

THE MIDDLE CLASS AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF ASUU AND NBA

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the collapse of one-party regimes in the Third World, many African countries have come to the conclusion that, political transformation is an inevitable process of attaining economic and political development. This process is expected to engender economic growth, improve citizens' access to national politics and create conducive environment for wealth creation. Using cross-sectional survey and key informant interview methods, this study found that, the middle class is one of the strong agents of political change and development in contemporary Nigeria. It however, found weak involvement and participation of the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Nigerian Bar Association in matters relating to party formation, economic growth and development, international politics and international relations contribute to limited progress made by Nigeria on the democratization process. The study found that, despite some progress made by the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) and the Nigerian Bar Association in the democratization process, the middle class still remains one of the most marginalized classes in contemporary Nigeria.

Keywords: Middle Class, Political Transformation, State, Nigeria, ASUU, NBA

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, political transformation has become an integral aspect of Africa's democratization process and policy agenda. This process has come in different forms and patterns, and actors in the political process are also divergent in terms of the interests they hold for the state and society. In many post-colonial African countries, political transformation has led to regime changes in North-Africa, West Africa, South-Africa and East-Africa, and it is leading to changes against tyranny and authoritarianism in some North African countries. Not only this, the

period of this transformation has helped to infuse the energy to call for and also ensure the reform of democratic institutions in many African countries. In the course of their participation, we have seen losers and gainers among the political actors. Similarly, the gains and losses of countries witnessing this political transformation have also varied across different segments of society (Ake, 2000; Aiyede, 2003).

Africa is however not the only continent that has witnessed political transformation so radical that, most of the old political regimes in the continent, have been completely uprooted and replaced with new regimes. The history of the current transformation in Africa dates back to the 1980s. In the 1980s, there were regime changes in Europe and Latin-American countries, occasioned by the increased pressure for new nations to embrace democracy and churn military rule. By the end of the Cold War, it was almost impossible for many African countries to resist the change from authoritarian regimes to democratic governance. In fact, to refuse this global political culture was to automatically call for sanctions from the world leaders. For many African countries, the rise of social movements, resistance from the civil society groups, and the repulsive character of the African people against military rule meant that the time was ripe to give the people their second independence.

As the changes were taking place, the middle class in Nigeria, and elsewhere in Africa were noticeable in all the stages of the political transformation, both the campaign for democracy and opposition to military rule. The middle class in post-colonial Africa did not only facilitate the process of bringing back democracy, it engendered the building of new institutions of governance, reform of the electoral process, sensitization of the civil society about the importance of democracy, reform of political party structures, and the reform of moribund economic institutions. The active involvement of the middle class, in this transformation is what has helped African countries to sustain democracy and democratic governance. But there is little research on the quality of involvement of this class in the post-Cold War transformation of Nigerian society. This study is intended to fill the lacuna on middle class and democratization in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The middle class is one of the most controversial classes in the history of capitalism, whether, in the developed or developing world (Lu, 2005; Kharas, 2010). This controversy is what has informed the nature of the problems facing the class in many late developing societies. Because the position of the class is not well defined in modern society, many of its members in developing countries usually play the role defined for them by

the socio-economic conditions of their countries and not the ideals that the class is known for since the beginning of industrial capitalism.

Unlike in the West, where the middle class has participated greatly in helping to advance democracy and facilitate the growth of democratic institutions (Lu, 2005), the non-cohesiveness of the middle class in the underdeveloped world helps to create more problems than solutions to political transformation. Expectedly, most members of the middle class have consequently been polarized or fractionalized along ethnic or religious interests leading crisis of legitimation between the state and the civil society (Erikson and John, 1995; Brown and David, 1995; Acemoglu and James, 2000; Bellin, 2000).

The experience of members of the middle class in post-colonial African society is not quite different from those of the other parts of the Third World. This is evident in the attitude of the class to nation-building and its approach to criticisms against bad governance, corrupt electoral institutions, violence and national security, terrorism, and destructive ethno-religious conflicts. Like in other parts of post-colonial Africa, the middle class in contemporary Nigeria is performing below expectations compared to the past when everyone new the middle class or the professional class as the most vibrant vanguard of demilitarization, and the return of Nigeria to democratic governance. This attitude towards democracy and lack of holistic support for political transformation has significantly affected the extent of political progress made by Nigeria.

Until recently, members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Nigerian Bar Association had lost the steam and energy with which they fought the military, and all forms of political and economic oppression that characterized the regimes of the military juntas. Aiyede (2003) believed this, that lack of the visibility and silence of the middle class account for the rot in the Nigerian society. Writing about the role of the middle class in Nigeria, Aiyede (2003) noted: “Democratic openings have provided space for political expression but non-democratic actors have become more visible. Extremist movements have grown by leaps and bounds. Confrontations between the executive and the legislature have slowed down the process of governance reform while ethnic and religious violence is on the ascendance. In the midst of these challenges, the pro-democracy, the NGOs and other civil society organizations appear to have lost steam or are ill-prepared for engaging the new democratic institutions and their challenges. The power seekers have dominated the political space. Civic engagement has been very low. Why have organizations that fought so gallantly against the military ceased to be important under democratic rule?” (Aiyede, 2003:2). This is where the problem lies. This study intends to 1. Determine the Role of the middle class in the political transformation of Nigeria using ASUU and NBA

as case studies 2. Find out the level of participation of ASUU and NBA in national politics and national political transformation 3. Identify the factors that are responsible for the marginalization of the middle class in the current dispensation in Nigeria. The rationale for this study is to determine the level of participation of the middle class in the political transformation of Nigeria so that the degree of performance of the class in the current political transformation can be properly evaluated and road-maps for future improvements be identified. In addition to these, it can help to redirect the focus of the government on the civil society and support for popular participation in government.

LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Middle class research and studies have dominated the social sciences since the beginning of the twentieth century (Huber and Stephens, 1999; Lu, 2005;. Most of these research and studies have however concentrated on the role of the middle class in the development of industrial capitalism and the advancement of democracy in the developed world. Instead of focusing on the role of the middle class in developing countries, the interests of most these research, has been on how the middle class has participated actively in the building of industrial societies. One of such significant inputs was conducted by C. Wright Mills in America titled, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes, published in 1951. It was this research which articulated the role of the middle class in American of the 20th century.*

Mills study found that the problem of the middle class begins with the problem of definition. Mills believed that the definition of the middle class is usually based on what capitalism makes us to believe. Mills believed that the middle class position is not a stable position in a capitalist society especially in a transition society. So, it is possible to have middle class persons moving from their positions to upper class, middle-class persons degenerating to a lower class living conditions deteriorate. While it is possible to move up the stratification ladder, it is also possible for a member of the middle class to drop to a lower class depending on the fluctuations in the economy of a country. Subsequent research and studies after Mills have shown that middle class values are quite distinct from the upper and lower class values. The middle class is generally a class of professionals and consultants. In the developed societies, members of the middle class have comfortable living standards, significant economic security, considerable work autonomy and instinct for transparency in public and private governance.

The middle class has, in other studies, been divided into the professional class, and the business class. Despite the difference in nomenclature, it is believed that, middle class values are relatively stable

across the world including their consumption patterns. In the developing societies, members of the middle class are relatively marginalized by the state. In Africa, the relationship between the class and the state is more severe making government's vulnerable to corruption and political opportunism.

Saif (2011) posited that there are two schools of thought on the definition of the middle class. The first school of thought is the school put forward by social scientists and economists in the United States. The school, according to Saif, focuses on the volume of consumption and income level of the class, so that income acts as a parameter or determinant of the class. The second school is the European-Marxist school, which takes into consideration a number of variables such as the level of education, type of work, family size, type of housing, the nature of social organization and the level of involvement of the class members in governance. Saif noted that the business class of the middle class has been more active in the Arab world than the professional class. This, he attributed, to the declining economic fortunes of Arab countries, since the 1990s. In recent times, the middle class and the lower class are increasingly changing their apolitical attitude to the state in the Arab World. With the Arab spring of the 2011, it has become evident in the political history of North Africa, that the various classes can play significant role in the growth of democracy in developing societies. In his own observation, "The middle class has played a special role in economic thought for centuries. It emerged out of the bourgeoisie in the late fourteenth century, a group that while derided by some for their economic materialism provided the impetus for an expansion of a capitalist market economy and trade between nation states. Ever since, the middle class has been thought of as the source of entrepreneurship and innovation—the small businesses that make a modern economy thrive. Middle class values also emphasize education, hard work and thrift. Thus, the middle class is the source of all the needed inputs for growth in a neoclassical economy—new ideas, physical capital accumulation and human capital accumulation" (Kharas, 2010: 7).

Several research and studies have equally been conducted in Africa on the middle class particularly their role in the growth of young African economies. Like those of the West, the interest of most research was largely on middle class values and consumption patterns and not on their role in the political transformation of Africa. One of the factors that caused this, was the delay in the democratic project of African countries till the end of the 1980s. Since the early 1990s, there has been individual and collective efforts among researchers to investigate the extent to which the middle class aids, and contributes to the political transformation of post-colonial and post-military African societies. In his research on identity transformation and identity

politics in Nigeria, Jega (2000) noted that the middle class, is one of the classes that participated actively in the demilitarization of the Nigerian state, and the return of Nigeria to democratic government. Similarly, Ake (2000) argued that the middle class and the civil society were significant agents of political development especially during the military when Nigerians were confronted with the tyrannical governments and military dictatorship. Aiyede (2003) found that recent experiences of state-civil society relations in Nigeria indicate that, the middle class is one of the most marginalized classes in the economic and political development of Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

There are two main approaches to the study of the role of the middle class in democracy and political transformation in the developing countries (Chen and Lu, 2011). The first approach is usually called a *unilinear approach* that draws some inspirations from the modernization theory. The theory believes that, there is a positive relationship between the level of economic modernization made in a country and the attitudes of the middle class towards democracy and democratization (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997; Huber and Stephens, 1999). As developing countries advance their economies and modernize their economic incentives, Huntington (1991) believed that, members of the middle class are expected to support democracy, since this is the only way the state can improve its capacity to control economic institutions, and use them for the benefits of the citizens, the support for democracy is usually overwhelming in countries where democracy is stable and productive. The approach believes that improved welfare of the class should have corresponding impact and reinforcement on political transformation, and consequently the stability of democratic institutions.

The unilinear approach also argues that improved economic and social welfare will dissuade the middle class from engaging in shady deals, corruption and political opportunism. Because members of the middle class are expected to be highly educated and enlightened due to their level of education, they are more likely to support government's reform and efforts at improving human conditions (Glassman, 1995; Hattori, Funatsu and Torii, 2003). Chen and Lu added that: "Proponents of this approach also argue that unlike individuals in the upper class who have abundant economic resources and close clientelist ties with political elites, those in the middle class have limited economic resources and lack connections with powerful patrons in the government. Out of self-interest, therefore, the middle class supports a democratic system in which their individual rights and private (though moderate) properties may best be protected from potential encroachment by the government and the upper class. In addition, some of these scholars

contend from the socio-behavioral perspective that middle-class individuals tend to favor democracy because, compared to the lower class, they have adequate education and leisure time, which enable them to understand and participate in public affairs effectively ‘ ‘ (see Chen and Lu, 2011:706). This approach has been supported by evidence from the role of the middle class in transition democracy mainly from the West. It has however not been able to explain the peculiarities of people in the developing societies. This is why the second approach is formulated.

The second approach is called the contingency approach. The contingency approach believes that there is no smooth relationship between economic modernization and support for political democratization. The approach believes that middle class attitudes towards democracy is contingent upon some salient socio-economic conditions such as the socio-context of politics, ethno-religious differences, the nature and character of the state, the political context that produces a middle class, as well as the welfare of the middle class generally (Stephens, 1989; Jones, 1998; 2000; Acemoglu and Robinson, Englehart, 2003). Chen and Lu (2011) believed that: ‘ ‘These conditions vary with the political contexts of different countries and with economic-development stages within each country. Such conditions or factors include, but are not limited to, the middle class's dependence (or independence) on the state, its perceived socioeconomic well-being, its political alliance with other classes (e.g., upper or working classes), its own class cohesiveness (or fragmentation), and its fear of political instability. In a nutshell, proponents of the contingent approach contend that the middle class does not necessarily support democratization, especially when it is heavily dependent upon or closely associated with the authoritarian state, socially/ materially well off or satisfied, fragmented as a class, and/or worried about political instability’’. Evidence from studies on the middle class in the late developing societies tend to support this approach to the understanding of middle class's involvement in political transformation and democratization. In order to be able to account for the peculiarity of Africa's middle class and rely on the contingency approach, the peripheral political economy is adopted in this study as a framework of analysis.

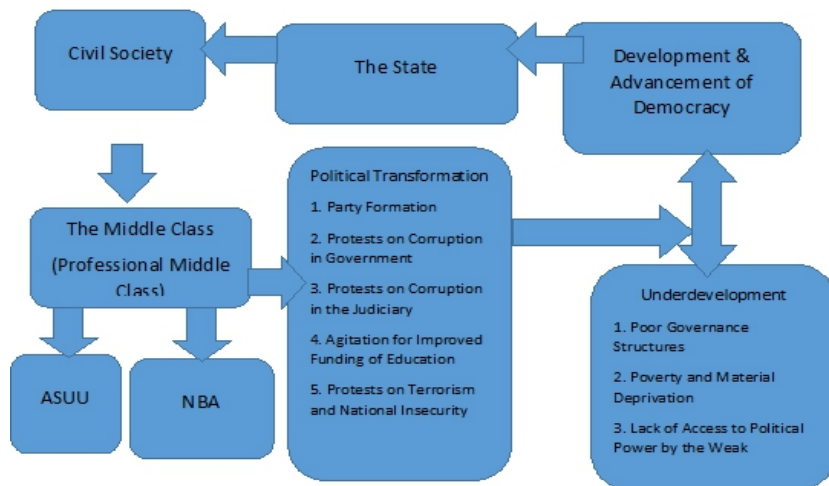
The peripheral political economy is formulated by political economists from the Third World to peculiarity of the development of peripheral nations. Proponents of this approach believe that, the peripheral societies have peculiar political economies that have not been comprehensively discussed in the mainstream Western political economy. It also argues that capitalism and colonialism made it almost impossible for the educated Africans to see their societies differently from the West. The approach believes that, the middle class are built by and sustained with harsh socio-economic conditions in these societies. The coming of independence

therefore created a post-colonial state that is inherently problematic and intolerant of the opposition. It encourages first, violence as a means of resolving national issues and activation of democratic project. This attitude to the society and members of the civil society has always presented a fierce struggle between the African post-colonial state and the various members of the civil society. In large measure, the persistence of arbitrariness and corruption in the handling of state affairs has always created a middle class that is apprehensive about the survival of the state, and also the survival of the democratic project.

Instead of engendering and building a virile middle class, the state in most post-colonial Africa has nurtured and proliferated ethno-religious and terrorist groups that are obviously inimical to national security and development. Ake (2000) summed up the character of the state in post-colonial Africa: “Independence changed the composition of the managers of the state but not the character of the state, which remained much as it was in the colonial era. Its scope tend to be totalistic and its economic orientation highly statist. It presented itself as an apparatus of violence, its base in social forces remained extremely narrow and relied for compliance unduly on coercion rather than authority. With few exceptions, the elite who came to power decided to inherit and exploit the colonial system to their own benefit rather than transforming it democratically as had been expected. This alienated them from the masses whom they now had to now contain with force” (Ake, 2000: 36).

With few exceptions, the post-colonial state is now more of an imposed state rather than a democratic system. This explains largely the response and attitude of members of the middle class to development project including political transformation.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the relationship between union affiliation and participation in political transformation



The above conceptual framework suggests that, in ideal situations, the middle class can serve as an agent of political change and development. This is done through regular contacts and interactions with the state and its structures of governance. Where such mutual understanding exists, the state is supposed to fulfill its own terms of social contract by providing conducive atmosphere for political competition, establishment of institutions of governance, creation of good investment climate, development of the national economy, advancement of science and technology, and ensuring the security and safety of members of the public. Where the state fails to carry out its own duty to the public or the civil society, the middle class is expected to act as an agent of political progress by either advising the government or embarking on public protests to show public displeasure to government's policies and programmes.

Similarly, in any society where the middle class is either inactive or docile, political modernization is expected to be slowed down because the state is not checked by forces within the society. Eventually, the entire political processes may be undermined by the capriciousness and corruption of state actors. The peripheral political economy explains this peculiarity in the case of transition society where the middle class is increasingly becoming less visible in all areas of national life because the state itself, has entered a regime of crisis.

METHODS

The study was mainly an exploratory study that was designed to determine the relationship between union affiliation and the level of participation in the political transformation in Nigeria. The main thesis guiding the research was that "professional middle class (ASUU and NBA) in Nigeria is one of the active agents of political transformation in Nigeria, and since the class comprise a large population that is widely distributed, sample survey or cross-sectional survey would be most appropriate for the task.

Research Design

The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research techniques using Cross-sectional Survey and Key Informant Interview research methods respectively. The quantitative research was conducted with a structured questionnaire designed to elicit information from members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Nigerian Bar Association. The instrument for the qualitative study was the Key Informant Interview Guide (KIIG) designed to elicit in-depth analysis of issues being investigated as well as to complement the results of the cross-sectional survey.

Study Location

The study was conducted in Lagos State. The study chose the University of Lagos for the study of ASUU members while it focused on the Nigerian Bar Association, Lagos State for the study of lawyers. University of Lagos is a Federal University that was established in 1962 with the Act of Federal Parliament. The University is one of the first generation Universities in Nigeria. The Nigeria Bar Association is also one of the oldest Bar Associations in Nigeria. These two complementary historical records made UNILAG and Lagos NBA, the appropriate research locations for this exploratory study.

Population of Study

The study focused solely on professional middle class members of ASUU and NBA. This was what the researcher used to measure the middle class in Nigeria

Sample Size

The study chose and relied a very small sample size since the research was a pre-requisite for a larger study on the middle class and political transformation in Nigeria. It therefore focused on 20 respondents, 13 from ASUU and 7 from NBA. The difference in the population of ASUU and NBA was due to the fact that, the ASUU members targeted were readily available for interview while the NBA members selected were difficult to track. The study chose 10 respondents for the Key Informant Interviews, 6 members of ASUU and 4 members of NBA.

Sampling Techniques

The study used non-probability sampling technique. It adopted purposive sampling techniques. For the ASUU members, the research divide and focus on ASUU members in the South-West, and then divided it into Federal and State universities. From there, it selected the University of Lagos. The ASUU members sampled were thereafter purposively selected from the academic staff in the faculty of social sciences and arts. For the NBA, the members were also purposively selected from the members of the Nigerian Bar Association in Lagos State.

Data Collection

The data were collected, collated, edited and processed in 2013. The researcher used 2 trained research assistants to collect the data from University of Lagos and the Nigeria Bar Association, Lagos State Branch.

Instruments Used

Questionnaire and Key Informant Interview Guide were carefully designed and administered on ASUU and NBA members.

Ethical Issues

The respondents' consent was sought before they were interviewed. Most of the members who spoke said that they did not speak on behalf of their unions but on behalf of themselves as members based on the experiences they have gathered over the years.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The data collected from the field were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to allow for the ease and careful analysis of the data, the SPSS was used to process and then analyze the quantitative data of the study using simple percentages. The researcher avoided the use of bivariate analysis for the quantitative data because the sample size was just 20; too small to arrive at a valid bivariate result. The researcher adopted ethnographic content analysis to analyze the qualitative data.

RESULTS

Table 1.0 shows the socio-demographic profiles of the respondents. The table indicates that 13 (65.0%) of the members of the middle class interviewed in the course of the survey were members of Academic Staff Union of Universities while 7 (35.0%) were members of the Nigerian Bar Association. The table also indicates that 3 (15.0%) of the respondents had less than 5 years' experience with their various unions while 9 (45.0%) had been with their unions in the last 5 to 10years. Of those middle class members covered in the study, only person 1 (5.0%) was an executive member, 2 (10.0%) were ex-officio members, 16 (80.0%) said that they are ordinary members. What this indicates is that all categories of members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Nigerian Bar Association were included in the study.

Of those ASUU and NBA members surveyed, 19 (95.0%) were males while 1 (5.0%) was a female. This implies that there may be higher proportion of men in the professional middle class in Nigeria than women. The age distribution of the respondents shows that only 1 (5.0%) person was less than 30 years, 17 (85.0%) were between 30 and 59 years while 2 (10.0%) were above 60 years. It can also be inferred from this result that, majority of the middle class members are still in the working age group, this, if carefully tapped by the Nigerian government, has the potentiality of boosting the Nigerian economy, as well as political development.

Table 1.0 further indicates that 13 (65.0%) of the middle class members covered by study were members of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), UNILAG chapter while the 7 (35.0%) were members of the Nigerian Bar Association, Lagos State Chapter. Of the 20 respondents, only 1 (5.0%) belonged to a political party in Nigeria, 19 (95.0%) said that they do not belong to any political party. The result indicates that most members of the middle class may not belong to any political party. Although, this may be at a theoretical level, but at practical level, the middle class usually holds political affiliation in form of ideology.

When asked about the nature of political ideology they believe in, 4 (20.0%) said that they prefer a state-dominated political ideology (Statism) while 75.0%) said that they prefer liberalized political economy where every citizen is given equal opportunity to participate in the economic system, once there is economic power to do so.

Table 1.0: Socio-Demographic Profiles Of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Union Affiliation		
ASUU	13	65
NBA	7	35
Total	20	100.0%
Length of Service in the Union		
Less than 5 years	3	15.0%
5 years and above	9	45.0%
No response	8	40.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Nature of Membership in the Union		
Executive Member	1	5.0%
Ex-officio Member	2	10.0%
Ordinary Member	16	80.0%
No response	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Sex		
Male	19	95.0%
Female	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Age		
Below 30 years	1	5.0%
30 years ---59years	17	85.0%
60 years and above	2	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%
University Affiliation of ASUU members		
UNILAG	13	100.0%

Institutional Affiliation of NBA members

Public Service	2	28.6%
Private Chambers	5	71.4%
Total	7	100.0%

Membership of Political Parties

Yes	1	5.0%
No	19	95.0%
Total	20	100.0%

Nature of Political Ideology Held

State-dominated Economy	4	20.0%
Liberalised Economy	15	75.0%
No response	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%

Table 2.0 presents the role of the middle class in the political transformation of Nigeria. The table shows that 15 (75.0%) of the members of the middle class covered by this study have commented on the political transformation in Nigeria at different fora, only 3 (15.0%) members were yet to make public comment about the country's political process. This result shows that individually, members of the middle class are making useful inputs into Nigeria's political transformation.

The table also shows that 11 (55.0%) of the respondents believed that the role of the middle class in the political transformation of Nigeria is visible and active while 7 (35.0%) believed that the middle class has not made any significant impact the nation's democratic project. The implication of this finding is that, the middle class in Nigeria is still force to be reckoned with in the political development of contemporary Nigeria.

When asked about the role of ASUU and NBA in the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999, 11 (55.0%) said that ASUU and NBA played active role in ensuring that Nigeria returned to civil rule in 1999, however, 7 (35.0%) of the respondents believed that the unions made minimal impact in returning democracy to Nigeria in May, 1999. When asked about the role of the middle class during the conduct of the 2011 general elections, 9 (45.0%) said that ASUU and NBA played active role in ensuring that the elections were successful while 5 (25.0%) said that the unions were not active participants in the electoral process. Evidence from this study support the fact that, the middle class in Nigeria was among those who struggled for the return of the country to civil rule, and the collapse of military interregnum in Nigeria.

Table 2.0 : The Role of the Middle Class in the Political Transformation of Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Ever commented on National Politics		
Yes	15	75.0%
No	3	15.0%
No response	2	10.0%
Total	20	100.0%
The role of the union in the political transformation of Nigeria		
Proactive and Visible	11	55.0%
Not proactive & Passive	7	35.0%
No response	2	10.0%
The Role of ASUU/NBA in the return of Democracy to Nigeria		
Active Role	11	55.0%
Passive Role	7	35.0%
No response	2	10.0%
Total	20	100.0%
The Role of ASUU/NBA in the 2011 General Elections		
Active participation in the conduct of elections	9	45.0%
Active participation in the defence of Votes	5	25.0%
Active participation in post-election activities	4	20.0%
No response	20	100.0%

Table 3.0 shows the level of sectoral participation of the middle class in the political transformation. The table indicates that only 6 (30.0%) of the ASUU & NBA members accepted that their unions are involved in issues of party formation in Nigeria, 14 (70.0%) which formed the majority of the class declined the involvement of their unions in matters pertaining to party formation. On human rights protection, 16 (80.0%) believed the middle class is deeply involved in the protection of human rights in Nigeria, only 4 (20.0%) however said that their unions are not involved. When asked to comment on the involvement of ASUU and NBA in protest against insecurity in the country, 15 (75.0%) answered in the affirmative while 5 (25.0%) stated that their unions have not been involved in protest against insecurity.

The data in table 3.0 further indicate that half of the respondents, 10 (50.0%) believed that their ASUU and NBA have been actively involved in the vigorous campaign against corruption in the judiciary while 8 (40.0%) said that much impact of the unions has not been felt. The conclusion that can be drawn from these results, is that the middle class in Nigeria has participated in every aspect of Nigerian political process, but some areas seemed to have gained the attention of the unions than others. First the study shows that ASUU and NBA have played active role in protests against human rights abuse, protest against political injustice and corruption in

government. The results however indicate that ASUU and NBA have not done enough in fighting the scourge of corruption in the judiciary. The results also indicate that the impact of ASUU and NBA have not been significantly felt in matters pertaining to political party formation. What this implies is that, the middle class has not paid significant attention to the foundation of democracy, which is party formation. Party formation is the foundation of democracy because it is the

Table: 3.0: Sectoral Participation of the Middle Class (ASUU and NBA) in the Political Transformation of Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Party Formation		
Yes	6	30.0%
No	14	70.0%
Total	20	100.0%
National Protest on Political Injustice		
Yes	16	80.0%
No	4	20.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Protest against the Abuse of Human Rights		
Yes	16	80.0%
No	4	20.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Protest against Corruption in Government		
Yes	14	70.0%
No	6	30.0
Total	20	100.0%
Protest against Insecurity in the country		
Yes	15	75.0
No	5	25.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Protest against Corruption in the Judiciary		
Yes	10	50.0%
No	8	40.0%
No Response	2	10.0%
Total	20	100.0%

Table 4.0 presents the percentage distribution of respondents' assessment of the sector performance of the middle class in Nigeria. On participation in the protests against continued violence in some state legislatures, only 9 (45.0%) agreed that their unions have been involved in such agitation, 10 (50.0%) said that there unions never took part in such anti-violence protests in Nigeria. Interestingly, this result indicates that, the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the Nigerian Bar Association has not done enough to reform the legislatures through criticisms and protests.

Table 4.0 also presents the percentage distribution of respondents by rating of unions on comments on national economy. Of the 20 members of the middle class, which this study covered, 13 said that their unions have been commenting vigorously on the state of the Nigerian economy. Not only this, the unions must have been part of the governments' strategic and political transformation agenda on the turnaround of the Nigerian economy. No wonder, Nigeria was rated, at the end of 2013 as the strongest economy in Africa. Evidence of this finding can also be supported with the fact that, the Nigerian economic policies are now largely driven by research from the Ivory Towers.

The table also shows respondents' assessment of ASUU and NBA involvement in matters affecting the education sector. When asked to confirm if the unions have participated in the reform of the education sector in Nigeria, 16 (80.0%) confirmed the active involvement of their unions in the reform of the education sector while 4 (20.0%) said that their unions have significantly impacted on the education sector in Nigeria. The result of this study vindicates the recent ASUU strike which lasted for six months from 2013-2014, the outcome of which saw comprehensive reform of funding of University education in Nigeria, and improved working conditions for University staff. The result also shows that, the education is one of the sectors in the Nigerian political system, that has gained most attention of members of the middle class especially the Academic Staff Union of Universities. On the issue of Boko Haram insurgency, the table indicates that 10 (50.0%) of the respondents believed that their unions have been involved in the several campaigns against Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism, 9 (45.0%) however thought that their unions never made any significant impact on Nigeria's counter-terrorism campaigns. When asked if their unions have been making regular comments on the state of the nation, 16 (80.0%) which formed the majority of the respondents answered in the affirmative while 4 (20.0%) said their unions never made regular comments on the state of the nation. What this implies, is that, the middle class usually makes regular comments on the state of the nation. On the issue of Nigeria's International relations and International politics, 12 (60.0%) a large proportion of the respondents said that their unions make regular comments on nation's international relations while 8 (40.0%) said that their unions are less visible in this area of national politics.

Results from table 4.0 also indicate that majority of the ASUU and NBA members, 14 (70.0%) saw their unions as active participants in the current regime while 6 (30.0%) held a contrary opinion. On whether ASUU and NBA are satisfied with the state of the nation, a very low proportion of the population 3 (15.0%) believed their unions are not satisfied with the state of the nation, 17 (85.0%) believed their unions are deeply not satisfied with

the current state of the nation. The result of this study indicates that, despite their involvement in the current political transformation, there is general feeling that the Nigerian state is a failed state. The comment by one of the ASUU members compliments this result: ‘ ‘ The increasing rate of poverty and poor living conditions in the contemporary Nigeria are evidences of a failed state, a state that is unable to cater for the needs of its people as well as their safety as citizens’ ’.

Table 4.0: Sectoral Participation of the Middle Class (ASUU and NBA) in the Political Transformation of Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Protest against violence in some State Legislatures		
Yes	9	45.0%
No	10	50.0%
No Response	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Regular Comments on National Economy		
Yes	13	65.0%
No	7	35.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Regular Comments on Education		
Yes	16	80.0%
No	4	20.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Protest on Boko Haram Insurgence & Terrorism		
Yes	10	50.0%
No	9	45.0%
Total	1	5.0
Regular comments on the state of the nation		
Yes	16	80.0%
No	4	20.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Regular comments on Nigeria’s International politics and International Relations		
Yes	12	60.0%
No	8	40.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Political participation/involvement of ASUU & NBA members in the current government		
Yes	14	70.0%
No	6	30.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Satisfaction of the Unions with the state of the Nation		
Yes	3	15.0%
No	17	85.0%
Total	20	100.0%

Table 4.0 shows

MARGINALIZATION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

The results of the qualitative study indicate that the middle class in Nigeria is experiencing political and economic marginalization despite its strong support for democracy and political modernization of the nation. This obvious neglect of the class shows in the expression of one of the respondents: ‘For decades, the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities, the Nigeria Bar Association, the Nigerian Medical Association, Civil Liberty Organization and the Nigeria Labour Congress and other human rights groups have been on the vanguard of political transformation of Nigeria. Despite our ardent belief in democracy and democratic struggles, the large number of them have lived under abject poverty and political persecution. During the military, we fought the military juntas with all our might against all forms of human rights’ abuses and obnoxious decrees designed to destroy the civil society. After the military, we have not relented as unions in saving the souls and protecting the interests of the downtrodden, and the vulnerable in the Nigerian society. ASUU, for instance, has gone on strikes to force the government to recognize the need for adequate funding of public universities in Nigeria. Despite all these struggles, the government has not seen the welfare of our members as a significant component of Nigeria’s political process. In the final analysis, government has been very hostile and intolerant of radical ASUU and NBA members who believe in transparency and accountability of democratic government’’ (Key Informant Interview, 2013).

Another respondent who spoke on the marginalization of the members of the middle class (ASUU and NBA) made the following remarks: ‘Like, in most developing societies, the state is intolerant of the middle class because we will always oppose a state that does not have respect for human rights, or engage in massive looting of national treasury. I think, the major reason why members of the middle class are marginalized in contemporary Nigeria, is because, in most cases, the class tends to be anti-government’’ (Key Informant Interview, 2013).

One of the members of the Nigerian Bar Association has this to say about the middle class: ‘Our current posture to national issues suggest a union (ASUU) that has lost the spirit of doggedness that is necessary to fight anti-democratic forces in developing democracies. We were active and prominent in the political arena during the era of the military because we wanted to return Nigeria to civil rule. Today, our struggle is more of improved welfare and not of good governance at all levels of governance’’.

The remark of one of the Lawyers was also not different on the nature of the relationship between the Nigerian State and the Civil Society. ‘The NBA of today is not the NBA of the 1980s and 1990s when Nigeria was in deep socio-economic and political crisis. In think there is a link between

economic crisis and political response of the members of the middle class. Now that life is better for some lawyers, they think less about the less privileged. For instance, how many lawyers are ready to fight corruption in the temple of justice. The debate is for another day” (Key Informant Interview, 2013).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study has investigated the role of the middle class in the democratization process especially in the ongoing political transformation of Nigeria. The study came to verify the popular assumption that the middle class is a force to reckon with in the political modernization of developing society. The belief among scholars, is that, the middle class plays universal role in the world, and this role, is to aid the process of transition from authoritarian political system to democratic regime.

Findings of this study indicate that the middle class in Nigeria, like their counterparts in the developed world, is very active in the political transformation of Nigeria but the level of participation of the class in the various aspects of Nigeria’s political processes vary. This result vindicates the study conducted by Lu (2005), which see a unilinear relationship between middle class involvement in political transformation and democratization. What this implies is that, there may not be smooth relationship between the participation of the middle class in democracy and the political modernization of developing society. On the contrary, the level of participation of the middle class as obtained in this study show that, middle class political participation usually varies across different segments of the democratic projects.

The study found that the involvement of the middle class in the political modernization of Nigeria is more conspicuous in areas of campaign for transparency in government and protests against corruption in government, human rights protection and the impunity of government officials, protests against political injustice, improved funding of University education in Nigeria and national security. The supports that the government has received on the fight against corruption in government might partly have been accounted for because the stance of the class to the forces that could return the country to civil rule.

Corruption is still being fought by the middle class in Nigeria because it was the problem that saw the collapse of the First Republic, took the country to military rule and then exploded Nigeria’s economic crises of the 1980s.

Unlike in the developed world, the middle class in Nigeria has not shown political maturity that warrants its involvement in the determination of party formation, building of party structures and ensuring that the rule of

law prevails at all times. This study also indicated that the limited presence of the professional middle class in the growth of the economy is as a result of the peripheral nature of the Nigerian society. In a peripheral society, the middle class' role is curtailed by forces within and outside the state. The forces within the state include: the opportunistic politicians, the ruling elites, the comprador bourgeoisie, and the foreign investors. The state in most post-colonial societies usually under-develops the middle class because the middle class is seen as threat to regime stabilization or the stabilization of the regimes of primitive accumulation of these various classes. This finding again opposes the unilinear approach to the study of the middle class, which goes to assert, there is a straight-forward relationship between the middle class and political modernization. Because the developing societies are societies that had undergone colonization, and is currently undergoing neocolonialism, many factors may prop up to determine how, when and where the middle class influences the democratic process. This is the submission of Koo (1991), Brown and Jones (1993), Rodan (1993) and Enghart (2003). The peculiarity of the experiences of members of the middle class goes to show that their participation in politics is contingent on the socio-economic and political conditions in their countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for improved relations between the state and the middle class:

1. The middle class (ASUU and NBA) should strengthen its involvement in areas such as wealth creation and Nigerian economic development, justice reform and the rule of law as well as Nigerian international politics.
2. The resolve of the unions to fight corruption in government should also be intensified
3. Government at different levels should seek further collaboration between members of the middle class and government agencies on issues pertaining to party formation.
4. Forces of the state that discourage the involvement of members of the middle class in national Politics should be identified and punished.
5. The dissatisfaction with the state of the nation by members of the middle class is an indication that Nigerian governments need to improve on the welfare of Nigerians at all levels of the society.
6. The middle class also encourage their members to increase their individual and collective involvement in the democratization process including conduct of elections so that Nigeria can sustain the democratic project.

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