers, public authorities, political parties, interest groups, the media, and related movements), antagonists or the adversaries (public authorities, repressive agents, counter-movements) and the bystanders or the not directly involved but nevertheless attentive audience. This configuration determines the possibility of conflicts and the outcomes of movements’ activities.

The interaction context is that “level of the mechanisms linking structures and configurations to agency and action, and it is at this level that the strategies of the social movements and their opponents come into view.” It is such that during a collective action, movements-government interaction could have a varied outcome as represented by reforms, threats or both. Reform is a situation where the authorities respond favourably to the issues raised by the social movement through changing policies that are being protested against. Threats are situations where authorities’ response is unfavourable in such a way that it persists with its original policies. Response of authorities could also be a mixture of threats and reforms or “no response at all.” These interaction contexts could be actual or anticipated.

McAdam, McCarthy and Zald on their part attempt to address the emergence, development and outcomes of social movements by engaging three interrelated factors that speak to the following: mobilising structures, opportunity structures, and framing processes. The mobilising structures are those mechanisms through which individuals are organised for collective action. This includes social structures as represented by formal configurations (such as the social movement organisation, churches, and mosques) and informal configurations (such as friendships and activists’ networks). Apart from social structures, the mobilising structure also includes tactical repertoires which represent those forms of protests and collective actions that activists are familiar with. This explains why some supporters are likely to rally in support of an issue as against other issues.

The opportunity structures are those environmental conditions that facilitate or constrain the activities of social movements.
McAdam specifically identifies four of these environmental conditions: the relative accessibility of the political, the stability or fragmentation of alignments among elite, the presence of elite allies, and the state's capacity and propensity for repression. Apart from McAdam's four conditions, other conditions such as access to information and education also shape the activities of social movements. As such environmental conditions range from the extent to which a polity is democratic to the extent to which there is totalitarian manifestation of leadership; and the level to which the needed information and education are available to groups. In both extremes, social movements find the tactical repertoires to support and justify their existence.

The framing processes represent the contestations for justification of actions, as exhibited by social movements on the one hand and the institutions, organisations or movements that they direct their actions towards. These contestations are in terms of language, rhetoric and narratives which for instance shape the form of representation by mainstream media of the actions of social movements. They often question the workings of international financial institutions as being 'anti-globalisation' while activists' publications often refer to the same actions of movements as a quest for 'global justice' or 'fair trade.'

The framing processes, just as collective action as a whole, are however influenced by a number of factors. Of these factors, contemporary social movements have benefitted from the actual and potential benefits of information and communication technology (ICT) especially as represented in what has come to be described as "new media." As Garrett notes, new ICT such as cell phones, e-mail and the World Wide Web are changing the ways in which activists communicate, collaborate and demonstrate. Unlike in the pre-internet era where publications of pamphlets and newsletters were expensive for social movements and social movement organisations (SMOs), today a laptop and a modem have transformed social movements and their leadership into publishers through the creation of an online identity, knowledge-base and networks which is marked by the ownership of blogs, websites, online conferencing and e-mails. Through these new media, movement leaders are not only conversant with the activities of their colleagues elsewhere but they also leverage on the attendant social networking that the new media provides. An attendant benefit of the foregoing is that activities and goals of social movements are more easily publicised than ever before. This means that membership will be easily expanded through the internet as represented by the electronic highway and community. In sum, ICT reduces the cost of communication and participation in social movements as well as facilitates social movement formation, recruitment and retention while also promoting collective identity that supports collective action.

The Nigerian Social Movement

There is an efflorescence of social movements in Nigeria, and there are several reasons for this. First is the alarming mass poverty. Even with the transition to civil rule in May 1999, the socio-economic plight of millions of Nigerians has not improved. The latest expression of this reality is the confirmation by an agency of the Nigeria state, National Bureau for Statistics that about 70 percent of Nigerians, that is, 112,518,507 citizens, of total population of 160 million Nigerians, are poor. Yet, and in spite of this huge poverty, corruption remains a major problem. The state has remained a veritable means to easy and looted funds and therefore wealth for some members of the political elite. This has made violence part of the competition for spoils, even among the political elite. The contestation for power has therefore also taken a violent dimension, with high casualty rate.

The list of political casualties include Aminasori Dikibo (Vice President of the Peoples' Democratic Party) who was shot in the head on his way to a meeting of the South-South zone of the PDP; Funsho Williams, a leading governorship contender in Lagos State PDP, was murdered after he defected from the Alliance for Democracy (AD) to PDP; Ogbonnaya Uche, an ANPP stalwart who was preparing to contest for a seat in the Nigerian Senate, was killed inside his house in Owerri a few days after he defected from the PDP; Harry Marshall (Dikibo's predecessor) was murdered in a hotel room in Abuja, where he had gone to attend a meeting of the ANPP, a party he defected to.
few days to his death; Chief Bola Ige, a serving Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, was killed at his residence in Ibadan, in spite of his police guards; Eze-Odimegwu Okonkwo, an ANPP stalwart in Anambra State, was murdered in Nnewi; Barnabas Igwe, an out-spoken Chairman of the Onitsha branch of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), and Abigail his wife (both lawyers) were gruesomely murdered; Theodore Agwatu, Principal Secretary to Governor Achike Udenwa was killed at his residence; Odunayo Olahgaju, a member of Osun State House of Assembly, was similarly killed at his residence in the wake of political crisis in the State; Ahmed Patagi, Chairman of PDP in Kwara State was assassinated; Dele Aroja, PDP governorship candidate, was murdered in Lagos; and Dipo Dina, a gubernatorial candidate in Ogun State was also murdered.11

Militarism (perceived), political exclusion and marginalisation have given rise to ethnic militias and violent youth organisations such as the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Egbesu, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and currently the Boko Haram. Identity politics and the citizenship question have also affected the militarisation of social life. It is in this light, for instance, that much orgies of violence between the Yoruba and the Hausa at Sagamu, in Ogun State, and at Mile 12, Lagos State; the incessant Birom-Hausa clashes in Jos, which have now extended to Fulani pastoralists in many part of North Central should be understood.

Another impetus for collective action is the presence of the Trade Unions and labour movement. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) which is the umbrella body for junior workers in Nigeria and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) have remained influential actors. Through strikes they have challenged the policies of government since the era of military rule. The student movement has also been a necessary complement to the activist role of the Trade Unions as has been the role of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Yet while the aforementioned conditions tend to provide the bases for social movements to flourish, a number of factors have challenged emergence and functionality of a truly Nigerian movement. Three of these factors are worth mentioning: politics of entryism, spontaneity and opportunism. Many Left Wing and radical individuals, have increasingly been coopted into accepting State offers of public positions within the same ruling class. Second, many of the struggles led by the labour movement have not been as coherent and cohesive, and therefore have not had enduring character, due to factionalism, internal leadership problems and organisational challenges. Finally, opportunism, and romance with the State in the context of social movement struggles, have sometimes made the leadership of such movements to compromise the struggles.

In spite of this, struggles by social movements are a reality in Nigeria. This is exemplified in the January 2012 protest against government's policy to remove subsidy leading to increased pump price of fuel on January 1, 2012. The action of government had generated reactions and there were collective action across the country especially in Lagos. The NLC called upon its members to strike while students and lecturers alike carried placards on the streets. The protest which was to be tagged “Occupy Nigeria,” witnessed the presence and sometimes performance of popular and top artists such Dbanj, Don Jazzy, Banky W, Seun Kuti, and Dede Mabiakwu. The solidarity was almost total except for a few States that did not participate. It must however be noted that even as social movements have mainly based their collective actions against government, there are instances where movements have supported government's policies. In other words, just as there are student movements that opposed the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha, so were others that supported it, such as Daniel Kalu-led Youth March in Abuja dubbed YOuths Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA).

Social movements, just as in other societies, are present in Nigeria. The recent Occupy Nigeria movement shows a potential of a Nigerian-wide movement devoid of sectarianism and narrow-mindedness embedded in ethnicity. Second, social movements in Nigeria will continue to be a major influence on the manner government manages its resources, human and material. The rising number of youths with access to the internet and the attendant Facebook, Twitter and numerous blogs means that required information for recruitment, mobilisation and collective action will
As telecommunications companies strive to provide cheaper internet services, these possibilities increase. In addition, continued decrease in the social indicators of development in Nigeria will also force individuals to take part in social movements. This will even be propelled by the incidence of unpunished corruption and insecurity. The existence of these realities goes a long way to enhance the propagators of such movements as the Occupy Nigeria. However, the determination of whether or not violence will be at the centre of the emerging body of movements can only be determined by a more systematic study that will analyse the motivations, capacities and the interaction contexts of emergent social movements.

Political and Economic Background of the Protest

The Jonathan Administration was a child of circumstance, but for the death in Saudi Arabia of President Umaru Yar’Adua, who was on medical treatment. Were he to be alive, under the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) zoning arrangement, the late president would have contested for a second term in office. The politics of transition following the death of President Yar’Adua shook the nation to its foundation with a power cabal led by his wife and some influential members of the cabinet who struggled to hold on to power by default. But for the principled and popular struggle of the civil society championed by the Save Nigeria Group (SNG) under the leadership of Pastor Tunde Bakare and Professor Wole Soyinka which forced the National Assembly adoption of the ‘Doctrine of Necessity’ Resolution, Dr. Jonathan’s emergence as Acting President may have been impossible.

The emergence of Dr. Jonathan as Acting President was not only unexpected; it challenged or indeed undermined the zoning formula of the ruling PDP under which the presidency was zoned to the North till 2015. President Jonathan’s decision to contest the 2011 Presidential election, a position zoned to the North by the ruling party polarised the PDP and created some antipathies. However, Jonathan’s campaign theme during the Presidential election in 2011 anchored on his humble background and material challenge while growing up, in some measure endeared him to many Nigerians and this reflected in his electoral victory.

The Nigerian masses voted at the General 2011 Elections for the eradication of Poverty and the delivery of the “dividends of democracy” by President Jonathan who publicly confessed that he had similarly experienced the pains and agony of poverty captured in the political metaphor of a “shoeless school boy.” Hence, the decision of President Jonathan to withdraw the subsidy on petroleum products, which the toiling people saw as the only benefit from the nation’s commonwealth, was thus perceived as a breach of a sacred covenant between them and the leadership of the nation. The indignation of Nigerians to the removal of subsidy was further exacerbated by the unedifying level of corruption under the Jonathan presidency. This was the context in which the struggles and resistance against the Jonathan Administration was waged in January 2011.

Joint Action Front (JAF) and the Save Nigeria Group (SNG)

The Joint Action Front (JAF), formerly known as Joint Action Forum is a coalition formed by civil society organisations in alliance with the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in 2003. JAF is a reaction to the debilitating effects of neo-liberal policies of the Obasanjo Administration and their impact on the impoverishment and disempowerment of Nigerians. Hence, its determination to oppose and resist all policies and programmes that may result in mass poverty and worsening social living conditions of millions of Nigerians. The JAF makes no pretense of its political objective and ideological commitment to socialism as a preferred system of government for Nigeria. Through popular protest and strike actions, JAF declared thus: “regime change is our objective, mass struggle is our vehicle, system change is our goal.” Its leading members are Leftists and core socialists such as Dr. Oladipo Fashina and Abiodun Aremu. The JAF is well schooled in anti-fuel subsidy removal struggles. Since 2001 it has waged many protests against neo-liberal government policies, particularly the deregulation of the petroleum sector. Indeed, between June 20 and 24, 2007, JAF forced the Yar’Adua Administration to reduce the price of petroleum (PMS)
to N65 per litre which it had increased to N75 per litre.

The Save Nigeria Group (SNG) emerged in the Nigerian political turf in the context of the dormant, if not inept, role of civil society in the face of de-democratisation and despotism of close to a decade after the departure of the military. According to the group, “The Save Nigeria Group (SNG) was founded on January 7, 2010 in the midst of the “crisis of impunity threatening the soul of Nigeria.” The ill-health of (then) President Yar’Adua and the attempt by a group led by the wife of President Umaru Yar’Adua to unduly and illegally cling to power, after the president’s transition in Saudi Arabia provided a rallying point for the civil society under the leadership of Pastor Tunde Bakare, the Vice-Presidential candidate to Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) in the 2011 Presidential Election. The Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka lent credibility to the SNG protest to the National Assembly in Abuja which eventually put pressure on the federal lawmakers to find ways around the constitutional impasse and hence make Dr. Goodluck Jonathan Acting President, as constitutionally stipulated, in the absence of President Umaru Yar’Adua.

The Road to the Protest

No sooner did Dr. Goodluck Jonathan have a popular mandate from the Nigerian people than a campaign over the controversial removal of subsidy on petroleum products dominated the Nigerian media. In June 2011, the government hinted on its plans to remove subsidy on petroleum products against the background of the huge government subsidy which it claimed was negatively impacting on government’s expenditure. This was despite the views of many Nigerians, and groups such as JAF and SNG, that the so-called subsidy on petroleum was for the common good. Indeed, as JAF put it, “As far as we in JAF are concerned, there is nothing like fuel subsidy.” The government’s argument that the beneficiaries of the subsidy on petroleum products are the rich and that there is large scale corruption in the subsidy regime was not acceptable to the citizens. The people saw this as an abdication of state social responsibility and a plan to impose unnecessary hardship on Nigerians. According to JAF:

The recycled argument being canvassed by Government and its rented spoke-persons that only a cabal of profiteers benefit from the subsidy clearly exposed it as irresponsible and anti-poor if, with all the apparatuses of power at its disposal, the Jonathan Presidency cannot deal with the profiteers and private sharks that are looting funds in the name of subsidy, then we must protect ourselves.34

Furthermore, Nigerians were at a loss as to why the Federal Government since May 29, 1999 has found it difficult to repair or embark on Turn Around Maintenance (TAM) of the oil refineries and build new refineries which would have made the need for importation of petroleum products and hence so-called subsidy unnecessary. Since the subsidy regime is a function of the international price of petroleum products, domestic production would have multiplier effect on the country; it will increase productivity, save scarce foreign exchange and earn additional revenue for the country from the sale of refined petroleum products. For the toiling Nigerian, nothing but selfish interest and corruption could prevent government from embarking on this economic path which has the potential of putting the nation on a sound developmental footing.

JAF used the evidence of failure and inefficiency of the private sector to build new refineries despite the issuance of about 20 licenses since 2002 to conclude that the private sector is only interested in primitive accumulation without production. According to JAF:

The fact is that the so-called private sector investors will not invest in long-term, capital intensive projects like refineries, but rather prefer quick and speculative enterprises with super profit like importation of oil. They are the same ruling cabals and cronies that got licenses to build refineries and at the same time the profiteers who import refined fuel products and loot so-called fuel subsidy.

Between June 2, 2011 when the government first hinted on its plan to increase the prices of petroleum products and November 23, 2011, JAF called on Nigerians to resist and reject fuel increase. In a media briefing on December 21, 2011, JAF called on Nigerians to commence mass action from January 3, 2012. The desperation and determination of the Jonathan Administration to foist a new regime
of petroleum price on the people was obvious, especially with the scale of mainstream media propaganda bordering on blackmail, double-talk and reactivation of the usual neo-liberal theology of “There is No Alternative” (TINA). The evidence and intellectual challenge of Professor Tam David West, a former Minister of Petroleum, on the cost of producing petroleum in Nigeria and the hoax of subsidy was ignored by the Administration. Indeed, Professor Tam David-West who was originally billed to appear before the House of Representatives Ad Hoc Committee on the Petroleum Subsidy question was abruptly urged not to appear, and no reason was given for this. The final prelude to the January mass protest was set with the JAF protest march in collaboration with Mrs. Ganiat Bukola Fawehinmi, widow of Gani Fawehinmi, from Ikeja to Gani Fawehinmi Solidarity Park at Ojota on December 31, 2011. According to Abiodun Aremu “It was the JAF struggle of that day with Mrs. Fawehinmi that changed the park’s name from Gani Memorial Park to Gani Fawehinmi Solidarity Park and declared it a Convergence Centre for struggles.”

Despite the promise by senior members of the Jonathan Administration including Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance and the Coordinating Minister of the Economy that there would be elaborate consultations and the fuel subsidy regime would stay till April 2012, Nigerians woke up on January 1, 2012 to learn that the Administration had increased the pump price of petroleum from N65 to N141, an increase of 117 per cent.

In a Press Statement by JAF issued on January 1, 2012 in a quick reaction to the announcement of the increase in the pump price of petroleum products, JAF urged Nigerians to: (i) boycott and shut filling stations that sell fuel above the prevailing prices prior to the new price announced by the government; (ii) use mass action to enforce stay-at-home and embark on strike actions in compliance with the directives of Labour and Civil Society Coalition (LASCO).

JAF, under its Chairman, Dr. Oladipo Fashina, a former President of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Comrade Abiodun Aremu and Mrs. Ganiat Gani Fawehinmi were the first to hit the streets in protest against the increase in prices of petroleum products. This electrified many Nigerians and spread like the prairie fire.

Following its successful protest on January 7, 2011 over the attempt to undermine (then) Vice President Jonathan, the SNG became popular as a platform that wages struggles against injustice and in defense of rule of law and constitutionalism. The SNG under the leadership of Pastor Bakare gave the peoples’ protest against the removal of fuel subsidy a big push. The decision of the SNG to use a separate or different platform from JAF to wage the same struggle over the removal of subsidy on petroleum products is borne out of experience of aborted popular struggles waged under the aegis of Trade Unions in the past two decades. According to Yinka Odumakin, the spokesperson of the group, the SNG had no confidence in labour because of its antecedent of betrayals of popular struggles due to its uncomfortable partnership with the government. Hence, many struggles waged in the past were compromised and tactically thwarted by Trade union leadership, principally due to a self-serving agenda and the Trojan horses in the trade union leadership. With regard to the January 2012 fuel subsidy protest, the SNG was simply a midwife of the protests. The protesters were in the mood for battle and indeed “self-mobilised” issues such as massive corruption in government, poor infrastructure and inability of government to deliver on its campaign promises and above all the subsidy withdrawal, made the protesters highly aggrieved. What the SNG did, according to its leaders, was to read the mood of the people and provide them a coherent platform to resist oppression and misrule. For Lakemfa, the SNG and its leadership were simply opportunistic as the whole idea of the protest and the use of the Gani Fawehinmi Park, Ojota that became the symbol of the protest were the products of JAF and Labour. The charge of opportunism is difficult to sustain given the SNG record of protest as well as the human and material resources the group committed to sustaining the daily increasing Ojota crowd that was abandoned by LASCO. As Loremikan argues: “SNG hired sound system for daily use, printed t-shirts and fliers and on daily basis goes back to review the day’s activities and planned for the next day.” Strategically, the SNG fixed the protest to coincide with the labour
strike on the increased price of fuel. Focus was less on the issue of the price increase and more on the causes of the crises in the political economy. This was said to be corruption, hence the slogan; “Kill Corruption, Not Nigerians.” To reach out to the youth and heavily mobilise them, popular culture and music were massively deployed during the protest.

The rallying point and symbol of the protest in Lagos was the Gani Fawehinmi Freedom Park, Ojota. The protest which lasted for a week before Nigerian soldiers took over the Park, was highly organised and the protesters were disciplined. No incident of violence was recorded all through the carnival-like protest. The success and peaceful nature of the protest at Ojota baffled government, especially President Jonathan, who made the assertion that the protest was sponsored although it could not provide the names of the sponsors. Additionally, the government claimed that the protesters were induced with food and drinks. The calibre of people at the daily protests was composite; it included subalterns, artisans, de-classe, traders, unemployed youth, middle class, entrepreneurs, professionals and civil servants. As such, the protest was trans-class in social structure and ideologically it was pan-Nigerian in outlook with people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

The protest was a rainbow coalition with multiple platforms springing up or being replicated all across the country: Mushin, Falomo, Lekki, Ojota, Ikorodu, Iyana-Ipaja, Egbeda, Badagry, Ibadan, Benin City, Kano, Kaduna, and Port-Harcourt, to mention a few. Live broadcast and the social media assisted in the national spread of the protest. The mobile strategy of the LASCO was primarily responsible for the spread of the protest in different locations across the country. The presence of popular artists, especially musicians and Nollywood stars, such as Femi Kuti, Seun Kuti, Desmond Elliott, Salawa Abeni, Wasiu Ayinde Marshall, Ganiat Gani Fawehinmi and her son, Mohammed Fawehinmi all assisted in capturing national attention and galvanised mass interest in the protest. These artistes were mobilised by Pastor Bakare.38

The January 2012 Subsidy Protest enjoyed the overwhelming support of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), as a body, despite the seeming anti-people and reactionary position of some individual lawyers who often deployed their forensic expertise in the service of those seen as oppressors of the people. As leading members of the petty-bourgeois class, it should not be surprising that members of the legal profession used their legal knowledge and position to defend the status quo and for class advantage often against the interest of the people. However, since the presidency of Mr. Aka Alao-Bashorun, Priscillia Kuye, and Olisa Agbakoba the NBA as a corporate personality had become progressive and pro-people in orientation. Several lawyers such as Gani Fawehinmi, Femi Falana, Festus Keyamu, Bamidele Aturu, to mention a few have over the years acted as the defenders of the toiling people at the risk of their personal liberties, comfort and even lives. The Ikeja branch of the NBA is also associated with this kind of progressive legal activism.

There was no need for any formal mobilisation for protest. It was the first of its kind since the struggle for the de-annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election. According to Sina Loremkikan: “It was an automated movement, no driver, no conductor, no speed limit, no guide and no rescue team.” Furthermore, as Odumakin stated: “the struggle was forced on the people, no preparation. The logistic required were not available.” There were many people involved. New forces emerged and a new spirit was forged among Nigerians.41

It should be stated that the strength of the alliance forged over the struggle against fuel price hike was also impinged upon by these loose and uncoordinated platforms that correlated with the protest movement. While JAF is an institutionalised alliance with experience of almost a decade of struggles by its affiliating partners, same cannot be said of the SNG platform. Even at that, the civil society partners in JAF felt let down by labour in their negotiation with the government on the reduction of the prices of petroleum products. As Abiodun Aremu states:

Our experience is that alliance building is a process, whose weaknesses and strength cannot just be determined by one struggle. The challenge of every struggle ultimately determines the direction of the alliance, which may be immediate or long-term or strategic. But every struggle actually needs a unity of all forces which share common social class interest to succeed.
The Demands of the Resistance Movement

While all the protesters found a common ground on the need for the total reversal of the price of fuel to N65 and continuation of dialogue, different participants and actors in the protest have other agenda and demands that are specific and exclusive. For instance, as Abiodun Aremu further noted, JAF went into the January protest with three basic demands:

1. **TOTAL REVERSAL** (not decrease) in the prices of petroleum products (not just the petrol price from N141 to N65) but also the prices of diesel and kerosene to the June 2007 labour agreement with the Federal Government following the LASCO protest of June 20-24, 2007 against the then increase in fuel prices, increase in VAT from 5 percent to 10 percent and the fraudulent transfer of public assets to private hands, including refineries.

2. Rejection of the IMF/World Bank policies of Privatisation and Deregulation.

3. **System Change**.

The third demand of JAF may be viewed as a maximalist ideological demand. Abiodun Aremu also called attention to the lack of consensus within the JAF affiliates involved in the protest. According to him: "It must be noted that the first demand stated above was the one-item in which we were in partial agreement with the labour partners, i.e. REVERSAL of the price of petrol from N141 to N65. As to the reversal in prices of other petroleum products, it was basically a JAF demand."  

In an unequivocal declaration which exemplifies the ideological underpinning of the JAF involvement in the fuel subsidy protest, Aremu declares that:

As far as we are concerned in JAF it was a struggle beyond hike in prices of fuel. It is a struggle against the Nigerian class of exploiters' economic agenda of neo-liberalism and all it represents as privatisation, deregulation, commercialisation, et al. it is a continuous struggle against the successive regimes' Structural Adjustment Programmes that have been responsible for the untold hardships and mass suffering of Nigerians in the midst of abundant resources and potentials. It is a struggle to reverse the decades of backwardness and underdevelopment, and these issues were clearly reflected in all public statements and handbills issued by JAF at various times in the past seven (7) years. And it is a struggle we must continue until Nigerians triumph with a SYSTEM CHANGE of the unjust exploitative socio-economic polity and ensure a true agenda of social and economic transformation that will make Nigeria work for Nigerians.  

On its part, the SNG was interested in the reversal of the price of petroleum products to its pre-January 1, 2012 position. While the SNG was not totally averse to deregulation, it insisted that there are many things that must be addressed such as the state of local refineries and the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill into law before the full deregulation of downstream sector of the Nigerian petroleum industry. The SNG was also vociferous on the need for a determined state assault on corruption. As far as SNG was concerned the problem was not subsidy, but corruption which was being treated with kid gloves. To this end, it called for a full scale probe of the subsidy regime and how the funds voted for the Turn Around Maintenance (TAM) of the four refineries in Nigeria have been expended since May 29, 1999. For the SNG, regime change was never part of the agenda at the inception of the protest. However, as the protest advanced, the leadership lost control of the direction and people openly started demanding for regime change. Thus, the SNG was caught in the web of the radicalisation of the protest. For labour, all through the protest regime change was not part of the agenda. The logic of regime change in the protest was based on the belief that the Jonathan Administration has no Blueprint for Nigeria. The deployment and militarisation of the Gani Fawehinmi Park, Ojota by the state was hinged on the plan to use the protest to overthrow the Jonathan Administration. 

While admitting that the issue of change of government came up in the cause of the protest, Owei Lakemfa stated unambiguously that the allegation was misplaced because at no time, before and during the protest did labour contemplate change of government. He added that President Jonathan was not only enjoying a democratic mandate, labour and civil society coalition have not capacity to take over the...
Government of the Federation and it feared the possibility of an opportunistic military coup. Ajaero has noted that it was the frustration of Nigerians with the Jonathan Administration that brought to the fore the issue of regime change, though labour was not brought into the protest any campaign for regime change. According to Ajaero: “Labour does not believe in regime change, nor does it have mandate to do that. Labour plans before action.”

Though there was a reduction in the price of petroleum from ₦140 to ₦97 contrary to the initial position of the government about the finality of the increase, this was contrary to the demand for the total reversal of the price to its previous price of ₦65. The belief that the ₦97 price was arrived at through a government negotiation with organised labour led to accusation of betrayal by the labour aristocracy, thus validating the position of SNG of the opportunistic partnership between the state and labour to the detriment of people's aspiration for change and better life. Aremu has observed:

None of the demands were met. The first demand ended with price reduction from ₦141 to ₦97 for a litre of petrol, which JAF totally rejected and urged Nigerians to brace up for future struggles to reverse Nigeria's dependence on fuel importation, and building of additional refineries and proper maintenance of the old ones in order to ensure availability of petroleum products at lower prices. However, it should be pointed out that the last two demands are not demands we expect the FG to meet, they were demands placed before Nigerians in terms of building a political alternative that will ensure the emergence of a new political and economic arrangement, in which the resources and potentials of the country will be judiciously applied to adequately fund and create equitable access to the majority Nigerians on education, healthcare, mass employment and productive opportunities, social welfare, electricity, and infrastructure.

Expectedly the state deployed police in strategic places during the protests. While the police at Ojota were highly professional in handling the protesters this was largely due to the highly peaceful and festive nature of the Ojota crowd, there were reported cases of trigger-happy police men who killed protesters in some parts of Lagos, Ilorin, Kogi and Kano states. In Ogba, Ifako-Ijaiye, Lagos, for instance, police shot at young boys who took advantage of the deserted road to play football, killing one of the boys, in the process. With the deployment of soldiers and occupation of the Gani Fawehinmi Freedom Park and its surroundings in the wee hours of January 16, 2012, security personnel brutalised some of the protesters. The popular movement resented the deployment of soldiers takeover of the Gani Fawehinmi Park, Ojota. This action by the state was seen by all the social movements involved in the protest as a violation of the democratic rights of the Nigerian people to freely associate and assemble without any encumbrances. The Chairman of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Ibrahim Zikirullahi notes that “The deployment of troops to Gani Fawehinmi Park was seen by all as a ploy to quell legitimate protests. It was an affront on the fundamental rights of citizens to peaceful assembly.” As a consequence, as Lakemfa notes: “JAF in Lagos decided to test the military and Aremu said let us see what will happen on the street. Labour Union in Lagos joined Aremu before they were stopped by the military at Ikorodu road.”

An Assessment of the Protest

The protest in many ways was historic. Its spontaneous and pan-Nigerian orientation demonstrated that though Nigerians are tolerant of their leaders, they equally have the capacity to exercise their democratic rights, by questioning government decisions and policies. The comprehensive and total nature of the strike action as well as sacrifices of the protesters who trekked several kilometres underscored their determination for change.

Also, the protest was a veritable rainbow coalition involving a critical mass, and unity across ethnic and religious lines. The interfaith solidarity displayed at the protest venue with Christians providing shield for Muslims during prayer session in context of anticipated Boko Haram bombing was quite instructive.

The House of Representatives Fuel Subsidy Probe panel led by Honourable Farouk Lawan and its ground breaking revelations are also the fallout of the protest. President Jonathan was compelled by the protest to put on trial some oil marketers who were implicated in
the fuel subsidy scam, either by the Lawan-led probe panel, or the Committees constituted by the Ministry of Finance or the Federal Government constituted panel headed by Nuhu Ribadu. It is apt to note that as a consequence of the January protest many state institutions of accountability are now being strengthened. For example, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) which was metaphorically on life-support has started giving people feedback through an interface between it and the civil society. Furthermore, as a consequence of the protest, Nigerians are more informed and better educated about how their country is being governed. Pastor Tunde Bakare succinctly captures this thus:

But perhaps what would turn out to be really interesting is that Nigerians didn't just limit themselves to protesting against the fuel prices. They protested against corruption, the cankerworm that unrepentantly luxuriates in Nigeria's vegetable. The protest would go on for days during which the ranks of protesters swelled. During the period, one of the things that we ensured in the protests I participated in at Freedom Park, Ojota, Lagos, was a crash course in civic education. We showed, with reliable facts and figures, that the whole subsidy thing, to begin with, was a scam. Even though over the years, people had been swindled, things were about to get worse because the president and his cronies were bent on extorting from the people, more taxes to sponsor their profligacy. We carried on for days and during which time, it was obvious the state officials became discomfited. Faced with the power of the people, they feared what an educated citizenry would be able to achieve. The state agencies, after empty sloganeering of "Power to the People" for years, feared what empowering people with knowledge would really translate to. They were rattled and then backed down from their high horse to conceded a 33 percent decrease.51

Additionally, the state has much to learn from the protest in terms of strategies for popular mobilisation for nation-building through the effective use of popular culture, music and social media. The protest gave voice to the voiceless Nigerians with the people openly speaking out against what they perceived as wrong in the Nigerian system and how to fix it. The coverage of the protest by the mass media assisted in no small measure with the effective dissemination of the activities of the protesters; but that also had a boomerang effect, because as the attendance and participation in the protest dwindled each day the protest lasted, this was also reported. This shows the limits of live coverage of events.

The protest had its drawbacks. First, the organisation of the protest manifested evidence of indecision. The protest at the Park in Ojota ended after every speech by Pastor Tunde Bakare, usually around 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm daily, when the crowd was still soarsing. The decision of the organisers not to fully occupy the park and prolong their stay despite the determination of the protesters to do so, called to question the sacrifice the leadership of the protest. It was apparent to many people that the organisers were overwhelmed by the mammoth crowd of protesters and had no clue as to how to manage them or even decipher what the subtext was.

There was also a serious debate amongst the leadership whether to continue the protest through the weekend or break and resume the following Monday. The decision to have a weekend break and resume on Monday allowed the state to abort the protest by taking over the Ojota Park. The lesson is clear: the struggle for change must be enduring and sustainable. It should not be ad hoc and undulating.

Mention must also be made of the lack of cohesion and unity amongst the civil society groups involved in the protest. There were cases of suspicion, accusations and counter-accusations of sellout. Some believed that labour insisted on smashing Ojota Park protesters before the strike could be called off. Many also felt that the leadership of labour acted unilaterally and in bad faith by accepting the reduction in fuel price from N141 to N97 as against the former price of N65 that was the talking point of all the groups involved in the protest. Contrary to the claim that labour sold out through the negotiation of a reduction, Acting Secretary General and Deputy President of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), respectively claimed that there was no negotiation. The reduction was unilaterally arrived at by the Jonathan Administration without due consultation with NLC.

A major concern was the question of synergy amongst the social movements and civil society organisations that coalesced to stage the historic protest. It must be realised that as a spontaneous and popular protest the subsidy protest was largely on auto-drive and self-
propelling with protest actions by multiple groups and platforms. In a way, ego and rivalry made collaboration and coordination difficult, if not impossible. This was not helped with the lack of clear-cut leadership for the protest movement. While the SNG was apparently on its own, the core social movement as represented by LASCO, built on their historic alliance of popular struggles and worked all through the January 2012 subsidy protest. As evidence of the synergy between labour and its civil society partners, immediately the government announced the removal of petroleum subsidy on January 1, 2012, Owei Lakemfa, the Acting Secretary General of the NLC called the Secretary of JAF, Abiodun Aremu; and LASCO Co-Secretary with Lakemfa, who replied with a text message on the decision of JAF to stage a warning rally in Lagos on January 3, 2012, for which Lakemfa mobilised labour. Furthermore, in Lagos, according to Ajero, LASCO met daily to discuss the protest operation for the following day. 54

Be that as it may, for the leadership and various civil society groups that were involved in the subsidy protest in January 2012, the alliances forged and the experience gained would be useful for future struggles. There is a need to marry protest with the organisational capacity in order to achieve intended outcome. This is not however to conclude that there was a total lack of synergy. For JAF and labour represented by LASCO, there was to a large extend synergy even if there were disagreements on some issues which were resolved based on democratic principles. One of such issues was the decision to call-off the strike. 55 According to Lakemfa, Dipo Fashina, the Chairman of JAF and Co-Chairman of LASCO was at the meeting to call-off the strike though he was not in support of the decision. 56

The protest failed to achieve its core objectives despite its many sided benefits. It appears the changes occasioned by the protest were cosmetic or short-lived. It is in this context that Ronaldo Munck warns of “a slippery path for social movements that is being bamboozled by neoliberal globalisation into a controlled environment where even critical voices serve the overall purpose of stabilising the existing order.”

Conclusion

The struggle of JAF and SNG show the strength and limits of popular struggles in Nigeria. They also point to the divisions and unity among popular platforms over shared vision and the Nigerian project. The protest of January 2012 over the fuel increase also showed the ideological division among groups between reformism and revolution. Different notions and framing of the basis of the protest also informed different interpretations of the outcome of the protests—whether it was a victory or defeat.

The popular anger of the citizens especially youth, was squandered; but the lack of synergy of programmes, a definition of the endgame, lack of trust in and by leadership and the weak nature of the alliances formed all militated against the struggle and the ultimate realisation of its objectives. The fact that people in the struggle worked at cross purposes was equally a major drawback.

The efficacy of popular action against maladministration and bad governance has been demonstrated. This was succinctly captured by Tunde Bakare of SNG thus:

But while the protest ended abruptly, and didn’t quite achieve the goal of permanently stamping out corruption in Nigeria, it did achieve several things. It galvanised Nigerians, re-energised them to realise the power of protest and popular struggles. They realised how much the same people who swore an Oath to protect their best interests are cheating them. Nigerians were able to see that contrary to the urban legend that we are natural beasts of burdens, we actually have a tipping point. Yes, when we are pushed far enough, we can fight and we will fight. We will fight for our rights. We will fight to demand dignity. We will fight to show that to “we the people” belong the power and the sovereignty and no, we shall sit back and watch our humanity desecrated. 57

The key question remains unanswered: was the core agenda of the January 2012 protest movement regime change or corruption? Or was there an interface between both? What implication does this have for the future of both JAF and SNG? It is possible that the next round of popular struggles in Nigeria, just like the Campaign for Democracy (CD) which led the pro-democracy groups in the struggle
for the de-annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election, may stem on its tempo and tenor; it is also possible that new social movements may be conceived in the womb of the existing ones to lead future popular struggles.

Notes

4. Ibid., p. 10.
5. Ibid., p. 4.
6. Ibid., p. 11.
10. Morris and Herring, passim.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 49.
15. Morris and Herring, passim
17. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 71.
23. Ibid., p. 74.
24. Ibid., p. 77.
25. Ibid., p. 78.
27. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 3.
38. Interview with Sina Loremikan, Lagos, December 2016.
42. See Biodun Aremu, “Email Interview,” July 25, 2012.
44. Ibid.
45. Supra Note 42.
46. Supra Note 36.
48. Supra Note 42.
50. Supra Note 26.
52. Supra Note 36 and 47.
53. Supra Note 36.
54. Supra Note 47.
55. Supra Note 36.
56. Ibid.
57. Supra Note 51.
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THE JONATHAN PRESIDENCY
JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS

The last two years (2013-2015) of the Jonathan Administration exemplified the rudderless situation that a government of “business as usual” finds itself. The Peoples Democratic Party had no systematic or clear programme except uncoordinated and ill-digested cliches that were ineffectual for a country in a dire need of direction. President Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan was the scapegoat of past political neglect and collective political inattention of Nigerians.

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