

Civil Society And Democratic Governance In Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Historical Reflection

By

Abah, Danladi

Department of History, Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria

&

Adihikon Tanko

Department of History & Diplomatic Studies, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

Abstract

Civil society groups in Nigeria have been indispensable actors in the democratization process especially since the return to civil rule in 1999. As agents of social change germane for mass re-orientation and mobilization, they have helped in the sustenance and deepening of democratic governance by providing the critical socio-economic and political services to Nigerians in both urban and rural areas. However, in spite of the ubiquitous nature of civil society in contemporary Nigeria's democratic governance, there still exist, immense lacunae in the nation's current democratic governance. The democratic system in Nigeria is riddled with corruption, bribery, human rights abuses, electoral frauds, *godfatherism*, violence, economic injustice and the rise in ethnic militia movements that tend to make mockery of Nigeria claim to democratic governance. Thus, this paper examines civil society and democratic governance in Nigeria's fourth republic from the caboose of history. It interrogates and illuminates the changes and continuities in the activities of civil society groups as it impinge on the pursuit of, and delivery of the dividends of democracy to Nigerians. The paper discovers that the dynamics inherent in the Nigeria state and its brand of democracy tends to stymied, and inhibit the growth and effective functioning of civil society. This unsavory scenario has snowballed in the lamentable decline in the roles of civil society in contemporary democratic governance in Nigeria. The study also posits tentative recommendation on how to strengthen and reposition civil society and democratic governance in Nigeria's fourth republic. The social contact theory is adopted as framework of analysis while interdisciplinary approach to historical research is also adopted. Oral interview of civil society groups, experts and 'ordinary' Nigerians were done and critically analyzed and integrated with extant literature to address the problems of this paper

Keyword: civil society, democracy, governance, democratic governance, Nigeria

Introduction

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 (Keane 1989, Ikelegbe 2013:2). Besides, civil society has become important agents for engendering good democratic governance through the promotion of accountability, transparency, rule of law, curtailment of human rights abuses, and capitalist exploitation. Civil society is seen as the cumulus of voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, and autonomous associations different from the state, business and family and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules that is open to the public (Woods:1992). It is known as the third sector because it serves as a vibrant social intermediary between the state, business and family. Civil society in Africa and Nigeria in particular is a recent phenomenon that characterized the recent ascendancy of neoliberal democratic institution (Harbeson: 1993). According to Ikelegbe, civil society provides the oil that lubricates the relationship between the government, 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).

Democracy is about effective and efficient representation and delivery of the dividends of good governance to the masses (Diamond 1992, Aiyede 2003). Civil society is 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 (Bayart 1980, Ikelegbe 2007, Hearn 2001). Coupled with this is the poverty of democracy in Africa which is manifest in the rising profiles of poverty, dictatorship, human rights abuses, hunger, insecurity, endemic corruption and bribery, environmental degradation, diseases, illiteracy, gender violence and underdevelopment (Abutudu 1995)

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.

This paper is therefore, an attempt to examine civil society and democratic governance in Nigeria's fourth republic from historical perspective. What we set to achieve is to assess the extent to which civil society in Africa's most populous country-Nigeria, has been able to stimulate the entrenchment of good governance since the return to democratic rule in 1999. The paper notes that although, civil society played immense role in agitation for military exit in Nigerian politics, they have not done enough to nurture the democracy since 1999. Civil society organizations in contemporary Nigeria seem to have gone to *slumber*. The sporadic cases of election riggings, stuffing and snatching of ballot papers and boxes, corruption, unbridled executive recklessness, project abandonment, neglect of rural women and incessant hikes in prices of petroleum and school fees leading to increased school dropout, kidnapping and general social and economic insecurity are rife and rapidly on the increase in Nigeria while civil society watches and remain hapless. What is the state of civil society organizations in the contemporary democratic governance in Nigeria? How can civil society in Nigeria be reposition to play more active role in democratic governance in the contemporary fourth republic? This paper is divided into four sections. Section one is the introduction, section two examines some conceptual and theoretical issues, section three takes a cursory look at the history of civil society in Nigeria in the fourth republic while section four provides a historical reflection on civil society and democratic governance in Nigeria since 1999 and a conclusion.

Conceptual and Theoretical Clarifications

Civil society as a social science term is not amenable to a straight-jacket definition. Historically, scholars and philosophers have used the term civil society in different contexts to mean different thing over the years (CIVICUS 20007). However, attempt is made to apprise some of the conceptualizations of the term and establish a working definition in this paper.

In the classical era, the term civil society was used to mean a regime that was committed to secure the rule of law for the common good on behalf of people. common good meant the provision of basic rights, public safety, education for all, and basic infrastructure like roads, electricity, pipe borne water, hospitals among others. In this perspective, civil society was viewed

as a good society where democratic dividends are delivered to the populace. Civil society is not the same thing as society, *chandhoke* clearly distinguished between both when he stated that while society stands for the entire social practices and interactions, both public (government) and private governed (private), which mark a collectivity, civil society is the public spheres of the society, the mediation level between public and private or between individual experiences and public articulations (CIVICUS 2007).

Civil society according to Chukwuma, (2005) is defined as a set of institutions, organization and behavior situated between the state, business world and family. These include non-governmental organization, private voluntary organization, people's organizations, civic organization, community based organization, cultural, gender, religious, and social organizations. 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.

Besides, civil society is also defined as the arena outside of the family, the state and the market where people associate to advance common interest. The essence of civil society is advance the interest of a group of people with a common socio-economic, political or cultural interest with the objective of not to capture political power or make profits but to provide and advance the course of good governance and common good of its members (Ghaus-Pasha 2004). To Tocqueville, civil society refers to associational activity that that occurs in political space outside the state, an ideology that gained renewed momentum in the 1980 and 1990s as organizations and activists struggled to challenge dictatorships and illiberal regimes.

Uwan and Yearoo (2009) civil society is defined as the set of institutions and organizations that interface between the state, business world and the family. They further argued that civil society is the arena of un-coerced collective actions around shared interest, values. In theory the institutions are different from the state, business and family world though in practice, the boundary between the state, family, market and civil society are often complex, blurred and negotiated. They

identified civil society to include Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs), people's organizations, community based organizations (CBOs), civic clubs, and trade unions.

Civil society is therefore, in this paper taken to mean the third sector, the collectivity of associational groups that is different the state, business and family that is geared towards the promotion of group goals and objectives. Civil society provides the necessary social lubricants that interface between the government and the citizens especially in the promotion of good democratic governance. Their responsibilities are clearly defined and cut across social, political, economic and cultural matrix of human society.

Democracy

Democracy is a buzz word that lacks a generally acceptable definition globally; this even partly, explains why some autocratic regimes have branded themselves to be democratic. Democracy is in fact, the most promiscuous word in world affairs and public discourse. According to a former American president, Abraham Lincoln (1863), democracy is defined as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Democracy is about the sovereignty of the people, effective representation of the people, accountability, and rule of law, free and fair periodic elections, and provisions of basic infrastructure, social security, and transparency in management of common wealth.

Fadakinte (2013) democracy is a form of government by mean of which citizens, through free and open institutional arrangements are empowered to choose and remove leaders in a competitive struggle for peoples' vote. Diamond (1999) avers that Liberal Democracy is a representative kind of governance in which qualified adult members of a given society elect their representatives through a periodic free and fair election. Democracy has recently become one of the fastest growing forms of government because of its ineluctable drive towards human freedom. It entrenches unlimited freedom and rule of law. Ideally, as a result of this, civil society is a symbol of true democracy.

Governance is defined as the process of exercising state power especially in the management and administration of state affairs by people entrusted with state authority (Fadakinte 2013) Democratic governance represents an articulate modus operandi of how political leadership is

engaged in policy making in determining how power is exercised to embody transparency, accountability and rational and prudent resources management. Governance is also a process of exercising power, a process of utilizing authority and appropriating state resources for the benefits and welfare of the masses. It is a cumulus of interrelated processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their rights, exercise their rights, and meet their obligations and mediate their differences. In this perspective, governance could either be adjudged good or bad. Good governance is sine qua non with democratic governance; bad governance had been linked with autocratic regimes.

In this paper therefore, governance is used synonymously with good governance to mean the strict adherence to the tenets of constitution by a democratic nation in its relation with the citizens and in exercise of state power and authority in the management and administration of state affairs. Thus, it is about credible election, transparency, accountability, equity, rule of law, equity, justice, freedom of speech, among others.

Theoretical issues

Liberal theory of civil society holds that the existence of civil society is highly imperative in a democratic society because it promotes freedom, equality, tolerance, accountability and progress. Liberalism is a negation to autocratic ideology and is sine qua non to democracy. As a political ideology, liberalism espouses citizen's freedom of association, expression, thought among others (Fadakinte 2013).

To the liberals, civil society is crucial in any democratic nation, especially in a multi-ethnic society because it promotes unrestricted freedom, tolerance, and equity, freedom of expression and association which is germane for building a violent free democratic society. By providing guidelines and legal provisions for openness and freedom, citizens are better informed and empowered to participate in governance. The survival of these liberal tenets inhibits the emergence of dictators and attenuates democratic culture. Within the above perspectives, civil society stands as an alternative way to aggregating social, political and economic forces outside the state which help to monitor, observe and gauge government policies and programs on the citizens and to articulate the views and interests of people outside the arena of political corridor to the government.

Liberalism which emerged with the fall of feudalism and communism and the triumph of capitalism is contemporarily being vanguarded by liberal institutions like the United Nations Organizations,(UNO), International Monetary Fund, (IMF), World Bank(WB) African Union,(AU) among others. These agencies believe that the existence of civil society helps to deepen democracy by promoting accountability, transparency and prudence in governance. In fact, western donor organizations like IMF and WB have made the establishment and promotion of virile civil society as a prerequisite for granting foreign development assistance to developing countries of Africa and Asia.

Social Contract theory

Social contract theory is a philosophical postulation which hinges on the ideological plank that the state is a product of the peoples' will who voluntarily surrendered their will to the state under a legally binding contractual agreement with the notion that the state will in turn provide certain fundamental goods and services to the citizens. The history of social contract theory in modern political parlance is rooted in the writings of earliest political philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, Jean Jacques Rousseau, among others. These crop of scholars opine that the modern state is a product of a covenant, a compact and social organic contracted element with apparatus of state power and authority. The logic import of this theory is that the people, by whose contrivance, government was instituted, ought to determine how they should be governed. The constitution of the state is supreme and therefore is the constitution of the people germane for the promotion of democracy and good governance.

Democratically, the terms and conditions of the social contract are equally specified in the constitution which is the modus operandi for citizen- government relations. Basically, the state is to provide security, accountability, good leadership, social and economic welfare services, promote effective and efficient justice distribution, curtail discrimination, provide political orientation through civic education, promote and protect fundamental human rights and freedom of speech among others. On the other hand, the citizens are expected to obey the constitution by maintaining law and order, respect constituted authority, vote during elections, and protect state infrastructure. In this perspective, Tocqueville (1969) argued that democratic laws when obeyed, generally tend to "promote the welfare of the greatest possible number; for they emanate from the majority of the citizens, who although are subject to error cannot have an interest opposed to their

own advantage” Tocqueville’s view demonstrates how civil society enhance democratic consolidation.

Within the context of the social contract theory, civil society acts as a watchdog between the state and the citizens in keeping to the terms of the social contract. Civil society organizations are therefore seen as the third sector because they stand in between the state, business and family. Besides, with the exercise and location of all powers and authority with state, a third party is needed to ensure that there is accountability and respect for the constitution. This ultimately helps to curtail the emergence of dictatorial or authoritarian regimes and further promote democracy and good governance germane for the welfare of all the people.

It is within this theoretical plank that this study adopts this theory in this study. The reasons for adopting this theory is because it will help explain the changes and continuities in civil society and democratic governance trails in Nigeria by laying bare the ideological trajectories of the Nigerian state and the extent to which the third sector had since the emergence of the fourth republic performed its responsibilities within the ambits of the law. For a holistic analysis, remarks to other theories are also made where necessary

The Emergence of Civil Society in Nigeria

There is acute paucity of literature, especially quantitative and statistical data on the growth and development of civil society organization in Nigeria since independence. However, in this study, attempt is made to identify and chronicle the major changes and continuities in civil society organizations development in various political phases of Nigerian history. As a result of this, we briefly reflected on civil society during the colonial era and focused more on how successive post-independence civilian and military administration and regimes policies and programs impinged on civil society organizations and interrogated the commitments of civil society to national development.

The emergence of civil society particularly in the democratic process is a twentieth century social phenomenon in Nigeria.(Aiyede 2003) Although some scholars have argued that civil society existed in pre-colonial Nigeria, it remains unknown how and what roles they played in pre-colonial development especially with regards to slavery and traditional dictatorship. According to Rodney, European colonialism was a watershed in the annals of African history. It provided vent

that gave fillip to the growth of social consciousness among Africans which in turn culminated to the formation of associational groups that served as watchdog to the colonial government. (Ikelegbe, 2008:33) During the colonial epoch in Nigeria, associational groups like the Nigerian Student Association (NAN), Egbe Omo Oduduwa, Jamatu Arewa, Nigeria Trade and Labour Unions, Tin Miners Association of Nigeria, Association of Nigerian Coal Workers, Muslim and Christian (Faith based) organizations helped to stimulate and galvanize collective force that laid the foundation for civil society in Nigeria. Ikelegbe(2013:34) surmised thus

With colonialism, new social exchange, modernism and attendant social dislocations provided a new platform of consciousness and agitation which catalyzed the formation of communal, traditional, cultural and other groups. The nationalist movement and decolonization period is regarded as the initial golden age of civil society

With the granting of independence to Nigeria by Great Britain on the 1st October 1960, the emergent political leaders attempted, as expected of any democratic state, to deepen the growth and development of democratic culture by providing a virile space for the existence of civil society organizations but the efforts of the post-independent leaders were scuttled by Military intervention in Nigerian politics in 1966.

Thus, from 1966 to 1979, Nigeria was under successive military regimes that were highly dictatorial and anti-civil society (Carl LeVan: 2009). Although very few existed during this era, they were very vocal and confrontational despite military intimidation. With support from international civil society organizations, many local civil society organizations in Nigeria began to agitate for the return to civilian rule (Ikelegbe 2001) Members of civil society groups organized mass campaigns and encouraged strike actions. With their support, the then military head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo, returned Nigeria to a democratic government following the election of Alhaji Shehu Shagari as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in late 1979. Shagari's administration also known as the Second Republic (1979-1983) was characterized by the resurgence and proliferation of civil society organizations. CSO helped to expose some corrupt politicians while others were engaged in mass socio-political mobilization. In spite of the success of democratization processes in Nigeria during President Shehu Shagari's administration, the military in a coup d'état led by General Muhammad Buhari, again struck on the 31st December 1983 thereby terminating the second republic.

Buhari hurriedly banned all political parties and associations including public gatherings, jailed some politicians and human activists and stymied press freedom. Unfortunately, Buhari regime only lasted for less than three years as General Ibrahim B. Babangida toppled him in 1985. General Ibrahim Babangida's regime marked a turning in the history of civil society movement in Nigeria for several reasons which shall be poignantly adumbrated. Firstly, the military regime of Ibrahim B. Babangida (1985-1993) was the longest lasting military regime, ever in the history of post-colonial Nigeria. This unsavoury scenario created immense challenge for the growth and development of civil society. Through military fiat, Babangida banned all kinds of political or public gatherings, imprisoned human rights activists and civil society advocates. For instance, members of the Nigerian Labour Congress, (NLC) shortly after their nationwide protest of December 1987 had many of its union leaders imprisoned. Members of the Nigerian Medical Association, (NMA), Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) faced similar threats and attacks. Besides, the regime adoption of the neoliberal economic policies of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) as recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank heightened the economic and social woes of Nigerians and this increased the tempo of civil society activism as many associations rose to challenge this opprobrious economic policies. In fact, the policies of SAP culminated to the retrenchment and massive unemployment in country coupled with astronomic rise in prices of basic food items in the midst of a depreciated national currency value (Lee 2007, Abutudu, 1995)

Another corollary issue to the above was the anti-democratic posture of Ibrahim Babangida, particularly in his lack of interest in the transition process. Although he did set up the transition machinery, he oscillated between dictatorship and democracy. This reached its apogee with the annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential election that was described by both local and international observers as the fairest and freest election ever conducted in Africa and was proclaimed to have been won by a Yoruba business mogul, MKO Mushood Abiola. (Fatton 1995, Osaghae 1997, Diamond 1999). In addition, Babangida suspended all judicial deliberations relating to the election results and abolished the electoral commission. This act of autocracy was condemned by all civil society and prodemocracy groups in Nigeria. Consequently, civil society organizations organized massive nation-wide protests which almost brought the country to a standstill. He setup a public bureau to work in collaboration with few Civil society organizations to tour the country and gather the opinion and inputs of Nigerians on the Structural Adjustment

Program. At the end of the nationwide tour and consultation, over 27,000 suggestions were gathered. The regime also created the Directorate of social mobilization (DSM), Directorate for Mass Mobilization, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) and a Public Complaint Commission (PCC) these institutions were saddled with the responsibility of civic education and mass mobilization, economic and social justice, and aggregation of public complains. These institutional mechanisms were created as a response to the effervescing and dogged confrontational approach of the civil society groups.

Arising from the economic and social hardships of the 1980s associated with the SAP, wives of military and paramilitary agencies in Nigeria began to form associational groups to assist their members especially those in need. In this perspective, the Nigerian Army officers wives Association, Nigerian Navy Officers Wives Association, Nigerian Police Officers Wives Association, Prison officers wives Association and others. Although these associations did help in providing economic welfare services to their members, they failed to advocate for democratization. In collaboration with the Association for Better Nigeria,(ABN), a front organization formed by IBB allies, they criticized the electoral commission and MKO Abiola, the acclaimed winner of the June 12 1993 presidential election and advocated for the outright cancellation of the election results.

By 1989, two vocal human rights civil society organizations were formed. These include the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) formed with the mandate to free political prisoners and Civil liberties organization (CLO) saddled with the responsibilities of human rights protection, judicial freedom and advancement of the rule of law. CLO and CDHR treated cases of people detained through opprobrious military decrees. In 1990 following increased commitments and public pronouncements of General Babangida to organize election and return the nation to civil rule, CDHR and CLO merged to form the Campaign for Democracy (CD) with the mission to articulate holistic political agenda that will end military rule, organize protests that will end SAP and to champion a common course for all civil society groups in the country through mass mobilization.

Retrospectively, the Campaign for Democracy (CD) immensely provided the final push that led to the ultimate “stepping aside” of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1993. However, the exit of the military did not bring the desired succor that civil society groups had clamoured for. This was

because he refused to hand over power to the presumed winner of the June 12 1993 presidential election but instead for a kangaroo Interim National Government(ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan. The formation of an ING angered many prodemocracy groups and many went to court to challenge the legitimacy of the ING. This led to the ruling of a federal high court in Lagos that declared the Shonekan Led ING as illegal and declared that the mandate of Abiola should be validated. Unfortunately, this never came to fruition as General Sani Abacha, the only military member of, and secretary to the ING usurped power from chief Ernest Shonekan after three months and returned the country to another era of horrendous military dictatorship characterized with hallucination of civil society organizations, arrests, imprisonment and hanging of human rights and prodemocracy activists.

During the military regime of late General Sani Abacha, in Nigeria, (1993-1998), the National Democratic Coalition, (NADECO) was an amalgamation of principal civil society and prodemocracy groups that organized massive protests to defend the democratic transition program.

Categorization of Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria

Different types of civil society organizations (CSOs) exist in contemporary Nigeria. Although establishing quantitatively, the exact number of CSOs in modern Nigeria is difficult due to their diverse nature and paucity of data. However, as Ikelegbe argued, it is easy to categorize and dimension the various CSOs in Nigeria using some criteria (Ikelegbe 2013).

Ikelegbe categorized CSOs in Nigeria into five. These include; primary or primordial groups, secondary associations, grass-root organizations, issued based groups and Non-governmental Organization. Primary or primordial groups are usually socio-cultural, ethnic, and religious and ethnic based. Examples of associations within this group are Afenifere, Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, Arewa Consultative Forum and Ijaw Youth Movement. The era of military dictatorship in Nigeria, they helped to mobilize its people and take a decision on a given state policy (Ikelegbe 2013).

The secondary or middle level associations are socio-economic, professionally and labour based groups. Also inclusive in this category are business groups including the organized private sector associations. Specific examples include Manufacturer Association of Nigeria (MAN), National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), and Women in Nigeria (WIN), Market Women Association of Nigeria (MWAN), and Women Advancement Forum (WAF). In

addition, the numerous professional associations like Nigeria Medical Association, Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Trade Union Congress (TUC) Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), and Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) also fall under the secondary or middle level CSOs in Nigeria (Ikelegbe 2013). Grass-root based CSOs include community based organizations (CBO), Community Development Association (CDA) and Age grades associations. Ikelegbe also noted that also include diverse local associations of survival, recreation, development support and mutual support groups. Issue based groups on the other hand comprise advocacy groups, gender, youth empowerment, environmental groups and rights associations. Examples of CSOs within this category are; Society for women and AIDS in Africa (SWAAN), Journalist against Aid (JAAIDS).

The most diverse and complex strand of CSOs in Nigeria is the Non-governmental Organization (NGO) sector. With over 10,000 in the 1990s, it has leapfrogged to over 30,000 in the fourth republic. NGOs can be sub-categorized into advocacy organizations, public awareness and communications organizations, social service and Welfare organizations, human capital development, action research, humanitarian assistance and peace building groups. Examples of groups within this arena in Nigeria include; Academic Associate for Peace work, peace and Development organization, women health research centre, Environmental Right Project, Campaign for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR)

Civil Society and Democratic Governance: The Nexus

Civil society is *sine qua non* with liberal democracy. As a social force, civil society organizations have multiplicity of role to play within any democratic society. Gaus-Pash(2004) argued that civil society help to deepen good governance by providing certain basic services which the state and private sector may be unable to provide. These she identified as advocacy, mass mobilization, monitoring of state performance and accountability. Aisha further observed virile civil society promote good democratic governance through:

public policy and advocacy, regulation and monitoring of state performance and the action and behavior of public officials; third, by building social capital and enabling citizens to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms, and democratic practices , ...by mobilizing particular constituencies especially the vulnerable and marginalized section

of masses, to participate more fully in politics and public affairs,..By development work to improve the wellbeing of their own and other communities (Gaus-Pash 2004)

Civil society organizations in a democratic society are expected to engage in the design, monitoring and implementation of public projects and budgeting.(Osaghae 1997,Diamond 1999) As a third sector, they are critical lubricants and observers in state articulation of state budgets by ensuring that such budgets either at the federal, state and local levels are people-oriented and gendered. The essence of this is to also ensure that the implementation of national budgets are transparent while advocacy to agencies and ministries in which capital and recurrent expenditures are budgeted for are judiciously utilized. Within the ambit of rule of law, civil society organizations are to discover and make public, cases of corruption by people entrusted with government authority in budget implementation and to also advise government appropriately in budget designs at the initial stage. Through consistent advocacy and monitoring of actions and behavior of public officials, civil society organizations deepen the growth and consolidation of democratic culture by nipping in the bud bureaucratic red tapes which often culminate to waste of state resources and unscrupulous attitudes of public officers. Besides, through this means, efficiency in democratic governance is maintained.

Democracy is about equality and elimination of discriminations irrespective of race, class or ethno-religious or cultural affiliations. In this perspective, Ikelegbe (2007) asserts that civil society organizations ensure that there is adequate constitutional provisions that promote equity and to also monitor and advocate for its implementation and practice in a democratic nation. It is expected that civil society stimulate good democratic governance by promoting equity in all ramifications especially by reporting cases of discriminations to the public. Furthermore, they help to reform victims of racial, ethnic or cultural discriminations by rendering instant psychological and socio-economic stop-gap measures. For instance, civil society organizations are critical in protecting victim of genocidal attacks in Rwanda in 1994 and in Nigeria during the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970. In these cases, Civil Society Organizations helped to provide victims with relief materials such as beds, food items, toiletries, water, and medical support among others. In fact, Lee (2007) government the post-civil war policies of reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation in Nigeria were greatly carried out by civil society organizations.

Fukuyama(2011) avers that Civil society is a cognomen for liberal democracy because it promotes the building of social capital. Social capital is another great component of civil society which has globally been acknowledged as been critical and imperative in promotion of cooperation, trust, friendship and solidarity among members. Fukuyama observed that social capital is that common spirit of unity, trust, love and camaraderie usually associated and built by members of a civil society over a period of time.

Besides, members of civil society provide a virile platform for galvanizing group trust through consensus building and value cum interest distribution. Fukuyama, Diamond, Bratton and Gaus-Pash, have poignantly articulated in their respective studies how associational groups outside state control enhance the development of common trust, identity and spirit de corps kind of attitudes that of douse conflicts and eliminate discrimination and injustice which usually stimulate intra and inter group hostilities and reduce democratic consolidation especially in a pluralistic society.

Human development, economic transformation, and equitable allocation of public projects to reflect the national character of the federating units in a pluralistic democratic society have become contentious issues in emerging democracies in Africa and Asia. Piqued by poverty and feeling of injustice, people in some parts of Nigeria, for instance, had resorted to violence confrontations often leading to loss of lives and destruction of government projects. Therefore, civil society organizations provide preemptive cushion that neutralizes tendencies of injustice in the distribution of national projects like Federal school, National stadia, companies and other state treasures by advocating and setting parameters for the location of state projects to reflect equity and fairness especially in the minds of the people of the federating units or constituent groups.

Mercy (2012) in her study poignantly identified the interconnecting web between civil society and democratic governance which help to promote overall development in a civil state. Specifically, she averred that civil society enhance the sustenance and consolidation of participatory governance through:

voter education, election observation, campaign finance monitoring, election tribunal monitoring, electoral reform advocacy, conflict mitigation, access to justice, public interest litigation, budget tracking, constituency outreaches, as well as research and documentation in thematic areas of democracy and governance

Civil society as the third sector with membership across different facets of the society and associational group no doubt represent recipe for good democratic governance. As agents of social change, they are ready-made mechanism for curtailing and monitoring executive recklessness and abuse of public thrust.

Civil Society and Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: An Appraisal

Primarily, the role of civil society in democratic governance as highlighted by scholars revolve round advocacy, civic engagement, sensitization, election monitoring, media watch, budget tracking, provision of socio-economic services, legislative advocacy, promotion of inter and intra ethnic peace, among others(Baryart,1986,Osaghae 1997, Diamond 1999, Mercy 2012, Fadakinte 2013. This section identifies some civil society groups in the fourth republic and their roles and also examines some of the threats to Nigeria democracy even in the midst of the proliferation of civil society.

Civil society organizations in Nigeria have since 1999 tried to advocate for the delivery of certain basic dividends of democracy to the citizens. Through public protests, consultations and media research, CSOs monitor the performances of elected representatives and demands response from them on certain national or local development issues (Mercy 2012). For instance, since 1999, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) has played immense roles in civic engagements, research and documentations. Also, it has organized seminars and symposium for elected representatives, political parties and members of the public on several issues bordering on democracy and development. The staffs of CDD also joined other civil society organizations in the December 2012 fuel subsidy snafu protests in Nigeria. Founded in 1999 in Nigeria with offices in Abuja and Lagos, it has advocated for transparency, accountability and equity in democratic governance in Nigeria. However, due to the diverse and populous nature of Nigeria comprising 170 million people with about 250 ethnic groups speaking nearly 400 different languages, reaching out to the larger rural dwellers by this organization is very difficult.

In addition, the Save Nigeria Group founded by Pastor Tunde Bakare of Latter Rain Church has helped to demand for strict adherence to constitutionalism in Nigeria. For instance, following the protracted illness and subsequent death of President Umaru Musa Ya'adua in 2009, the group through public demonstration in Lagos agitated for the immediate confirmation of the then Vice

President, Goodluck Jonathan to be confirmed as acting president following the inability of the sick president to perform his duties. Similarly in 2012, the Save Nigerian Group demonstrated openly against the removal fuel subsidy in Nigeria. The group with other civil society groups like the Occupy Nigeria Group (ONG), Citizens for Good Governance (CGG), Arise for Change (AFC) and Women Arise for Change Initiatives (WACI) joined in one of the largest demonstrations in Lagos since June 12, 1993 to demand for an end to the removal of fuel subsidy by the Nigerian Government. They demanded for the revival of the nation's moribund refineries and the fight against corruption especially in the oil sector (Smith 2015).

Civil society sector in Nigeria has also helped in the provision of basic economic and social services to Nigerians in both urban and rural areas. They provide soft loans and agricultural incentives to members of the public, provide employment opportunities and basic social amenities like schools, clinics, pipe borne water and other essential services (Shedrack 2015, Mercy 2012). In Makurdi, the Benue State capital for instance, the Women In Nigeria (WIN) provides soft loans to women (Smith 2015). WIN also provide business seminars and symposium to business women in Makurdi on how to grow their businesses and to access loans. In Kogi State, North central Nigeria for instance, Some CSOs like the Akpanya Welfare Association (AWA), Justice, Peace and Development Mission (JPDM) helped to build and renovate schools, Markets and Primary health centres (PE Okwoli, 2015).

In the areas of elections, civil society has helped to promote and advocate for a free fair and credible elections in Nigeria since 1999. In the build up to the April 2015 elections in Nigeria, the civil society sector was involved in all the stages of preparations, voting and collations, declarations of election results. According to Ikechukwu, *A situation Room*, a coalition of 60 local civil society organizations were involved in the minute by minute observation and monitoring and analysis of trends and events of the 2015 Presidential election. Following the challenges that besieged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the Presidential election in some parts of Nigeria, the *Situation Room* noted thus;

...is unacceptable, the inability of INEC to deploy its officials and election materials on time to allow for timely commencement of polls...officials and materials did not reach significant number of poll opening. This delayed accreditation and voting and led to continuation of poll till late into light in many places...situation room wishes to draw urgent attention to three critical areas of challenges, namely;(1) late commencement of elections;

(2) challenges with accreditation process; (3) performance of security agencies and use of social media(Ikechukwu 2015:9)

Through this process of critical criticism and identifications, civil society helps to deepen democratization processes. However, one of the major defects with civil society in Nigeria democracy is their elitist nature. Most of the CSOs with interest in governance or democracy issue are usually located in urban centres while the few in rural areas lack the necessary financial and administrative savvy to entrench and promote good governance.

Inability of elected representatives to deliver on campaign promises despite receiving jumbo salaries and allowances. For instance, in 2013, the former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Sanusi Lamido lamented that Nigeria spent over 25% of its annual budget on the National Assembly alone while the majority of the citizens lived in abject poverty(Fadakinte, 2012). Besides, the number of bills that had been passed by the National Assembly in Nigeria since 1999 up to 2015 is not in any way commensurate with the salaries and allowances spent on them.

Corruption which has been defined as the abuse of public office for private gain; dishonesty for personal gain, dishonest for exploitation of power for personal gain, depravity and extreme immorality and also as the manipulation of conditions to attain exclusive benefits to individuals or groups at the cost of social benefits is rife in Nigeria fourth republic democracy (Uwen and Yearoo 2009, Adeyemi 2012, Akanbi 2005).

Corruption and bribery in Nigeria ranks highest in Africa and cuts across social, political, economic and cultural strata. Politically, corruption has become a canker worm in the country. Many Federal and state legislators, Ministers, Local Government chairmen had in several occasion been indicted for corruption (Ogbo 2011, Adeyemi 2012). For instance, Nigeria had about seven Senate Presidents impeached between 1999 and 2007. Their impeachments were based on corruption cases. Also, the first female speaker of the House of Representatives in Nigeria was impeached on ground of corruption. There were also, cases of grand legislative corruption involving the Hon. Herman Hembe bordering on mismanagement of pension and stock exchange funds. Others were the senator Nicholas Yahaya, and Hon. Elumelu rural electrification scandal and more recently, the petroleum subsidy scandal involving Hon. Farouk Lawal and an Oil magnet, Otedola(Shedrack,2015, Charles 2015).

Political corruption especially at the state and local Government levels are rife but CSO have not been able to actively confront this menace. Civil society has not been able to legally confront corrupt politicians through citizen litigations. What is common in Nigeria is mere criticisms and comments on pages of newspapers and magazines. More worrisome is the fact that some local Civil Society Organizations have in certain grand corruption cases, staged public protests against the prosecution of high profile individuals in the country. For instance, the former Governor of Bayelsa state, DSP Alamesigha who was the executive governor between 1999 to 2006 was never challenged by any CSO until he was arrested in the UK. Although he dubiously maneuvered the UK Metropolitan police and ran to Nigeria by disguising himself in female attire, he had never been tried since his return, in fact, he was later granted a state pardon by the immediate past president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan. Similarly, the former governor of oil-rich Delta State, James Ibori, who is currently in jail in London, was accused of money laundering and abuse of public trust in Nigeria. However, when Nigeria law enforcement agents particularly, the anti-graft agency- Economic and Financial Crimes Commission(EFCC), made attempts to arrest and prosecute him in Nigeria, members of the law enforcement agents were confronted by his tribal and clannish association. Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM) resisted and engaged the police and EFCC officials in violent confrontations claiming that their son had not done any wrong. With the numerous number of CSO in Nigeria between this era of turmoil, none of them openly condemned the act through advocacy or legal means. James Ibori, moved freely and even attempted to contest the 2007 presidential election until he was miraculously arrested, tried and imprisoned in London by the Metropolitan police, in UK.

In the Nigeria oil sector, there have been excessive cases of corruption and abuse of public trust by managers of the industry and the political class. Nigeria annual crude oil production average 710 million barrels with 2.36 trillion cubic gas per year of which 68, 66(bct) is flared monthly representing about 823.92 billion (bct) annually. In monetary terms, Nigeria lost \$72 billion to gas flare (Ogbo 2011). More worrisome is the poor comatose state of Nigeria four refineries located at Port Harcourt, Warri, and Kaduna. Established with an installed daily production capacity of 445,000 barrels, however, none of the refineries is presently functioning. Instead, Nigeria imports millions of barrels of refined fuel from other countries at exorbitant prices. This has led to incessant hikes and scarcity of fuel in Nigeria with attendant increase in household commodities and transport fares (Shedrack 2015).

Although oil has been the mainstay of the economy since 1970s, the revenues generated have not been judiciously utilized due to corruption. For instance, between 1970 to 2005, oil contributed \$391.6 billion to government and the foreign exchange earnings from oil between this periods was valued at over \$593.6 billion(Ogbo 2011). In spite of these huge revenues, the economy has not grown nor the standard of living of Nigerians improved significantly. The lack of transparency and existence of obsolete laws in the sector have created avenues for perpetration of corruption. For instance between 1999 and 2007, President Olusegun Obasanjo sold ten oil blocks without proper bidding process to his political allies and business associates

This is made possible because of lack of transparency, accountability and the existence of archaic laws in the sector. For instance, the petroleum industry Act of 1969 gives the authority to allocate oil blocks in Nigeria to the minister of petroleum who is under, and answerable to the president. This explains why since independence, bidding process and allocation of oil blocks had been abused by the executive, and bedeviled by corruption.

For instance, in 2004, a South African based new print reported that a former president of Nigeria awarded a \$ 1 billion oil block in the Niger Delta region to his wife's hair dresser (Business Times, October 31, 2004). Also, in 2007, the acting Director of Petroleum Resources,(DPR), Mohammad Aliyu Sabo testified before the National Assembly members on the cases of corruption in the awards and sales of oil blocks that “ there are cases of insensitive and sharp practices in the oil sector and that even important documents on oil blocks allocation were missing. He further declared; we can only give what we have, because we cannot find some of the documents” (Ogbo, 2011:32). The probe panel also discovered that Shell Plc had in December 2003 paid \$210 million as signature bonus to the Federal Government of Nigeria but only the sum of \$1 million was reflected in the records. Earlier in 2003, the sum of \$2.5 million was paid for OPL 257, by vintage oil but was spent five years before it was receipted on July 8, 2008.

In terms of public re-orientations and political enlightenment and civic education, civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria have not performed well. Nigeria is a populous country with thirty six (36) states and the Federal Capital territory, Abuja and further sub divided into seven hundred and seventy four (774) Local Government Areas. With over 170 million people, less than 30% of these are literate while over 75% resides in rural areas lacking access to basic social amenities. Although majority of Nigerians are domicile in rural areas, well funded and

articulate CSO which can educate the masses and conduct civic education are majorly based in urban centers mainly the FCT and in states and local government capitals. The effects of this elitist character of CSO could be gleaned in the staggering proportions of invalid or blank votes, ethno-religious violence, and electoral fraud (Shedrack, 2015, Alfred 2015).

Worthy of note is the issue of invalid/ blank votes that had characterized successive presidential elections in Nigeria since 1999. For instance, in 1999 presidential election, a total of 57,938,945 registered voters, the voter turnout was 30,280,052 while invalid/ blank votes stood at 29,848,441. Similarly, in the April 2003 presidential election, a total of 60,823,022 people were registered while voter turnout was 42,018,735 and invalid/blank votes was 2,538,246. In addition, in the April 2007 presidential election, registered voters were 61,567,036 while invalid vote was over 8%. In 2011, invalid and blank votes were 1,259,506(Vanguard Newspaper, April, 23 2011)

The high preponderance of invalid votes in contemporary democratic experience of Nigeria amidst multiplicity of civil of civil society groups had been linked to the passive and drifting role of civil society groups and electoral umpires in Nigeria. Majority of the invalid votes are from rural areas where there are high rates of poverty and illiteracy. Ideally, with the exponential growth in the number of CSOs and increased funding from foreign donor agencies, one would have expected that the level of political awareness and civic education from civil society will nip in the bud the incidence of invalid votes, electoral frauds and violence but this is not the case with fourth republic Nigeria according to Peter Okwori, elitist structure of majority of the CSO with heavy concentration in Abuja and state capitals and major cities to the neglect of rural areas coupled with high incidences of corruption among CSO leading to diversion of funds are responsible for this unsavory scenarios(Peter, 2015).

Closely related to this is the issue of electoral frauds which had plagued Nigeria's nascent democracy since the return to civil rule in 29th May 1999. Although the 1999 presidential election because fairly devoid of excessive frauds, mainly because it was midwife by the military that of 2003 and 2007 was marred by irregularities. There were numerous cases of ballot box snatching and stuffing of ballot papers, under age voting, intimidation of voters, attack of electoral officials, and hijacking of electoral materials by political thugs among other electoral malfeasances. What did civil society group do as all these anomalies happened? Why should all these occur amidst charades of CSOs? In fact, after the 2007 presidential election, the late president Umaru Musa

Yar'adua acknowledged that the election that brought him to power was rigged but promised to carry out electoral reforms. There were high cases of stolen mandates. In fact, civil society organizations which observed and monitored the elections with copious evidences of electoral malpractice could not go to court to challenge any of the results. For instance, following the 2007 governorship election in Nigeria, election results were overturned in Kogi, Sokoto, Edo, Bayelsa, Ogun and Ondo state by the court on the grounds of electoral frauds(Shederack 2015, Alfred 2015, Peter 2015).

Furthermore, since the emergence of the fourth republic in Nigeria, ethnic militia groups have negatively affected the delivery and pursuit of the dividends of good governance to the people. In contemporary Nigeria, ethnic militia groups like Odua Peoples' Congress, Movement For the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, Egbesu Boys, Ombatse, Niger Delta Volunteer Force, Arewa Peoples; Congress and other clandestine socio-cultural associational groups have by the manifestation of its activities hindered democracy. Although these groups from liberal perspective, are classified as Civil Society Organization but their incessant use of force and violence which have led to loss of lives and property in different parts of Nigeria work against democracy in Nigeria.

Vaaseh (2010) argued that some civil society groups in Nigeria have stymied the growth and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. He poignantly pointed out that the OPC was involved in the killing of police officers and innocent Hausas in Lagos state in 2009. Danladi and Hembra(2015) using the Ombatse militia in Nasarawa State, North central Nigeria observed that while there are increase in the proliferation of militias as a result of state failure and weak civil society, consolidating Nigeria's nascent democracy will be very difficult. This view was corroborated by that of Agbu (2011) whose study surmises that a major problem to nation building and democratic consolidation in post-military Nigeria is the rise and activities of ethnic militia groups. Danladi and Tanko (2015) had further opined that with the unregulated activities of militant socio-cultural associational groups, particularly the Ombatse in Nasarawa state, the pursuit and realization of sustainable development will be not be feasible. They advocated for the criminalization of Ombatse by the government and the punishment of promoters of such violent prone association in Nigeria.

Ombatse was for instance responsible for the death of seventy eight (78) members of the Nigeria security operatives comprising of the Police and State Security services personnel who were on their lawful assignment at Alakio village in Nasarawa state in 2013. Similarly, during this fracas, about twenty innocent citizens were killed and police vehicles destroyed. Since 2013, Ombatse had been involved in communal clashes with other non-Eggon ethnic tribes in Nasarawa state including the arrest and torture of Fulani pastoralists. Since the resurgence of Ombatse militancy, civil society organizations in Lafia and other parts of Nigeria have not made any frantic efforts toward mediating advocating for criminalization of Ombatse. Moreover, with copious evidences of grave human right abuse been perpetrated by Ombatse, no civil society has dared file a law suit against Ombatse either in Nigeria or the International criminal court. Although, the promoters or sponsors of the Ombatse had been identified by government of Nasarawa state, civil liberty organizations have not advocated for sanction or prosecution of indicted members.

Social capital is another great component of civil society which has globally been acknowledged as been critical and imperative in promotion of cooperation, trust, friendship and solidarity among members. Fukuyama observed that social capital is that common spirit of unity, trust, love and camaraderie usually associated and built by members of a civil society over a period of time (Fukuyama 2011) For instance, members of a socio-cultural associations like the the Igala Cultural and Development Association(ICDA),Christians Association of Nigeria(CAN), Muslim League of Nigeria(MLN), Federation of Muslim Women in Nigeria(FORWAN), and other tend to trust and cherish one another over a period of time. This trust, Fukuyama noted is imperative in building mutual peace, tranquility and cohesion especially in a multi-ethnic liberal democratic state.

Within the Nigeria's democratic landscape, this has not been sustained since the emergence of the fourth republic. This is because, there are immense internal crack and disunity among member of most civil society groups especially cultural associational groups in Nigeria. for instance, there is problem in CAN as a result of its recent alignment and identification with members of political parties in Nigeria. This has made some Christian bodies in Nigeria to break away from CAN. Similarly, the onslaught of Islamic terrorist group, Boko Haram in Nigeria, which has killed many Muslims and non-Muslims in Nigeria has created a high sense of suspicious among Muslim organizations in Nigeria. in fact, corruption has negatively affected the socio-

cultural and political fulcrum of modern Nigeria and this has been responsible for the high spate of intra and inter-ethnic violence in Nigeria.

Strengthening Civil Society in Nigeria: Some Recommendations

In order to for the democratization process in Nigeria in Nigeria to be sustained and dividends of good democratic governance delivered to people, civil society need to be properly repositioned and strengthened. Strengthening civil society is therefore imperative so that they can improve upon the current poor existing structures of CSO. Thus, for Nigeria to have virile this to be achieved, the following recommendations should be adopted.

Funding: poor funding has been a major problem sapping the vitality of civil society in Nigeria and Africa in general (Diamond 1999, Mercy 2012, Fadakinte 2013). Majority of the civil society organizations in Nigeria depend largely on external source usually foreign donor agencies to finance their activities. In fact, virtually all the donor agencies have vested interest in certain areas of the nation and thus, money released for projects does not in many cases reflect the pressing needs of the people instead the donor goals and objectives stands clear. As a result, adequate constitutional provision on funding of civil society in Nigeria should be made. This could be achieved by creating a consolidated or national trust fund integrated in the national budget where registered civil society organizations in Nigeria can apply for fund annually. When this is done, it will help reduce over dependency of Nigeria civil society on external donor agencies with their stringent conditionality and narrow interest. As the common saying of he who pays the piper dictates the tune syndrome is not good as currently obtained in Nigeria.

Urban and Elitist nature of CSO in Nigeria: civil society organizations are greatly highly concentrated in urban centers with high number of educated elites as members. This has led to high rates of illiteracy and poor democratic culture among the rural poor. The effects of these can be seen in the staggering proportion of invalid votes and ethno-religious cum communal clashes in different parts of Nigeria. a way out of this ruse is to de-urbanize civil society in Nigeria by ensuring that CSO concerned with human rights, women empowerment, poverty reduction, civic education are located or headquarter in rural areas instead of urban centers. Closely related to the above is the issue of elitism of CSO. There is need for the integration of rural dwellers in civil society to actively participate in advocacy. This will help give them a sense of belonging in the

civil society advocacy and engagement and coupled with the fact that most of the sensitive information needed for addressing the problems usually identified by CSO are domiciled with the people who are involved in the problem.

Leadership: the issue of quality and responsive leadership is one that affects the entire polity of Nigeria and not just the civil society alone. However, from the past seventeen years of unbroken democratic experience, it is clear that poor leadership is one of the banes of civil society in Nigeria. Some of the leaders of trade and labor unions in Nigeria had at critical moments abandoned their responsibilities of monitoring the activities of the state. Many had even ventured into active politics and are serving as state governors, ministers, senators and chairmen of local government councils. As Fadakinte (2013) observed, Comrade Adam Oshiomole, served as the president of Nigerian Labor Congress, (NLC), but is the governor of Edo state. Professor Pat Utomi, who founded the *Value for Leadership Center* in Lagos contest Presidential election in 2003 and 2007, Pastor Tunde Bakare, established the *Save Nigeria foundation* but contested the 2010 presidential election as a deputy to Muhammad Buhari under the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria party. The implication of the penchant by leaders of civil society in Nigeria have limited their performance and reduced the perception and attitude of the masses toward the third sector in Nigeria.

One of the ways to curtail this attitude of the leaders of CSO, especially from venturing into politics is to establish centers for training and retraining of civil society advocates and members. Such centers may be affiliated to universities or research institutes within the country where lecturers and civil society experts can teach, mentor and educate members and leaders of civil society towards making them understand in nitty-gritty the dynamic and trajectories of the third sector. This will also improve their performance and empower them with requisite skills to contribute to democratic governance in Nigeria. In addition, if this is done, it will help inculcate the ideology and philosophy of civil society activism into the members.

Corruption and bribery is a great canker worm that has eaten deep into the social fabrics of Nigeria. The cancerous nature of corruption makes it difficult for any part of the Nigeria polity to be immune from it. Although, there are fewer cases of corruption in the third sector in Nigeria, there are reports of mismanagement of funds meant for development by students and labor unions in contemporary Nigeria. For instance, the Nigeria Labor congress in Nigeria since March 2015

has been embroiled in corruption and crisis leading to break ups and parallel leadership of the union. According to Peter Okwori, the Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN) top leaders have recently been involved in party politics, manifest in their public support and collaboration with corrupt individuals in the society. Also, the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) an umbrella body comprising of all students in Nigeria, both home and abroad was involved in the endorsement of political aspirants during the build-up to the 2015 general election. NANS executives at the state and local levels also endorsed certain politicians at the state level. This scenario portends grave danger for civil society. First, with the corrupt nature of the state and political class, these aforementioned laborers, trade, religious and student unions easily get bribed and co-opted by the state thereby reducing their level of activism and watchdog roles in governance. Secondly, with financial inducements from the politicians, these civil society groups get embroiled in crisis over sharing of booty thereby creating division and leadership crisis. Strengthening these civil society groups in light of this quagmire is through re-orientation and financial support from donor agencies and proper media monitoring of the activities of CSO in Nigeria.

The Nigeria Bar Association,(NBA), and Nigeria Union of Journalists, (NUJ), should collaborate and render free legal services and media coverage to other Civil society groups within the country. The NBA should apart from condemning unjust government policies and programs but file law suits against government in fulfillment of their role of citizen litigation and advocacy. Furthermore, the NUJ should intensify effort in rural cum advocacy journalism to help bring news and special documentaries from rural areas that may not be financially newsworthy in the capitalist democratic state.

CONCLUSION

Civil society organizations, (CSOs), no doubt, have been critical agents of change and participants in the democratization process in Africa since the 1980s and 1990s, there is however, noticeable relaxation and laxity in activism since the new millennium. With the withering of military and authoritarian rules in Africa, the level and intensity of Civil society advocacy, protests, watchdog and state monitoring and general commitment to the Promotion of transparency, equity, accountability, freedom of speech, thought, association, advocacy, civic education, judicial freedom and accessibility, economic and social empowerment in the democratic process have been

greatly reduced and low in Nigeria and this unsavory scenario has negatively affected the quality of democratic governance in fourth republic Niger

Although the quantity of party politics have leapfrogged, Nigeria's democracy is still a deficient, fragile, fledging and nascent democracy with enormous gaps and loopholes, little wonder it has ranked lowest in past good governance indicators ratings. Overcoming the multi-variegated malaises that is besieging Nigeria's democratic governance would involve ideological and philosophical restructuring of civil society. CSO need to wake up from slumber and wear the garb of activism coated in confrontational approach to undemocratic cultures in contemporary Nigeria.

In order to ensure that civil society plays more viable and pragmatic role in democratic governance in Nigeria especially in the future, emphasis must be geared toward proper funding of CSO to reduce their over dependence on foreign donors often with skewed interests. Also, the training and retraining of civil society leaders, advocates, and non members is highly imperative and germane in the democratic system in Nigeria.

Within the period under survey, CSO have not done enough. In fact, while the number of registered CSO has increased, good democratic governance dividends still elude the country. With massive army of unemployment, bribery and corruption is rife with resurgence of clandestine militia groups spread all over the country, ethno-religious violence and extra judicial killings are rampant. The study recommend that if the ongoing democratic process in Nigeria is to be reformed, and consolidated for overall national development, then there must be urgent need for the civil society to be repositioned and reinvigorated ideologically to become more active performing its multifaceted role in governance.

Reference

- Abutdu, M.I.M.,(1995), *The State, Civil Society and the Democratization Process in Nigeria*.
Dakar:CODESRIA
- Adeyemi, O.O., (2012), Corruption and Local Government Administration in Nigeria: A Discourse of Core Issues, *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 1& 2
- Aiyede, R.E., (2003), The Dynamics of Civil Society and Democratization Process in Nigeria”, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 39(1)
- Bayart, J.F., (1986), Civil Society in Africa”, in Chabal, P (ed) *Political Dominion in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*. Cambridge: University Press
- Bratton, M.,(1992), Civil Society and Political Transitions in Africa, in J. Harbeson, D.Rothchild and N. Chazan(eds) *Civil Society and the State in Africa*, Boulder: Lynner Reinner
- Chukwuma I., (2005), Government –Civil Society Partnership in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects, Paper presented at special retreat on Government- Civil Society Partnership in Nigeria, Kaduna, September 12-15
- Danladi, A. and Hembe A.O., (2015), Ethnic Militia and Security in Contemporary Nigeria: A Reflection on Ombatse in Nasarawa State, *POLAC Historical Review*
- Danladi, A. and Tanko, A. A, (2015), Ombatse Ethnic Militias and the Challenge of Sustainable Development in Nasarawa State of Nigeria, *LAPAI Democracy series*,
- Diamond, L., (1999), *Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press
- Fatton, R.C(1995), Africa in the Age of Democratization: the Civic Limitations of Civil Society, *African Studies Review*

Fukuyama, F., (2001), Social Capital, Civil Society and Development, *Third World Quarterly*, 22(1)

Ghaus-Pasha .A.,(2004), Role of Civil Society Organization in Governance, Paper Presented at the *Global Forum on Reinventing Government Towards Participatory and Transparent Governance*, Seoul, May 24-27

Hearn, J. (2001) “The Use and Abuse of Civil Society in Africa”, *Review of African Political Economy*, 27(4)

Ikelegbe, A.O., (2001) The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society: Evidence From Nigeria. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Cambridge: University Press, 39(1)

Ikelegbe,A.O.,(2007), Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation in Africa: Issue, Problems and Prospects”, *Nigerian Journal of Policy and Development*,6(2)

Ikelegbe, A.O., (2013), *State, Civil Society and Sustainable Development in Nigeria*, CEPED Monograph Series, No.7

Lee, J. (2007), *Civil Society in Nigeria: An Overview*, Geneva: CASIN Negotiations on NGO and Civil Society.

Keane, J. (1989), Introduction, in J. Keane, (ed) *Civil Society and The State: New European Perspectives*, London: Verso Publishers.s

Mercy, A.O., (2012), Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria”, *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAP)* 3(1)

Ndegwa, S.N. (1996) *The Two Faces of Civil Society: NGO and Politics in Africa*, Ghana: Kumann press.

Osaghae, E.,(1997),The Role of Civil Society in Consolidating Democracy: An African Comparative Perspective, *African Insight*, 27(1)

Uwen Essia and Afzal Yearoo.,(2009), Strengthening Civil Society Organizations /Government Partnership in Nigeria, *International NGO Journal*, 4(9)

Vasseh, G.A., (2010), Friends or fiends?: Images of Ethnic militia Groups in Nigeria since 1990s, *Benue Valley journal of Humanities*, 19 (1&2)

Woods, D. (1992), Civil Society in Europe and Africa: Limiting State Power through a Public Sphere, *African Studies Review*, 35(2)

About the Authors

Abah, Danladi, is a multi-award winning student. He Obtained B.A(Hons) History & International Studies from Kogi State Student University Anyigba-Nigeria and emerged as the overall best departmental and faculty Student with the best academic result in the 2009/2010 academic session. I won the coveted Professor F.S Idabachaba Prize for excellent academic records and also won the prize for the best department and faculty student with best academic records. In addition, I was and remain the only highest ever graded student in the department of Political Science, Kogi State University (when I scored 99/100 in Politics of Development and Underdevelopment in 2010) Abah Danladi holds MA History from Benue State University Makurdi-Nigeria, where he also emerged as the best Student and is currently a PhD candidate. Danladi is the author of the book; *A History of the Traditional Igala Textile Industry, Nigeria, 1900-1960*, Germany: Verlag publishers, 2016 and Co-author of *A History of Eggon-Koro Conflicts in Nasarawa State, North Central Nigeria, 1900-2012* in addition to over twenty published papers in both Local and International Journals. He has also attended and presented papers in many local and International conferences. Danladi is a member of the Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), International Society for Third Sector Research, and Historical Society of Nigeria. Email: danladiabah@gmail.com

Tanko Adihikon is a Doctoral candidate in History at Benue State University Makurdi and lecturer in the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. He has published extensively in both local and international journals

