

THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The civil society organisations (CSOs) have been associated with the wave of democratisation in many countries, including Nigeria. Since they participated actively in democratic transitions, the organisations are also expected to play major roles in democratic consolidation. The transition from many years of military authoritarian regimes to popularly elected administrations in Nigeria was welcomed and celebrated with high hopes and expectations of good governance and a resultant good life that democracy will usher into Nigeria. However, it has been eighteen years on and the hopes seem to have been dashed as a vast majority of Nigerians live and groan under harsh economic realities. This paper adopted a secondary method of data collection and analysis to investigate the problem. The study was anchored on the Marxian theory of the post-colonial State as the framework of analysis. The study noted that CSOs in Nigeria lack the capacity and potency to live up to expectations as the conscience and bedrock of a democratic society. It is recommended among others that for the CSOs, as a body, in Nigeria to mature, flourish and assert itself, it needs partnership and cooperation with their counter-parts in the advanced democracies. It should also seek to understand, aggregate and articulate the needs of the citizenry and constructively engaged the State for the sake of good governance.

Keywords: Civil Society Organisations, Good Governance, Democratic Consolidation, Post-Colonial State, Democracy, Election

Introduction

The wave of democratic transitions that blew across Africa in the 1990s, ushering in democratic regimes, including Nigeria's transition to electoral democracy in 1999, was largely influenced by the struggles of CSOs. In fact, the drive to institutionalise the culture of good governance within the regime of democratic governance can be understood within the initiatives of the CSOs (Omodia and Erunke, 2007). The CSOs which operate from the public realm are a reinforcing mechanism for effective governance in the overall interest of the majority of the people. Though democratic transition has occurred in Africa, there is a compelling need for the CSOs to ensure the institutionalisation of the democratic practice, especially as it exercises and maintains its autonomy from State apparatuses. It is

noteworthy therefore that transition to democracy does not automatically translates into a culture of good governance and democratic consolidation, hence the relevance and urgency of the CSOs to continue the struggle for good governance and democratic consolidation and resist the experience of civilian dictatorship and impunity.

Herein lays the onerous responsibility for the CSO, as an important structure and force in liberal democratic politics, in helping to consolidate the hard earned democracy and make it sustainable, irreversible and the only game in town. In other words, as the conscience of the democratic society, it is imperative for the CSOs to continue to enlarge the democratic space, thereby contributing, through its struggles, to democratic consolidation. What then can the CSOs do ensure good governance and democratic consolidation in Nigeria? This and ancillary concerns were tackled by this paper, then, the way forward proffered.

Conceptual Elucidation:

i. Civil Society Organisation

As the bedrock and conscience of any civilised society, the concept of CSOs have attracted a myriad attempts at its conceptualisation. According to Ibitoye (2012, p. 45), civil society organisations refers to “the organisations that arise out of voluntary association within the society, found between the extended family and the State.” Similarly, Idumange (2012) captures the CSOs as a sphere of social interaction between the household (family) and the State which is manifested in the norms of community cooperative, structures of voluntary association and networks of public communication. He adds that CSOs are composed of autonomous associations which develop a dense, diverse and pluralistic network.

For Schmitter, the CSOs are:

a set or system of self-organized intermediary groups that: 1) are relatively independent of both public authorities and private units of production and reproduction ...; 2) are capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in defence or promotion of their interests or passions; 3) do not seek to replace either State agents or private (re)producers or to accept responsibility for governing the polity as a whole; and 4) agree to act within pre-established rules of a ‘civil’ nature (Schmitter, 1997, p. 240).

Similarly, Wheatley (2010) affirms that the CSOs are a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected nongovernmental institutions that tend to be nonviolent, self-organising, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension, both with each other and with the governmental institutions that ‘frame’, constrict and enable their activities. There are therefore, four key attributes of CSOs that can be discerned from the above: independence from the State and private capital, self-organisation, deliberation and civility. Thus, CSOs can be defined as the sphere of organised social life that is voluntary, self-generating, largely self-supporting, and autonomous from the State and market, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules (Schmitter, 1997). .

The CSOs therefore include professional organisations, labour unions, women's groups, faith-based organisations, special interest campaigns, community groups, right down to sports and social clubs. In this respect, any group organisation beyond the family but not part of the State apparatus can be said to be part of CSOs. Put differently, CSOs, in this paper, refer to those organisations which exist outside the formal structures of government power.

ii. Good Governance

There have been various attempts to conceptualise "good governance," yet, scholars are in want of a single and precise definition that commands universal acceptability. In the World Bank (2003) conception, governance consists in the exercise of authority in the name of the people while good governance is doing so in ways that respect the integrity and needs of everyone within the State (Odo, 2015, p.4). This implies that good governance rests on two important core values, namely: inclusiveness and accountability. To Madhav (2007), good governance is tied to the ethical grounding of governance and must be evaluated with reference to specific norms and objectives as may be laid down. Similarly, Okpaga (2007) opined that governance denotes how people are ruled and how the affairs of the State are administered and regulated. To him, public authority is expected to play an important role in creating conducive environment to enhance development. On this premise, Ansah (2007) viewed governance as encompassing a State's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making process and implementation capacity and the relationship between government officials and the public. Consequently, governance can either be good or bad, depending on whether or not it has the basic ingredients of what makes a system acceptable to the generality of the people (Odo, 2015). The ingredients of good governance include freedom, accountability, and participation (Sen, 1990). The basic features of good governance include the conduct of an inclusive management wherein all the critical stakeholders are allowed to have a say in the decision-making process.

The foregoing reveals therefore that good governance is the process through which a State's affairs are managed effectively in the areas of public accountability, financial accountability, administrative and political accountability, responsiveness and transparency, all of which must show in the interest of the governed and the leaders. It, thus, means that good governance and democracy are symmetrical, and good governance thrives in a democratic setting; hence to achieve good governance, there must be a democratic system in place. While there is no universal definition of good governance, there is little disagreement over its defining elements, which include inclusiveness, accountability, transparency, predictability, the rule of law and participation. Good governance therefore ensures high-level institutional effectiveness and socio-economic development, complemented by a politically stable environment for the formulation and implementation of government policies.

iii. Democratic Consolidation

Democracy has come to refer to a form of government and an entrenched culture that allows for popular participation by the citizens, accountability and

responsiveness by the elected and appointed State officials; ushering in a legitimate system of government that is guided by a body of laws and which guarantees people's basic rights, extending from civil and political rights to the economic, social and cultural rights. Democratic Consolidation therefore implies a status of democratic maturity such that it can no longer be threatened or truncated by reactionary forces whether internal or external. Thus, democratic consolidation is meant to describe the challenges of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short-term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian repression and of building dams against eventual reverse waves (Schedler, 1998).

In a broader perspective, Azeez (2005, p. 24) argued that democratic consolidation does not simply mean the defeat of supposedly undemocratic forces and rulers or the putting in place of democratic institutions and paraphernalia. According to him, the survival and consolidation of democracy has a lot to do with how it is able to better the material conditions of the people in terms of provision of effective and affordable education, shelter, security of life and property, better health care, employment, food, portable water as well as to ensure political stability and thereby save the people from the scourge of war and other violent conflicts. Apart from ensuring socio-economic wellbeing of the people, democratic consolidation also entails the legitimization of the political institutions and processes. In this line, Diamond (1999, p. 62) defined democratic consolidation as:

the process of achieving broad (and) deep legitimization such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass level believe that the democratic system is better for the society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine.... It also connects the act of reducing the probability of the breakdown of the system to the point where democracy can be said that it will persist.

Democratic consolidation, thus, entails regime maintenance and the regarding of the key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game. It manifest under enhanced economic development, developed democratic culture and stable party system. Extending the legitimization thesis, Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 33) stressed that democratic consolidation must also involve a shared normative or behavioural commitment to the specific rules, values, attitudes and practices of a country's constitutional system. The consolidation of democracy must therefore encourage and guarantee economic and social liberties of the people. Essentially, by democratic consolidation, we mean a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules and patterned incentives and disincentives has become a dominant culture, "the only game in town" and is irreversible.

Theoretical postulations on Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation, it should be emphasised, begins with the enthronement of democracy after a free and fair election, and spans through the period when its probability of breakdown is very low or on the other way round,

when its probability of survival is very high. There must then be the optimism expressed by major political actors, all relevant observers and the entire citizenry that the democratic regime can last into a foreseeable future, thereby having the capacity to build dams against what Huntington (1991) would describe as a 'reverse wave'. He argues further that, democratic consolidation entails a process of achieving broad and deep legitimation such that all significant political actors believe that popular rule is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine. Moreover, it is a process by which a new democratic culture becomes more established and matures such that there is a high probability or unlikelihood of its reverting to authoritarianism without external shocks. For Huntington (1991), democratisation is merely agreement by the elites that democracy is the least worst form of government for their societies and for themselves. This means that democracy can only flourish if those who exercise power want it to.

According to Linz and Stepan (1996), consolidated and non-consolidated democracies differ in the degree they achieve the following criteria:

- i. In CSOs, there has to be freedom of association and communication,
- ii. In political society, there has to be free and electoral process,
- iii. There must be a rule of law and a spirit of constitutionalism,
- iv. State apparatus must be impartial and organised along legal-rational bureaucratic principles,
- v. Economically, there must be respect for property rights and prospects for economic growth.

More so, different criteria are proposed to identify a consolidated democratic system but two are discernible in this context. First, Schedler (1998) submits that there is the 'two election test' or put differently the 'transfer of power test'. This criterion reckons with the 'behavioural' aspects of democratic consolidation as it questions the attitude of political actors when defeated in an electoral contest. Clearly stated the probability of democratic survival is not high until and unless democratically elected regimes lose elections in subsequent contests and accept the verdict. Democracy is therefore consolidated when a ruling political party or class hands over power to an opposition party after losing the contest (Oni, 2014). This speaks volume of the readiness of major political players and their supporters to respect the rules that govern the game of electoral contest and their readiness to sacrifice their personal and/or sectional interest for the good of the democratic system. The second is the "simple longevity" or "generation test". The import of this criterion is that years of regular competitive elections should be sufficient enough to adjudge a democracy consolidated irrespective of the fact that power is not transferred to another political party or class. According to Oni (2014), the criterion argues that continuous, regular and credible elections would have created in people a mind-set that develops apathy for any near alternative to democracy.

Thus, behaviourally, in consolidated democracies, democracy becomes the only game in town when no significant political group seriously attempts to overthrow the democratic regime or to promote domestic or international violence in

order to secede from the State. When this situation obtains, the behaviour of the newly elected government that has emerged from the democratic transition is no longer dominated by the problem of how to avoid democratic breakdown. Attitudinally, democracy becomes a general norm, even in the face of severe political and economic crisis; the overwhelming majority of people believe that any further political change must emerge from within the parameters of democratic procedures. Again, constitutionally, democracy is consolidated when all the actors in the polity become habituated to the fact that political conflict within the State will be resolved according to established norms and that violation of these norms are likely to be both ineffective and costly. In short, with consolidation, democracy becomes routinised and deeply internalised in social institutions. It follows therefore that democratic consolidation entails the betterment, sustainability and deepening of democracy in a State (Ogbonna, 2014).

It is clear therefore as submitted by Oni (2014) that, achieving a consolidated democracy requires good governance by democratic regimes. It also demands upholding democratic values of popular participation, respect for the rule of law, free and fair elections and the independence of the judiciary. Good governance essentially promotes improved welfare of the people, transparency and accountability by public managers in the conduct of State affairs and reduces corruption and political violence to the barest minimum. These correlates of democracy are some of the daunting challenges in Nigeria since 1999. Essentially therefore, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to fully achieve democratic consolidation in its all theoretical postulations. States are therefore considered “consolidated” when they mostly achieve the criteria.

It can however be argued that Nigeria is on the path of democratic consolidation. For one, there has been a successful transition from authoritarianism to democratic rule and from one ruling party to another. Again, while there have been some improvements in the organisation and conduct of elections in Nigeria, there is still much to be desired in the electoral and the political process generally. For one, electoral violence and fraud has continued to bedevil the Nigerian electoral process; and the attitude and behaviour of the political class to capture and retain power at all cost has remained a scar on the conscience of the democratic process in Nigeria. It is hoped that the resurgence of the CSOs and advocacy groups will ensure that democratisation, constitutionalism and the rule of law gradually become the order of the day in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the neo-Marxist theory of the post-colonial State which is an offshoot of the classical Marxist political economy approach. The major tenets of the theory of post-colonial State are generated from the works of Ekeh (1972) Alavi, (1973); Ake, (1981) and Ekekwe, (1986); who among others have contributed to the explanation and understanding of the character of states in the periphery, with a Marxist persuasion.

The central focus of the theory is on understanding the nature, structure, history, composition and character of the State in the periphery, like the Nigerian

State in order to ascertain the dynamics of political developments and processes within the State. Suffice it to add that this dynamics include the nature and character of CSOs and democratic consolidation with their various manifestations. They argued that it is the State that occupies the centre stage of politics and therefore is the major determinant of the most societal processes including civil society and democratic consolidation. The theory suggests that the post-colonial state is a creation of imperialism. As such, it has followed the developmental strategies of the colonialists, dictated by the interest of imperialist and its local allies, not by those of the majority of the indigenous population. The post-colonial state has created for itself a deep crisis from which it can hardly extricate itself without fundamentally changing its present nature. As Engels (1919), cited in Omoyibo (2014, p.23) argues, “the state is nothing but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”. Similarly, Ake noted that:

The State is a specific modality of class domination, one in which domination is mediated by commodity exchange so that the system of institutional mechanisms of domination is differentiated and disassociated from the ruling class and even the society appears as an objective force standing alongside society (Ake, 1981, p.5).

More so, Alavi (1973, p.146) had opined that the “post-colonial States and their apparatus are instruments of primitive accumulation by the dominant class and their collaborators”. According to Ekekwe (1986), the post colonial states rest on the foundation of the colonial state. This, in turn, had incorporated some important elements of the pre- colonial rudimentary state structures. The main goal of the colonial state was to create conditions under which accumulation of capital by the foreign bourgeoisie in alliance with the ruling elite would take place through the exploitation of local human and other natural resources. It was on this basis that the post-colonial state emerged.

Given this context, the stakes and struggles for State power are very high and often assume “a zero-sum game” approach. The limited autonomy of the post-colonial State in Africa leads to an exclusive politics articulated in the struggle for power based on efficiency norms rather than legitimacy norms; the triumph of the vicious over the virtuous circle; centralization of power; imposition of domination and political control; alienation of leaders from their masses; and the deployment of extremism in the exercise of power are all hallmarks of the postcolonial State. The intensities or the frequencies of the above forces in African States affect the operationalization of CSOs and the consolidation of democracy in such States (Ogbonna, 2014).

Under these circumstances, State-building is subverted and becomes the political equivalent of primitive accumulation ‘in a rather violent form’. It entails conquest and subjugation, since it is projected as arbitrary power. It revokes the autonomy of communities and subjects them to ‘alien rule’ within an otherwise independent political system (i) by laying claim to the resources of subordinated territories and (ii) through its exertion of ‘legitimate force’ in counteracting resource

wars and pro-democratic resistance. State-building in Africa thus assumes a rather violent character as groups or social classes jostle for power and resources (Ake, 1996b). He further argues that an understanding of the history, nature and character of the State is very important for capturing the dynamics of socio-economic formations, their configuration and transformation (including CSOs and democratic consolidation).

It is noteworthy therefore that the basic character of the State in Africa is that it has very limited autonomy. This means that the State is institutionally constituted in such a way that it enjoys limited independence from the social classes, particularly the hegemonic social class, and so, is immersed in the class struggle that goes on in the society which does have an overbearing influence on the role of CSOs in the process of ensuring good governance and democratic consolidation. Similarly, Ekekwe, (1986, p.12) notes that “the distinction between states in advanced capitalist societies and those in post-colonial formations is that whereas the state in the former functions to maintain the economic and social relations under which bourgeois accumulation takes place (democracy) in the later, factors which have to do with the level of development of productive forces make the state direct instrument of capital accumulation for the dominant class or its elements.

Despite its analytical power, the neo-Marxian theory of the post-colonial State has been attacked for been ambiguous and vague. As indicated by Young, (1996, 2001), the neo-Marxian theory of post-colonial state not only lacks clarity and consensus but also keeps changing through new forms of social collectivity as they emerge in time and space in the postcolonial world. However, its fluidity and ambivalence, is what is genuinely enabling about the theory. The theory is also accused of suffering from colonial reductionism and at such cannot stand empirical scrutiny because it lacks adequate and valid explanation as to why countries like the United States of America, Australia, Singapore, among others, all former colonies are exempted from the postcolonial quagmire (Okolie, 2010).

However, it can be convincingly demonstrated that the neo-Marxian theory of post colonial State raised succinctly some major questions as regards the question of democracy and development in Africa (Ake, 1996). More so, these issues according to Gutkind & Wallerstein (1976, p.21):

Must be approached historically, for it is the past, rather than some evolutionary dynamics that have shaped the present and it is these past events and experiences which so many contemporary analysts have elected to ignore. By implication, this theory sees the historical analysis as way of explaining and simplifying social realities- the realities of the introduction and spread of colonialism and capitalism, or more precisely, colonial imperialism, all the major and complex processes as revealed in the specific political, economic and social matrix of colonial and post-colonial African.

From the above submissions, it can be stated that the neo-Marxian theory of post colonial State is relevant in interrogating CSOs and democratic consolidation as

both variables are implants of neo-colonialism. Consequently, Arowosegbe (2001) and Ogbonna (2014), among others, have used this framework to investigate various political phenomena, including the civil society and democratic consolidation. Therefore, this theory is not only in vogue but also relevant in the examination of germane issues like CSOs and democratic consolidation.

The relationship between CSOs, good governance and democratic consolidation is better explained in the light of neo-Marxian theory of post-colonial State. This framework unravels the hidden relations that influence CSOs differently in the process of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The importance of this approach in interrogating CSOs and democratic consolidation in Nigeria lies in the fact that “it enables us to go beyond analyses whose account are limited to the features, origin, types and potentials of CSOs and their role in the process of democratic consolidation” (Ogbonna, 2014, p.). The theory mirrors vividly the actual state of democratic consolidation in Nigeria and because it is the nature and character of the Nigerian State that ultimately controls and influences CSOs also account for the experiences in democratic practice. This view was corroborated by Aiyede (2005) who noted that in this context CSOs can hardly solidify as they becomes vulnerable to the overarching character of the State as the dominant employer, bearer of opportunities for upward social mobility, and manipulator.

Unfortunately, the nature and character of the Nigerian state typifies this ugly picture yet finds it difficult to cross the hurdle. Alluding to this, Onyeoziri (2005) reiterated how the character of the Nigerian State, especially its authoritarian and unitarian tendencies discourage the practice of good governance. Thus, Onyeoziri (2005), opined that when the institutions of the state are too weak to enforce fairness, justice and the rule of law, thus allowing crude power politics to reign, then, there is no end in sight yet, as far as electoral misfortune is concerned. This weakness disallows the State from thriving, democratically. Suffice it to add that the Nigerian State suffers from predatory, parasitic and non-productive ruling class who see politics as a zero sum game and as such strongly possess a winner takes all mentality. More so, prebendalism, clientelism, weak opposition, electoral fraud, lack of party ideologies and lack of internal party democracy are attributed to the high premium placed on capturing and retaining State power in Nigeria.

In sum, this theory studies the State-civil society organization dialectical relationship, in which strategies of the State and changes in those strategies shape civil society, especially as regards democratic consolidation in Nigeria. As a result, membership of the civil society organisations and the types of alliances formed among social groups change over time. The term ‘dialectical’ emphasizes that one shapes the other in a simultaneous and continuous process of constant action and reaction, even within the unequal power relations between the post-colonial State and society in Africa. The most important implication of this dialectical relationship is that the process of State and civil society formation and transformation cannot be grasped by isolating, observing and analyzing one component or the other, but requires the study of both. Such an analysis is needed, for as Ake (1996a) noted, the democratization struggles, especially as led by the CSOs is an expression of the will

to survive rather than a conscious effort to open up the political space for liberal democracy. This is because neoliberal reforms hit at the very livelihood of citizens even as the State becomes more rampageous in its oppressive character. More so, the nature and character of the post-colonial State in Nigeria accounts for and explains the challenges and seeming weaknesses of the CSOs in Nigeria.

The Nexus between CSOs, Good Governance and Democratic Consolidation

In spite of the nature and character of the post-colonial Nigerian State, it is important to reiterate that the importance of CSOs is that the ultimate powers of the society reside in the people themselves. It follows that since ultimate power resides with the people (the CSOs), in measured doses, they control the exercise of that power through constructive engagements with political power holders. In most cases, critical policy decisions are better fashioned out when they are subjected to the crucible of CSOs debates and criticisms. Thus, the power exercised by the electorate via the ballot box; the criticism to which public policies are subjected, the debates carried out by CSOs verge on political legitimacy (Idumange, 2012).

According to Ibitoye (2012), the CSOs became a major pre-occupation of students of politics in the 1950's and 1960's. This was a response to the burgeoning number and activities of these groups and a reflection of a shift from the study of the formal constitutional and institutional aspects of politics towards emphasis on political power. At one time, attacked as subversive of democratic processes, CSOs later became widely regarded as the essence of the system of democratic pluralism where it was argued that it stood as a buffer between the citizens and the overbearing State. Indeed, it is the voluntary and symbiotic relationship between the CSOs and the ruling elite that guarantees progress and ensures that dividends get spread. The absence of such political symbiosis would ultimately lead to major contradictions and disintegration. In liberal democratic politics therefore, CSOs have now been accepted as the engine of growth by their constructive and objective criticisms, debates and unalloyed interest in the policy programmes of a State. Thus, they are accommodated, tolerated and considered in terms of their views before major policy decisions are reached.

In corroboration, Idumange (2012) reiterates that CSOs are increasingly important agents for promoting good governance manifested in transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness and accountability. In other words, the CSOs contribute in various ways to improve good governance and consolidate democracy. . It does this by policy analysis and advocacy and by regulation and monitoring of State performance and the action and behaviour of public officials. More so, the CSOs encourage good governance and democratic consolidation by building social capital and enabling citizens to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms and democratic practices; and by mobilising particular constituencies, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised sections of masses, to participate more fully in politics and public affairs. In a similar vein, the CSOs contribute to good governance and democratic consolidation by development work to improve the wellbeing of their own and other communities.

According to Fadakinte (2013, p. 136), CSOs are relevant in a democracy to safeguard citizens' rights, because liberal democracy grants each citizen the right to express his passion for his interest, and pursue the interest with passion. But by the nature of the capitalist society, the State, which arose from the irreconcilable differences between the social classes, always acts in defence of the social order. In spite of its own pretensions, the State functions, not in the interest of all, but in the interest of the dominant capitalist class of which its welfare and not that of all is its *raison d'être*. It can be gleaned from the foregoing that the primary function of CSOs is that of maintaining a check on the power of the State or serving as citizens curb on the power of the State. This is a way by which active popular participation will be achieved and it is also a way by which the revitalisation of social institutions that are needed to nurture democracy will be promoted. While there are a plethora of CSOs with varying dispositions, some cooperating with the government and others voicing their opposition and dissent to some government policies and actions; each group attempts to influence State decision making with varying results. Put succinctly, CSOs are formal organisations of people with common interest for the purpose of influencing government to the advantage of the general public.

In collaboration, Ikelegbe (2013) submits that civil society organizations have globally become active non-state agents of democratic governance saddled with the multifaceted responsibilities of providing social welfare, economic empowerment, humanitarian services, political participation, human capital development and economic activities (Ikelegbe 2013, p. 2). According to Ikelegbe, civil society organisation provides the oil that lubricates the relationship between the governments, business outfits and the people. He observed that emerging democracies especially in Africa and Nigeria cannot be consolidated or sustained without a virile and vibrant civil society (Ikelegbe 2007). This implies that the civil society organisation are a *sine qua non* to democratic governance, which explicitly is about providing social security, expanding and advocating for economic opportunities, rule of law, freedom of press, nipping in the bud ethno-religious violence, provision of basic infrastructural facilities, guarantee of oppositions, and a regular free and fair election. However, because the State represents the interest of the ruling class, whose interest is to perpetually control the apparatus of state power and machinery of government at all cost, the interest of the people especially in emerging democracies in Africa tend to be disregarded (Ikelegbe 2007)

. As Fatton (1995) observed, the states in Africa are incapacitated and irresponsible to the wellbeing of the people which it claims to protect. In the midst of these ad infinitum problems, the civil society is therefore, expected to serve as a watch dog against excesses of government and capitalists by providing a platform for aggregating and championing the interest of the people both in urban and rural areas to demand delivery of good governance from the government. In a similar vein, Ikelegbe (2013) defined civil society as the associational life of citizens characterized by common interests, civil and public purposes, and voluntary collective autonomous actions. It also stretches to include all those associations that enables citizens to participate voluntarily, freely and openly within the public realm, and operate and

function independent of and outside state and corporate powers though, relating with them. Civil society act as a buffer against the power of the central government and in that capacity encourages individuals to follow their own courses without fear of intimidation from the central government.

Furthermore, governance refers to the formal and informal arrangements that determine how public decisions are made and how public actions are carried out from the perspective of maintaining a country's constitutional values. The issue of governance has emerged as a key concept pre-occupying the international community. Governance refers to the way a society sets and manages the rules that guide policy-making and policy implementation. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002), governance is a very broad concept, and operates at every level, such as household, village, municipality, nation, region or globe. It is noteworthy that there exist many definitions of governance in the literature, but it is possible to isolate just three main types of governance (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002).

First, political or public governance, whose authority is the State, government or public sector, relates to the process by which a society organizes its affairs and manages itself. The public sector could be defined as activities that are undertaken with public funds, whether within or outside of core government, and whether those funds represent a direct transfer or are provided in the form of an implicit guarantee (United Nations, 2007). Second, economic governance, whose authority is the private sector, relates to the policies, the processes or organizational mechanisms that are necessary to produce and distribute services and goods. Third, social governance, whose authority is the civil society, including citizens and non-for-profit organizations, relates to a system of values and beliefs that are necessary for social behaviours to happen and for public decisions to be taken.

Governance should not be reduced to government, as the three aspects of governance are interdependent in a society. Indeed, social governance provides a moral foundation, while economic governance provides a material foundation, and political governance guaranties the order and the cohesion of a society (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Thus, governance is the process whereby a society makes important decisions, determines whom they involve, and how they render account. More precisely, governance comprises complex mechanisms, processes, relationships, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences (Cheema, 2005). On the other hand, identifying some differences in the role and importance of public, social and economic governance in a society leads to accepting the pre-eminence of public governance. As it provides the organizational dynamics and political and jurisdictional systems for both social and economic governance, the State plays a more important role than the civil society or the private sector.

Therefore, governance is not just about how a government and social organizations interact, and how they relate to citizens (United Nations, 2007), but it concerns the State's ability to serve citizens and other actors, as well as the manner in which public functions are carried out, public resources are managed and public regulatory powers are exercised. In this context, governance can be viewed as the

traditions and the institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced, the capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies, and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

Besides, public governance represents more than a means of providing common good, as it can be related to the government capacity to help their citizens' ability to achieve individual satisfaction and material prosperity. Therefore, governance could be compared to the management, supply, and delivery of political goods to citizens of a nation-state. Political goods are various, and they include human security, rule of law, political and civil freedoms, medical and health care, schools and education, communication networks, money and banking system, fiscal and institutional context, support for civil society, or regulating the sharing of the environmental commons. The practice of governance is also ruled by community values, informal traditions, accepted practices, or unwritten codes of conduct.

Furthermore, governance is "good" when it allocates and manages resources to respond to collective problems, in other words, when a State efficiently provides public goods of necessary quality to its citizens. Hence States should be assessed on both the quality and the quantity of public goods provided to citizens. Suffice it to add that the policies that supply public goods are guided by principles such as human rights, democratization and democracy, transparency, participation and decentralized power sharing, sound public administration, accountability, rule of law, effectiveness, equity, and strategic vision (Cheema, 2005). This explains why the Human Development Report (2002) insists on "good" governance as a democratic exigency, in order to rid societies of corruption, give people the rights, the means, and the capacity to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and to hold their governments accountable for what they do (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Consequently, "good" governance, ordinarily, promotes gender equality, sustains the environment, enables citizens to exercise personal freedoms, and provides tools to reduce poverty, deprivation, fear, and violence. The United Nations (2007) therefore views good governance as participatory, transparent and accountable. It encompasses state institutions and their operations and includes private sector and civil society organizations.

In practice, such principles should translate into "strengthening democratic institutions" (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002) by free, fair and frequent elections, a representative legislature, some judiciary and media independence from the State, the guarantee of human rights, transparent and accountable institutions, local governments that possess decentralized authority, a civil society which sets priorities and defends "the needs of the most vulnerable people. The United Nations has considered "good" governance as an essential component global politics because "good" governance establishes a framework for fighting poverty, inequality, and many of humanities' other shortcomings. In sum, good public governance also underpins good corporate governance. Good public governance is the bedrock for stable and successful economies. The same underlying principles that are found in

public governance also apply in their standards for good corporate governance.

It is important to reiterate that democratic consolidation refers to an identifiable phase in the transition from authoritarian rule to civil rule and by extension, democratic systems that are germane and fundamental to the establishment and entronement of a stable, institutional and enduring democracy. Achieving democratic consolidation therefore calls for the entronement of democracy as a system of organizing both the society and government and thereafter creating concomitant institutions, culture, ethics, support system and the 'will' that are crucial in making it stable, efficient and responsive. Essentially, arriving at a consolidated democracy requires nurturing democratic values and ethos, principles and institutions in a matured sense that prevents a reversal to a hitherto authoritarian regime. It also rests upon strong and dynamic CSOs whose responsibility it is to check repeated abuses of power hold public officials accountable for their actions and inactions in the management of public resources and also serves to mitigate political conflicts (Diamond 1994). The CSOs are thus not an end in themselves but a means to an end. As noted by Diamond (1994, p.7), "a vibrant CSO is probably more essential for consolidating and maintaining democracy than for initiating it".

Threats to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

In spite of the progress made towards establishing a democratic culture, series of threats still abound against the democratic process in Nigeria. In the first place, there is no gainsaying the fact that violence as a recurring phenomenon is chief among the many vices associated with the democratic process in Nigeria. For instance, election-related violence can therefore not be taken out of context of the general prevalence of violence in societal life. Allegedly civil and uncivil interests often resort to violence to extract concessions from government and business concerns for group and personal benefits. As submitted by Adoke (2011), this has bred ethnic militia that has occasionally engineered other vices like kidnapping and ransoming, militancy and insurgency. The ease with which individuals and groups resort to violence to settle scores manifest in every facet of national life of which election-related violence is pronounced. Thus, electoral violence, which manifests through looting, arson and wanton destruction of lives and properties by aggrieved stakeholders and opportunists as well as members of political parties, constitutes serious threats to democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

More so, injustice in the distribution of State's resources among the diverse sections of the Nigerian State has given rise to countless uprisings, separatists groups, and threats of war, ceaseless cries of marginalization, and very recently kidnapping and ransoming. Some of the violent groups threatening democracy and the corporate existence of Nigeria include the Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani Herdsmen/marauders, Niger-Delta Avengers and militants, Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Independent People of Biafra (IPOD), among others. The failure of the constitutional mechanism to redress series of apparent injustices is at the root of most conflicts and violence across the nation, some of which manifest in militancy and insurrection by the ethnic militia (Babawale

and Odukoya, 2007). It can rightly be submitted that injustice in the distribution State power and other resources is at the root of political instability in Nigeria (Amadi and Vande, 2015).

Another threat to democratic consolidation is voter apathy. According to Ipinoyomi (2015), this has remained a recurring phenomenon in Nigerian elections. He posits that where less than 50% attendance is recorded in an election, any winner can still not boast because, those who chose to stay away can still turn the tide. Again, Falade (2014) concurs that there is low level of political participation among Nigerian citizens. Though voter apathy seems a global problem, the recurring voter apathy is increasingly becoming an attribute of this impasse. It is noteworthy that attendance is a crucial part of democracy as it connotes awareness, participation, freedom and fairness, and an unbiased result (at the end). If only a few people turn out to vote, the voice of the silent majority may be lost because, the small percentage of the electorates that may have come out to vote, may not truly represent the wishes of the entire people (Ipinoyomi, 2015). The impact of voter apathy on democratic consolidation is essentially in the negative regard. The table below clearly shows the voter turnout in Presidential elections since 1999.

Table 1: Voter Turnout in Presidential Elections since 1999

Election Year	Registered Voters	Votes	% Turnout
1999	57, 938, 945	30, 280, 052	52.26
2003	60, 823, 022	42, 018, 735	69.08
2007	61, 567, 036	35, 397, 517	57.49
2011	73, 528, 040	39, 469, 484	54.07
2015	67, 422, 005	29, 432, 083	43.65

Source: International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), 2015.

Again, a fraudulent and manipulated election is another obstacle to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. As Onuoha (2014) argues, the political elite in Nigeria have been in control of Nigerian politics since the introduction of electoral politics in Nigeria. As the class that even controls the Nigerian State, the elite is a force that uses State apparatus and its primitively accumulated financial resources to routinely corrupt the political and electoral process through electoral manipulation, intimidation, vote buying and rigging and to also pervert or buy justice (Amuwo, 2009). Consequently, Nigerian elections are often programmed to achieve pre-determined results. In spite of the progress made in the 2015 general elections, the process has a lot to be corrected.

Similarly, prebendalism, known in common parlance as “godfatherism” is another threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Many wealthy Nigerians play the role of godfathers and as Onuoha (2014) asserts, godfathers (the diabolical political elite) are immensely influential in the electoral process in Nigeria. They sponsor the formation of political parties and also determine who will be candidates at the elections. They determine the result of an election in advance and their dubious determination stands. In many cases, they subvert and purchase justice, where some

members of the judiciary are willing accomplices. Thus, there is no internal party democracy and when political parties themselves are not democratic but objects of imposition of the will of the few on the majority, such outfits cannot midwife, ensure or consolidate democracy.

Another major obstacle to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria is the problem of Parties without Ideologies. It is common knowledge in Nigeria that virtually all Nigeria's postcolonial governments to date have been thrust to power without a concise national ideology, let alone a popular and liberating one. Between 1999 and 2015 also, nothing has really changed. Consequently, where ideologies are lacking and political formations are bereft of identity, as in Nigeria, we are confronted with the efflorescence of several look-alike political parties, differentiated only by the fatness of the purse of their main sponsors and the unique mannerisms and idiosyncrasies of their leaders (Amuwo, 2009). Invariably, the electorate is left without options. Votes are canvassed and voting is done based on nothing. In this vein, election campaigns are reduced to disco sessions. In place of orators, the process produces inelegant speakers and abusers who have no ideologies to propagate.

The rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria is also a serious threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Fact Book (2014), the World Bank (2014) and the National Bureau of Statistics (2015), among others concur that the Nigerian population below the poverty line is over seventy (70) percent. Similarly, the World Bank Development Indicators reveal that by 2010, the poverty headcount ratio of national poverty lines in Nigeria was 46.0 percent. Suffice it to add that democracy presupposes the individual's right to economic decision to own the means of production and participate fully in economic activities. It means the right to have access to food, shelter, education, health care and benefits that contributes to good life in the society. In essence, it seeks to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of all and sundry. This is succinctly captured by Pogoso (2010, p. 2) that:

in its fullest sense, democracy is meaningless without economic, political and social rights. It means nothing to people who cannot eat properly, have a roof over their heads, find a job, send their children to school and have access to primary health care.

It is apt to submit that the ever rising rates of poverty, unemployment and inequality in Nigeria are serious threats to democratic consolidation. As to Ngara, Esebonu, Ogoh and Orokpo (2014) submit, the poverty situation in Nigeria since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 included a dimension of powerlessness. This is characterized by dependence on others, and a lack of voice and options. The implications of limited participation of the people in democracy removes such a system from the realm of true democracy and prevents it from engineering people's centred development as well as the loss of its essence and meaning. Such democratic regime can also easily transform or relapse into autocracy and dictatorship. Again, it important to note that political apathy arising from mass poverty in Nigeria has also

hindered and contributed to the stifling of the growth and development of vibrant civil societies as well as the cultivation and growth of democratic value and civic culture (Ngara, Esebonu, Ogoh and Orokpo, 2014).

Similarly, the 2015 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report notes that as the inequality in a country increases, the loss to human development also increases. While Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) for 2014 was 0.514, when the value was discounted for inequality, the HDI fell to 0.320; a loss of 37.8% due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices. This confirms that the level of inequality in Nigeria is generally very high and an impediment to democratic consolidation.

The foregoing discourse has indicated clearly the link between CSOs, good governance and democratic consolidation, arguing that for the government to perform its basic functions and ensure democratic consolidation, the CSOs must be a check on the government. However, there are a plethora of challenges that confront the CSOs towards asserting themselves and contributing to good governance and democratic stability in Nigeria. The nature and character of the CSOs is determined by the nature and character of the Nigerian State (Ogbonna, 2014 and Fadakinte, 2013). This explains to a large extent why the mode of operation of the CSOs in Nigeria is devoid of critical engagement, either in participation, that is, the willingness to take the risk of retaliation on repugnant State policies/actions, or in voicing dissent and criticism or even taking a strong opposing side on public policies that do not favour the ordinary citizens.

There is no gainsaying the fact therefore that the CSOs in Nigeria are very weak, very reactive, lacking in organisation and tactics and therefore do not possess that overbearing influence on government. Again, they possess very weak capacity for mobilisation and cannot sustain long period of protest. It is sad to note that most Nigerians do not know about the existence and relevance of CSOs and equally doubt the representative capacity of the CSOs, making them wonder on whether or not the CSOs can represent the society against the State. This is because on very critical issues the CSOs are found wanting in Nigeria. For example, the problems of corruption, poverty and glaring inequality in distributive justice which have reached a crisis level are enough a problem that the CSOs ought to have taken up with the State. More so, not much of the CSOs have voiced dissent on the obnoxious allowances and salaries collected by public officers and the overbearing cost of running government in Nigeria, even in the heart of harsh economic realities. Equally, the CSOs have largely remained silent over the strangulation of the third tier of government in Nigeria, therefore stifling decentralisation, democratisation and grassroots development. Even where some groups voice up, such groups are treated as dissidents or as sponsored by opposition elements to the powers that be. Examples can be seen in the posture and reaction of the Nigerian State to the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), among many other CSOs (Ukase and Audu, 2015, p.186).

Although many CSOs are mobilising and articulating the concerns of the masses, it is noteworthy that the CSOs in Nigeria are in a state of inertia. It is

unfortunate that CSOs in Nigeria has failed to understand the meaning of democracy and democratic consolidation, as a host of them assume that democracy means just civil rule. However, civil rule is not the same thing as democracy and electoral politics does not necessary translate into a democracy. The critical role of CSOs is thus to limit the State, that is, the promotion and defence of the constitution, rule of law, enhancement of the integrity and efficacy of the democratic institutions (Rooy, 2006). In a capitalist society, the market obviously dominates with its most cherished values being materialism and utilitarianism while other values that are critical to human development, such as spiritual, moral, social and intellectual are relegated. CSOs must always endeavour to promote the (relegated values).

In terms of ideology and philosophy most segments of the CSOs in Nigeria are lacking in this primary identity. The relevant goals cannot be achieved if activities of the CSOs are not guided by ideology and philosophy. In Nigeria, many CSOs are deficient in effectiveness and therefore are not able to play the role of key agents because of the challenges they face. For example, the trade unions and student union organisations which are expected to be active and agile and even militant are highly vulnerable to cooptation by the State (politics). There are many examples where many vocal voices among the CSOs became part of government. A good example is Mr. Adams Oshiomhole, the former President of the Nigerian Labour Congress, who became a State Governor. His deputy in office, Mr. Joseph Akinlaja became a member of the House of Representatives. Again, the former Minister of Information and gubernatorial contender in Nasarawa State, Mr. Labaran Maku was a student union leader at the University of Jos, Mr. Frank Nweke, a former Minister of Information was also a student union leader at the University of Ibadan, while the former Minister of Interior, Mr. Aba Moro was a leading comrade and the General Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees. Similarly, Dr. Reuben Abati, who was the chairman of the editorial board of the Guardian Newspapers and the anchor person for the *Pattito Gang*, a popular television programme of public opinion, left that and became a Special Adviser on Media to the former President Goodluck Jonathan. More so, Mr. Segun Adeniyi, a fearless columnist in the ThisDay Newspapers served as Special Adviser on Media to late President Umaru Yar'Adua. Not only that, Dr. Patrick Utomi, who established a civil society organization, *Value for Leadership*, contested the presidential elections in 2003 and 2007 but lost on both occasions. There are countless instances where prominent figures in the CSOs abandoned that role and joined government. CSOs therefore have no sustained or sincere leadership. It seems most of its leadership and vocal figures use the CSOs as platforms to make noise to be heard, achieve popularity and join the political terrain and be.

Furthermore, the CSOs in Nigeria lack the patience, skill and potency to engage the State with potent discussions, public debates, media pressure and combine these with peaceful protests. This is because, it has been argued that protests can serve as a dialogical medium between the State and CSOs when conventional democratic institutions are discredited or do not function properly (Chambers and Kopstein, 2008). It is an unfortunate fact that the CSOs in Nigeria are only heard or

seen when there is an increase in the price of petroleum products or there are issues that have to do with salaries and wages of civil servants. Until then, the CSOs do not see anything wrong with the rate of poverty, unemployment, inequalities, a weird federal structure and fiscal federalism, the strangulation of the local government, the nature of the Nigerian roads, decaying infrastructure, among so many others ills and neglects by the State. More so, how can the CSOs remain silent when elected public officers like State Governors and Members of States and National Assemblies approve pension for themselves, even if a member serves for only one term of four years. All this should be enough of failures, inefficiency and poor performance of the State to make the CSOs to mobilise the citizens and demand for improvements in social service delivery. The CSOs should not only come alive and visible when the government increases the price of petroleum products.

Another pronounced challenge of the CSOs in Nigeria is the allegation that CSOs often lack competent administrators and technicians, or financial and material resources. From the modus operandi of CSOs in Nigeria, it is obvious that a great many of them are small, localized, and uncoordinated hence they can hardly key into State and national development policies. With a very weak organizational structure and porous financial base, the CSOs find it difficult to engage in effective advocacy work.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the aforementioned challenges and weaknesses of CSOs in Nigeria have undermined the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. The injustices in the distribution of values, resulting to massive and abject poverty and powerlessness in Nigeria are a serious infraction on the democratic ethos; for true and sustainable democracy cannot exist in the midst of harsh economic realities. It is also noteworthy that the problems of funding, corruption, inability to access information, lack of coordination (Ukase and Audu, 2015, p.186) and desired philosophy and leadership characterising the CSOs are serious factors that have weakened and hampered the CSOs to operate and consolidate their positions against an authoritarian and overbearing State. Invariably, these factors adversely affect good governance and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

It is clear that CSOs have been widely recognised as essential structures and force in democratic societies, as their strength can have a positive influence on the State and the market. However, it is not an exaggeration to say that CSOs are weak and ineffective in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa. The major reason for this unfortunate development is the weak democratic culture on the continent, explainable on the nature and character of the post-colonial Nigerian State. It is noteworthy that the many years of military and even civilian authoritarianism have been a major undoing to the formation and growth of CSOs and democratic culture in Nigeria. Hence, the existing relationship between the State and CSOs in Nigeria is still that of confrontation rather than accommodation, of competition rather than partnership. The media, for instance, is largely perceived as an enemy rather than a socially responsive watchdog even under the democratic political dispensation.

Thus, the process of democratisation has had a tortuous journey in Nigeria and the role of the CSOs to midwife democracy in Nigeria has not been in doubt. The CSOs has therefore occupied a central role in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy and more so towards democratic consolidation. It is obvious that the CSOs have an undeniable role to play in modern democracy but because of their confrontational posturing, public office holders find it difficult to dialogue with them. It is pertinent for the CSOs to realise and accept the fact that partnership is a more useful tool in their dealings with government. Indeed unlearning absolutism and militarism and learning cooperation and consultation are the major challenges in this regard.

It is therefore recommended therefore that given the need for a local funding base for the CSOs activities in Nigeria, the right to access to public funding for charitable purposes should be guaranteed by law. Such public funding should however be established within a politically neutral administrative framework, with well-defined criteria and procedures for accessing it.

Again, there is a need for a well-structured institutional arrangement for partnership between the CSOs and governmental agencies. Such arrangements should make it easy for the CSOs and other citizens-based groups to partner with government in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring with the ultimate goal of promoting transparency and accountability.

There is also the knotty challenge of the federal structure, revenue allocation and distributive justice in Nigeria. The conflicts generated by the operation of the federal structure have always driven the country to the precipice. The CSOs can redouble their struggle and call for decentralisation and devolution of powers in the Nigerian federalism.

For the CSOs in Nigeria to mature, flourish and assert themselves, they need partnership and cooperation with their counter-parts in the advanced democracies. This partnership and cooperation will encourage capacity building for the CSOs and definitely contribute to good governance and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Again, the CSOs should seek to understand, aggregate and articulate the needs of the citizenry and constructively engaged the State for the sake of good governance. Where the State and its powerful and overzealous operators are not kept in check, the benefits of social cooperation will be cornered by a few to the detriment of the masses.

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