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CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD (2007 – 2019)

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Abstract
The need to institutionalize the culture of good governance in Nigeria informs the position of this work. The Nigeria nation has been characterized with policies that are antithetical to the welfare and livelihood of the masses. Thus, foreign investors in connivance with Nigerian leaders caused a lot of damage to the local politics, environment and people by creating dependency, thereby, causing the peoples decline of their support to the state. The civil society organizations became a viable option for the realization of this all important objective within the framework of political participation. The paper examined the role of the civil society organizations in Nigeria democratic consolidation: issues, challenges and the way forward. To explain in details how it could help consolidate, stabilize and further strengthen Nigeria's democratic governance, this work was anchored on the group theory framework, and the method of data collection was the secondary method. The paper is of the view that no democracy can survive without the harmonious working relationship between government and the people. The new roles given to civil society in the era of democratic consolidation and sustainable development should be situated within a context. Efforts should be made to promote capacity building for civic organizations, while civic sectoral linkages should be encourage so that there could be collaboration and complementality of efforts to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in their activities.

Keywords: Civil Society, Democratic Consolidation, Challenges, Governance, Development, Sustainability, Effectiveness.
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Introduction
The dire need to institutionalize the culture of good governance within the administration of democratic governance is the cornerstone of civil society initiatives, especially in emerging democracies such as Nigeria. The civil society which is seen as operating from the public space is a reinforcing mechanism for effective governance in the overall interest of the majority of the people. Civil society can only be operational when their voices are heard and allowed to impact on the institutions of the government in order to eliminate or reduce the selfish interest of those in power. Civil society organizations in Nigeria dates back to pre-colonial and post colonial era when they became the vanguard for change in the emancipation and liberation of African countries, particularly in the achievement of independence. Today, they have become instrument for consolidating the gains of the on-going democratic governance in Nigeria. Momoh (2003) views this as a transformational process, which emanated from the agitations from the entrenchment of civil liberties in Nigeria during the military regimes of the 1980's to the agitations for the entrenchment of democratic governance in 1990's, culminating in the birth of statist organizations in Nigeria.

However, with the enthronement of democratic governance in Nigeria on May 29, 1999, there was no doubt that civil society in Nigeria has been persistent in the agitation for good governance considering the experience of civil dictatorship in the administration of President Olusagun Obasanjo arising from the long years of military dictatorship which has negatively molded the political, culture of Nigerians. Thus, Akindele (2003) stated that:

> "Today, civil society faces great challenges and more onerous responsibilities in helping to consolidate democracy and make it sustainable as well as irreversible than it did in the struggle to enthrone it".

From the above background and from the views of other scholars like Ajayi (1993) and Gboyega (1997), which discusses the struggle of civil organization in enlarging the democratic

space in Nigeria, thereby contributing to the consolidation of democracy, the questions that usually come to mind is to what extent has the civil society in Nigeria contributed in the consolidation of democracy, considering its historical antecedents, structure and methods for influencing governmental policies to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. It would appear, the civil society organizations have lost their steam or have been cowed by the totalizing influence of the state. These are some of the issues this study seeks to unravel.
To be able to respond to the above issues, the paper is focused at discussing the subject matter as it is relevant to the Nigerian state through an unobtrusive method by unfolding a compatible methodology, concept clarification, theoretical framework, looking at the types and nature of civil society organizations, the connection between civil society and democratic consolidation or their role, the challenges facing civil society in the context of democratic consolidation and finally the way forward and conclusion.

Methodology

This work uses qualitative research design to have a deep understanding of the nature and character of civil society organizations and their struggle in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. We adopted descriptive analysis to examine the issues and challenges confronting civil society organizations in Nigeria. The paper which is theoretical in nature draws its argument basically from secondary data which include journal publications, textbooks and internet sources.

Conceptual Clarifications

Civil Society:

Just like the concept of democracy, the attempts of defining civil society have been very difficult and confusing. Beyond the ubiquity and even the ambiguities surrounding the attempts, there are even further problems as to whether the concept itself can be applied to Africa. A flurry of definitions, no matter their impressions, should not be seen as a sign of the weakness of the concept. For clarity and application of the concept, John (1995), defines civil society as "an opposite of deposition, a space in which social groups could exist and move, something which exemplified and would ensure softer, more tolerable conditions of existence". Bayart (1986) on the other hand has defined it as "a society in relation with the state, in so far as it is confrontation with the state or more precisely, as the process by which the society seeks to breach and counteract the simultaneous totalization unleashed by the state". According to Seligman (1992), however, the concept is "an ethical ideal of social order… that harmonizes the conflicting demands of individual interest and social order". He goes on to define civil society as "that realm where the concrete person, that particular individual, subject to his/her own wants, caprices, and physical necessities seeks the attainment of these selfish aims… that arena where free, self-determining individuality sets forth its claims for satisfaction of its wants and personal autonomy".

In furtherance to the understanding of the concept, Matthew (2003) quoting Diamond (1994) has this to say that civil society is the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, self-supporting, autonomous from the state and bound by the legal order of a set of shared rules… it involved citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interest, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve internal goals, make demands on the state and hold state officials accountable. It is an intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and the state.

Another way of getting closer to what civil society is, is by ruling out what it is not (Yishai, 1998), or what it is distinct from (Diamond, 1994, P. 5). Civil society is first and foremost identified by its detachment from the state. As noted by Ahrne (1998), "it is distinct and as a social phenomenon, different from the state" or by Keane (1998) "a realm of life institutionally separated from territorial state institutions". (Drysele, 1996) notes that civil society consists of associations "not seeking any share in state power". yet, civil society should

definitely not be taken to include the whole of society, meaning that it is everything which is not state.

Democracy:

Like every other concept in social sciences, the term 'democracy' has a festival of definitions. The most accepted however, is that attributed to Abraham Lincoln. He was said to have defined democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. But as popular as that definition was, it was comprehensive only in political terms, it met all the standards of electoral and legal democracy, only implied on social and racial, but said almost nothing explicitly on economic rights according to Igwe (2007). As our knowledge of democracy increases, we grow more aware that there is no single model on which all democratic states are molded. Democracies vary in size, shape and essence and no two are identical. It is thus, reasonable to assume that some configurations of civil society are more liable to influence certain forms of democracy, while others are suitable for different democratic varieties. Therefore, democracy is a culture which thrives well according to the environment it is established.

Again, democracy as a social process has been in deficit as shown in the deteriorating state of the human person in the content. Poverty, hunger, diseases, lack of basic infrastructures and social amenities are all reflective of this deficit (see Ake, 1994; Osafiae, 1994; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1997; UNDP/HDL, 2012). It is argued that liberal democracy could resolve all these challenges (see Huntington, 1991; Diamond, 1999). While electoral democracy is in place in much of Africa, substantive democracy is still a far-fetched possibility (Haynes, 2001). Hence, democratization is embraced in order to achieve the core values of democracy.

Democratization:

This can be seen as a gradual process whereby a regime becomes increasingly democratic in nature. This means that democracy is not a finished business. It is work in progress. Its processes require gradual measures captured in not only the divide between democracies and non-democracies, but differences in degrees of democratic qualities (Lundberg, 2008).

Perhaps, according to Igbokwe-Ibeto *et al.*, (2014), what is important in the democratization process is that political, social and economic re-engineering efforts should bring about qualitative changes in the lives of the people, while the building and remodeling of political institutions and structures of government go on. Civil society has important role to play in ensuring all these, especially where political parties are not completely developed in pursuing these goals; civil society may cooperate with or conflate with the state. Whatever angle democratization process may take, the overriding objective is to extent the frontier of democracy, and sustainable development through civil society organizations activities.

According to United Nations (2009) sustainable development is seen as "development that meets our present needs without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. The United Nations identified three elements which should work together to ensure sustainable development. These are economic development, social development and environmental protection (UN, 2009). Ayeni (2010) argues that these three components must be conceptualized together, planned together and implemented together to achieve the desired goals. Here lies the importance of the civil society organizations as watch dogs of the citizens in keeping government alive to its responsibilities.

While democratic consolidation is the sustainability and the maintenance of the gains of democracy, making democracy irreversible to authoritarianism.

Theoretical Framework

There are several theories that can be adopted to explain social phenomenon like this; however, this work adopts group theory to critically explain the role, activities and weakness of civil societies in Nigeria's democratic consolidation. In the main, the assumption of group

theory is that power is fragmented and widely dispersed among the groups that composed the society. According to the pluralists, decisions are made through a complex process of bargaining and interaction that ensures the views and interests of a large number of groups are taken into account (Mbah, 2007). Thus, group theory is building on a system in which all interests are organized and compete freely and as one group is able to dominate decision making. Accordingly, the government is open to pressure from the interest groups (civil society), and politics consist of the competition among these interest groups to see that the policies they favour are adopted by the government (Anifowese and Ehemto, 1999).

This theory was propounded by Bentley, in his book "The process of government (1908)" and Truman, "The governmental process (1960)", are highly credited to having developed the group/pluralist theory. The core of Bentley's argument is that organized groups are the fundamental building blocks of the political process. This led him into concluding in his famous dictum "when the groups are adequately stated, everything is stated". In fact, it is Bentley's assumptions that are called the group theory. According to this interpretation Gauba (2007) says government is the focal point for public pressure and its task is to make policies which reflect the highest common group demand. Thus, democratic society is seen as a pluralist, differentiated society where the management of public affairs is shared by a number of groups having different values, sources, and methods of influence.

Robert Dahl in his preface to Democratic Theory (1956) developed a model of the democratic process which he described as polyarchy. This corresponds to the models developed by Bentley and Truman variously known as pluralism or group theory. Pluralism is used here in the sociological sense, that is to say or describe the pluralist nature of democratic society, not in the philosophical sense as a political ideal, associated with the pluralist theory of sovereignty.

Gauba (2007) further contends that, the pluralist theory suggest the following: that policy-making process may appear to be centralized in form, but in reality, a highly decentralized process of bargaining among relatively autonomous groups. In other words, public policy is not a product of the will of the elite or the chosen few, as the elitist theories lay claim. On the contrary, it is an outcome of the interaction of all groups who make claim upon or express interest in that particular issue. The extent to which different groups will get their way is a function of the strength of the group and the intensity of their participation.

Bentley's contentions are that is any social system, political activities can only be explained and understood in terms of interest group, the individual does not count. It is only the group that counts. Public policy is thus seen in pluralists as the resultant interaction of interest groups. The individual is seen as participant only through interest groups. That political institutions, political parties and public officials responds to groups demands. It entails that the configuration of politics can only be understood through the dynamics of group interaction. Pluralism/group theory presupposes, strong cohesion, unity of purpose among the members of the group (Mbah, 2007:390).

Therefore, group theory is adopted to explain the issue of civil society organization and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. For instance, in an effort to enthrone democratic governance, many groups have surfaced to sustain the struggle for democratization in Nigeria. Some of these groups include: Campaign for Democracy (CD), The National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), The Constitutional Rights Projects (CRP), and Joint Action Committee for Democracy (JACOD) and so on. All these groups are groups with defined interest who came together to influence the policy and decision making process of the government thereby, attaining democratic governance where issues are deliberated upon before arriving at a consensus. On the whole, these groups are very instrumental in the construction and reconstruction of Nigeria's democracy and democratization process. They are also known as a formidable force and platform for mobilizing and re-organizing the country's for stability by

consolidating meaningfully on the nascent democratic process in Nigeria through popular participation, rule of law, constitutional democracy and so on.

The Types and Nature of Civil Society Organization in Nigeria

The struggle to enthrone democratization and sustain democratic governance has been a difficult task amongst the developing countries of the world, particularly Nigeria. There is no gain saying the fact that Nigeria is in her fourth republic. This largely implies that Nigerians effort at democratization have failed three times. According to Iwaga and Afungu (2013) gave several reasons that account for this failure such as inter and intra party struggle for power, ethnicity, corruption, bad leadership, insecurity and religious bigotry. In response to this, Oyovbaire (1992) asserts that there is a difficulty of interposing democracy upon the multiplicity of our pre-colonial societies and state system like Nigeria. The failed democracy in Nigeria was due to the lack of sound foundation in 1966 which led to several military regimes.

Isola (2012) argued that civil society political activities in Nigeria are traced to colonial politics in Nigeria with the Aba Women's Riot of November, 1929 and the 1947 women tax revolts led by Mrs. Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti in Abeokuta as notable cases of civil protest against unacceptable official policies. Uganden (2006) notes that the growth and development of printed media in Nigeria is also linked to civil society activities as those newspapers served as advocacy of and demand for good governance from the colonial rules and ultimately contributed to the attainment of independence. She further explain that, the politics of Nigerian's first republic significantly reflects the role of the civil society organizations. In a related conception (Isola, 2012:83) contends that, students' groups (National Association of Nigerian Students) were particularly active at this time as seen in the abrogation of the defence pact between Nigeria and Britain which, resulted from demand by university students who actually interrupted parliamentary proceedings to drive home their demands.

It is important to stress here that the brutality of both the military and civilian dictator's greatly propelled grounds for the emergence of civil society in Nigeria. the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election by the military regime of General Babangida brought discontent and subsequent uproar against military rule as observed by Uganden (2012:60). This political atmosphere provided the right condition for the development of civil society organizations to campaign for the return of Nigeria to democratic rule.

In searching for democracy, Aiyede (2005) identifies two broad categories of plural civil society organizations involved in the democracy struggles in Nigeria since the 90s. The first category is made up of organizations which aim at extending the frontier of liberal democratic practices within the country such as: Civil Liberty Organization (CLO), Campaign for Democracy (CD), Constitutional Right Project (CRP), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Joint Action Committee of Nigeria (JACON), Democratic Alliance (DA), United Action for Democracy (UAD), among others. The list presented here is by no means exhaustive, but these political organizations contributed in no small measure to the opening of the political space and ensured that the military was forced to relinquish political power to the wish of Nigerian citizens.

The second category comprises of interest groups whose activities and actions were not directly focused on the pursuit of democracy, but implicitly affected its progress. Their major concerns however, centers on monitoring and protecting the "rules that regulate the relations of domination in a particular area" see (Aiyede, 2005). In pursuance of these goals, they either conflated with the state or cooperated with it. In the process, they were able to maintain the constitutional requirements for the regulation of relations among interest groups to ensure that they follow due process and prevent the emergence of dominant groups that could monopolize the political space (Olukoshi, 1997).

To these categories could be added a third. This comprises of the interest groups whose pedigree dates back to the period prior to colonial rule. They started as indigenous interest groups but has since transformed in structure and organization. These are socioeconomic groups whose main activities are to cater for the interest of their members, i.e. professional or non-professional groups such as farmers, artisans, ethno-religious groups, occupational bodies among others. From the World Bank's view of sustainable development and structural adjustment, these groups are important as they help to promote bottom-up approach to realization of these goals. As the state recedes and or become weak, these groups step in to promote the welfare and wellbeing of their members. These groups "compliment or provide for an alternative to state-directed development which had been made virtually impossible because of the pathologies of the state" (Osaghae, 1977). To what extent have they achieved these democratic imperatives since the return to civil rule? This is x-rayed in the next section.

The Role of the Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria Democratic Consolidation

The development of civil society in Nigeria is guided by the desire to build a consciousness in the minds of the citizens and a common front for our preservation of human rights. It is in line with this thinking that Onagoruwa (1995) observed that, the growth of these civil society organizations could be traced to consciousness and a concern for the preservation of liberty which they conceived as gradually being eroded, due to the subversion of the social, economic and political rights of the people.

In the same line of thought, Diamond pointed out that, civil society can play a role in checking, monitoring and restraining the exercise of power by the state and holding it accountable. This function can reduce tension, political corruption, which is pervasive in emerging democracies. It can force the government to be more accountable, transparent and responsive to the public, which strengthens its legitimacy.

Civil society organizations can play a vital role in making the elites and the mass public more committed to democracy by disseminating democratic principles and ideas. Organizations that are involved specifically in the protection of civil rights and freedoms, as well as political reforms, can be particularly important in this regard.

Another role civil society organizations play in consolidating democracy in Nigeria is by stimulating political participation. In several emerging democracies, voluntary political participation is not always high. Political indifference and apathy may blow down the consolidation process. Civil society organizations can supplement the role of political parties in encouraging people to get involved in politics, especially as voters in elections. Political participation strengthens the legitimacy and the institutionalization of democratic government, which are essential for consolidation.

Civil society's role in empowering the people is well recognized. Civil society organizations in many democracies perform the functions of representing the interests and asserting the rights and power of the people. In several new democracies such as Indonesia and Thailand, many interest groups are loosely organized and are unable to articulate their interests. Civil society organizations can come in and help interest groups and people to fight more effectively for their interests, thereby empowering them.

Civil society organizations can also train future political leaders. Those who are involved in the activities of such groups learn how to organize and motivate people, publicize programs, reconcile conflicts and build alliances. This teaches people to deal efficiently with political challenges and can mold competent political leaders.

Civil society organizations in Nigeria had also undertaking Human Rights, Child Labour and Human Trafficking tasks upon itself. Odeh (2012) explained that, children are exploited and force to work to supplement family incomes, the consequence is that the child is unable to access education, which hinders his or her development. Civil society organizations working on human rights and children's rights issue partnered with the state to enactment of

the Child Rights Law. The legislation has been passed in more than eleven (11) states of the federation. Civil society organizations responded to this through; advocacy campaigns. The establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition in Trafficking of Persons (NAPTP) indicates some success by civil society organizations.

Odeh (2012:64) contends that, civil society in Nigeria undertook the monitoring of the National Budgeting process. He notes that the civil society organizations have established the Budget law and the fiscal responsibility initiative to help monitor the process. They are also working with legislature to develop inclusive budget laws at National and state levels. Despite these initiatives, it is still early to evaluate the effectiveness of civil society organizations in national budgeting process since they are active in this area since 2003.

However, Jega (2006), argues that the extent to which civil society can contribute to the consolidation of democracy is related to the extent to which its members have a democratic political culture and practices. More so, civil societies have remained the voice of the voiceless in Nigeria due to their transformative and emancipative roles. They have positively contributed to the consolidation of democracy by legitimacy strengthening institution and culture of democracy as well as contesting, protesting and opposing undemocratic and uncivil practices in Nigeria.

Currently, civil society organizations are innovating to widen the electoral processes and ensure grassroot sensitization. Neighborhood Environment Watch (NEW) Foundation, with the support of the media in Ebonyi State has created "Democracy Clinic", a platform for civic education and means of gauging the democratic barometer, and with other civil society organizations have been working with the Ebonyi Resident Electoral Commission (REC) to ensure that the state has a violence free and transparent elections at all point in time. It should be noted that Ebonyi state is one of flash points for electoral violence in Nigeria.

The civil society organizations have advocated for the avoidance of 'winner-takes-all' politics by encouraging the building of institutions and processes that are vital for multi-party competition and division of power. Furthermore, the civil society organizations have advocated for the removal of the barriers that prevented free and consent-based voting and promote the inclusion of women, minorities and other marginalized groups. They insisted that there is a need to work towards a time whose we elect as our leaders are voted into positions of trust based not on the colour of their skin, the religion they profess or the tribe they belong, but on their antecedents, their track records of integrity, and their passion to be judged by history as men and women who have their marks on the sand of time or history.

The civil society organizations have insisted on the promotion of unity of Nigeria by sensitizing the electorates to vote for those who have the passion to make positive impact, herald sustainable development and fight corruption – the cankerworm that have defied all cures in Nigeria. They have also openly advocated for the tracking the flow of unregulated money in politics, which undermines voters faith in elections and ultimately in democracy, and instead breeds fear that wealth buys political power and influence.

They have also consolidated democracy in Nigeria by the active involvement in the activities of their communities and work to ensure that we have credible elections and an electorate that is well informed and not prone to conscience buying through material inducements. It is not in doubt that there can be no meaningful democracy without the active involvement of people. Good governance is all about the level of peoples' participation in governance. But often, the peoples' wishes are subverted through political corruption, such that democracy in Nigeria, instead of promoting the welfare of the people, becomes a burden under which only those that have political clout survive. Nigeria's underdevelopment as a nation, despite its abundant resources, is attributable to flawed electoral processes. There is an intimate link between the subversion of the electoral process and electoral fraud and poor governance.

With a partnership that has been established between the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) and civil society organizations under the National Anti-Corruption Coalition (NACC), most of its members have been in the vanguard of consolidating true democracy through diverse programmes such as voter education, election observation, campaign finance monitoring, election tribunal monitoring, electoral reform advocacy, conflict mitigation, access to justice, public interest litigations, budget tracking, constituency outreach and research and documentation in thematic areas of democracy and governance. These initiatives have made a good impact on Nigeria's nascent democracy, as organizations and governments assess the democratic temperature of the country through the barometer of civil society organizations.

Challenges Facing Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria

Despite the role played by civil society organizations in matured democracies and even consolidating nascent democracies, civil society groups in Nigeria are constrained by several problems. Boadi (1995), Osaghae (1998) and Ikelegebe (2003) noted that the problems of civil society groups stem from the proliferation, duplication, crass opportunism, split factionalism, conflict, personal differences, arrogance and ambition, ethnic, cultural and regional sentiments and identities, manipulations, treachery, regionalism and frequent squabbles, lack of internal democracy, transparency, accountability and poor organizational and management. For instance, Catholic Bishops Conference (CBC) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) are discharging the same functions. Others like Arewa People's Congress (APC), Igbo Youth Movement (IYM) and Odua People's Congress (OPC) have the same functions, roles and objectives to perform.

Moreso, civil society has failed to innovate in its mode of operation by evolving new political and economic culture in Africa. There is the "tendency to copy not just the constitutions of democracy from the West, but also, and rather incongruously, its norms" (Gyimali-Baadi, 1998). Such practices as in the days of implementing modernization precepts, have failed to bring about political and economic stability to Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. Contemporary activities of civil society organizations are bound to face similar fate unless concrete efforts are made to change its modus operandi and Vivendi.

Again, influence of ethno-geopolitical division of Nigeria affects collective mobility for mass action of organized groups. Such civil society organizations like Odua People's Congress (OPC), Igbo Youth Movement (IYM) and Arewa People's Congress (APC), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) are formed along ethnic and religious lines. Isola (2012:83) observed that, the June 12, 1993 presidential demand for the actualization of mandate was portrayed more as a struggle by and for the south-west championed by Odua People's Congress (OPC).

Furthermore, civil society tends to be reactive rather than proactive in engaging the state on matters affecting the people and the polity. More often than not, civil society has tended to rely on government for information and direction, thereby giving the government the head-start on sensitive issues. This may be pinned down to the weak structural and organizational bases of most civil society organizations. All these go a long way to affect their ability to gauge public opinion and react to them in ways that would favour the democratic course.

Other problems of civil society as said by Uganden (2012:62) were that there are too much external influence and involvement on civil society activities affect their performance in Nigeria. Civil society projects activities seen to be tailored along the interest defined by external funding agencies and the people behind them. For instance, Campaign for Democracy (CD), National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) and Constitutional Rights Projects (CRP) are financed by international agencies such as International Labour Organizations (ILO), and therefore represent the interest of these foreign based organizations.

Paradoxically, many civil society organizations lack the very democracy they are trying to promote or sell to the larger society. The question is how civil and democratic is civil society organizations? Substantially, internal democracy is almost absent in civil society as its members are treated as second class citizens by their leaders/founders unless this abnormality, is corrected and this internal operations subjected to the rule of law and separation of powers, particularly in the areas of the use of funds and recruitment and selection of their leaders, its contributions to the democratization process could be vitiated. Does one give out what it does not have? For civil society to contribute to reshaping and deepening the democratization of the polity and society, it should first demonstrate that it has what it wants to sell to the larger society, which is democracy.

In another dimension, Uadialo (1980) affirms that civil society organizations in Nigeria are largely affected by factors such as wild passion, violence, divisiveness, exclusiveness, parochialism, manipulative, crippling poverty, nepotism, liberalism, participation, lack of consensus, egalitarian and so on have caused the failure of civil society organizations.

Civil society in promoting the country's democratic agenda has not been consistent and persistent in the face of intimidation and attack by government forces against their activities. The way and manner civil society and labour coalition carved-in after threat from the federal government during the fuel subsidy crisis in January, 2012 and 2015 showed that they cannot engage the state in a protracted struggle as experienced in up-rising in the Maghreb region. Also, the struggle in Syria has been the opposition groups take on government forces for months without backing down. Democracy is never won by asking. It is struggled for. It is clear from the foregoing that civil societies in Nigeria are faced with several constraints and obstacles. What then is the way forward? This is the subject matter the next section addresses.

Civil Society Organizations and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: The Way Forward

In every challenge, there are opportunities. This means, challenges identified in this work could be turned into opportunities for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. However, for civil society organizations to discharge their duties effectively in order to consolidate democratic governance in Nigeria, the following steps should be adopted:

There is need for them to operate independently from government and they should always mobilize the people for effective participation in the governance process.

There should be a legislation to guide against massive proliferations of civil society organizations in Nigeria. The legislation should regulate the proliferations of these civil society organizations in order to unite the existing ones to achieve their main objectives and purpose.

Indeed, there is a clear link between democracy, accountability and good governance. In most organizations in the public and private sectors, there is no internal democracy, accountability and separation of powers. For civil society to perform its roles in democratic consolidation, it should embrace universal best practices with all its ethos and norms for it to be efficient and effective. Some civil society organizations are run as personal estates by their leaders/founders with little or no element of democracy in its structure and processes. This has curtailed what they can do and how they affect people's lives.

Funding is a crucial element in the organization and processes of civil society. Most of these organizations get their funding from international aid and donor agencies and their members in Diaspora. While the practice is not bad in itself if not properly monitored and managed could compromise the course they set out to achieve. They could have negative consequences for the autonomy of these organizations as their policies and programmes will be subjected to external influences. As the popular saying puts it, "he who pays the piper dictates the tune". Civil society should explore and exploit independent sources of finance to run its affairs.

Moreso, for civil society to strengthen and consolidate democracy and good governance in Nigeria, there is need for them to enlighten and sensitize their members in order to build

consciousness in them. This enlightenment can build or enhance better mobilization of members and resources towards attaining their role of emancipating and transforming the Nigerian society by inculcating new democratic values, attitudes and ethos into Nigerians.
Again, government/civil society relations should be established to regulate the activities of both the government and these organizations to ensure that each of them is sufficiently independent to check the excesses of one another.

Conclusion

Democratization, its consolidation and sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be effectively realized without civil society. The political space has been in a state of decay as a result of poverty, crime, bureaucratic corruption and various forms of administrative irregularities holding sway. The civil society is expected to mitigate these crises with its attendant on democratization in the polity. The civil society should be proactive in engaging state policies and programmes rather than reactive.
The new roles given to civil society in Nigeria in the era of democratic consolidation and sustainable development should be situated within a context. Although the idea of civil society is not new to social formation in Africa, their structures, functions and processes have to be redefined. Efforts should be made to promote capacity building for civic organizations while civic sectoral linkages should be encouraged so that there could be collaboration and complementarities of efforts to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in their activities.

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