

## **A COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL APPRAISAL OF INTEREST GROUPS IN NIGERIA AND KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper evaluates the historical experiences of interest groups with particular reference to Kenya and Nigeria, resulting from the apparent differences in the shared ideals and patterns of influence. In considering the shared values and influence dimensions of interest groups, the study examines the concept of interest groups, which often plays a critical role in socio-political development trajectories. Based on a comparative historical analysis of events, the study shows how interest groups impacted public policy processes in Kenya and Nigeria in the decades following the 1960s. Basically, it makes the case that instead of engaging in activism for the public good and welfare, interest groups seem to have sided with constituted authorities, particularly governments, in recent decades. Although the paper attributes this to interest group politicisation, ethnicity, and the corrupt practices of interest association leaders, it suggests that interest groups in Nigeria, Kenya, and possibly Africa in general reevaluate their common beliefs, customs, and standards to promote socio-political sanity and the common good.

**Keywords:** Comparative History, Development, Diplomacy, Public Policy, Interest Groups

### **Introduction**

Over the past fifty years, as democratic spaces have grown throughout Africa, interest groups have proliferated in social and political circles to promote internationally recognised norms by interfering with public policymaking (Akhakpe, 2014, p. 47). In the meantime, the rise of interest groups in contemporary sociopolitical structures is fueled by nonconformist impulses and shattered ideologies, unlike those that were historically upheld. History can easily give insights into the past experiences of sociopolitical entities with interest groups, especially for their wielded influence on public (government) policy direction through various means such as advocacy and activism. More recently, political and sociocultural scholarship seems to have looked at not just man and his society but also social, economic, cultural, and professional groups about the creation of public policies, changes and continuities, public mobilisation, and advancements in various spheres of human civilisation (Duangthong and Boonmee, 2022; Horvathova and Dobbins, 2019; Bloodgood, 2011; Abimbola, 2002; Olukoju, 1997). However, the heterogeneous context and existence of interest pluralism within cultures and groups in various African socio-political formations have made integration a crucial imperative (Adebile, 2015; 2022, p. 87). In the literature, the pattern of interest groups' influence on public policy in Africa has received relatively little attention. The literature does not address, in a comparative context, how interest groups have affected public

policy processes in Kenya and Nigeria during the decades after the 1960s. There are, in fact, limited historical studies on how interest groups have shaped sociopolitical development in East and West Africa. This is the focus of this article.

That said, the paper adopts a qualitative method to analyse, in a historical context, the structure, formation and pattern of interest group influence on public policy formulation and implementation in post-colonial Nigeria and Kenya. It relies on qualitative data sourced from books, articles, academic journals, government documents and other library materials. These sources were critically analysed within a comparative historical framework, identifying themes and patterns to offer perspectives and draw conclusions. In light of this, this study compares and contrasts the influence patterns of interest groups on African public and government policy processes, with a focus on the experiences of Nigeria and Kenya in the decades following the 1960s. This will be assessed through the following sections in this article. First, I examine conceptual perceptions of interest groups.

### **Conceptual Perceptions**

Interest groups are one of the crucial elements that reveal the character of any political system. In addition, they are the main conduit between the people and the government. The structure, concerns and participation of interest groups in the policy-making process are largely determined by the prevailing socio-political conditions at a given time and the reactions to such situations. While interest groups play key roles in any political system, they do not aim to win formal government control, like political parties; they only seek to influence public policy. Interest groups are defined differently by scholars. Maira Martini (2012) defines interest groups as “associations of individuals or organisations that, based on one or more shared concerns, attempt to influence public policy in their favour, usually by lobbying members of the government.” Additionally, interest groups have been defined as “private, non-profit, professional organisations, concerned with public welfare goals, with a distinctive legal character” (Clarke, 1998, p. 37). More elaborately, Baldo and Sibthorpe (1998) describe interest groups as “...the wide range of voluntary associations that occupy the broad terrain between the individual and state, and which are the primary means by which citizens can articulate their interests to both the state and to the society at large.” In the ideal sense, interest groups aim to influence the policymaking process without necessarily becoming involved in governance.

'Pressure group' and 'interest group' are often used interchangeably (Abimbola, 2002, p. 38), but the concepts are not entirely the same. However, pressure groups are better described as a subset of interest groups that are primarily concerned with influencing institutional policies and decision-making processes, particularly through social or institutional threats. This is to suggest that pressure groups are more aggressive, using protests, ultimatums, and even systemic disruptions like riots to put pressure on institutions, policymakers, and governments in particular. Interest groups, advocacy groups, or object-centred groups are associations of people with a common or integrated objective and collectively channelled efforts to advance such a goal of interest through

various forms of advocacy and activism. Interest groups, on the other hand, may advocate for a broader range of issues and represent groups like business and commercial associations, human rights and women's affirmative action organisations, health and environmental organisations, professional and student unions, and labour and trade associations. Hence, while interest groups may operate on a broad spectrum of matters of concern, pressure groups are rather parochial and specific in their objective and operation.

It follows from the foregoing that the two concepts are perceived as synonymous due to their similar approaches and purposes. Nonetheless, pressure groups may be considered as interest groups, but not every interest group operates as a pressure group. The increased emphasis on interest groups, which typically perform more demanding functions like public education, research, social reorientation, reporting, philanthropy, and other community services, is especially the cause of this. Since they are formed along ethnic and religious lines, interest groups and pressure groups may not be easily underrated in state formation and democratisation processes, especially in Africa, as this study would reveal. Moreover, history has shown that interest groups have served as a platform through which public opinion and interest are communicated to the state in colonial and post-colonial Africa. Though these groups have not been free of criticism, most probably because of the approach and tactics they employ to advance their opinions, influence policy formulation, and achieve their objectives of interest. However, they have continued to be a strong opponent of the government's and other established authorities' oppressive and marginalising policy directions. In summary, interest groups are essential to the socio-political formation and development paths of governments, institutions, and societies. These functions are best understood when these socio-political entities are placed in their historical context.

### **Interest Groups in Kenya and Nigeria: Historical Context**

The origins of interest groups in Kenya could be traced to the colonial era. The colonial regime introduced many oppressive and obnoxious socio-economic policies, such as alienation of land, denial of representation and subjection to forced labour. These policies were not welcomed with open arms by the people. Because so many colonial policies were rejected by the populace, the colonial regime used force to enforce compliance. The oppressive character of colonial laws and their implementation made organised public advocacy and resistance necessary. The people's dissatisfaction with the colonial system was expressed through the formation of numerous interest groups. The oppressive nature of colonial law enforcement led to the formation of indigenous interest groups against the oppressive colonial state.

The Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), the Young Kavirondo Association (YKA) and the Kenya African Union (KCA), which later became KANU, were among the earliest interest groups that lent a voice to the interests of the people. The KCA and YKA campaigned against the alienation of natives from their land and championed the call for educational and economic opportunities for natives. The groups also canvassed for direct representation of natives in the Legislative Council (LEGCO). As a result of the activities of these two groups, the colonial regime allowed the first

African Representative to the Legislative Assembly (LEGCO) in 1944 (Stiftung, 2010). However, the role of the KCA and YKA advocacy in appointing an African representative to the Legislative Assembly in 1944 does not capture the exact picture or disposition of the colonial regime to native interest groups and the influence of such groups on initiating or changing colonial policies.

More often than not, the activities of interest groups were opposed mainly by violent reprisals by the state. The colonial state often restricted the activities of nationalist groups and frustrated them by imprisoning and detaining their leaders. Following the inefficiency of the use of peaceful methods of advocacy, Kenyans switched to the use of force. This new strategy culminated in the Mau uprisings of 1952. In response to the adoption of force by the people, the colonial regime responded with more force. A state of emergency was proclaimed by the regime, which also outlawed all political organisations nationwide. Until the foundation for independence was established in the Lyttelton Constitution of 1954, Kenyans' unwavering advocacy for political emancipation through all available channels remained a thorn in the colonial regime's side. This was followed by the election of eight Africans to LEGCO (Stiftung, 2010, p. 4).

Nigeria's interest group history is intricately linked to colonial politics and the fight for independence, much like Kenya's. Following many obnoxious policies by the British colonial government and the exclusion of the educated natives from the administrative process, much opposition arose against the colonial administration. Numerous interest groups were established as a result of nationalistic opposition to colonial rule in order to organise and promote calls for self-determination and self-rule. In the 1920s, interest groups, such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers, the Nigerian Law Association and the Nigerian Produce Traders Association, sprang up across the country. Nigeria saw the emergence of trade union organisations after the colonial government granted them the right to collective organisation and bargaining in 1939. Under the aegis of the TUC, workers organised a general strike for increased wages in 1945. The workers enjoyed the backing of the press outlets owned by Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo (the editor of the TUC's bulletin and secretary of the Motor Transport Owners' Union). The strike crippled economic activities across the country, forcing the colonial government to concede to the workers' demands.

The heterogeneous makeup of the colonial Nigerian state birthed heavy competition among the various ethnic affiliations over scarce resources. Interestingly, some organisations express and represent the interests of the majority of Nigeria's ethnic groups. Between the pre-independence and post-independence periods, the major ethnic groups (the Hausa/Fulani, the Igbo, and the Yoruba) in Nigeria formed socio-cultural organisations to represent regional interests. Such organisations were initially formed as an instrument of nationalism and the quest for independence from colonial rule. However, the relationship between certain socio-cultural associations and political parties became complex after independence was achieved. A few cultural associations and political parties quickly formed a mutually beneficial relationship. Minority ethnic groups have also organised themselves into various advocacy groups. The Middle Belt Forum was in the Middle Belt (North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria). The Niger-Delta Elders Forum also

existed in the Niger-Delta alongside other parallel interest groups (such as the South-South Forum) and many other ethnic solidarity and advocacy groups in the region and other parts of the country. Community Development Associations, which were initially responsible for mobilising resources for community development initiatives, have now expanded to include lobbying for cabinet positions and government patronage (Balogun, 2009, pp. 63-65).

The people of the Niger Delta have long demanded self-determination and resource control, which have taken many forms. One of the earliest attempts to advocate for the interests of the Niger Delta people was the Isaac Boro-led Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF). In the 1990s, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), an interest group formed and led by the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, advocated for the rights of the people of the Niger Delta for self-determination. This was motivated by the years of neglect and suffering witnessed by the people of the Niger Delta, particularly the Ogoni people. MOSOP articulated and presented the Ogoni Bill of Rights to the Federal Military Government of Nigeria in 1990. The highlight of the bill is the demand for political autonomy and resource control (Ogoni Bill of Rights, 1990, p. 11). The government reacted to the activities of the group with repression; this culminated in the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other MOSOP members by the Sani Abacha-led military government in November 1993. This, however, failed to stop the agitations for self-determination and resource control in the Niger Delta. Instead, more interest groups sprang up in the Niger-Delta, especially after the return to democratic rule in 1999.

The Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) was formed based on the efforts of the late Isaac Boro. The group's demands were codified in the popular Kaiama Declaration. The group drew public attention to the high level of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region and expressed the rejection of federal laws such as the Land Use Decree of 1978 and the Petroleum Decrees that robbed the Niger Delta of resource control. Another group that emerged after 1999 was the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). MEND was also involved in the advocacy for resource control and self-determination, like other groups before it. Ethnic interest groups in the Niger Delta were successful in drawing global and national attention to the region's underdevelopment (Balogun, 2019, p. 121). The history of interest groups in Kenya and Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial period, when people began to resent the British colonial authorities' policies of subjugation, exploitation, and exclusion in their regions through sociopolitical associations and groups. The liberation of these territories from colonial rule was made possible in large part by interest groups working for political emancipation. In a nutshell, the essence of interest groups is visible in public advocacy and organised resistance or opposition to harmful public policies, as demonstrated in subsequent sections. It may therefore be worthwhile to conduct a hierarchical analysis of interest groups in Nigeria and Kenya.

### **Interest Groups in Nigeria and Kenya: Towards a Structural Analysis**

As in most African countries, the nature and structure of interest groups in Nigeria and Kenya hold keen similarities. Interest groups are often classified based on purposes and objectives. In Nigeria, just as in Kenya, there are different groupings of interest groups. The first to be mentioned are the

research and advocacy groups; they are designed to serve as think-tank research and advocacy groups. While such groups in Nigeria include, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD); Centre for Advanced Social Sciences (CASS); African Leadership Forum (ALF), Centre for Research and Documentation (CRD) and a host of others, Kenya has groups such as Centre for the Study of Adolescents (CSA), Centre for Advocacy on Legal Ethics and Human Rights Issues (CALER), African Centre for Rights and Governance (ACRG), Centre for African Post-Cultural Studies (CAPS), Centre For Assistance and Rehabilitation of Ex-Prisoners, Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education, Centre for Minority Rights and Development, Centre for Research and Advocacy in Human Rights, Centre for Restoration of Human Rights and Democracy, Child Rights and Special Needs Education Center and many more that will be best classified within the Research and Advocacy Groups. These groups help to shape key government policies and advise the government on issues such as development and political governance.

The second in order of social relevance is the Human Rights and Democracy Advocacy Groups; the conditions that led to the proliferation of these groups were created by the long years of military rule and its extremes in Nigeria. The sit-tight tendencies of some military dictators, combined with their poor human rights records, prompted the formation of human rights and democracy advocacy groups in Nigeria. Such groups include (work on election today and HIV/AIDS tomorrow): Gender and Development Action (GADA), Women Advocacy Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC), and Human Rights Law Services (HURILAW). On the other hand, Kenyan human rights and democracy advocacy groups revolve around groups with the objectives of canvassing for human rights and protecting and defending them. Some of these groups include Action Resort for Change (ARC), ASHOKA EAST AFRICA, Foundation for Girl Child, Friends of the Kenyan Child Association, Kenya Organised Women Association and Women Minority Rights Initiative. The networks and coalitions may better fit in the third grouping. Individuals or organisations form these groups to campaign for changes in the national life of Nigeria and Kenya. Membership of these groups in both countries is drawn from different civil society organisations (CSOs). In Kenya mention would be made of the Advocacy for Health Research and Development (AHRD), African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (Kenya Chapter), Kenya African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), Health Rights Advocacy Forum, and the National Alliance for the Protection of Minorities and Marginalised Persons. These are the groups under the Networks and Coalitions groupings. At the same time, the Citizens Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR), the Electoral Reform Network (ERN) and the Transitional Monitoring Group (TMG) are examples of networks and coalition interest groups in Nigeria.

Central in these groupings or classifications are the trade unions and professional bodies. These groups are established to influence government policies to meet their collective and individual interests. Such associations or organisations in Nigeria include the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and several others attached to almost every profession or artisan, as well as trade and

commercial associations within the country. Interesting to know that, in Kenya, professional and trade groups are scattered all over the country. Examples of unions or organisations within this category in Kenya are the Commuters Welfare Association, Kenya Consumers' Organisation, Kenya Workers Rights and Harmonisation Programme, Central Organisation of Trade Unions, Kenya National Farmers Union, Kenya National Union of Teachers, and Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers, to mention a few. They are very active in influencing government and political policies for the benefit and welfare of group members.

With particular reference to Nigeria, it is worth noting that there are religious and ethnic interest groups in the country, as well as a few who adhere to militia philosophies and terroristic approaches. The most notorious ones include the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), the Bakassi Boys, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and a wing of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). The Bakassi Boys and the OPC were established in the eastern and southwestern parts of Nigeria, respectively, with the admirable goal of reducing the threat of criminal activity and social vices in order to assist the established law enforcement organisations. There was conflict between the groups and the Nigerian Police Force and other law enforcement organisations throughout the country because, although they were comparatively successful in maintaining order in their respective regions, some of their excesses were too great to ignore (Balogun, 2009, p. 67). It is relevant to make mention here that while several previously existing religious and ethnic-based groups have transformed into fundamentalist entities with extreme radical approaches, challenging and intimidating governance with the threat of violence and terror. Various groups of this kind have been established in the northern region of the country to lessen the threat of terrorism ravaging the country.

The foregoing brings to the fore the existing similarities in the nature and structure of interest groups in Nigeria and Kenya. It is instructive that just as in some other human social associations, these groups are administered by an appointed set of leaders from within the group, often called executives. As the group's spokesperson for the government and society, this influential group of executives assists in putting group decisions into action. They stand as an intermediary between the government and their members. Since the primary objective of interest groups is to influence government policies and social thought, they get organised in united forums along common interests and concerns, adopting different means to manipulate policy formulation and implementation in the public interest. In short, interest groups in West African Nigeria and East African Kenya are strikingly similar in their nature and structure. However, the malicious dominance of ethnic and religious interest groups has altered how these groups were formed and organised, especially in light of recent developments in Nigeria.

### **Interest Groups and Socio-political Formation in Post-Colonial Kenya and Nigeria**

Scarcely have studies been devoted to responding to political questions that border on how interest groups influence the decision-making process in governance. Such questions calling for attention in this respect do not exempt "What is influence?" "Who is wielding influence?" "How does influence affect public/government policies?" "How can the influence of public interests on public

policies be measured?” (Scott, 2018, p. 14). These questions are difficult to answer because they are intangible, and influence is difficult to quantify. This is especially true because the influence of any group or individual on government policies is often invisible, except when a policy change occurs or a government-sponsored proposal is defeated. This aspect of the study will examine the roles, influences, or contributions of interest groups in the socio-political development of Kenya and Nigeria.

### ***Interest Groups and Socio-political Developments in Kenya***

Religious entities have largely influenced socio-political development trajectories in Kenya. When one of Kenya's most historic developments, democratisation, is mentioned, the roles of Christian churches become especially important. Shortly after colonialism, Kenya's pre-existing socioeconomic conditions and the rise of a repressive one-party state necessitated much-needed democratic reform and development (Ngunyi, 1995, p. 151). At the time, the church served as an excellent tool for democratic advocacy. Even though this appears to be a traditional church administrative approach, it provided its members and leaders from all ethnic and social backgrounds with a common front in the fight against totalitarianism during the Moi regime. Even though this appears to be a traditional church administrative approach, it provided its members and leaders from all ethnic and social backgrounds with a common front in the fight against totalitarianism during the Moi regime. Religious interest groups such as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK) reached out to the disenfranchised and those marginalised within the country. The Church's political advocacy was in the form of confronting the one-party government with its collaborative approach (Okuku, 2002, p. 14).

During colonialism, the church-state relationship in Kenya was a welcoming one. The church leaders during this period were from the same country as the colonial administrators, making it difficult, if not impossible, for church leaders to criticise the colonial regime. Yet, there were pockets of criticism from some church leaders during the colonial era. With the emergence of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) in 1966, there were thirty-seven (37) dominant Protestant churches and para-church organisations related to the Church Province of Kenya (CPK) and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) denominations. The group became the instrument through which religious mandates and public mobilisations were exercised. Thus, the church protested unfavourable government policies such as the replacement of the secret with a queuing system, the violent evictions of squatters in Nairobi, and the state-induced ethnic clashes in the Rift Valley (Berman and Lonsdale, 1992, pp. 650-52). The Church's position was influenced by the belief that governance was not solely the responsibility of politicians. As such, the Church should act as a catalyst for social and political change. The late Bishop Muge articulated this belief well in his address to the Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK) Youth Organisation, stating that "the church couldn't compromise theological issues with secular or temporal matters" (Throup and Hornsby, 1998; Khadiagala, 2021, p. 157). He urged the church to protest “when God-given rights and liberties are violated”. He added that the church had a special duty to “give voice to the

voiceless” (Throup and Hornsby, 1998, p. 151). Rev. Kariuki B. Njoroge corroborated this when he asserted that “the church has a duty beyond the rescue of victims of oppression. It must try to eliminate the source of oppression. The church will have to enter the political arena to do this” (Ram & Sabar-Friedman, 1996, p. 56).

The position and activities of the church were so effective that they generated counter-reactions from the government. A case to mention was the banning of Beyond Church Magazine following proactive disapproval of the queuing vote system during KANU's elections in 1986 and more specifically, the publication of a particular edition of Beyond Church in which Bedan Mbugua, one of its editors, wrote that "democracy in Kenya has slipped a step downward, putting the country on the path of self-destruction that many African countries have followed." (Branch, 2011, p. 179). In addition, a pastoral correspondence in 1988 from the Catholic Church in Kenya made a commitment to a “God-given mission of human development and of promoting justice, love and peace”. The church added that “the situation of growing injustice should not be” (Branch, 2011, p. 69). Alexander Muge (The Anglican bishop of Eldoret, 1983-1990) also lent his voice to the dissatisfaction with the Moi regime. Muge proceeded to compare Kenya under Moi to the apartheid regime in South Africa. When the local media was forced to limit its coverage of church leaders' opinions, the leaders turned to foreign media outlets to distribute sermons and other literature critical of the government (Branch, 2011, p. 71).

The church collaborated with other groups with similar political interests. The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the Law Society of Kenya worked together to call for public debate on the introduction of queue voting in 1986. The church also worked with lawyers (such as John Khaminwa) who acted as defence counsel to political prisoners. The lawyers, having had access to the condition of the prisoners, were motivated to advocate for the prisoners' rights. However, the lawyers discovered that most Kenyans were uninterested in the plight of political prisoners, making it difficult to build public support for the cause. Kiraitu Murungi, one of the lawyers involved, had written in his diaries:

Whenever I visit my home in the rural areas, most of the talk there is about rain, drought, livestock and which people in the village are sick. All the United Nations declarations, conventions and pompous declarations of human rights have not been heard of by the majority of our people. They are of no consequence in our villages (Branch, 2011, pp. 74-15).

As a result, the lawyers and the church shared interests; the lawyers acted as a conduit between civil society activism and political opposition, while the churches gave their human rights activism a larger audience and a channel of communication. Also, lawyers such as Paul Muite, Kiraitu Murungi, Gibson Kamau Kuria, Gitobu Imanyara and Pheroze Nowrojee transformed the criticisms of the queue-voting system into a larger debate about constitutional reform. By 1988, the collaboration between the church and lawyers brought about a political movement rooted in the call for constitutional reforms (Branch, 2011, p. 77).

Amidst several proactive approaches, the NCCCK was also engaged in socio-economic development efforts. The NCCCK's activities in this regard were in three categories: Christian Education and

Training, Relief, Rehabilitation and Resettlement, and Christian Service and Urban Development (Ngunyi, 1995, p. 164). Under the Education and Training Programme, the group was involved in formal and informal education. The village polytechnic programmes were started as part of the programme in response to the high number of youths who were not attending school. The programme also prioritised public enlightenment and civic education, which helped raise political consciousness among the populace and fuelled calls for a shift from one-party authoritarianism to multiparty democracy. It is instructive to add here that the strong advocacy of the NCKK, supported by the Roman Catholic Church (though not part of the NCKK), was responsible for the exemption of church leaders, armed forces officers, and other ranking civil servants from queuing during voting. These efforts show the sagacity of religious interest groups' political advocacy in Kenya. In addition, the NCKK was involved in community projects such as rural training centres for farmers, as well as providing social services and economic inputs to the informal sector in cities. These humanitarian projects relied on grants and aids from non-governmental organisations and foreign donors. (Gibbs and Ajulu, 1999, pp. 43-44; Gitari, 1991, p. 16).

Given the strong advocacies and oppositions by the NCKK, the government turned to other Christian groups, especially the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK), made up of the African Inland Church, the Reformed Church of East Africa, the Kenya Assemblies of God, and the African Gospel Church. Being dominated by Kalenjin ethnic people, from where the president hails from, the EFK would not align with NCKK's agitations but became its opposition instead. Though the EFK was registered in 1976, it never got into active operations until 1980, when its administrative secretariat was fully set up. The emergence of EFK, however, never stopped the NCKK and the Roman Catholic Church's political advocacy. Well-meaning religious priests and church leaders, including Bishops Muge, Gitari, and Okullu of CPK, Bishop Ndingi Mwana a'Nzeki of the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, and Rev. Timothy Njoya of PCEA, among others, stood firm in support of NCKK's activism. Their efforts gained more influence on government decision-making through clear and detailed presentation of evidence-based narratives and arguments for any agitation. A case to mention was in the aftermath of the 1988 general election; some pastors of the CPK diocese of Eldoret, led by Bishop Muge, collated data from the Tinderet constituency (where their allegations of intimidation of voters by Mr Sego were against the incumbent MP, Mr Henry Kosgey). According to the pastors' data, Mr Sego was declared the winner of the election with 3341 votes, while the incumbent MP, Mr Kosgey, received 9385 votes. The result gathered by the pastors was published in *Beyond*, an NCKK advocacy magazine. The government responded by imprisoning the magazine editor (Mr Bedan Mbugwa) and proscribing the magazine (Githiga, 1997, pp. 166-169). Bishop David Gitari (of the Diocese of Mt Kenya East) also facilitated data collection in Kirinyaga District during the 1988 elections. According to the data gathered, only 25% of the electorate went to the polls. Gitari concluded that "owing to massive rigging of elections, it is alleged that 75% of the present parliamentarians were not popularly elected, and as Bishop Henry Okullu put it: 'They are in parliament by selection, not by election'" (Githiga, 1997, p. 166-169).

Further still, the NCKK and the RCC created a Department of Justice and Peace in 1991. It was a platform to fight state oppression by educating the masses about their political rights. This was also a medium for disseminating a utilitarian interpretation and presentation of Jesus Christ's Gospel in a way that affected people's daily lives, resulting in a peaceful, sane, and lasting social environment. However, by the end of the 1980s, the EFK had gained strength by defining and polarising religious affiliations in Kenya along ethnic lines (Githiga, 1997, p. 211). This gave rise to pluralism among interest groups with similar advocacy ideals, which was not good for the socio-political stability of the state. At the height of internal and external pressures against the state, the president proposed introducing a multi-party political system instead of the one-party system practice. This development brought about a new era of political education and orientation spearheaded by religious interest groups, particularly the NCKK. On the other hand, the EFK grew stronger with the support of the state, which mustered enough strength for the EFK to challenge and oppose the activities of the NCKK.

The National Ecumenical Civil Education Programme (NECEP) was founded by the NCKK and the Roman Catholic Church in preparation for Kenya's general elections in December 1992. The programmemobilised election observers to all the country's one hundred and eighty-eight (188) constituencies. It has been suggested that EFK, on the other hand, had been employed by the government to disorganise the activities of NCKK, such that, before the elections, about eight member churches of the NCKK had already relinquished their membership (Ngunyi, 1995, p. 151). Because of this and other reasons, the incumbent government was kept in power, the elections were blatantly rigged, and the election monitoring process was ineffectual (Githiga, 1997, p. 211). Even though the NCKK and the Roman Catholic Church in particular were disappointed that they were unable to overthrow the current government, they persisted in their activism against unfavourable government policies and decisions and promoted good governance and political order.

Ethnicity and political patronage had a detrimental impact on religious interest groups' advocacy, despite the religious groups' contributions to Kenya's sociopolitical developments. The Luo and Kikuyu ethnic groups served as the foundation for the church's resistance to the Moi government in Kenya. Also, many churches supporting the government had affiliations with the Lalenjin and Kamba ethnic groups that dominated the regime. The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCKK) is a multiethnic organisation that includes the Luo, Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru, whereas the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK) had a Luo-Kalenjin bias (Ngunyi, 1995, p. 126). The political positions of the leadership of various churches were also caused by political patronage or lack thereof; many church institutions that supported political reform were initially shut out of the political patronage system during the regime. On the other hand, church institutions that defended and supported the regime were included in state patronage (Okuku, 2002, pp. 84-90). Within this narrative context, it can be construed that the EFK was politicised and empowered by the state apparatus to collapse the influence and advocacy of the NCKK and other sister religious interest

groups. This is a metric of the divide-and-rule politics employed by the state to weaken the proactive influence and result-seeking efforts of interest groups.

Evaluating the contributions and roles of other strategic interest groups in Kenya's development process is also important. In addition, during the 1980s and 1990s, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had a significant impact on Kenya's political landscape. NGOs filled the void created by the weakness of opposition parties in Kenya. The authoritarian nature of the post-colonial Kenyan state required a radical and comprehensive approach, which the NGOs provided. Initially, the state and NGOs had a cordial relationship; the state did not interfere with NGOs' activities as long as they were "developmental" (Kanyinga, 1995). However, the economic crisis of the 1980s led to a change in the government's relationship with NGOs. The financial crisis resulted in reduced funds available to the government, while the NGOs continued to receive aid from the international community. This resulted in the state's resentment of NGOs (Ndegwa, 1996, p. 9). The state responded through the NGO Coordination Act of 1990, which sought to control the NGOs. The state's attempt to control the NGOs was met with resistance. The legislation strained relations between NGOs and governments. The non-governmental organisations successfully challenged the bill's obnoxious provisions. The success of the NGOs in challenging the legislation to control them created an aura of invincibility for the NGOs and allowed them to operate independently of the state.

The Green Belt Movement in Kenyan sociopolitical development is also noteworthy, as it had a significant impact on forest preservation advocacy. Between 1977 and the mid-1990s, the movement's membership grew sporadically, not less than 50,000 Kenyan peoples shared membership with the Movement. Members of the movement pledged to plant trees to combat deforestation and provide household fuel. The group inevitably became involved in democracy advocacy because they believed that their environmental interests would be better protected under a new political order. Furthermore, because of the links between environmental and political advocacy, the movement was at the forefront of the campaign against the ruling party's plans to build a new secretariat in Uhuru Park. The local campaign against the project was based on the fact that the park was publicly owned and was one of the scarce green public spaces in the city. There was also uproar against the project in the international community. Concerns about the project's massive budget, combined with sustained domestic and international pressure, particularly from American and Japanese diplomats, led to the project's abandonment in January 1990 (Branch, 2011, pp. 186-87). In February and March 1992, the movement staged another hunger strike in protest of political imprisonment. The protestors, who were mostly women (mothers and wives) and siblings of political prisoners, set up camp on the corner of Uhuru Park and remained there despite police raids. After two days, political prisoners were released (Branch, 2011, pp. 189-90).

Like the Church, the NGOs were also influenced by ethnicity and patronage. The role of NGOs in Kenyan politics confirms the observation that patronage-based politics provide fertile ground for civil society participants to establish platforms (NGOs) with the veiled goal of acquiring political power or gaining political patronage while advocating for reforms. Thus, most NGOs have

strengthened, rather than weakened, patronage in Kenya (Okuku, 2002, pp. 91-93). In the same vein, as seen in the Church, the Kenyan NGO community reflected the different political divisions in the larger society. The influence of NGOs and the Church in Kenya supports the notion that African non-state civil society actors can only make small, uncertain, and reversible contributions to governance (Okuku, 2002, p. 92).

Following the success of the multi-party efforts in Kenya, most interest groups at the forefront of the campaigns were ironically weakened. There was a sharp decline in the influence of interest groups in the aftermath of the 2002 elections. Prominent figures (such as Wangari Maathai, Paul Muite, Peter Anyang Nyong'o, and Kiraitu Murungi) who drove the campaigns against the one-party state became part of the new political order, rather than staying outside the political system. The brain drain of individuals from interest groups into active politics has weakened the vibrancy of civil society. Moreover, many individuals who advocated good governance during the Moi regime were involved in some of the worst abuses of power under Kibaki's government. The church also lost its advocacy flavour after the return to a multi-party state. By 2002, most of the clergy who drove the church advocacy had left the stage. Those who replaced them lacked the same bite to speak the truth to power. David Githii, elected as the moderator of the Presbyterian Church in 2003, spent more time on the campaign to remove satanic and masonic symbols from the church than on making the church relevant to Kenyan youths, which was his central campaign promise (Branch, 2011, pp. 256-58). Since then, interest groups' ability to influence people, especially through activism and advocacy, has significantly decreased. In fact, interest groups' influence over the creation and execution of policies seems to be waning, most likely as a result of political favouritism and incentives from the state and its managers, which have made the public's voice unheard and largely irrelevant.

### ***Socio-political Development Patterns and Interest Groups in Nigeria***

The majority of professional interest groups in Nigeria were active in both expressing and promoting the interests of their members as well as pursuing public interests. The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Campaign for Democracy (CD), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), National Association of Nigerian Students, and the press are examples of functional interest groups in Nigeria. Functional interest groups are those interest groups whose activities transcend the promotion and protection of specific interests but overlap with the pursuit of policies that are of public interest. These organisations criticise unpopular government policies, organise conferences, seminars, rallies, demonstrations, and protest marches, and, in certain situations, offer workable alternatives to unpopular policies to raise public awareness and mobilise the public against unpopular acts of government (Okeke, 2014; Abimbola, 2002, p. 39).

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) were also involved in political advocacy. The NBA has pushed for a return to democratic governance and the application of democratic principles, including equality before the law, even though its main

goal is to unite and defend the interests of its members. The NBA was a thorn in the flesh of many military regimes in Nigeria, most especially the regime of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida. Under the leadership of Alao Aka-Bashorun and Priscilla Kuye, the NBA was so radical in its political advocacies that it was a target of suppression by the IBB regime. The IBB junta's sustained attacks culminated in the NBA's lethargic inertness between 1992 and 1995 (Mimiko, 1995).

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has continued to draw attention to the lack of infrastructure and poor working conditions in Nigeria's public universities. While the ASUU is a professional interest organisation, it has implicitly participated in political activities. For example, between May and November 1993, the Union went on strike in protest of the government's failure to honour a 1992 agreement with the Union. The Union, on the other hand, joined the chorus of voices calling for the annulled June 12, 1993, elections to be completed. ASUU was at its peak of national relevance under the leadership of Dr. Attahiru Jega and later that of Dr. Asisi Asobie (Akinyanju, 1997, pp. 65-73; Abimbola, 2002, p.42). Since then, the ASUU has not relented in advocating for its members' interests in the context of public wellness and good governance. The government's insensitive and unresponsive approach to honouring its agreements with the union has frequently resulted in recurring strike actions by the union.

Interest groups such as the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), and the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) have made significant contributions to advocating for the interests of their members as well as the general public. Nigerian students, under the umbrella of the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS) and later the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), have participated in the struggle for political changes in Nigeria since independence. The students played an active role in reversing the Anglo-Nigerian defence pact of 1962. The National Association of Nigerian Students' Charter of Demands serves as the philosophical foundation for the students' political activism, as it is based on the belief that democracy is impossible unless the exploiter class is overthrown. Following an effective general strike in 1981, the NLC met with the Shagari administration to negotiate a new minimum wage. Similarly, the NMA has sustained its advocacy for an exclusive and improved member salary package. Similarly, the NANS-led opposition to implementing the Structural Adjustment Programme introduced SAP relief packages for Nigerians, especially the working class. The National Association of Nigerian Students also facilitated massive protests against the 25 kobo increase in petrol pump price in 1986. During the Shagari presidency (1980), the illegal deportation of Alhaji Shugaba Abdulrahman Darman (an opposition leader) was challenged by a combined force of NANS, ASUU and the NLC (Banwo, 1997, p. 44; Abimbola, 2002, p.44).

The organised labour in Nigeria appears to have a socialist orientation, particularly with its approach to political advocacy. From its inception, organised labour extended its mandate beyond advocating for the parochial interests of its members to advocating for public interests. The NLC participated in the calls for political reforms during the military regimes. Nevertheless, Pascal Bafyau's subpar leadership from 1988 to 1993 undermined the NLC, making it unable to successfully organise Nigerians against the obvious oppression of the time. This gap was

eventually filled by human rights organisations. Human rights organisations organised lectures, symposia, seminars, and conferences on the necessity of restoring democracy. They also opposed attempts by the government to sabotage or end democracy (Akhakpe, 2014, pp. 45, 47).

Through the presentation and endorsement of candidates for elections or the setting up of tents with political parties that share their values, organised labour has actively engaged in Nigerian politics (Olukoju, 1997). In 1944, organised labour joined the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) to engage in party politics during Nigeria's colonial era. This collaboration was pivotal to the general strike of 1945. During the First Republic, the organised labour in Nigeria also made political demands alongside improved wages for its members. The participation of organised labour in politics reached its climax when the Nigerian Labour Party (NLP) was formed by Michael Imoudu and Eskor Toyo in 1964. The NLP participated in the general elections of 1964. In 1979, when democracy took over, the Nigerian Labour Congress made the decision that its leaders should not be involved in the new political system as partisans. However, there was no restriction on the participation of individual members and officers in the political process, but this was without the backing of the NLC. As a result, numerous labour leaders ran for and were elected to a variety of positions using the platforms of various political parties (Olukoju, 1997).

The political gains of the NLC during the Second Republic were eroded by the military intervention of 1983. The Buhari military regime witnessed a massive clampdown on opposing groups and individuals. Following the inability to register the Labour Party in 1989, the NLC explicitly supported the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in an unprincipled and incoherent affiliation and ardour. However, this did not provide the NLC with any real advantages. In the current democratic dispensation, the NLC continued its direct participation in politics under the platform of the Labour Party. The party was formed by the Nigeria Labour Congress in 2002. In 2009, Olusegun Mimiko emerged as the Ondo state governor under the party's platform.

Interest groups with human rights concerns flourished as a result of the high degree of human rights violations committed by the Buhari and IBB regimes. The foundation for organised human rights advocacy began with forming the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) in 1987. Subsequently, many public interest groups of human rights concerns (such as the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), the Constitutional Right Project (CRP), the Universal Defenders of Democracy (UDD), the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL), and Human Rights Africa) were formed. Initially, these organisations were established to advocate for Nigerians' human rights and to pursue justice for those who have been subjected to human rights abuses.

Many interest groups opposed the IBB-led military regime's SAP loans. Following the introduction of SAP to the country, against popular rejection, interest groups such as Civil Liberties Organisations (CLO), National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Association of Senior Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Trade Union Congress (TUC), and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) led anti-SAP riots in 1988. Following the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election, the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) used the strike option to exert pressure on the Ibrahim Babangida

(IBB) military regime (Olukoju, 1997). Between July 5 and 7, 1993, the Campaign for Democracy mobilised many Nigerians for mass protests against the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election (Abimbola, 2002, p. 42). General Ibrahim Babangida's abrupt resignation in August 1993 was largely influenced by the demonstrations led by the CD and other human rights organisations (Iji, 1997; Mimiko, 1995).

The sit-tight tendencies of the IBB regime, as manifested in the regime's manipulative transition programme, led to the metamorphosis of the human-rights interest groups to political interest groups. The complex relationship between democracy and respect for human rights may be the reason why human rights organisations have shifted their focus from human rights advocacy to more direct political demands. As a result of this transformation, the Campaign for Democracy (CD) was established in 1991 (Mimiko, 1995). The Campaign for Democracy became the umbrella body for all interest groups with human rights concerns and other interest groups interested in the end of military rule. While the C.D. was created as a public interest group, the group's political interest hinged on the transition from military dictatorship to democratic governance and the social re-engineering of the Nigerian state. The Campaign for Democracy had two primary goals: increasing pressure on the IBB regime to adhere to its January 2, 1993, handover date and advocating for a Sovereign National Conference (Abimbola, 2002, p. 42). The CD was at the forefront of the mass protests against the annulment of the June 12 election results (Mimiko, 1995, p. 155).

Unlike Kenya, the return to democratic rule in 1999 did not weaken the efficiency of interest groups in Nigeria. Interest groups have continued to serve as watchdogs and pressure groups on successive democratic governments. While the approach to advocacy seems to have changed (from demanding radical political changes during the military regimes), interest groups have continued to influence government in an atmosphere of cooperation rather than hostility. The Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have worked with the government to enact public interest laws. Such efforts resulted in the enactment of the Child Rights Law, which has been passed in most of the states of the federation. CSOs have also addressed the issue of child trafficking through advocacy campaigns, particularly the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTP). Interest groups have also embarked on campaigns for legal reforms. The Media Rights Agenda (a civil society organisation) sponsored a private member's bill that contributed significantly to the success of the Freedom of Information Act (Okeke, 2014, p. 22). Interest groups have also succeeded in guarding against threats to the democratic process and forcing the reversal of unpopular government decisions during the current democratic dispensation. For example, the Olusegun Obasanjo presidency's attempts to amend the constitution to allow for a third term were rejected by parliament due to pressure from numerous civil rights groups. Also, during President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's illness and incapacitation in 2010, interest groups like the Save Nigeria Group demanded that power be transferred from the sick president to the vice president (Goodluck Ebele Jonathan). The pressure mounted by the groups forced the National Assembly to adopt the "Doctrine of Necessity" that transferred power to the vice

president (Ogbeide, 2010). A case in point was the removal of the subsidy on petrol by the Federal Government in January 2012. This resulted in a sharp increase in fuel prices and consequent hardship for citizens; however, the policy was reversed due to organised protests by the NLC and other CSOs at the time, demonstrating interest groups' influence on government policies (Okeke, 2014, pp. 22-24). However, more recently, in May 2023, following the inauguration of Bola Ahmed Tinubu as president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the same policy on the removal of the fuel subsidy was implemented, which has generated colossal inflation and untold hardship for Nigerian citizens (Usigbe, 2023). Unfortunately, interest groups in this situation have not taken any decisive action beyond rhetorical advocacy, which has had no noticeable impact on the policy, especially given the difficult economic conditions that Nigerians face daily.

The preceding attempt to investigate the influence of interest groups on sociopolitical trajectories and public policies in Kenya and Nigeria revealed a striking similarity of experiences. The trend of interest groups' strong advocacy and activism was so evident at the eve of independence (a result of which was national liberation in the 1960s) and the early post-independence decades in both countries. Without a doubt, interest groups had a strong influence on social welfare, political sanity, and the general public good. Typically, the credulity of interest groups; however, in recent times, there appears to have been a compromise in purpose, interests, and traditions. In this regard, the recent removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria, as well as the government's ongoing efforts to silence the voices of suffering citizens, deserves mention. The oppression of Nigerians, as well as organised efforts by interest groups to stage national protests and strikes against the policy's burdensome effects, have consistently been politically sabotaged; similar cases can be found in post-independent Kenyan socio-polity (Kisaka and Nyadera, 2019; Osamba, 2019; Hornsby, 2012). This situation, as illustrated by Kenya and Nigeria's experiences, is most likely due to the politicisation of interest groups, shared ideologies, ethnicity, and the selfish and corrupt nature of interest group leaders.

## **Conclusion**

So far, the study has identified stark similarities in the nature and growth of interest groups in Kenya and Nigeria during the post-1960 decades. The conceptual insights demonstrated that interest groups cover a wide range of topics that pertain to the public interest through shared values, beliefs, and conventions, including activism and advocacy. From the Nigerian and Kenyan experiences, interest groups influence public policy processes. Their actions and methods have had a significant impact on the socio-political development patterns in these nations, despite being primarily shaped by development circumstances. In the post-1960 decades, interest groups' operations have frequently been defined by their politicisation, ethnicity, and the corrupt and self-centred tendencies of their leaders, whereas during the colonial era, nationalism defined the formation, structure, and activities of interest groups in these countries. According to the study, the latter have persisted in encouraging departures from the fundamental principles and values that underlie the formation of interest groups, to the point where, over the last few decades, interest groups seem to support government policies rather than picking sides and participating in activism

for the public good and welfare. More sadly, because even when public policies are oppressive and hardship-imposing, interest groups, except for their often-empty rhetoric, would not make decisive moves to oppose such policies. Thus, it is essential for interest groups in Africa, especially in Nigeria and Kenya, to reappraise their shared ideologies, traditions and norms for a repositioning to pursue public interests. The study makes the following recommendations in this regard: First, interest groups should remember their shared core values and stick to them in spite of shifting sociopolitical circumstances. In order to maintain the public interest and socio-political sanity, interest group leaders should secondly learn how to act honourably and fairly, and thirdly, interest groups should unreservedly oppose oppressive institutional policies.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

None (I hereby confirm that I do not have any conflict of interest related to this manuscript).

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