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Solidarity and fragmentation between trade unions and civil societies during fuel subsidy mass-protest in Nigeria : a study of social movement unionism.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND:

The title of this study is solidarity and fragmentation between trade unions and civil society during the fuel subsidy mass-protest in Nigeria: A study of Social Movement Unionism (SMU). The study focuses on the removal of subsidy from petroleum by the Federal Government (FG) of Nigeria on the first of January, 2012. This raised the price of petrol from 65 Naira to 141 Naira, which resulted into strike and mass-protest led by the Nigeria Trade Unions and Civil Society partners under Labour and Civil Society Coalition, (LASCO).

Removal of subsidy is regarded as one aspect of neo-liberal prescriptions in what scholars called the 'third wave of great transformation' that seek to dis-embed the state from the society through deregulation, privatisation and restructuring of labour (Polanyi, 2001, Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout, 2008, Burawoy, 2010). The Polanyi's 'double movement' thesis stresses the role of a global counter-movement through out the history of global crisis in various phases. The first great transformation witnesses the emergence of work –place hegemony and construction of welfare state in the North as well as the rise of independence and state corporatism in the South. While the rise of neo-liberalism has resulted in to the emergence of embryonic global counter-movement in form of global unionism and World Social forum (Webster, et'al cited in Burawoy, 2010).

LASCO as a counter-movement against predatory state in Nigeria was formed in 2003 as a charter of struggle that drew its strength both from the shop floor and larger society. It linked politics of production and reproduction, operating as a form of SMU (Burawoy, 2010, Lambert & Webster, 1988). The declaration of the strike by Trade Unions and Civil Society partners on the 9th of January, 2012 has recorded high level of mobilisation un-parallel in the Nigeria's history, issues of mobilisation revolves around poor leadership, endemic corruption and rent seeking in the administration of the oil subsidy, and poor state bureaucracy in checkmating these excesses, this trend built a petit bourgeoisie that secure its economic base on the state resources.

The central demand of LASCO was total reversal of the policy and that of addressing the endemic corruption that embeds the subsidy regime. While government on the other hand, insists on no going back on the policy, as it promised to redirect the subsidy fund into other infrastructural development through what it called Subsidy Reinvestment Strategy, (SURE). Subsequent of the political tension generated by the one week strike and protest that almost brought the country to a halt, the federal government announces a reduction from 141 Naira to 97 Naira in the second week of the strike and mass-protest.

Following this waiver by the FG, the central labour organisations of the Nigeria Labour Congress, and the Trade Union Congress, suspended the strike and directed workers to resume work. This suspension augments anger and resentment among the civil society partners within LASCO, under the Joint Action Front (JAF). JAF described the strike suspension as unilateral and non-consultative, hence, promised to continue until the struggle is completed. Given this background, this study is interested to explore the basis of the tension within LASCO alliance, utilising the literature on Social Movement Unionism as its analytical tool of enquiry.

Although the concept of SMU has wider application, especially in Brazil and South Africa (Lambert & Webster, 1988, Waterman, 1993, Siedman, 1994, von Holdt, 2002 & 2003). These scholars argued that SMU is a new form of trade unionism influenced by authoritarian industrialization as the basis of trade union mobilization both in the work place and in the communities. In South Africa, series of trade unions community alliances signified the power of the SMU concept as an analytical tool of understanding Trade Union vs. community mobilisation, such instances include, Fattis and Monis Boycott in 1979 and Leyland and Red Meat Boycott respectively.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY:

This study examines the 9th January, 2012 fuel subsidy mass-protest in Nigeria with particular emphasis to the protest in Kano state of Northern Nigeria. The study is interested in understanding how the alliance between trade unions and civil society shapes the character of the mass-protest, with a view to explore issues of solidarity on the one hand, and fragmentation within LASCO alliance following the suspension of the strike on the other.

The study undertakes an assessment of LASCO alliance between trade unions and civil societies during the withdrawal of fuel subsidy mass protest in Nigeria with particular emphasis on the aftermath of the suspension of the mass-protest by trade unions and the tension it generated within the alliance. To do this, the study utilises the literature on SMU as its analytical point of departure. What are the possible tensions that may exist between trade unions, civil societies and communities in the process of mobilization? Would SMU be immune from social fragmentation? These are some of the question that needs empirical response in the context of LASCO allaince in Nigeria.

The study is justified on the ground that the literature on SMU as advanced by scholars such as (Lambert & Webster, 1988 Siedman, 1994 Von Holdt, 2002) was inadequate in addressing possible tensions that may exist between trade union and community alliances. Similarly, the literature has explored authoritarian industrialisation as source of SMU mobilisation like in the case of Brazil and South Africa (Lambert & Webster, 1988, Siedman, 1994). In Nigeria the rise of petit bourgeoisie and its rent seeking behaviour especially in the oil industry has been a source of mobilisation for trade unions and civil society organisations during this mass-protest.

The suspension of the strike by the trade unions and the desire of the civil and community organisation to continue with the strike revealed the potential tension inherent in the SMU, this tension resonate with Von Holdt (2002) that recognises the centrality of understanding the internal contestation within SMU in the work-place. However, this study while focusing on internal contestation within an alliance, contrasted with Von Holdt (2002) that sees union as contester of order, this study leaned toward Hyman and Burawoy that see union as negotiator of order within an alliance such as LASCO.

1.3 Research Questions:

Given this background the study explores the following key questions:

1. Does the concept of social movement unionism hold any explanatory value for an analysis of the relations between trade unions and other social movements today?

2. What was the basis of solidarity between trade unions and civil society organizations during the mass-protest in Kano?

3. What was the basis of fragmentation of solidarity between trade unions and civil society organizations?

1.4 Research Design and Planning:

When we talk about a general strategy for solving a research problem, we are talking about a research design (Leedy & Ormond, 2010). The research design provides the overall structure for the procedures the researcher follows, the data the researcher collects, and the analysis the researcher conducts (Saunders & Thornhill, 2012). Research design deals with four major problems: what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyse the results (Yin, 2009). Therefore, in this study, the qualitative case study design was adopted since the purpose of the study is to examine solidarity and fragmentation between trade union and civil societies during the fuel subsidy strikes and mass-protest in Nigeria.

The relevance of the qualitative case study research is that it gives an in-depth analysis and description of certain forms of action as it affects the research population. This method is appropriate for this research as it gives deeper understanding of trade unions and community relations in the context of January, 2012 general strike and mass-protest in Nigeria. Information was extracted from the research population which comprises Trade unions, Civil Societies and communities through in-depth interviews and participant observation as the researcher was involved in the mass-protest.

Kvale (1996) notes that the essence of the research interview is to be able to understand the subject matter from the respondent's point of view based on the respondent experiences, "interview may not necessarily convey objective information but it captures many of the subject views on the research topic" (1996:1). Weiss (1994) on the other hand argued that qualitative interview is relevant in developing a detail description of the phenomena, it helps in integrating multiple perspectives, assist greatly in describing process.

Weiss (1994:310) notes the relevance of qualitative interviews in the following ways 'qualitative interview study may well be the method of choice if our aim is to describe how a system works or fails to work. Thus we might rely on qualitative interviewing of members of a family life, and qualitative interviewing of members of an organization to understand how the organization works'. Given this background, a study of understanding solidarity and fragmentation between trade unions and civil societies can better be grasped by interviewing the members of these organizations. Hence, the choice of qualitative method becomes relevant, in interpreting our social world.

Kitay & Callus (1998) thus define case study method 'as a research strategy or design that is used to study one or more selected social phenomena and to understand or explain the phenomena by placing them in the wider context' (Kitay & Callus, 1998:103). Case study is a research design that aims to interrogate the phenomena under study using multiple techniques because to understand phenomena in its full context multiple techniques are needed, such as documentary sources, qualitative interviews, structured questionnaires and archival materials and observations. The pertinent question remains, when is it suitable to use qualitative case study as our research strategy?

Similarly, the choice of qualitative method becomes relevant for this study due to the nature of the research problem, which is an examination of issues of solidarity and fragmentation within LASCO alliance during the fuel subsidy mass-protest in Nigeria. A research question to a greater extent determines the research methods. The major issues of this research are mobilisation, solidarity, fragmentation and alliance. To explore these issues, we need to interrogate the people involve in the LASCO alliance during the subsidy strike and mass-protest, our analytical respondents/informant were; Trade Unionist and Civil societies involved in the LASCO alliance. The potential way to understand their views as it shapes the

character of alliance is through in-depth interviews and participant observation of their behaviour during the mass-protest, strategic meetings, briefings, press-conferences, and speeches during the mass-protest. Hence, the choice of qualitative case studies as a method of enquiry.

Kitay & Callus (1998) contended that case study is suitable in situations when a researcher is examining the process by which certain events unfold in society as well as when researchers are interested in exploring a causal relations ships. As they argued that 'the case study method is particularly well suited to researching motives, power relations, or processes that involve understanding complex social interactions'. This study tries to explore the process through which solidarity was formed between trade unions and civil society during the subsidy removal mass-protest, how such solidarity got fragmented and the causes for such fragmentation.

Both Case study and extended case method are approaches used in industrial relations researches, as alternative methods to positivist sociology that seeks to insulate the researcher from the research subject. Several scholars have demonstrated the importance of case study method in understanding what the research subject is doing and power relations in the research settings (Burawoy, 1998, Stake, 1978, Kitay & Callus, 1998).

Qualitative research enables in-depth study of phenomena under study through inductive reasoning with the research subject, understanding trade unions and community mobilizations and how solidarity was formed and contested during the subsidy removal protest in Kano can be grasped through in-depth interviews with the research subjects, such as trade unions, civil societies and communities. Leedy & Ormrod (2010) notes that, 'qualitative researchers believe that researchers ability to interpret and make sense of what he or she sees is critical

for understanding any social phenomena. In the sense that, the researcher is an instrument in much the same way that an oscilloscope, sociogram, or rating scale is an instrument'

The relevance of social science is that of interaction with the research community, as students of sociology, we would like to understand how society patterned individual behaviours. Coombes (2001) contends that the relevance of Social science research lies in its ability to interact with the research subject. In this research I conducted interviews physically with the respondents in Kano; this is with a view to understand the dynamics that shapes trade unions and community relationship during the January, 2012 oil subsidy mass protest.

Burawoy (1998) sees extended case method as an alternative strategy to positivist sociology advanced by Augusta Comte, as he argued 'in the alternative strategy we thematise our participation in the world we study. We keep ourselves steady by rooting ourselves in theory that guides our dialogue with participants' (Burawoy, 1998:5). As students of industrial sociology it is expedient to have strategies that make us closer to our research subject not detachment as social reality is far from the scientific idiosyncrasy of positivism that seeks to understand the objective world.

1.4.1 Kano Case study:

Kano case study was chosen for this research due to its special character during the subsidy strike and mass-protest. Firstly, Kano was chosen for its cosmopolitan nature that virtually harbours all the Nigerian ethnic groups. Secondly, Kano was one of the states where the strike and mass-protest continues despite its suspension by the Trade Unions. As argued by Yin (2009), Case study as a qualitative method is distinguish from both phenomenological and ethnographic studies because of it is restricted to a particular boundary that has special character. This study focuses itself to Kano state strike /mass-protest due to the

aforementioned reasons. However, reference was been made to the LASCO alliance at the National Level, as well as its particular form of mobilisation and tension, with a view to give meaning to the Kano case.

1.4.2 Researcher as Participant Observer:

The researcher is deeply involved in the research process as a participant observer. I was involved in several campaigns and protest organised under LASCO. During the subsidy removal mass-protest I participated in several meetings where decisions were taken. Such meetings include, National Administrative Council (NAC), which comprises the National Leadership of the NLC, the National Executive Council (NEC) meetings which is the highest organ of the NLC that ratifies key decisions. These two bodies were central in taking the decision of both declaring the strike/mass-protest as well as its suspension. Personal notes during these meetings constitute enormous source of data for this research.

1.4.3 Method of Data Collection:

The research employs a qualitative method of enquiry in order to explore the relationship between trade union and civil society organisations during the fuel subsidy mass protest in Kano state of Nigeria. The research uses both in-depth interviews and participants' observation of the protest since the researcher was involved in the process. Similarly, the research has substantially utilised electronic media such as YouTube and face books in observing and interpreting the people perceptions about the strikes and the mass-protest, viz-a viz trade union's civil society relations.

For the interviews, specialised interviews were conducted and the respondents were drawn from trade unionist, civil society and community members, through the means of snowballing. Snowball sampling entails the referral of the participants to potential

respondents that participated in the mass-protest. This method was helpful, as first contact respondents keep on referring the researcher to other people they consider relevant to the research area and who participated in the mass-protest. In terms of the responses, all the key respondents have demonstrated their willingness to respond to the research questions.

Other auxiliary sources of data include documents sources such as press releases, annual reports, archives, news papers, videos, and YouTube materials.

1.4.4 Managing Researchers' Bias:

The researcher was able to manage his bias through the application of analytical frameworks such as Hyman's Optimist and Pessimist tradition as well Beiler Lindberg and Pillay's accommodatory and transformaory solidarities.

1.4.5 Sampling Methods:

The research respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling implies a deliberate attempt to select some special group of people as research respondents, their choice may be informed by their deep knowledge of the research topic, or their involvement on the research topic (Leedy & Ormond, 2010). The research topic to a greater extent determines who is to be included as a respondent or who is not.

Similarly, a snowball sampling was adopted for the study, Snowball entails a referral to a research respondent who may either participate in the issue of research or have deeper knowledge of it (Coombes, 2001). Neuman (2000) sees snowball sampling as a networking, chain referral or reputational sampling. It enables the researcher to network with relevant respondents to his research, the research respondents will be growing from simple to

complex. The research utilised this method to link up with the potential research respondents in Kano state.

Given the nature of this research, that is understanding the relationship between trade unions, civil societies and communities in the context of Mass-protest in Kano state of Nigeria, the respondents will be drawn from; LASCO members which embodies; Trade Unions, and Civil Societies and community members in Kano state.

1.4.6 Sample Size:

Sample size entails the number of people to be involved as research respondents, due to time limit, resource constraints; the researcher used a sample of 13 respondents. The choice of this number is justified by the type of sampling the research adopted, that is purposive sampling and relying on the fact that such sample represents the behavioural pattern of the research population.

1.4.6 Data Analysis:

Thematic analysis was deployed in analyzing data. The research uses this method to analyze the data using various themes; thematic analysis will enable the structuring of the data based on semblance of the responses or otherwise. According to Lacy & Luff (2001:1) 'the mass of words generated by interviews or observational data needs to be described and summarize. The question may require the researcher to seek relationship between various themes that have been identified or to relate behaviour or ideas to biographical characteristics of the respondents such as age/gender'

In this study, thematic analysis of data was done in generating the key themes in the interviews; this was done in the light of broader conceptual and analytical issues deduced in the literature survey.

1.5 Ethical Consideration:

Social science research as a professional academic endeavour has standard research ethics that must be adhered to by the scientific community. This become apparent due to the nature of our research subject, which is human behaviour "a researcher should confine to the standard conduct of his profession" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001)

Ethical consideration pertains to what is right and wrong and what could be harmful to the research subject. To avoid intrusion into people's live, participation should be voluntary. Similarly to respect the integrity of the respondents it is analytically relevant for the researcher to deploy the concepts of anonymity and confidentiality in the research reporting.

1.6 Organisation of the Study:

The study is organised in five chapters. Chapter one gives the general introduction and background to the study, chapter two dealt with Literature review and conceptual framework, while chapter three focuses on the basis of Social Movement mobilisation in the study area whereas chapter four analysed issues of division and tensions within the SMU mobilisation in Kano, finally chapter five summarised the major findings of the study and its implication on the research.

1.7 CONCLUSION:

This chapter has given the background to the study, situated within the rent seeking behaviour of the Nigeria state, especially in the oil industry. This served as the basis of

mobilisation of trade unions and civil societies under LASCO as a counter-movement analysed within SMU debate. The chapter demonstrated the relevance of the Concept of SMU in understanding community and trade union alliances, albeit with very little emphasis on tensions and conflict within the alliance. This inadequacy of the literature informs the basis of this study which is exploring solidarity and fragmentation between trade unions and civil society allies within the context of fuel subsidy mass-protest in Nigeria. The chapter demonstrated on the twin issues that triggered the study, which is corruption and poor leadership in the country as a source of mobilisation for trade unions and civil societies, secondly, the study focuses on internal contestation within LASCO alliance, following the suspension of the strike by the trade unions, which served as a basis for the breakdown of the alliance. This constitutes the point of departure from the classical SMU literature that stresses on repressive industrialisation as the basis of mobilisation, and emphasises little in understanding internal contestation within the movement dimension of the SMU (Von, Holdt, 2002, 2003,).

The next chapter will review the literature of social movement unionism with particular emphasis to South African experience and some comparison with the Nigeria situation. This is with a view to explore the plausibility of the SMU as a concept of trade union mobilisation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

2.1 INTRODUCTION:

This chapter has reviewed the various literatures on social movement unionism especially in South Africa, with a view to understand the Nigerian situation. The chapter traces major trends that shape political unionism in South Africa and Nigeria and interrogate the relevance of such trend in understanding trade union mobilisation during the fuel subsidy removal mass-protest in Nigeria. In appreciating the dynamics of alliance politics or what scholars later called social movement unionism (SMU), this chapter undertakes an assessment of Trade Unions and community alliance in South Africa, and political alliance within the United Democratic Front (UDF), and engage with the recent debate on SMU as an innovative phase of union community alliance.

The chapter interrogates the inadequacy of SMU literature in exploring the basis of trade union mobilisation, during the fuel subsidy mass protest in Nigeria and the tension that ensue the suspension of the mass-protest among the alliance partners under LASCO.

To bridge the gap in the literature, the chapter advanced its argument on the role of rent seeking and weak state which engenders corruption and leadership deficit as basis of mobilisation for trade unions and communities under the process of democratisation in Nigeria. Finally, the chapter articulates the role of class and political orientation of both Trade unions and Civil Society in understanding fragmentation within LASCO alliance.

2.2 Labour and Politics in South Africa:

Trade Unions, Community and political alliances 1970- 1985:

The exploitative condition engendered by colonial exploitation in Africa and specifically apartheid in South Africa engendered a different form of Trade Union strategy that surprises the metropolitan industrial sociology literature that see trade unions operation as restricted to collective bargaining or orthodox unionism (Cohen, 1974, Lambert & Webster, 1988). Lambert and Webster (1988) argued that Trade unions in South Africa have repudiated 'Orthodox unionism' and shifts labour energy from what Burawoy called 'production politics' to wider engagement in contentious politics.

Trade unions in Africa were historically political in nature owing to the history of colonial development, and its economic logic of extraction of raw materials and dehumanisation of African workers. This prompted workers to join unions and equally support the nationalist struggle (Bhulungu, 2012). Cohen (1974) argued that the political character of unions in Asia and Africa has become an exceptional, where a form of trade union *sui generis* has developed or about to emerge that is usually describe as a form of 'political unionism' which was sharply different from the 'economic or business unionism that is supposed to operate in the industrialised west and some times the 'productionist' unionism that operates in the Soviet union and other centrally plan economies. (Cohen, 1974:145).

Political unionism in underdeveloped countries is regarded as an aberration especially in relation to economic unionism in industrialised west (Cohen, 1974 Lambert & Webster, 1988). Cohen attributed social and historical factors that predestine the political inclination of

trade unions in underdeveloped countries, such as colonial politics and the nationalist struggle it engendered. 'Politicisation of the unions derived from their connection with the nationalist movement this varied greatly and was probably stronger in Asia than in Africa' (Cohen, 1974:147).

Lambert & Webster (1988) stressed that the politicisation of labour in South Africa was reinforced by the nature of the state and industrial relation system, or what Beckman & Sachikonye (2001) called 'labour regime'. Thus, Labour regime entails 'complex of institutions, rules and practices through which relations between labour and capital are regulated both at the work-place as well as in society. It also denotes the ways and means in which state and organised interests intervene and mediate in those relations' (Beckman & Sachikonye, 2001: 9).

Labour regime in South Africa both at work-place level was highly repressive, which alienated labour right in the work-place through regimented workplace practices and deprivation of political right by the apartheid policy. This has created a space for the growth of industrial unions albeit without providing an atmosphere of political incorporation through enfranchisement of Black Africans (Lambert & Webster, 1988).

These restrictions of the labour rights at the work-place through what Von Holdt (2002) called 'repressive apartheid work-place regime' that contained labour militancy, deprived citizenship and subsequent disenfranchisement of black Africans was responsible for the labour militancy and politicisation of labour beyond the work-place, through innovative link with communities in pressing for working class demand and democratisation of society. According to Lambert & Webster 'trade unions have been faced with dual challenges of national liberation & youth led civil war in the townships. It is this pressure that brought about the question of alliance politics that pressured union leaders to act through symbiotic

relationship between factory based struggles and broader political struggles in the society (Lambert & Webster, 1988).

2.2.1 Trade Union and Community Relations in South Africa:

The politicisation of labour in the work-place and Society through active labour engagement in non-factory struggles has resulted into trade union and community alliances although in a somewhat loose manner, but was portrayed by labour and community restiveness in rendering the workplace and apartheid regime 'ungovernable' (Von Holdt, 2003).

Series of events have influenced Trade Unions community relations in South Africa (Friedman, 1987; Lambert & Webster 1988, Pillay Unpublished, Baskin, 1991; FCWU, 1982; Foster, 1982, Hindson, 1987). For instance, Fattis and Monis boycott (Friedman, 1987 & South African Labour Bulletin, 1980), Transvaal Stay-away (Hindson, 1987) Leyland and Red meat boycott (Friedman, 1987).

Lambert & Webster (1988) stressed that, the crisis in the work-place has brought about unprecedented mobilisation and resistance in both the factories and communities over economic and political issues; this tension was responsible for, rent strikes, bus boycotts, consumer boycotts, school boycotts, anti-constitutional campaigns and stay-away which brought about ideological and political alignment.

Hindson (1987) contends that Union community co-operation was first signified in 1979 when food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU) received community support during Fattis and Monis boycott, communities instantly boycotted the products of Fattis and Monis in support of workers demand for better wages, decent working condition and reinstatement of sacked workers, for their role in industrial action against the management. McGregor (1980)

argued that the consumer boycott was supported by various organizations such as colleges, universities, and small traders like the SOWETO committee of ten and several trade unions.

Similarly, Hindson (1987) contends that the November, 1984 stay-away in the Transvaal marks a turning point in community union relations. "The years preceding the formation of UDF witnessed high union involvement in community issues such as rent, transport, and local elections. The FOSATU entry into Transvaal stay-way was influenced by their overlapping membership" the Transvaal Stay away has great implication in community/union relations; it engendered hitherto workerist unions to take non factory issues in their struggles, it promotes deep root of the union in the communities, and also signified a non-violent demonstration of power (Friedman, 1987)

It is the quest for a workable relationship between community and unions that prompted FCWU to evolve with an approach that will strengthen community union relation, as captures by Hindson (1987)

> Our view point is that a union should not split the struggle of workers in the factory from struggles outside the work place, on community and political issues. We do not believe that the problem of workers in the factories is separate from the problem in the areas where they live. Nor can we ever say that it is not concern of workers that they have no say in the government of the country.

The experiences of the trade union community alliances during the consumer boycotts and stay-aways brought about the need for the creation of a broad democratic front that will both involve trade unions and activist in carrying out the struggles for political rights especially occasioned by the state constitutional reform and fighting the Kornhof bill (Friedman, 1987). However, the formation of UDF in 1983 has resulted into serious resentment about trade union affiliation and the issues of worker control (Hindson, 1987, FCWU, 1982, Foster, 1982). Unions were worried of the tendency of activist controlling and shaping the activities of the organisation, without recourse to working class endorsement (Foster, 1982, FCWU,

1982, Friedman, 1987). Hence, the basis of the tension in the alliance politics between unions and activist in South Africa.

2.2.2 Fragmentation of Solidarity: Union Vs Community Relations

Baskin (1991) analyzed the rise of alliances in South Africa in the context of the political struggles that gave birth to populist and workerist demand. Workerist tend to underestimate class alliances and view it with suspicion based on economism, they limit working class struggle to the workplace. While populist tend to argue that racial oppression is the major contradiction within society as such they see symbiotic relationship between workers organisation and popular struggles. Lambert and Webster (1988) viewed Workerist as those promoting orthodox or collective bargaining unionism often reluctant to link production politics with wider political issues.

Therefore, for (Lambert & Webster, 1988, Baskin 1991) trade union engagement in politics has brought about considerable debate around workerist/populist label. However, Baskin (1991) argued that neither workerist nor populist views were held within COSATU as even those associated with economism/syndicalism often encourage their members as individuals to be involved in political organizations like UDF.

However, despite the success of the trade union community relations underpinned by several stay-aways and consumer boycotts stated above. Resentments began to emerge on the extent of union community engagement with non-worker issues; it was this debate that brought about issues of workerist vs. populist debate in South Africa (Baskin, 1991, Friedman, 1987, Lambert & Webster, 1988, Pillay, unpublished). The workerist emphasise narrow economism and restrict trade union struggles to the factories as exemplified by FOSATU and Cape

Unions, while the populist encourage political involvement and contesting the racial order engendered by the apartheid (Lambert & Webster, 1988, Baskin, 1991, Friedman, 1987).

The workerist tendencies of the union noted above is captured by Friedman (1987) that "workerist tendencies begin to emerge within unions, especially FOSATU unions stressed that political links would divert their energies from factory, unions begin to reiterates the position they would repeat in the eighties, that workers have different interests to other black groups and could not pursue them in political alliance with non workers" FOSATU workerist tradition was further reinforced by its general secretary during the FOSATU congress in April 1982, "No mass movement can be effective or be seen to be effective if it does not have some worker involvement". (Foster, 1982: 72) he further notes that:

> As trade union movement we are clearly concerned with workers and their aspirations. If we were to think in terms of our members only, we would have a very limited role. If however we are thinking more widely of the working class then, we have to examine very much more carefully what our political role is. In particular we need to look in South African context (Foster, 1982: 69)

The workerist tradition in South African trade unions especially underpinned by the debate on affiliation to UDF underscores the relevance of class analysis of trade union/community relations. Hindson (1987), observed the sharp differences between trade union organisation and other community based organisations. 'As class composition of both membership and leadership of these organisations affects the class interests they pursue' (Hindson, 1987:208)

The main point of departure that brought the potential tension between trade unions and community organisations was the Fattis and Monis boycott in 1979 in South Africa. Disputes arose over the conduct of a boycott: when and where it should be started and called off. The leadership and direction of the unions was sometimes questioned by those who had originally set out only to offer support (Hindson, 1987:211).

The nagging question to ask is, should workers subordinate their organisations to non worker groups that are not based on shop floor democracy? This tension relates very much to the 2012 fuel subsidy removal mass protest in Nigeria when civil society organisations that allied with labour in the prosecution of the mass-protest deplored the suspension of the strike by the NLC and TUC and continued with the mass protest outside the trade unions platform. To avert the worry of submitting working class organisation to the control of community or civil society organisations, the General Secretary of Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) Foster made the following caution:

> Involvement in community organisations over non factory struggles could entail the loss of working class leadership and direction of such struggles, and expose the union to state attack for actions initiated and directed by leaders not subject to workers accountability…should workers, who had painstakingly built up their organisations over years of struggle, give over leadership to newly formed communities organisation which had no substantial organised base and thus relatively little to lose from confrontation with the state (Foster: 1987:213)

Workerist tendencies in the unions influenced FOSATU unions and Cape Union's aloofness in joining the UDF. Friedman (1987) argued that the unions perspective was that the major social contradiction in South African society was not race as amplified by the activist, rather, fighting economic inequality thus 'they would not win if the white elite was simply replaced by black one and the political movement were usually led by members of the elite' (Freidman, 1987: 432).

Friedman argued that unions were resentful in joining politics and community alliances not because it is evil but cautious of its repercussions especially on the erosion of working class control 'as political links would divert their energies from factory' (Friedman, 1987: 432). The issues of worker control was further buttressed by Friedman when he cited a worker saying that 'we want Mandela to be a prime minister but we must make sure when he is, the workers control him'

Friedman discusses the transformative nature of social movements which sharply distinguished them from Trade Union class orientation in the following words:

> Activist often voiced maximum demands their final goal, rather than what they had the power to win and then refuse to compromise when authorities were pressured into meeting them halfway; their insistence on the full loaf of bread usually left them with none and their followers were reminded again of their weaknesses. The unions had made gains by doing precisely the opposite; if grassroots democracy and tactical compromise could gain in the factories, they could do so in the townships (Friedman, 1987: 438).

The above statement unveils the character of unions which is predicated on collective bargaining unionism based on give and take. Whereas, activist seek for a total transformation. This dynamics of trade union attitude and that of community was expressed by Hyman (1975) pessimist tradition which sees unions as negotiators of interest and as such inhibit revolutionary tendencies of contesting order.

Beiler, Lindberg & Pillay (1998) re-echoed Hyman's analysis through what they called 'accommodatory solidarity' that union behaviour seeks to negotiate order rather than total change. However, Von Holdt, (2002 & 2003) has contrasted the above view of trade unions especially in a repressive apartheid work-place regime in South Africa which prompted unions to be contesters of order in the work-place setting.

Lambert & Webster (1988) have further demonstrated anti-populist stand of the unions on the basis that alliance politics stresses the people rather than the working class and is unable to prepare working class for socialism, as such, unions that involve themselves into populist campaigns will lose their organisational texture and be in a campaign they will be unable to control citing the case of confrontationist strategies of the unions.

Given the above debate between workerist and populist division in the wake of trade union and community alliances, Njikelana (1982) responded rather critically to the workerist orientation towards community alliances and in support to the formation of Democratic Front such as the UDF. He underscores the relevance of alliance as a way of concentrating energies to fight a particular course while acting independently as against workerist pretension of subordinating working class structures to non-worker organisations such as UDF.

However Njikelana (1982) was of the view that Trade Union is a different organisational form from other organisations. Unions have identical structures such as shop floor structures at the factory, membership and regular contact. This mass-based nature of the trade union distinguishes it from community organisations but he warns that to say community organisations are not mass based is to be totally out of touch with reality. Therefore, mass based organisations that do not have identical structures can be assessed based on the support their campaigns and programmes enjoyed from the public. 'The difference between trade union and other working class organisations is that, a Trade union is a single class organisation and other organisations as multi-class organisations' (Njikelana, 1982: 255).

Njikelana (1982) warns the trade unions against fetishism of other organisational forms as working class cannot be reduced to trade union and unions cannot be a political party for the working class, what was needed is building a broad democratic front with which to wage a war for political rights and 'unions do not necessarily expressed the view of the working class' (Njikelana, 1982: 255-256).

The above discussions have emphasised class as the major source of tension in the trade unions community alliances in the wake of popular struggles in South Africa. This study keenly observed that the LASCO alliance in Nigeria during the subsidy removal mass-protest experienced similar trends, as trade unions queried some civil societies for been political

through their call for regime change rather than restricting to the mandate of the strike which was about demanding for the reversal of the price of petrol to the status quo.

Similarly, trade union as a particular organisational form as argued by Njikelana (1982) was also crucial in understanding fragmentation of solidarity within LASCO alliance as trade unions use their structure to call off strike, whereas several civil society and communities deplored such decisions and vowed to forge ahead. What aggravated the tension was the multi varied nature of the community organisations as community mobilisation was beyond LASCO alliance; many people don't even know LASCO, but still demanded to be consulted by the trade unions. How could the consultation be possible? In addition to the community perspective of the alliance, the study also observed that the trade unions have developed sentiments that most of the civil societies are mere NGOs and hence lack a mass based structure.

2.3 SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM: CONTESTING PERSPECTIVES

The innovative ways in which trade unions utilised their collective bargaining power or what Lambert & Webster (1988) called 'orthodox unionism' was responsible for trade union community alliances that challenges repressive workplace practices and political exclusion in South Africa. Most of the literatures at that time talked about alliance politics see (Baskin, 1991, Friedman, 1975, Hindson, 1982). This innovative trade union strategy that arose in the global south prompted scholars to use social movement discourse in understanding trade union mobilisation beyond the work place through what they coined as Social Movement Unionism (Waterman, 1993, Lambert and Webster, 1988, Siedman, 1994 & 2011, Von Holdt, 2002 & 2003).

Lambert & Webster were the first to apply the SMU concept in South African context and argued that trade unionism that emerged in the seventies and eighties was quite different, as it differs from conventional unionism that stresses working class struggles within a predictable industrial relations system akin to what Lambert & Webster (1988) called 'orthodox unionism' and Pillay (2012) referred to as 'Business Unionism'. Lambert & Webster's argument on the emergence of SMU in South Africa is captured in the following words:

> This form of unionism has the potential to forge alliance with the popular movement on the basis of equality, and a commitment to defend a working class socialist programme in a liberated South Africa by combining links at community level with an engagement in national liberation. These unions have begun to take on the characteristics of Social movement unionism (Lambert & Webster, 1988: 38)

There are considerable debate on the origin and relevance of SMU as a strategy of social transformation (Waterman, 1993, Lambert and Webster, 1988, Siedman, 1994 & 2011, von Holdt, 2002 & 2003). What I called great SMU debate, gives different theoretical account of what constitute the SMU, what shapes it, and on whether it is relevant in understanding trade union organizing in the twenty-first century specifically in the global south (Siedman, 2011)

Waterman, (1993) viewed the rise of SMU on the basis of the growing social contradiction and new social subjects predicated on various campaigns on gender, ecology, human right, ethnicity and religion. He contended that, SMU could be viewed beyond the onslaught of global capital and the current restructuring of social relations enabled by post-modern world, to a rather re-conceptualization of the world of work.

For Waterman SMU enables a more coherent and broader understanding of the work and the role of labour. SMU as a project according to Waterman will be carried out by a coalition of forces, with organized worker at the heart. Waterman global prescription of SMU, resonates Evans (2012) notion of counter-hegemonic globalisation thesis, that privileges Labour,

women organisations, environmental groups and the right groups as viable alternatives of power in a form of global counter-movement to challenge the neo-liberal globalisation.

Both Siedman, (1994) and Waterman, (1993) concede on the relevance of the global restructuring of production system which creates new vulnerabilities underscored by the global transition from fordism to post fordist regime of accumulation, which creates new social relation of production and reconfigured labour capital contradiction (Beiler, Lindberg & Pillay, 2008, Lindstrom, 2004). Siedman, (1994) in particular stresses that "the dynamic of twentieth century industrialization contrasted sharply with that of early fordist regime, this transition created new vulnerabilities, and has reduced producer's dependence on specific geographic locale"

Therefore, what is SMU? What inform its growth in the global South? And to what extent will the SMU enables us to understand labour capital contradiction in the global south? There exist a number of explanations on the growth of SMU in the global South specifically in South Africa (Lambert and Webster 1988, Siedman, 1994 & Von Holdt, 2002 & 2003).

For Lambert & Webster, (1988) Social Movement Unionism in South Africa arose out of the popular demand of linking production politics with wider socio-political issues in the community. As unions that emerged in the 1970s were not narrowly economistic rather, they were social movement challenging South African racial capitalism and majority of people joined unions out of popular demand to fight the apartheid regime.

Siedman (1994) defines SMU as 'an effort to raise the living standard of the working class as a whole rather than to protect individually defined interest of union members" SMU is contrasted with production politics of orthodox unionism but pervades areas of reproduction such issues relating to housing, health care, education and transport. These campaigns

according to Siedman, link factory based unions with the communities and engendered strong factory/community relations in challenging state excess and misrule.

The role of massive industrialization and its repressive labour regime especially in South Africa prompted Von Holdt, (2002) & Siedman, (1994) to incorporate the role of industrialization in their definition of SMU, just like Siedman, von Holdt maintained that SMU pertains to "a highly mobilized form of unionism which emerges in opposition to authoritarian regimes and repressive work place in newly industrializing countries" (von Holdt, 2002).

Lambert and Webster (1988) stressed their definition of SMU in the context of political unionism in South Africa, they emphasised the necessity of linking production politics with wider popular struggles during apartheid in South Africa. 'SMU signifies a form of union organization that facilitates an active engagement in factory based production politics and in community and state power issues. It engages in alliance in order to establish relationship with political organizations on a systematic basis" (Lambert & Webster, 1988: 21).

SMU differs significantly from traditional trade unionism given its vitality of seeing labour as both social and political force (Lambert and Webster, 1988). Trade unions in alliance with the students, youth, women and the un-employed tend to provide a leading role and active voice towards democratization with the engagement of community in national liberation struggles in South Africa.

However, in other social formations, SMU may have been triggered by deindustrialization (Waterman, 1993) and the predatory nature of the state for capital accumulation (Evans, 1995, Joseph, 1983). For instance in Nigeria, it suggests that LASCO mobilisation appears to be a form of SMU, as a response of state failure to address the needs of the people, and state

failure to grasp the substantive democratic aspirations of bettering the living condition of the citizenry. SMU could best be explained by the character of the state in impeding the development process. As argued by Waterman, (1993) "state failure in Africa is responsible for the rise of New Social Movements" (Waterman, 1993:256).

However, there is a wide ranging debate about the plausibility of SMU concept as a way of understanding Trade Union mobilisation especially in the global south (Pillay, 2012, Siedman, 2011). This study glimpse the value of the concept in understanding how trade union/ civil society and community alliances could operate in engaging the state repression or capital exploitation in under-develop capitalist economy that is in the process of democratisation such as Nigeria.

SMU mobilisation in Nigeria was deeply embedded in the predatory state practices, poor leadership question, and rent seeking elites that depleted the state resources accrued from the petroleum sector. These predatory practices has contributed immensely in Trade Union massive support from both civil society and community organisation by building a form of 'counter-movement' under LASCO, predicated in a form of SMU.

Just like Pillay (2012), Cohen (1974) also contended that movements in union can take different form which may overlap. 'The tendency towards movementism may take one informally take on the characteristics of political parties, or enter into alliance, temporary or symbolic, with the party. It may also take the form of the presentation of a 'united front' including in its structure peripheral organisation such as women's organisations, students group, or coteries of intellectuals' (Cohen, 1974: 149).

The behaviour of must African Trade Unions is captured in Tedjasukmana's description cited in (Cohen: 1974:149) 'the structure bears the marks of simplicity, flexibility, mobility, and

other prerequisite of a fighting organisation. The administration of the union is dynamic, unbusineslike and sometimes illogical. The behaviour of the unions, which betrays their political nature, is subject to spontaneity, emotion, impulses and outburst of enthusiasm or rages and of a fighting spirit' he further stresses on why unions became highly political in channelling their demand in developing countries, was attributed to the fact that government is the major employer of labour, which constitute the tendency of escalating union grievance into a political issue.

Cohen suggests that, there is no pure form of political or economic unionism but rather union behaviour may have a disposition to types of unionism based on the condition at stake. 'it is dependent on the degree to which the necessary conditions exist which make unionism, collective bargaining, or other form of worker protest, possible or preferable tactics for union struggle' (Cohen, 1974:150). Socio-economic conditions are essential in understanding the particular disposition of trade union behaviour for instance in South Africa, the apartheid political order and repressive work-place regime prompted unions to fused collective bargaining unionism with social movement unionism (Von Holdt, 2002).

2.3.1 Tension within SMU: assessing the literature

Von Holdt (2002 & 2003) has challenged the dominant SMU literature for lack of centrality in understanding the movement dimension of the SMU especially in a repressive work-place regime in South Africa as alliances forged out side the work place came to influence the labour identity. Most of the SMU literature focused on alliances forged by trade unions against the state (Lambert & Webster, 1988, Siedman, 1994). While Lambert and Webster (1988) focuses on populism as a basis of SMU mobilisation to challenge the racial political regime in South Africa, Siedman (1994) was more emphatic on authoritarian industrialisation as the basis of mobilisation, whereas Waterman (1993) was more descriptive of forming

working class internationalism or global SMU, similar to what Evans (2012) called counter-hegemonic globalisation based on the current challenges of globalisation which permits the 'transferability of union strategies across national frontiers' (Friedman, 2012). However, Burawoy, (2012), has criticised such global optimism of trans-national solidarity envisaged by scholars such as Webster's (2012) internationalism based on factory based linkages globally, or Evans counter-hegemonic globalisation. For Burawoy (2012), Labour internationalism, or transnational solidarity is still embryonic.

None of the dominant SMU literature discusses the internal contestations within the movement dimension of the SMU. Von Holdt (2000, 2002 & 2003) followed the aforementioned debates and added on the need to understand the movement dimension of the unions within a repressive Apartheid work-place regime in South Africa, which generates tension in the work-place as non worker identities in the communities came to shape the labour identity in the work-place.

Von Holdt (2003) further argued that the SMU literature concentrates on the role of the union in community, whereas his analysis gives prominence to the impact of community alliances in the union social structure in Apartheid workplace. Identities forged outside the work-place, such as townships and hostels came to have significant implication on the worker identity in the work-place. Von Holdt was emphatic on the role of popular identities such as race, migrant labour, black vs. white in understanding work-place practices and its impact on the class identity of the workers in the workplace.

Von Holdt (2003) analysis is very apt in understanding tension within SMU by underscoring the movement dimension within unions, been influenced by several cleavages such as structural imbalances in the work-place following the formation of a strike committee which rivals the position of the shop-stewards, the residential patterns as most strike committees

were based in the hostels, while shop-stewards resided in the Township. It also had ethnic undertones as majority of migrant workers in the hostel were Pedi-speakers from Northern Transvaal, whereas the township residents tended to be Zulu speakers, the tension also has political undertones as strike committee activist that are resentful of workerist in NUMSA and the leading shop-stewards. These divisions according to von Holdt are essential in understanding the un-governability of the workers both in the workplace and in the society. The un-governability in the work-place was ensued by fragmentation in the work-place as workers rejected shop-stewards and form a strike committee in 1986, as a manifestation of internal contestation within the unions in the work-place.

The un-governability in the work-place resulted into wild cat strike as argued by a chairperson of workers that 'the real problem was that in 1986 we formed what we called a strike committee made up of all those militant guys that would always like to see action. For any petty thing they would just stop people to say, 'No today we are not going to work there is a strike' some times as a chair-person, I would come to work and find there is strike and I didn't know about it' (von (Holdt, 2000: 103). He further notes that:

> ..internal conflict-often violent in nature-and contestation over practices, strategies and meanings as central to an understanding of militant black trade unionism in South Africa. Collective identities formed in traditional rural communities, urban communities and in the national political struggles against apartheid are crucial to understanding both the internal contestation and strategies and practices of the trade union movement, furthermore, the work-place practices of South African form of SMU are quite different from those characteristics of labour movements in industrialised countries (von Holdt, 2002: 286).

Therefore, this study appreicates the tension and fragmentation of solidarity within SMU by relying on the internal contestation thesis argued by Von Holdt (2002) which focuses on apartheid repressive work-place regime influenced by different identities such as ethnic, migrant identities as the basis of union contesting order. The Hyman (1971) pessimist tradition of trade unionism that sees unions as negotiators of order, and Beiler, Lindberg and

Pillay (2008) accomodatory strategy as well as class issues engendered by workerist tradition of the trade unions (Friedman, 1987, Hindson, 1982, Pillay Unpublished, Baskin 1991, Lambert and Webster, 1988). These approaches constitute the basis of understanding solidarity fragmentation within an alliance such as LASCO as can be analysed below.

The tensions between Unions and communities especially in South African case is anchored during the days of intense community and trade union alliances in engaging the apartheid political order and its attendant repressive work place regime. To understand the inherent tension between community and trade unions as FCWU maintained 'there is a symbiotic relationship between workers problem and community problem, however, nature of the unions makes it difficult to subordinate itself to community decisions due to the shop floor tradition of the unions. However, union members are encouraged to be part of community organisations 'we would hope our members would be in the fore front of community struggles not because they are union members but because they know the value of organisations' (SALB, 1982: 54-58).

According to Pillay (Unpublished) those that unite political and economic struggles especially aligned to ANC-UDF their detractors called their actions as populism. Union engagement to wider socio-economic issues is characterised by these labels. What implications do such labelling implies to understanding the fragmentations between Trade Union and Civil Society relations in Nigeria during the subsidy removal mass-protest?

Beiler, Lindberg and Pillay, (2008) also relate the tension between Trade unions and civil society through what they called accomodatory vs. transformatory strategy. Trade unions seek accomodatory strategy while the social movements seek transformatory strategy. The former entails reforms while the latter seeks transformation of the social order. Beiler et'al accomodatory and transformatory strategy resembles Hyman (1971) 'optimist' vs. 'pessimist'

view of trade unions. The implication of these traditions during the fuel subsidy removal mass-protest was that social movement were calling for a reconfiguration of political order by shifting the balance of forces in favour of the masses as 'mobilisation for alternative vision is an inherent feature of Social Movement' (Friedman, 2012:93).

Looking at this fragmentation that characterise the alliance Friedman (2012), describes the salient features of both Trade Unions and social movement and its impact on their relationship. 'Social Movement are different from Trade Unions because their motive is to expand the Democratic space 'they are concerned not with concrete changes but to act as alternative avenues for democratic expression outside those formal political system or as mobilisers of an alternative socialist vision…most of movements did not seek negotiation with the authority –indeed they see it as unacceptable compromise' (Friedman, 2012: 93).

2.4 Corruption and rentier state: a source of mobilisation in Nigeria

The SMU literature discussed above has shown how authoritarian industrialisation especially in Brazil and South Africa served as source of trade union and community mobilisation. In Nigeria, the predatory state and the resultant lack of embeddiness between the state and society, this creates a basis for trade unions to link up with other segment of the society in challenging the state ineptitudes as exemplified during the fuel subsidy mass-protest. Corruption and rentier state as a source of mobilisation for trade unions and society is portrayed in other African Social formations such as the Arab Springs in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. These states became less embedded to their society, very restrictive in citizen participation coupled with the repressive tendencies of the constituted authority in containing democratic impulses emerging from their societies. How did the rentier state trigger mobilisation from below as a form of counter-movement (Burawoy, 2012)? Did the

democratisation process in Nigeria have relation with the citizen's contestation for change during the fuel subsidy mass-protest?

Pam Sha (2012) has also joined other scholars in discussing the impact of corruption in the administration of oil industry in Nigeria. 'The various probes of the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) also show that billions of the Nations money cannot be accounted for. The audit of the petroleum account undertaken by the Nigerian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NIETI) shows that the Nigerian Government does not know how much oil is produced and sold; neither does it know how much revenue accrues to the country from the sale of oil.

Pam Sha (2012) has attributed the decay in the petroleum industry to the Nigeria drive on the neo-liberal policies of rolling back the frontiers of state in the economy, through various IMF induced reforms as alternative measures in the time of crisis, and the rent seeking political elite which he describe as 'inefficient and parasitic domestic capitalist class which is comfortable in operating in the sphere of circulation rather than in production' (Pamsha, 2011: 37

Pam sha observed that the labour's choice of street option in pressing its demands rather than the boardroom protest of collective bargaining point to the failure of the state to meet the demands of the citizens and also paints to the picture of a failed state. (2012).

The return to civil rule in Nigeria in 1999 has brought a new form of mobilisation for the labour movement around issues of retrenchment, casualisation, deregulation and privatisation. Labour movement engagement during democratisation process was very robust and has created a strong link between labour and civil societies in Nigeria. The political atmosphere was heated by the growing state repression and exploitation occasioned by weak

political parties to challenge such ineptitudeness. Hence, labour became the strongest opposition and the voice of the oppressed.

As captured by Brandel (2012) in the absence of strong opposition and autonomous political opposition parties it was assumed that Trade Unions may be the central actors in any process of transition' (Brandel, 2012). Interestingly, Brandel utilises the concept of rentier state to buttress the weak link between state and society especially in Arab countries that witnesses uprisings and other societies like Nigeria, whose major income is from rent generated from oil and Gas. He notes that, it is illusionary to expect long term democratic and developmental policies to replace the rentierism that permeates the fabric of the society (Brandel: 2012). How relevant is the rentier state in understanding the role of the labour movement in contesting the public policies, since rentier state have very low level of participation of citizens in decision making.

Absences of embeddiness between the state served as a source of mobilisation for labour movements and its constituents in contesting public policy that seem inimical to the society. 'The link between state and society is weak. Skopol describes the Shah's state as much less rooted and embedded in society' (Cited in Brandel, 2012: 56)

On the issues of challenges of democratisation which may constitute a basis of mobilisation for trade unions. Bangura (2012) raises three major challenges facing Nigeria's Democracy which is failure of credible election, parties without ties with social movement and failure of developmentalism. These three challenges have hindered the development of Nigeria. The return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 has regresses the viability of its electoral process the way and manner in which leaders came to power makes it difficult to be hold accountable by the electorate as obtained in the mature democracy where there is strong tendencies for incumbent to lose power. 'Fear of loosing power through elections can push government to

adopt and sustain social reforms' (Bangura, 2012:81). In Nigeria reverse has been the case as the out come of 2003-2007 elections made the Transition Monitoring Group to title its report *Do the Voters Count?* As a contestation of the outcomes of the elections.

2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The literature review above has demonstrated the trend and dynamics of trade union mobilisation beyond the work place in the cases of South Africa Brazil and Nigeria as well as the character that shapes trade union and community/ party alliances. The literature of SMU has analytical dearth in addressing other forces of mobilisation beside authoritarian industrialisation (Siedman, 1994, Von Holdt, 2002).

In Nigeria's social formation, this study takes its point of departure on the role of weak state and predatory practices and corruption that embeds the oil sector in Nigeria as a basis of social mobilisation for SMU under LASCO represented as a counter-movement during the fuel subsidy mass-protest in Nigeria. Issues of solidarity to SMU in Nigeria were influenced by the weak nature of the state, corruption, election rigging and rising cost of living. These factors constitute people support for the mass-protest and strikes that follows the withdrawal of subsidy by the federal government.

Unlike the classical SMU literature such as Lambert & Webster (1988), Siedman, (1994), Von Holdt, 2002, 20003, that underscored the role of authoritarian states and repressive Apartheid work-place regime as the basis of community support and alliance with trade unions, in rendering the apartheid political order ungovernable so as to win both equal rights in the work-place and in the society.

In Nigeria, the political right did not translate into the substantive Democratic aspirations of the citizens such as better standard of living, poverty reduction, and reducing inequality. For instance, de-industrialisation through the collapse of industries and heightened un-employment that result into a reserve army of the un-employed, the nature of the elite formation characterises by the petit bourgeoisie whose economic base lies with rent seeking from state resources, and the rising inequality between the rich and the poor which culminate into Harvey's (2012) 'accumulation by dis-possession'. Alienation from social and economic rights, poverty among the poor accelerated by a 'captured' and 'predatory' state (Evans, 1995, Joseph, 1987), has form the basis of massive support to the LASCO alliance during the fuel subsidy mass-protest in Nigeria which also resonates with Waterman (1993) that de-industrialisation could also be the basis of SMU.

Similarly, the breakdown of LASCO alliance could be understood based on the class orientation of the Trade unions which is influenced by labour capital relations, while Social movements are implicated in state society relations. The subsidy removal mass-protest is more of a societal demand than factory based demands. The civil society desire to forge ahead with the strike despites its suspension by the Trade Unions reflects it desire to protect the society against commodification and marketisation that obstructs the fabric of the society (Webster, et'al 2008). While, Trade unions suspension of the strike could be attributed to its desire to save its organisation from state attack following the price reduction by the state. Hence, unions negotiate order.

For instance in South Africa affiliation to UDF according to South African Labour Bulletin SALB has generated a lot of controversies between trade unions and community activist. The General Workers Union GWU Secretary maintained that trade unions have two major difficulties one been that of the structure of organisations affiliated to UDF and the second

relates to the single class nature of trade union, relative to the multi-class nature of the UDF and of many of the organisations affiliated to it. The General Secretary made the following remarks:

> The critical feature that all these organisations have in common, as far as we can see, is that they are primarily organisations of activists. To say they are organisations of activist is not intended as a slight in any way, and we believe that there is a great needed for this type of organisations in South Africa. But we still insist that they bear no similarity in their structure or organisational practices to a trade union p 243
>
> Working class individuals occupy leading positions in national political organisation inside the country. It's important because I believe the second to be true as well, that workers must have special status in multi-class organisations. Workers must have the opportunity to lead the pace, style, tone and language in fact the whole discourse of the organisation…working class is the only group with a class interest in democracy. Other social classes or groupings might have an interest in relative or partial democratisation of society. (SALB, 243-249).

2.5.1 Political Orientation:

Important factor in understanding divisions and tensions within SMU alliance is the political orientation of the movements. This study argued that the political orientation of trade unions is tilted towards what Webster and Adler (2000) called radical reform in the context of South African Democratic transition in 1994, as trade unions accept participation in the ANC led alliance government by influencing certain decisions rather than advocating for a new order. Trade unions accept piecemeal reforms and held a dream for socialism by swelling the rank and file of the ANC. This perspective is similar to Beiler, Lindberg and Pillay (2008) 'accomodatory solidarity' or Hyman (1971) pessimistic view of trade unions.

Therefore, the suspension of the strike and mass-protest by the Trade Unions following the reduction of the price by almost 50% by the federal government reveals more of the reformist nature of the trade unions built on 'bargaining' framework and concession seeking. This view also contrasted with von Holdt (2002 & 2003) that sees unions as contester of order in the work-place in South Africa, in this case union had become a negotiator of order within an

alliance. Similarly, the research found that unions political views during the suspension of the strike was influence by its strategic position in the production and its desire to protects its organisation.

While Civil Society organisations seem to be blurred, characterised by diversity and multiplicity of interest. These multiplicity and lack of decision making floor is the major feature that distinguishes it from the Trade Unions. Similarly, this study observed that the unfinished project of formalising LASCO structure into the trade union decision making organs was also a factor for divisions during the strike and mass-protest, although the Chairman and Secretary of JAF the civil society component of LASCO, were normally accommodated in NLC NEC meetings while taking critical decision for collaborative actions. However, their presence does not significantly make impact in a decision making floor populated by 99 percent of Trade Unionist. This brought about lack of horizontality in decision making process as trade unions always got an upper hand.

2.6 CONCLUSION:

This chapter has reviewed the various literatures on SMU with particular reference to the basis of trade union and community mobilisation especially in South Africa predicated on authoritarian industrialisation. The review has pointed to the inadequacy of the literature in understanding the basis of trade union mobilisation during the fuel subsidy removal mass protest in Nigeria, and the tension it generated. The review suggest that corruption was engendered by rent seeking is the point of departure for trade union to mobilise with other forces in the civil society against the state.

Finally, it suggests that understanding relationship between LASCO partnership during the mass protest, and the tension that follows the suspension of the strike that prompted the civil

societies under JAF to deplore the positions of the trade unions requires theoretical underpinning within class theory and political orientation of both trade unions and social movement. The former corresponds to the Beiler's et'al 'accomodatory solidarity' or Hyman Pessimist view of trade unions while the latter corresponds to 'Transformatory solidarity' (Beiler, Lindberg and Pillay, 2008).

This tension is further grasped by understanding the strategic location of Trade unions in the production system defined by Marxist thesis of working class exploitation. On the other hand, civil society organisations attitudes towards the suspension of the strike were a response to protect the society against the state dis-embeddiness or withdrawal from vital sectors of the economy such as oil industry. As argued by Webster (undated) we need both Marx and Polanyi to understand a viable counter movement project by what he called seeing Marx through the eyes of Polanyi, which entails understanding workers exploitation in the sphere of production, and commodification of the society by the market in the sphere of reproduction.

CHAPTER THREE

'We are not negotiating Price'

Social Movement Unionism: Mobilising Against Corruption:

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

This chapter examines the basis of trade union and civil society mobilisation during the fuel subsidy mass-protest in Kano, Nigeria, by reviewing and analysing the research interviews. The respondents include trade unionist, community members and civil society organisations that participated in the mass-protest. Of great significance is that, the chapter discusses history of Trade unions and alliance politics in Nigeria and the nature of LASCO organisation and mobilisation in the study area, and the reason for Trade Unions linkage with the civil society, reviewed within the SMU discussions and alliance politics literature in South Africa. The chapter shows that LASCO as a form of SMU was engendered by weak corrupt state in Nigeria, unlike the classical SMU debates that focus on authoritarian states and repressive work-place regime. The chapter further argues that, SMU has the potential of suppressing primordial identities, thereby engendering a unified form of citizenship as shown by the fuel subsidy strike and mass-protest under LASCO.

The theme generated were corruption, rent seeking and challenges of democratisation as the basis of Trade Union mobilising the community against the state policy of deregulation as underpinned by the total removal of the subsidy the federal government on the first of January, 2012.

3.2 BACKGROUND TO TRADE UNION POLITCAL ALLAINCE IN NIGERIA:

Trade Union involvement in politics in Nigeria especially anchored in the alliance politics, has brought about two major divisions, the Conservatives and the radicals (Cohen, 1975,

Ananaba, 1969). The conservatives played a collaborationist unionism and made serious reservations about labour involvement in politics similar to workerist trend of FOSATU unions in South Africa. The conservative Unions in Nigeria during independent struggles include Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUCN), United Labour Congress (ULC) and Nigeria Workers Council (NWC). Whereas, the radical unions such as Trade Union congress TUC and Nigeria Trade Union congress NTUCN believed in political engagement and alliance with radical movement and political parties in challenging obnoxious colonial policies in Nigeria. The radicals had similar disposition with the populist trade unions in South Africa as workers see symbiotic relationship between problems of the society and that of the working class.

Ananaba (1969) argued that labour was not visible in politics in Nigeria until 1946 mainly influenced by two accounts. (1) That the colonial government was opposed to the idea of trade union involvement in politics so as not lend its platform to what it termed 'mischievous individuals' whom may turn the Trade Union platform against colonial subjugation. (2) Second reason was that few politicians and political parties recognised the potentials of the Trade Unions in the society. According to Ananaba the jinx of trade union aloofness in politics was broke by the 1944 Kings College student riot over bad food and unhealthy accommodation. What stroked the consciousness of Nigerians and trade unions in particular was the very callous response of the then Governor general Arthur Richard whose response to student protest and demonstration was to order the conscription of the student leaders into the army, and prosecution of the other student involved in the protest.

This very action provided a united platform for action by students, politician and trade unions and organise a conference in August 26, 1944 and resolved to found the Nigeria National Council which later transform into National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC). The

affiliation of (TUC) was a turning point in the Trade Union involvement in politics in Nigeria.

The second major events that herald the conscious actions by the popular forces against the Richard constitution was the' obnoxious bills' that sought to empower the governor to appoint and depose emirs. To fight this obnoxious bill, the NCNC thought of solving the impasse by sending a delegation to London, the pan-Nigerian Delegation composed of the National President Herbert Heelas Macaulay, General Secretary Nanmdi Azikwe, and three others. One of these three was Michael Imoudu. (Cohen, 1975).

The history of union in Nigeria has been characterised with political unionism as exhibited by the early trade union centres. For instance, the (NTUC) has maintained a high political inclination in the wake of Nigeria independence. At the first Revolutionary convention of Independent United Labour Congress (IULC) later NTUC in August 1963 a policy paper on the political struggle of the working class stated that: your parliament does not represent the material interest of the working class of Nigeria. It went on to argue that:

> Independence has not brought democracy to Nigeria workers and farmers. This is because the type of democracy preached by the Nigeria government is the democracy for the few rich Nigerians, the Emirs, the Obas, their families and supporters… the existing major political parties are parties of the rich and feudal aristocracy. They are dominated, controlled and financed by the representatives of the rich classes. They only use the people, the workers and farmers, as ladders to climb into power. (Cohen: 1975:156)

Cohen (1975) shows that NTUC in its characteristics plays a political form of unionism as its political goal permeates the restructuring of the society and attack on feudalism as perpetuated by the native authority. For Cohen 'NTUC exhibits a tendency towards movementism' the second paper on politics presented to the second revolutionary convention in 1965 argued that:

> We must henceforth use our economic power, whenever necessary to secure our political objectives. Having secured political power, we can then use it to alleviate our economic burden and secure a greater measure of social justice. That is the only way. You can not remove the sources of social injustice by limiting the activities of trade unions to mere economic, bread and butter, issues.

Cohen (1974) underlined the history of fragmentation in the Nigeria labour movement especially on union party relations. There are three overlapping opinions, one been that of creating structural link with the existing parties, the second is that of neutrality in party politics, and the third was for the workers to create their own platform. The 1945 upheavals has depicted how the first option was at play as union create a link with NCNC as radical unions viewed their economic struggle in tandem with anti-colonial movement. However there were dissenting views and reservations especially from the conservatives on the labour movement link with the NCNC especially during the TUC conference in 1948. H.P Adebola's speech at the conference has captured this concern as he noted:

> Unwarranted association with non-labour political parties tends to diminish the enviable positions which workers should occupy in the scheme of things. Instead of political parties soliciting for support of workers, the workers are soliciting for support of political parties where ideologies are at variance with those of the labouring class. Instead of affiliation I recommend full collaboration...Not to tie ourselves so that in the face of any disagreement we may be able to Part Company without embarrassment.

The ideological leaning of the NTUC is Marxist-Leninist and the centre maintained a strong tice with World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) based on fraternal relations which later transform into affiliation. Cohen observed that organisational weakness such as few membership and poor remittances of Check-off dues predisposes NTUC to adopt a kind of political bargaining unionism and it is more inclined to use rallies, protest and demonstrations in making its views unlike the United Labour Congress (ULC) that promotes collective bargaining form of unionism.

Cohen observed that, despite the collaborationist and conservative unionism of ULC and NWC and the political unionism of the NTUC; that do not in any way provide the basis of splitting the labour movement into two different camp radicals vs. conservatives which to him is an over exaggeration, as such divisions did not in any way reflect the interest of the rank and file members of the different camps, as well as the aspirations of their professional General secretaries. Rather Cohen notes that 'trade unions seem to function in much the same way, quite regardless of their attachment to one or other of the Trade Union centres. In fact, as we have seen in the case of the Ibadan University Workers' union, the membership may not be aware to which centre their union is affiliated.

The formation of the NLC in 1978 brought an end to the ideological divisions that characterise Trade Union movement in Nigeria prio,r and during the independence. NLC was created by the military government decree 22 of 1978 as the only recognise labour centre with forty two industrial union affiliates organised on cheque-off due system so as to make the movement financially viable and non-attractive to foreign interest. The formation of the NLC by the military government also prohibits its affiliation to any international centres outside the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU). This decision was based on the lesson learnt on the impact of previous union's affiliation to International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU) or WFTU which affected their ideological leaning which significantly affects their ideologies and augment rivalries that led to several conflicts among the working class and their organisations (www.nlcng.org).

The Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999, revived the labour movement following series of proscription by the military junta that ruled Nigeria from 1984 until its exit from politics in 1998. NLC adopted a programme of new beginning to revive the movement through inter-movement linkages and tacit alliance with communities and civil societies. It was precisely in

2004 following the trade union amendment act that the federal government allowed for the existence of multiple labour centres, subsequently TUC was formed. Leadership challenges and bad policies of the civilian administration since the return to civil rule in Nigeria has prompted the two labour centres to work in concert on several campaigns with civil society partners under LASCO. The formation of LASCO was a watershed of regaining and deepening the movement dimension of the trade unions in Nigeria through pro-active engagement on politics of production and that of reproduction in the wider society.

Unlike the alliances in 1940s that was inclined toward political parties, the LASCO alliance is geared towards social movement form of unionism whose mobilisation revolves around weak, rentier and predatory state in the process of democratisation.

However, the trade unions have lent their support to Labour party in Nigeria but such support has not yet translate into workers capturing political power. Similarly, just like the fragmentation that exist between union political alliance in 1940s, the fragmentation of LASCO alliance especially during the fuel subsidy mass-protest is much related to divisions between trade unions on the one hand, and the civil society on the other anchored by the suspension of the mass-protest by the trade unions.

3.3 LASCO ALLIANCE: ORGANISATION AND MOBILISATION

Social movement unionism is predicated in a particular form of organisation that coheres inter-movement linkages between Trade Unions, Community organisations and civil societies, through an ‘an organisational front’ (Cohen, 1974). The Classical SMU literature specifically applied in South Africa and Brazil suggested that authoritarian industrialisation like in Brazil and repressive work-place and political regime in South Africa, engendered SMU mobilisation both in the townships and in the work-places (Lambert & Webster 1988,

Siedman, 1994). The formation of Organisations such as United Democratic Front (UDF) in South Africa was robust in aligning with trade unions and popular organisations in challenging the South African Apartheid regime through organising in communities and in the work-place, as well as commitment to political engagement through the Africa National Congress (ANC).

However, In Nigeria, the weak nature of the state conditioned by the predatory and rentier state in the process of democratisation triggered a form of SMU mobilisation under LASCO, which resonated with the most recent debate in the SMU literature that SMU could be obtainable even under democratisation rather than the authoritarian states such as Brazil and South Africa in the last century (Siedman, 2011). LASCO as a form of SMU was formed in Nigeria as an 'organisational front' for trade unions and pro-labour civil societies under JAF, whose mobilisation revolves around; democratic challenges such as election rigging, corruption, rolling back of the state frontiers from the economy through deregulation and privatisation.

LASCO mobilisation was influenced by the trade union's need to link up with wider segment of the civil society in Nigeria under the pretext of what the NLC called 'new beginning' which sought to rebuild the labour movement following its long time proscription by the military that ruled Nigeria until 1999. The return to civil rule in 1999 and the leadership challenges that accompanied the transitions especially with the incessant hike in the price of petroleum and endemic corruption prompted the creation of a broad-based platform under LASCO. The Nigeria Trade union centres of the NLC and TUC sought the need to linked up with the civil society to make the movement relevant and visible in the society, while the Civil societies need the Labour Platform especially its 'collective bargaining power' to make their voice and campaigns visible and credible in the eyes of the state.

LASCO major campaign issues, since formation revolves around electoral reform, anti-deregulation campaign, and demand for increased minimum wage for the Nigerian workers. LASCO has sensitised large segments of Nigerians through Road shows and campaigns in overhauling the Nigeria's electoral regime that was fraudulent since return to civil rule in 1999, as LASCO mobilisation was supported by many Nigerians which resulted into the formation of electoral reform committee in 2007 by the Nigeria's President, it is noteworthy that, the inputs of LASCO formed the cornerstone of the Justice Uwais Led committee recommendations. Similarly, LASCO's campaigns were responsible for the removal of the erstwhile Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) , whom was seen as the monster that presided over the fraudulent elections ever had in Nigeria in 2007. Secondly, anti-deregulation campaigns is the cornerstone of Trade Unions relevance in Nigeria, as LASCO campaigns against the subsidy removal and endemic corruption surrounding the administration of the subsidy has garnered solidarity to Nigeria Labour Movement. To make itself viable LASCO has the following Goals and structures:

3.3.1 Overall Goal of LASCO:

The overall goal of LASCO should be to provide popular platform both to challenges current manifestations of bad governance and ultimately to actualize a responsive government that will be accountable to the people and alive to their needs, wishes and aspirations.

Objectives:

The following specific objectives are proposed for consideration:

1. To create a broad based movement for popular emancipation founded on the sustainable alliance of organizations of the oppressed or marginalized throughout Nigeria

2. To struggle against all policies, programmes, measures, laws, agencies or governments that oppress or impoverish the people, hamper national development or hinder the full actualization of individuals and group potentials.
3. To facilitate the emergence of an alternative charter (or framework) for the democratic governance and human centered development of society on the basis of the expressed will of the people and the utilization of the common wealth for welfare of all.
4. To systematically and consistently educate, enlighten, organize and mobilize the Nigerian people at all levels towards the attainment of these objectives (LASCO background document).

3.3.2 Structures:

LASCO's structures is based on the concept of a bilateral alliance-of organized labour and the joint platform of civil society groups committed to the objective of LASCO and the alliance with Labour. The Labour component of the alliance is already well streamlined comprising NLC, TUC and CFTU (though CFTU is no longer in existence as it former affiliates have merged with the NLC), the Civil Society component has streamlined itself under the platform of the Joint Action Forum (JAF). All non-labour groups that want to be part of LASCO must thus be advised to join JAF in the same way that any labour organization that wants to join LASCO must come through the labour components.

3.4 Protest organisation and Mobilisation in Kano:

Following the removal of fuel subsidy by the Nigerian government on the first of January, 2012, sporadic actions began across major cities in Nigeria such as Kano, Lagos and Abuja through street protests by various organisations decrying the government decisions and

demanding for policy reversal. The removal of the subsidy was contained in a statement issued by the Petroleum Price and Regulatory Agency PPRA, thus, 'the PPRA wishes to inform all stake holders of the commencement of formal removal of subsidy on PMS. Marketers are to note that no one will be paid subsidy on PMS discharged after January 1' (New Nigeria News paper, January, 2nd 2012 p1).

For Nigerians the year began with nightmares as people were taken by surprise by the government subsidy withdrawal, in fact, those that travelled during New Year and Christmas festivities could not come back as transportation fare rises beyond expectation. This has restricted movement among Nigerians and many could not afford to go to work as such people extend their profound solidarity to the planned declaration of the strike and mass-protest by the Nigerian Trade Union centres.

The tension that accompanied subsidy removal has generated sporadic street protest across the country before the NLC/TUC National Executive Council (NEC) conveyed a meeting and announces the day for the commencement of the 'mother of all strikes'. Youth in the Major cities such as Lagos, Kano, and Kaduna have already overtaken and block major streets, chanting anti government songs and demanding the FG to retreat on its decision. The Secretary of the Joint Action Front, JAF the partner in the LASCO, Comrade Abioudun Aremu while addressing the protesters urged them to remain vigilant in agitating for their right:

> I want to urge you all to remain steadfast. We must continue to make bonfires. We must continue to barricade the roads; we must ensure that fuel is sold at the official rate of 65 Naira and we must continue to sensitise people in our neighbourhood that this government is indeed a prodigal government. We must let the few who occupy Aso Rock today realise that they can't determine the future of millions of ordinary Nigerian masses. (Daily Trust Wednesday, January 4 p2)

Similarly, In Kano the area focused by this study, Student of Tertiary institutions stationed themselves in the famous silver Jubilee square and renamed it after the Egypt 'Tahrir Square'. They stayed through out the night before they were dispersed by Security forces. Who the security forces implored them to wait until the Trade Unions officially declare the strike. Subsequent of the police actions, some of the protesters were wounded, their vehicles destroyed and personal effects stolen. Director of action and Mobilisation of Nigeria Student Zone A made the following remarks in Kano.

> We urged the government to revert to the former price as he argued that 'they talked about 16 billion for power, where is the power and the money? We are not fools, where is the excess crude fund? What is the assurance that this 1.3 trillion would be put to use? We do not trust our leaders; we will be here forever until the president comes to us and tell us that the litre of fuel is brought back to 65 naira. (Daily Trust, Thursday, January 5 2012p 7).

The young protesters in Kano had, enjoyed high level of solidarity among community members especially during their occupation of the famous Silver Jubilee roundabout, some supplied them with food, and mattresses as they plan to stay there till day break. The students were not alone in the struggle as the entire Kano community had mobilised for change. In an interview with one of the community activists and organisers of the protest Nura Maaji, He stated that the Kano community support was unprecedented as captured in the following words:

> Prior to the declaration of the strike by the NLC, the kano state civil society coalitions had already spearheaded a mass mobilization, led by the student of the 17 higher institutions in kano. The students occupied the famous silver jubilee square and named it after the Egypt Tahrir square during the Arab spring in Egypt. The role of the student groups signalled the first attempt at resisting the subsidy removal policy in Kano. Virtually, various people have played their role in the mass protest, ranging from religious leaders, politicians, women, academics and civil societies. (Discussion, June, 2012).

3.4.1 Structure of LASCO alliance in Kano:

Following the National Executive Council (NEC) meeting of the NLC and TUC on Wednesday 4th January, 2012, the long awaited outcome for the commencement of the mass-protest became a reality, as contained in the Joint communiqués of the NLC/TUC with the participation of the Civil Society partners under LASCO. The communiqué reads in parts, 'after exhaustive deliberations and Consultations with all sections of the populace, the NLC, TUC and other pro-people allies demand that the presidency immediately reverses fuel prices to 65 Naira. If the Government fails to do so, we direct that indefinite general strike and mass-protest be held across the country with effect from Monday 9th January, 2012. We call on Nigerians to participate actively in this movement to rescue our country. (NLC/TUC Communiqué, January, 2012).

The NEC directed all Trade union structures in various states to liaise with civil society allies under JAF to prosecute the strike and the mass-protest. as noted by the Chairman NLC Kano comrade Danguguwa (interview) that 'In Kano like other states after coming back from NEC meeting, we met at our State Executive Council (SEC) meeting and resolved to sermon a general meeting which comprises civil societies, NGOs, students unions, market men and women and then the leaders of the affiliates …we told people the message and the decision taken by the NEC… we agreed that we should come out with at least 3 committees that we felt will be useful in discharging whatever we want to discharge' (Interview, June, 2012).

Mobilisation in Kano was occasioned by the creation of various committees such as mobilisation committee, tactical committee and enlightenment and logistics committees respectively. These committees guided the modus operandi of the strike and mass-protest such as street procession, determination of meeting points and routes to be followed as well

as sensitisation of the general public on the basis of the strike and mass-protest through the media.

Hence, trade unions and civil society partners within the alliance mobilised various constituents in their respective locations under the leadership of Trade Unions. The organisational structure in Kano was based on a steering committee which tagged 'NLC/ASUU/CSO and Student grand coalition'. The coalition comprised of Trade unions under the leadership of the NLC and TUC, University lecturers under ASUU, lecturers of Tertiary institutions, Professional Associations like Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Nigeria Medical Association (NMA), lecturer of college of Education under Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) and students under the banner of Kano state student coalition, as well as several groups of the informal workers and the oppressed. A community activist in Kano, Comrade Sani Ayagi stated their grass-root mobilisation as follows:

> We have supported the NLC in mobilizing people at the grass root level to join the mass-protest, because fuel subsidy is the only thing that the common man benefits from at the grass root level. It is difficult for people to move to town for day to day transactions due to the increase in the price of petrol, but the federal government went ahead to embark on this policy, that is why as civil society we have shown our discontent with what the government is doing because it touch the heart of the grass-root. (Interview, June, 2012).

The declaration of strike by the NLC/TUC became the mother of all mobilisations as workers across the country down tools, market closed down, Airports, Sea ports, all grounded. This marks a clear demonstration of people's power under civilian administrations. The major rallying point of the protest was demanding the government to reverse its decision, and focus on addressing the corruption in the oil Industry. This change of focus of the Nigeria labour movement deviated from the previous precedence of negotiating prices with the government. The Acting General Secretary of the NLC, Chris Uyot reveals that the point of engagement

revolves around addressing the leakages that embeded the administration of the subsidy regime.

> The General strike and mass protest of January 2012 was somehow different giving experiences of our struggle against increase in fuel prices over the years, where by we negotiate price with the government. This time around, we decided that we are not going to talk about prices but we want to focus on the leakages, looting and corruption within the oil industry, which has distorted the process of pricing. We believe strongly that if the high level of corruption was addressed, Nigerians may pay less than 65 Naira per litre for fuel because we have always doubted the figure of 35 million litres a day consumed in Nigeria. We believed that if corruption in that sector was addressed Nigerians will discover that they consume less than about 20-25 million litres a day. So this was at the back of our mind when we carried out this struggle and the strike, and so we decided to go for strike that we were not going to negotiate. In fact the NEC demanded that prices were out of the question this time around we want full sanitation of the downstream sector and the oil industry (interview, June, 2012).

The refusal of the trade unions to negotiate price with the federal government contributed immensely in the stalemate that characterised various meetings with the federal government as government 'blinked' while labour remained adamant'. The federal government reiterated its position of **No going back** on the subsidy removal while the labour movement and the entire community remained resolute on the **policy reversals**. It was observed that the inability of the trade unions to negotiate price with the government this time around resulted into unilateral decision by the Nigeria's President to reduce the price to a certain level owing to the public pressure that was about to bring the government down. Subsequent of the reduction of the price by the federal government, the Trade Unions were in dilemma of either calling off the strike to save the polity and face public stiff resistance or continue with the strike whose repercussions on the countries political stability is grim. The dilemma of Trade unions was attributed to the desire to save its organisation from state attack and at the same time afraid of delinking it self from the mass-movement mobilised in the Nigerian Streets.

The position of labour on addressing corruption in the petroleum industry became the rallying point that shapes the opinions of so many people in Nigeria as patronage networks benefited immensely in the subsidy regime rather than the citizens. Patronage and rent seeking has attracted SMU mobilisation in Nigeria during the mass-protest under LASCO. This brought to the fore the role of weak and predatory state in understanding trade union and community mobilisation in Nigeria which contrasted sharply with the classical SMU literature that sees repressive states as precursor for the SMU as in the case of apartheid South Africa and authoritarian Brazil (Lambert & Webster, 1988, Siedman, 1994).

As noted in the literature review and conceptual framework, corruption has become a perplexing problem in Nigeria especially in the oil industry. The state became predatory (Evans, 1995) and prebendal Joseph (1987). Although the two concepts were applied in different occasions but both point to the state failure and remained apt in understanding the character of trade union mobilisation during the fuel-subsidy removal mass-protest in Nigeria. Evans uses the concept of predatory to underscores state failure of developmentalism in Zaire Congo, under Mobutu as the state became captured by vested interest who have no developmental agenda unlike in developmental states where the state embeds it self with certain element of society that have developmental goals or what Evans called ‘embedded autonomy’ like in the case of Asian developmental states.

Evans assumes that “some states may extract such large amounts of otherwise investable surplus and provide so little in the way of collective goods in return they so indeed impede economic transformation. These states are called ‘predatory’ rent seeking characterizes the state; the incumbent utilizes the power of their offices to create rents by restricting the ability of the market to operate.

The concept of predatory state as a heuristic device is relevant in understanding state failure in Nigeria and the way it engenders social mobilization by trade unions and civil society organizations during the fuel subsidy mass-protest. Rent seeking defines the social relations of production that favors the petit bourgeoisie who align with the bureaucratic elites to perpetuate capital accumulation in the Nigeria's oil industry.

The oil industry had become a very lucrative venture for the state elites and their allies in the private sector. Over invoicing of the actual litre consumes in Nigeria and the volume of the fuel imported from outside became highly contentions, as noted by the Nigeria's House of representative ad-hoc committee report on the investigation of fuel subsidy scam in Nigeria.

This discrepancy was revealed during the public hearing instituted by the Nigeria's House of Representatives following the subsidy mass-protest in January. Discrepancies in figures and submissions among the agencies that administer the subsidy regime in Nigeria became a decisive point for many Nigerians. For instance the Chairman of the Nigerian Extractive Industry and Transparency Initiative NIETI professor Assisi Asobei point to the lack of transparency in the payment of subsidy claims as he reviewed:

> Subsidy payment should only be made from central bank of Nigeria through the petroleum equalisation fund…the payment could only be effected on the approval of Accountant general with the approval of petroleum product pricing and regulatory Agency PPPRA...He accused the NNPC of deducting directly from estimated amounts from the domestic crude proceeds before remitting the rest to the federation account. (Daily Trust Thursday, January 19 2012).

Corroborating with Asobei's revelation the chairman of Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) Eng. Elias Mbam, broke another egg when he said that 'the whole subsidy regime was shrouded in secrecy and corruption' (New Nigeria Newspaper January 22 2012 Sunday). This secrecy had created a few cabals in the oil industry that grew very strong to undermine any effort at checkmating their excesses by various anti-graft

agencies created in Nigeria such as the notorious Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

Lack of transparency and accountability in the management of the subsidy regime was the rallying point for Citizens agitation against the removal of the subsidy which raises issues of insensitivity of the government to the plight of Nigerians, and this form the basis of contestation between state and labour movement. As observed by an interview with Bala of Network of Justice Kano, thus:

> We felt there were too many leakages in the oil industry that needed to be plugged, and except those things were done we felt there was no need for us to stop protesting. We wanted to show to the government that what it did was not popular with the people. If the government as a Democratic regime now thinks whatever it does is on the interest of the people, now here is a situation where by people came out on the street in mass to express their disapproval to the government and it was obvious that the government was lying, what it did was not in the interest of the people (interview, June, 2012).

Given the intensity of corruption and several leakages that embed the administration of subsidy regime, the fuel subsidy mass-protest in January became a bombshell that explodes the anger nursed in the mind of Nigerians, as well as series of questions they have been reserving only waiting for a platform with which to voice it out.

Therefore, the mass-protest epitomised by the trade unions and civil society organisations became a platform to channel the long awaited anger that manifest it self following the government decision to remove the subsidy on the first of January, 2012. Most Nigerians hold the view that the government has taken them for granted for long time.

The viability of street protest as the only weapon in the hands of the dispossessed was further illuminated by Comrade Shehu Sani of the Civil Right Congress of Nigeria. For Shehu Sani, the street protest is the only road to liberation from the economic slavery Nigerians were

engulfed owing to corrupt leadership that short-changed the citizenry. He thus argued that protest is the only available option to free themselves from the shackles of economic slavery. Removing subsidy is nothing but 'robbing peter to pay Paul which he said translates into robbing the masses to share money to state governors'. (Daily trust Monday, January 16 2012 p 7)

3.4.2 Leadership question in Nigeria: 'We are for Regime Change'

The major streets of Kano were stormed by angry youth under the leadership of the State chapter of the NLC and civil society networks, chanting anti-subsidy removal song and accusing the insensitivity of the (FG) under President Goodluck Jonathan. Although the objective for the protest is on the removal of subsidy as contained in the NLC communiqué, but the protesters were chanting songs for regime change. They describe the crop of leaders at the helm of affairs in Nigeria as 'Thieves', 'Traitors' and insensitive to the yearning of the people.

Why the strike took this particular dimension in Kano could be attributed to the aftermath of the 2011 general Election that brought the current leadership to power. The overwhelming majority of Kano citizens voted for the Congress for Progressive change CPC Candidate, General Muhammad Buhari from Northern Nigeria. The declaration of Goodluck Jonathan from the South, as the winner of election in 2011 has resulted into significant mayhem in the state; in fact, many Houses of perceived Jonathan supporters were burnt to ashes to symbolise their contest of the election result.

It is clear that the legitimacy crisis that engulfed the regime becomes the defining moment and a mobilising force for people to agitate for a regime change, especially, in Kano. Abdurasheed Komar Mata one of the student union leaders in Kano laments that, despite

Nigeria's riches it citizens have remained in abject poverty and fuel subsidy is the only benefit that goes to the common man. Hence, the fuel subsidy protest served as a time to *reclaim Nigeria for Nigerians* as stressed by the NLC.

For the protesters and many Nigerians the Mass-protest is an epoch making event and a decisive moment to be utilised, as Senator Umar Magaji of the Nigerian Youth made a poser to the protesters in Kano that 'Do you want Jonathan to resign? We have been taken for granted so this is the time to show that our voice matters, while the amplified voices of the protesters were saying *Ko Ya Janye Sai Ya Sauka*, which literally means that even if the president reverted the price to status quo he must resign.

Observing the mass-protest and the number of youth mobilised in the street point to the educational and employment crisis in the North and Kano in particular. Kano been the high populated state in Nigeria according to 2006 Census, have a reserved army of unemployed that could be mobilised by various forces in the society for good or for bad. The mass-protest became an impetus that amplifies the voice of the voiceless in the society.

To demonstrate the significance of people power, the Chairman of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria Dr Nasir Isa Fagge contended that people power is capable of bringing government to it toes as the subsidy removal mass-protest has demonstrated lack of government responsiveness to the yearning of the governed, which clearly demonstrated during the subsidy mass-protest as he remarked:

> But I think the message has been sent to the government that any government that comes up with any anti-peoples policy stand the chance of loosing favour with the people, and Nigerians are really mobilised you see what happened in Lagos despite all the draconian attempt to suppress people the citizens in Lagos were still able to come out. So we were convinced that if people should venture into taking similar steps again because the people were convinced that this is a democratic government and democracy entails consultation with people, and if government will continue

> coming out with policies without consultation I am pretty certain that the citizens of Nigeria will be in a position to resist such anti-people policy. (Interview, June, 2012).

The demonstration of people's power during the mass-protest as captured above has clearly shown that people are fully mobilised to protest against unfriendly policies but did not have a platform to do that, as the opposition political parties remained docile. This lack of avenue to express grievances prompted the chairman of NLC Kano to make the following observations:

> From what transpired it is like members of the public are getting to understand that it is only labour being a pressure group that can challenge some poor or bad policies of the government. With that people are getting to understand that yes labour deserved to be given solidarity. Our leaders know that they can be challenged and checked on any thing that is contrary to things that they promise to the members of the public during election. The issue of fuel subsidy has given education to Nigerians that they can challenge their leaders at any time if they are not satisfied with there leadership or if they see transferency and accountability is not there, then I think if that continues, very soon our dream of changing Nigeria may likely become true (Interview, June, 2012)

The dream of Changing Nigeria for the better as shown by the above interview is anchored on the bad leadership in the country since Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999. It is observed that the whole struggle during the mass-protest was an attempt to interrogate the leadership question in Nigeria as many Nigerians do not see its viability in addressing the plight of the common man, due to the virtual collapse of the working of the political system. In fact, the situation in the country is akin to Achebe's popular Novel that 'things have fallen apart'. The taxonomy of things falling apart in Nigeria due to poor leadership was expressed by Nasiru Kura (interview) thus 'The mass-protest and the whole struggle were to interrogate the whole leadership question in the country, that was why people have demonstrated their desire for regime change.'

The subtle ground for regime change became obvious in the opinion of the convener of Save Nigeria Group (SNG) Pastor Tunde Bakare who noted that things are not working in favour of the citizens as such there is a basis for people to join the mass-protest to challenge

insensitive leadership. Many Nigerians believed that the protest is beyond fuel subsidy but rather is to interrogate the whole leadership question in the country. As noted by Pastor Tunde Bakare 'the protest is beyond fuel subsidy but a war against corruption and insensitive leadership' (Daily Independent, Tuesday, January, 10, 2012)

What contributed to the leadership challenges in the country was attributed by the Nigeria's former president General Babangida to the collapse of social contract between the government and the governed that resulted into exclusionary leadership. Similarly Mr. Babangida had also addressed the high tendency of executive fiat in the decision making process as legislative arm of government seem not been consulted by the executive while embarking on the subsidy removal by the President. This brings to question the overwhelming power of the executive arm in the American Democratic model Nigeria is operating, that either disregard other organs of the government or render them as mere rubber stamp. Mr.Banagida's observation is made as follows:

> The problem and challenges facing the country points to the breakdown of social contract between the leaders at all levels and the led the leaders have failed their responsibility at meeting the expectation of the people….the National assembly should have been made to be part of the decision-making process since 2012 budget is yet to be discussed passed by the legislature. Every government should ordinarily take the interest of her people at heart so that the reason for its existence will be justified …this exclusive decision by the executive arm of government does not speak well to the tenant of democracy. (New Nigerian Tuesday, January 3rd 2012: P1-2).

The exclusion of important arm of government like legislature implies why they (the Law Makers) extend their solidarity to the Nigerian people as they reconvened an emergency session on the 8th of January a day to the commencement of the nationwide protest and passed a resolution imploring the president to restore the subsidy and begin consultation with stakeholders. The insensitivity of the leadership was further demonstrated in Kano in the following ways as captured by New Nigerian Newspaper: 'Hundred of youth matched

through major streets in Kano to protest the withdrawal of fuel subsidy by the federal government and accused the president Jonathan for being insensitive to the feeling of ordinary Nigerians'. (New Nigerian Tuesday, January 3rd 2012) p1

While the Chairman of ASUU BUK Branch, considers the removal as a betrayal of trust as he opined 'We were saddened by the callous decision of the government to remove subsidy on petrol, saying such action is not only inhuman but was also ill-advised and a betrayal of the trust Nigerians have on the government'. (New Nigeria, Thursday, January 5, 2012 p 3). Given the above discussion it is clear that the removal of subsidy has mobilised Nigerians to challenge the poor leadership in the country.

One instructive lesson was that the seven days of the mass-protest has shifted the balance of forces in favour of the people as the organised labour and its allies became a virtual source of power for the one week Mass-protest. Along this line, Jideofor Adibe a newspaper columnist with Daily trust made a seminal article titled *Nigeria's Pawpaw Revolution* in which he made the following remark as an assessment of the mass-protest:

> If we define revolution as a change in the configuration of power relations between establishment and the people in favour of the latter. For the one week it effectively lasted, it was a triumph of people's power with the leadership of the organised labour and its allied civil society groups successfully mobilising and framing the struggle as a simple matter of people versus the state and capital.

Also in a different article titled: *political protest, protest policing and other matters* published in the daily trust Thursday, January 12, 2012 p 56. Jideofor Adibe attributes the significance of democracy in allowing people to voice their anger against any policy they deem disenchanted. He argued that the right for organised protest in a democracy while not absolute anywhere in the world is generally seen as a manifestation of three important fundamental human rights, the right of assembly , the right to freedom of association and the right to freedom of speech. (Daily trust Thursday, January 12 2012 p56)

As noted in the literature review that the challenges of democracy has also become the basis of mobilisation for trade unions and civil society organisations against the state. Bangura attributed the challenges of democracy in Nigeria to three key issues, as failure to hold credible election, parties without ties with social movement, and failure of developmentalism (Bangura, 2012).

How did the above challenges of democracy affect the character of trade union and civil society mobilisation during the fuel subsidy mass-protest? This theme explores the democratic crisis and leadership question in Nigeria and how it influenced people mobilisation during the subsidy removal mass-protest. Many people of the grass-root do not feel the presence of the government, as such they see the fuel subsidy as the only benefits accrued from the state and the only way to show their discontent is by joining the mass-protest.

However, the advocacy for regime change as a way to overcome the challenges of democracy as canvassed by the mass-protesters remained an emotional, political and to some extent a mere advocacy. Will regime change bring a new social order? Will it prosper or impedes the process of democratisation that started twelve years ago after a long history of military incursion in Nigeria politics. In response to this question, the Ag. General Secretary of the NLC remarked as follows:

> We in the labour movement did not go on the protest whether to effect on the regime change. We went on this strike in order to sanitize the oil sector and allow Nigerians to be able to enjoy the fruits of the oil wealth… I think the problem this is carrying is the misconception of what type of transformation that the society needs. As far as we are concern in the labour movement we don't believe that we should be playing what we did on June 12 were several Nigerian youth marched on the street against the military and got killed. We succeeded to put pressure on the military to go, what we got were men who were in civilian cloth but had the mentality of the military. There was no class transformation in terms of power change. It was just like a transfer of power to a civilian ruling class, and so we couldn't see policies that are beneficial to Nigerian workers, because the parties in power have a deep ideological

> sense of identity to protect capitalism. And so the question we need to ask ourselves is, was the civil society preferred for a total transformation of society in such a way that we will not just change faces and have the same type of people in power? Are we going to have a workerist democratic power change in the sense that there is a worker friendly government? That is a government that came in to power by our mass protest, which we would have wished. Before you talk about that total transformation you must have the structures on ground. And there was no time in which the civil society and labour discussed the issue of structures.

It is clear that the idea of regime that arose during the mass-protest emanates largely from some civil society group, politicians and majority of the public. The labour movement aloofness from regime change is related very much to the nature of the demand at the moment which is policy reversal, its structure which is shop floor based as well as, its particular sentiments towards democracy, its reformist and accomodatory orientation and its worry about authoritarian reversals. Similarly, some civil society activists also have maintained the same position against the idea of regime change as maintained by Bala Network of Justice:

> No! not, necessarily regime change because that will be unconstitutional as law abiding citizens of the country. We do things in conformity with the law there are laid down procedures of change in leadership of the country. We have to wait for a tenure to expire and change the regime through the election process. And we never set out to do anything to the contrary and we had nothing against government or its functionaries per say. But what we were against was the policy of the government and how they went about implementing the policy (Interview, June, 2012).

3.4.3 Submergence of Primordial Identities: "We are against oppression"

The literature of Social Movement Unionism has demonstrated the relevance of non-workers identities in shaping community mobilisation as national and racial identities shapes labour identity (Von Holdt, 2002, Cohen, 1974, Adisina, 2000). The character of mobilisation during the subsidy removal mass-protest resembles the above literature as people submerged their regional ethnic and religious identities to a common force facing the state. How relevant is

the submergence of primordial identities during the mass-protest to the value of the SMU literature in Nigeria? The following remark by Jideofor Adibe describes the character of the protest and its mobilisation beyond all social stratifies that reinforced the emergence of a unified labour identity.

> For the time the revolution lasted, the protesters from Ibadan-to Akure and from Kaduna to Kano-submerged their primordial identities to the larger contradiction of a collective struggle against perceived state callousness, if not wickedness. It was a telling sign that under the right leadership and conditions, Nigeria-nation will be a viable project….there were various efforts to portray the protesters as people trying to bring down the government of Jonathan because he is from South-South…what was proven was that Nigerians could close ranks to sustain a protest against unpopular policies. Our primordial identities and other contradictions may not disappear but they can be submerged to a higher course. (Daily Trust, Thursday, 19, 2012 p 56)

In relation to above character of the protest mobilisation beyond social and religious divide, was the peaceful nature of the protest especially in the North where mass-protests occasionally degenerates into religious or ethnic conflicts. The peaceful character of the protest was unprecedented in the history of Mass-protest in Northern Nigeria especially in Kano state. Along this line Mr. Steve Aluko made the following comments thus:

> That we want to inform all Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters, particularly in the North, that it is simply a mass-protest by Nigerians against those who have oppressed them..We have equally caution protesters against targeting churches or mosques we are united in this struggle against bad policies, irrespective of tribe or religion. (New Nigerian Monday January, 9 2012 p 5)

The culture of strike and violence is well entrenched in cities like Kano due to a high level of youth un-employment which created a counter culture of violence. The subsidy mass protest became exceptional as negative form of youth identities such as burning places of worships, looting of properties as *Ganima (booty)* became almost absent during the mass-protest. This success could be attributed to the high level of mobilisation undertaken by the Kano state chapter of the NLC in collaboration of the civil society networks. The chairman of the NLC

made the following point on the role of mobilisation committee in relation to the aversion of negative form of identities during the mass-protest.

> the mobilisation committee, which is shouldered with the responsibility of mobilizing the union leaders the civil society leaders, the NGOs the market men and women using various media such as the electronic and even the print. We instructed the union leaders first to mobilise and sensitize them and made them to understand why NLC intend to embark into that mass rallies and what NLC is trying to communicate to Federal Government during that rally, and where is the rally or the mass protest suppose to take place. So it was that mobilization committee that were tasked with that responsibility. like I said we use so many media organization and as such that contributed a lot to bring the attention of the members of the public in Kano to know that yes it is high time that Nigerians answered the call and we were able to come out from the beginning of the first day (Interview, June, 2012).

The role of mobilisation had really sensitised the people on the objective of the strike and the demand surrounding it which is reversal of the policy. People appreciated the fact that the major challenge lies with the state oppression rather than in their differences.

> In kano for instance, where past protest were characterised by looting of shops and attack of non-indigene by miscreants, the ongoing protest had been without any incidents of looting and burgling of shops…instead the protesters in states of Kaduna, kano, Abuja, Lagos and other hot spot for sectarian violence, have adopted the Egyptians Tahrir square system, where Christian provided human shield to their Muslim brothers to observe their prayers and vice versa. (Daily Trust, Thursday, January, 2012 p 3).

Similarly, the secret behind the peaceful mass-protest in Kano was also attributed to the fact Nigerian youth had began to realise the divide and rule tactics of some vested interest among the elites, who used them to perpetuate Armageddon in the society. Their mobilisation became a manifestation of their negligence by the authority as exemplified by the un-employment crisis and lack of opportunities. The following remark by the Leader of the Northern Youth Assembly Ibrahim Muawuyya was incisive ‘The secret behind the peace we are experiencing during this very important protest is for simple fact that Nigerian youth have this time around refused to be divided on the bases of religious, ethnic or political divide

which our so called leaders use to mis-lead us on important national issues' (Daily Trust Thursday January, 12, 2012 p 3).

Mobilisation of identity has history in Nigeria especially during the colonial period, and post-colonial state as a strategy of divide and rule. Jega (2000) notes that mobilisation of ethnic, regional and religious identities have a history in the colonial and post colonial Nigeria. The British Indirect rule policy nurtures the syndrome of 'us Vs Them' Muslim versus Christians' Northerners versus Southerners' to the extent that regional and ethnic sentiments were given prominence in the conception of public policies.

The experiences of the fuel subsidy mass-protest suggested that negative form of identity mobilisation could be temporary especially in the period of hardships. 'Identity consciousness is normal features of plural societies. But they became counter productive when they become platforms on which discriminatory practices and unjustified use of violence are organised' (Jega, 2000: 21).

3. 5 CONCLUSION:

The chapter has discussed major issues of mobilisation during the fuels subsidy mass-protest in Kano Nigeria. The key issues that underpinned people support for the protest were; corruption, challenges of democracy and identity mobilisation. The data revealed that predatory practices are capable to generate mobilisation against the state as shown during the strike and mass-protest. LASCO alliance was created as response to state failure and incessant hikes in the price of petroleum normally influenced by corruption.

The chapter argues that in the event of bad leadership and general disenchantment by the citizenry, negative forms of identities tend to submerge to give way to a unified form of identity to challenge the state oppression. This added value to the SMU literature that social

movement unionism could be shaped by submergence of negative form of identities that are divisive to the unity and progress of the society as resurgence of identity politics is very much pronounce in plural societies such as Nigeria (Jega, 2000).

The next chapter will look at how the relationship breaks down between trade unions and civil society organisation during the mass-protest.

CHAPTER FOUR

'We started together but marched out separately'

Social Movement Unionism:

Suspension of Strike and Erosion of Union Democracy

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter focuses on internal contestation within LASCO alliance following the suspension of the strike and mass-protest by the trade unions components of the alliance. The chapter argues that the break down of the alliance and the tension it generated is attributed to the perceived undemocratic process in which the strike was suspended. Several unionist and civil society partners argued that the decision was not subjected to the highest organ of the trade unions which is the National Executive Council (NEC). This subversion of the union democratic tenants had negatively affected the organisational cohesion of the trade unions on the one hand, its relation with civil society and communities on the other. Subsequent of the union perceived singular action, fragmentation of solidarity within the alliance manifested through violence against unionist, desire of the civil society and communities to forge ahead with the struggle and heightened mutual suspicion between unions and civil/community organisations. These challenges raise serious questions to the social movement unionism literature that sees SMU orientation underpinned by horizontality of relations and democratic decision making (Lambert & Webster, 1988, Waterman, 1993).

Therefore, this particular experience of tension within SMU as typified by LASCO alliance could be analytically understood through the nature of different Class Structure of unions, and civil society organisations. Trade unions are single class structures implicated in labour capital contradictions, what Burawoy called 'production politics', while social movements

are multi class organisations involved in state society relations and often involve in 'contentious politics' as a counter-movement to protect society (Polanyi, 2001). The fusion of the two spheres of exploitation in the workplace and that of society through policies that destroys society such as deregulation constitutes what Polanyi called 'counter-movement' (Polanyi, 2001, Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout, 2008, Burawoy, 2010). The desire of the society to forge ahead with the strike outside the trade unions platform revealed more of the nature of the demand, which is not a workplace issue but societal issue, as such the society tries to protect it self as a counter movement, while labour seeks concession to protect its organisation. However, the non success of the continuation of the strike entails the strategic position which labour occupies in production through its structural and associational power (Burawoy, 2010). Therefore, successful counter movement requires a binary of Marx and Polanyi, in other words fusion of sphere of production and that of reproduction as a basis of counter-movement through social movement unionism (Webster, 2012).

4.2 The pitfall of Union Democracy:

Decision making in the Nigeria trade unions rest squarely on four major organs of the unions, namely; Delegate conference (This organ meets every four years unless if there is emergency), National Executive Council (NEC) (regarded as the second highest organ of the trade unions that ratifies decisions, it is made up of state Chairpersons, and president and General Secretaries of the affiliates), National Administrative Council (NAC) made up of National Executives officers and principal officers of the secretariat (This organ normally discuss issues and forward it for review to CWC and for final ratification at NEC), and Central Working Committee CWC which comprises the National Executives and leadership of the affiliate unions 1.e President, General Secretary and Treasurer.

NEC is considered as the highest organ of the trade unions as it ratifies decisions made by the various organs. How did the LASCO alliance fit into the Trade Union Organs? Despite the unfinished formalisation of LASCO alliance, the Joint Action Front (JAF) which is the Civil Society component of the alliance was mainstreamed into NEC through involvement of JAF Chairperson and Secretary during NEC sessions especially when collaborative decisions are to be taken. How the union democratic ethos did became questioned by the suspension of the strike and mass-protest by the trade unions?

4.2.1 The January 14th NEC meeting:

As noted in chapter three, the strike and mass-protest spearheaded by LASCO that began on January 9th was subsequent to the increase in the price of petrol from 65 Naira to 141 Naira. The one week strike from 9th to 13th January, 2012 has brought the country to a standstill, despite several attempt at resolving the fracas, through various interventions such as; the resolution of House of representatives on the 8th of January, series of meetings with government delegation and the senate president from 9th -13th January, 2012. But all to no avail, the federal government insist on No going back, while the unions remained resolute on 'no retreat no surrender' unless government revert its decision and convene an inclusive dialogue. This resulted into series of deadlock between Trade Unions and (FG).

The high level of tension in the country that accompanied the strike/mass-protest and unprecedented mobilisation of Nigerians across all social divides as shown in chapter three prompted NLC/TUC to reconvene emergency NEC meetings to review the one week strike / mass-protest and strategise for a way forward. The NEC meeting was robust and fully attended by all NEC members across the country and in attendance was also the JAF chairman. What was striking in the NEC meeting was the renewed mandate to continue the strike and mass-protest nationwide on the 16th January, 2012 in order not to divorce the

labour movement from the mass-movement mobilised in the one week strike. The resolutions of the NEC meeting were:

1. NEC in session has considered the state of the Nation and urged the government to reverse to 65 Naira and immediately constitute an all embracing committee to look in to the subsidy matter.

2. That the Congress rallies and mass-protest was peaceful and apolitical and is not targeting, or advocating for regime change.

3. The NEC in-session has strongly warned the federal government over deployment of military personnel to threaten the protesters.

4. That the NEC has given a renewed mandate for the strike and mass-protest to continue and urge all to re-mobilise for the subsequent days.

5. On non-compliance with NEC decisions by the state councils, NEC in-session has suspended the NLC Chairman Abia state and directed that the immediate officer to takeover the stewardship of the state (NLC, NEC meeting 14th January, 2012).

The NEC decision on the 14ht of January was a serious relief to the labour movement, as it neutralize the rumour that the trade unions have compromise their earlier position as such the movement was hailed by popular interest across the country. Similarly, the NEC decision has revealed its political views that contrasted sharply from that of some civil societies and some opposition parties canvassing for regime change.

The insulation of the movement from such advocacy was very much an attempt to protect the working class organisation from state attack for an action not coming from its constituency and at the same time. it emphasised the nature of demand at the moment which was reversal

of the policy as stated in the 15th January, Press statement ' the labour movement once again reiterates that the strikes, rallies and street protests must be peaceful and that the objective is the reversal of the petrol (PMS) prices to their pre-January, 1st 2012 level. We are therefore not campaigning for regime change' (NLC/TUC Press Statement January, 15, 2010). This class orientation of the union made it to be a negotiator of order due its organisational structure that is shop-floor based and predicated on ordering of decision.

The resolve of the trade unions to continue with the strike was also reaffirmed in a press statement issued on the 15th of January following a deadlock meeting with the FG. The press statement titled **why Labour-FG talks stalled and Strike /Protest Continue Monday** stated thus:

> The talk between the federal government and labour represented by the NLC and TUC in Abuja on Saturday 14th January, 2012 stalled due to differences on the methodology of finding a solution to the crisis…the summary of the labour position at the meeting was that talks and consultations were ongoing before government aborted them by announcing the 120-220 per cent increase in the price of petrol, and that it is necessary to return to the status quo in order to douse tension, return the country to normalcy and allow for a conducive atmosphere for consultation and talks. However governments only offer was to reduce the new prices while declining to allow a phased price increase we think that the government position will not return the country to normalcy. The labour movement pledges that whenever and wherever government invites us to for talks, we shall be there without any conditionality…for the avoidance of doubt, the indefinite strikes, rallies and protests continue nationwide from Monday 16th January, 2012 (NLC/TUC Press Statement, January, 15th , 2012).

What was discerned from the above statement is the desire of both parties to end the heighten tension in the country. For the government it tries not to strike back, so as not to make an assault on its authority, while for the labour movement it was tormenting, as it tries to negotiate order and seek for the way out, by demobilising the people from the street to save the character of its organisation without much damage. The summary of the 14th January NEC meeting by the NLC president alludes to the concern of the trade unions to negotiate order as captured thus 'there is a serious tension in the country, labour and civil society has

heightened the desire of Nigerians to insist on an issue about the state of the nation. It is unfortunate that the president of the country is been caged by some elements in his cabinet. Therefore, as a movement we should find a way to come out from the struggle without damage' (NLC, NEC meeting, 14th January, 2012).

The desire of the labour movement to save its organisation and came out without damage was very much influence by the way it suspended the strike which was seen as undemocratic by the civil society and communities as can be shown below:

4.3 Strike Suspension and Breakdown of the Alliance: Union negotiates order

How was the Strike and Mass-protest Suspended? Following the stalemate that characterised Government Trade Unions series of meetings discussed above. On the early Morning of Monday 16th January, Nigeria's President made a National Broadcast reducing the price of petrol from 141 Naira per litre to 97 Naira per litre and urged the Trade Unions to suspend their strike; workers resume work and return normally in the country. In response to the President speech, the NLC/TUC and Civil Society allies announced that due to the volatility of the strike and high level of insecurity mass-protest were suspended, while stay at homes and strikes continues. It is important to note that, JAF was not indifferent with the decision to suspend the mass-protest and continue with the strike as contained in JAF press statement signed by its Secretary Comrade Abioudun Aremu:

> We have listened to and read the address of President Goodluck Jonathan in response to the legitimate demand of the people of Nigeria for the total reversal of the wicked hike in the price from N141 to 65. The Joint Action Front (JAF) and the labour and civil society coalition LASCO reject in its entirety the N97 offer which was unilaterally fixed by the president and his team of economic saboteurs… however, early this morning, our joint leadership advised Nigerians to continue the strike but should stay at home in view of the resolve by the federal government to unleash violence on Nigerians who want to exercise their right to protest and procession. (JAF Press Statement 16 January, 2012).

Following the suspension of the mass-protest while continuing with the stay at homes, the NLC/TUC NAC members reconvened a meeting to strike a way forward. For the TUC they told the meeting that their NEC has given their NAC go ahead to take what ever decision it deemed appropriate, while for the NLC it was a dilemma, as its NEC was not decisive on whom to call off the strike, although the NLC president has made a poser to NEC demanding in the event that things are going out of hand some thing must be done by the NAC.

The unity of the trade union centres and saving their organisation from both physical and internal assault by the state explain more of the decision they would likely take. Military men were deployed around major meeting points to disperse potential protesters. After series of indoor meetings of the NLC/ TUC NAC members, they finally resolved to call off the strike in the afternoon of Monday 16th January, 2012 as contained in the press statement signed by NLC & TUC President:

> In the past eight days through strikes, mass rallies, shutdown, debates and street protests, Nigerians demonstrated clearly that they cannot be taken for granted and that sovereignty belongs to them. In the last twenty four hours, the Labour Movement and its allies who had the historic responsibility of coordinating these mass actions have had cause to review the various actions and decided that in order to save lives and in the interest of national survival, these mass actions be suspended. We note the major successes Nigerians scored in these past days in which they rose courageously as a people to take their destiny in their hands. First, the Federal Government that chorused continuously that its decision to increase petrol (PMS) price to N141 is irreversible and irreducible, was forced to announce a price reduction to N97. We however state categorically that this new price was a unilateral one by the Government. Secondly, Government has been made to adopt the policy to drastically reduce the cost of governance. A third major success Nigerians recorded is to get the Federal Government to decisively move against the massive and crippling corruption in the oil sector. While until now Government has seemed helpless to tackle corruption, the mass action of the people has compelled it to address accountability issues in the Sector. In this wise, President Goodluck Jonathan has told the nation that the forensic audit report on the NNPC will be studied and proven acts of corruption will be sanctioned… In view of the foregoing, Labour and its allies formally announce the suspension of strikes, mass rallies and protests across the country. We demand the release of all those detained in the course of the strikes, rallies and street protests. (NLC/TUC Press Statement suspending the strike and Mass-protest, 16th January, 2012).

The suspension of the strike was seen by civil society, community members as even some trade unionist as been *undemocratic* and *non-transparent*, as it has not been subjected to consultation with LASCO alliance partners under JAF as reaffirm by the JAF Secretary, Comrade Abioudun Aremu thus:

> We went to the strike with the same consensus on the reversal of petroleum price but we marched out separately as labour did not carry the JAF partners in the suspension of the strike…While the strike became tense the government became repressive, the labour partnership taught it is good to suspend the strike. For us the struggle has to be completed we never believe that the strike has to be suspended. Essentially, that has created a national challenge in the alliance as it has effect on the future struggles (Interview: November, 2012).

While comrade Jaye Gaskia of United action for Democracy a member of JAF stresses the influence of the organisational orientation of LASCO partners i.e. Trade unions and civil societies. As he captured below:

> For the labour leadership, it was time to retreat, to safeguard the unions from repression which was imminent and had already been placed on the agenda; and which was going to be unleashed from 16th of January if there was no resolution b the 15th January. For the Civil Society (UAD & JAF), this was the time to intensify the action, to up the ante, by for example beginning the shutdown of oil operations and the actual more or less permanent occupation of strategic places across the country. We had no doubt if the deepened general strike and mass protests entered the second week across the country, that the regime will be faced with the choice of either throwing caution to the wind and beginning a brutal repression as in Syria or Libya before it; or it will cave in and return to status quo ante within which a genuine dialogue process aimed at addressing all the issues in the sector would take place (Jaye Gaskia, 2012).

In relation to the above interview the ASUU president (a trade unionist) Comrade Nasiru Fagge (interview) stated that suspension of the strike by NLC took them by surprised because National Executive Council (NEC) of the NLC resolved that the strike can only be suspended by NEC. He stated that 'some of us that were at NEC including the Kano state chairman of the NLC were convinced that such decision can only be taken by NEC and since we happen

to be members of NEC we were surprised that the leadership could on their own take the decision to suspend the strike'

Similarly in Kano state, the Chairman of the NLC Kano State Council was on air stressing that what the Central Labour organisations NLC/TUC did was not inline with the NEC mandate as such they will forge ahead with the mass-protest even outside the NLC platform. (BBC, Hausa interviews: 16th January, 2012) He further argued that the suspension of the strike was the basis of solidarity fragmentation as captured below:

> Actually the whole of first 4 or 5 days there was no any problem or differences, the only thing we encountered was on the last day. That was the day when that news was filtered that the leadership of NLC and TUC suspended the strike that angered people and people started stoning and sending insult and so many names to us that we betrayed Nigerians because the struggle we were pursuing was not completed… so that thing angered members of the public here in Kano to the extent of even insulting us, throwing stones, giving names to labour leaders. In fact we even have to hide ourselves…. So the only difference was that people were not happy in the last day and that was what distanced the public from the labour and even the solidarity was about to be withdrawn (Danguguwa, Interview, June, 2012).

The perceived subversion of union democracy by the unilateral suspension of the strike by the trade unions was a watershed in endangering a form of internal contestation through the use of violence against unionist as noted above. Solidarity began to erode by the use of violence as a form of internal contestation within the alliance; many trade unionists became threatened and intimidated by the protesters following the rumour that the strike has been suspended. Similarly, several Staffs of the NLC had received anonymous threat text messages warning them against suspending the strike. One of such text reads 'please tell your bosses not call-off the strike otherwise they will pay for the price'

In addition, several members of the NLC NEC had informed the Congress during the one week review of the mass-protest that must of the communities and civil societies had warned them not to call off the strike as stressed by an anonymous NEC member during the NEC meeting of 14th January, 2012 thus 'most of the youth in LAGOS they told us that if we attempt to call-off the strike they will slaughter us'. Several NEC members across the country had informed the NEC in- session that tension that reaped in their various locations seem insurmountable as such some were even contemplating going back homes after the NEC meeting.

The internal contestation that shapes the suspension of the strike was accompanied by internal violence within the alliance. This trend has resonated with Von Holdt (2002) that internal contestation is crucial to understanding the movement dimension of SMU in the work place regime, in this case the internal contestation is within Trade union/civil society alliance. What relevance does such theoretical underpinnings has in understanding the behaviour of social movements in Kano during the suspension of the mass-protest within trade union/civil society and community alliance? The enmity has shifted from the state to the trade unions. The following interviews underscored the role of violence as a basis of solidarity erosion within SMU alliance.

> The reaction was really shocking, because members of the public decided to focus attention on NLC leadership. I think it is good to place on record that some of our colleagues that were wearing NLC t-shirts and p-cap had to find an alternative dressing to be able to escape, because there were attempts to really beat them up. They were lucky some were able to get into neighbouring houses along the road to borrow t-shirts to replace the ones they were wearing that were carrying the NLC logo. So you could see that people were massively mobilised and suddenly NLC decided to call off the strike. Up to today many people were not satisfied with the explanations given by NLC (Nasiru Fagge, Interview, 2012).

The union behaviour towards the suspension of the strike revealed more of union as negotiator of order which sharply contrasted with Von Holdt (2002) that sees union as an instrument of contesting order in the work place, this study lean towards Hyman (1975) and Burawoy (1979) that unions have become negotiators of order in the workplace (Cited in Von Holdt, 2002: 288). But in this case, the union negotiates order in the context of alliance not work place regime crisis.

4.3.1 Suspending the Strike: 'We were Disappointed'

The suspension of the strike owing to the National broadcast made by the Nigeria's president who unilaterally reduced the price from 141 Naira to 97 Naira generated considerable public acrimony. Although, the Trade Unions have at the inception of the mass-protest told the public, they are not negotiating price this time around but demanding a total reversal of the policy. Their decision to suspend the protest amidst public expectation has generated resentment among the alliance partners as they deplore the Trade Unions position and ask Nigerians to continue to occupy until victory is won. Why did the trade union make a U turn on its earlier position? The Acting General Secretary of the NLC Mr Chris Uyot remarked as follows:

> What made us to suspend the strike will have to do with the high level of violence that came up with the strike. In Kano about 9 people were killed, Kaduna there was burning of properties. In Niger state there was also violence. Zamfara also the same thing. In Lagos and Ilorin people were killed, all this occurred within the first 3 days of the strike. So when it became apparent to us that people were dying as a result of this protest and that there was the possibility of *Boko Haram* strike (a radical group that claimed to be Islamic). We decided to suspend the strike.

The violence stated above is not violence within the community but rather, is a state violence as anti-riot police squad were involved in the killings of protesters like in Kano and Kwara state during the first day of the Mass-protest. It was this killing according to NLC Chairman Kano (interview) that prompted NLC and civil society networks to suspend the strike in the

second day to mourn the demise of the fellow protesters. This has revealed the plausibility of the argument of SMU as responses to authoritarian states see (Siedman, 1994, and Von Hold, 2002 & 2003)

The trade unions and civil society and communities have supported the trade unions throughout the one week strike and mass protest in engaging the state. However, following the suspension of the protest by the trade unions, solidarity got fractured and eroded as the trade unions and civil society marched separately because the target of the strike according to civil societies has not been achieved, that is reverting the price of petrol to 65 Naira. An NBA, member of one of the professional organisations that participate in the protest in Kano has this to say:

> Well the general thing was about disappointment, when they were about to embark on this protest they invited us but when they were to suspend the strike there was nothing like that, the NBA was not invited was not involved in such decision. So we felt disappointed, in situation were by they had 99% support, all the civil society organisation members of the public, then all of sudden without consultation they decided to suspend the strike. So we were disappointed. (Aikawa Interview, June, 2012).

The above interview suggests that issues of internal democracy within an alliance especially in relation to decision making as SMU is inherently predicated with horizontality of relationship within the alliance partners led by labour (Waterman, 1993). Similarly, Lambert & Webster (1988) have also demonstrated issues of equality within an alliance as basis of social movement unionism. But this particular situation in Nigeria has call to question the plausibility of both equality and horizontality in the alliance as trade unions behave like ‘a big brother’ within the alliance which resonates with the tendency of trade unions sphere heading a decision because community struggles should be worker led so as not subordinate working class organisations to the community organisations as in the South African experience in the 70s (Foster, 1982). In the Nigerian case, the civil society and community

organisations were subordinated to the trade unions. Lack of consultation has been the key word for many Civil Society organisations as can be discerned as follows:

> If at all NLC/TUC want to stop the protest for what ever reason consultations should have been made …we hear through rumours that it was suspended, in fact, we were in the midst of the protest when we heard that the mother union had already suspended the strike, we felt embarrass and even intimidated by the security agencies. We were disappointed (Fagge, COESU, Interview, June, 2012).

However, the civil society organisations according to Owei Lakemfa a former acting General Secretary of the NLC was fully represented during all the meetings with the federal government, he argued that there is a question of 'who is this civil society' Trade unions relate with mass-based civil society such as human right organisations not donor driven NGOS that disappears when an issue is dead. This perspective of union to non-working class organisation is very much visible in the South African case which result into workerist tendencies inherent in the trade union movement which was very visible in the alliance literature in South Africa, see (Baskin 1991, Friedman, 1987 & Hindson 1987, FCWU, 1982).

The trade unions were of the opinion that the strike was suspended with a view to have peace to reign in the country and to avoid hijacking of the protest by politicians, as various groups were calling for regime change, while For the trade unions such advocacy was outside the objective of the protest. As captured by Chris Uyot of the NLC (interview) 'we in labour movement did not go on the protest to effect on regime change, we went on this strike in order to sanitise the oil sector and allow Nigerian to be able to enjoy the fruits of the oil wealth'. However, JAF Secretary Abioudun Aremu was of the view that JAF was concern about system change that will shift the balance of power to the working class not regime change, he stresses that labour has the right to be political while maintaining ideological

stands and to be blacklisted by government as partisan is not an issue to worry about (Interview, November, 2012).

It is apparent that trade unions were cautious of the dimension the mass-protest is taking, as some politicians and civil societies are advocating for regime change at a time the country came out from election that recorded bloodshed.

4.3.2 Mutual suspicion and distrust:

Mutual suspicion was manifested in the way the civil society and community disowned the trade union movement following the suspension of the strike and mass-protest. what reinforced the mistrust was the constant meeting between the Trade Unions and the government delegation although the unions made it public that they were not negotiating price but their meetings had already pre-empted the position they were likely to take. Although, one to two representatives of civil societies under JAF were normally incorporated in the trade union delegation as noted by the then Ag. General Secretary of the NLC comrade Owei-Lakemfa. However, this did not in any way avert the worry raised by the civil society. Therefore, it is observed that the unfinished project of formalising the LASCO alliance is very much related to this tension, often triggered by ad-hoc strategies of decision making. The organisational challenges were described in the following words by the JAF secretary thus:

> LASCO arrangement has some organisational challenges yet to be resolved, yet we entered into the subsidy removal strike. To solve the organisational challenges we propose a collegial arrangement whereby the President of the labour centres NLC/TUC and the chairman of JAF would be the co-chairs of LASCO, while the secretaries of the respective labour centres and JAF would be Co-secretaries of the alliance. This has really affected LASCO struggle as LASCO was a charter of struggle, this challenges has equally affect the labour party that supposed to be the vanguard of the working people (Abioudun Aremu, Interview, 18th November, 2012).

A community member in Kano narrated the mutual distrust in the following ways:

> Four to five days we were very optimistic thinking that the decision will be withdrawn by the federal government, but it has changed our mind because while people were rallying at Na'ibawa we received information that the NLC has suspended the strike. May be they have settled themselves. According to the news, the President has agreed to come down to N97/litre but what NLC told us was that, they won't accept any negotiation except reverting to N65. So we thought that they will deliver but unfortunately when we heard the information we were very unhappy and the civil organisation in the state were trying to match again in order to lunch another protest. (Zaharadeen, Interview, 2012).

A civil society activist in Kano Nasiru Kura further states that 'there is a mutual suspicion between trade unions and civil societies and such suspicion was re-enforced by the unilateral suspension of the strike by the trade unions through the back door with the total exclusion of the civil society organisations. However, despite this suspicion, Bala of Network of Justice Kano acknowledged the different organisational structure of trade union as distinct from civil society organisations and still argued that, despite solidarity gap engendered by suspending the strike, civil societies in Nigeria had no better partners then trade unions as he stated:

> NLC is a distinct movement from the civil society but the civil society does not have a better partner then trade unions despite their problems with NLC/TUC. And we still sincerely believe in the integrity of the NLC we still believed that the NLC for now is one of the most progressive movements in Nigeria that can lead other progressive movement to agitate for change, justice, fairness and even the fight against corruption. Nigeria Labour Congress can play a very formidable role and we still believe they have that regard from civil society they have that respect and we hope they will free themselves of some of this nagging problems that tend to suggest that they are not focused and reliable (Interview, June, 2012)

Chris Uyot (interview) also reaffirms the above assertion that in every struggle there are rough edges and the labour movement will continue to have the support of the civil society organisations and stressed that what the labour movement detested was mixture of politics with the issue of subsidy removal 'however, there might be a time when the labour movement will be ready to do a good work and collaborate for a total transformation of society'

Looking at the experiences of subsidy removal protest, would trade unions continue to enjoy public support in future engagements? For the trade union movement to regain its credibility in the perspective of civil society organisations, Nasiru Kura (interview) suggested that 'in the future terms have to be defined' the question to ask remains that would trade unions subject their decisions to civil society and community organisations out side their shop floor tradition and union organs?

4.3.3 Forging alliances beyond Trade Unions Platform:

In the wake of the strike suspension, JAF the civil society partner in LASCO also issued a press statement deploring the unilateral suspension of the strike by the NLC/TUC and urged Nigerians to forge ahead until the struggle is fought to the finish. The statement further reads that JAF and its allies across the country had resolved to continue with the strike and mass-protest at various freedom squares formed during the January, Mass-protest. (JAF Press Statement). One of the respondents in Kano made the following point as the basis of continuing with the strike:

> We felt there was no need for us to stop protesting and so we decided to discountenance that position of the federal government and the NLC and go on with the protest because we were insisting that the pump price be reverted to the status qou. We decided as a different constituency because the mass rally was organised here in Kano by a different number of constituencies. We also thought that they will take the struggle to its logical conclusion. And when they were not able to do that we were disappointed we abandon them and decided to go ahead (Bala, Interview, 2012).

Zaharadeen Kallah a community member (interview) revealed that Kano community was disappointed when they heard that trade unions had suspended the strike. 'Unfortunately when we heard the information of suspending the strike we were very unhappy with the decision and civil society organisations in the state organised to match again in order to launch another protest'

Continuing the strike and mass-protest became the major concern of the civil society organisations especially in Kano, Lagos, Kaduna and Bauchi. A general secretary of the National Association of Kano State Students NAKS (interview) affirmed that 'the community in Kano felt that they can continue the strike even outside the platform of the NLC to pursue their rights as citizens'

Many people in Kano have demonstrated the desire to continue the strike outside the platform of the NLC. However, ASUU president (interview) contended that there were controversies among the various groups participating in the strike on whether to continue with the strike, or stop since the NLC/TUC who started the protest had suspended it. He noted that 'many people in Kano were of the opinion that we could still provide leadership and people could express their minds which is something that is actually enshrined in the second schedule of the Nigeria Constitution. He further alluded that the popular view was that the mass-protest should continue until government rescind on its decision and restore the subsidy. However, the withdrawal of trade unions from the protest was a major source of demobilisation to civil societies and communities.

The suspension of the mass-protest had called to question the credibility of unions in seeking community support during prosecution of an action in the future as some civil society activist reserved as follows:

> In the future the terms have to be defined there is mutual suspicion between trade unions and civil societies, this suspicion was re-enforced by the unilateral suspension of the strike through the back door with the exclusion of the Civil Societies. Even the claim that the strike is about addressing corruption in the subsidy regime in Nigeria, is just a cover up, by the labour movement. to divert the attention of people from the substantial issues with which they cannot convince people. (Nasiru Kura, Interview, 2012).
>
> I don't think people will cooperate because the wound created has not been healed. Before NLC can call any strike and people accept it as before I don't think it will

> happen very soon. But may be with time, it is natural to t to forgive but to forget it will take time (Zaharadeen, interviews, June, 2012).

On the other hand, JAF secretary summed up the challenges in the alliance to lack of ideological vision on the side of the labour leaders which undermine any effort towards social transformation as he noted:

> Nigeria labour movement in its origin was ideological from the times of Imoudu and Wahab Good-luck. The labour movement has ideological stand on issues for example in 1986 there was a political debate in Nigeria the labour movement was ideological in such debates on it vision of the kind of society it wants. Infact, those that work in the NLC were recruited from the student movement to maintain such ideological pact, it was clear that the demand of labour in 80s is ideologically clear against IMF policies. Now the labour movement in Nigeria lack a clear stand on the ideological view of the movement, example issue of privatisation, collapse of textile industries this has really affected the solidarity we are clear about this issues. The labour movement should talk about corruption in the economy, the means of production the chapter 16 of the Nigeria constitution was clear that the economy should be ran by the people…As student of history we follow similar cases across the globe, for example COSATU in South Africa despite its alliance with ANC that did not stop COSATU to push its ideological stand that was what affect our organisational strategies, it also affects the kind of education we give to our working class. (Abioudun Aremu, Interview, Nov 18th, 2012).

4.4 CONCLUSION:

The above analysis of social movement unionism within LASCO alliance revealed that SMU is not insulated from internal tension among alliance partners, owing to the perceived undemocratic process that underlines the union suspension of strike and mass-protest without consultation with alliance partners under JAF. These undemocratic practices of SMU in LASCO alliance contrasted with classical SMU literature that sees SMU inherently predicated with democratic practices and horizontal relationship (Waterman, 1993, Lambert & Webster, 1988).

This solidarity was eroded following the unilateral suspension of the strike/mass protest by the trade unions. This suspension engendered internal contestations in form of internal violence against trade unionist that suspended the strike, mutual suspicion, disappointment

and the desire to forge ahead with the strike and mass-protest. The Use of violence as internal contestation and the desire of the communities and the civil societies to forge ahead with the mass-protest became highly pronounced. These developments raised several questions to the SMU literature especially as it ignores internal tension and contestation within the movement (Von Hold, 2002).

The chapter leaned towards Hyman (1975) that the internal contestation between the alliance partners is attributed within the pessimist tradition within trade unions orientation that sees trade unions actions as limited to their narrow economistic interest and then non-revolutionary and transformatory in outlook. The strategic location of workers in production gives them advantage over social movement that is why the strike could not continue beyond the trade union suspension, this source of power of trade unions is located within what Burawoy, (2010) called 'structural and associational power'. While social movement on the other hand, seek to protect the society as a form of counter movement against what Polanyi called commodification of nature and disruption of society (Polanyi, 2001, Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout, 2008, Burawoy, 2010), through polices such as deregulation that seek to remove subsidy, whose danger is more to the society rather than the working class organisation. Hence, the breakdown of the alliance based on the societal desire to forge ahead with the strike and mass-protest, this attitude leaned to the transformatory orientation and Polanyi's counter-movement culture that seeks a system change through a shift in the balance of forces from market and predatory elites in favour of the society in the current era of third wave of great transformation. Subsequent, of the two traditions, marrying Marxist approach of exploitation of the working class, with Polanyi's commodification of nature and its destruction of society, constitute the basis of counter-movement under LASCO implicated in social movement unionism. However, the chapter has contrasted with Von Holdt (2002) that

sees unions as contesting order in the work place regime. In the context of the alliance trade unions seems negotiating order or what Beiler, Lindberg and Pillay (2008) called accomodatory strategy which seeks preservation of order akin to Hymans' pessimist tradition of trade unions.

The negotiation of order by the unions in the context of LASCO alliance is very much related to its collective bargaining orientation that negotiates relationship with the employer and the management, while social movements were outside labour capital relations but implicated in state society relation that is more complicated and political. The summary of trade union orientation and social movement orientation in the context of LASCO alliance during the subsidy strike and mass protest was summarised by a JAF member from UAD Jaye Gaskia in a reflection in the aftermath of the strike titled; *reflecting on our January Uprising: Results and Prospects*. Thus:

> The labour leadership was limited by the structure and horizons of trade union movement; the historic role of the trade unions is to mediate between employer and employee, and the historic role of the leadership of this trade union therefore is to organise and undertake this mediation. It was in this sense that this labour leadership found it self in a bind, when compelled by its alliance with pro-labour civil society and citizens organisations primarily organised into the UAD and JAF; it was given the mandate of total reversal to 65 naira-that is to say a mandate not to negotiate any new price, but only to negotiate a return to the status quo before January 1st and the conditions under which proper all embracing it is meant, a discussion that includes tackling all the issues in the petroleum sector –corruption, state refineries, determining actual daily consumption etc. noticing that the labour leadership felt uncomfortable being in this bind, and was therefore more susceptible to pressure and psychological warfare; the joint delegation of the regime including leadership of the National assembly, NASS, representatives of the Nigeria's governors forum and representatives of Federal Executive Council FEC, began to implement an agenda of subtly introducing a wedge into the labour-civil society alliance, disparaging civil society as being unrepresentative, beholden to foreign interest and local political interest.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION:

This chapter summarises and concludes the implication of the research findings on the application of SMU in the Nigeria context. It reflects on the major research questions and reveals the relationship between the research questions and the study outcome. The chapter argues that the application of SMU in Nigeria reveals different outcome from that of South Africa and Brazil. In Nigeria, SMU is triggered by weak state and corruption in a process of democratisation. Unlike in South Africa and Brazil where repressive work regime engendered an innovative union alliance with community organisations which resulted into series of consumer boycotts and stay-aways in support of working class demands. Nigeria's experience during the Fuel subsidy removal mass-protest revealed the alliance potentials of the SMU under the LASCO platform, as poor leadership and endemic corruption engendered a form of trade union civil society and community mobilisation against the state as a form of 'counter-movement' (Polanyi, 2010).

The chapter argues that, the breakdown of LASCO alliance was very much attributed to the perceived undemocratic process in which the trade unions suspended the strike, without due consultation with alliance partners under JAF, and their failure in subjecting the decision to the trade union highest organ which is the National Executive Council (NEC). This resulted into internal contestation within the alliance occasioned by violent reaction against trade union leaders, and the desire of civil society and community to forge ahead with the strike

outside the trade union platform. This divisions and resentment within the alliance reveals the Democratic deficit of the SMU as well as LASCO organisational challenges yet to be resolved

The study concludes that the tensions within LASCO alliance following the trade unions unilateral suspension of the strike and mass-protest is analytically conceived based on the political orientation and class structure of the alliance partners. Trade unions as a single class organisation implicated in labour capital relations tends to negotiate order in the society in order to save its organisation from state assault. This trade union behaviour is theorised under Hyman pessimist view of trade unions which is similar to Beiler et'al accomodatory strategy that sees union behaviour and action as very limited in bringing social transformation in the larger society. The civil society as a multi class organisation has transformatory capacity that seeks a system change and reconfiguration of power relations in favour of the masses. This orientation of the civil society is analysed under transformatory orientation of social movement that seeks alternation of power relations in society in favour of the masses. This political orientation and organisational structure of alliance partners constitute the major challenges to SMU in Nigeria.

5.2 IMPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS:

SMU as a form of mobilisation against repressive work place in South Africa (Von Holdt, 2002 & 2003) and authoritarian industrialisation in Brazil (Seidman, 1994, 2011) has brought about innovative strategy of linking production and reproduction politics, as communities could support trade unions demands for better working conditions through stay ways and boycotts. See Fattis and Monis Strike as well as much later engagement of Transvaal Stay away where trade unions support community issues in the townships. The working class

rendered itself ungovernable in the workplace in support of democratisation and an end to racial exploitation of the apartheid regime (Von Holdt, 2002, 2003).

It is within these experience that scholars emerged with the concept of SMU as form of trade union strategy of forging alliances beyond the workplace in support of broad working class demand and involvement in contentious politics in the wider society with a view to transform the social order in favour of the people (Waterman, 1993, Lambert & Webster, 1988, Siedman 1994 & 2011, Von Holdt, 2002 & 2003).

This study utilises the substance of the above literature especially as it lean towards alliance between Trade unions and communities in order to understand a particular form of alliance that emerged in Nigeria under the platform of LASCO within a particular experience of fuel Subsidy removal mass-protest in Nigeria between 9th January, 2012 to 17th January, 2012. The emphasis was to understand issues of solidarity and fragmentation within the alliance partners and to interrogate whether the concept of SMU is relevant in understanding such Scenarios and whether SMU is insulated from power contestation within an alliance?

Therefore, the study answered following questions:

1. Does the concept of SMU hold any explanatory value for an analysis of the relations between trade unions and social movement in Nigeria?

2. What was the basis of solidarity between trade Unions and civil society organisations during the fuel subsidy removal mass protest?

3. What was the basis of fragmentation of solidarity between trade unions and civil society organisation during the mass-protest?

4. Is SMU insulated from power contestation amongst the alliance partners?

To address the above questions, the study uses a qualitative method of inquiry through in-depth interviewing and participant observation of LASCO alliance before and during subsidy removal mass-protest. The study revealed that the removal of fuel subsidy on the first of January, 2012 by Federal Government brought to fore trade union and civil society mobilisation challenging the state policy and demanding for the reversal of the decision. The rallying point of LASCO alliance was a response to poor leadership in Nigeria accentuated by endemic corruption and weak state bureaucracy in checkmating the corrupt practices in the state and in the management of fuel subsidy.

The unions decided to work together with civil societies and communities so as to have a stronger voice both from the shop-floor and in the larger society by marrying what Lambert & Webster (1988) called 'economic unionism' with political or social movement unionism, through LASCO alliance, that built inter movement linkages. Solidarity and mobilisation was very much in response to state failure, bad governance, corruption and rent seeking which resonates with several studies on weak state as platform of rent seeking akin to *predatory states* Evans (1995), *prebendal politics* (Joseph, 1985).

The Study revealed that SMU mobilisation is obtainable even under democracy (Siedman, 2011) in addition, the study further explores the thesis that weak state could attracts SMU behaviour as shown in Nigeria's mass protest in January. This has evidently contrasted with classical SMU literature that sees authoritarian state such as Brazil and South Africa as the basis of SMU (Lambert & Webster, 1988, Siedman, 1994, Von Holdt, 2002 & 2003). The findings suggests that, It will be apt to utilise the literature on weak state, collapse states and rentier states as a basis of engendering movement dimension of trade unionism and the way they linked up with wider segments of the society in form of alliances, as basis of mobilisations and engagement in contentious politics.

The study further alludes that SMU mobilisation has the potential of bringing about a unified form of citizenship by downplaying the prominence of primordial identities in a multi-ethnic society, such as Nigeria through, a unified form of citizenship. The fuel subsidy mass-protest had submerged the divisive tendencies within the citizenship that nurtures the culture of us vs. them, Muslim vs. Christians through a pan-Nigerian movement against the state oppression. Submergence of popular identities became an inherent feature of SMU mobilisation during the subsidy strike and mass-protest, the first of its kind in the Nigerian history.

Chapter four focuses on the breakdown of the LASCO alliance following the unilateral reduction of the price by the FG from 141 to 97 Naira, solidarity got fractured when unions seemed pressured to unilaterally suspend the strike to save its organisation. The suspension of the strike by the trade unions was the rallying point of resentment of JAF and community members who accused the trade unions for not been Democratic in the process of suspending the strike.

This perceived undemocratic process of suspending the strike and mass-protest by the trade unions was later translated into internal contestation through the use of violence against trade unionist in Kano, as well as forging ahead with the strike and mass-protest out side the trade union platform in Kano, Lagos and Kaduna. The study explains the 'social distance' within LASCO alliance based on the political orientation and class structure of the alliance partners. Trade unions as single class organisation of workers seek to negotiate order in the society and save its organisation from attack as a collective bargaining agent implicated in labour capital contradiction. The civil society on the other hand is a multi-class organisation that challenges state power and ideologically oriented towards social transformation seeking for shift in the power configuration in the society.

Several civil society activists stressed their disappointment with the trade unions over the suspension of the strike which reinforced a kind of mutual suspicion within the alliance. The civil society view of the suspension of the strike is anchored within its transformatory class orientation or populist view of struggle, with out much recourse of the impact of its actions on its organisational structure that is blurred. The study indicates that the suspension of the strike has triggered violence as a form of internal contestation, as protesters rain abuses and thrown stone on the labour leaders and any body that dressed with Trade Union regalia. The situation was expressed in the following words: 'we have to hide our selves…the suspension of the strike has angered people in Kano to the extent of even insulting us throwing stones and giving names to labour leaders' (Interview, June, 2012 with Danguguwa Chairman NLC, Kano)

The above findings corroborates Von Holdt (2002) that challenges the dominant SMU literature for lack of centrality in understanding internal contestation within the movement dimension of SMU in a repressive work place regime in South Africa. However, Von Holdt sees unions as contesters of order in the work place while this study lean towards Hyman (1975) and Burawoy (1979) that unions have become negotiators of order in the work place (Cited in Von Holdt, 2002: 288). Whereas, the findings of this study suggested that unions became negotiators of order although in the context of an alliance not work place regime as argued by Von Holdt (2002).

The study further corroborates Hyman (1975) that the internal contestation within the alliance partners is attributed within the pessimist tradition that sees unions not exhibiting any revolutionary tendencies of social transformation envision by social movements (Friedman, 2012). Beiler Pillay and Lindberg (2008) further shared this vision as the character of the

alliance based on their 'Accomodatory' and 'Transformatory' typologies. The accomodatory strategy resembles Hyman (1975) pessimist view of trade unions which according to Pillay et'al that union behaviour tends to accommodate social order rather than seeking to change it (Beiler, Lindberg and Pillay, 2008).

5.3 CONCLUSION:

This chapter has reviewed the major argument advanced by the study on the relevance of SMU in understanding solidarity and fragmentation between trade unions and civil societies during the fuel subsidy mass-protest in Kano. The data and review of the existing literature suggests that Nigerian experience suggest more of the alliance potential of the SMU which has historically been the trend of trade unionism in Nigeria since independence and the subsequent struggles during SAP and fight against military rule. However, unlike the SMU experience in South Africa where there was a robust commitment of the community towards working class demand in challenging the apartheid workplace regime, which resulted into series of stay ways and boycotts in support of working class demand like the case of Fattis and Monis, in Nigeria the experience signifies more of the Trade Union seeking community support and civil society support in addressing bad policies such as the removal of subsidy.

The contribution of this study is that application of SMU in places like Nigeria shows that SMU mobilisation could be triggered by weak state in contrast with Authoritarian form of state envisaged by scholars such as Siedman, (1994), and Von Holdt, (2003). Similarly, SMU mobilisation has the potential of suppressing primordial sentiments and negative form of identities by forging national identities and unified form of citizenship in a multicultural society like Nigeria. The study further reveals that SMU is not insulated from internal contestation as internal democracy within the alliance marred the relationship within LASCO alliance especially in a situation where trade unions spearheaded an action without subjecting

it to discussion with alliance partners like the case of suspending the strike and mass-protest. The desire of civil and community organisation to forge ahead with the struggle was a response to protect the society and protest against state 'dis-embeddiness' (Polanyi, 2010).

This obstruction of democratic process manifested itself into Violence as a form of contestation within an alliance as buttressed by Kano experience of the Mass-protest when trade unions were chased with stones following the suspension of the strike. Similarly, the suspension of the mass-protest amidst public anger portrays trade unions as negotiators of order akin to Hyman (1975) pessimistic view of Trade Unions or what Beiler, Lindberg and Pillay called Accomodatory strategy. These categorisations by Hyman and Beiler et'al all portray Trade Unions as reformers rather than being a platform of seeking political alternatives canvassed by community and civil societies akin to Beiler et'al (2008) Transformatory solidarity.

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