

Donnish Journal of Political Science and International Relations
Vol 1(2) pp. 009-015 July, 2015.
<http://www.donnishjournals.org/djpsir>
Copyright © 2015 Donnish Journals

Original Research Article

Civil Society and Democratic Governance in Nigeria

Regina O. Arisi

Department of Social Science Education, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria.

Accepted 24th May, 2015.

The impacts of civil society on democracy in any society are enormous. In Nigeria, civil society is indisputable fact of the nation's democracy. The installation of democratic governance in Nigeria was largely in part associated with the civil societies' activities. However, there has been genuine concern as to the continued effectiveness of the civil society in the consolidating democracy in Nigeria. The paper therefore critically examines the impact of civil society groups on the nation's democracy using data from the secondary sources. The idea of civil society in Nigeria and anywhere else is historically rooted in all "Ideal democracies". Its empirical validity rest on the fact that civil society is a bundle of capacity building which functions best when it permits a plurality of actions or forces into the arena of political and social action. When people of different religions and ethnic identities come together on the basis of their common interests as women, artists, doctors, students, workers, farmers, lawyers, human rights activists, environmentalists, and so on, civic life become richer, more complex and more tolerant. The civil society actors watch how state officials use powers, they raise public concern about abuse of power; they lobby for access to information including laws, and rules and institution to control corruption. The paper, however, revealed that the civil society in Nigeria after the enthronement of civil rule has become docile and ineffective in the consolidation and deepening of democracy and have become collaborators with the government and its officials in circumventing the tenets and values of democracy they are meant to uphold and fight for. To this end, we recommend that the civil society can play their role in Nigerian democracy and be more effective if they maintain a high degree of independence from the government.

Keywords: Civil Society, Democratic Governance, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria experience with democracy has been epileptic since 1960 when she got her independence from the British administration. In each of the administrative dispensations or regimes, there were recorded practices widely at variance with the true spirit of democracy. These were perceived to be the major reason for the democratic demise in Nigeria such as violence, corruption, political association and now godfatherism. These have not only undermined democracy in Nigeria but have gone a long way to threaten its very sustenance.

Due to the way democracy has been pursued in Nigeria, it has come to mean many things to many people. Many have not been able to extricate or distinguish it from dictatorial regimes despite the fact that there are perceived elements of the major characteristics of democracy. For instance, it has been alleged that in many quarters that even when elections

are conducted, citizens are not allowed to go pass the voting process in having a good share in the elected government of the day (Adele, 2001). The role of civil society is not only to strengthening but also to ensuring its sustenance becomes very imperative. However, civil society roles in consolidating democracy in the third world nations has been doubted, this is because why credit must be given to the civil society in ensuring that democratic transitions are successful, they lack what it takes to assure its continuation.

According to Boadi, (1995), there are many factors responsible for the ineffective weakness of the civil society in the third world nations, specifically Nigeria, among which are the lack of funds, dependence on government and political polarization of civil society groups. For example, the lack of mutual set goals and exchange of information as an essential ingredient of civil society has risen in most civil societies in

Nigeria due to the polarization of civil society and that has rendered it so weak to hold state officials accountable. Third world civil society is no longer an intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and the state, rather as stated earlier, lack of finance (fund) has been by many to have been co-opted by the state in advancing their selfish interest.

Chikendu and Kalu (1996) are of the view that the polarization of civil society, especially as it reflects their geographical location (North/East/West/South dichotomy), strengthens the military resolves to be adamant to the people's wish. It is believed that civil society has great role to play in sustaining democracy in Nigeria as indeed all third world nations. But as already stated above, the role played by civil society groups in the post military regimes have become questionable, given the constraints that hinder their effective organisation. This paper therefore, is very timely in that it rigorously and systematically looks at civil society to be of immense help in consolidating democracy in Nigeria by overcoming their weakness.

The struggles in Nigeria to advance the frontiers of democracy and sustain democratic statecraft has not been an easy task. According to Oyovbaire (1992) there is the difficulty of interposing democracy upon the multiplicity of our pro-colonial societies and state systems. The collapse of Nigeria democracy which was due to the lack of sound foundation in 1966 led to several military regimes. It was the period when the crimes or high-handedness of the dictatorship has reached its ultimate in 1987 during the General Ibrahim Babangida regime that the first human rights organization (civil liberties organization) came on stream (Adubar 1995). According to Onagoruwa, (1995), "the growth of these non-governmental organizations could be traced to consciousness and a concern for the preservation of liberty which they conceived was gradually being eroded in similar vein" Ubani. F. traced the growth to subversion of the social, economic and political rights of the people.

The role of civil societies is indispensable to the goals of attainment of a sustainable democracy, although as generally recognized, such role is not a sufficient condition for democratic sustainability and consolidation. Therefore, having the right mental attitude and machine to meet enormous challenges if not obstacles, should be the aim and objective of the Nigeria civil society. The lack of effective and viable civil society has called to question the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. In other words, the civil societies operating or existing in Nigeria are docile and not owing to their responsibilities in the entrenchment of democracy. This stems from a myriad of problems that militate against the emergence of a viable strength of civil societies in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUALISATION

Civil Society

The concept civil society is not new in the Nigeria political lexicon, a lot of scholars, social political and economic has written so much about it and its perceived roles. Mutfang (2003) sees civil society as a wide range of association and other organized collectives capable of articulating the interest of their member, moulding and constraining state power.

According to him, their demands provide input for democratic political process which at times are aggregated by political parties. Their approval or disapproval of what goes on in government contributes to accountability. He further postulates that a country which is well endowed in this respect is well positioned to democratize and ensure good governance.

It is in this same vein that a weak civil society is often used to explain the failure of democratization.

Gold (1990) defines civil society as a whole range of social groups that seek to operate independently of the state and the (communist party) such as private business enterprises, labour union, trade unions, professional associations, religious bodies, student organizations, artistic and publications. His inference is that civil societies are not only independent of the state, but as interest group they push forward their demand which might contrast that of the government, he opined that the demand input be specific or general.

In other words, it might be for a particular class interest or the interest of the society as a whole, hence he differentiates civil society from associational group though, sometimes, these terms are used interchangeably. Associational groups are more specific in their demands than civil society groups. -They are more likely to make demands which relate to their members' interest in overriding issues. However, he concluded that associational groups are also within the realm of civil society.

Diamond (1991) sees civil society as that realm of organized socialite that is voluntary, self generating, largely self supporting and autonomous from the state and bound by a legal order and a set of shared rules. He went further to say that it is distinct from society in general and that it involves citizens acting together and collectively in the public sphere to express their interest, passion and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, he concludes that it is an intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and the state. Hence again, Diamond distinguishing factors are basically "interest". It is defined interest that makes members to act collectively in actualizing their goals, aims and objectives. This interest in some cases runs contrary to government (state) policies. But, on the other hand, among civil society groups, they do try to find common ground to act, this is especially true in the developed social formation. In doing this, Diamond says they exchange information.

Diamond (1999), further ascribes certain functions to civil society in a democratic set-up, these includes providing the basis for the limitation of state power. It is supposed to supplement the role of political parties by stimulating political participation; it also promotes the development of political parties to articulate, aggregate and represent their interest.

Oyovbare, (2000), conceptualized civil society as consisting basically of non-state and non-governmental groups activity organized to pursue definitive issues and interests. He went on to exhaustively list some of them in Nigerian context, they include the following among others, tribal and ethnic associations, the various non-governmental groups, professional interest groups of numerous occupational practices such as medical doctors, lawyers, judges and magistrates, academics at various level of educational industry, pharmacists, nurses, and dentists, media practitioners, proprietors, journalists, youth and student groups, churches, mosques and related ecclesiastical organizations, human right and civil liberty groups in the environment (environmentalists) and similar nature oriented advocacy groups, concepts of political space and the consequences that flow when it is differentiated as it is in the modern state.

The idea that a public sphere can be distinguished from a civil sphere and that while both exist in a polity, each has important roles to play in promoting the welfare of individuals and groups are central to the concept of civil society. These ideas in view, had only graduated or evolved in Western

Europe and North America and have not been fully integrated into the political culture world-wide.

He went further to stress that the head of civil society is rooted in the nation of "Natural law" the central hypothesis being that man is not by nature ordered towards society rather, promoted by self interest. This could be seen from the view expressed by the social contract theorist Thomas Hobbes, John Lock and Jean Jackues Rousseau (Uchendu 2000).

Despite the divergent views of these scholars as to the origin of the state, a common ground can be noted, the desire of man to live a much more organized life where the common good can be much more assured. Thus, the philosophical state emerged.

Strauss, (1972), building on this remind us that the "desire for self preservation is a passion, a powerful passion that make it the basis of society" in other words, Strauss makes natural law a sufficient basis for all rights and duties from right of self-preservation. Here, we can see that right are made absolute while duties are conditional.

The State of nature is the State of man without government. In this State, according to Hobbes (1946), life is described as solitary, poor, nasty, British, and short. One way to get out of this dilemma was to view the state as a partnership in duties. A State advances politically, economically, socially and otherwise only when there is a strong civil society or it can boast of one.

According to Sarbine and Thoson (1976), Hegel's views show that the state depends upon civil society for the means of accomplishing the moral purpose which it embodies and as such, it uses civil society for achievement of its own ends. Hegal bore no contempt for civil society, Hegel's account of civil society was in fact a careful one, even an elaborate analysis of the guilds and corporations, the estates and classes, the association Hegel regards as indispensable.

From Hegel's point of view therefore, the state is not composed primarily of individual citizens, the individual must be mediated through a series of corporations and associations before he arrives at the final dignity of citizenship in the State (Omoregbe, 1991).

The above review of the various scholars writing on civil society shows it to be an indispensable tool in the administration of the State so that citizens should be able to actualize their goals. It has been able to show too, that law of National right is the precursor to the development of civil society. However, the contention of these research reports that civil society in Nigeria and other third world nations comes up as a result of dissatisfaction with the state, the inability of the state to provide the good life needed by man necessitated the reaction of parallel institutions. Secondly, the autocratic nature of leadership in Nigeria, especially during the Abacha regime led to various conditions firmed primarily to fight dictatorship. These abnormalities led to numerous civil societies being formed (as there was shown) has also been the basis for their weakness as this research work intends to show.

Civil society in Nigeria as in other third world nations differs sharply in terms of its evolution from that of the western world. This has tended to shape its actions, objectives or goals. While in the western world, civil society grew out of necessities, that is to say, they grew out of the expansion of states which was occasioned by the complexities of government role in everyday affairs, third world civil society came about as a result of dissatisfaction with state policies. In fact, most persons (scholars and political commentators alike) have tended to trace the evolution and subsequent proliferation of civil society groups to the high-handedness witnessed during military dictatorship in Nigeria as in other third world nations. However,

one concept that can best be used to analyze the above point is the concept of "Exit" from the state. According to Muffang (2000), it has been observed that the study of political development in Africa and the third world in general is repleted with accounts of the rise of mostly anti-system, grass root involvement with a variety of political, social and economic goals which are often beyond the control of the state.

Bayart (1991) also made reference to groups which interact with the state by by-passing-it, by defining themselves in relation to economic, political or cultural system which transcends the state by submerging the state with its specula claims and mobilization.

These individuals found out that, their goals are often incompatible with state goals most times, it is the inability of the state to transcend ethnic sentiments in order to achieve national integration among its citizens that actually gives room for these individuals to form a group with particular and same interest. Exit therefore, refers to a disengagement or retreat from the state by disaffected or marginalized segments of the citizenry and in the same vein, the creation of parallel social cultural, economic and political system which compete with state structures.

The reciprocal rights normally associated with state citizen relations are therefore absent (Bayart 1991). In the Nigeria state, we can identify various forms of exit, especially in the creation of parallel and self-governing economic structures and socio-cultural and judicial activities, for instance, as a result of the failure of the state to provide for the lives and properties of the citizens, the 1990s witnessed an upsurge in the creation of vigilante groups, such as the Bakassi boys in the Eastern part of the country. These groups engaged in security duties with the open support of the state. In fact, it has been observed that citizens more often not report cases to these outfits, "cases" that were originally the preserve of the police.

Similarly, the O'Odudua People Congress (OPC) although leaving an openly stated political programme of protecting the political interest of the Yoruba ethnic group and that of negotiating a better deal for the Omo-Odudua in the Nigeria federation (Ejiorfor 2002) would also engage in police duties by meting out instant justice to suspected criminals. Some other failure of the state that resulted in the emergence of such groups include the inability of the state to provide goods and services to the general populace. This was also compounded by the authoritarian dictatorship of the military that further alienated the citizenry.

All these prepared the ground for various segments of the country to alternatives and very often parallel sites-fundamentalist religious movement, ethnic self-help unions, black market networks and so on for support. Sometimes some citizens or groups choose outright exile from the state to define alternative life systems. The phenomena that would seem to establish a linkage between the proliferation and vibrancies of associational like or civil societies parallel to state structure on the hand and the exit from the state on the other hand is the concept of the "collapse state". (Osaghae, 1997).

Uchendu (2000), postulated that the foundation of Nigeria civil society lies in its ethnic phiralism of the country. The characteristic of civil society in Nigeria today reflects the uneven socio-cultural development of the country. The various level of socio-cultural differentiation achieved by the various populations. The Nigerian civil society tends to ignore the state when it felt that its interest (the state interest) did not inform public policy choices, civil societie groups emerged and protested when they felt that relative balance of power between the state and the civil society assumed a redirection of policy.

If we say that during the military era, there was an upsurge rise of civil society, we are in fact condescending to the view or better still inferring that civil society could not have started during the military period: true, during the military era the growth of civil society reached its peak, but however, the emergence of civil society in Nigeria goes beyond the military era or the failure of the post-colonial state to attend to the desires and aspirations of the citizens. In fact, Nigeria civil society can be traced to the colonial period. This is so, if the theory of the post-colonial politics is largely a carryover of colonial politics, is anything to go by.

Toure-Kejah (2000), wrote that colonialism was principally a violent imposition enslavement of the people and economic subjugation to economic exploitation, political repression and cultural oppression. Military might was used by the colonialist to co-opt the people into submission. Apart from the rise of various oppositions/associational groups standing in opposition of the colonialist contest, the violent imposition of the colonialist was the basis of non-inclusive citizenship. (Foore Kazan, 2000).

Credibility as provoked by the decomposition of the state has encouraged and accelerated the construction of parallel economic systems. Hence the post-independent era witnessed the unurge/rise of various religious bodies, Anti-military association like NADECO (National Democratic Coalition), ethnic association and so on. These and many too numerous to mention has escaped to fourth republic that began 1999 with their parochial and adhoc stand.

Democracy

Uchendu (1999:21) posits that the stability of the democratic government precludes that government is generally broad and participatory in his words, the live and cry of neglect and marginalization is a manifestation of the failure of the government to respond to the yearning of the people's marginalization. He noted further a product of contrived national inadequacy promoted by the repressive character of the state.

The outcome of frustration and a general feeling of insecurity within, a national polity which is evident hard work into crime and natural endowment into cause flowing from the above, it is evident that the civil societies play a huge role in the sustenance of democracy.

In other words civil societies must exist, and is the threshold upon which democracy tends to drive. This is because democracy presupposed the rights to individuals.

To establish further the relationship between civil society and government, Lonsdate (1981: 139) posits that the philosophical speculation concerning the end of government is generally believed, ought to promote the public interest. A venerable notion of government holds that governance is a public activity that involves public purposes, or public interest entails the idea that governmental actions ought to create and promote values that are for the good of the general public and that are made with the welfare of the society in mind. When government loses focus on this direction, the civil societies stands in the gap by calling the attention of the government.

This position was supported by Soibonjo (2002:21), who posited that in all democracies, respect for the will of the people means that those who are in position of authority have to act in line with the wish known by expressing their views and giving the opinion on how matters of the public interest should be handled. Thus, the civil societies stand by checking the arbitrariness of government actions.

The civil organization creates avenues that promote the fact that public opinion should be one of the factors informing government action. Civil societies by their functions make sure that government constituted by elected political leaders and their appointees must always recognize that it is merely established to execute the mandate of the people.

We can deduce from the foregoing that civil societies within a democracy helps to create and foster a set of ideas, institutions and process of governance that allows the broad mass of the people to choose their leaders and that guarantees them a broad range of civil rights.

HISTORY OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

Among the forces that helped to dislodge the military from power in Nigeria politics, the civil societies were in the forefront. In the Nigerian case under an entrenched authoritarian, the civil society group operated from "Diaspora". This was because of high handedness of the military class who were opposed to any form of opposition. Students' union association, media groups, religious bodies, professional bodies, inter and intra ethnic association were virtually reduced to nothing and attempt to speak against the unjust manner in the country was equally met with stiff sanctions.

However, paradoxically, such persecution only serves to heighten the resolves to break down the existence of millenarianism. One which has actually stood out in the fight against the military is NADECO (National Democratic Coalition) whose members are mostly of the Yoruba-but also home members drawn from across the nation, actually stop at nothing to speak against the excessiveness of military dictatorship. Personalities like Pa. Micheal Ajasin, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Anthony Enahoro, Wole Soyinka, Boko Ransome-Kuti and so on. Others operated from "Exile" and were a pain in the "ass" of the military.

Although, the proliferation of new types of non-governmental organization (NGOs) in recent times has raised expectation that democratic governance might thrive in Nigeria. While their growing presence largely reflects the wakening developmental capacity of the state, they contributes directly or indirectly to the creation of a social-economic and political setting conducive to democracy. Some of the NGOs together with labour unions have fought decisively for the entrenchment of democracy.

Nigeria democracy today could be said to be a fight that started in the 1980s certainly passed at the beginning of a completely new approach in the world political economy and governance. The proliferation of civil society groups cannot be associated from the happenings of this period. The vibrancy of civil society was especially noticeable during this period. It was this vibrancy that eventually saw Babangida "stepping aside" in 1993 after the unceremonious annulment of the June 12 presidential election that was adjusted by both local and international observers as the fairest election till date.

An attempt to correct the abnormalities of the colonial policies led to the emergence of various associational groups that later became political in nature. First among these various groups was a trans-national organization known as the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) led by some intellectuals under the leadership of a Ghanaian lawyer, Lasely Utayford. It has the main objective of unity for the four British West Africa countries- Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria in their demands for self determination, some scholars believed that despite the colonial opposition reaction to the demand of these groups, they were successful in their quest

because in 1922, the establishment of a new legislature with the elective principles was introduced by the then governor Sir Hugel Clifford in Nigeria. A major request of the group. The NCBWA was to serve as a capitalist for the emergence of their similar groups in the country. Subsequently, there was the Lagos youth movement that was founded in 1934 by four Nigerians. O.J.C. Vanghar, Samuel Abirsanya, Ernest Ikoli and H.O. Davis to oppose the colonial policies with regards to the differences which these people alleged existed in the Yaba college (an Educational institution). In 1936 the name was later changed to the Nigerian Youth Movement in an effort to make it a national movement. The movement later became political changed into Nigerian National Democratic Party of Herbert Marcauley in 1958 by winning elections for the Lagos town council and the Lagos seats in the legislative council.

The major political parties that later exact profound influence in the Nigeria political landscape started as cultural organization for instance the Action congress, the Northern people congress and the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons that had its root first in previous movement like the NYC and the Nigeria Union of students (NUS).

However, pre-colonial civil society came into existence mainly to fight off what they perceived to be an unprecedented oppression of the black race and more. Civil society existed mainly as a result of the authoritarian nature of the military rule in the country. As Osaghae (1997) put it, the combination of foreign debts, structural adjustment and general economic decline have further emasculated the capacity of the state to provide jobs, subsidization of education, health care, social service, protection of lives and property.

This has forced the people to devise various strategies of coping outside the formal structure of the state. Also the unprecedented level of repression and personal dictatorship as made ineffective, potential sites of opposition and counter-hegemony like the independent media grass roots organization and so on. This has worsened crisis of confidence and the political achievements in the end.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

Democracy definitely has its own defenders, one of which is a genuinely independent civil society, whose essence is said to consist in its capacity to resist state authoritarianism or totalitarianism, (Bayary:1996) equally established the relation between civil society and democracy more poignantly by asserting that "The quest for unearthing the dynamics of civil society in Africa would be without purpose outside its potential relationship with democracy".

In fact, the relationship and significance of civil society in nurturing and depending on democracy was amply demonstrated in Abacha's Nigeria (1993-1998). Given General Sani Abacha's palace coup against chief Ernest Shonekon's Interim National Government (ING), and the detention of chief M.K.O, Abiola, the presented winner of the June 12, 1993 general election, civil society organization through it sustain the momentum of the democratic struggle in Nigeria. The emerging pro-democratic coalitions (NADECO) which became the unofficial opposition to the Abacha's administration. NADECO was inaugurated at Ikeja in May 1994 by prominent politicians academics, professionals and pro-democracy activities Nationwide.

Under Abacha's, the civil society under the aegis of NADECO remained clearly an opposition organization. It constituted itself into political opposition simplicities and was engaged in critical questioning and an unceasing

inquisitiveness. The civil society was therefore what Schapiro, (1972:75) calls "integral, revolutionary opposition" what Dah (1996:34) dubs, "revolutionary structural opposition", or what "Bizezinski," and "Hungnigton" (1964:114) refers to as "alienation" or "Unorthodox dissent". To ensure democracy, the civil society in Nigeria thus represented the type of Anti-system opposition entailing rejection of the whole system of rule, coupled with overt and covert disloyalty, revolutionary conspiracies, lesson forms of resistance such as underground activity, sabotage or political emigration, designed to overthrow the dictatorship of the Abacha regime and replace it with a democratic government. This was done by mobilizing and harnessing all available resources in order to disrupt the normal operation of political processes to discredit the system to impair its legitimacy and in general to increase the vulnerability of the polity to democratic rule.

Further, the civil society in its desire to enthrone democratic rule in Nigeria, staged a number of demonstrations throughout the country, especially in the South West of Nigeria, particularly Lagos, in order to back its demands for democratic rule. (Babatope, 1995:127), weapons of civil disobedience such as stayed at home calls on workers, keep-off the road orders to transport owner and workers closure of all oil installation reference, fuel stations and depots, and closure of markets and shops were also applied by the group, for instance, when two major unions in the oil and gas sector, the National Union of Petroleum and Gas workers union (NUPEIME) and the petroleum and national.

Gas senior staff association of Nigeria (PEGASSAN) demanded the actualization of June 12 mandate from the Abacha's government at the risk of touching off industrial action, the economy was brought to a virtual standstill in the ensuing strike. According to Baba Tope (1995:129), The economy of civil society was immediately oriented towards western nations to take punitive actions against the Abacha administration (Sunray, 22 August, 1994:1). The group also networked and mobilized the support of the global coalition for Africa, transparency international, Amnesty international and other human rights and democracy groups which make human rights and democratization their programmes of action. Again, the civil society group works are instrumental in disrupting Abacha's self-succession bid. This he did by calling for the boycott of the proposed National constitutional conference. Following from the above analysis, it is evident that members of the civil society play a very significant role in enthrone democratic government as currently enjoyed in Nigeria.

As Markoritz, (1975:241), pointed out by serving as a rallying ground and focal point for grievances, responsible opposition and civil organization can transform potential disenchantment with government into positive channels, preventing apathy and avoiding cynicism about democracy.

PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN NIGERIA

Some of the problems that bedeviled civil societies in Nigeria are as follows:

1. Ethnicity/Ethnic Bias: majority of civil societies in Nigeria are ethnic connotations and agenda which does not makes for national orientation or focus on entrenching democracy in the nation but are tools for carrying out ethnic agendas.
2. Finance: civil societies operating in Nigeria are lacking finance hence they becomes contractors and agents/ tools

in the hands of the reigning government to carry out agendas that are inimical and anti democracy instead of opposing such policies and programmes.

3. Civil societies in Nigeria lack internal democracy, so are not in a position to enforce the tenets of democracy because they lack the culture/prerequisites to do so.
4. Lack of civic education by the civil societies on the culture and tenets of democracy on the government and the governed. Rather, civil societies are sought as avenue to get financial supports internally from the government or international donors under dubious guise.

There are many observable reasons for this, one major reason that has reduced the power of civil society in underdeveloped social formation like Nigeria is the issue of fund. (Boadi: 1995), most civil society groups had to rely on the respective government where they play host for funds to run their organization.

In the long run, their policies are largely dictated by the government. Given state dominance in most of the formal sector of investment and employment-key social groups and their organization are ultimately dependent on government. (Ibid). Secondly, groups such as unions whose members came substantially from the public sectors are always vulnerable to government arm. In Nigeria for instance, during the late 80s and early 90s intermittent prescription of the Nigeria labour congress and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU) as well as conception of their inducement has hampered. The popular movement against military doctors.

Although, things have considerably changed during the current democratic dispensation, the future of civil society in democratic consolidation is not really bright, for instance, privatization of state owned enterprises, (SOEs) has not really empowered civil society groups economically as expected hence today we still see crisis and co-option taken place. This is because many civil associations of all kinds have seen their materials bases of support eroded first by protected economic crisis and by stringent new-liberal adjustment measures imposed with a view of resolving it.

The poor economic conditions of the Nigerian state has also led to the emergence of civil society that are state inclined because members of such groups believe strongly that by showing loyalty to the incumbent government, material resources is assured. (Osaghae-1998)

While the proliferation of new types of NGOs has raised expectations that democratic governance might thrive in Nigeria, it has become clear that there sorts of NGO's also labour under structural, material and legal constraints that hinders their effectiveness as agents of democracy. Local NGOs in general are poorly funded and have weak organizational capacities. As stated above, they often turned to government for support and external donors, comprising strategy that distorts the accountability owed to members.

Also, many NGOs and especially the civil subspecies that are mostly like to be involved in democratic activism, suffer from low levels of institutional development. Many have withered or changed their characters as key leaders have taken post in the new post-authoritarian governments or plunged into party politics.

Infact, to use the exact words of Boadi; (1995) "many of Africa (Nigeria) new democracy civil association turned out to be nothing more than political action committee and proto parties that have more in common with political than civil society". The heterogeneous nature of most Africa society, not excluded has also acted as a Nigeria debilitating factor necessitating against a meaningful and well organized civil

society group in the country Jega (2006) have apthy coined it "lack of sensitivity to the plural nature of Nigeria".

In such multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies, democratic happenings are often associated with heightened sectarian conflict and communal violence. The end product been that civil societies are more likely to fight against themselves than against an oppressive regime. This is the case during oppressive rule in Nigeria, especially during the era of general Banbangida and Abacha. The fight for the enthronement of democracy was largely perceived to be a Yoruba affair despite the wide distaste for military rule (Boadi, 1995). This was because of the frontline role played by NADECO. A civil group largely composed of the Yoruba people.

CONCLUSION

In a democracy, respect for the will of the people of authority have to act in line with the constitution and the aspiration of the people. The people make their wishes known by expressing their views and given their opinion on how matters of public interest should be handled, arbitrariness of action is not conducive to democracy, and the political responsibility of a government demands that public opinion should be one of the factors informing its actions.

The government constituted by elected political leaders and their appointees must always recognize that it is merely established to execute the mandate of the people when policies are formulated and adopted by the government, it is understood in a democracy that, the government does so as the agent of the people. The civil societies have an important role to play in this regards. Indeed limitation of the exercise to power by those in authority is not informed by self-interest, and that political dissent, which opposes the wrongful exercise of authority and reckless programmes is not suppressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Within a democracy set-up the government recognizes that the well being of the citizens is its fundamental responsibility, power belongs to the people while those who occupy political offices are merely agents of the people. Unfortunately, democracy in Nigeria is generally perceived by the leaders as a means to an end.

REFERENCES

- Aduba, J. (1995), "The role of human right organization in the propagation of human right values in Nigeria". A critical appraisal in Okanya D.O (ed) *Gruat issues Nigerial government and politics*. Department of Political Science Enugu State Univeristy of Science and Technology.
- Diamond, L. (1996), "Rethinking Society" in brown and R.mereridis (eds) *Comparative politics. Notes and reading*. Newyork Wodsworth Publishing Company.
- Eminne, F. (2000), "The role of Civil Society groups in Nigeria". *Journal of Democracy Vol XI No2*.
- Oyovbaire, S. (1992), "Political development in Nigeria, Essays in Society Politics and Economy." Buerions Arries. Ed. Publishers.
- Bratton, M.(1989), *Beyond the State. Civil Society and Associational life in Africa*, World Politics Oxford Press.
- Diamond, L. (1999), *Rethinking Civil Society towards democratic consolidation crossword*, Vol. 1 No. 3. (February), Lagos United State Information Service.
- Gold, M. (1990), "Civil Society and its role in a democratic state" *journal of democracy Vol. IV No. 3*.
- Hobbes, T. (1946), *Leviathan* Oxford, O. U. P.

- Lonsdale, J. (1981), *State and Social process in Africa: A Historical survey*. Boulder. West view press.
- Mutfang, T. (2003), "The State civil society and Government in Nigeria". A post 1960 synopsis" in Aboh, O.S. (ed), *Geographies of citizenship in Nigeria*, Zaria, Tanga publishers.
- Omogbe, J. (1991), *A simplified History of Western philosophy*, Lagos, joja Educational research and publisher.
- Oyovbrare, S. (2000), "Civil Society and Democracy in Nigeria, A key note address" in Okon, E.U. (ed) *Ibid*.
- Rottchild, D. (1989), *The precarious Balance state and society in Africa*. Boulder Western view press.
- Sabine, G and Thorson, T. (1972), *A History of political theory*, New Deltil Nohan prinland and IBH publishing Co.
- Strauss, L. (1972), "Natural Law" *International encyclopedia of social science*.
- Uchendu, V. (2000), "Civil Society and democracy theoretical perspective" in Okoh E.U. (ed.) *Civil Society and the Consolidation of democracy in Nigeria*, Calabar, Cats publishers.
- Uchendu, U. C. (1999), *Capacity assessment of Civil Society in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Bayart, A. (1991), "Finishing with the idea of the third world: the concept of the political Trajectory" in J, (ed) *Rethinking third world politics* London, Longinan publishers.
- Mutfang, P. (2000), "The state civil society and Governance in Nigeria. A post 1960 synopsis" in Oga S.A. (ed) *Geographies of citizenship in Nigeria*. Tamaja publishers.
- Osaghae, E. E.(1997), "Existing from the state in Nigeria" in Haynes J (ed), *democracy and civil society in the third world politics and new social movement*. Cambridge polity press.
- Toure-Kajan, T. (2000), "inclusive citizenship and democratic Governance in Nigeria" in Oyo S.A (ed) *Op. Cit*.
- Uchendu, V. C. (2000), "Civil society and democracy. Theoretical foundation of democracy in Nigeria. Calabar. Cats publishers.
- Urofsky, M. (2003), "The root principle of democracy" *Journal of democracy*, Vol XVI, NO 2.
- Adejumobi, S. (2002), *The military and National question in Nigeria: Comparative perspective*. Aldershot: A shaquate.
- Bayart, I. F. (1996) *Civil Society in Africa*. P chabal (Eds) *political Domination on Africa reflection on the limits of power* Cambridge University press.
- Boadi, G. (1995), "Civil Society in Africa" *Journal of democracy*, Vol XVI NO3.
- Dahi, R. (1996), "Political opposition in western democracies. London press.
- Ekeh, P. (1975), "Colonialis and the two publics in Africa. A theoretical statement comparative studies in society and histoty, Lagos: Macmillian.
- Gega, A. (2006), "Democratization in Nigeria: Problems and prospects", retrieved from [nigerianmasses.com/political details](http://nigerianmasses.com/political_details). Abuja, on 27/3/2008.
- Markovitz, I.L (1975), *African politics and society. Basic issues and problems of government and development* New York freepress.
- Osaghae, E. (1998), "Structural Adjustment, Civil Society and National cohension in Africa". Arrius Aps print source.
- Osaghae, E. (1987), "Class and Civil Society in Africa". Benin. Owema publisher.
- Schapiro, L. (1972), "Political opposition in one party state". London Macmillian press.