Civil Society Organizations and the Promotion of Liberal Democracy: Exploring the Elements of Continuities in Nigerian Politics

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Abstract
Democracy promotion has been a reoccurring feature of the neoliberal international order that emerged after the ideological triumph of liberalism in the cold war. Neoliberal scholars have vigorously projected the quest for democracy as a universal yearning while western governments have continued to provide support for countries of the Third World where the democratic tenet is low in order to ensure its consolidation. Such support has mainly been in the form of providing funding for sundry civil society groups with a focus on democracy promotion programming. In Nigeria, a cottage industry of democracy-promoting civil society groups has since emerged. Scholars have interrogated the role of these foreign-funded civil society organizations in the actual consolidation of democracy in the country. Extant explanations are however inadequate for explicating the intractable nature of Nigerian politics viz-a-viz the activities of these groups. The present study therefore deploys the Gramscian hegemonic theory to the explanation of the activities these groups in the country.
Keywords: Democracy promotion; civil society; development; external funding

Introduction

The involvement of civil society in the defense and promotion of liberal democracy in Nigeria is one of the enduring legacies of colonialism. Colonialism fast-forwarded the incorporation and integration of African economies into the global orbit of liberalisation. The colonisers justified and legitimated the alien domination with claims of civilising Africans and redeeming them from the path of backwardness. The emergent African bourgeoisies that inherited the mantle of leadership from the Europeans had no qualms with the principles inherent in colonialism, which was the legitimation and promotion of market democracy but resented the foreign personnel that occupied various political offices (Osaghae, 2003). The nature and character of the politics of the indigenous bourgeoisies during the colonial era bear eloquence to this submission. While some of the nationalist movements that fought for the dismantling of colonialism do not bear the description civil society, their activities and function imply the description.

It could be said that civil society organizations played very crucial role in the restoration of democratic rule in Nigeria following decades of military authoritarianism. Some of the foremost civil society organizations involved in the struggle were the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL), Civil Liberty Orgainsation (CLO), Campaign for Defense of Human Rights (CDHR), the Eastern Mandate Union (EMU), the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), the National Union of Petroleum and Gas Workers Union (NUPENG), the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Academic Staff Union of the University (ASUU), Movement for the survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Human Rights Africa (HRA), the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD), Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ), Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) etc. With the return to civilian rule, many of these organizations have also continued to exist albeit with reduced influence. In the literature, there is also attempt to distinguish fake civil society with genuine ones based on their functions and funding source. While the genuine civil society is immersed in promoting political participation in the polity and mobilising the citizenry towards acceptance of market democracy, there are other mushroom Non-Governmental Organisations dedicated to massaging the egos of authoritarian political office holders and abetting illiberal democratic culture in the polity (Page, 2021).

Despite the visibility of civil society in the liberal democratic project of developing countries, the fundamental rationale undergirding it still remains a contested issue. A large body of literature has offered several explanations. First is the projection of the quest for democracy as a universal yearning (Barash and Webel, 2018). Huntington (1997) refers to this universal yearning as the triumph of democracy flanked in his metaphorical third wave of democratization which began in Portugal and the involvement of international support is to provide political life vest to the waves. Second, international civil society engagement in democracy support provides lifeline to the developing countries where low quality of democracy pervades the polity (Diamond, 1999). This is within the context of the prevailing idea that democracies in relatively good shape should assist another set of countries in their struggle to achieve quality democracy (Carothers, 2020). Diamond shares this sentiment by stating that democracy promotion in the developing countries springs from the desire to build free societies around the world (Diamond, 2008). Third, is the ideological notion behind the promotion. Fukuyama (1992) had earlier

theorised of a global consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as the endpoint of mankind ideological evolution and at such has constituted the end of history. Democracy promotion by the international civil society appears central to the creation and sustenance of this new international order, one defined by the global triumph of democracy and the predominance of Western transnational influence (Carothers, 2020). It is against this background that some elements of the democracy promotion communities are worried about the future of democracy promotion in Africa and elsewhere given the recent lukewarm attitude of the providers among the traditional supplicants and have suggested a move towards the revitalisation of the assistance (Carothers, 2009a, 2009b, Sedacca & Bouchet, 2014).

The dilemma is to interrogate and unveil these fundamental positions, given the persistence, visibility, and role of western supervised and funded civil society organizations in the democratization project in Nigeria. Our point of intervention is that beyond the rhetoric of democracy promotion serving as an enablement towards the uplifting of democratic aspiration from low quality to a high quality is a hegemonic pursuit by the western capitalist nations to consolidate market democracy in Nigeria polity. The fundamental argument of the paper is that foreign-funded civil societies are not neutral in the propagation of market ideology. It is rather the arrowhead and defender of liberalization and democratization projects in developing countries. It maintains that it is difficult for liberal democracy to occur without a strong, established, well-functioning, and broadly supported civil society which socializes and mobilizes the general public around dominant and acceptable ethos without coercion. It also argues that rather than a spontaneous moment of action, the involvement of civil society in fostering a dominant social order within a given environment, specifically in Nigeria has been a reoccurring element of Nigerian politics.

Its relevance is to provoke a conscientious assessment of the efficacy of democratic assistance by the international community in Nigeria against the backdrop of the forthcoming 2023 critical election. The study relied on documentary method of data collection and logical inferences for data analysis. The remaining sections of the study are partitioned into four. The next section deals with conceptual issues. This is followed by the theoretical discourse. And the next section is the presentation and analysis of data, and then the conclusion.

Conceptual Issues

The concept of civil society is a contentious subject like other concepts in social sciences. Scholars have approached the subject from various philosophical worldviews. There are two modes of thought that dominate the discourse: they are the Anglo-American perspective and Radical perspective which derived its strength from Marxian scholarship. The Anglo-American narrative of civil society lays much emphasis on the civility, nationality and homogeneity of CS. The Centre for Civil Society of London School of Economics (2004), noted thus in this regard: Civil society refers to the area of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development of non-governmental organizations, community groups, women organizations, faith- based organizations, profession (LSC, 2004 cited in Rafiu. 2014, p.209).

Similarly, Cooper (2018) believes that civil society refers to those organizations that operate outside the realm of the family, market and state. He therefore sees civil society as wide range of organised and organic groups including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, social movements, grassroots organisations, online networks and communities, and groups whose roles include advocacy on any issue of interest, provision of communal services and participation in global governance issues. Perret (2006), also toes the same line of argument and believes that the emergence of civil liberty organization is contextualised within the broader issue of non-state actors in politics due to the decreasing function of the state capacity in the face of globalization that is reviewing the traditional sovereignty of state character. Diamond (1996, p.5), sees it as the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self -generating, self-supporting, autonomous from the state and bound by the legal order or set of shared rules….it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interest, passions and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state and hold state officials accountable. It is intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and the state". According to Schmitter, (1997, p.240), civil society is "a set or system of self-organizing intermediary groups that:

✔ Are relatively interdependent of both public authorities and private units of production that is of firms and families.

✔ Are capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in defense or promotion of their interest or passions.

✔ Do not seek to place either the state agents or private producers or to accept responsibility as a whole and

✔ Agree to act within pre-established rules or civil nature that is conveying mutual respect".

However, Osaghae (1998), representing the radical perspective provides a more comprehensive articulation of the nature of civil society. According to him, it is "the formal and informal organisations, including social movements, which occupy the non-state sphere of public realm and functions in one or more of the following ways: articulating and promoting the interest of diverse groups within society with a view of devising ways in which conflicting interests and the differences can be accommodated and resolved, defending individual and collective rights as well as popular sovereignty against intrusions by the state and other powerful groups including foreign interests, mediating relations between the state and the larger society, setting the rules or norms governing the state and society and upholding accountability of those in government, serving as the ultimate check to state power and its abuse, serving as the engine room of private and local capital and performing shadow state functions" (Osaghae 1998, pp.19-20). However, it was Ekeh (1992) cited in Osaghae (2006) that provides the four typologies of civil service as including: the civic public organizations (labour, professional and student associations, mass media); deviant civic associations (secret societies, fundamentalist religious movements); primordial public associations (ethnic and communal associations); and indigenous development associations (farmers' and traditional women's associations).

The inference from the forging array of conceptualisations is that civil society is a playground of organized social life. It connotes all the activities of non-governmental organizations such as professional, students, self-help, labour, cultural organizations, self-help. In fact, all the civil liberty orgnisations are subsumed under the umbrella body of non-governmental organizations NGOS (Nnachukwu,2008).

Democracy on the other hand at its most rudimentary level is offered by Abraham Lincoln as "government of the people, by the people, for the people (Igwe, 2003). This definition

accords 'the people' the subject and object of democracy or the reason of governance. It draws inspiration from the classical Hellenistic notion of democracy which had as its fundamental feature, the direct and immediate participation of citizens in the deliberation and decisions on public matters in the citizens' assembly. As a result of the transition of democracy from a city state order to a cosmopolitan order (Held. 1992) and the analytical difficulty in measuring "the will of the people" (Schumpeter, 1976), there is debate on what constitute the people. Do people mean the totality of the population within a given territory? Or does it mean the selected few taking decisions on behalf of others? Is there a link between the people and the notion of citizenship? A large body of literature have emerged to interrogate these interlocking issues in democracy.

Schumpeter (1976) reduced the democratic practice to the competition for political leadership in which election of men who take public decision takes precedence over the view of the electorates. According to him, "the democratic method is that "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the peoples vote" (Schumpeter, 1976, p.269). This implies that the responsibility of the people is to participate in selecting a body that will auction the public policy or that "democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them" (Schumpeter in Adejumbo, 2000). Huntington (1991) also toes the same line of argument by maintaining that democracy exist when "the most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes,".

Defending the minimalist conception of democracy, Przeworski (2003) offered some didactic rationales for a minimalist conception of democracy. He argues that democracy is the appropriate framework of getting rid of dysfunctional government without bloodshed and periodic elections offered an opportunity of reckoning for both the electorates who appraise the government and makes sanctions through voting and also incentives the rulers to stick to the terms of the contract in terms of implementing of the manifestoes. More importantly, voting implies an authorization to act and conferment of legitimacy to the action of the government (Przeworski, 2003, pp.13-14). Speaking in the same perspective, Fiskin (2003) argues that given the increasing population of people in the contemporary society, that it will be herculean and unrealistic to conduct a face-to-face democracy. The western led democracies believe that

individual right of choice is the defining essence of liberal democracy. In such a game, citizens are free agents entitled to the fullest expressions of democratic choice and rights. In a polity where there is a high emphasis of individual freedom of choice, democracy is simply restricted to the annual ritual of filling out to vote in periodic elections.

Scholarly opinions have critiqued elections as the essence of democracy. This is because election alienates the masses which are the very subject of the democratic governance. It also inadvertently provides the elite the opportunity to perpetuate themselves at the corridor of power irrespective of the low legitimacy of the process that throws them up (Nwosu, 2012). Since elections reduce people to individuals, its application in societies like Africa that are still communal appears problematic. (Ake, 1993). In the end, the polity experiences a hybrid regime which is periodic elections without democracy. Given this perversion of democracy, scholars recommend caution in equating regime change as a democracy. (Diamond, 2002, 1997). Despite these glaring shortcomings of reducing democratic practices to elections, it has subsisted because it is an instrument of foisting neoliberal policies on the polity. After all, "governance is not a neutral description of inevitable process but an ideological narrative justifying the neoliberal states" Taylor (2002) (in Eghosa, 2019). When the neoliberal conception of democracy is transferred to the political plain, it puts more emphasis in separation of power, human rights, rule of law, equality before the law and citizen's right and manifest economically in the thoroughgoing commodification of labour in the production process (Ibeanu, 1993). Therefore, civil societies that engage in liberal democratic promotion receive support that elongate all the infrastructures and institutions successful conduct of elections. In that vein, Democracy promotion or democracy assistant according to USAID cited in Hubber (2015) means:

> technical assistance and other support to strengthen capacity of reform-minded governments, nongovernmental actors, and/or citizens in order to develop and support democratic states and institutions that are responsive and accountable to citizens. These efforts also include promoting democratic transitions in countries that are not reform minded. Democracy programs promote the rule of law and human rights, transparent and fair elections coupled with a competitive political process, a free and independent media, stronger civil society and greater citizen participation in government, and governance structures that are efficient, responsive, and accountable. (Huber, 2015, p.45).

The definition that captures the mood of our analysis is the one offered by Sedaca and Bouchet (2014) which sees it "as the widest range of actions that one country with all its actors can take to influence the political development of another towards greater democratisation". The importance of democracy promotion was highlighted by a one-time chairman of National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Carl Gersman who noted that in a world of advanced and exploding knowledge, it is no longer possible to rely on force to promote stability and defend the national security. Persuasion is increasingly becoming important and the United States must enhance its capacity to persuasion by developing techniques for reaching many different levels.

Civil Society and Liberal Democratization: A Theoretical Discourse

We adopted the theoretical framework of neo-Gramscian analysis as an insightful guide into the functions of democracy promotion by the developed countries of the world to the NGOs in peripheral economies like Nigeria. Neo-Gramscian theory is an offshoot of the theoretical work of Antonio Gramsci as articulated in his prison notes. Others who contributed in elucidating the theory are Robert Cox (1974, 1981, 1983 and 1987), Perry Anderson (1976), Thomas Bates (1975), Bieler and Morton (2004) and a host of others. A very fundamental aspect of the functions of international civil society is the idea of hegemony. According to Gramsci, hegemony is the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant group in any society. This consent is a result of the prestige and consequent confidence which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and functions in the world production. The idea of hegemony is underpinned by the hypothesis that:

> Within a stable social order, there must be a substratum of agreement so powerful that it can counteract the divisions and disruptive forces arising from conflicting interest that is on the values, norms, perceptions and beliefs that support and define the structures of central authority (Cox, 1974 cited in Markakis, 2016, p.4).

Antonio Gramsci argues through the concept of hegemony that man is not ruled by force alone but by ideas. It is to idea that he ascribed the vital functions of preserving the ideological unity of the dominant bloc. Gramsci breaks the entire society into two, namely the civil society and the political society. While the civil society is composed of the private organizations, the political society called the state is composed of all the governmental institutions like the police, army,

prison and other coercive apparatus of the state. He therefore contends that the ruling class penetrates the society through the civil society and the political society. According to him, the "civil society is the marketplace of ideas, where intellectuals enter as "salesmen" of contending cultures. The intellectuals succeed in creating hegemony to the extent that they extend the world view of the rulers to the ruled, and thereby secure the "free" consent of the masses to the law and order of the land. To the extent that the intellectuals fail to create hegemony, the ruling class falls back on the state's coercive apparatus which disciplines those who do not "consent," (Bates, 1975, p.106). Gramsci in the above passage shows that it is the civil society that legitimizes the activities of the state through the agency of the intellectuals.

While the Civil society includes "private organisms"-schools, churches, clubs, journals, and political parties' Political society, on the other hand, includes the governmental institutions like the court and other coercive apparatus of the state The ruling class exerts its power over society through these dominant norms and values.

This Gramscian theory emphasises consensual mechanism which characterises liberal democracy. It is the ideology of liberal democracy that is implicated in the hegemonic process. Gramsci observes thus:

> Previously germinated ideologies come into confrontation and conflict until one of them or at least a single combination tends to prevail to gain upper hand to propagate itself throughout society, bringing about not only union of economic and political gains but also intellectual and moral unity posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not a corporate but on a universal plane and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups (Gramsci, 1970,pp.181-182).

Gramsci sees ideology as the shared belief which serves to justify the interest of the dominant groups. Today the western liberal democratic culture and ethos are widely disseminated as the ideal notion of democracy. After the ideological rivalry between the western capitalist nations under the leadership of USA and the eastern bloc under USSR, which USA won with the collapse of socialism in 1990, there appears a consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government around the world having conquered rival ideologies, thus constituting the "end point of mankind's ideological experimentation and the "final form of

human government," and as such constituted the "end of history." (Fukuyama, 1992, p.xi). Ever since these developments, attempts have been made to compel every nation on earth to toe the line of supporting liberal democracy. Democracy has been seen from such liberal conceptions. Perry Anderson succinctly captures this when he observes that democracy connotes:

> Certain irrefutable concrete institutions like regular elections, civil freedom, rights of assembly, all of which exist in the west and none of which directly threaten the class power of capital. The day-to-day system of bourgeoisie rule is thus based on consent of the masses in the form of the ideological belief that they exercise self-government in the representative state (Parry, 1976, p.30).

These institutions as alluded by Perry as cited above apart from the infrastructures of elections also include civil liberty organisations. This is because the locus of hegemony is the terrain of civil liberty organisations. Even before the USA made democracy support to the third world countries one of the corner stones of their foreign policy in 1980s, nationalist movements that championed the course for democracy in Nigeria during the colonial periods received enablement from various institutions in United States of America. The exposure to American political mode of life to the pioneers of the independence movement conditioned their political thought to be receptive to American ways of life. For instance, Azikeiwe's political philosophy tilted towards a combination of capitalism, socialism and welfarism while that of Awolowo was a brand of a pragmatic socialism formulated to move the society forward (Nwanolue and Ezeibe,2020).

By the time Nigeria transitioned to democracy in 1999, the international civil society domiciled in USA knowing the strategic role that NGOs play in the consolidation of democracy and by implication, consolidating the dominant ideology have supported them in various ways. Some of the civil societies that receive this support are Independent electoral Commission (INEC), political parties, Human Right Organisations, Civil Liberty Organisations, governmental institutions like the legislatures. There has also been diplomatic engagement by the major western donors and different Nigerian candidates, political party leadership, civil society, business leaders and prominent individuals with the hope to promoting peaceful and credible elections in Nigeria. Both US, EU, UK and China employed this diplomatic engagement strategy in the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections in Nigeria (Kia, Nnaa Biiragbara and

Nwigbo, 2017). All these engagements are to solidify and entrench market democracy in Africa in detriment to evolving a different form of democracy that could assure a sustainable form of livelihood to Nigerians.

Empirical Presentations of Supports to Civil Societies for Democratic Consolidation

The empirical presentations of civil society's promotion of liberal democracy will be highlighted using the following indices as indicated in the proceeding box:

- Promotion of the fair rules of the game
- Promotion of channels of representation
- Promotion of civic education
- Promotion of privatisation as path to economic prosperity

Table: 1 The Substantive Ingredients of Liberal Democracy Promotion

Targets	Goals	Means of achievements
Fair rules of the game	Democratic constitution, civil and political right, rule of law, etc	Assistance for constitutional reform, Accession to international human rights treaties, support for justice reform, support for police reform and ant-corruption measures
Channels for representation and democratic consolidation	Free and fair elections, effective parliaments, effective political parties,	Assistance for electoral law reform, electoral support and monitoring, legislative strengthening, party assistance, assistance to NGOs dedicated to Human Rights
Citizens	Strong independent media, Politically educated citizens, Inclusiveness	Civic education, support to minority.
Economy	Privatization as a path to economic prosperity	Grants to emerging entrepreneurs, seminars and workshops for Business and Industries, Support to NGOs pursuing economic empowerment.

Source: Compiled by the authors from the literature. Compare Huber (2015).

Promotion of the Fair Rules of the Game

There is a consensus among scholars of liberal democracy promotion that if the democracies of the developing countries would have enduring future, it must be consolidated. Diamond (1999) sees this democratic consolidation as the acceptance of the norms, principles and practices guiding liberal democracy by all the elite and organisations in the society. This is because if the elite and the masses do not believe in the organising ethos of democratic experiment, there is the likelihood of reverting back to a different mode of governance. One of the defining ethos of liberal democracy is that it is a representative democracy in which the elected representatives rely on the rule of law for their day-to-day decision making. This rule of law is moderated by the constitution which is seen as the grand norms of the law. The constitution formulates various rights accruable to the citizenry. Some of these freedoms as enshrined in the constitution are: right to life and security of person, freedom from slavery, freedom of movement, association, religion, education, independent judiciary and others. To consolidate the liberal democracy, civil societies serving as salesmen of contending cultures have received various supports in this regard. See the accompanying table 2:

Table: 2 Timelines of Selected Civil Societies and Grants received from Foreign Donors

S/No	CLO	Year	Grant Received	Nature of Programme
1	Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Projects (SERAP)	2021 2020 2019 2019 2019 2016 2013 2011 2008	$ 1, 1 00, 000, $50,000, $39,000, $79,000, $13,167 $300,000 $350,000 $350,000 $150,000	ACJA & other Covid-19 rpt G governance Corruption Accountability Transparency Human Rights Human Rights Human Rights
2	Nigerian Civil society Situation Room (NCSSR)	2014-2018	Unstated amount of grants	Training of election observers and monitoring, promoting issue-based campaign, voter education, collaboration with INEC
3	Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN)	2014 2016 2019	$200.000 $360.000 $400.000	HR (1year) HR (3year) HR (2 year) All on human rights, civic education, publicity on accountability in 5 states in Niger-Delta

One of the civil societies that benefited from the foreign donors is the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Projects (SERAP). As an advocacy organisation, SERAP's stated objective is to promote human rights, transparency, and accountability in governance through training, advocacy, research, and strategic litigation. From 2008 to 2021 as shown in the above table, SERAP received a total of $3,142, 167 from donor agencies like Mac-Arthur foundations to promote and deepening of democratic ethos. These funds received have assisted them conducting a detailed analysis of the Auditor General's reports on federal appropriations to ministries, departments, and agencies. SERAP is also undertaking public interest litigation on the information gathered on asset recovery and procurement practices as appropriate, and translating reports into short, accessible formats for easier understanding. These grants also support SERAP to advocate for the Supreme Court to overturn its decision on section 396(7) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), which was nullified due to its inconsistency with the Nigerian constitution. The award is expected to strengthen transparency, promote accountability, and reduce corruption in Nigeria.

Other civil societies like Nigerian Civil society Situation Room (NCSSR) which is an amalgamation of different kinds of NGOs in Nigeria for Interco operative activities, have also received various kinds of funding by foreign donors in promotion of democracy in Nigeria. These were channeled into training in election observation and monitoring, promoting issue based campaign, voter education and collaboration with independent national electoral commission (INEC) in ensuring a free and fair election. In 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria. There was a noticeable collaboration among the civil societies and their international partners in monitoring election results. Some of the NGOs that deployed their received donors in this exercise were Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), YIAGA Africa, and international monitoring groups including African Union (AU), European Union (EU), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), and International Federation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and several others (Sule et al, 2021). The Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) has also received an amount of $960.000 US dollars from 2014 to 2021 from their international partners based in London, United Kingdom in support of the defense of human rights, engagement in civic education, and accountability in governance. This is mostly observed in what the

NGOs have done in both community mobilization towards democratic acceptance and empowerment of the rural population.

Liberal Democratization Promotion and Privatization

The overall objective of funding civil societies in developing countries like Nigeria by the donor agencies is as a result of the inseparable existence of political democracy and capitalist ideology as a path to development. Liberal democratization promotion provides the fertile ground for the sustenance of economic interest of the donor agencies whose sole aim is to dismantle any economic ideology that is inimical to the growth of market democracy. Following this principle, the donor agencies have offered different support to federal government pursuit of privatization of key sectors of the economy like electricity and provision of capacity training to emerging entrepreneurs that will drive the privatization project. The following table provides a glimpse of what the donor agencies have done in the regard especially Mac Arthur foundation and USAID.

Table 3: Private Sector Support from Donor Agencies

1	Centre for International Private Enterprises	2022	$1, 035,191, $500,000, $160,000, $145,000, $50,500, $55,000, $100,000, $102000, $200965, $57000, $90500, $95000, $77500, $200000 $65500, $59000, $75000, $102000, $72000	Private sector support, Support for the participation marginalized groups in politics, Support for investigative journalism, Support for women participation in politics Reform in governance, Youth participation in politics, etc.
2	Association of Nigerian Electricity Distributors (ANED)	2018 2016-2019		i. USAID support for full privatization of electricity. ii. MacArthur awards $350.000 in stakeholders in policy matters and educate the public on the gains of privatizing electricity iii. MacArthur awards $350.000 in stakeholders in policy matters and educate the public on the gains of privatizing electricity iv. Awards $330.000 in strengthening service delivery and curbing corruption in electricity sector.

Source: www.usaid.org, www.macarthur.org

Nigeria has consolidated its capitalist enterprise through various reforms carried to mainstream the economy into neoliberal adventures. One of the areas of these reforms that got international and donor agencies attention is in power sector. And this power sector reform has witnessed unbridled intervention from foreign based public-private partnership and multilateral agencies dedicated to privatisation and commercialisation. A major actor in this regard is the Power Africa. Power Africa is a USA led public-private partnership launched in 2013 to increase electricity access to Sub-Sahara Africa by adding more than 30,000 megawatts of electricity and 60 million new homes and business connections. Power Africa works to remove barriers that impede energy development in Africa and to unlock the substantial natural gas, wind, solar, hydro power, biomass, geothermal, resources on the continent. Power Africa brings together all the USA agencies who work in energy on the continent, multilateral and bilateral development partners such as World Bank and AFDB, among others, and more than 160 addition public and private sector partners (USAID, 2018). By early 2018, Power Africa launched the Nigeria power Sector Programme (NPSP). The expected outcome of NPSP is to showcase varieties of interventions that have served as a bulwark against Nigeria resorting back to the days of state monopolisation of both generation, transmission and distribution of electricity.

To consolidate private path to citizen's access to electricity in Nigeria and douse the tension that it would have generated, there is need to mobilise the policy makers and the general public in this regard. Civil society organisations in Nigeria have performed gallantly in this regard. For instance, from 2018 to 2021 alone, MacArthur foundation awardsed$680.000 US dollars grants to Association of Nigerian Electricity Distributors (ANED) for a senstisation of stakeholders in policy matters and educate the general public on the gains of privatising electricity. Apart from superintending the connection of 1,387, which resulted from NPSP's support to SHS companies like Emel Solar, it has supported 7 off grid companies regarding investment facilitation and research. It has also trained 20 people in project managements and Microsoft office products to build capacity within Nigeria's rural electrification (USAID, 2021). By June, 2022, USAID as a donor agency facilitated over 2.7million on and off grid connections and 1,086 megawatts. It has also mobilised international partners to invest a whopping $2.3 billion US dollars for energy investment in Nigeria and trained 4,000 people in technical energy fields. More so, Power Africa intends to consolidate their grip on power sector in Nigeria by targeting 30,000 megawatts and 60 million connections by 2030 (USAID, 2022).

The Centre for International Private Enterprises (CIPE), International Republican Institute (IRI), Inclusive Friends Association (IFA), Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism, (PTCIJ) Access to Justice (AJ) and a host of other civil societies have received mouthwatering amounts of foreign currencies in promotion of privatisation and other political reforms that encourage the flourishing of western oriented values in politics and economy.

Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate the role of civil societies in the promotion of liberal democratic project in Nigeria. Attempts to consolidate Nigeria's transition from authoritarian regime to democratic regime necessitated democratic support from international donor agencies to civil societies. Whereas some scholars have commended the effort as a way of strengthening the quality of democratic practice in developing countries and universalising the value of liberty inherent in democracy. We found out that as salesmen of contending cultures and the centre place for marketing ideas, civil society, rather than consolidating a democratic culture akin to what was practiced in Greece has been inadvertently yielding to the donor demands, which is to propagate and fertilise the general public towards acceptance of neoliberal path to development. This is without prejudice to the noble role played by the international donor agencies and multilateral organisations in stigmatizing authoritarian regimes which facilitated its demise in Africa. But suffice it say that such effort has not been enough because since liberal democracy prirotised periodic elections and representative principles and other abstract ethos to economic empowerment of the population, democratic practice in Nigeria has left much to be desired. In fact, the 2019 election simply demonstrated the perversity of election and hardly reflected people's vote.

At the level of political support, we interrogated the funding of civil societies in the areas of strengthening good governance, anti-corruption crusade, conducting public enlightenment in political participation, gender empowerment, promotion of the active political participation of persons living with disabilities, campaign against human rights abridgment, and civic education generally. We also examined the economic implication of overreliance on foreign investors for the execution of the roadmap towards power sector resuscitation. This paper therefore concludes that while Nigeria may have transitioned from military authoritarianism to a form of democracy, a whole lot more still needs to be done before democracy could be said to have been consolidated in the country.

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