

Beyond the State:

**NIGERIA'S SEARCH FOR
POSITIVE LEADERSHIP**

— Edited by —
ADEBAYO OLUKOSHI
ADIGUN A. B. AGBAJE
HUSSAINAH ABDULLAH
CYRIL I. OBI

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**BEYOND THE STATE:
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Z. Remi Ayede
University of Ibadan
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Edited by

**Adebayo Olukoshi, Adigun A.B. Agbaje,
Hussaina Abdullah and Cyril I. Obi**

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LEADERSHIP AND THE PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

E. Remi Aiyede

Democracy is a form of government that needs no heroes, and successful democracy is a country that needs no heroes – *Benjamin Barber*

Introduction

Popular protest against harsh economic adjustment measures, which were attended by political repression in Nigeria, exploded into popular struggles for democracy from the late 1980s onwards. These struggles reached fever pitch during the Abacha period. During that period, pro-democracy activists, journalists and opposition figures were either jailed on trumped-up charges, forced to go on exile or were simply assassinated. Nigeria attained the status of a pariah nation following the 'judicial murder' of Ken Saro-Wiwa of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, and subsequent suspension of the country from membership of the Commonwealth in 1995.

Inward-looking explanations for the Nigerian crisis have placed it squarely on leadership, the type of politics and statecraft practised by the political leadership since independence. Scholarly engagement with the crisis has described the form of statecraft practised by Nigeria's post-independence leadership variously as 'prebendal,' 'neopatrimonial,' 'predatory,' 'praetorian,' 'spoils politics,' 'myownization of power', etc. (Joseph 1987; Fatton 1992; Allen 1995; Diamond 1995; 1997; Kukah 1999). The outcome of these leadership styles has been an uncivic society characterized by pyramidal patronclient relations that have left the society fragmented, and "[d]efection, distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation,

disorder and stagnation intensify (and reinforce) one another" (Diamond 1997, 584).

The democratic struggles of the 1990s were quickly characterized not just as part of the global third wave of democratization but as part of the on-going struggles for a "second independence" in Africa. Accordingly, the agencies (civil society) championing these struggles were portrayed as the source of political liberalization, developing formal democratic systems (competitive elections), accountability, rule of law, administrative probity and good governance. They were also considered better placed to provide guidance and initiative for coping with system break down and for reconstructing civil and political life. They are the veritable bearers of the few optimistic features of African politics that Allen (1995, 318-319) identifies as democratic energy and readiness to innovate and reform.

Even as the leadership styles of the post-independence Nigerian elites were perceived to be responsible for the dictatorship, spoils politics and economic failures that have marked the country's political and economic history, the leadership of the popular struggles for democratic change have been said to possess the initiative for positive change. Thus, as Ake (1992, 10) emphasized: "Development in Africa has not failed; it just never started in the first place. It never started because the appropriate political framework was lacking. The democracy movement is finally the beginning of a serious attempt to create this framework."

The return to democratic rule has been welcomed with optimism, for it is considered to have opened the country to new opportunities for democratic development. The return to democratic rule is largely attributable to the relentless and consistent challenge of Nigeria's pro-democracy groups that championed the rule of law, human rights and other ethos of democracy. They raised public awareness of human rights issues and abuses, were instrumental in seeing to the release of innocent detainees, facilitating prison reforms and the amendment of obnoxious decrees. They spearheaded the mass protest and civil disobedience that hounded General Babangida out of power and ultimately ensured that Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999 (Enemu and Momoh 1996; Diamond 1995).

But these achievements were recorded within a process of struggle that had far-reaching consequences on organizational cohesion and sustained focus. Indeed, the pro-democracy

organizations went into disarray in the later part of the Abacha dictatorship and consequently played a minimal role in the design and implementation of the short transition programme through which the General Abubakar-led military government returned the country to civil rule. How the movement fared during those difficult periods of struggle, and its role in post-military Nigeria, can be better appreciated by taking a critical look at its organizational leadership.

Civil Society, Social Capital, Democracy and Leadership

The conventional view of civil society places a high premium on its role as the catalyst for democratization, consolidating and sustaining it (Diamond 1994, 1997; Bratton 1994; Chazan 1994; Woods 1992). It is often assumed that civil society can provide capable leadership in the transition from dictatorship to democracy, as well as in the sustenance of democracy once it is established. Because of this, the revival in the 1990s of vibrant associations in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa life generated a lot of optimism with regard to democratic possibilities. But with the decreased momentum of democratization and the sobering outcomes of political reforms in several countries, efforts have been made to explain how and why civil society may contribute or fail to contribute to democratic consolidation and stability.

The concept of social capital is useful for this purpose. Social capital refers to the social networks that cut across traditional cleavages and which promote trust and reciprocity that nourish wider cooperation, law abidingness and commitment to the larger political community (Putnam 1993). In the words of Coleman (1990, 304), social capital is "embodied in the relations among persons... a group whose members manifest trustworthiness, and place extensive trust in one another will be able to accomplish more than a comparable group lacking that trustworthiness and trust." Social capital includes norms of reciprocity and trust available as resources to individuals who interact within a particular group. In this sense, civil society organizations, whether neighbourhood organizations, occupational groups, choral groups, football clubs, human rights organizations, an ethnic group, or religious communities, by their functioning are capable of generating trust and cooperation which are useful for achieving collective goals.

Recognizing that civil society is an arena of conflict between organized interests of various kinds, the ability of the various groups in civil society to unite in a broad front is considered critical to propelling democratic change. Civil society needs to simultaneously sustain intimate solidarity within groups as well as sustain connections to the larger political community to increase the reserve of positive social capital. Hence, Fukuyama (1999) talks about the significance of the 'radius of trust' and Putnam follows Granovetter (1995) in emphasizing 'weak' ties as against 'strong' ties as formative of social capital. Indeed, Woolcock (1998) argues that social capital requires that a balance be struck between 'embeddedness' and 'autonomy.' In the Nigerian case, civil society has to develop associational networks that cut across traditional social cleavages of ethnicity and religion that have been so markedly exploited by dictators to perpetuate neo-patrimonial rule. But it is leadership that enables civil society to rise above sectarian interests, ensuring active participation on the basis of formal equality within the group while preventing the group from contributing to social exclusionism. Leadership restrains and disciplines contending forces to promote trust within, while ensuring that lines of communication and fellow feelings with other citizens are not closed.

This leadership challenge becomes clear when closer attention is paid to the requirement of *cross-cutting networks* for civil society to be supportive of democracy in a given state. All too often the conventional perception of civil society in celebrating civil society loses sight of this dimension. Hence, the tendency to presuppose that the larger the number of civil groups that exists and the more dense civil groups, associations and clubs are, the greater the society's reserve of social capital. In fact, studies on social capital have taken two forms. The first involves a census of groups and group membership in a given country. The second is to carry out a survey of attitudes concerning levels of trust and civic engagement. Approaching social capital in this way overlooks the downside of social capital when associations, such as ethnic irredentist groups, religious fundamentalist associations, drug cartels, gangs, etc. are isolated, are parochial or work at cross purposes with national collective interests. This is particularly important for democratization in the context of nation-building challenges, as is the case with Nigeria. The engagement with leadership is underscored by the fact that the idea of civil society serves to

"juxtapose a sphere of voluntary, *purposive* association to the forces of chaos, oppression or atomisation" (Edwards and Foley 1998, 1). Leadership is viewed as a role, especially the "role of deciding where to go and how to get there" (Balogun 1997, 238). The theoretical and normative thrust of the concepts of civil society and social capital call for a more serious engagement with leadership as it relates to the pro-democracy movement than has been done in current studies of political liberalization in Nigeria.

The Pro-Democracy Movement

The struggles to expand the democratic space in post-independence Nigeria is the culmination of a series of discrete efforts to counter the tendencies of the state to trample on the fundamental freedoms of citizens or to be unresponsive to social needs. It encompasses efforts by various groups to prevent the state from introducing or imposing policies that they consider discriminatory or unfavourable, as they pursue their separate interests within the public space. The crystallization of the efforts of these individuals and organizations into a full fledged movement in the 1990s is attributable to the deepening of the economic crisis that gripped the country from the early 1980s, the introduction of neo-liberal economic reforms that worsened social conditions, the repressive measures employed by the state to control popular opposition to these reforms and, ultimately, the effort to prolong military rule in the face of competition among the power elite.

The plural organizations involved in the democratic struggles of the 1990s had clear aims, with the abolition of dictatorship enjoying varying degrees of importance. The question of leadership therefore demands that we isolate those organizations that should properly be identified as constituting the leadership of the pro-democracy movement in Nigeria. Also, given that Nigeria was only a part of a global movement of democratization, it is important to recognize that the pro-democracy movement has both local and international dimensions. Indeed, a Nigerian scholar has explored the pro-democracy movement in the diaspora (Shettima 1999). This essay concerns itself with the pro-democracy movement within Nigeria. What makes an organization worthy of being called a pro-democracy organization? Olukoshi (1997) in his contribution to the seminal work, *Transition without End*, suggests that such groups are those that were "dedicated to the pursuit of democracy and the rule of law" or groups that helped "in placing the democratic

question firmly on the national agenda." In this regard human rights organizations, professional associations, labour unions, religious groups and umbrella organizations of human rights activists have been identified as actors in the democratic struggle in Nigeria.

In a bid to answer the question, 'Is the endowment of political institutions conducive to democratic transition?' Oyediran and Agbaje (1999) utilized an institutional perspective and identified religious organizations, occupational groups and civic associations as key civil society organizations whose actions or condition partly account for the outcome of the transition to democracy in Nigeria. An engagement with leadership of this nature calls for a more parsimonious classification of the organizations involved in the struggle for democracy based on their roles as the struggle has been played out in the country.

Broadly, one can classify these groups into two. The first class is comprised by those organizations that aim to expand the basic elements of liberal democratic practice within the Nigerian political system. This I consider to be central to the struggle for democracy in Nigeria. It includes such organizations as the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), the Movement for National Reformation (MNR), the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL) and other umbrella groups, such as the Campaign for Democracy (CD), the Joint Action Committee of Nigeria (JACON), the Democratic Alternative (DA), and the Citizens Forum for Constitutional Reforms (CFCR). Concerning this class of organizations, their uniting to found umbrella organizations marked the crystallization of a pro-democracy movement in Nigeria.

The second class comprises those interest groups whose essence is not the direct pursuit of democracy or its elements. They are organized interests concerned with the rules that regulate the relations of domination in particular arenas. In contesting these rules each of these interest groups seeks to pull the state to its side or to fend off hostile state intervention as each reaches out to allies outside its own arena. Thus, their involvement in the democratic struggles derives from the contest of relations of domination in their respective arenas of operation. They contribute to the expansion of the democratic space as they make advances in ensuring the constitutional regulation of conflicts in those arenas

(Beckman and Jega 1995, 167). This class includes religious groups, labour unions and professional associations, and other pressure groups.

Apart from the *raison d'être* of the first group being the direct challenge to dictatorship and direct pressures for democratization, they all came into existence in the 1980s and 1990s, signalling the commencement of the struggle for democratic rule. In that sense, they clearly specialize in the pursuit of democracy and its defining elements. Their primary concern is with democratizing the state. While they freely aligned with and drew on the resources and support of other groups, the leadership of the pro-democracy movement rested squarely on their shoulders. Thus, to a large extent their strategies and capacity to organize and mobilize resources for the struggle have been significant to the success and failures or limitations of the struggle for a democratic order in Nigeria. Besides, their organizational location and spread also defined the coverage of most pro-democracy outbursts during the hay days of the struggle against military dictatorship.

This paper explores the role of the Campaign for Democracy (CD) as the leading organ of the pro-democracy movement. It then examines the legacies and lessons thrown up by the CD's leadership role in the democratic struggle in Nigeria, bearing in mind the fact that the CD remains only a major organizational expression of the pro-democracy movement.

The formation of the CD in 1991 marked a decisive point in the struggle for democracy in Nigeria. Most fundamentally, the CD made the termination of military rule outside the framework provided by the military a central goal of the struggle for democracy. This becomes very clear when the articulated aims of the CD are compared to those of the human rights groups that existed before it. The first item listed among the aims of the CD was "the restoration of the sovereignty of the Nigerian people to self-determination, to choose how to be governed, who to govern them and the procedure or process through which they will be governed." Second, it reaffirms "the right of the people to form their own political parties without interference." Thirdly, it declares its commitment to "the termination of military rule for all time." In this manner the CD articulated the struggle to liberate the masses from the post-colonial rulers.

While the human rights organizations focused essentially on ensuring the protection of civil and political rights within the ambit

of the transition to civil rule programme initiated by the military, the CD rejected the transition programme and military rule in its entirety. While the human rights organizations appeared unsure of their role in radically altering the political system, the CD declared its vision and the road to achieving it. This contradicted the path taken by the Babangida transition to civil rule programme.

The CD's call for a sovereign national conference was hinged on the illegitimacy of the Babangida regime as well as in the perceived contradiction in expecting a military government to effectively transform Nigeria into a viable democracy. Alao Aka-Bashorun, its first chairman and former President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), outlined the driving principle of the CD in these declarations:

- That Nigeria is one, and indivisible nation, and all Nigerians (have the right to) live in any part of the country without discrimination on the ground of ethnic, geographical or state origins or gender, or religious or political beliefs.
- That leadership for the country shall be elected through free, popular, democratic elections based on multi-party democracy.
- That military rule is illegal, unconstitutional, and undemocratic and that the military restricts itself to defending the territorial integrity of Nigeria only and subject itself to civil government.
- That on no pretext shall the military take over the reigns of government (cited by Enemuo and Momoh 1999, 89).

Thus, the CD insisted that there were fundamental problems with the Nigerian state, and thereby captured the growing popular discontent with dictatorship. Its mission amounted to a declaration of a struggle to free the Nigerian people from the Babangida regime by creating a pan-Nigerian citizenship that forecloses discrimination on the ground of ethnic or geographical origin, gender, or religious or political beliefs. The instrument for providing this framework for development was a national conference where all aspects of Nigerian politics, economy and society, including the transition to democratic rule, would be discussed. This conference was to replace the guided transition programme of the Babangida dictatorship. The achievement of

such a radical change required the establishment of a structure appropriate to mobilizing the Nigerian masses for this monumental change. Therefore, unlike the other human rights organizations, the CD was conceived as a national organ for mass mobilization.

The CD was the culmination of an effort to articulate the piecemeal efforts of various human rights organizations. It combined the popular consciousness of economic deprivation and state repression into a coherent agenda, an agenda to make a clean break with the military-initiated economic liberalization programme and the political transition programme. The CD infused the struggle for civil rights and the popular protest against harsh economic reforms with a dynamism that was hitherto not witnessed since the reforms were initiated in 1986.

The CD was an umbrella organization providing a broad front for Nigeria's growing number of human rights and pro-democracy groups. It gained popular appeal through several public statements making a case for the rejection of the transition to civil rule programme and consistently called for the convening of a sovereign national conference, buttressing its positions by emphasizing the inconsistent nature of the government's actions. These included the *volte faces* of the military junta on several aspects of the transition programme, a confirmation of the suspicion that Babangida had a hidden agenda; the increasing human rights abuses, uncharacteristic of a democratizing government; the persecution of human rights groups; the clamp-down on opposition media; and general arbitrariness on the part of the government. These had progressively shrunk the democratic space. The CD emphasized the implications of these for the legitimacy of the state and for national cohesion, insisting that the transition to civil rule programme, if continued as it was, could "only lead to chaos and anarchy."

The challenge of disciplined leadership able to sustain and press forward the radical vision of the organization in the face of those who would want to hijack it, suppress it or immerse it in the tempestuous struggle for power in Nigeria was immediately perceptible.

The Babangida government (and, later, the Abacha government) employed several measures to suppress the activities of the CD and its affiliated organizations. These included the promulgation of obnoxious decrees that broadened what was considered treasonable, the arrest and detention of prominent

members of the pro-democracy organizations, and the sponsorship of groups to counter the views being propagated by the CD, while characterizing the CD as an agent of foreign donors.

The CD waxed stronger and successfully resisted efforts by the military regimes to incapacitate and silence it. However, the situation changed during the protracted crisis that followed the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections. Rather than present the annulment of the elections as a fulfilment of its prediction that the Babangida transition programme would end in chaos and anarchy, the CD called for its reversal. The national conference, which it had hitherto canvassed as the way out of Babangida's quagmire, was now to follow the hand-over of power to the winner of the June 12 election. Given the general disappointment by a large number of pro-democracy activists, and their overwhelming desire to end military rule, it was easy to see why this change in position had no immediate consequence for the internal cohesion of the CD. Besides, internal and external monitors had described the elections as the most successful, orderly, fair and free elections in the history of the country. The CD organized campaigns of domestic civil disobedience and mass action to force the government to reverse the annulment of the presidential elections. Strikes and demonstrations paralyzed commercial and social life in some Nigerian cities for several days. The international community responded to the call of the CD to isolate the government.

Indeed, the immediate reaction of the United States embassy in Nigeria was to reject the annulment, describing it as "a failure on the part of the military regime to respect the will of the Nigerian people." Subsequently, the US, Britain, Canada and the EU took concrete, far-reaching measures to restate the disappointment of the international community at the annulment of the elections. These measures included the suspension of military aid and training, and the cancellation of visas for Nigerian military personnel and their families (Suberu 1997, 316)

However, as the crisis wore on, it became clear that the demonstrations were confined largely to the south-western states. The anger elicited from the population varied across the country's traditional cleavages. The self-contradiction involved in calling for the reversal of the annulment by the CD soon began to unravel. In the frenzied reaction to the perceived attempt by the military to remain in power, the CD leadership had accepted the outcome of a

process it had rejected, without considering how it would ultimately be interpreted in the light of Nigeria's geopolitics. This poor reading of the political dynamics of the Nigerian society reflected an inadequate appreciation by the CD leadership of the role of the CD within these dynamics. It proved to be very costly.

This change of position was to transform the pan-Nigeria organization into what has come to be seen as organ of one ethnic group. It was at the heart of the division among the leadership of the movement into those who 'stood on June 12' and those who considered themselves not to be 'June 12 purists.' The supplanting of the pan-Nigeria Sovereign National Conference with the actualization of the June 12 mandate as the major focus of the CD signalled the demise of the CD as the leading group in the pro-democracy movement in Nigeria. It was quickly absorbed into the struggle for power. That was why, even within the pro-democracy movement, the Abiola mandate, which was achieved through an electoral process that was not sectional in character, largely came to "reflect the special sense of ethnic injustice felt by the populace in the south-west at the aborting of the presidential victory of a Yoruba candidate by a Northern-led government" (Suberu, *ibid*). In the end, the CD became sub-ordinated to the pro-Abiola organization, reduced to one of the many organizations, mostly sectional, geared towards the fulfilment of the June 12 mandate.

In its preoccupation with the actualization of the June 12 mandate, the CD leadership elevated the mandate and the bearer of the mandate, Chief M.K.O. Abiola, above the CD itself as the symbol of Nigeria's pro-democracy struggle. As its energies became channelled to this purpose, the CD alienated key elements within the organization. Some of its leaders adopted new strategies, especially those that featured in the "politics of anxiety" that Ake (1996) says characterize the Nigerian power elite. This is the logical outcome of the CD's alliance with sections of the Nigerian power elite, which seized the June 12 mandate as platform to climb to political power.

In effect, the CD became one of the organs of the pro-Abiola, pro-June 12 group competing for power in the context of the intrigues that followed the crisis unleashed by the annulment. This crisis led to the exit of Babangida, the installation of a wobbly Interim-National Government, and the eventual return to full blown dictatorship under General Sani Abacha.

Some leaders of the CD, in concert with pro-Abiola groups, called for military intervention to reinstate the June 12 mandate. This call preceded Abacha's coup and showed too clearly the self-contradiction involved in collaborating with a section of the political class. It marked the beginning of the frustration of the hope of the pro-democracy movement to be a principal actor in charting the path of a future transition to democratic rule. It also marked the demise of the CD as the veritable leader of the popular struggle for democracy in Nigeria.

How did the CD, which had rejected the Babangida transition to civil rule programme, come to accept the outcome and thereby enter into a self-contradiction that would undermine its leadership role in the pro-democracy movement? With the benefit of hindsight, three plausible explanations may be advanced.

The first relates to the perceived opportunity of terminating military rule, which the actualization of the June 12 mandate provided. It seemed easier to pressurize a civilian than a military government to convene a sovereign national conference. Hence, the idea of a government of national unity headed by Abiola was canvassed by the Joint Action Committee of Nigeria (JACON), as a solution to the June 12 crisis. JACON was one of the splinter groups that emerged after the CD went into a coma.

The second plausible explanation draws on the influence that foreign democracy-promoting organizations had on the human rights groups that dominated the CD, and the CD itself. As it has become typical of the transition paradigm, from which these democracy promoters draw inspiration, multi-party elections are considered the most significant factors that determine if a country is transiting from dictatorship to democracy (see Carothers 2002). Hence, their sponsorship of democracy promotion activities within the country had gradually eroded the perception of the illegality of the transition to civil rule programme of the Babangida regime. The reaction of the American Embassy in Lagos to the attempted postponement of the presidential elections, after an Abuja High Court had restrained the National Electoral Commission from conducting it, and the subsequent response of the Babangida government are particularly relevant. The Embassy had warned that "any postponement of the election would be of great concern to the United States Government," and the Babangida government had expelled Mr Michael O'Brien, the Director of the United States Information Service (USIS) for making such a statement, which it

viewed as an intolerable interference in the internal affairs of the country. Coupled with this was the immediate reaction to the news of the annulment by the same embassy. In a statement, it declared that the annulment of Nigeria's "most successful election," which was "orderly, fair and free from serious irregularities," was a "failure on the part of the military regime to respect the will of the Nigerian people." The statement added that the embassy was closely examining various options that "might help the Nigerian people to successfully express their political will" (Akindele 1999, 272). This statement served to reassure the CD leadership of the support of the US government in any effort to force a reversal of the annulment and was, therefore, precipitative.

The third perspective relates to the structure of the CD leadership that made it amenable to the influence of the Yoruba power elite. This power elite interpreted the annulment as a confirmation of the suspicion that the North did not want to relinquish power to the South, especially to the Yoruba. The events that followed the crisis, especially during the long-drawn battle against General Abacha's government, lend credence to this perspective. These events led to the transformation of many pro-democracy leaders in Yoruba land into champions of sub-nationalism. In due course, complaints of a subtle imposition of a Yoruba agenda on the CD began to feature. A pointer to this was the eventual split of the CD in 1997 at a meeting in which Olise Agbakoba was said to have told his colleagues that he was not a "June 12th purist", while Gani Fawehinmi retorted that he could not work with anyone who had any reservation about the sanctity of the June 12 mandate (Kukah 1999, 263). This was accentuated by the fact that the question of power sharing between the North and the South had dominated debates on the outcome of the first party presidential primaries that were cancelled and in the build-up to the presidential elections that were eventually annulled in 1993 (see Akinterinwa 1997).

All of these point to the fact that the CD was poorly organized and therefore ill-equipped to fulfil its self-imposed historic mission for the democratic transformation of the country. The organization did not lack men and women of courage able to face the consequences of standing up against military dictatorship. On the contrary, the CD leaders were men and women who had gained national prominence by their heroic defiance of the military. Many of them were leaders of prominent human rights organizations.

The problem was that they towered above the organization and thereby ensured that the CD remained a loose alliance of several organizations. They were not able to coalesce around its founding vision, especially at critical moments of decision. This was evident from the fact that they met with representatives of the Abacha government without the express authorization of the organization. Some members called for military intervention and some eventually participated in the Abacha government and its National Constitutional Conference Commission (Enemuo and Momoh 1999, 90-91).

The CD correctly predicted that the Babangida regime would end in chaos and anarchy. It was right in rejecting it completely. The sovereign national conference (SNC) formula it put forward also proved to be a very resilient proposal in public debates on the Nigerian crisis and the way out of it. Even General Abacha saw the value of the SNC option as a way to bury the Babangida project. Hence, he demolished all the structures of the Babangida transition and instituted a national conference. Thus, under the Abacha regime, the vision of the CD was appropriated, distorted and implemented to serve tyranny.

Clearly, the situation would have been different in a scenario where the crisis that came in the wake of the annulment was seized by the CD leadership to incorporate the pro-Abiola group into the pro-democracy movement by subordinating the group to its founding ideals and then mobilising the populace against the military.

Conclusion

The CD experience confirms Barber's (2003) remark that while dictatorships need great leaders to survive, democracy depends not on the quality of leadership but on the quality of citizenship. As we have seen, the pro-democracy movement has thrown up heroes who had to take the back seat in the programme of transition that eventually returned the country to democratic rule in 1999, because they were not able to submit themselves to the vision, ideals, process and discipline of the organization.

However, the CD experience has, even if to a limited extent, demonstrated the possibility of mobilising across traditional cleavages and interests by means of the universal values of fundamental rights, justice and equity in a divided society like Nigeria. The CD phenomenon points to the possibilities of

autonomous non-state actors as agents of social transformation in Nigeria. It has also shown the need to take into account sub-national sensibilities in organizing even around universal values of fundamental rights, democratic participation and justice at the non-state arena. Clearly, democratic struggles must rise above the attractions of quick fixes and short cuts that beckon at moments of crisis. Beyond this, leadership must draw strength and legitimacy from the people rather than the resources and support of foreign agencies and governments.

The CD was able to coordinate the human rights NGOs and the occupational and other pressure groups into a unified resistance against the military, especially in the period immediately following the June 12 annulment. In doing this the CD demystified the military in the eyes of the populace. But the CD could not push the democracy struggle to its logical conclusion because it became entangled in the 'politics of anxiety' that characterize the Nigerian power elite. In the event, its own internal contradictions exploded and the organization split into several factions.

The pro-democracy movement has become an enduring feature of Nigeria's political process currently represented in the Citizens Forum for Constitutional Reforms (CFCR). The emergence and structure of the CFCR show the resilience of the movement and the fact that it has come out of the post-June 12 crisis with some lessons. Its spread is national, and its visibility has not been marked by the towering personalities amongst its membership. All of these point to the fact that it is a learning movement and is destined to play a critical role in democratizing Nigeria's political system.

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