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ASSESSMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATISATION IN NIGERIA

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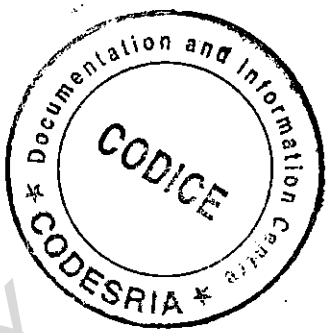

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BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF SCIENCE (M. SC) DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE, NIGERIA.

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Title: Assessment of Transnational Support for Civil Society and Democratisation in Nigeria
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Abstract

The study identified the key external donors and their support for civil society agencies in Nigeria. It also examined the key strategies of engagement by external donors vis-a-vis civil society agencies in Nigeria and evaluated the impact of transnational donor strategies on the activities of civil society organisations. Finally, the study also examined the implications of external donor involvement with civil society for democratisation in Nigeria.

Primary and secondary data were used for this study. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In-depth interviews were conducted with officials of purposively selected CSOs engaged in advocacies targeting key issues relevant to democratisation such as gender, electoral reform, capacity building, religion and peace building. Other interview respondents included academics, and officials of funding organisations particularly United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP), Open Society Institute of West Africa (OSIWA) and Local Government Initiative-Open Society Institute (LGI-OSI). The FGDs, consisting of an average of between four to six persons drew mainly from operators of CSOs brought together along the five thematic clusters selected. Secondary data were obtained from extant literature, policy briefings, official documents, newspaper articles and periodicals; all of which were subject to detailed content analysis.

The results showed that external contact in the colonial times established and deepened linkages between modern CSOs in Nigeria and transnational civil society movements and donors. The skewed nature of this relationship however, has played a major

role in framing the nature of relations between them. It was also found that foreign donors not only set the ideological and programme agenda of civil society organisations in Nigeria, but also legitimise, fund and provide the evaluative frameworks for their advocacy. As a result of this, the study found that transnational donors frame the institutional and operational environment of civil society through the effective use of engagement strategies like renewable contracting, donor coordination and competitive tenders. Furthermore, the study established that the environment created as a consequence of these strategies increased organisational insecurity among the CSOs by deepening operational challenges often associated with principal-agent relations, multiple principals as well as frequent reduction in programme initiatives. The relationship also created incentives for opportunistic and fraudulent behaviour since CSOs were forced to respond to a highly competitive environment that sometimes threatened their survival. The study also revealed that CSOs responded to these challenges in diverse ways. These included proliferation, corporatisation, westernization, and sometimes fraud. The challenges in turn, undermined the ability of civil society organisations to play positive roles the country's democratisation. While CSOs appeared to participate more in the political sphere in recent times, the study showed that the neoliberal framework within which they operated and defined their roles, limited their ability to connect to the ordinary people and thus detracted from their relevance as the conscience or voice of the society. As a consequence, civil society is severely limited in its capacity to play a progressive role in democratisation.

The study concluded that structural contradictions within the operational environment of civil society, rather than the dispositions or normative values of individual CSOs are often to blame for opportunistic behaviour.

Supervisor: Dr. Dokun Oyeshola

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Chapter Seven: Imagining a Civil Society for the Future

List of Acronyms

ACE	Alliance for Credible Elections
AFA	Alliances for Africa
AfA	Alliances for Africa
APC	Arewa People's Congress
AUSAID	Australian Aid
BWHR	Baobab for Women's Human Rights
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CCDP	COCIN Community Development Programme
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
CDHR	Committee for the Defence of Human Rights
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIRDDOC	Civil Research Development and Documentation Centre
CLO	Civil Liberties Organisation
CSCC	Civil Society Coordinating Committee on Electoral Reform
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DA	Democratic Alternative
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERA	Environmental Rights Action
ERN	Electoral Reform Network
FCT	Federal Capital Territory-Abuja
FGD	Focus group Discussion
FIDA-Nigeria	International Federation of Female Lawyers
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women Associations of Nigeria

GADA	Gender and Development Action
GAT	Gender Awareness Trust
GF	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis
HDI	Human development Index
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IADO	Islamic Aid and Development Organisation
ICRC	International Red Cross Committee
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
IO	International Organisation
IPBSC	Initiative for Peace Building and Social Change
IYC	Ijaw Youth Congress
JDBF	Joint Donor basket Fund
JDPC	Justice Development and Peace Commission
JONADAB	Joint Association of Persons Living with Disabilities
LEADS	League of Democratic Women
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People
MRA	Media Rights Agenda
NACA	National Agency for the Control of AIDS
NADECO	National Democratic Coalition
NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
NCCWO	National Council of Catholic Women Organization
NCMLE	National Commission for Mass Literacy Education
NCWS	National Council of Women Societies

NDE	National Directorate for Employment
NEITI	Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
NEO	New Economics of Organisation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NLAC	Nigeria Legal Aid Council
NPC	Nigerian Planning Commission
NYC	Nigerian Youth Council
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPC	Oodua People's Congress
OSI	Open Society Institute
OSIWA	Open Society Institute of West Africa
PAg	Project Agape
Pal	Project Alert
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
RFP	Request for Proposal
RHV	Raising Her Voice Project
RMG	Rights Monitoring Group
RWI	Revenue Watch Institute
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
TMG	Transition Monitoring Group
UNDP	United Nations' Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations' Development Fund for Women

USAID	United State Agency for International Development
WACOL	Women Aid Collective
WOCON	Women's Consortium of Nigeria
WRAPA	Women's Rights Advancement Protection Alternative

Certification

I hereby certify that this thesis was prepared by Iwilade Samuel Akinwumi in the Department of International Relations, Faculty of Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, under my supervision.

Oyeshola, O.P 1/6/11

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Authorization

I, Iwilade Samuel Akinwumi hereby authorize the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library to copy my thesis in whole or in part in response to requests from individual researchers and organisations for the purpose of private study or research.

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Date.....1/6/2011.....

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Akin Iwilade,

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Civil society is a crucial component of the architecture of modern democracy. As important as it is however, critics across the ideological spectrum constantly call to question its ability to fulfil its normative agenda-setting roles within the democratisation process. While liberal analysts focus on the capacity of civil society to take on its rather complex roles, scholars within the alternative paradigms emphasise the interactions of power and control that frame its very nature. In the midst of this analytical confusion, the specific context of a civil society evolving within the developing world raises even more challenging questions. These questions often refer to analytical challenges associated with conceptualizing civil society in places like Africa with its unique social experiences and material history. What place, for instance does one give ethnicity and religion in framing the contours of civil society? Or how should foreign theories of civil society be domesticated in Africa, if they should be at all? The questions also generally relate to the implications of the transformations going on in the international system; which appear to constantly give new meaning to old conceptions of territoriality, dependency and control; for the autonomy of civil society in the developing world regardless of how it is eventually conceptualized.

These transformations undermine the state by encouraging both qualitative and quantitative increases in the transnational linkages that increasingly connect different publics within the international system. Civil society is of course not left out of this emerging dynamic. It is ironic that at the time civil society in Africa purports to represent the 'self

organisational efforts of autonomous social forces'[1] within society, it is also becoming important to understand it by locating its dynamics within what has been referred to as a 'global civil society'.[2] The complex web of linkages that connect local civil society in Africa to global networks has therefore become an important area of the discourse. This study provides an important contribution to what appears to be one of the most critical challenges faced by civil society in twenty first century Africa; that is the role of transnational donors.

The involvement of transnational donors in the governance processes in Africa is allegedly meant to encourage its low-income states to develop. Yet, scholars like Dambisa Moyo can confidently argue that, after many decades and billions of dollars of aid money, Africa is perhaps even worse off.[3] Transnational donors create partnerships with both the state and with 'autonomous' social forces of civil society that do not only transfer billions of dollars in aid funds to Africa but also ensure that value systems are being remodelled to suit an emerging 'global best practice'.

It is often argued, and correctly so, that donors generally privilege civil society in the transfer of funds. The growing engagement with civil society by donor organisations may be understood by looking at the origin of what Salamon had referred to as a 'non-governmental, associational or quiet revolution'.[4] The rise of modern nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in Africa can be located in the neoliberal ideological offensive of the early 1980s. This rise and increased role in state policy was justified as Shivji argues, within the conceptual framework of the problematic of civil society. By highlighting civil society's perceived relevance to advancing the agenda of liberal democracy and consolidating the

[1]A. Olukoshi "Associational Life", in L. Diamond, A. Kirk-Green and O. Oyediran, (eds.), *Transition Without End: Nigerian Politics and Civil Society under Babangida,* Ibadan: Vintage Press, 1996.
[2]H. Anheier, et. al. (eds.), *Civil Society*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001.
[3]See her stinging criticism of foreign aid in D. Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not working and how there is a Better Way for Africa,* Paris: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2009.
[4] L. Salamon, *The Global Associational Revolution: The Rise of the Third Sector on the World Scene*, Occassional Paper 15, Baltimore Institute of Policy Studies, John Hopkins University, 1994, p.1.

retreat of the state that had been all but guaranteed by the failure of full state models like communism, the neoliberal offensive privileged engaging these supposedly autonomous forces rather than the state.[5]

This emphasis on civil society did much to weaken the structures of many dictatorships in Africa and forced some opening up of the political space. However, it also created new or re-emergent problems for the political process in Africa. In the first place, many of these civil society organisations (CSOs) were overwhelmingly donor funded. This raised questions as to their autonomy and ability to truly represent the interests of the poor.

By purporting to be the sphere that mediates conflict between the state and society, in the interest of society, CSOs easily appropriate the voice of the poor and reconfigure it to suit the demands of capital. The state also reacts to its marginalisation by utilising elite coalitions that straddle the realm of CSOs, the state and donor organisations. It is in this appropriation that perspectives of constructive engagement between civil society and the state, rather than militant opposition, was born.

In Africa's peculiar context, civil society must also be situated in its imperial mode. The fact that CSOs are overwhelmingly funded by foreign donors raises valid questions about their autonomy and their ability to represent society. Indeed, questions persist as to the accountability of CSOs to their constituencies, to the donors who provide funds, set modalities for evaluation and of course the agenda for advocacy and to the state that constantly demands regulation and macro oversight.

The 'development' community prefers civil society to the state for reasons of ideology. One of the key arguments for preferring civil society to the state is related to the neoliberal assumptions about the African state and its ideal role in the developmental process.

[5] I. Shivji, *The Silences in the NGO Discourse: The Role and Future of NGOs in Africa*, Pambazuka Special Report 14, London: Fahamu Ltd, 2006, p.11.

As Shivji notes, in the neoliberal discourse, the state is villainised and its bureaucracies demonised as corrupt, incapable and unable to learn. The developmental role of the state is therefore declared dead and buried and it is 'assigned the role of a chief to supervise the globalization project under the tutelage of imperialism'.[6] To be sure, the African state or more appropriately, the state in Africa, has been even more criticised in radical literature. The difference is that while neoliberalism focuses on capacities, alternative perspectives look at the interactions and distribution of power.

Even though CSOs are not immune from the crisis faced by the state in Africa, transnational donors have strong motivations for engaging them in the design, implementation and monitoring of development assistance. This is because they are perceived to be immune from the contestations of politics and the demands of the impatient public.[7] Since they are unelected 'voices' for the poor, they hardly face the kind of accountability required of even the most authoritarian regimes. They are effectively above public reproach. It is ironic that development agencies who use democratisation and empowerment rhetoric to rationalise their aid conditionalities find it easier to engage with unelected, unaccountable and often undemocratic bodies of professional careerists to promote 'democracy' and popular participation.

The linkage between local CSOs and the transnational community is quite deep. By their very nature, they derive not only their sustenance but also their legitimacy from the donor community. This justifies questions about their role within the political and governance processes in Africa.

[6] *Ibid.*
[7] L. Zivtev, *Doing Good: The Australian NGO Community,* North Stanley NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1991.

The civil society in Nigeria is archetypal of what obtains within Africa. The long struggle against colonial rule and its exclusionary nature gave major fillip to the emergence of modern organised civil society in the country. Even though the colonial state was totalitarian in the way it mediated social relations, thereby leaving little space for autonomous action, it was in the resistance to its very presence that what is now regarded as civil society in Nigeria emerged. The nationalist agitations of the 1940s induced the awakening of collective communal, social and political consciousness that was expressed in numerous organisations participating in the resistance against colonial exploitation. The decolonisation period is thus often described as the initial 'golden age' of civil society in Nigeria.[8]

The end of colonialism paradoxically undermined the autonomous legitimacy of civil society as its organisations, like much of society, fell under the authoritarian control of a state that had been appropriated by the independence elite and the emerging national bourgeoisie. This deliberate effort of the post colonial state in Nigeria to maintain totalitarian control of social relations within its territory was of course helped on by the persistence of primordial identity systems and the fact that civil society had itself, in its anti-colonial social mobilization, appropriated these identities. Post independence political competition was framed by these ethnic identities and as such, it appears civil society was so easily incorporated because it also defined its new mission within the ethnic contours that the political elites used.[9]

By the time the military took over governance, civil society in Nigeria had become immersed in the ethnic coloured competition for access to the state and the resources it

[8] See C. Young, "In Search of Civil Society in Africa", in: J. Harbeson, D. Rothchild and N. Chazan, (eds.), *Civil Society and the State in Africa*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992, pp. 33-50.

[9] There is a rich literature on the implications of ethnicity for Nigeria. See for instance O. Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Press, 1980; R. Joseph R., *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991 and K. Maier, *This House has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*, London: Penguin Books, 2000. For analysis of how civil society was appropriated by regional ethnic based political elites in the immediate post independence period, see M. Abutudu, *The State, Civil Society and the Democratisation Process in Nigeria*, Dakar: CODESRIA Monograph Series, 1/95, 1995.

controlled. The economic crisis of the 1980s and the widespread repression of the successive military regimes helped to reintroduce civil society as a distinct platform for social and political resistance. Agreeing with this point, Obi noted that, it was not until the 1980's that the civil society re-emerged in the public sphere to participate in struggles against military dictatorships, one party rule and of course, the contradictions unleashed by the growing economic crisis and its Structural Adjustment Programmes.[10] In particular, organised civil society in Nigeria came to be symbolized by pro-democracy and human rights organisations which reflected the overriding concern of the Nigerian society at that time. Groups like the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), National democratic Coalition (NADECO), Democratic Alternative (DA) and others like them emerged to lead the resistance against military rule. Within the context of deep economic and environmental crisis in the Niger Delta region, the scope of civil society also expanded to include groups like Environmental Rights Action (ERA) and of course the resource rights movements led by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP).

There is no doubt that these organisations played a prominent role in the eventual collapse of military despotism. These successes nevertheless, it is clear that civil society was far less successful in forcing a reconfiguration of the essential structures of the Nigerian state. Indeed, like the independence elite failed to change the authoritarian foundations of the state, merely effecting the transfer of power from the British to indigenous tyrants, civil society's struggle for democracy appears to have gotten it a pyrrhic victory.[11]

The return of civil rule appears to have spawned a contradictory process within civil society in Nigeria itself. It has induced a new period of collaboration with the state; through

[10] C. Obi, "Civil Society, Good Governance and the Challenge of Regional Security in West Africa: An Overview", in: R. Akindele (ed.). *Civil Society, Good Governance and the Challenges of Regional Security in West Africa,* Lagos: AFSTRAG, 2003, pp. 7-9.

[11] There is much evidence to justify this pessimistic view. See a comprehensive analysis of the first four years of civilian rule in A. Gana and Y. Omelle (eds.), *Democratic Rebirth in Nigeria, Vol. 1, 1999-2003,* New Jersey: Africarus Multimedia, 2005.

so called partnerships and advocacy engagements; while at the same time civil society appears to have regained its boisterousness. This contradiction has been underpinned by a growing de-territorialisation of civil society in Nigeria. This is a deepening of the transnational linkages and networks that not only fund but also set the advocacy agenda for local civil society in the country. While many actors would argue that this is evidence of civil society's growing commitment to global best practices, critics contend that it reflects a loss of autonomy and legitimacy. The intensifying interest of transnational donors in engaging civil society rather than the state has helped, in no small way, to encourage the proliferation of CSOs in the country. With so much money available to fuel advocacy agendas of CSOs, the business of NGOs has become a very popular one indeed in Nigeria.

While questions can be legitimately raised about the normative agenda of civil society in Nigeria, this study focuses instead on the unintended effects of transnational donor funding on civil society operations in Nigeria. This area provides an objective window through which what is effectively one of the most salient features of the modern civil society organisation in Nigeria can be examined. The exact contour of this problem is what is set out in the next section.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

The expansion of civil society in Nigeria is well documented.[12] This expansion is often placed within the context of a supposed democratic rebirth in Africa,[13] and the growing centrality of what Olukoshi described as, 'voluntary, autonomous, professional or non

[12]U. Ohachenu, "Learning from Below: Indigenous Non Governmental Grass Roots Organizations in Governance and Democratisation", In: D. Olowu et. al (eds.) *Governance and Democratisation in Nigeria*, Lagos: Spectrum, 1995; D. Olowu, "Transition to Democratic Governance in Africa", in: D. Olowu et. al (eds.), *Governance and Democratisation in Nigeria*, Lagos: Spectrum, 1995; A. Olukoshi 'Associational Life', *Op. Cit; E.* Osaghae, "The Role of Civil Society in Consolidating Democracy: An African Comparative Perspective", *Africa Insight,* Vol.27, No.1, 1997; A. Ikelegbe, "The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society: Evidence from Nigeria", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2001, pp. 1-24.

[13]R. Fatton, *Predatory Rule: State and Civil Society Rule in Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992; M. Halperin, J. Siegle, and M. Weintein, *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace,* New York: Routledge, 2010.

professional associations',[14] in the democratic movement in African society. Shivji in contrast, situates the rise and prominence of civil society, often conflated as NGOs, in the 'womb of the neoliberal offensive whose aim is as much ideological as economic and political'.[15] Other studies equally demonstrate the linkage between civil society and patterns of capital accumulation.[16]

Studies that highlight the rise of civil society in the democracy project in Africa are often based on the assumption of its positive impacts on the democratisation process. As Tocqueville,[17] Putnam[18] and Warren[19] have shown, it is assumed that civil society does not only facilitate a strong sense of democratic citizenship, but that it also strengthens the capacity of states to confront social challenges. This perspective of civil society, as essentially positive players in the democratic architecture of Africa, is however facing increasingly strident criticism. Ikelegbe for instance, writes of *The Perverse Manifestations of Civil Society in Nigeria.*[20] In that article, he demonstrates the way civil society often appropriates exclusive social identities and undermines, rather than promote, democratic values. Similar points are made by Makumbe,[21] Fatton[22]and Dahrendorf.[23] Fatton in particular, demonstrates the relative correlation between the contours of class and the formation of specific types of civil society in Africa. He identifies the existence of three key types of civil society in Africa, which tend to coincide, rather neatly, with class groupings. These groupings are the predatory bloc, middle sectors, and the subordinate classes. In his

[14]Olukoshi A. (1996). 'Associational Life', *Op. Cit*, p. 474.
[15]I. Shivji, 'The Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit*, p.4.
[16]R. Fatton, "Africa in an age of Democratisation: Civic Limitations of Civil Society", *Africa Studies Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 1995, pp. 67-99.
[17] A. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, New York, Harper and Row, 1966.
[18] R. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.
[19] M. Warren, *Democracy and Association*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2001.
[20] A. Ikelegbe ,'The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society', *Op. Cit*
[21]J. Makumbe, "Is there a Civil Society in Africa?", *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2, 1998, pp. 305-17.
[22] R. Fatton 'Predatory Rule', *Op. Cit.*; R. Fatton, 'Africa in the Age of Democratisation', *Op. Cit.*
[23] R. Dahrendorf, *Life Chance,*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

words, civil society's 'manifest uncertainties derive from the conflicting projects, claims and interests of three major political blocs of classes.[24]

In interrogating the challenges faced by civil society in its attempts to advance democracy, quite a number of studies have engaged the question raised by the role of foreign donors.[25] The focus has been on the impacts of donor funding on the legitimacy of civil society groups and on their patterns of accountability. These issues highlight the implications of civil society organisations' funding sources for their ability to represent the grassroots and play their supposed normative agenda-setting role in the state-society interaction.

As the above shows, literature seems to have focussed on the scope and depth of donor funding while generally ignoring the impact of donor funding on the institutional environment and thus, organizational behaviour of civil society groups, and its implications for their role in democratisation. This critical issue area in the interrogation of civil society activities derives from the assumption that not only is funding important, but that the way funds are accessed, mobilized and evaluated can have significant impacts on these organisations. Indeed, as the New Economics of Organisation (NEO) theory shows, incentives created by contractual relations, transaction costs, property rights and competition for funds could have wide ranging impacts on the organisational behaviour of civil society groups.[26] Cooley and Ron provide a qualitative analysis of this problematic in their study of the impact of market-based funding policies on transnational organisations. They note that attempts by International Organisations (IOs) and International Non Governmental

[24] R. Fatton, 'Africa in the Age of Democratisation', *Op. Cit.*, p.78.
[25] I. Shivji, 'The Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*; A. Iwilade, "Democracy, Civil Society and the Commodification of AIDS", *African Journal of Rhetoric*, Vol. 2, 2010, pp. 133-58; J. Steffek et. al., *Whose Voice? Transnational CSOs and their Relations with Members, Supporters and Beneficiaries*, Transtate Working Papers, No 113, Transformations of the State, Collaborative Research Center 597, University of Bremen, 2010.
[26] O. Williamson, *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets and Relational Contracting*, New York: Free Press, 1985; G. Hodgson, *Economics and Institutions: A Manifesto for a Modern Institutional Economics*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988; N. Douglas, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990 and T. Eggertson, *Economic Behaviour and Institutions*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Organisations (INGOs) to reconcile material pressures, created by market incentives, with normative motivations, often end in outcomes that are 'dramatically at odds with liberal expectations'.[27]

Marketization policies, including competitive bidding and renewable contracting, can be increasingly linked to the organisational insecurity of civil society groups. In the context of the proliferation of civil society since the relative liberalization of the political space in Nigeria in 1999, it can be expected that competition for donor funds will intensify. The methods through which funds are competed for and through which evaluation of fund-use is made, can therefore become central to the survival of civil society organisations and to their ability to retain their normative agendas. Much like firms do in markets, civil society, it would appear, can be expected to increasingly respond to the emerging institutional environment by cost cutting, optimization and perhaps even, illegal tactics, with all its implications for their legitimacy and accountability. This study therefore seeks to focus on the role of marketization policies being increasingly used by donors to determine what civil society organisation and/or what issue area receives funding, rather than on the scope or motive behind the funds. This is important to determine how the institutional context created by marketization of donor funding, impacts on the organisational behaviour of civil society in Nigeria. By identifying the impacts of transnational donor funding on organisational behaviour, the study seeks to demonstrate the linkage between the political economy of transnational donor action and the operational challenges of civil society in Nigeria. This is a much neglected area of the civil society discourse in Nigeria. The study therefore fills an important gap in the literature on civil society in Nigeria.

[27]A. Cooley and J. Ron, "The NGO Scramble: Organisational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action", *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2002, p.6.

1.3 Research Questions

Arising from the above, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

(a) Who are the key external donors and what supports do they offer to civil society organisations in Nigeria?

(b) What are the key engagement strategies donors use to engage civil society organisations in Nigeria?

(c) What are the impacts of transnational donor strategies on the activities of civil society organisation?

(d) What are the implications of external donor involvement with civil society for democratisation in Nigeria?

1.4 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

(a) identify the key external donors and their supports to civil society organisations in Nigeria.

(b) examine the key strategies of engagement by external donors vis-a-vis civil society agencies in Nigeria.

(c) evaluate the impacts of transnational donor strategies on the activities of civil organisations; and

(d) examine the implications of external donor involvement with civil society for democratisation in Nigeria.

1.5 Research Assumptions

This study is based on the following assumptions:

(i) The proliferation of civil society groups in the light of political liberalization will significantly intensify competition for funds from foreign donors and increase organisational insecurity for all the groups.

(ii) The marketization of many donor funding programmes will generate incentives that encourage competition rather than efficiency. This will have negative impacts on civil society operations.

1.6 Research Methodology

Data will be obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data will include: in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The study will involve a purposive sample of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), transnational donors and academics. In-depth interviews will be conducted among selected leaders of CSOs in Nigeria that receive a significant amount of funding from foreign donor agencies and whose main work is concentrated in policy advocacy. The focus on CSOs involved in advocacy is informed by their involvement in the democratic policy process and the fact that they are largely donor funded. CSOs will be drawn from thematic clusters of organisations involved in gender advocacy, electoral and democratic governance advocacy, HIV/AIDS advocacy and civil society capacity building. These specific clusters are selected for their high incidences of transnational donor engagement and funding. Sample will include organisations like Open Society Institute of West Africa (OSIWA-Nigeria), Women's Rights Advancement Protection Alternative (WRAPA), Media Rights Agenda (MRA), Alliances for Africa (AFA), Electoral Reform Network (ERN), Rights Monitoring Group (RMG), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) and Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC). The sample will also include academics and grants and programme officers of donor agencies with offices in Nigeria like the World Bank, Ford

Foundation, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The choice of this category of experts and practitioners in civil society work is informed by the fact that they are knowledgeable about the inner workings of donor funding and can identify the institutional constraints and incentives faced by both donors and CSOs. They can also identify specific funding criteria and strategies, and provide insights into how it impacts on organisational behaviour. Focus Group Discussions will be carried out with officials of this select group of CSOs, academics and donor agencies. Secondary data will be mainly from extant literature, the internet, policy briefs of CSOs and official publications of donor agencies and government. Data collected will be analyzed using descriptive and content analysis.

For the civil society organisations, it is important to be cautious about the possibility of receiving inaccurate, distorted or outright false information. This is critical because if the hypothesis of marketization generating incentives that drive civil society to desperate organisational behaviour is correct, the sample organisations may not necessarily be expected to provide an accurate account of our subject of enquiry. In the light of this, the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions will have to be carefully evaluated to read between the lines. To make up for this possibility, a mix of junior and senior staff of the sample organisations will be employed for both the FGDs and the in-depth interviews. The report of auditors, project proposals and project reports will also be useful to identify areas of possible distortion.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study focuses particularly on NGOs involved in advocacy programmes. This is informed by their specific relevance to the democratisation process through engagement with

the state on governance issues. These organisations are also particularly well placed to engage donors, and they do, therefore providing rich samples to address the implications of donor funding for organisational behaviour.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study is significant first for its timely nature. By interrogating the impact of transnational donor funding on civil society operations at a time when the proliferation of these organisations, and indeed the donors available to provide support for their programmes, has become a critical discourse area in the democratisation debate in Nigeria, the study plugs crucially into contemporary literature. The study will also provide a platform through which civil society behaviour can be both be explained and predicted through materialist political economy and in verifiable empirical terms. This is important to draw a connection between not merely civil society and patterns of class formation, consolidation and interaction within the national boundaries, but also between civil society and the transnational donor community who ultimately set the advocacy agenda.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

1.9.1 Civil Society

Civil society, like most social science phenomena, has been a rather fluid concept. In a definition that largely captures the liberal conception of the term, Lyman Sargent describes civil society as the 'largely voluntary associations and interactions found in the family, clubs, neighbourhood associations, religious organizations, and so forth that operate outside the formal political system'.[28]This conception of civil society derives from the assumption that human societies can be divided into three, sometimes even two, neat compartments. These are the state, the market and the civil society. This implies that all forms of interaction outside

[28] L. Sargent, *Contemporary Political Ideologies: A Comparative Analysis*, Belmont: Wadsworth, 2009, p. 92.

of the state (the public sphere) and the market fall within the space that is civil and within which people learn tolerance, the process of winning and losing elections, living with rules determined by the group, and other democratic values. This is a profoundly optimistic view of civil society that is not shared by this study.

Challenges to the rather exaggerated perception of civil society as positive contributors to the emergence and consolidation of democratic values have been quite intense in the literature. The key areas of contention have included the supposed dichotomy between the state, market and civil society; the supposed emergence of a global civil society capable of articulating the views and protecting the interests of a 'global citizen', and the potential of civil society being appropriated by dominant classes. There is also a lacuna in appropriately describing civil society in complex non European societies like Africa. This study adopts a radical view of civil society. It is, in reality, difficult, if not outright impossible, to neatly separate the state, market and 'society'. The social forces that control and manipulate these spheres are often the same. Therefore, underpinning that space referred to as civil society is the interactions of power that determine the nature of economic production; its ownership and control, and this in turn determines the character of state and those who control it. In this wise, it is difficult to see a distinct line of separation between the state and the market or the market and 'civil society'.

Therefore, in this study, civil society refers to the realm of organised social life that is voluntary, associational and nongovernmental; which defines itself by a shared set of values, identities or interests and which relies on some sort of social mobilization to achieve its goals. This definition allows us to include within 'civil society', organisations that operate in collaboration with or opposition to the state, regardless of methods. Any attempt to exclude organisations involved in violent contestations with the state, for instance, raises a normative rather than a pragmatic question. The definition adopted above therefore allows us to accept

the reality of civil society's positive and perverse manifestations without doing any analytic damage to the study. This is after all, not an ethical evaluation of civil society.

1.9.2 Transnational Donors

'Transnational', according to Richter, Berkin and Muller-Schmid, means, in effect, abandoning the concept of the nation. Yet 'trans' means, first and foremost, nothing more than 'beyond', and 'transnational' must therefore be understood to mean 'beyond the national'. The word means something negative, something open, without attributing any concrete content to 'beyond'. Unlike globalization, the concern here is the organization of spheres of political influence and power potentials. Given the openness of the concept, it is not possible to make an unequivocal statement on what or whose sovereignty is at issue, i.e. who is to exercise power. Transnationality must thus be seen as referring to the scope of political action and power structures beyond the nation.[29] In the light of this, transnational donors, as operationalized in this study, refer to funding agencies or organizations based outside Nigeria, who provide resources, whether financial or otherwise, to Nigerian organisations, for the purpose of aiding, articulating and advancing certain defined interests.

1.9.3 Democratisation

Our definition of democratisation derives from Claude Ake's treatment of the subject. He argues that, for Africa, democracy has no meaning if it does not involve concrete economic gains. His approach questions the prevailing orthodoxy in the global democracy movement which has reduced popular participation in the democratic process to the mere election of representatives. In his opinion, the African conception of democratic participation

[29]I. Richter, S. Berkin and R. Muller-Schmid , "Introduction", in: I. Richter, S. Berkin, and R. Muller-Schmid, (eds.), *Building a Transnational Civil Society: Global issues and Global Actors,* Hampshire: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006, p.9. A related definition can also be found in E. Erman and A. Uhlin "Democratic Credentials of Transnational Actors: An Introduction", in: E. Erman and A. Uhlin (eds.), *Legitimacy Beyond the State: Re-examining the Democratic Credentials of Transnational Actors*, Hampshire: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010, pp. 3-15.

is 'quite unlike the western notion of the occasional opportunity to choose, affirm or dissent. It is rather the active involvement in a process, that of setting goals and making decisions'.[30]

Democratisation is therefore conceptualized in this study as the process through which the institutions of state, the distribution of power and resources are put under popular control for the purpose of securing not only abstract rights but also concrete benefits for the population.

1.9.4 Transactional Values

Transactional values refer to a system of beliefs that is driven principally by market based considerations. Unlike social values that are framed by a collective imaginary of what is ideal and 'good', transactional values are underpinned primarily by notions of individualism and competitive relations. This value system is at the heart of capitalism.

1.9.5 Commodification

Commodification refers to the process through which transactional values gain primacy in the exchange and distribution of services that are otherwise freely and socially distributed.

1.10 Expected Contributions to Knowledge

This study will highlight the relevance of the institutional environment to civil society operations and demonstrate the way transnational donor funding impacts on it. It will also provide a critical analysis of the implications of civil society's institutional constraints or incentives for its role in the democratisation process in Nigeria.

It is expected that this study will also demonstrate the growing use of market based principles by donor organisations in their distributions of funds to civil society groups in Nigeria. This trend should clearly increase organisational insecurity for civil society groups

[30] C. Ake, "The Unique Case of African Democracy", *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 1993, p. 243.

in Nigeria in such a way that will limit incentives for broad coordination of action, encourage opportunistic behaviour by civil society organisations and reduce their efficiency. These areas have significant impacts on civil society operations.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited first by time. It is near impossible to fully interrogate the whole gamut of transnational supports to civil society in Nigeria within the short time frame allowed by an M Sc. Thesis. I have therefore limited my examination principally to funding related support. While attempt will be made to generate data as accurately as possible, it should be noted that expectations of full disclosure by civil society organisations of their funding structures may be rather naive. The method of research and data analysis is therefore inevitably qualitative. This will allow me sift through inconsistent data and rely heavily on deductions from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

CHAPTER TWO

ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes a Marxist political economy approach to the study of linkages between transnational donor funding and civil society operations in Nigeria. It also uses this approach to demonstrate the linkage between civil society's own challenges and its relative weakness advancing democracy. It is contended that civil society behaviour can be understood and explained by materialist analysis and an examination of the incentives and constraints produced by the transnational sector's institutional environment. In the light of this, two main theoretical propositions are advanced. First, given the growing number of civil society organizations occasioned by an opening up of the political space in 1999, there is bound to be increased uncertainty, competition, and insecurity for all organizations. Second, the marketization of many donor activities-particularly the use of competitive tenders and renewable contracting- generates incentives that encourage competition rather than efficiency. This competition, in the context of a socio-political and economic environment that is permissive of corruption, is likely to encourage civil society actors to further opportunistic interests thereby deepening the patterns of domination and exploitation that underpin the super-structures of society. This perspective is also placed within the broad context of economic crisis that puts pressure on all social formations so much so that it encourages the emergence and/or consolidation of shadow economies and corrupt capital accumulation. This approach is considered appropriate because the problem being engaged straddles the realm of politics and economy and can only be properly understood if viewed as such.

Political economy as a theoretical tool for the scientific interrogation of social phenomena and as the context within which socio-economic activities and forces operate has, according to Tade Akin Aina, 'regained widespread currency in the literature of contemporary academic social science'.[1] This method of analysis gives primacy to material conditions, particularly economic factors, in explaining social life; emphasises the dynamic character of reality and takes systematic account of the interactions of the different elements of social life, especially the economic, social and political structures.[2]

While the different variations of political economy tend to thrive on these basic assumptions, there are fundamental differences. Robert Gilpin argues that there are three variations to the theory of political economy. These are the liberal, mercantilist and Marxist conceptions. These three prevailing formulations of political economy differ fundamentally on the nature of economic relations, the goal of economic activity, the assumed nature of the actors in international economic relations and the relationship between economics and politics.[3]While Liberal political economy assumes that international economic relations is essentially harmonious, mercantilists and Marxists view it as essentially conflictual. The liberal view was given its first full expression by Adam Smith who contended that there is an underlying identity of national and cosmopolitan interests in a free market, and as such, the state should refrain from interfering with economic exchanges across borders. This is what Kindleberger refers to as 'the cosmopolitan interests of the national form'.[4]It is also at the

[1] T. Aina "What is Political Economy?", in: Ajayi et.al, *The Nigerian Economy: A Political Economy Approach*, Essex: Longman, 1986, pp. 1-15.
[2] For clearer analysis see C. Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa,* Lagos: Longman, 1981.
[3] R. Gilpin "The Political Economy of the Multinational Corporation: Three Contrasting Perspectives", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 70, 1976, pp. 184-91.
[4] C. Kindleberger *Power and Money: The Economics of International Politics and the Politics of International Economics,* New York: Basic Books, 1970.

heart of triumphalist literature that greeted the collapse of the cold war[5] and of talks of the emergence of a 'global civil society'.[6]

The Marxist perspective of political economy is however fundamentally different in its world view. It emerged from the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels during the era of classical political economy in the 19th century. According to Bade Onimode, the material basis for this new revolutionary social science was the industrial revolution which 'generated corporate capitalism and the first industrial working class and its historic struggle against the industrial bourgeoisie or capitalists'.[7] So from the onset, Marxist political economy had been rooted in a historical analysis of social interactions that are both conflictual and exploitative. Marxist political economy clearly does not envisage a society of harmonious parts; rather, it highlights the expressions of power in social interactions and places emphasis on the sociological foundations of economic relations. As Onimode describes it, there is no 'useful economics without an analysis of the sociological relations that structure the economic system'.[8]

In the context of our study, this mode of analysis is very relevant. For instance, by raising questions about the nature of control and dependence that underpins the interactions between transnational donors and civil society in Nigeria, Marxist political economy allows us to focus on the implications of transnational interventions on civil society autonomy and what role this plays in framing its roles in the democratization process. In particular, since

[5] F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man,* London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992.
[6] The assumption of the emergence of a 'global civil society' derives from a perception of international politics as essentially harmonious; a view that ignores deep divisions like class and the essentially exploitative nature of relations. See for instance H. Anheier et. al., (eds.),'Civil Society', *Op. Cit.* Other works that have explained civil society in this context include K. Tsutsui, "Global Civil Society and Ethnic Social movements in the Contemporary World", *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2004, pp. 63-87 and K. Tsutsui and C. Wotipka "Global Civil Society and the International Human Rights Movement: Citizen Participation in Human Rights International Nongovernmental Organisations", *Social Forces*, Vol. 83, No. 2, 2004, pp. 587-620.
[7] B. Onimode, *An Introduction to Marxist Political Economy*, London: Zed Books, 1985, p. 27. Similar conclusions are reached in J. Ihonvbere, *The Political Economy of Crisis and Underdevelopment in Africa: Selected Works of Claude Ake,* Lagos: JAD Publishers, 1989.
[8] B. Onimode, 'An Introduction to Marxist Political Economy', *Ibid*, p.27.

Marxist political economy draws attention to the relationship between class relations and modes of production, it will allow us to place the transnational donor-CSO linkages in Nigeria within the broader context of economic crisis and the patterns of relations within the international political economy. Our theoretical assumptions, as noted above, derive from this conception of the sociological foundations of economic production and serve as a useful framework from which our research questions may be interrogated.

2.2 Literature Review

This section provides a thematic review of extant literature on transnational donor funding and its implications for civil society in Africa. This method is important because it allows for an analytical mapping of the key issues and discourses that drive the debate on transnational donor engagement with Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Three thematic sections have been identified under which the literature can be mapped. These are (a) civil society in the African public and private spheres, (b) civil society, governance and democratisation and (c) transnational donor funding and civil society operations. It should be noted however, that these thematic sections are not mutually exclusive compartments. There is an overlapping of the literature that allows for a more robust analysis of the role of donors and funding processes in shaping the character and goals of civil society within Nigeria. The correlation of the three broad themes gives important insights into the research issues this study engages.

2.2.1 Civil Society in the African public and private spheres

While providing a conceptual analysis of civil society in Africa, literature is quite rich in perspectives of civil society that draw attention to the problematique of navigation between the public and private spheres. Placing civil society within this framework allows an understanding of its essential character and the context within which it operates in modern society. Habermas' work on the public sphere appears to be a takeoff point for literature in

this regard. His concept of the public sphere was developed within the context of the transition from the stage of liberal market capitalism of the 19th century to the stage of monopoly and organized capitalism in the 20th century. So, from the outset, conceptions of the dichotomy or fusion of the public and private spheres had been framed within the context of economic production[9]. For Habermas, the public emerged from the fusion of private individuals. This fusion, in the eighteenth century, was such that there was a line between state and society that presupposed a strict separation of the two realms. Private people therefore gathered together as a public to articulate the needs of society vis-a-vis the state which was itself considered a part of the private realm[10]. Changes in the structure of production however expanded the public sphere so much so that conflicts, formerly forced into the private realm, emerged, thereby robbing it of its cohesion. With broader and more complex methods of production, distribution and exchange of economic goods, the market invariably became incapable of regulating itself, and the state had to be increasingly called upon to mediate what were previously private economic concerns. This conception of the evolution of bourgeois capitalist society has become a key foundation for the literature that engages the problematic space of the private and public spheres and it provides important insights into the origin of civil society.

Transformations of the state in the immediate post cold war international system, for instance, also offers new ways with which what is referred to as the public sphere can be conceptualized. By focussing on how pressures on the state, both from forces below and above it, tend to modify its capacity to frame the public sphere, literature provides rich insights into the place of civil society in the governance process. This growing relevance of what has been described as voluntary associations arising out of the 'self organisational

[9]J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Translated by T. Burger), Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1989.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

efforts of autonomous social forces'[11] or as 'the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and that is bound by a legal order or a shared set of collective rules'[12], reflects the transformations going on in both the territorial (state) and de-territorialized (international) contexts of politics.

Africa in particular, has been impacted significantly by the dynamic international environment and its growing emphasis on non-state actors. In understanding the changes that arose and which continue to emerge in the post cold war environment in Africa, Christopher Clapham[13] notes that insights can be gleaned from the cold war international system itself. He argues that the failure of the undemocratic consensus of neo-patrimonialism, which secured a stable international context for Africa's cold war dictators, for instance, was largely responsible both for the intensification of repression and the spread of dissent[14] on the continent. This argument is a throwback to contentions of the continued salience of the colonial experience in the contemporary issues faced by Africa[15]. Clapham contends however, that despite the continued salience of colonial and post colonial history to the dynamics of African politics, it appears that old conventions no longer seem to apply. He points at the open military interventions by some African states in other African states in the 1990s as evidence of an increasingly transnational perspective of international politics that calls to question old conceptions of sovereignty. One of the key features of the Africa that emerged at the end of the cold war was also, according to Clapham, weak states perched 'precariously on shifting societies, bobbing about on currents of a globalized economy'.[16]The weakness of these states is partly a consequence of as well as a catalyst for the emergence of

[11] A. Olukoshi, 'Associational Life', *Op. Cit.*
[12] L. Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, p. 221.
[13] See C. Clapham, "Discerning the New Africa", *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2,1998, pp. 263-70.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 264.
[15] See for instance S. Amin, "Africa: Living on the Fringe?" *Africa Insight*, Vol. 31 No. 2, 2001, 3-7.
[16] C. Clapham, 'Discerning the New Africa', *Op. Cit.*, p.269.

increasingly strong 'autonomous' social forces, intent on undermining the ability of the state to control the public sphere and determine the overall direction of social relations.

In an assessment that encourages a historically informed analysis of state transformations, Roland Axtmann[17] notes how changes in the nature of international politics have forced a reconceptualization of the state. These changes, he argues, may be framed in the contexts of the conflict between nationalism and multiculturalism; the internationalization of the state and of geopolitical transformations. In his work, Axtmann provides a sketch of what he considers the territorialized concepts of the state. This concept is rooted in the Westphalian perception of state and its role in society. He identified a unitary sovereign will, a homogenous nation-state, popular sovereignty and the global spread of the nation-state idea as key elements in the evolution of the territorial state[18].

However, the spread of multi-cultural societies, particularly in Europe and the US, forced states to adopt assimilation policies that began to highlight the growing irrelevance of the old nation-state ideal.[19]The cultural heterogeneity of plural societies that emerge out of these conscious nation building efforts is, in the words of Axtmann, 'complemented by the state's decline in its capacity to act as a moral or moralizing agent'[20]. One can indeed place the expansion of civil society within the context of this emerging multicultural character of the state and the varied attempts of social formations to respond to its dynamics. Axtmann opines for instance, that this development 'creates the political space for "civil society", the "third sector", "private interest government", "policy communities", "policy networks" and

[17] R. Axtmann, "The State of the State: The Model of the Modern State and its Contemporary Transformation", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 2004, pp. 259-79.
[18] *Ibid*, pp. 259-64.
[19] There is ample literature on this trend; particularly the inappropriateness of attempting to melt minorities into a dominant culture, rather than encourage their independent survival within the emerging national frameworks. See for instance B. Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000; A. Gagnon and J. Tully, (eds.), *Multinational Democracies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; P. Kelly, *Multiculturalism Reconsidered: "Culture and Equality" and its Critics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002; C. Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
[20] R. Axtmann, 'The State of the State'., *Op. Cit.*, p.267.

nongovernmental organisations (NGOs)'[21] to emerge and thrive. In this political space, states have either completely transferred responsibility for managing economic and social relations to parastatal, nongovernmental, private or commercial actors, or are exercising "public" functions in "partnership" with these actors.

The consequences of this transformation of the role of the state and its interactions with social formations within and outside its borders for the democracy project would seem obvious. Axtmann notes, for instance, that 'as a result of a high level of social differentiation and the increasing transnationalization of a wide range of societal interactions, the effective political solution of ever more societal problems is being sought at a level above, below or outside'[22] the state. This tendency to privilege forces below or beyond the state in the delivery of public goods is at the heart of what Sangeeta Kamat refers to as *The Privatization of Public Interest.*[23]In that study, Kamat argues that the globalization of NGOs is reflective of the new policy consensus that they are de facto agents of democracy rather than products of a thriving democratic culture. Similar arguments have been raised by many other scholars in different contexts.[24]This creates a perception of the role of the state that encourages sidelining it in favour of civil society. Privileging NGOs for the provision of public goods, Kamat argues, implies a privatization of what is essentially a public interest. In the peculiar case of Africa, this privatization comes with transnational linkages and interactions that deepen the democratic deficit and raises questions about the autonomy of its social and political formations.

[21]R. Axtmann, 'The State of the State', *Op. Cit.*, p.270.
[22] R. Axtmann, 'The State of the State', *Ibid.*
[23]S. Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest: Theorizing NGO Discourse in a Neoliberal Age", *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2004, pp. 155-76.
[24] See for instance J. Edwards, *Future Positive: International Cooperation in the 21st Century,* Washington: Earthscan Publications, 2000 and J. Nye and J. Donahue, *Governance in a Globalizing World,* Washington D.C: Brookings Institutions Press, 2000.

Kamat's study also provides useful insights into the underlying neoliberal conception of political and economic life, a corroboration of Habermas[25] and Freund[26] and the inevitable transnational linkages it imposes within the context of a globalized world. According to him, 'the early history of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) that signified the birth of pluralist democratic cultures in many postcolonial countries stands largely compromised today in the current policy environment of free market reform and the dismantling of social democratic states'. The consequences of adjustment have included cutbacks on state spending and a corresponding increase in the presence of civil society organisations. This has led some critics to argue that this was analogous to 'franchising the state'.[27]

Kamat also draws attention to the role of international organisations in promoting this trend. International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have been especially active in the NGO sector. According to Kamat, while they, on the one hand, recommend the withdrawal of state support from the social sector, they allocate aid to NGOs to engage in that very same sector. This has led to widespread accusations that the growth of NGOs within Africa has been largely induced by external policy decisions[28]. By drawing attention to the role of international bodies like the United Nations, through its agencies like UNDP and UNIFEM, Kamat demonstrates both the widespread popularity of NGOs and the degree of transnational coordination that promotes their dynamism. It is thus clear that the NGO phenomena must be theorized in the context of a global political economy that engenders 'an overall restructuring of public good and private interest'.[29] The NGO debate however tends to focus on the state while obfuscating the linkage between NGOs and the capitalist economy. The tendency,

[25] J. Habermas, 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere', *Op. Cit.*
[26] J. Freund, *L'essence du politique*, Paris: Editions Sirey, 1978.
[27] See for instance, G. Wood, "States without Citizens: The Problem of the Franchise State", in: D Hulme and M. Edwards (eds.), *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close the Comfort?,* New York: St. Martin Press, 2000.
[28] S. Kamat, 'The Privatization of Public Interest', *Op. Cit.*, p. 160.
[29] *Ibid*

among NGO analysts, according to Kamat, is to 'disengage from the structural reality of civil society, and locate NGOs/civil society as the 'third sector', separate from the market and the state[30]. This creates analytical difficulties and disguises the extent of cooperation and indeed conflict that attends the overlapping spaces that straddle the civil society/state and international contexts.

Arnaud Sales illuminates this problematic by interrogating power structures and interactions within the context of the relationship of the private, public and civil spheres of participation. The study provides important insights into how, in contemporary societies, civil society is related to other social fields and the implications of this relationship for understanding the dynamics of both the public and private spheres[31].

Discourses on the supposed dichotomy between the public and private spheres tend to be expressed in the sense of perpetual opposition between state and civil society. This indicates a tendency to confuse the private sphere for civil society and bundle heterogeneous elements such as the family, social movements, political parties, multinational corporations or indeed any other thing not directly managed by the state within that all encompassing space referred to as private. Underlining this perspective is a dualistic model of state/civil society which Sales challenges in his work. This model assumes a neat division of the public (state) and private sphere (often conflated with civil society). At its core lies the influence of the debate around 'neoliberal themes of privatization, denationalization, deregulation and destatization' which tends to ignore, in its interrogation of the private sphere or civil society, reference to other economic or socio-cultural systems of power and domination.[32]The dualistic model interestingly, according to Sales, enjoys popularity within left-wing scholarship, who, rather than ignoring the linkage between state and civil society, point at

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 158.
[31]A. Sales, 'The Private, the Public and Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*
[32]*Ibid*, p. 296.

interactions of conflict and antagonism between them. In spite of this rather different focus however, both perspectives still assume a dual model of distinct spheres, in conflict or cooperation, but never overlapping.

Whereas scholars like Julien Freund envisage a distinction between the private and public spheres only connected by what he refers to as 'categories of command',[33]others like Jurgen Habermas, as earlier discussed, identify the progressive intermeshing of these spheres and the emergence of 'a re-politicised social sphere'[34] that 'could not be subsumed under the categories of public and private from either a sociological or legal perspective'.[35]Sales' work clearly agrees with Habermas that there is an intermeshing of both realms of social and political participation but challenges the dualistic premise from which it begins. He notes for instance, that the concentration and centralization of capital have enabled many modern private capitalist concerns like multinationals to become centres of power and therefore become increasingly involved in the political or public sphere. As Fossaert notes, they have become, as a consequence of their roles in formulating public policy, 'bearers of statist virtualities'.[36]This calls to question perspectives of distinct spheres of public and private engagement separate from the economy. The unique contribution of Arnauld Sales to this important area of the civil society discourse is perhaps to be located in the insights given into the role of civil society as the realm of public-opinion formation.[37]In this, he places the discourse within the broad and complex context of modern life. He notes that participation in the political process, read as the public sphere, is often contingent on the very act of participation in social life. He gives, for instance, the examples of an ecological movement which may criticize the way multinationals operate or a feminist group which may question

[33] See his analysis of these spheres in J. Freund, '*L'essence du politique*', *Op. Cit.*
[34] J. Habermas, 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere', *Op. Cit.*, p. 30, 276.
[35] A. Sales, 'The Private, Public and Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*, p.300.
[36]R. Fossaert, *La Societe/4. Les Etats*, Paris: Editions Du Seuil, 1981.
[37] A. Sales, 'The Private, Public and Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*, p.307.

gendered social roles and identities. Their criticism may not necessarily be intended to participate in the political process, but, in the very act of advancing social opinions, they inevitably frame discourses on democracy, human rights, poverty and so on. These issues draw them into the public sphere. Implicit in this analysis is the intermeshing of private and public realms and the shifting contours and boundaries that define them; an argument quite in line with Habermas.

In the African context, it is important to put into the private-public sphere dichotomy, perspectives of transnational influences that frame policy discourses and inevitably, public decision making. In this context, many scholars have raised questions about the implications of foreign aid on statehood in Africa. They have pointed out that foreign aid gets between the state and the demands of its internal constituencies; that it is an 'unearned' source of income, similar to rents from mineral wealth and thus likely to have the same effect on African economies;[38]and that because of it, African states typically never acquire the organized capacity to raise revenue through direct taxation neither do they establish the tradition of providing public goods in exchange for taxes or fees. Thus, foreign aid stifles the very values of responsive and efficient government it is meant to foster.[39]

This connection between the public/private spheres and the transnational context is crucial to this study. Indeed, it is apposite to place this study within the conceptual space that emerges from the interaction between the transnational sphere and the domestic. It is in this critical area of social, political and economic engagement that civil society has become intensely active. It is also in this area that its autonomy and relevance is being questioned. This will be discussed extensively within the third thematic cluster. It is however necessary to

[38] See for instance M. Moore, "Death without Taxes: Democracy, State Capacity and Aid Dependence in the Fourth World", in: M. Robinson and G. White (eds.), *The Democratic Developmental State,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 84-121.

[39] A. Goldsmith, "Foreign Aid and Statehood in Africa", *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 1, 2001, pp. 123-48.

note that the 'national' public sphere is no longer a centre of discourse for local actors alone, rather, it is being shaped by the changes being wrought by globalization and the increasing relevance of forces beneath, above and beyond the state. This is more so for Africa given its peculiar place in the power structures of international politics.[40]

The changes in the transnational and international environments have been crucial to the emergence of civil society as critical actors in the governance process in Africa. Even though elements of an associational life had always existed in Africa, the emergence of modern NGOs is linked more to transnational influences than anything in Africa's material history, except to the extent that this history is itself largely a product of foreign contacts.[41]

Civil society's linkage to the transnational donor environment cannot but be placed within the context of the relations of dependency and marginalization that defines Africa's connection with the global community. This has ensured that governance and policy processes, an important component of which civil society appears to have become, is increasingly moored within the paradigms, concepts and values developed in the west. It is to this critical relationship between state, civil society and governance processes that we now turn.

2.2.2 Civil Society, Governance and Democratisation

This area of literature is about the most deeply researched within the civil society discourse. While some see civil society's role in the governance process as essentially

[40] Literature is rich about the place of Africa in the international political economy and the implications for its social formations. See for instance, C. Ake, 'A Political Economy of Africa', *Op. Cit.;* C Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, New York, Brookings Institute, 1995; S. Amin, 'Africa: Living on the Fringe?' *Op. Cit.*; A. Olukoshi, "Globalization, Equity and Development: Some Reflections on the African Experience", *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2004, pp. 23-42.; P. Bond, *Looting Africa: The Economics of Exploitation*, London: Zed Books, 2006; J. Saul, *Development after Globalization: Theory and Practice for the Embattled South in a New Imperial Age*, London: Zed Books, 2006 and A. Amsden, *Escape from Empire: The Developing World's Journey through Heaven and Hell*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007.

[41] See analysis of the origins of modern NGOs and civil society in I. Shivji, *The Silences in the NGO Discourse: The Role and future of NGOs in Africa*, Pambazuka Special Report 14, London: Fahamu Ltd, 2006 and F. Manji and C. O'Coill, "The Missionary Position: NGOs and Development in Africa", *International Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3, 2002, pp. 567-83.

positive,[42] others contend that civil society's many configurations may actually undermine rather than promote democracy.[43]Those who assume a positive correlation between civil society and democratic governance argue that civil society does not only facilitate a strong sense of democratic citizenship, but that it also strengthens the capacity of states to confront social challenges. It is also often argued that the emergence of modern democracy, or more appropriately 'the third wave of democratization' in Africa, as Huntington[44] argues, is more or less a product of the explosion in the western model of the associational or civic life.[45] There appears to be a consensus in the literature that civil society has seen an explosion in both qualitative and quantitative terms and that, in all its heterogeneity, it is critical to the democratisation process. The literature addresses different dimensions of this explosion but there is significant divergence as to the implications of this for democratisation and governance.

The civil society discourse also appears to be increasingly placed within a highly transnational or de-territorialized frame that reflects changes in the nature of international

[42]See for instance studies by Tocqueville, Warren and Putnam which tend to take civil society's positive role within the governance process for granted. A. Tocqueville, 'Democracy in America', *Op. Cit.*; R. Putnam 'Making Democracy Work', *Op. Cit.*; and M. Warren, 'Democracy and Association', *Op. Cit.* Other studies that view civil society's contributions in the democratization process as positive include . J. Howell and J. Pearce, *Civil Society and Development.* London: Lynne Rienner, 2001; D. Hilhorst, *The Real World of NGOs: Discourses, Diversity and Development,* London: Zed, 2003; H. Anheir, *Civil Society: Measurement, Evaluation, Policy*, London: Civicus, 2004; I. Gyimah-Boadi, *Democratic Reform in Africa*, London: Lynne Reinner, 2004; P. Burnell and P. Calvert, (eds.), *Civil Society in Democratization*, London: Frank Cass, 2005.

[43] Assumptions of civil society's positive role in the democratization process have been challenged by critics who examine, for instance, its connection to dominant classes and its potential to promote primordial identities, to devastating effect. See for instance, R. Fatton 'Predatory Rule' *Op. Cit.*; R. Fatton, 'Africa in the Age of Democratization', *Op. Cit.*; J. Makumbe, 'Is there a Civil Society in Africa?', *Op. Cit.*; N. Bermeo and P. Nord, *Civil Society before Democracy,* New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000; A. Brysk, "Democratizing Civil Society in Latin America", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2000, pp. 151-65; A. Ikelegbe 'The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society', *Op. Cit,*; M. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and Genocide*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001; A. Armony, *The Dubious Link: Civic Engagement and Democratization,* Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.

[44] S. Huntington *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century*, Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

[45] See for instance, K. Newton, "Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society and Democracy", *International Political Science Review,* Vol. 22, No. 2, 2000, pp. 201-14; R. Tusalem, "A Boon or Bane? The Role of Civil Society in Third and Fourth Wave Democracies", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2007, pp. 361-86 and M. Halperin, J. Siegle and M. Weintein, *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace,* New York: Routledge, 2010.

politics. The perception of the transformations in international and transnational politics is founded on concern about the implications of ongoing changes for global stability.[46]In this regard, the civil society discourse has become so de-territorialized to the point that Anheier confidently speaks of a global civil society.[47]The literature on civil society's relationship with social movements also reflects this de-territorialized framing of the discourse as shown by how protest movements at both the World Economic Forum in New York City and the deliberations at the World Social Forum in Porto Allegre are put under the heading "Grassroots Globalization".[48]In those articles, both authors make it clear that they consider these very separate activities, attended by very few of the really poor or marginalized, as expressions of grassroots voices. So, it would appear that in a national or local context, grassroots means one thing, and in the context of global activism, quite another. This creates conceptual and analytical problems in the attempts to understand grassroots movements at the transnational level or to deconstruct their linkages to civil society.

The difficulties in understanding the nature of civil society within the context of a rapidly changing world is further driven by ruptures in the study of identity, citizenship and political participation; all of which are important for situating the civil society concept in Africa.[49]These challenges notwithstanding, there is ample literature on the role of civil

[46] See M. Finger, "NGOs and Transformation: Beyond Social Movement Theory", in: T. Princen and M. Finger (eds.) *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and Global*, London: Routledge, 1994; S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, London: Simon and Schuster, 1997; A. Oyebade and A. Alao (eds.), *Africa after the Cold War: Changing Perspectives on Security*, Asmara: Africa World Press, 1998; M. Kaldor, (ed.), *Global Insecurity: Restructuring the Global Military Sector,* London: Pinter, 2000 and S. Kay, *Global Security in the Twenty First Century: The Quest for Power and the Search for Peace*, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006.

[47] H. Anheier, et. al. (eds.), 'Civil Society', *Op. Cit.* Other works that have explained civil society in this context include K. Tsutsui, 'Global Civil Society', *Op. Cit.* and K. Tsutsui and C. Wotipka, 'Global Civil Society and the International Human Rights Movement', *Op. Cit.*

[48] See articles like K. Bruno, *The whole world was watching: New York stages a peaceful protest against the World Economic Forum.* CorpWatch. www.corpwatch.org, February 6, 2002 accessed April 12, 2010 and J. Karliner, *Porto Allegre: Globalizing hope.* CorpWatch. www.corpwatch.org, February 6, 2002 accessed April 12, 2010.

[49]These three concepts also now face significant uncertainties in the way they are conceptualized and contextualized in a globalizing world. They also raise new questions about the nature of democracy and the implications of specific civil society expressions for its survival. For Citizenship, see R. Bellamy, *Citizenship: A*

society in the governance processes in Africa. The central focus has been on whether it plays a positive or negative role and what key features define its contours and nature.

Ikelegbe[50] contends that while civil society may play positive roles in the democratisation project, its manifestations may also be perverse. He traced the emergence of civil society in Nigeria to five problems and policies. These were the pervasive economic crisis that raised the restiveness of the population, the weaknesses of the state that increasingly delegitimized it and exposed it to challenges from below and the debates in 1985 about the IMF loans which provided an occasion for civil associational life to flourish. The other two factors identified by Ikelegbe are the introduction of structural adjustment in 1986 and the 1993 annulment of the June 12 presidential elections. Similar arguments have also been raised by other scholars.[51]

In demonstrating the manifestations of civil society that undermine rather than strengthen the democratisation process in Nigeria, Ikelegbe[52] looks at three ethnic organisations operating as civil society groups. These organisations; the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and the Arewa People's Congress (APC); represent, according to him, a removal of the 'overarching objectives of civil society, which instead have become directed at local, sectional and regional interests'. This criticism of social formations like the IYC, OPC and APC largely ignores one of the key features of civil society. This is that it is 'a dynamic ensemble of legally protected nongovernmental institutions' that tend to be self-organizing, self-reflective and, most importantly,

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Very Short Introduction, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008; for identity see K. Cerulo, "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 23, 1997, pp. 385-409.; for political participation see S. Naastrom, "What Globalization Overshadows", *Political Theory*, Vol. 31, No. 6, 2003, pp 808-834.

[50] A. Ikelegbe, 'The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*

[51] See works like M. Abutudu, *The State, Civil Society and the Democratization Process in Nigeria*, Dakar: CODESRIA Monograph Series, 1/95, 1995; A. Jega, *Organising for Popular Democratic Change in Nigeria: Options and Strategies,* Report of Proceedings of Strategic Planning Workshop on Democratic Development in Nigeria, London: Centre for Democratic Development, 1997; A. Olukoshi, 'Associational Life', *Op. Cit.*

[52] A. Ikelegbe, 'The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.

'permanently in tension with each other and with the government institutions that frame, constrict and enable their activities'.[53] The exclusionary character of these organisations may therefore be a necessary attribute that demonstrates their claim to civil society status. By focussing on the ethnic colourations of civil society, Ikelegbe easily loses sight of the market like conditions of competition that drive civil society growth and the peculiar context of Nigerian political history. He also seems to have ignored the salience of class to the mobilisations of these organisations and the tendency of their activities to be framed by demands of the marginalised for material advancement. While ethnicity no doubt plays a role in mobilization and discourses, it is often merely a convenient tool for galvanising the publics and masks material demands for access to state power and resources that lie at the core of these organizations.

The participation of elements of the dominant class in these organizations would suggest that there is no definitive class colouration to the mobilization of ethnic based groupings within civil society. Fatton[54] notes however that even though the dominant class has totalitarian ambitions and are predatory in nature, they also seek to reduce the reach of the state. This is not unlike the subaltern class, who, even though they are victims of an overly repressive state, still see that very state as the solution to their disempowerment. Achieving this goal of reducing the state's reach is at the heart of the appropriation of civil society structures by the dominant class. Therefore, it appears that appropriation of civil society is a necessary part of the struggle over control of the state and access to the resources it has appropriated.[55]

Fatton's work is particularly rich in insights about what he called the 'civic limitations of civil society'. Situating civil society within the context of class, he notes that 'by generally

[53] J. Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, London: Verso, 1988.
[54] R. Fatton, 'Africa in an age of Democratization', *Op. Cit.*
[55] See N. Bobbio, *Democracy and Dictatorship*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 26 and R. Fatton, 'Predatory Rule', *Op. Cit.* pp. 73-97.

reflecting the lopsided balance of class, ethnic and sexual power, the organizations of civil society tend inevitably to privilege the privileged and marginalize the marginalized'.[56] Civil society organizations, therefore, as Yukako and Eloundou-Enyegue argue, are appropriated by 'local elites seeking to re-position themselves and consolidate their power in the post-adjustment era'.[57] In his attempt at stressing the potential of civil society undermining rather than strengthening democracy as studies by Tocqueville,[58] Putnam[59] and Warren[60] suggest, Fatton notes that it should not be conflated with civic society. He contends that:

> civil society is not the all-encompassing movement of popular empowerment and economic change portrayed in the revelling and exaggerated celebrations of its advocates. It is simply not a democratic *deux ex machina* equalizing life-chances and opportunities; crippled by material limitations and class impairments, it constitutes at best a very uncertain substitute to what had previously been the corrupt and class based patronage of a more profligate state.[61]

He also notes that even though civil society often frames its discourses in emancipatory rhetoric, its pluralism is hardly always emancipatory as it can be a 'reservoir of antiquated norms and practices'.[62] Civil society can thus reach out to antiquated norms for identity and mobilization. Rather than being an instrument of resistance and revolutionary transformation, cultural traditions are often a means of coping with the devastation brought about by the failure of development. This attachment to tradition, what Ekeh referred to as primordial publics,[63] does not entail a fixation with the past, but rather a continuity that is constantly affected by a changing present. The persisting power of traditional identities in the

[56] R. Faton, 'Africa in the Age of Democratization', *Op. Cit.*, p. 72.
[57] S. Yukako and P. Eloundou-Enyegue, "The Emergence of African NGO's: Functional or Opportunistic Response?" *Africa Notes,* April/May, 2006.
[58] A. Tocqueville, 'Democracy in America', *Op. Cit.*
[59] R. Putnam 'Making Democracy Work' *Op. Cit.*
[60] M. Warren, 'Democracy and Association', *Op. Cit.*
[61] R. Fatton, 'Africa in the Age of Democratization', *Op. Cit.*, p.72.
[62] *Ibid,* p. 75.
[63] P. Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 17, No.1, 1975, pp 91-112.

formation of grass roots movements is traceable to the failures of neoliberal development and the efforts of African societies to cope with the pressures of a changing world.

Interestingly, Fatton counsels against attempting to reform African civil society by discouraging these primordial links. He contends, correctly in my opinion, that rather than 'embodying a coherent social project, civil society tends to be a disorganized plurality of mutually exclusive projects that are not necessarily democratic. Civil society is therefore neither homogenous nor unitary; it is fragmented by the contradictory historical alternatives of competing social actors, institutions and beliefs'.[64] To fulfil their role in the democratization process, civil society should be just that. It should reflect as much as is possible, both the conflicting goals and the complimentary ends of society. This implies that conflict is a necessary component of the architecture of civil society if it will play its normative agenda setting and public sphere framing role in democracy. As Fatton put it, to transform civil society, as Chazan does for instance,[65] 'into an exclusive realm of civility, emptied of parochialism, fundamentalism and self seeking agents; is to do violence to its very essence'.[66]

Fatton also identifies three key types of civil society vying for power in Africa. These three blocs; the predatory, quasi-bourgeois and popular; coincide roughly with class. This perspective follows a pluralized conception of civil society that valorizes the presence of competition and conflict;[67] a perspective that derives from Habermas' conception of a fusion of the public and private spheres[68] and that can also be linked to Arnold Sales' challenge of the dualistic model of society earlier discussed.[69] It highlights the dynamics of class formation and the influence of multiple identity systems in this process. It also demonstrates

[64] R. Fatton, 'Africa in the Age of Democratization', *Op. Cit.*, p. 77.
[65] N. Chazan, "Africa's Democratic Challenge", *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 9, No.2, 1992, pp. 279-307.
[66] R. Fatton, 'Africa in the Age of Democratization', *Op. Cit.*, p.77.
[67] *Ibid.*, p.78.
[68] J. Habermas, 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere', *Op. Cit.*
[69] A. Sales, 'The Private, Public and Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*

a long process of conflict and compromise, of objective cross-class alliance building and even violent confrontations. By demonstrating the imperative of a civil society discourse that incorporates chaos rather than excludes it, Fatton's work provides important contemporary validation of Gramsci's conception of civil society as a space, and his perspectives of alternative hegemony and the realm of consent[70] in Africa. Another important feature of this conceptualization of civil society is that it demonstrates the ability of alternative hegemony, albeit that of consent, to develop, within the civil space, to challenge the arbitrary exercise of state power. Implicit in this conception of civil society is its functional purpose as an alternative center of power. The idea of civil society as the realm of consent does not necessarily imply consent to state authority. That consent mentioned by Gramsci refers to the nature of power relations *within* the alternative social forces. This is not unlike Fatton's notion of class alliances too.

By situating the civil society discourse within the neoliberal debate, Shivji also examines it, inevitably, through the lens of class.[71] The central focus of Shivji's work is not to explain what is being said about civil society but, rather, to expose what is not being said about its linkages with neoliberal global capitalism and the development project in Africa. Shivji locates the rise of NGOs within 'the womb of the neoliberal offensive, whose aim is as much ideological as economic and political'.[72] Tracing the NGO advance through an examination of the evolution of the state in Africa, Shivji demonstrates the connection between NGOs and the authoritarian structures of state. Its logic is quite similar to the public/private sphere fusion or intermeshing perspective of Jurgen Habermas and to the argument advanced by Manji and O'Coill about the role of NGOs in development.[73] In that

[70] See Antonio Gramsci's *State and Civil Society* and the *Selections from Prison Notebooks*
[71] I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*
[72] *Ibid.*, p.4.
[73] F. Manji and C. O'Coill, 'The Missionary Position', *Op. Cit.*

light, he notes that the perception of a 'bi-polarity';[74] what Sales refers to as a 'dualistic model of society';[75] between state and civil society is largely false and has unfortunately predominated civil society discourses. Based on utterly false historical and intellectual premises, according to Shivji, this bi-polar logic allows the self perception of NGOs as good intentioned, non-governmental, non-partisan and non-political organisations operating in a third sphere, totally distinct from the state and the market.[76] However, Shivji places them instead within the context of what he refers to as a 'fundamental antithesis between the national and the imperial projects'.[77] In this way, he demonstrates the place of civil society in international politics and justifies a transnational perspective of the changes going on in the civil society discourse. This also allows placing the NGO discourse within the debate on governance and democratization in Africa; showing civil society's dialectical relationship to governance and political processes. Shivji also links the rise of NGOs in Africa to the neoliberal triumphalism that emerged in the years leading to the collapse of the cold war world order. In response to widespread economic crisis, donor organisations had sought to further weaken the state in Africa, forcing it to abandon the provision and/or subsidy of public goods. This was a critical plank in the western onslaught against communism and its statism.

Shivji identifies what he refers to as 'silences in the NGO discourse'. The first is a deficit of theory. In this, he argues that donor agencies actively discourage a historical and theoretical understanding of development, poverty and discrimination. In doing this, NGOs are constrained to act within the limitations imposed by the contemporary neoliberal system rather than working to understand the historical context of crisis. This easily, according to

[74] I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.* p.11.
[75] A. Sales, 'The Private, the Public and Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*, pp. 296-97.
[76]There is a broader analysis of this issue in I. Shivji, "Globalization and Popular Resistance", in: Semboja J. Mwapachu J and Jansen E. (eds.), *Local Perspectives on Globalization: The African Case*, Dar es Salaam: REPOA, Mkuki na Nyota, 2002.
[77] I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*, p.4.

Shivji, encourages NGOs to focus on issues rather than the underlying premises that frame the issues. The result is a shallow perspective of social phenomena by NGOs and the inevitable continuation of the status quo.[78] The second 'silence' is what Shivji calls the 'permanent present'. This implies a denial of history or internalization by NGOs of the:

> thoughtless idiocies of right wing, reactionary writers such as Fukuyama who propagate the 'end of history' in which the present- that is of course the present global capitalism under the hegemony of the imperialist North- is declared permanent.[79]

This 'silence' in the NGO discourse conceals what many scholars refer to as the salience of Africa's colonial experience to its contemporary development crisis.[80] Like Shivji implies, it makes NGOs an accomplice in distortions of Africa's material and political history in such a way that shields the neoliberal system from blame for its problems. The third 'silence' identified by Shivji is the assumption of society as a harmonious whole of stakeholders. This perception of society also attempts to conceal the class divisions and antagonisms that underpin politics. The implication is that NGOs largely concede the ideological advantage to neoliberalism without much thought. According to Shivji, they assume that the neoliberal model of development based on private property and accumulation, and the market as the motor of society is 'common sense' and as such needs no questioning.[81]The fourth grey area within civil society discourse, according to Shivji, is the assumption that being nongovernmental qualifies civil society to be non-political. This perception of civil society as non-political derives from the continued separation of the realms of politics and economy by bourgeois social science. Indeed, as Shivji notes, politics is the quintessence, or the concentrated form of economics. 'The sphere of politics is built on the sphere of production and there is a close relationship between those who command

[78] *Ibid.*, p.14.
[79] *Ibid.*
[80] See S. Amin, 'Africa: Living on the Fringe?' *Op. Cit.*
[81] I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit*, p.15.

production and those who wield power'.[82] By participating in policy processes, which are by nature terrains of intense conflict and political contestations, civil society cannot pretend to be value free or apolitical. In fact, the very essence of civil society is to engage the state in political contestations that set the normative agenda on the side of society. Finally, he questions the perception of an alternative world by NGOs in Africa. While most civil society activists readily talk about the need for 'a better world', they generally see that 'better world' within the context of the current system. This perception of change is related to the 'theory deficit', 'permanent present' and a 'society of harmonious stakeholders' that Shivji identifies as blind spots in the NGO discourse. He raises the question however of whether NGOs can be pro change and pro poor without necessarily being anti imperialist. Shivji's conclusion is that there has to be a conscious re-linking of civil society activism and theory building; an integration of the intellectual and activist discourse. He also calls for NGOs to strive to learn about the real material struggles of Africans before 'evangelising on donor-fads of the day'.[83]This call is not unlike the conclusion of many other scholars who encourage a deeply pan African vision of the future and question the growing integration of Africa into an unequal global system both internationally and transnationally.[84]

Rollin Tusalem engages the question of whether civil society is a boon or bane for third and fourth wave democracies. His work examines the effect of the pre-transitional strength and post transitional density of civil society on institutional performance among more than sixty states since Huntington's third wave of democracy.[85] This highly empirical study appears to justify contentions that a dense civil society deepens not only democratic

[82] *Ibid*, p. 16.
[83] *Ibid*, p. 17.
[84] See C. Landsberg and F. Kornegey, *The African Renaissance: a Quest for Pax Africana and Pan Africanism*, Foundation for Global Dialogue (FGD) Occasional Paper No. 17, 1998; G. Nyong'O and D. Lamba (eds.), *New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD: A New Path?*, Nairobi: Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2002; I. Shivji, *Pan-Africanism or Imperialism?* 2nd Billy Dudley Memorial Lecture presented to the Nigerian Political Science Association, Nsukka, Nigeria, July 2005, F. Yieke (ed.), *East Afrika: In Search of National and Regional Renewal*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2005.
[85] R. Tusalem, 'A Boon or a Bane?', *Op. Cit.*

freedoms but also the institutional performance of states. The study also appears to justify the theoretical claim that a strong civil society increases political stability in transitional states, and generates polities that can avoid domestic turmoil associated with interventionist militaries and coups. This is similar to conclusions arrived at by scholars like Belkin and Schofer[86] and Karatnycky and Ackerman.[87] Tusalem argues that states with a strong civil society presence often focus on 'sustaining the complexity and pluralism of their societal groups which leads NGOs to experience both vertical and horizontal growth'[88] and which deepens the democratic experience. As was also demonstrated by the works of Varshney on India,[89] Tusalem's study contends that interethnic associational networks of civic engagement have inherent peace-inducing effects. Therefore, civil society is also crucial to establishing peaceful social interactions and institutionalizing it. Tusalem also finds that states with a dense NGO presence can 'train democratic citizens in the virtues of civility, such as toleration, cooperation and reciprocity'.[90] While Tusalem went to great empirical lengths to establish the validity of his theoretical postulations, it must be said that the premise is fundamentally value ridden. For instance, he relies so much on neoliberal data like the Freedom House Index, the World Bank's Global Governance Project and Standard and Poor's DRI, and on studies that also make such data sets the fulcrum of their analysis.[91] This indicates a tendency to assess social phenomena from a neoliberal prism. Indeed, the bulk of

[86]A. Belking and E. Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 47, No. 5, 2003, pp. 594-620.
[87] A. Karatnycky and P. Ackerman, "How Freedom is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy", www. freedomhouse.org, Freedom House, 2005, cited in R. Tusalem, 'A Boon or Bane?', *Op. Cit*, p. 371.
[88]R. Tusalem, 'A Boon or Bane?', *Op. Cit*, p. 379.
[89] See A. Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civic Civil Society: India and Beyond", *World Politics*, Vol. 53, 2001, pp. 362-98 and A. Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India,* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002.
[90] R. Tusalem, 'A Boon or Bane?', *Op. Cit*, p. 380.
[91] He relies for instance on the works of A. Karatnycky and P. Ackerman, 'How Freedom is Won', *Op. Cit.*, for Freedom House Data; and on K. Kauffman et al., "Measures of Governance Indicators", http://web. Worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,menuPK:232599~pagePK:64133170~piPK:64133498~sitePK:239419,00.html. Washington DC: World Bank, 2004 for the World Bank's Global Governance Project Data.

the challenges to assumptions of civil society's positive influence on democratization or even peace are derived from a rejection of the neoliberal worldview. By linking civil society to elite appropriation or more appropriately, class manipulations, many of these studies highlight a radical political economic perspective of social formations that is at odds with the neoliberal view. While the neoliberal view, as is also evident in Tusalem's notion of institutional performance, focuses on state capacities, bureaucratic efficiency and stability, the alternative paradigms place greater emphasis on the interactions of power and patterns of domination. Shivji's conception of 'silences' in the NGO discourse clearly challenges the kind of logic that is so evident in Tusalem's study[92]. Rather than drawing attention to elements of state capacity like regulatory quality and control of corruption, as important as these are, scholars like Shivji argue that the distribution and interactions of power and its implications for economic production and reproduction are far more salient determinants of the nature, depth, scope and character of democracy. This view provides, in my opinion a more rigorous and robust explanation for the African condition.

Like Tusalem, William Fisher also examines the question of whether civil society plays a positive or negative role in the political process. In this case, Fisher focuses on understanding the translocal flows of ideas, knowledge, funding and people.[93] The study also attempts to shed light on the changing relationships among citizenry, associations and the state and encourage a reconsideration of connections between the personal and the political; again a recourse to the public/private sphere problematique. This rather complex objective is accomplished by a critical survey of literature 'concerned with the growing numbers, changing functions and intensifying networks of NGOs which have had significant impacts

[92] See .I Shivji , 'The Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*
[93] W. Fisher, "Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 26,1997, pp. 439-64.

upon globalization, international and national politics, and local lives'.[94] The focus of Fisher's survey, as noted above, is to examine the relationships being forged by civil society with governments, multinational corporations, civic associational groups, grass roots movements, transnational issue coalitions and of course within themselves. This is important because, as he opines, these increasingly complex and wide ranging formal and informal linkages have begun to have 'profound impacts both on globalization and local lives'.[95] It should be noted that while these linkages shape the globalization process by giving new meaning to notions of social mobilization and to its spatiality, what Anheier refers to as a 'global civil society'[96]is also being shaped by the very nature of the contemporary international system which tends to impose, transnational perspectives of social phenomena at the same time that it intensifies resistance to foreign intrusions.

Most significantly for our study, Fisher surveys extant literature on the transnational linkages that have come to increasingly define the NGO world. He identifies studies like that of George Marcus[97], Forbes[98] and Peters[99] that direct attention to the complexities of local NGO relationships and highlight the importance of placing them within a broader transnational context. This theme within the civil society discourse aids the understanding of the local context by placing it within the larger network of deepening relationships, alliances and interests which inevitably shape it. Indeed, for Africa, this is crucial because it is evident within the literature that there is broad consensus on the overwhelming dependence of civil society on these transnational linkages and the resources, both human and financial, they can

[94] *Ibid,* p. 439.
[95] *Ibid*, p. 441.
[96] H. Anheier et. al. (eds.) '*Civil Society', Op. Cit.*
[97] G. Marcus, "Ethnography in/out of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sided Ethnography", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 24, 1995, pp. 95-117.
[98] A. Forbes, *The Importance of Being Local: Villagers, NGOs and the World Bank in the Arun Valley, Nepal,* Paper presented at the 94th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington DC, 1995.
[99] P. Peters, (ed.), "Who's Local Here? The Politics of Participation in Development", *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1996, pp. 22-60.

muster on behalf of a given advocacy agenda. What the survey undertaken by Fisher clearly shows is that while literature has dealt extensively with understanding the place of the NGO within the national public sphere, the changing international context presents new and complex analytical challenges as to what to make of the linkages that continue to emerge between and among national public spheres. This argument bears salience even in literature on citizenship, identity, political participation, social movements and democracy itself. It shows that the globalizing international system is challenging the orthodoxy within these spheres and is giving new meaning to old concepts.

While all the above studies appear to work on the assumption that a civil society does indeed exist in Africa, Makumbe raises a rather different question. He argues that while there might be an 'African experience of civil society', it is questionable if a civil society actually exists in Africa.[100] This would appear to suggest that Makumbe thinks a civil society does not exist in Africa. He however does not. By looking at the varied weaknesses of the civil society architecture, he argues that it is rather difficult for what is referred to as a civil society in Africa to represent, promote and protect the interests of the people. This essentially pushes civil society, as he implies, into the realm of virtuality, rather than effective existentiality. Makumbe makes his argument by tracing what seem to be the traditional weaknesses of civil society in Africa and indeed, much of the developing world. These problems range from the linkages between civil society, economic production and the class that controls it; primordial identities and the conflicts that arise as a consequence; the accountability challenge and of course, the problematique of donor funding. These problems, according to Makumbe, are at the heart of the weakness of civil society in Africa and therefore constrain it from playing its expected roles in the democratization and governance projects.[101]Makumbe takes a very

[100] J. Makumbe, 'Is there a Civil Society in Africa?', *Op. Cit.*
[101] *Ibid*, pp. 310-12.

critical look at the role of foreign donors in shaping the contours and framing the advocacy agenda of civil society in Africa. He links, like Shivji does,[102] the contemporary rise of donor influence in Africa to the period of adjustment that was imposed as a response to the widespread economic crisis of the 70s and 80s. This inevitably situates the donor role in the civil society architecture in Africa, in a political-economic context that appears to justify postulations of civil society's reflection of class configurations and its tendency to be appropriated by 'local elites seeking to re-position themselves and consolidate their power in the post-adjustment era'.[103] In spite of the negative impacts of transnational donor funding on civil society's patterns of accountability and legitimacy, Makumbe' s conclusion appears to mirror the resignation that is evident in the literature that the resources of donors will remain critical to civil society's vibrancy far into the foreseeable future.

The literature that establishes a nexus between civil society and the governance and democratization processes in Africa is rich in the insights it provides into how civil society performs within this space. It is clear that there is consensus that, for all its imperfections, civil society, in whatever form it is conceptualized, is critical to the deepening of democracy. There is however no end to the disagreements on what exactly democracy or indeed civil society itself means. Another area where disagreements still abound is in the role of transnational donors. It is to this area of the literature that I now turn.

2.2.3 Transnational donor funding and civil society operations

While the two thematic clusters above provide important background information and insights into the activities of civil society, it is within this third theme that we situate the role of transnational donors and funding in framing the institutional environment that shapes civil

[102] I. Shivji, 'The Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.* pp. 4, 9-10.
[103] S. Yukako and P. Eloundou-Enyegue, 'The Emergence of African NGOs', *Op. Cit.*

society behavior. Literature seems to have focused on the normative agenda of donors and the economic implications of their interventions.[104]Works like that of Gibbon, Bangura and Ofstad;[105] Van de Walle[106] and Robinson[107] however point at the political implications of donor activities in Africa and place foreign interventions within a context broader than the civil society space. They place the entire donor funding edifice; both Official Development Assistance (ODA) and grants to NGOs and CSOs, within the framework of dependency and imperialism. They attempt to link transnational donor funding with relations of domination and patterns of dependency. This way, attention is drawn to the way foreign interventions tend to deepen the dependency of African social formations to alien patrons, particularly in the west. The literature also places transnational funding within the context of extreme privation and economic crisis in Africa. Indeed, the strong moral drive to 'do something' about poverty in Africa, is one of the most enduring incentives for transnational donor action. Works like that of Mathew Lockwood talk of the need for an 'international action on poverty in Africa'.[108]This attitude reflects a persistence of the paternalistic approach that has been critical to the way the west has related with Africa throughout its material and political history. By purporting to 'do something' about poverty in Africa, transnational donors appropriate the right and indeed responsibility of social formations and the state in Africa to design and implement policies for its developmental project. This criticism nonetheless, literature still contains strong defense of the role of transnational donors in civil society in Africa.

[104] See for instance J. Stiglitz, "The World Bank at the Millennium", *Economic Journal*, Vol. 109, 1999, pp. 577-97; D. Sogge, *Give and Take: What's the Matter with Foreign Aid?,* London: Zed books, 2002; J. Sachs, *The End of Poverty,* New York: Penguin Press, 2005.

[105] P. Gibbon, B. Yusuf and A. Ofstad, (eds.), *Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment: The Politics of Economic Reform in Africa*, Uppsala: Nordic African Institute, 1992.

[106] N. Van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis*, 1979-1999, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[107]M. Robinson,"Aid, democracy and political conditionality in sub-Saharan Africa", *European Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1995, pp. 85-99.

[108]M. Lockwood, *The State they're in: An agenda for International Action on Poverty in Africa,* Warwickshire: Intermediate Technology Publications, 2006.

Arthur Goldsmith for instance, following the work of Hirschman,[109] rejects what he terms the 'perversity thesis' which, they contend, is at the heart of most criticisms of foreign aid. In this thesis, it is assumed that an attempt to push society towards one direction generates strong incentives to go the other way. Arthur's Goldsmith's study of foreign aid also examines the moral hazard concept.[110]This refers to the mechanism for the supposedly perverse political impact of foreign aid that emerges out of the tension between aid donors, who generally want political liberalization and recipients who favour the status quo.[111] The study clearly demonstrates Africa's dependence on aid and the fact that it has actually grown in the last three decades. He argues that donors counteract the 'moral hazard' by putting conditions on their loans but this may be defeated by the very disbursement of funding aid as it frees up other resources for the state to dispense of as it pleases. This situation is what Carol Lancaster described as having prolonged the life of some corrupt, incompetent and authoritarian dictatorships in Africa.[112]As Goldsmith correctly notes, much of the literature on foreign aid seems to have focussed on the economic payoffs, or lack of it, rather than on the political impacts.[113]Some of the studies of the political impacts of aid and the mosaic of reform programmes that accompany it have however presented conflicting conclusions. While some argue that foreign aid is not linked to bad policy choices,[114] others contend that

[109]A. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy*, Cambridge Mass: Belknap Press, 1991.
[110] A. Goldsmith, 'Foreign Aid and Statehood in Africa', *Op. Cit.*, p. 124.
[111] For a robust analysis of this concept, see J. Widner, "States and Statelessness in Late Twentieth-Century Africa", *Daedalus,* Vol. 124, No. 3, 1995, pp. 129-53 and J. Herbst, "Responding to State Failure in Africa", *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1996, pp. 120-44.
[112] C. Lancaster. *Aid to Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
[113] A. Goldsmith, 'Foreign Aid and Statehood in Africa', *Op. Cit.*, p. 128.
[114] See for instance H. Schwalbenberg, "Does Foreign Aid Cause the Adoption of Harmful Economic Policies?", *Jounal of Social Policy Modelling*, Vol. 20, No. 5, 1998, pp. 669-75.

political corruption is a regular feature of recipient states[115] and that it is responsible for the deepening of the authoritarian character of the state.[116]

While focussing on political conditions in Africa rather than economic conditions, Goldsmith's study pitches its tent with those who do not consider foreign aid as a problem rather than a solution for Africa. Even though he agrees that foreign aid cannot be said to have had a major helpful impact on Africa, he argues that there is little correlation between it and public policy. This is because, as he argues, internal political and social dynamics are more important.[117]Therefore, in his opinion, even though foreign aid has not resolved Africa's development crisis, there is little or no empirical evidence to link it to political instability.

He takes the argument further in another article. There, he challenges the thinking that arbitrary, unaccountable and inefficient states in Africa have remained in spite of massive infusion of external capital through development aid.[118]He argues instead that there is empirical evidence that arbitrary, unrepresentative government diminished in Africa and that development assistance played a significant role in encouraging this trend. This is quite similar to the contention that political power is being institutionalized in Africa as a consequence of political liberalization occasioned by increased donor engagement.[119]

Goldsmith contends that foreign aid shapes Africa's domestic politics primarily in four ways. First, he contends that some of the pressures for government reform in Africa is a by-product of donor-inspired economic austerity schemes, also known as structural

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[115] A. Alesina and B. Werder, *Do Corrupt Governments Receive Less Aid?,* NBER Working Paper 7108. Cambridge Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1999.
[116] P. Gibbon , B. Yusuf and A. Ofstad, (eds.), 'Authoritarianism, Democracy and adjustment', *Op. Cit.*
[117] A. Goldsmith, 'Foreign Aid and Statehood in Africa', *Op. Cit.,* p. 144.
[118] A. Goldsmith, "Donors, Dictators and Democrats in Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2001, pp. 411-36.
[119] See for instance D. Posner and D. Young, "The Institutionalization of Political Power in Africa", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18 No. 3, 2007, pp. 126-40; T. Carothers, "How Democracies Emerge: The Sequencing Fallacy", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, 2007, No. 1, pp. 12-28 and M. Halperin M., J. Siegle and M. Weintein, 'The Democracy Advantage' *Op, Cit'.*

adjustment. Though the reforms were primarily economic in nature, they had many unintended political ramifications. The reforms encouraged political shake-ups by undermining the capacity of the state to fund the vast networks of patronage. It also galvanised the repressed society to demand for democratisation. Second, aid directed at political reform is on the increase.[120]This kind of aid is contingent on recipient states following previously agreed political liberalisation projects that often culminate in general elections and some form of political transition. Third, donors privilege civil society, particularly NGOs in fund disbursements thereby strengthening their presence and capacity to engage within the political arena. Finally, Goldsmith notes that donors also often give specific political conditionalities for loans that incorporate reward and punishment to induce political reform.

The above claims have been thoroughly criticised in literature. For instance, challenging the view that foreign aid induces pressures that encourages the state to democratize, Beckman has this to say:

> In resisting SAP, interest groups seek to secure greater autonomy from the state. The confrontation enhances their state in a pluralist order. While in pursuit of the material interests of their members, interest groups enter into alliances in defence of autonomy and rights of organisation. Demands for democratic reforms at the level of the state..., become tied to the defence of such organizational rights. They serve as a bridge between the material grievances of members and the question of the democratic constitution of the state.[121]

[120] For instance, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s ODA had an average of 48.83 percent of funds directed at governance related neoliberal projects between 1998 and 2008. This highlights the centrality of promoting the neoliberal world view in motivations for aid. It also shows the essentially political character of aid. See http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DatasetCode=ODA_SECTOR, accessed May 3, 2010 and G. Allard and C. Martinez, *The influence of government policy and NGOs on capturing private investment*, paper presented at the OECD Global Forum on International Investment, March 27-28, 2008 available online at www.oecd.org/investment/gfi-7, accessed, May 8, 2010. Literature is also rich in analysis of the essentially political nature of aid, this is in spite of protestations by proponents of its economic character. See D. Kapur and R. Webb, *Governance Related Conditionalities of the IFIs* , Revision of paper presented for the XII Technical Group Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of 24 for International Monetary Affairs, 1-3 March, Lima, Peru, 2000; N. Van de Walle, *African Economies, Op. Cit;* T. Killick, "Politics, evidence and the new Aid agenda", *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2004, pp. 5-29.

[121] B. Beckman, "Empowerment or Repression? 'The World Bank and the Politics of African Development", *Africa Development*, Vol.1991, XVI, No. 1.

This implies that democratisation pressures occurred in spite of rather than as a result of adjustment. Even though governance related aid is truly on the increase, it should be noted that what aid often promotes is a neoliberal kind of political reform. This specific type of reforms have been argued to be inappropriate for Africa as they engender a politics of exclusion, elitism and a regime of abstract rights rather than concrete economic rights.[122]

Goldsmith's claim that donors increasingly privilege NGOs is quite true. What is contentious is whether this privileging engenders mass popular participation or 'expert' participation. NGOs are not immune from the crisis faced by the state in Africa. Literature shows that they can be as corrupt as the state,[123] have serious accountability deficits[124] and reproduce existing power structures.[125] The very nature of NGOs and the civil society, as explained in the conceptual framework, raises serious questions about the democracy advantage supposedly inherent in engaging civil society rather than the state.

The final claim is also quite suspect. Political conditionalities, alongside the extreme economic pressures generated by adjustment pressures have been fingered as responsible for the repression that Africa saw during the adjustment period. Comprehensive studies of that period have been near unanimous in their conclusions that adjustment only bred economic turmoil and state repression.[126]It is therefore difficult not to disagree with Goldsmith's conclusion that foreign assistance appears to be responsible for 'welcome political trends'.

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[122] Many scholars have challenged the neoliberal vision of democracy. Ake in particular argues that it fails to capture the specific historical and material realities of Africa and is as such ill-suited for it. See C. Ake, 'The Unique Case of African Democracy', *Op. Cit.*, pp. 239-44.

[123]A. Ikelegbe, 'The Perverse Manifestation of Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*; A. Cooley and J. Ron , "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action", *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 1,2002, pp 5-39; R. Burger and T. Owens, *Promoting Transparency in the NGO Sector: Examining the availability and Reliability of Self-Reported Data*, CREDIT Research Paper No 08/11, 2006; A. Iwilade, 'Democracy, Civil Society and the Commodification of AIDS', *Op. Cit.*

[124] M. Kaldor, "Civil Society and Accountability", *Journal of Human Development*, Vol. 4, No.1, 2003, pp. 5-27; I. Shivji, 'The Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*; R. Tusalem, 'A Boon or Bane?', *Op. Cit.*

[125]A. Sales, 'The Private, Public and Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*; S. Yukako and P. Eloundou-Enyegue, 'The Emergence of African NGO's', *Op. Cit.*

[126] See P. Gibbon, Y. Bangura and A. Ofstad, (eds.), 'Authoritarianism, Democracy and adjustment', *Op. Cit.*; A. Olukoshi, R. Olaniyan and F. Aribisala, (eds.), *Structural adjustment in West Africa,* Lagos: Pumark, 1994; T. Killick, *IMF Programmes in Developing Countries: Design and impact,* London and New York: Rutledge,

Bangura and Gibbon come to a radically different conclusion in their examination of the impact of adjustment on democracy in Africa.[127]The review of literature on adjustment is important because it provides a rich body of knowledge on the intersection between foreign aid, as actual transfer of funds to poor countries, and foreign aid as embodied in the reforms that accompany it. Here, foreign aid is not abstracted from the institutional, political and market reforms required to facilitate its disbursement and evaluation and to consolidate its expected gains. In my view, the product cannot be separated from the process, as it is the process that gives the product its distinct character.

The study 'embodies and develops a critique of what are becoming the principal trends in the analysis of structural adjustment'. One of those trends is the perspective that the political order resulting from adjustment induces the informalisation of African society and the rise of civil society.[128]This perspective, they argue, is found in the work of those who view adjustment and economic crisis as opportunities for strengthening civil society and therefore for democratisation[129] and those who consider economic and political informalisation as the main intermediary in the process.[130] These arguments would appear to suggest that within adjustment was a deliberate democratisation agenda; that there was indeed a causal relationship between these interventions and pressures for democratisation in Africa. To the extent that foreign fund transfers and the policy processes that were required to facilitate them during that period liberalised the political space in Africa, adjustment indeed has a causal relationship with the wave of democratisation that swept through Africa in the

1995 and T. Mkandawire and A. Olukoshi, (eds.), *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa,* Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995.

[127]Y. Bangura, and P. Gibbon, 'Adjustment, Authoritarianism and Democracy: An Introduction to some Conceptual and Empirical Issues', in: Gibbon P., Yusuf B. and A. Ofstad,(eds.), '*Authoritarianism, Democracy and adjustment*', *Op. Cit*, pp. 7-38.

[128] Y. Bangura and P. Gibbon, 'Adjustment, Authoritarianism and Democracy', *Ibid.*, p. 8-9.

[129] Examples of such works include L. Diamond, "Roots of Failure Seeds of Hope", in: L. Diamond, J. Linz, and S. Lipset, (eds.), *Democracy in developing Countries*, Vol. 2, Africa, boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1988.

[130] An example is R. Lemarchand, *"The Political Economy of Informal Economies"*, University of Florida, (mimeo), 1991.

1990s. But that is where the relationship terminates. Beckman for instance, notes that, even though some form of political liberalisation resulted from the adjustment process, authoritarianism is essentially a property of adjustment itself rather than that of the states adjusting.[131] By linking the termination of the traditional popular basis of the African state, a key demand of the adjustment process, to its resort to repression, he tries to establish a causal relationship between adjustment and tyranny. This argument does not necessarily suggest that tyranny did not exist in Africa prior to the intervention of foreign capital; it merely highlights the way these interventions tend to generate incentives for the state to deepen repression. It also demonstrates that any democratisation that resulted from the adjustment process occurred in spite of rather than as a result of the massive infusion of foreign capital or the policy processes meant to facilitate it. Rauf Mustapha's examination of structural adjustment in Nigeria in that study provides a compelling argument that underlines the above points. He argues that:

> The reality of political life under SAP is the intensification of repression and the contraction of democratic political openings... not as a result of the need of the state to fill the void created between erstwhile patrons and clients... but because the adoption of SAP as state policy contains within it an unstated predisposition towards the incorporation or dismantling of associations in civil society whose members are likely to bear the brunt of SAP policies.[132]

It is clear that literature on transnational donor funding and activities in Africa contain an implicit concern about the nature of political accountability and the way donors can impact on it. Indeed, within the discourse on democratisation is a constant allusion to the question of accountability. Accountability is often regarded as a defining component of the governance process. Its presence supposedly marks out democracy as the form of government that best

[131] See B. Beckman, "Empowerment or Repression? The World Bank and the Politics of African Adjustment", in: P. Gibbon, Y. Bangura and A. Ofstad, (eds.), *Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment, Op. Cit.*, pp. 83-105.

[132] R. Mustapha, "Structural Adjustment and Multiple Modes of Livelihood in Nigeria", in: P. Gibbon, Y. Bangura and A. Ofstad, (eds.), *Authoritarianism, Democracy and adjustment, Op. Cit.*, p. 216.

guarantees freedom and thus development; while its absence is the reason tyranny is so abhorrent.[133] There is talk of the degree of accountability of the governing class in Africa to the common people and the perverse accountability of the state itself to this class. In an attempt to situate this concept within the discourses around governance processes, Moncrieffe provides an insightful reconceptualization of accountability. This conceptualization is important because it challenges the tendency to secure accountability solely though the procedures of a conventional representative democracy[134]. This in effect allows the concept to apply to new actors in the political space whose contributions have become increasingly important to governance. One of such actors is the civil society.

Moncrieffe identifies three interrelated key aspects of accountability. These are 'accountability in regard to public funds; public responsibility in regard to the use of governmental power by politicians and civil servants and the executives responsiveness to in regard to anticipating public needs and sensibilities'.[135] It is clear that this conceptualization focuses almost exclusively on the state. The onus of responsibility, and thus accountability is conceived as falling only on the state and its officials. It leaves out other players within the governance process whose actions and inactions may make or mar even the best of state intentions.

In addressing this deficit, Moncrieffe first of all examines conceptual tensions that accompany such definitions of accountability. For instance, there is always an inconsistency between the ideals of financial transparency and political accountability. There may be financial transparency but, in the distribution of resources, the state may be completely unaccountable to a large section of the society politically. The apartheid regime in South

[133] See for instance V. Subramaniam, "Public Accountability: Context, Career and Confusions of a Concept", *Indian Journal of Public Administration,* Vol. 29, No. 3, 1983, pp. 446-56.
[134] J. Moncrieffe, "Reconceptualizing Political Accountability", *International Political Science Review,* Vol. 19, No. 4, 1998, pp. 387-406.
[135] V. Subramaniam, 'Public Accountability', *Op. Cit* as Cited in J. Moncrieffe, 'Reconceptualizing Political Accountability', *Op. Cit.*, p. 389.

Africa will be a good example of such. There is also the question of whether it is in fact possible that all state decisions or decision making processes be fully transparent. How does one situate the national security dimension or indeed the underhand negotiations between interest groups that may be necessary to secure a greater public good? As Moncrieffe notes, 'it would be naive to suggest that governments can afford transparency in all contexts'.[136]She also examines the problematique of dual accountability. That is, the accountability of a state to its society and to foreign powers. The ability to hold governments responsible is curtailed by their obligations to transnational donors. This is particularly relevant for civil society because, being private organisations that operate in the public sphere; they are generally free from the kind of public scrutiny that states face.

Even though Moncrieffe's work focuses on the democratic state, it offers insights into the accountability of civil society or to its role in shaping state accountability. For instance by insisting that pluralism; that is the promotion of civil society and NGOs, professional and voluntary organisations; will create links both upward and downward in society and voice local concerns more effectively or will, according to Williams and Young, 'exert pressure on public officials for better performance and greater accountability',[137] she shows an understanding of not merely the liberal perception of civil society but also the potentials it has with regard to public accountability.[138]This does not however say much about the accountability problem faced by civil society itself.

This area of civil society is addressed in Mary Kaldor's examination of the question of whether trust in civil society is justified in relation to giving voice to the poor.[139] This is what Moncrieffe would call examining civil society's 'political accountability'. For Kaldor,

[136] J. Moncrieffe, 'Reconceptualizing Political Accountability', *Op. Cit.*, p. 391.
[137] D. Williams and T. Young, "Governance, the World Bank and Liberal Theory", *Political Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 1994, pp. 84-100.
[138] J. Moncrieffe, 'Reconceptualizing Political Accountability', *Op. Cit.*, p. 390 and 402-3.
[139] M. Kaldor, 'Civil Society and Accountability', *Op. Cit.*

accountability refers to internal management practices and political responsibility. This is similar to positions of many other writers on accountability.[140]Edwards however questions the very necessity of linking the internal management practices of CSOs to their accountability or role in the public sphere. He argues that since CSOs have a voice and not a vote, and are thus not representative in the sense of national parliaments for instance, their internal management patterns are irrelevant to their role in the public arena. In short what matters is what they have to say and not whether they are internally democratic or representative.[141]Kaldor insists that this contradiction between moral and procedural accountability applies more to NGOs, a subset of civil society. The larger civil society grapples more with accountability questions that relate to its overall meaning and composition.

'Moral accountability', according to Kaldor, arises from the mission of the civil society actor. While most CSOs have some form of procedural accountability, it is unclear to what extent these mechanisms promote moral accountability. By purporting to speak on behalf of the poor and by operating in the public sphere; significantly influencing its dynamics; CSOs should be bound by some form of moral accountability similar to Kaldor's conception of the term. While a good number of civil society actors may genuinely care about the development crisis society faces, it is unclear how they resolve the contradictions that often result from balancing moral or procedural accountability. In the case of CSOs who receive transnational donor aid, the problem is magnified. For one, critics argue that civil society, particularly the NGO variant, are merely 'handmaidens of capitalist change', with

[140] See M. Edwards, *NGO Rights and Responsibilities: A New Deal for Global Governance*, London: The Foreign Policy Center and NCVO, 2000; L. Jordan and P. Tuijl, "Political Responsibility in Transnational NGO Advocacy", *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, pp. 2051-65.
[141] M. Edwards, 'NGO Rights and Responsibilities', *Op. Cit.*

little serious concern for the constituency they purport to represent.[142] This implies that CSOs appropriate the voice of the poor and use it to advance the interests of capital. The growing dependence on donors also tends to distort the priorities or mission of these organisations, further deepening their accountability deficit. Where there is significant conflict between donors and client organisations, it is often difficult for CSOs in Africa to follow through their promises and commitments to their appropriated constituencies. These problems, according to Kaldor, eventually reflect on the quality of civil society interventions and undermine their ability to engage the state. Kaldor also contends that the most important way to increase the accountability of NGOs is to bring donors and beneficiaries much closer together.[143] One way to achieve this is to involve beneficiaries in performance assessment through what Fowler calls 'interpretative' rather than scientific assessment.[144]Concluding, Kaldor contends that:

> Civil society is not a substitute for formal democratic processes; rather, it is a way of strengthening the substantive character of democracy, of developing a political culture at a global, as well as national and local level, through which those who are formally responsible for making decisions are responsive to the needs and concerns of the poorest people.

Kaldor's work is important because it generates arguments for the debate on the role of transnational donors in civil society operations. For instance, it draws attention to the connection between transnational capital and CSOs; it also highlights the relationship between companies and NGOs, particularly in the area of corporate social responsibility. This is what Gereffi, Garcia-Johnson and Sasser refer to as the 'NGO-Industrial Complex'.[145] By drawing attention to these crucial links, the paper, like much of the literature reviewed here, highlights the relevance of a political economic perspective of civil society operations. The

[142] D. Lewis, *The Management of Non-Governmental Development Organisations: An Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
[143] M. Kaldor, 'Civil Society and Accountability', *Op. Cit.*, p. 24.
[144]A. Fowler, *Striking a Balance: A Guide to Enhancing the Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organisations in International Development*, London: Earthscan, 1997.
[145]G. Gereffi, A. Garcia-Johnson and E. Sasser, "The NGO-Industrial Complex", *Foreign Policy,* July/August, 2001.

overall institutional environment created by the very nature of transnational donor funding is also implicitly interrogated.

This important aspect of civil society operations is also examined in a study by Steffek, Hahn, Rodekamp and Piewitt. They examine the assumption that transnational CSOs are, through their advocacy work, voicing citizens' interests, anxieties, hopes and ideals. Even though this study focuses on transnational CSOs in the European context, its theoretical assumptions and arguments hold very important lessons that can be situated in the African context. Given the intense advocacy work many of the sample organisations also do in Africa, it provides very deep insights into the accountability chain and demonstrates the linkages that African client CSOs have to grapple with.[146]

Like a good number of the works reviewed here, Steffek et. al. start off by looking at the debate around the democratising potential of civil society. Rather than from the perspective of a local civil society involved in the political process within a defined national space however, the study examines the question of civil society's democratising potential from a transnational perspective. That is from the angle of the role of transnational CSOs in connecting citizens to global discourses, concerns and processes. There is disagreement as to exactly how or even if transnational CSOs can actually fulfil this potential.[147]

Steffek et. al. establish four key criteria through which the extent to which transnational CSOs represent the citizen's voice may be measured. These criteria are

[146] J. Steffek J. et. al., 'Whose Voice?', *Op. Cit.*

[147] Some argue that Transnational CSOs do indeed voice the concerns of a considerable number of people. Examples of such works include D. Esty, "The World Trade Organisation's Legitimacy Crisis" *World Trade Review*, Vol. 1, 2000, No. 1, pp. 7-22. Critics however complain that this so-called democratising potential is grossly exaggerated. See G. Johns, *The NGO Challenge: Whose democracy is it Anyway?* Conference paper presented at the American Enterprise Institute, Washington D.C, 11 June, 2003; J. Trachtman and P. Moremen "Costs and Benefits of Private Participation in WTO Dispute Settlement: Whose Right is it Anyway", *Harvard International Law Journal,* Vol. 44, No. 1, 2003, pp. 221-50. Others take a rather pluralist view of the role of CSOs, contending that their very presence leads to a more balanced representation of societal groups and interests in international policy processes. An example is J. Greenwood, "Review Article: Organised Civil Society and democratic Legitimacy in the EU", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2007, pp. 333-57.

participation, inclusion, transparency and independence. It is in these four criteria that this study is most useful for our purposes. It puts up compelling theoretical assumptions that challenge the notion that transnational donor funding has little or no negative implications for civil society operations in client states like Nigeria. The independence criterion particularly raises questions about the autonomy of CSOs who depend on transnational funding. This question is also attempted in Guo and Musso's analysis of the local or national context.[148]

The discourse around the independence of CSOs is founded on the assumption that they serve or ought to serve as 'transmission belts' of citizen's interests and concerns. Fulfilling this role requires therefore, that CSOs be free from entanglements with the dominant class, the state and business interests which may prevent them from exercising their function as intermediaries between citizens and the sites of policy making. These entanglements are, of course, often linked to funding and the co-optation that often results from such dependence.[149]This is the critical interphase between Steffek et. al.'s work and this study. By highlighting the way CSO funding generates incentives that may constrain or induce accountability; they demonstrate one of the chief implications of transnational donor funding for civil society operations in Nigeria. This study is however placed within a cultural and spatial context that is much different from Nigeria. It thus holds the possibility that some of its fundamental assumptions may not apply to the Nigerian case or even to an African or developing world case study.

In a study that situates civil society's organizational culture within its normative role in development and governance processes and, more importantly, within the context of a developing economy, Lewis moves the literature a bit closer to our research

[148]C. Guo and J. Musso, "Representation in Nonprofit and Voluntary Associations: A Conceptual Framework", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2007, pp. 308-26.
[149]K. Martens, "Non-governmental Organisations as Corporatist Mediator? An Analysis of NGOs in the UNESCO System", *Global Society*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2001, pp. 387-404; J. Hirsch, "The State's New Clothes: NGOs and the Internationalization of States", *Politica y Cultura,* Vol. 20,2003, pp. 7-25.

problematique.[150]Lewis focuses on the way organizational culture interacts within the complex relationship built between funding agencies and recipient NGOs. The study draws on qualitative research on a sericulture project in rural Bangladesh that help reveal the complex roots of sustainability problems within multi-agency rural development projects. By focussing both on local organisational realities and on relationships of power in the way these organisations interact with transnational donors, Lewis demonstrates that the peculiar nature of donor-client relationships may generate incentives that frame the operations of civil society organisations in particular ways. He concludes by noting that even though project priorities and goals are often clearly defined at the outset of any donor intervention, initial project meanings are, as the realities of execution deepen, merged or fragmented.[151] This undermines the accountability chain as the beneficiaries are often, at this stage, not consulted any longer.

A similar conclusion is reached by Cooley and Ron in a very detailed study of organisational insecurity generated by transnational action.[152]This article is significant because it proceeds from most of the key assumptions with which our study engages the question of transnational donors within the Nigerian civil society architecture. For one, it utilizes a political economy approach that locates civil society organisational behaviour within the incentives and constraints generated by funding policies. This study examines specific funding policies that reflect the prevailing dominance of neoliberal market paradigms in the NGO industry and attempts to draw attention to how these policies tend to frame the behaviour of CSOs. The main thrust is that commodification of civil society activities tends to force organisations to focus on security, survival and ultimately, market profits. NGOs

[150]D. Lewis, "NGOs, Organizational Culture and Institutional Sustainability", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social science, *Rethinking Sustainable Development,* Vol. 590, 2003, pp. 212-26.
[151]*Ibid, Op. Cit.*, p. 224.
[152] A. Cooley and J. Ron,'The NGO Scramble', *Op. Cit.*

therefore can be expected to act much like firms do in markets in so far as they are forced to operate under market based institutional environments.

Cooley and Ron use the New Economics of Organisation (NEO), to demonstrate the implications of market like conditions on NGOs.[153]This theory assumes that NGO organisational structures emulate private-sector models largely because donor-recipient relationship is contractual. They contend that, within the context of a rapidly growing NGO and donor industry, multiple principals result in organisational insecurity and creates organizational imperatives to 'promote self-interested action, inter-INGO competition, and poor project implementation.[154]As a consequence of changes in the nature of the international system Cooley and Ron call for scholars to 'rethink their approach to the emerging world of transnational action'. They argue that the assumption that transnational civil society is a harbinger of a 'new, liberal and robust civil society' may be overly optimistic.[155]This is the conclusion of a large section of the literature on civil society reviewed above.

The literature reviewed above shows that much work has been done on the nature of civil society, its actors, its challenges and the way it interacts with other social formations within and outside the state. The literature is quite definitive in its consensus that for good or evil, civil society plays a significant role in the democratic process. There is also widespread agreement that civil society can and does play a crucial role in the governance process. It appears that there is a consensus too about the ongoing de-territorialisation of civil society; that is the creation of what Anheir[156] and Tsutui[157] refer to as a 'global civil society' or at least the increasing linkage between territorial civil society groups fighting similar causes.

[153]The NEO is a body of theory that was created to study organisational behaviour under market conditions. For insights, see O. Williamson, 'The Economic Institutions of Capitalism', *Op. Cit.*; N. Douglas, 'Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance', *Op. Cit.* and T. Eggertson, 'Economic Behaviour and Institutions', *Op. Cit.*

[154] A. Cooley and J. Ron, 'The NGO Scramble', *Op. Cit*, p. 14.

[155]*Ibid, p. 36.*

[156] H. Anheier, et. al. (eds.), 'Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*

[157]K. Tsutsui, 'Global Civil Society' and Ethnic Social movements', *Op. Cit.* and K. Tsutsui and C. Wotipka, 'Global Civil Society and the International Human Rights Movement', *Op. Cit.*

These broad areas of agreement however mask deeper disagreements about the very nature of civil society, its composition and the role it actually plays in the governance and democratisation processes. Our review has shown that the debate about civil society's relationship with the public and private sphere, or, in fact, whether civil society can be separated from either of these spheres is still very much alive. There is also no end in sight to the controversy regarding the ability of civil society to resist the manipulation of dominant classes or to adequately represent the interest of the poor. It is not clear too what relationship civil society ought to have with transnational donors. Should they join up with a global civil society, thereby effectively abandoning context specific advocacy; becoming a part of a so-called global grassroots movement or should they retain their distinct identities, spurn globalisation, if they can, and continue to mirror primordial identities?

These areas of consensus and discord reflect the robust and dynamic nature of the civil society discourse. It shows that civil society is fast becoming a buzzword within whose analytical bowels many political issues of a globalizing world can be situated. It also shows that, like many other social science phenomena, it can be explained through the paradigms developed from within different schools of thought.

This review however reflects something else. It shows that as lively as the discourse has been, it has largely refrained from engaging the nature of civil society institutional contexts. It has focussed on the normative agenda of civil society and its donors; it has engaged the implications of donor involvement for autonomy and hence, legitimacy, but not the way transnational donor activities result in unintended incentives and constraints that shape civil society operations. This is an area of the discourse on civil society that can move debate away from value driven and ideological postulations and perhaps anchor it on truly scientific and objective frameworks. Africa is also, as usual, largely under researched within the civil society discourse. These gaps are the focus of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

TRANSNATIONAL DONOR INVOLVEMENT IN CIVIL SOCIETY IN NIGERIA

3.1 Origins and Dynamics of Modern Civil Society in Nigeria

While the emergence of modern civil society in Nigeria can easily be traced to its colonial history, there is no doubt that a civil society had existed even in the pre-colonial period. As was demonstrated by Falola and Heaton,[1] secret societies, age grade movements, progress unions, trade associations and craft groups thrived in Nigeria in the pre-colonial period. Michael Bratton's definition of civil society as 'an arena where manifold social movement organisations from all classes attempt to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements, so that they can express themselves and advance their interests',[2] leaves no doubt that these social formations described by Falola and Heaton constitute a civil society.

The emergence of colonialism and the repression that it arguably introduced and consolidated within Nigeria therefore, rather than having introduced the civic sphere to the country, merely served to introduce a peculiar character to it. This character is that of militant opposition to the structures of the state. It is of course to be expected that the nature of the civic sphere that would emerge within the colonial context would react to the alien character of the colonial state and to its intense repressive tendencies. This nature did not however completely kill the erstwhile central essence of pre-colonial civil society in Nigeria; that is meeting the immediate needs of members in its social, material and religious expressions. As Falola and Heaton again report, 'civil society organisations have often been constituted to meet the needs of their members in a way that is completely separate from the state... while

[1] T. Falola and M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 210.
[2] M. Bratton, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

also making their needs known to the state'.[3]The ability to combine these two functions appears to be one of the defining elements of modern civil society in Nigeria.

The above is important to challenge the tendency to link civil society origins in Africa to the emergence of liberal democratic governance paradigms or to the advent of colonial contacts.[4] Placing the contemporary expressions of civic life within a separate and distinct analytical category allows us to understand their origins and dynamics without necessarily doing damage to pre-colonial history and linkages. This is why, in this study, my emphasis is on 'modern civil society' rather than on 'civil society'. By 'modern civil society', I refer specifically to CSOs that emerged in the post colonial period. Describing this analytical category as *modern civil society* allows a focus on the nature and dynamics of new civil society movements, particularly NGOs, and their interactions with a globalizing system.

The colonial period is a very important epoch that defined the nature of modern civil society movements in much of Africa. For one, it effectively imbued the perception of being on a 'civilizing mission' on civil society. This self perception, what Shivji described as based on 'utterly false historical and intellectual premises',[5] is not unconnected to the racist, imperialist and paternalistic foundations of the colonial enterprise itself. Colonialism also eroded the collective organisation and associational kinship that was at the heart of social formations in the pre-colonial period and paved the way for the increasingly visible disconnection between modern NGOs and the people they purport to represent.

Perhaps the most significant impact of colonialism on the architecture of civil society in Nigeria, as in the rest of Africa, however, was the deepening of linkages with transnational

[3] T Falola and M. Heaton, 'A History of Nigeria', op.cit. p. 210.
[4]Such views are particularly rife in liberal democratic literature where the priority is often to justify neoliberal governance and to consolidate the retreat of the state and the consequent strengthening of so called autonomous social formations. Arguing that civil society emerged with colonial contacts makes it easier to highlight its opposition to state while ignoring its associational value which is perhaps its most practical utility in Africa. For analysis of the distinction between these two functions of civil society, see P. Ekeh, 'Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa', *Op. Cit.*
[5] I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*, p. 11.

civil society movements. It has been said that the colonial authorities had no desire to finance state welfare programmes for Africans in spite of the widespread economic dislocations created by colonial policies.[6] This posture of colonialism deepened within the context of the growing relevance of charities in many European states themselves who had taken up the task of bridging the growing gap between the bourgeoisie and the swelling ranks of the proletariat, apparently to prevent the outbreak of violent social resistance to the crisis being created by rapid industrialization. These charities soon followed the expansion of capital into the colonial territories, providing material palliatives to some of colonialism's worst atrocities and to its tendency to deny Africans some form of social security. They also held distinct advantages over the newly emerging modern civil society movements in Africa. For one, they had significantly greater experience in such interventions, having been involved in similar work in industrialising Europe since at least the 1840s[7]. They were also more conversant with the peculiar workings of the European states and by extension, their policies in colonial territories. This advantage was further reinforced by the preference of the colonial authorities, for reasons of race, strategic considerations and general convenience, of transnational NGOs from their home territories. To cap it all, these organisations had access to surplus capital from the rapidly expanding capitalist economies of Europe's colonial powers. It was thus practically impossible for nascent indigenous NGOs to compete with or, to say the least, ignore them. These transnational charities therefore did not only play major roles in addressing some of the worst material implications of colonialism, they were also crucial instruments of cultural control, establishing working relationships with indigenous grass roots

[6] See for instance H. Werlin, *Governing an African City: A Study of Nairobi,* London: Africana Publishing Co., 1974. By denying Africans access to state organised welfare systems, colonialism induced a growing attachment to alternate platforms like civil society. While this no doubt strengthened the ability of indigenous civil society movements to gain support among the populace, it also deepened the penetration of African society by foreign transnational movements who were of course eager to step in to offer some material succour at the same time they provided the ideological and sometimes even theological justification for colonialism (see F. Manji and C. O'Coill, 'The Missionary Position', *Op. Cit.*).

[7] F. Manji and C. O'Coill, 'The Missionary Position', *Op. Cit.*, p. 568.

movements involved in the associational life in Africa that have endured in similar fashion into the twenty first century.

Manji and O'Coill provide a brilliant expose of the linkages between transnational civil society formations that preceded colonial conquest, what they referred to as 'missionaries of empire', and modern voluntary associations that we call NGOs.[8] Their analysis demonstrates a connection between the foreign CSOs whose work in Africa in the colonial period was as much humanitarian as it was for the advancement of empire, and modern day 'development' NGOs that now champion liberal governance projects. In the first place, there are long standing linkages between voluntarism and the market and modern civil society appears to be configured in such a way that it advances the interests of power and capital rather than that of local constituencies.[9] These linkages between the market and the NGO sector have been carried on into the post independence period so much so that since the 1980s, there has been an explosion in the number of CSOs and the issue areas within which they operate. There has, of course, also been a deepening of the networks of linkages that connect CSOs to centres of capital.

After initially participating in the decolonization projects of the 1950s and 60s, most African civil society groups, lost faith in or were co-opted by the post-colonial state and thus entered a phase of retraction. It was not until the 1980's that the civil society re-emerged in the public sphere to participate in struggles against military dictatorships, one party rule and of course, the contradictions unleashed by the growing economic crisis and its Structural Adjustment Programmes. Before the 1960s however, grassroots movements, protesting the disempowerment policies of the colonial state, had become increasingly vibrant and vocal in

[8] F. Manji and C. O'Coill, 'The Missionary Position', *Ibid.*
[9] For articles that raise concern about whose interest NGOs advance, in spite of rhetoric of local representation, see A. Iwilade, 'Democracy, Civil Society and the Commodification of AIDS', *Op. Cit.*; J. Steffek et. al., 'Whose Voice?', *Op. Cit.*

demands for some form of participation. This participation was not so much for abstract concepts of self-determination as it was for concrete economic rights. These rights related to the very survival of the common people and provided impetus for the liberation movements that eventually fought for independence.[10]

It would appear from the above therefore; that what drove the formation of modern civil society was chiefly the need to confront the material implications of colonialism, to provide alternative spaces for political expression and dissent and to ultimately challenge the authoritarian nature of the state. Underlying these drives was also what Ikelegbe referred to as 'perverse manifestations' of civil society.[11]These include the persistence of primordial linkages of ethnicity and the pull of primitive accumulation of capital.[12] In any case, it would be naive to expect civil society to be immune from the crisis faced by the state. The colonial state in Nigeria was clearly hostage to transnational forces in both the political and economic realms. Being a totalitarian enterprise, colonialism facilitated the penetration of civil society by foreign donor organisations that, at that time, set the context for the agenda-setting role they now play in the civic sphere.

Just as the origin of modern civil society in Nigeria can be located in colonialism and the peculiar nature of political and economic interaction that it engendered, the changes in the architecture of civil society since the post-colonial era have also largely followed an external dynamic. This is not to say that civil society has failed to respond to internal questions raised by the immense governance challenges that the country has faced. However, it appears that the specific issue areas, methodology and vocal priorities of civil society's engagement with

[10] Similar arguments can be found in C. Ake, 'The Unique Case of African Democracy', *Op. Cit.* and F. Manji and C. O'Coill, 'The Missionary Position', *Op. Cit.*
[11] See A. Ikelegbe, 'The Perverse manifestations of Civil society', *Op. Cit.*
[12] Similar views were expressed by Dr. Kehinde Olayode in an interview conducted by the author on 16, December, 2010, in Ile-Ife.

the state have been determined by changes in the fads, expectations and priorities of transnational donors.

The influence of what many scholars have referred to as a global civil society[13]is perhaps most visible in the NGO sector. This influence is at the heart of critiques of civil society that has focussed on questions of autonomy and legitimacy. In keeping with a so called 'global best practice' NGOs ape the prevailing fads of foreign, mostly western societies. More often than not, their activities reflect a denial of the specificities of Nigerian society. This is what Issa Shivji referred to as the 'permanent present' or the internalization of the 'thoughtless idiocies of right wing and reactionary writers'[14] that leads to a distortion of Africa's material and political history. The linkages of dependence and control that compel NGOs in Nigeria to collapse into the ideological and funding structures of foreign donors can be understood by taking note of the broader context of dependency that determines Nigeria's relationship with western powers.

The literature on foreign aid provides important insights into the interactions of power that govern linkages between states at the core and those at the periphery of the globalizing international system.[15] While literature appears to have focussed on interstate relations within this context, it is important to note that civil society, particularly since the 1980s, has become a leading net recipient of non military aid.[16] With this increase in transnational engagement

[13] See for instance H. Anheier, 'Civil Society', *Op. Cit;* J. Keane, *Global Civil Society?,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; K. Tsutsui, 'Global Civil Society and Ethnic Social Movements', *Op. Cit.*;K. Tsutsui and C. Wotipka, 'Global Civil Society and the International Human Rights Movement', *Op. Cit.*; H. Clark, *People Power: Unarmed Resistance and Global Solidarity,* London: Pluto Press, 2009; R. Reitan, *Global Activism,* London: Taylor and Francis, 2009; P. Dofour , D. Masson, and D. Caouette (eds.), *Solidarities Beyond Borders: Transnationalizing Women's Movements,* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010.

[14] See I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*, p.14.

[15] See for instance H. Schwalbenberg, 'Does Foreign Aid Cause the Adoption of Harmful Economic Policies?', *Op. Cit.;* N. Van de Walle, 'African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis', *Op. Cit*; D. Sogge, 'Give and Take', *Op. Cit.*; D. Moyo, 'Dead Aid: why Aid is not working' *Op. Cit.*

[16] See M. Robinson, "Aid, Democracy and Political Conditionality In Sub-Saharan Africa", *European Journal of Development Research,* Vol. 5, No. 3,1993, pp. 85-99; M. Robinson, "Strengthening Civil Society in Africa: The Role of Foreign Political Aid", *IDS Bulletin,* Vol. 26, No. 2, 1995, pp. 70-80 and C. Gibbs, C. Fumo and T.

with civil society within Africa, one can expect that the patterns of dependent relations that characterized and still characterize the relationship between states will have been carried over into donor-civil society relations. It is the nature of this relationship that has ensured that local civil society responds disproportionately to external dynamics and justifies the growing scholarly interest in the role of donors in civil society in the developing world.

3.2 The Role of Donors

The above analysis of the origins and dynamics of civil society in Nigeria establishes the importance of foreign supports for its vibrancy and character. Indeed, the story of modern civil society in Nigeria is as much a story of internal evolutions of its social formations that react to self identified needs and interests[17], as it is a story of the dynamics of a global civil society; reacting to its own internal pressures and in turn putting intense pressure, in both ideological and financial terms, on local civil society to reflect 'global best practices'. In simple words, the civil society movement in Nigeria is inspired both by its internal needs and the push provided by donors. Organisations like the ERN, for instance, typify the interaction of both internal and external pressures in the formulation of CSO policies and priorities. Many scholars will argue, in fact, that donor pressures have grown to become the most crucial determinant of the emerging character of civil society.[18]

The purpose of this section is to identify the roles donors play within civil society. It also will provide a critical analysis of the implications of these roles for civil society and its ability to participate effectively in the democracy project. As a starting point, it is important

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Kuby, *Nongovernmental Organisations in World Bank Supported Projects: A Review*, Washington DC: World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, 1999.

[17] The development of the press, for instance, largely reflects the reactions of the Nigerian society, particularly its educated elite, to internal pressures for democratisation. See

[18] Even though scholars interrogate different aspects of donor influence, most agree that donors ultimately frame the civil society's institutional environment. For scholars who emphasise the role of funding in donor influence, see note 15 above. For those who look instead at ideological influence, see I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.* and T. Moss, *African Development: Making Sense of the Issues and Actors,* Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007.

to note that donor participation appears to have been a central determinant of the nature of civil society in Nigeria. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the survival of modern civil society in Nigeria without the supports provided in varied forms by transnational donors. At the very least, it is clear that modern civil society in Nigeria would have been much different without the kind of comprehensive engagement with transnational forces it has had. As important as this engagement is however, it is its very nature and the patterns of interaction that have framed it that has been most crucial.

To all intents and purposes, there appears to be a general consensus that civil society derives its legitimacy largely from transnational donors. This much was said by Issa Shivji when he noted that CSOs 'by their very nature, derive not only their sustenance but also legitimacy from the donor community'.[19] He goes on further to connect this pattern of legitimacy to the linkages between aid recipient regimes and their benefactors. In this, Shivji draws attention not only to the fact that the ability to attract and retain donor support is often a benchmark through which 'good governance' indicators are evaluated but also to the intricate web that connects the donor-state-CSO triad. It is perhaps obvious that by adding the market to this triad, the exclusion of society is profoundly complete.

An assessment of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 2009 Human development Index (HDI) evaluation of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa shows for instance, that aid recipient states are generally considered to be more effective and often either democratic or democratising; a very important criteria for international legitimacy in the 21st century.[20] Five countries can particularly demonstrate this. They are Mauritius, Botswana, Swaziland, Ghana and Uganda.

[19] See I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. cit,* p. 13.
[20] This can be inferred by comparing Official Development Assistance (ODA) and movement along Good Governance Performance Indexes. See Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Country	HDI	World Rank	Africa Rank	ODA Per Capita (US$)	ODA as Percentage of Africa Average
Mauritius	0.804	82	3	1109.91	236.84
Botswana	0.694	125	10	540.85	115.41
Swaziland	0.572	142	17	995.25	212.36
Ghana	0.526	152	23	125.33	26.74
Uganda	0.514	157	28	66.751	14.24

Sources: Data on ODA is available from the OECD. Extracted from http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=AEO_THEME_FIG2 on November 3, 2010. HDI Data is available from the UNDP's Human Development Report, 2009.

A broader analysis of all countries perhaps captures this hypothesis more poignantly. The countries within the high and medium clusters of the UNDP's HDI for instance, receive an average ODA per capita of 752.38 US Dollars while low HDI countries received a mere 91 US Dollars.[21] One would expect that the greater the need for help, the higher the aid availed. This is clearly not the case. This indicates a bias not necessarily for aid giving, but for the linkages that neoliberal economic reform inevitably deepens between such states and donors. This does not say much about how the reform agenda came to be designed and adopted or what causal relationship, if there is any, can be established between aid giving/receiving and 'good governance'[22]. It is of course also silent on whether neoliberal

[21] Based on author calculations from a combination of the OECD's 2009 ODA data and the UNDP's 2009 HDI. Data on ODA is available from the OECD and extracted from http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=AEO_THEME_FIG2 on November 3, 2010. HDI Data is available from the UNDP's Human Development Report, 2009.

[22] Todd Moss argues that 'there is little evidence that foreign aid generates broad economic growth'. Where empirical evidence has been generated that appears to support the notion that aid induces economic growth, Moss dismisses them as manipulative 'slicing of data'. See T. Moss, 'African Development', *Op. Cit.*, p. 137.

'good governance' indicators capture the essential realities of contemporary Africa. What it does say however is that the more a state ties its governance policies to supports received from foreign sources, the more likely it is to be considered as respecting 'good governance' and therefore, the more legitimacy it earns within the western dominated international community. States like Ghana, Uganda and Botswana provide very good examples. There are of course exceptions like Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone who are major aid recipients either as a direct consequence of instability or for post conflict reconstruction purposes, but who do not generally meet the 'good governance' criteria. Nigeria's governance project often gains the support of donor agencies at a time it accepts significant levels of support from the donor community. Periods in Nigeria's history like the late 1980s Structural Adjustment Programme of General Ibrahim Babangida and the early 21st century economic reform agenda of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's government are good examples of the country's high rating within international financial circles that may be linked to active engagement with donors.

By being the source of legitimacy, donors inevitably become critical to the survival of CSOs in Nigeria. Since CSOs purport to operate in the voluntary sector and given the fact that they are generally perceived as; or more appropriately, they generally thrive on the self perception of what Fisher referred to as 'doing good',[23] legitimacy is a very important social capital that not only justifies their existence but also strengthens their claim to ownership of social conscience and values. This very crucial capital is offered largely by donors. Even though some elements within civil society, particularly grass roots movements who have little or no engagement with transnational donors, do not necessarily derive their essential

Contrary evidence is presented in M. Halperin, J. Siegle, and M. Weintein, 'The Democracy Advantage', *Op. Cit.*

[23] See W. Fisher, 'Doing Good? The Politics and Anti-politics of NGO Practices', *Op. cit.*

legitimacy from foreign sources, the impact of the legitimization of the entire architecture of civil society by western ideological and political supports cannot be ignored.

Another important role of transnational donors in the civic sphere in Nigeria is funding. This area of transnational donor engagement with civil society is one of the most researched within the literature. Most modern NGOs cannot survive without some form of funding support from foreign donors.[24] This dependence on funding from foreign sources is the major instrument through which donors ensure that their goals are largely met within the governance process in Nigeria. Funding and other allied support is both the carrot, that is the incentive, and the stick, the tool of punishment, through which donor control is guaranteed. It is difficult to envisage a civil society architecture so dependent on foreign influences without the use of funding supports as a powerful lever through which transnational organisations can pressure or induce, as may be required, local organisations to do their bidding.

The massive influx of funding from transnational sources is partly responsible for the intensification of activities in the civic sphere. Before the increased transfer of funds from transnational donors to local civil society in Nigeria in the 1990s, an increase occasioned by the changing dynamics of the international system and its tendency to privilege NGOs over the state, activities in the democracy and governance advocacy sectors were negligible. This is not to suggest that civil society movements were unconcerned with democratisation and governance related issues, after all, we have earlier established its colonial roots. The point being made however is that the kind of urban based advocacy that appears to shift focus away from issues of economic and social justice generally strengthened in that period. William

[24] There are numerous indications that this is the case within the literature. See for instance A. Goldsmith 'Foreign Aid and Statehood in Africa', *Op. Cit.;* A. Goldsmith 'Donors, dictators and democrats in Africa', *Op. Cit.* and D. Sogge, 'Give and Take', *Op. Cit.* My field research also largely confirmed this. In fact, according to Tope Shaba of the Electoral Reform Network (ERN), his organisation receives not less than 99 percent of its funds from foreign sources. The remaining 1 percent is sourced from membership subscriptions. (Interview at ERN office, Abuja, October 7, 2010). All other sample organisations indicate similar levels of dependence on foreign funding.

Fisher's study of literature on civil society in the globalization era does much to demonstrate the intensification of networks of cooperation and the trans-local and transnational flow of ideas, people and funding that has been witnessed since the late 1980s.[25]

Increased funding appears to have become a double edged sword within the civil society in Nigeria. In the first place, it has no doubt strengthened the capacity of local CSOs relative to the state. It provides them with funds and other logistical supports that enhance their ability to coordinate advocacy campaigns. Organisations like ERA, DA, CDHR and NADECO for instance, benefited immensely from donor enthusiasm in the 1990s. They were thus able to challenge state authoritarianism in a way that was perhaps last seen in the colonial period. Increased funding also encourages broader participation in civil society activities. It brings in more people, particularly the educated and highly skilled class. This is the case in present day Nigeria. In field trips around sample organisations in Abuja and Lagos, it is common to find CSOs almost entirely staffed by young, educated and highly sophisticated Nigerians. Unlike in the 1960s when the field workers of CSOs were uneducated and aggrieved peasants, the 'do gooders' of the twenty first century are young, *blackberry* totting graduates, largely content with their personal lives. This changing dynamic in participation indicates a shift in the centre of the control gravity of civil society. It indicates an elite appropriation of civil society that is partly a consequence of massive influx of foreign funding. Such high level of donor dependence raises questions about the legitimacy and autonomy of local CSOs. It also increases competition for growing but yet limited funds among CSOs operating in the sector. This competition intensifies organisational insecurity for all involved and forces market-like responses on organisations that are essentially voluntary and non-profit.

[25] W. Fisher, 'Doing Good', *Op. Cit.*

Transnational donors also provide ideological guidance and leadership to a broad spectrum of civil society. The contemporary tapestry of civil society is unlikely to be what it currently is without the ideological push that the post cold war international system gave to the civic sphere. The years leading to the collapse of the cold war international system and perhaps more so, those immediately after its collapse, were important watersheds in the advancement of the liberal perspective of civil society. From Eastern Europe where the Solidarity Movement in Poland, formed in Gdansk in 1980, resisted communism, to African struggles against the military and one party rule, liberal democratic rhetoric triumphed in much of the world. For Africa, this perspective of civil society derives from fundamental assumptions about the state. It is assumed that the state is incapable of driving the development process as a result of its internal contradictions. Since the recession of the nuclear threat in the early 1990s provided incentive for the de-securitization of global politics, or at least the elevation of hitherto 'unimportant' issues into the realm of high politics, it became possible, or indeed, desirable, that its presence, that is the state's, be scaled back to allow emerging 'autonomous' social forces gain primacy in development planning. With civil society gaining the ideological initiative at the expense of the state, the stage was inevitably set for conflict.

The highly unstable nature of the post cold war international system also induced important changes within states. While it opened up new opportunities for harmonious politics above the state, it intensified the conflictual nature of the politics going on below the state; that is within, between and among its social and class formations. These formations, read as civil society, also had to increasingly struggle for relevance and control of resources with the state. While these internal contradictions were emerging within the developing world, leading to the implosion of states like Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone and widespread instability in states like Nigeria, transnational civil society and social movements

in the west were becoming re-invigorated. Triumphalist scholarship like that of Francis Fukuyama who declared the *End of History* provides signs of the highly re-invigorated atmosphere within which transnational civil society movements re-launched their engagement with the developing world in the 1990s.

Repression by the Nigerian state in that period was in part a reaction to challenges to its authority deriving from civil society's attempts to seize the opportunities provided by a changing global system. This repression easily forced much of civil society underground, particularly those raising questions directly challenging the rights of the ruling ethno-military class to govern. The resulting crisis situation presented transnational donors the opportunity not only to help local organisations build capacities to survive the onslaught of the Nigerian state, but also for them to seize the ideological initiative. This was done by bringing to the forefront of the democratic struggle, issues that were important but clearly not the priorities of the Nigerian society. One may understand what Ake describes as the 'trivialisation of democracy' in this context.[26] By emphasising electoral freedom, civil rights and so forth rather than economic and resource rights, the 1990s marked a watershed in the liberalisation of Nigerian civil society, and perhaps its 'trivialisation'. Since 1987, it has been reported that the number of NGOs involved in issues relating to civil rights in Nigeria have increased from just one (the Civil Liberties Organisation {CLO}) to more than a thousand.[27] Rather than indicating a rise in awareness of human rights issues or even in the capacity of civil society to bring the state to account for abuses, this proliferation merely reflects the fact that the de-territorialisation of civil society in Nigeria is proceeding in full swing under the ideological tutelage of western social movements.

[26] See C. Ake, 'Democracy and Development in Africa', *Op. Cit.*, p.

[27] See I. Chukwuma, *"Government-Civil Society Partnership in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects"*, Paper presented at the Special Retreat on Government Civil Society Partnership organized by the National Orientation Agency in Collaboration with Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Civil Society at the Multipurpose Arts Theatre, Gamji Gate, Kaduna, 12-15, September, 2005.

Transnational civil society movements, within the context of their re-engagement with local civil society in Nigeria in the 1990s, were largely successful in framing the ideological paradigms that drive civic advocacy in neoliberal terms. This has blunted the revolutionary edge of civil society, reducing them to active, if unwitting, collaborators with the state. Shivji's account of the conscious discouragement of any 'historical and social theoretical understanding of development, poverty, discrimination etc' by transnational donors provides important corroboration of this argument.[28] This indicates that the tendency to advocate 'change' within the structures of the state as it is presently constituted, that is 'reform' rather than 'revolution', is an ideological choice that has been encouraged by transnational donors at a specific historical moment in Nigeria's political history. It fits into global neoliberal desires for peace and stability, notwithstanding the deficit in justice this may imply for many societies.

Deriving from their ideological leadership and funding of civil society in Nigeria, transnational donors find it quite easy to set the advocacy agenda. Transnational donors control not just the letters but also the spirit of civil society advocacy in Nigeria. There is hardly any doubt that the advocacy priorities of civil society changes over time. Indeed, both the challenges of society and the context within which they have to be confronted are hardly ever frozen in time. One of the advantages civil society is said to have over the state is essentially its ability to respond quite nimbly to the dynamic changes going on within society unlike the state which is often over burdened by a corrupt and inept bureaucracy.[29] Begrudging civil society for its flexibility or for the heterogeneous character that allows this would therefore be unfair. As Fatton notes, to transform civil society, 'into an exclusive

[28] See I. Shivji, 'The Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*, p. 14.
[29] See for instance World Bank , *World Development Report*, Washington DC: World Bank/Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 135; and B. Adam, "Post Marxism and the New Social Movements", *Canadian Review of Social Anthropology*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 1993, pp. 316-36.

realm of civility, emptied of parochialism, fundamentalism and self seeking agents; is to do violence to its very essence'.[30]

The question being raised here is therefore not about the ability of civil society to respond to the dynamics of the governance crisis in Nigeria but rather, the tendency of those responses to be at the prodding of donors. It appears that rather than being dynamic in their response to issues faced by the Nigerian society, civil society is particularly nimble in soaking up the fads of donor organisations. This is the crux of the 'agenda-setting role' that donors are accused of playing within civil society. There are two dimensions to this. The first is where NGOs follow the lead of donors without the latter necessarily consciously pushing them. This is the unintended consequence of donor monopoly of funds and allied capacities. NGOs merely follow the money trail and plug in to access available funds. The second dimension is where NGOs are actually driven to pursue specific advocacy agendas by donors. This is often the case with NGOs who have already established some form of relationship with donors in specific advocacy areas. They, in a bid to win or retain funding portfolios, allow transnational donors to dictate priority areas and methods of advocacy.

A few examples will suffice in this case. By comparing funding trends in specific areas where civil society advocacy has been strong with changes in the number of NGOs involved in that area, it is possible to deduce how donor engagement induces NGOs to focus on particular issues. Two sectors provide important insights into how donor support impacts on the priorities of NGOs in Nigeria. These are HIV/AIDS and human rights.

Activities intensified in the HIV/AIDS sector of civil society at about the turn of the 21st century, just as the transnational donor community was discovering the development and security imperative of expanding interventions. This increase in NGO activity in the sector

[30] R. Fatton, 'Africa in the Age of Democratization', *Op. Cit.*, p.77.

suggests a causal link between funding and intensified advocacy interest. While this may not provide the sole explanation for the intensification of NGO interest, it is more than a mere coincidence that NGOs proliferate at the time donors direct funds at the HIV/AIDs issue. There is empirical evidence that supports my argument that donors are quite capable of setting the advocacy agenda and that they often do in the case of HIV/AIDS.

According to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (GF), HIV/AIDS funding to Nigeria has risen to about 353 million dollars since 2000.[31] During that time, the number of HIV/AIDS NGOs has risen from under a hundred to several thousands.[32] The above demonstrates that increases in the funds available from transnational donors impacts directly on the number of NGOs working in that area. This is an indication that NGOs are likely to follow the money thereby allowing donors to set the agenda of advocacy.

The human rights sector also provides compelling examples of how increased funding inevitably means heightened NGO interest. As reported by Chukwuma, between 1987 and 2005, there has been an exponential increase from just one human rights NGO to over one thousand. Does empirical data provide evidence that funding also increased? The de-securitization of global politics without doubt increased funding for governance related projects all over Africa. This is because donors made an ideological choice to intensify funding to neoliberal sectors of the economy. One of which was the human rights and constitutionalism projects.[33]

The above corroborates the data on HIV/AIDS and therefore indicates that the causal linkages suggested of donor funding and NGO advocacy can be held to represent a general

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[31] See The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, available in http://portfolio.theglobalfund.org/Country/Index/NGA?lang=en. Accessed, November 3, 2010.
[32] See National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA).
[33] See A. Iwilade, *Depoliticising Development? Foreign Aid and Democracy in Africa*, Paper presented at the International Conference on "Politics Beyond the State: Transformations of the State between De- and Re-politicization", at the Collaborative Research Center 597 on the Transformations of the State, University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany, May 26-30, 2010, p.31.

trend. It appears therefore that through the instrumentality of funding, transnational donors easily set the advocacy agenda for local NGOs thereby further undermining their autonomy and imposing perverse accountability dynamics.

One other important role of donors in civil society in Nigeria is the provision of frameworks for evaluation. Since they largely grant legitimacy to modern civil society, their evaluation of specific civil society activities and programmes is a crucial lever with which transnational donors control the sector. Project evaluation is meant to ensure that donor funds are utilized within the limits imposed by proposals and to push advocacy agendas already agreed upon. Because these organisations now increasingly depend on renewable contracting as a strategy to ensure periodic in-programme assessment of NGOs, they have become very powerful indeed. Renewable contracting provides a strong disincentive for NGOs to demonstrate independent initiative even where funds have already been won. This is because, such initiative, where it challenges the fundamentals of donor assumptions, even if that were wrong *ab initio*, increases the risk that contracts will not be renewed. Giving widespread proliferation, there are of course many other NGOs jostling to take over the contracts on donor terms. Wielding the evaluation stick also strengthens the ability of donors to frame legitimacy the way they choose and severely undermines both the autonomy of NGOs and their standing with local constituencies.

The roles identified above of transnational donors within the civil society sector in Nigeria are indicative primarily of the nature of relations. They show that in the interactions of power, donors clearly hold the ace. The question is however that what exactly does this nature of relations mean for civil society? How does it frame civil society's perception of its role in democratisation?

The transnational linkages with donors may introduce and solidify the ideas of transparency, good governance and democracy.[34] It may also help bring local CSOs in line with the latest in advocacy strategies, experiences and expertise while providing crucial capacity building help. These linkages also at times help protect civil society activists from the most extreme forms of state repression as it essentially internationalises their struggles and creates dynamics that links civil society advocacy with foreign policy and sometimes even regime security.

The most visible impact of high levels of donor involvement in civil society operations is however perhaps the corporatisation of CSOs. Murphy captures this point very clearly when he wrote that:

> increasingly the model for the 'successful NGO is the corporation- ideally a transnational corporation and NGOs are ever more marketed and judged against corporate ideals. As part of the trend, a new development scientism is strangling us with things like strategic framework analysis and results-based management, precisely the values and methods and techniques that have made the world what it is today.[35]

This view of the increasing corporatisation of NGOs is shared by all sample organisations involved in this study. One of the most visible signs of corporatisation is the growing dependence on career activists and experts. This area of civil society appears to be on the increase as competition for jobs in both the public and private spheres becomes more intense. The problem with the growing tendency to staff NGOs with professionals or experts is that the sector appears to be increasingly depoliticised. Depoliticisation is conceptualized not merely as the shrinking of actors or as relative public ignorance of or indifference to a

[34] This view is held by many scholars who have examined the transnational linkages that accompany donor-civil society engagement within the context of globalization. See for instance S. Lipset, "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 59, 1994, pp. 2-13; H. Im,"Globalization and Democratization: Boon Companions or Strange Bedfellows?", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 50, 1996, pp. 279-91 and N. Rudra, "Globalization and the Strengthening of Democracy in the Developing World" *American Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 49. No. 4, 2005, pp. 704-730.

[35] See B. Murphy, "International NGOs and the Challenge of Modernity", in: D. Eade and E. Ligteringen, (eds.), *Debating Development*, Oxford: Oxfam GB.

particular policy process[36] but also as a process through which public policy consciously limits the extent of political contestations; a process of creating *democratic* consensus based on reason. As is envisaged within the theoretical assumptions upon which this study is based, corporatisation of NGOs inevitably make them operate much like firms do in markets, thereby eroding the much vaunted 'doing good' or 'charity' postures from which their claims to civil society status largely derives. Corporatisation also further entrenches civil society within the market, creating an interface that justifies perceptions of the fusion between the public and private spheres that was addressed so vigorously in our review of literature.[37]

Besides corporatisation, there is perhaps no gain saying that intense donor engagement with civil society has increasingly delinked local CSOs from constituent communities through whom their legitimacy ought to flow. In the first place, these CSOs become rentier organisations. They extract 'royalties' as it were from transnational donors, who also need to transfer available funds to justify receipt of surpluses in the developed north, and therefore do not have to be accountable to their constituencies. This is much like the case with the Nigerian state with regard to its oil industry, where engagement with multinational oil companies guarantees it revenue, and thus solvency, irrespective of maladministration of development policy and perhaps most significantly, irrespective of its legitimacy or that of the governing regime. The negative implications of this for civil society's role in the governance process and in democratisation cannot be overemphasised.

These identified implications of widespread donor engagement with the civil society in Nigeria may be better understood if placed within the context of the accompanying politics

[36] M. Zürn, "Global Governance and Legitimacy Problems." *Government and Opposition,* Vol. 39 No. 2, pp. 260-87, 2004.

[37] See Chapter two, particularly section 2.2.1. El-Battahani provides another brilliant analysis of the interface of civil society and the market in A. El-Battahani, "Economic Liberalisation and Civil Society in Sudan, 1989-1995", in: K. Prah and A. Ahmed (eds.), Africa in Transformation: Political and Economic Transformations and Socio-Economic Development Responses in Africa (Vol.2), Addis Ababa: OSSREA, pp. 145-60.

and nature of linkages and challenges that govern the interactions. This is what we now turn to.

3.3 The Politics of Donor Funding: Linkages and Challenges

The central question to be addressed here is related to the political implications of donor supports for civil society, the nature of linkages it encourages and the challenges that emerge as a consequence. The character of linkages between civil society in Africa and the trans-national donor community cannot be adequately explained except in the context of the broader relations of dependence between the developing and developed worlds. In its historical context Ake explained that dependence relates to the mono cultural character of the post colonial economy, its disarticulation and class contradictions and derives from 'the peculiar determinations and distortions of the colonial economy'.[38] The resultant monopolistic distribution of power in the global economy according to Ake therefore makes it extremely difficult for Africa to break out of economic dependence; class contradictions make it difficult for African leaders to get their priorities right and to engender the unity of purpose and the effort which is needed to tackle the problem of dependence. Unfortunately, Ake's postulation still rings true for Africa in the 21st century. It therefore stands to reason that since the essential patterns of dependent relations have remained constant; those being the super structure from which other socio-economic relations derive, the actors that emerge out of the various international arenas will largely maintain their place. In short, trans-national capital that emerges from the developed world would inevitably maintain a hegemonic relationship with its clients in the developing world and consequently impose its will on values, prioritization, programme content, scope and design on them.

By situating transnational donor supports within the broader context of the international political economy, it is easier to understand the relations of dependence and

[38] C. Ake, 'A Political Economy of Africa', *Op. Cit,* p. 20.

control that characterize civil society's engagement with foreign benefactors. It also highlights the complex dynamic processes of competing and overlapping practices in the discourse on the utility of civil society in driving the developmental agenda of states or providing an alternate development framework. It is also easier to sympathize with the school of thought that intensely questions the ultimate value of donor supports.

Donors give aid for very many reasons. Aid specialists according to David Sogge have located motives in three clusters. These are strategic socio-political, mercantilist and humanitarian and ethical motives.[39] While aid's motives are mixed, some high and noble, others low and ignoble, the problematic of understanding it is compounded by the shifting nature of these motives, the differences between donors, time specific contexts and of course the challenge of accurately imputing value on each variable in specific contexts. Nevertheless, what it does show is that the philosophy behind the aid industry is largely political. This is supported by a large and growing body of literature that addresses the political conditionalities often attached to aid.[40]

In the voluntary sector, donors and local CSOs alike would situate the motive for aid within the third cluster, that is humanitarian and ethical. It is clear that the desire to 'do something' about the severe development crisis being faced in Africa is one reason why many northern charities get involved. Pictures of starving young children and brutalities against women and children arising from conflicts have become compelling tools recruiting many ordinary people in the developed world to giving something. There will be no gain in denying the deep passions that drive this kind of behaviour. It is also important to acknowledge the fact that however marginally; these charities have played a role in

[39] D. Sogge, 'Give and Take', *Op. Cit*, p. 41

[40] See for instance, J. Stiglitz, 'The World Bank at the Millenium', *Op. Cit.*; N. Van de Walle, 'African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis', *Op. Cit.*; D. Kapur and R. Webb 'Governance Related Conditionalities of the IFIs', *Op. Cit.*; A. Goldsmith 'Foreign Aid and Statehood in Africa', *Op. Cit.;* A. Goldsmith 'Donors, dictators and democrats in Africa', *Op. Cit.* Kapur and Webb: 2000; T. Killick 'Politics, evidence and the new Aid agenda', *Op. Cit.*

mitigating some of the worst expressions of human misery on the continent. From Darfur to Eritrea, from Liberia to Niger, northern charities like Save the Children, Oxfam, and the International Red Cross and government departments like DFID, USAID and AUSAID have been the lifeline for many immiserated people on the African continent. In the light of this therefore, the normative agenda of these organisations, particularly the nongovernmental transnational ones, should not ordinarily be questioned.

Where questions can be legitimately raised is on the political implications of such dependence on foreign sources of funding by local CSOs. In the first place, the neoliberal context of 21st century global politics places immense emphasis on the strengthening of purportedly autonomous social formations at the expense of the state. Therefore, from the word go, the very act of providing funds for CSOs is both a political action and an ideological choice irrespective of the declared motive or indeed the actual perception of such action by the donors. The often unintended consequence of transnational supports to civil society is therefore the promotion of the neoliberal worldview.[41]

Another important point to note with regard to the politics of donor involvement in civil society in Nigeria is that the reality is very often different from the rhetoric. One of the key justifications for donor privileging of NGOs over the state is that it broadens public participation in the governance process. Indeed, it would appear that working with supposedly autonomous social forces, free from the greed of the market and the pressures of political contestations,[42] deepens the democratic process rather than undermines it. One must however look at the nature of that inclusion and the essential character of the included to understand that it does not indicate popular participation. What it does is rather a shrinking of the actors of the politics of development, leaving the excluded to express dissent from outside

[41] This is the central argument in A. Iwilade, 'Depoliticising Development?', *Op. Cit.*
[42] See L. Zivtev, 'Doing Good', *Op. Cit.*

the mainstream. The assumption that NGOs are alternative platforms through which development could be driven is fundamentally flawed. This is because this assumption is in itself based on the assumption that NGOs are largely immune from the crisis being faced by the state. This is hardly the case. Literature has shown that NGOs, and the rest of civil society, can be as corrupt as the state,[43] have serious accountability deficits[44] and reproduce existing power structures, thereby deepening inequality and consolidating hegemony.[45]

Donor involvement links civil society to transnational centres of capital and to the state in ways that undermine its independence. In the first place, because of growing de-territorialisation of civil society and the deepening of international networks, civil society in Nigeria appears to be finding it increasingly difficult to configure a distinct identity. Second, because globalization, being a major source of insecurity, has essentially globalized many of the governance challenges that Nigeria faces, there is a tendency to interrogate issues from an international perspective that often times ignores or even denies the specificities of the Nigerian condition. Third, because most donors are also active supporters of the state, their involvement with civil society tends to deepen the linkages between state and civil society. The implication is that the autonomy of civil society, already seriously undermined by donors themselves, is further decimated. By creating channels of communication framed by neoliberal discourses between state and civil society, donors easily deepen their penetration of Nigeria's social formations and ensure the promotion of an essentially western world view. A good example is to be found in the area of electoral governance. The European Union, the British Government and other donors involved with the Joint Donor basket Fund (JDBF) are

[43] See A. Ikelegbe, 'The Perverse manifestations of Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*; A. Cooley and J. Ron, 'The NGO Scramble', *Op. Cit.*; R. Burger and T. Owens, 'Promoting Accountability in the NGO Sector', *Op. Cit.*; and A. Iwilade, 'Democracy, Civil society and the Commodification of AIDS', *Op. Cit.*

[44] J. Moncrieffe. 'Reconceptualizing Political Accountability', *Op. Cit.*; M. Kaldor, 'Civil Society and Accountability', *Op. Cit.*; I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.* And R. Tusalem, 'A Boon or Bane?', *Op. Cit.*

[45] A. Sales, The Private, Public and Civil Society', *Op. Cit.*, and S. Yukako and P. Eloundou-Enyegue, 'The Emergence of African NGOs', *Op. Cit.*

active supporters of Nigeria's electoral commission (the Independent National Electoral Commission {INEC}) and of a motley coalition of civil society groups who challenge it. This puts donors in a rather awkward situation of supporting both the 'hero' and the 'villain'. What it further demonstrates is that donors wield immense influence on both sides of the divide and can therefore manipulate the outcomes of a process that is so central to Nigeria's governance.

The linkages that donor involvement with civil society in Nigeria creates are often negative because it often places the latter in a position of weakness. Relative to the state, it encourages questions about civil society's autonomy, patriotism and legitimacy. To the international civil society networks and coalitions, at the same time that it encourages them to plug into global capacities, donor involvement rubs civil society in Nigeria of context and undermines the formation of clear identities. The implications are then that while civil society may gain funds and enhanced capacity, their ability to strike a chord with the ordinary people becomes more suspect and with it is their ability to play expected roles in the democracy project.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSNATIONAL DONOR FUNDING AND THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN NIGERIA

4.1 Donor Funding Strategies in Nigeria

This section is intended to identify and analyse the key strategies with which donors engage civil society in Nigeria. As has been established in earlier chapters, the scope and normative agenda that drive donor interactions with civil society in Nigeria are just as important as the strategies with which this is accomplished. This is because the specific strategies are the instruments that frame the institutional environment of civil society and, in the final analysis, determine the ultimate impact of donor engagement. As Alexander Cooley and James Ron note, within the context of a rapidly growing NGO and donor industry, commodification of the NGO sector results in organisational insecurity and creates organizational imperatives to 'promote self-interested action, inter-INGO competition, and poor project implementation.[1] Implicit in this assertion is an understanding of the important role that the nature of the contact with transnational donors has to play in framing the institutional environment of civil society.

In determining the key strategies used by donors to engage CSOs in Nigeria, I rely heavily on field research. The in-depth interviews conducted among sample organisations provide very rich insights into not only donor strategies but also how they frame the way CSOs do their work. One of the most recurring strategies identified is the use of competitive tenders. By competitive tenders, I refer to open competition for donor funds through proposals, intense lobbying and networking. In the first place, giving the proliferation of NGOs working on governance issues in Nigeria, there is intense competition for access to the

[1] A. Cooley and J. Ron, 'The NGO Scramble', *Op. Cit.*, p. 14.

resources being offered by transnational donors. This is largely encouraged by donors because they thrive on the neoliberal orthodoxy that resources are better allocated when they are freely competed for. This is that marketization curbs waste, improves professionalism and enhances project implementation.[2] Secondly, the proliferation of NGOs, itself a product of the incursion of the market into the voluntary sector, is generally considered as evidence of a robust civil society. This is of course, linked to a broader assumption that transnational linkages and networks provide evidence of an emerging global civil society. While numerical increases in CSOs cannot be considered bad in itself, critiques argue that the causal role of marketization tends to promote dysfunctional organizational behaviour that is a rational response to the institutional pressures and incentives created by transnational donors.[3] Finally, transnational donors are often the chief cheerleaders of neoliberal market policies. As a result, they are wont to advance this worldview. The very engagement with civil society is, as has been earlier noted, an ideological choice that is meant to ensure the consolidation of the retreat of the state that has been all but guaranteed by the collapse of the cold war international system. By providing vital funds within a neoliberal economic context, it is no surprise that one of the core principles of market economics-competition- will be upheld. For these reasons, the use of competitive tenders to determine the allocation of donor funds has become one of the cornerstone strategies for donor engagement with CSOs in Nigeria.

This much was agreed by respondents from sample organisations during field research. For instance, both Mr Joseph Amenaghawon (Programme Officer- Economic Governance of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa-Nigeria {OSIWA-NIGERIA}) and Mr. Temitope Shaba of the ERN agreed that competition for programme funds is intense. Mr Shaba in particular notes that the design of programmes is itself influenced by the nature

[2] See for instance R. Charlton and R. May, "NGOs, Politics, Projects and Probity: A Policy Implementation Perspective", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 2, June 1995, p.244.
[3] A. Cooley and J. Ron, 'The NGO Scramble', *Op. Cit* and A. Iwilade, 'Democracy, Civil Society and the Commodification of AIDS', *Op. Cit.*

of competition.[4] The implication is that rather than programmes being developed to suit the specific conditions and context of advocacy, CSOs also have to bear in mind the actions of their competitors. A cursory assessment, for instance, of a *Request for Proposal* (RFP) sent to CSOs all over the country by the UNDP for bids for the provision of voter education and mobilization of the electorate in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria in July 2010 gives insights into the extremely competitive world of NGOs. For one, this call for proposal was openly available to thousands of organisations for a maximum of about a hundred contracts.[5] The wording of the RFP itself indicated the intense competition expected for access to the available funds.[6] CSOs also had to adhere to very strict deadlines and technical requirements which only intensify the competitive nature of the bids.[7] But perhaps most significant here is the very fact that, much like firms do in the market, NGOs have to bid for contracts. They have to demonstrate past achievements, demonstrate superior competencies and generate contemporary proposals. It therefore only marginally matters whether the winning CSO considers its advocacy an act of public service or merely a contract winning drive for material solvency.

Another important strategy with which donors engage civil society in Nigeria is the use of renewable contracting. This refers to requiring periodic evaluation of contracts when they are eventually won, often after intense competition, before funds are released for subsequent phases of the project. The rationale behind this is to ensure that project funds are

[4] Mr Shaba's views were offered at an interview conducted by the author at the ERN Office, Abuja, 07/10/2010. Mr Amenaghawon's views were offered in a comprehensive Survey Questionnaire sent to him and subsequently corroborated in series of telephone interviews between November 1 and 9, 2010.

[5] These public or semi-public calls are generally used to initiate short-term projects (often between 3-6 months). NGOs that trump competition and win the contracts are also faced with constant threats of non-renewals, staff layoffs, cut backs and capacity reductions. This inevitably adds to the insecurity of the NGO environment and generates incentives for opportunistic behaviour. This engagement strategy is described as the 'ratchet problem' by Solnick. See S. Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*, Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998, pp. 27-29.

[6] This Request for Proposal was obtained from some of the sample organisations. It was sent out by the UNDP and is dated 12 July, 2010.

[7] See note 6 above, pp. 2-10.

spent within the limits imposed by contracts, to provide opportunities for in-project evaluation and justify the continued injection of funds. It is difficult to assail the logic behind this sort of practice. One may not begrudge donors for insisting on such measures for the purpose of guaranteeing local CSO adherence to contractual obligations freely entered into. In fact, some donors also have responsibilities to report fund use and what is now being referred to as 'aid effectiveness' to their funding sources in the developed countries. There is little doubt that renewable contracting and periodic in-project evaluation provides a powerful means through which donors monitor recipient CSOs and ensure some measure of quality control. The question is whether it ensures that CSOs adhere to contracts or whether it merely provides strong incentives to falsify records by withholding potentially damaging information.

There is also increasing reliance on donor coordination. Criticism of aid inefficiency and duplication has inspired a new dynamic in the industry. Donors reason that by collectively coordinating aid disbursements, duplications can be reduced significantly and funds can thus be more efficiently targeted. One of the key instruments used in Nigeria is the Joint Donor Basket Fund (JDBF) coordinated by the UNDP. The JDBF was originally intended to promote coordination among both donors and NGOs. It has however had the unintended consequence of increasing competition. This is because rather than having multiple potential sources of funding and with it different ideological and policy persuasions, NGOs have to align their values with that of a single donor unit. NGOs therefore, particularly those involved in the governance advocacy sector, must all compete for very similar programmes from a single source. Competition inevitably intensifies in this context. The JDBF has prequalification criteria that NGOs must meet before they can even bid for contracts. Some of these include registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission, audited accounts, evidence of past work with major donors like the UNDP and USAID and the like.

This effectively shuts out many small scale organisations and encourages the development of alliances between NGOs at the same time it intensifies competition between the various favoured alliances. It also inevitably excludes new but vibrant coalitions like the Joint Association of Persons Living with Disabilities (JONADAB) which, in spite of its popular activism for people living with disabilities, has not been able to access funds from the JDBF.[8]

It appears that the above three are the key strategies with which donors generally engage with civil society in Nigeria. Each of these engagement strategies clearly flow from the ideological foundations of neoliberalism. They all indicate the marketization of donor funding and the NGO sector in Nigeria. The idea of competition is a core value of neoliberal market economics. This is also the cornerstone of donor engagement. It is however problematic because while shutting out small organisations, it gradually moves the NGO sector closer to the monopoly stage of capitalism. This move is aided by donor centralization through instruments like the JDBF. The specific and general implications for civil society's institutional environment are deep and widely varying and are what I now turn to.

4.2 Implications for the Institutional Environment of Civil Society

The above donor engagement strategies have very crucial roles to play in framing the institutional environment of civil society in Nigeria. For one, the very fact that civil society depends so much on funds availed by foreign donors implies that the latter's policies will be key to their institutional dynamics and even survival potential. Again, since donors operate in market conditions, creating contractual rather than value relations with recipient NGOs, the institutional implications for civil society must be interrogated within a neoliberal capitalist context. This is one of the key reasons that this study adopts a materialist political economy approach.

[8] This is the opinion of some CSO members of JONADAB. Their views were given on condition of anonymity. A similar comment was made by Gbenga Gbarada of IPBSC, November 8, 2010.

Donor strategies tend to homogenize civil society responses to advocacy issues and challenges. This is because they encourage the building of coalitions and the coordination of advocacy efforts. There can be no doubt that this sort of alliance building can help CSOs leverage on their individual capacities. For instance, organisations like the ERN and the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) are both involved in electoral governance advocacy. Programme bidding within the JDBF has encouraged both NGOs to work together rather than at cross purposes. While ERN is strong in the area of electoral laws and participation advocacy, TMG is reputed for its capacity in the area of election monitoring. Therefore both NGOs have found a common ground that allows them to jointly bid for projects. This is a positive effect of donor approaches to engagement with civil society in Nigeria.

It cannot also be denied that the donor strategies identified above can have the effect of linking civil society in Nigeria to the emerging global civil society movement. This de-territorialisation offers increased opportunities for transnational networking that can improve civil society practices in Nigeria. In a globalizing world, de-territorialisation also helps civil society to more effectively confront transnational challenges like environmental governance and cross border crime. It also puts pressure on the state to adhere to universalizing ideals like human rights, gender sensitivity and democratisation.

These positive effects nevertheless, there are fundamental problems and challenges that marketization policies of donors create for the civil society environment. These challenges tend to make civil society advocacy a lot more problematic. In the first place, principal-agent problems are rife within the institutional environment of civil society in Nigeria. According to Terry Moe,

> short term contracting creates acute agency problems. Relations between donors, contractors and recipients can be modelled as a double set of principal-agent problems wherein the donor is a "principal" and contractors

> (that is NGOs) are "agents". At the lower half of the hierarchy, the contractor functions as the principal and the aid recipient as the agent.[9]

The above relates to the autonomy and legitimacy questions often raised with regard to civil society relations with donors on the one hand and with recipient constituencies on the other.

Principal-agent problems emerge where unequal stakeholders enter into contractual relations from within different contexts. In the case of donor-CSO relations, the latter's fulfilment of the former's project expectations is very important and can therefore not be taken for granted. This much is confirmed by scholars of agency theory.[10] It should also be noted that the relationship between donors and CSOs is a very complex one. It is undergirded first by interactions of dependency within the international system itself. Civil society is therefore obliged to fulfil obligations defined by a hostile international environment that expects little initiative from it except that which is critical to fulfilling donor objectives. Donor-CSO relations is also influenced by the donors own contractual obligations to their home constituencies. That is small time individual donors in rich states, large voluntary foundations, social movements in those states and of course big business corporate philanthropy. Into this mix must be added donors own 'principal' status in its relationship with recipient NGOs and the fact that it is the local NGOs that ultimately control the funds- after all they are the final project implementers.

The implications of this rather complex web of inter-relationships for civil society's institutional environment are huge. In the first place, CSOs have to balance their goals and values with principals from very different material and value contexts. There is thus often a conflict between their advocacy priorities and expectations, and that of their principals. Since

[9] T. Moe, "The New Economics of Organization", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1984, p. 756

[10] See for instance K. Eisenardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1989, pp. 57-74; G. Miller, *Managerial Dilemmas: The Political Economy of Hierarchy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992 and J. Pratt, *Principals and Agents: The Structure of Business*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1985.

CSOs often need these funds so badly, they usually accept the sometimes contradictory or even conflictual expectations and enter into contracts that oblige them to fulfil donor targets. This does not however suggest that they always follow through with their contractual obligations.

Hendrick Spruyt notes for instance that disregard of donor preferences is often the case where NGOs acquire highly specialize competencies and often in remote locations in the developing world.[11] While this increases the NGOs control over the project, it also creates incentives and opportunities to withhold or even distort information, particularly where such may indicate non compliance with contractual obligations. The incidences of such distortion were confirmed during field research. For instance, according to Gbenga Gbarada of the Initiative for Peace Building and Social Change, Lagos (IPBSC), while fund recipients generally strive to fulfil contractual obligations, it is often difficult to do so.[12] Since donors often have to rely on reports provided by the NGOs themselves, it is not too difficult for the NGOs to manipulate evaluation reports to reflect what the donors require. Donors in turn pass down such inaccurate reports to their own principals in the developed north.

The flipside of the Principal-Agent interaction is that of NGOs and their own constituencies. Of course it is the donor-NGO interaction that is at the heart of this study. However, the evaluation of projects also depends on the recipient constituency's perception. Many donors now insist on some form of community participation in the design of development interventions. This is a reaction to critics who raise questions about the legitimacy of such interventions where they exclude the opinion of recipient communities. The participation of recipient communities, rather than easing the problem of incomplete and inaccurate disclosure, appears to merely deepen it. According to Alexander Cooley and James

[11] H. Spruyt, *Oversight, Control and Resistance in Translocal Organizations*, paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, California, April 16-20, 1996.
[12] Views expressed in in-depth interview conducted by author at the IPBSC office in Lagos, November 10, 2010.

Ron, it is 'more difficult to impute a priori a project recipient's preferences than it is those of a contractor (that is the NGO)'.[13] Even though recipient communities may welcome the intervention; this is by no means always the case as the rejection of anti-polio vaccines in some states in northern Nigeria shows; they may divert such funds to other uses other than why the funds were availed. How this impacts on donor-NGO relations is that where this is the case, NGOs are often reluctant to report such cases because it may make them look inefficient, thereby costing them contract renewals and perhaps even threatening organisational survival.

The above indicates that the contractual nature of relations between donors and civil society, and of course the other webs of linkages that both undergird and straddle this relationship, makes NGO work more complex and problematic. They create constantly shifting responsibility hierarchies that make it pretty difficult for NGOs to plan and therefore generate incentives for manipulating the emerging spaces of accountability through opportunistic institutional survival tactics.

Another way that donor strategies frame the institutional environment of civil society in Nigeria is the creation of multiple principals. This is related to the principal-agent problem analysed above. It arises when multiple donors or NGOs compete for the same project. It would be expected that being purportedly involved in a voluntary sector with a normative 'doing good' agenda, competing donors or local NGOs will cooperate. The creation of initiatives like the JDBF appears to suggest just that. However, it should be noted that at the heart of the JDBF is the need to cut costs, reduce waste and introduce enhanced efficiency; purely market motives; rather than a normative drive to collectively 'do something' about Nigeria's problems. Therefore, the JDBF cannot be considered a drive to reduce unhealthy

[13] A. Cooley and J. Ron, 'The NGO Scramble', *Op. Cit.*, p. 15.

competition and refocus the efforts of both donors and recipient NGOs towards their normative agendas.

Rather than increase efficiency and encourage project coordination and information sharing, the high density of donors and local NGOs competing for available funds only makes the position of each organization the more insecure. It can be easily understood why NGOs will feel more insecure in a crowded industry where similar organisations design similar programmes and compete for funds from similar donors. For the donors however, their insecurity is less visible. It is there none the less. Donors for instance have to disburse the funds available. The approval of grants is often a criterion for upward movement for the staff of donor agencies. In the case of the World Bank and the IMF, it is suggested that staff often turn a blind eye to inappropriate uses of availed funds for fear of cutbacks in their budgetary allocations.[14]Therefore, the staff of donor agencies have strong incentives to provide available funds and may bend or overlook the rules to guarantee this. This plays into the hands of local NGO recipients who are already overburdened by intense competition and generates incentives that drive them towards opportunistic behaviour.

Competition created by multiple principals also undermines the very coordination that donors theoretically argue for. Cooley and Ron argue that:

> recurring coordination problems, however, are not caused solely by poor communication, lack of professionalism, or a dearth of coordinating bodies. They are also-and perhaps chiefly- produced by a crowded and highly competitive aid market in which multiple organisations compete for contracts from the same donors. Interorganisational discord is a predictable outcome of existing material incentives.[15]

Also chief among the institutional implications of donor strategies is a reduction in internal programme initiative. Even though virtually all sample organisations denied that donor strategies reduce their initiative, it appears that that is exactly what happens. It is true

[14] P. Gibbon, B. Yusuf and A. Ofstad, (eds.), 'Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment', *Op. Cit.*
[15] A. Cooley and J. Ron, 'The NGO Scramble', *Op. Cit.*, p. 17.

that competition brings out the innovative strengths of NGOs. However, because the sector is essentially framed by neoliberal orthodoxies which tend to explain Nigeria's problems within the context of a reformist agenda, NGOs involved in governance advocacy are constrained to create 'innovations' within the context of a fundamentally flawed system. They are bound to see change only in incremental terms. Therefore, like footballers, they must not just play within the field but also within established rules, conventions and assumptions. It is assumed for instance, that the debate on whether it is the free market or something else is dead; that we have reached Fukuyama's *End of History.* This is in spite of the continued rise of alternative development paradigms and their salience for understanding and confronting the crisis in the developing world.[16] This is a major challenge for the NGO sector in Nigeria because it essentially ties it to the elite class and disconnects it from the huge peasant, urban poor and rural population. Shivji makes a similar point when he opined that because NGOs have been co-opted into a supposedly participatory development model, the sector:

> which is presented as pro-poor and morally driven, legitimises the essentially exploitative capitalist system while the progressive agenda of people-driven development (the radical, populist agenda of the nationalists of yesteryear) is co-opted.[17]

This suggests that the institutional environment created by the dominance of donors in the NGO sector in Nigeria re-creates what Manji and O'Coill referred to as the 'missionary position' of NGOs in Africa which legitimised colonial penetration.[18] There is a palpable sense of dissatisfaction with the Nigerian state at all sample organisations. All of them also had problems with the nature of Nigeria's democracy and with the corruption of its political

[16]See for instance D. Lal, *The Poverty of Development Economics*, Institute of Economic Affairs, London: Hobert Paper Back, 1983; B. Beckman 'Empowerment or Repression?', *Op. Cit.*; P. Gibbon, B. Yusuf and A. Ofstad 'Authoritarianism, Democracy and adjustment', *Op. Cit.*; J. Stiglitz, 'The World Bank at the Millennium', *Op. Cit.*; N. Van de Walle, 'African Economies', *Op. Cit.* and P. Bond, 'Looting Africa', *Op. Cit.*
[17] I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*, p. 15.
[18] F. Manji and C. O'Coill, 'The Missionary Position', *Op. Cit.*

and business class. Interestingly however, all respondents also indicated willingness, to varying degrees, to collaborate with the state. They generally frame this collaboration as 'constructive engagement'. When asked if their 'constructive engagement'; which includes receiving funds from state agencies as with the Nigerian Youth Council (NYC) and the Islamic Aid and Development Organisation (IADO); does not legitimise the state and its authoritarian exercises of power, virtually all respondents disagree. This shows that the NGO sector is convinced that engaging the state is an inevitable option to drive forward Nigeria's development. An assumption such as this, in all its flawed nature, can only restrict NGO initiative to neoliberal interventions to the exclusion of all other possibilities. Ironically at the time NGOs find it so easy to engage with the state, they increasingly get tucked away in urban centres, removed from the large rural population and inevitably disconnected from their realities. This further demonstrates what I have earlier identified as the corporatisation and now, the 'elitification' of NGOs. It should be noted however that while the NGO sector, the part of civil society most favoured by donors is engaging the state however, other parts of civil society thrive on their tendency to confront or ignore the state. Social movements like labour, the environmental and resource movements for instance, still largely challenge the state.

What the above indicate is that donor activities play a very crucial role in framing the nature of civil society in Nigeria. Most of the individual implications noted above, when combined, tend to kill the very essence of civil society-spontaneity, voluntarism, initiative and freedom of action. It is clear that the institutional environment is central to the behaviour of individual CSOs as they have to react, adapt and adjust to the dynamics of the various factors that condition their activities. Ultimately, a CSO that will survive must be able to respond to a changing and increasingly competitive sector. How CSOs do this is what I now turn to.

4.3 Building Modern CSOs: How CSOs Adapt to Donor Dynamics in Nigeria

CSOs behave much like firms do in markets in order to survive the highly marketized institutional environment created by donors. The bulk of CSO responses to donor dynamics are therefore rooted in neoliberal market strategies. It is clear that given the salience of donor action or inaction to the vibrancy and in fact even the density of civil society in Nigeria, it is inevitable that, to survive, modern civil society must proactively respond to donor dynamics. This response often includes shifting advocacy focus to issues where donor interest is clearly discernible. Therefore, civil advocacy stands the risk of ignoring the existential realities of the Nigerian condition or out rightly denying it, further entrenching civil society's disconnection with the popular mass.

Because the environment within which civil society operates has become exceedingly competitive, CSOs have had to design very innovative survival strategies. This section demonstrates that civil society has not been passive in its engagement with donors. Even though donors clearly hold the aces in this interaction, CSOs have been quite inventive in fighting for survival.

Survival strategies can be divided into two groups- the general and the specific. The general refers to how the sector responds in its collective. This does not imply conscious coordination among all CSOs, but rather the aggregate of individual action(s), what I describe as 'the specific'. General strategies include proliferation, corporatization, fluidity and westernization. Specific strategies include information concealment, distortion and falsification, coordination and alliance building, targeted programme designing and manipulation of donors.

The tendency to proliferate as a response to a changing political environment has been one of the most discussed features of the civil society evolution since the late 1980s.[19] While this discourse appears to have focussed almost exclusively on the role played by the liberalisation of the political process, it has ignored the impact of increased funding. Of course, the discourse on the liberalisation of the political process generally acknowledges the part played by the neoliberal international context and its democracy promotion in the post cold war period, it however ignores the specific role played by increased funding. The emphasis appears to have been on the political pressures for democratisation rather than on the economic incentives for the proliferation of civil society.

It is clear that even though both the international and domestic political contexts provided crucial incentives for the expansion of civil society in Nigeria, the push provided by increased donor funding was a very crucial factor that must not be ignored in any attempt to understand this trend. Increases in donor funding directed at civil society was clearly discernible by the early 1990s.[20] It is by no means a mere coincidence that civil society

[19]Scholars have pointed at the increased density of civil society, both in the actual number of CSOs and in the range of issues they engage, as evidence of a robust liberal democratisation. It is often argued that the liberalisation of the political environment due to pressures from both below and above the state has resulted in the proliferation of civil society organisations. See for instance, A. Iwilade, 'Democracy, Civil Society and the Commodification of Civil Society in Africa', *Op. Cit.* and E. Obadare, "The Press and NGOs in a Democratic Society", in: Fawole W. (ed,), *Beyond the Transition to Civil Rule: Consolidating Democracy in Post-Military Nigeria,* Lagos: Amkra Books.

[20] OECD figures for instance demonstrate how significant aid through NGOs has become as a percentage of all bilateral ODA for the member nations in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), especially Ireland and the Netherlands, where it represents about 20% of the total. Italy, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Sweden, Denmark, Canada and Switzerland also direct a large proportion of their development aid through NGOs. In cases like the Netherlands, New Zealand or the United Kingdom, this proportion has risen steadily over the 2000-2006 period, partly in response to a conscious government decision to direct more aid through these channels in order to increase aid effectiveness. In the United States, Congress mandated in the late 1980s that 13.5% of US funding of international development efforts should be passed through PVOs (Private Voluntary Organizations), and USAID stated in its latest report that PVOs receive about a third of USAID's development assistance budget. For OECD see G. Allard and C. Martinez, *The influence of government policy and NGOs on capturing private investment*, paper presented at the OECD Global Forum on International Investment, March 27-28, available online at www.oecd.org/investment/gfi-7, accessed, May 8, 2010; for USAID figures see USAID Chapter 6, *Sources and amounts of private aid*, http://www.usaid.gov/fani/ch06/privateaid12.htm, accessed May 9, 2010. Scholarly references have also been made to this tendency to fund civil society directly in order to promote liberal democratisation. See for instance T. Carothers, 'Democracy Assistance: The Question of Strategy', *Democratization*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1997, pp. 109-32 and J. Hearn, *Foreign Aid,*

proliferation took off at around that time too. As was reported by Chukwuma, from just one human rights NGO in 1987; the CLO; Nigeria was, by 2005, home to more than a thousand, most of who were being funded by foreign donors.[21]

The argument that civil society proliferated as a logical response to the material incentives provided by heightened donor interest is brought into clearer focus if placed within the context of political economy. The 1990s were not only a period of widespread political liberalism but also a period of intense economic crisis for Nigeria. As a result of the structural adjustment programme that had been imposed since the late 1980s, the economic space had shrunk considerably. With this widespread economic crisis came an even deeper social crisis which threatened to tear apart the very fabric of the Nigerian state. This specific moment in Nigeria's history was made more precarious by the highly uncertain and constantly mutating nature of the international system at the turn of the 20th century. With growing economic challenges, the shrinking middle class desperately sought refuge in whatever sector of the polity that offered a chance, however slim or unethical, for some sort of accumulation. It was in this context that donors increased their commitment to the civil society, thereby providing material incentives for elite appropriation and ultimately, proliferation. This much was the crux of Sakabe and Eloundou-Enyegue's article that spoke of civil society merely reflecting 'local elites seeking to re-position themselves and consolidate their power in the post-adjustment era'.[22] The utility of the civil society platform as a means of capital accumulation, a situation built no less by increased donor commitment, is at the heart of its proliferation. The point therefore is that civil society proliferated at the critical intersection between

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Democratisation and Civil Society in Africa: A Study of South Africa, Ghana and Uganda, Institute of Development Studies, Discussion Paper 368, 1998.

[21] I. Chukwuma, 'Government Civil Society Partnership', *Op. Cit.*, p. 2.

[22] S. Yukako and P. Eloundou-Enyegue, 'The Emergence of African NGO's', *Op. Cit.*

increased donor interest in strengthening it and widespread economic crisis that created incentives for all kinds of accumulation.

Another important general strategy with which civil society responds to the dynamics of the donor environment is corporatisation. As already explained, corporatisation implies the framing of CSO structures, institutional goals and engagement strategies like that of corporate firms. This is not unconnected to the neoliberal context within which donors frame their engagement with CSOs and the fact that the model for successful NGOs is, more often than not, for profit corporations. The very fact of corporatisation is quite visible in NGO staffing policies, planning and budgeting. What may be hazy is how this can be partly explained as a survival strategy.

First, I have established that donors are the lifeblood of the NGO sector. Second, donors, being themselves often transnational organisations configured along neoliberal lines and driven by the prevailing market ideals, generally demand that fund recipients act like firms do in markets. They insist on registration by relevant government agencies, up to date proposals, strategic development plans and results based management. To survive in the highly competitive NGO sector therefore, NGOs must necessarily develop internal structures that reflect these corporate ideals no matter what it does to their 'doing good' essence or to their ability to connect to the critical mass.

Civil society is also highly fluid in its attempts to survive. Fluidity is reflected in many areas of civil society work. From values, to focus areas to methodology, the civil society in Nigeria has been a highly impressionable and thus malleable sector. There is little doubt that this fluidity is a direct product of shifting donor interests and goals. As was demonstrated in my earlier analysis of the HIV/AIDS and Human Rights sectors,[23] civil society is particularly adroit at following the money trail, thereby reflecting the prevailing

[23] See Chapter 3, pp. 62-3.

priorities of donors rather than that of constituent society. This rather fluid value base of civil society is clearly a survival strategy. CSOs that attempt to ignore prevailing donor priorities run the risk of collapsing under the weight of their 'recalcitrance'. A good example would be the difference in the vibrancy and density of organisations involved in two different areas of governance advocacy in Nigeria: liberal economic and political advocacy and alternative populist advocacy. It is clear that CSOs pushing the liberal agenda are donor favourites, and for obvious reasons. Those organisations like the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) who were rather radical have not been particularly popular with the kind of donors under review in this study. More importantly however, even MOSOP appears to be increasingly plugging into the liberal political agenda as is evidenced by the participation of some of its key leaders like Ledum Mitee in state sponsored governance projects like the Federal Government's Technical Committee on the Niger Delta and the Amnesty project. This is an indication that to remain relevant in an overwhelmingly neoliberal world, even social movements like MOSOP increasingly see the need for objective concessions to the forces of capital.

One of the most salient features of modern civil society is westernization. This is, of course, not unconnected to the penetration of western social constructs into the Nigerian society or to the growing attachment of the emergent educated elite to a western social imaginary. For the civil society however, it represents much more than the tendency to define modernization as westernization. It has become a tool with which it demonstrates its claim to membership of a global community of civil actors and thus its credentials for engagement with donors. In short, it is a tool of survival. Even Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have to increasingly create organisational structures that ape the management practices of transnational corporations in order to qualify for support. Civil society has become western in

very many ways. From nomenclatures to priorities and from methodology to organisational structures, civil society in Nigeria has become very western in outlook.

The above represent general trends visible within civil society. They are individual choices of CSOs that have become so pervasive as to resemble a collective perception of the realities of the environment within which they work. In addition to these, there are specific strategies that are also adopted to increase the chances of CSOs' survival in a highly competitive environment.

The first of such is the wilful distortion, concealment or outright falsification of information. It has been argued that marketization of the civil society environment generates incentives that drive CSOs to engage in opportunistic behaviour. This opportunistic behaviour usually manifests in the concealment, distortion or falsification of project information. Even though no CSO would admit to engaging in such unethical and sometimes even illegal acts for the purpose of winning or retaining funding for specific projects, interviews conducted indicated a very high possibility of such. For instance, on the condition of anonymity, some respondents admitted that their organisation sometimes has to conceal information that may negatively impact on their standing with donors. One in particular alleged that his organisation solicits for and receives funds from private sources which are then held in the official account for a few weeks before it is returned to the 'donor'. This is a practice he referred to as 'account flashing'. When prodded on the logic of such act, he pointed out that it helps strengthen the fiscal profile of the organisation and thus increases its chances of getting support from donors.[24] What is clear is that this kind of information manipulation is reflective of the intensely competitive NGO environment and the kind of pressures that local NGOs face to meet donor requirements.

[24] These views were obtained only after strict guarantees of confidentiality. This may also be an indication that such staff may face disciplinary action for disclosing such potentially damaging information.

CSOs also increasingly have to build alliances to survive. Because of the highly specialized nature of modern civil advocacy and the inability of most Nigerian CSOs to singlehandedly tackle all issues related to their area of interest, alliance building has become pretty popular. This sort of behaviour has allowed CSOs cut costs and leverage on their different capacities to present more efficient and viable proposals. In the face of the increasing monopolization of advocacy by massive alliances like the ERN (electoral reform), Human Rights Network (HURINET-human rights), and Media Rights Agenda (MRA-media), small organisations stand little or no chance of receiving donor supports and in many cases, survival is itself threatened.[25]

Organisations also tend to develop programmes to target available funds. There is ample evidence to suggest that many CSOs simply design programmes to fit into donor projects. Without this, CSOs are unlikely to be able to access the funds being availed for various governance related projects all over the country. Closely related to this is the tendency to manipulate donors by using their language and playing one off against the other.

The above are strategies that CSOs often adopt to survive the competitive and dynamic environment they operate in. It is an indication that CSOs do not necessarily take the pressures of a donor dominated environment lying down. They react in dynamic ways and clearly develop innovative survival strategies. While these strategies are enough to preserve the organisational life of the more lucky CSOs, they however do not do much about the insecurity that pervades the sector. They also do significant damage to the standing of civil society within the Nigerian society and continue to provide justifications for raising questions about the latter's role in democratisation.

[25] This much was confirmed by respondents from relatively small organisations like IPSC who operate outside the alliances in their advocacy area.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF SOME CASE STUDIES IN NIGERIA

5.1 Preliminary Notes on Justification of Samples

This chapter operationalizes the preceeding analysis. The cases selected for in-depth review are drawn from three different areas of governance in Nigeria and were founded under separate circumstances that are largely representative of the type of NGOs that have gained prominence in governance and advocacy circles in Nigeria. They were selected from a large sample of NGOs whose origins, focus areas and funding structures can be broadly divided into three. They are those founded by serving or former members of government or their wives and associates (WRAPA); those founded through initiatives from abroad (OSIWA-Nigeria) and those founded by educated Nigerian middle class (ERN). These categories of NGOs are the most prevalent in a large sample of more than forty prominent organisations purposively selected primarily from the urban centres of Lagos and Abuja. These NGOs also provide crucial data through which our assumptions may be tested. First, they all receive significant amounts of funding and sundry supports from foreign sources. Second, they all have burning advocacy agendas and thus operate in highly competitive institutional environments. This makes them particularly useful in demonstrating the implications of competition for NGO activities. Finally, by selecting organisations that cut across advocacy areas, it is possible to make some tentative generalisations for how engagement with donors, within the context of a neoliberal operational environment, impacts on civil society activities.

5.2 The Electoral Reform Network (ERN)

The ERN is a coalition of Nigerian CSOs with interest in the area of electoral governance and reforms. It was formed in 2001 as a response to the National Assembly's request for civil society input into the 2002 Electoral Act, then being considered. The

coalition, at its formation in 2001, consisted of some 35 CSOs with similar interests in the area of electoral governance. Since 2001, the coalition has expanded to about 120 CSOs working in different areas of electoral governance from CSO capacity building and electoral legislation to election day monitoring and advocacy.

In carrying out its activities, the ERN is almost wholly funded by foreign donors. In fact, it is reported that only about one percent of the funds available to ERN comes from domestic sources and these are membership subscriptions of member CSOs. One of the reasons given for the reluctance of local donors to support the ERN's work is their fear of partisanship. Local donors are careful to refrain from antagonizing the Nigerian political class, particularly those presently holding political office. Since the ERN's work may entail significant confrontation with government, local donors are very reluctant to provide support.[1] Of course, to that may be added the relatively undeveloped organised charity sector in the country- a condition that may be linked to the widespread economic crisis and the informal social security networks that reduce the tendency to engage in organised charity.

Organisations like Global Rights, the UNDP and some foreign governments like the UK, Japan and the Netherlands through their respective high commissions and embassies are the chief providers of funding and sundry supports to ERN's work. Other donors include International IDEA and OSIWA. These funds, worth about 500,000 US Dollars, have supported advocacy campaigns on the 2002 and 2006 electoral acts, and work related to increased gender representation in politics, media monitoring of the electoral process, civil society capacity building on electoral laws and voter education.[2] The supports provided to ERN to pursue these interests are multidimensional. For instance, ERN receives institutional supports that provide funds for staffing and internal processes like internet and telephone

[1] Interview at ERN office in Abuja, October, 7, 2010, 11.25am.
[2] *Ibid.* See also http://www.electoralreformnetwork.org/staticpage.php?page=partners

services. It also receives funds to facilitate specific programmes. For instance, funds for the printing of advocacy materials like the 'Fact Sheet on ERC Draft Bills' and the 'Nigerian Civil Society Input to the Electoral Bill 2004' were provided by the British High Commission.[3] In fact, the bulk of funds ERN receives are often tied to specific projects like these.

Supports are often closely monitored by donors and strict observance of contractual obligations is often a key condition for continued support. In maintaining oversight on projects, donors generally insist that the ERN provides Quarterly Reports, and funding is usually disbursed in tranches. By doing this, donors ensure that continuing support is contingent on ERNs observation of contracts.

Since 2001, the ERN has been one of the leading advocates of electoral reform in Nigeria, a situation that would have been impossible without support from transnational donors. The ERN also works with similar coalitions like the TMG to leverage on their different capacities. This kind of collaborative work is encouraged by donors, particularly the UNDP through its JDBF. In furtherance of similar objectives in the area of electoral governance, the ERN and its alliance partners are active in the Civil Society Coordinating Committee on Electoral Reform (CSCC) and this is funded largely through grants from foreign sources. Interestingly, the ERN is forced to collaborate with government agencies through donors who provide support to both sides of the aisle. For instance, the ERN, and many other NGOs working in electoral governance advocacy, work directly or indirectly, with government agencies like INEC and the Nigerian Planning Commission (NPC), simply because donors insist on such engagement. In fact, in the case of the JDBF, the NPC is a coordinating agency.

[3] See Electoral Reform Network, *Fact Sheet on ERC Draft Bills,* Abuja: British Council/ERN, 2006 and Electoral Reform Network, *Nigerian Civil Society Input to the Electoral Bill 2004,* Abuja: British Council/ERN, 2004.

The above paints a largely rosy picture of ERNs work in electoral governance advocacy in Nigeria. Within the 'doing good' rhetoric however, some important points of salient significance are evident that justifies the largely pessimistic view of modern civil society and of their interactions with donors that this study has taken. In the first place, it is an interesting paradox that the ERN, a supposedly autonomous nongovernmental coalition was formed at the instance of the National Assembly. This, of course, raises important questions about the ability of civil society to independently define its advocacy agenda. It also challenges the perception of civil society as a 'third sector', independent of state and market.[4] It may, of course, be argued that the National Assembly merely called for civil society input into the electoral act and that the emergence of ERN was indeed an independent reaction of civil society to an emergent opportunity to engage with electoral governance challenges in Nigeria. It will be difficult to fault the logic implicit in this argument. Rather than doubt the autonomous reaction of civil society to the National Assembly's call however, it is the inability of civil society to put electoral governance on the agenda in the first place, before the political class found it convenient to do so, that is the issue. The implication is that civil society's claim to set the normative agenda on behalf of the society is at best a tenuous one and at worst, a dubious one.

One of the assumptions on which this study is based is that the proliferation of civil society groups in the light of political liberalization will significantly intensify competition for funds from foreign donors and increase organisational insecurity for all the groups. For the ERN this assumption proves to be very true. ERNs participation in coalitions and joint projects with other CSOs like the TMG will appear to suggest that cooperation, rather than competition arises out of donor funding policies in Nigeria. Collaboration in accessing funds from the JDBF also suggests CSO cooperation rather than competition. In reality however,

[4] This debate within the literature is thoroughly analysed in Chapter 2. Particularly Section 2.2.1

coalitions and alliances by CSOs are survival strategies that emerge out of the climate of extreme competition and organisational insecurity that is occasioned by the incentives and constraints produced by the transnational donor environment. This is not different to the way firms outsource production lines, specific contracts and the like to take advantage of better economies of scale. For the ERN, winning funds to support its advocacy campaigns often depends on leveraging on the capacities of partners like TMG. It should be noted that for every partner like TMG, ERN has to ward off competition from tens of other coalitions. The climate of insecurity and competition is also evident in the tone with which ERN staff talk about other NGOs involved in similar advocacy work.

Competition and a proliferation of organizations have created opportunities for INEC to manipulate the CSO environment to get some CSOs to provide some form of legitimization of its activities. In spite of widespread condemnation of INEC as a major obstacle to sound electoral governance, a fact that appears to be confirmed by the almost one dozen overturns of INEC results in the 2007 general elections in states all over the federation, INEC still finds CSOs willing to collaborate with it. Organisations like the Rights Monitoring Group (RMG) (a coalition of NGOs working in the electoral governance issue area) for instance, work closely with the agency. This provides a veneer of legitimacy for INEC that contradicts both public and international opinion of it.

This provides confirmation for the assumption that competition not only creates a highly insecure operational environment for the CSOs but also appears to generate incentives for opportunistic behaviour. It is also obvious from interviews conducted at the ERN office that, for fear of losing contracts, staff are often reluctant to report instances of inappropriate practices. Interestingly, this is not only inappropriate practices from ERN staff but also from organisations and communities that benefit from ERNs work. It is assumed that reporting such may frame ERN as incapable of effectively monitoring funds availed it and may thus

disqualify it from future programmes. This is an important validation of some of my assumptions about the operational environment of civil society in Nigeria.

What the ERN reflects is an organisation whose normative agenda cannot be faulted but that is constrained by the environment within which it has to operate. What needs to be addressed now is how much the interactions with transnational donors are culpable for this adverse operational environment. As has been noted earlier, there is little doubt that the supports received by the ERN from foreign sources are not just key to its advocacy campaigns but also to its very survival. Put simply, without support from foreign sources, ERN would probably not exist. With this level of donor influence within ERN, its interaction with them is the single most important variable to be considered in interrogating any of its activities. To be sure, the intense competitive posture ERN has in its engagement with other CSOs and coalitions outside its alliance system is not a function of contradictions in goals or programmes. Rather, it is a direct product of tensions induced by having to compete for a similar limited source of prospective funding. This source, that is transnational donors, also incidentally reifies liberal competition as the most effective, if not the only viable, way of allocating resources. Therefore, it is unlikely that the ERN would consider other CSOs working in its advocacy area as competitors rather than partners were it not for the peculiar situation it finds itself vis-a-vis donors. This situation also opens up ERN to abuse by the political class. It was reported, for instance, that the ERN, alongside other similar NGO coalitions working in electoral governance was offered eight million naira (about 54000 US Dollars) by INEC to facilitate their advocacy work in the National Assembly. This was considered a bribe by the ERN and was therefore rejected. Other coalitions accepted the gift.[5] As a cautionary note, it should be noted that the complete story as to whether ERN accepted the gift may not be known, after all the story emanated from ERN staff who may wish to

[5] Interview in Abuja with a senior ERN staffer, October, 7, 2010.

protect the organisation. The ERN experience however provides very important validation of a study by Neil MacFarlane who notes that 'competition for turf and difficulties of coordination... make humanitarian actors easy targets for political actors seeking access to scarce resources they control'.[6]

Overall, qualitative analysis of interviews conducted at the ERN office and cross-validation at the UNDP and other donors point at the fact that one of the major implications of transnational donor interaction with the organisation has been its commodification and that of the environment within which it has to operate. Donors are the reason ERN remains vibrant at the same time they are the major impediments to its organisational survival.

5.3 The Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA-Nigeria)

The Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) was established in 2000 as a part of the global network of autonomous Soros Foundations. OSIWA works to build vibrant, open democracies in 18 countries, including the 15 members of ECOWAS—Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo—as well as Cameroon, Chad, and Mauritania. OSIWA supports civil society organizations and has advocacy interests in the areas of governance; law, justice and human rights; public health and development; information, communication technology, and media. The organisation disburses about 10 million US Dollars annually to fund priority projects in these countries. OSIWA receives its funds mainly from the Soros Foundation but also gets grants from other donors including the UNDP and the British Government.

One of the priority areas of OSIWA is the Nigeria programme which is the focus of this study. The Nigeria Programme is the oldest and the largest of OSIWA projects.

[6] N. MacFarlane, Politics and Humanitarian Action, Providence: War and Humanitarian Project, Brown University, 2000, p. 45.

According to its official website, the programme 'has established itself as a respected player on political and economic governance, as well as, on access to justice issues and human rights.'[7] For instance, it supported a CSO coalition of 200 groups, the Citizen's Forum for Constitutional Reform to ensure that civil society views were reflected in the constitutional reform process. The process put together a Model Constitution that was designed through nationwide consultations and later developed into a Harmonized Model Constitution which brought together the reviews undertaken by the Legislative arm of government and the executive government's input. This copy was adopted by the National Political Reform Conference set up by the government in 2006, and utilized by the Joint Committee of the National Assembly to draft the constitution that quashed efforts to obtain a third term of office for President Obasanjo.

OSIWA-Nigeria also contributed towards efforts to entrench an accountability and transparency value system by supporting pilot projects on budget transparency and participatory budgeting as a model of governance in five states and the FCT. The states are Bauchi, Kebbi, Imo, Ogun and Edo.

OSIWA has also been instrumental in putting into place a draft Budget bill and advocacy on its passage. This process of advocacy contributed to the birth of the Fiscal Responsibility and National Budget Office Bill. OSIWA's Nigeria programme has been working closely together with Open Society Institute (OSI), the Revenue Watch Institute (RWI) and the OSIWA Economic Programme, to support the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) process. OSIWA also supported the establishment of Publish What You Pay Coalition in Nigeria, advocating successfully for civil society participation in the NEITI process. Thanks to this campaign, civil society was represented on the National

[7] See www.osiwa.org/Nigeria, accessed November 28, 2010, 3.15 am.

NEITI Working group which brings together government institutions, the private and public oil companies and institutions to monitor and participate in the NEITI process.

Access to justice with a special focus on human rights and penal reform has been another area of work for OSIWA- Nigeria. OSIWA, working with additional support from OSI and grants from George Soros, supported the Presidential Commission on the Reform of the Justice Sector in Nigeria which consolidated all reform efforts of the Obasanjo government and also organized two inter-ministerial summits on prison decongestion. The recommendations from this summit were accepted by the Federal Executive Council of the Obasanjo Government and this informed the Presidential Commission for the reform of the Administration of Justice in Nigeria. OSIWA also helped establish the Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE) in 2006 which for the first time in the history of elections in the country, succeeded in bringing together all the key stakeholders on elections in the country on one platform to speak with one voice calling for credible elections. OSIWA promoted CSO involvement in the work of the electoral committee set up by the Yar 'Adua government.[8]

It is clear from the above that OSIWA-Nigeria has been deeply involved in governance related advocacy at the federal level in Nigeria. It is also evident that its funding structures are far more stable than that of many other CSOs, given the fact that it receives stable funding from a single source, the George Soros Foundation. This appears to significantly mitigate my thesis on organisational insecurity in the case of OSIWA. There are, however, clear indications that OSIWA faces practically similar organisational security challenges, in spite of relatively predictable source of funding. In the first place, OSIWA is a foreign initiative. The Open Society Initiative was established by the investor and philanthropist, George Soros in 1980 to aid former communist countries in eastern and

[8] The bulk of this information is extracted from osiwa.org/Nigeria and is corroborated by interview respondents at the OSIWA office, Abuja.

central Europe in their transition to a market economy. It is clear therefore, that from the word go, the ideological motivation of the Soros Foundation and all its offshoots, including OSIWA, is the expansion of the capitalist neoliberal world view. This goal is often incompatible with the expectations of ordinary people in the developing world that its offshoots like OSIWA purport to represent. It is also clear that policies and programmes will be based on the assumption of a strong middle class, which expectedly offers stability in governance and a deep interest in protecting the status quo. This is why OSIWA, like all other Soros Foundation programmes are reform minded; the classic 'reform and not revolution' battle cry. An indication of this thinking is evident in one of George Soros' most popular works when he notes that:

> I believe significant changes are called for. Even so, I am opposed to revolutionary changes, because of the dangers of unintended consequences. We must start with what we have and try to improve it.[9]

This thought process justifies criticism of NGOs like OSIWA that their perception of change derives from a theory deficit that Shivji identifies as a blind spot in the NGO discourse.[10] It reflects a tendency to concentrate on bureaucratic efficiencies and capacities while disregarding the interactions of power that determine the distribution of resources. OSIWA's agenda in Nigeria easily demonstrates its prioritization of capacity building in a number of ways. For instance, while it works on projects like getting key stakeholders in the electoral process to jointly make a declaration calling for 'credible elections', it defines key stakeholders in such a way that ignores grassroots movements, in short, it denies 'the people' the status of 'key' stakeholder. Similarly, OSIWA has been active in the NEITI project, constantly demanding transparency in the use of resources from extractive industries, the most important of which is the oil industry in Nigeria. However, it has ignored the issues that

[9] See G. Soros, The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered, Cambridge MA: Perseus Books, 2004, p. 227.
[10] See I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*, p. 16-17.

are perhaps the most important and controversial in Nigeria's extractive industry- resource control and environmental governance. If OSIWA were truly a representative of the ordinary people, surely it would consider engaging the state on these explosive areas. But it cannot be expected to do so, after all, resource control and environmental governance and conflict issues do not raise questions about capacity, rather, they challenge the very nature of power, in short, they talk of revolution and not reform. What the examples above show is that OSIWA cannot claim legitimacy solely by its purported representation of society's interests.

OSIWA is in a rather peculiar situation in the donor market. At the same time that it is a recipient of funding, it is also a donor for many smaller NGOs.[11] This gives the organisation some leverage to follow its own institutional dynamic. The organisation however has to align itself with the agenda of larger donors like the UNDP if it will gain the much needed legitimacy. So, in spite of its relatively stronger funding position, unlike organisations like ERN and TMG, OSIWA largely follows the lead of major donors like the UNDP thereby facing similar charges of illegitimacy, inconsistency and disconnect. Besides, OSIWA is linked through similar funding networks to the predominant western donor industry that ultimately sets the advocacy agenda. For instance, through ACE, OSIWA received 430, 000 US Dollars from the MacArthur Foundation in 2009 to support its project to promote citizen participation in the electoral process.[12] The implication is that, by the very fact of its receiving funds from foreign sources, OSIWA is shaped by the operational environment created by the constraints and incentives of a western dominated donor market.

The implications of this for OSIWAs ability to promote any real change in the Nigerian governance and political structures are adverse. In the first place, its ownership

[11] For instance, from February 22-26, 2010, OSIWA, in conjunction with Local Government Initiative (LGI-OSI) Budapest, funded a civil society capacity building workshop on advocacy at the Dennis Hotel in Abuja. There are unconfirmed reports that the project cost about 50,000 US Dollars.

[12] See http://nigeria.macfound.org/site/c.bnKGIONtEqG/b.1737219/k.8E52/Recent_Grants.htm, accessed March 16, 2011, 10.12 am.

structure is foreign and thus likely to prioritize de-territorialized perspectives of governance. Even though OSIWA is purportedly an autonomous member of the OSI network, it remains to be seen how autonomous it can be when its projects are almost wholly funded by OSI and the George Soros Foundation. In fact, the OSIWA website is replete with constant allusions to the Chairman's Funds (that is George Soros) or to his position on specific issues. This makes the claim to autonomy very tenuous and brittle indeed. Secondly, it is based in Abuja and its programmes appear to focus on direct engagement with government. This opens it up to abuse by the political class and undermines its standing with ordinary people. In the final analysis, OSIWA, like ERN, is constrained by the nature of its sponsors. The theoretical assumptions upon which this study is based therefore holds true once again despite the rather different funding circumstance of OSIWA.

5.4 Women's Rights Advancement Protection Alternative (WRAPA)

The Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) Nigeria, is an NGO working in the area of women's rights advocacy. It was established by the then wife of the Head of State, Justice Fati Abubakar in 1999, and it seeks to

> advance and protect the rights of women as provided by national laws and policies, regional and international treaties and agreements, through an integrated approach that entrenches respect for the human dignity of the woman as her inclusion in decisions that affect her life and the development of her community.[13]

In 1999, WRAPA established two Pilot Project Centres, situated in the Federal Capital Territory. At these centres, support services aimed at actualizing their rights and enhancing their capacity to meaningfully contribute to their families and community are provided to women. Over 300 women have learned various skills and enjoyed legal support through this initiative. In the states, WRAPA has established similar centres or facilities that

[13] See WRAPA website, www.wrapa.org/aboutus.

offer women in rural and satellite communities vocational skills training, legal aid/counselling and reconciliation services, adult literacy programmes, and support for enhanced income generating activities. WRAPA at present has a total of 22 adult literacy centres in 12 states, 10 legal aid centres in 10 states, and 11 vocational training centres in 9 states. WRAPA enjoys tremendous support from government agencies in the operations of its centres. The most visible are the National Commission for Mass Literacy Education (NCMLE), the National Directorate for Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Nigeria Legal Aid Council (NLAC). It also receives funds from corporate bodies in the finance and media sectors and from foreign human rights organisations like Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Oxfam UK.

WRAPA has also been particularly active in the area of engaging the state in gender sensitive legislation and the codification of international protocols like the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women. This is a comprehensive perspective of issues confronting women in Africa and it also sets mechanisms for addressing such issues. The protocol provides broader protection for women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women, harmful traditional practices, discrimination and other constraints faced by women and so on.

WRAPA has also made attempts to engage with women in the grassroots. In fact, the flagship programme of the organisation, the Raising Her Voice Project (RHV) is a portfolio of projects in 17 countries across the world and focuses on improving governance and transparency by recognizing and increasing the significant contribution rural poor women can make to public life and in promoting their own rights. In Africa, RHV project is being implemented in 8 countries including Nigeria with the same goal of strengthening national

legislation, adequate budgeting and implementation of the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women through community popularization and advocacy activities.[14]

WRAPA has been quite active in gender advocacy in Nigeria. It has however suffered from pretty much the same operational challenges faced by modern CSOs in Nigeria. In the first place, the organisation is entrenched in the state. Its founding by the wife of a sitting Head of State perhaps set the context for this close association with the state. The general perception of WRAPA as an NGO appears to be misleading. This is because, even though the organisation is privately owned, it is so entrenched within the structures of government that its autonomy is in serious question. Staff within the organisation admitted that the organisation enjoys heavy patronage from agencies of government. Even on its website, WRAPA trumpets its relationship with government as a major strength. It works with various agencies of the federal government to advance the interest of rural women. This indicates that rather than considering the authoritarian character of the state as the key impediment to gender and human rights, WRAPA believes that the deficit can be easily legislated away. It leads, once more, to the revolution or reform question.

The willingness of WRAPA to collaborate with the Nigerian state is largely a product of its dependence on the political class and the state itself, through its agencies like the NHRC for fiscal solvency. It is indeed quite difficult to divorce WRAPA from the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, the same way it would have been naive to separate late Maryam Babangida's Better Life For Rural Women from the Nigerian state. The circumstances surrounding the formation of WRAPA is therefore a fundamental disadvantage that sets the context for its disconnection from some of the core realities of ordinary women.

WRAPA like ERN and OSIWA also depends significantly on foreign sources of support. Unlike the other two however, it is unlikely that WRAPA will collapse were foreign

[14] *Ibid.*

funding sources to dry up. This is because it receives only about 40 percent of its supports from foreign sources, a function of its linkages with the Nigerian ruling class and consequent high government patronage. Nevertheless, WRAPA is intensely involved in competition for available foreign funds, particularly those directed at women rights issues. This is perhaps why its flagship programme, the RHV project, is a foreign initiative. It may be safely assumed that WRAPA will evolve in the near future to depend much more on foreign supports than it currently does.

One of the implications of WRAPA's engagement with foreign donor organisations like Oxfam is the deepening of its linkages with non Nigerian CSOs and its consequent westernization. For instance WRAPA is a mere implementer of the RHV project. It is neither an initiator nor was it involved in the formulation of the AU protocol it works so hard to domesticate in Nigeria. By bidding for and winning the RHV portfolio in Nigeria, WRAPA has become a part of a network of NGOs in about 17 countries, focussing on governance and transparency issues from the perspective of women. As a result, it has had to remodel its programmes and strategy policy plans around the AU gender agenda.

It is reported that the organisation continues to face some uncertainty as a result of its entrenchment within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). A staffer noted, on condition of anonymity, that because many of its patrons are either members or 'sympathisers' of the ruling PDP, there is a fear of sustainability should the PDP lose elections at the federal level. In fact, the staff noted that the organisation appears to have an unwritten policy of avoiding states held by the opposition. There is hardly any doubt that this kind of entrenchment within the structures of the state may serve WRAPA well in get sympathetic ears for its projects. However, it also undermines the capacity of the organisation to ask some of the pertinent questions related to disempowerment that are necessary to address the larger picture of authoritarianism and tyranny in the country.

Its relationship with foreign donors also deepens its disconnection with the ordinary women it purports to represent. For instance, most of its programmes are held in upscale areas of Nigeria. One staff commented that foreign donors would not be impressed with the organisation if it held its programmes 'in some hovel'. Of course, WRAPA's elite patrons will also not be comfortable with programmes held in the grassroots even though such programme is being held to benefit the grassroots. Apart from that, WRAPA appears to face increasing competition from other women organisations accessing funds from similar sources. Some of those organisations include Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), Baobab for Women's Human Rights, Alliances for Africa (AfA), Gender Awareness Trust (GAT), League of Democratic Women (LEADS), Women Aid Collective (WACOL), Civil Research Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC), International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria, National Council of Catholic Women Organization (NCCWO), Federation of Muslim Women Associations (FOMWAN) Nigeria, COCIN Community Development Programme (CCDP), Project Agape, Project Alert, Gender and Development Action (GADA) and National Council of Women Societies (NCWS). Interestingly, just like ERN is forced by the UNDP's JDBF to collaborate with potential competitors, WRAPA works with all of these organisations to jointly implement the RHV project. The implication of this is that a wide spectrum of women organisations is focussing resources and capacities on implementing what is essentially a foreign programme. It is a strong indication of the capacity of transnational donors to set the agenda of advocacy in Nigeria.

The linkage with these organisations does not however indicate the absence of competition of the kind that increases organisational insecurity for all of them. In fact, collaboration is a key survival strategy for these organisations much like mergers and acquisitions are for firms. This much was confirmed during interviews with staff of WRAPA.

Overall, it should be noted that the ability of WRAPA to play its role in advancing women's rights is severely limited by its operational environment. Its operational environment is such that obliges it to collaborate with rather than confront the state. This is principally because its funding structure links it with the ruling elite and thus reduces its predilection to challenge state authority. Again, it relies heavily on foreign projects like RHV to define its advocacy, thus, it inevitably takes a neoliberal view of gender.

All the case studies analysed above provide empirical evidence that foreign patronage is generating perverse incentives and constraints in the operational environment of civil society in Nigeria. This is in itself an indication of the thoroughly compromised nature of civil society in Nigeria. It is difficult to imagine NGOs with such institutional motivations and constraints championing the cause of redistributive democracy that is deeply embedded in the Nigerian public.[15] It is to this all important function of the civil society in the public sphere that I now turn to.

[15] Large scale empirical studies indicating preference for distributive democracy have been conducted by many scholars. See for instance M. Bratton and R. Mattes, *Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental?*, Afro Barometer Working Paper No. 1, 2000; M. Bratton, *Poor People and Democratic Citizenship in Africa*, Afro Barometer Working Paper No. 56, 2006.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY COMMODIFICATION FOR DEMOCRATISATION IN NIGERIA

6.1 A Political Economy of Democracy

What I set out to do in this chapter is to analyse the implications of the commodification of civil society for democratisation in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of previous chapters that have established that civil society's interactions with donors is largely responsible for its commodification, and of apparent consensus in the literature that, for good or evil, civil society plays a major role in democratisation.

It should however be noted that a commodified civil society does not engage the architecture of democracy in abstraction. It is given its precise meaning by the marketization of the broad framework of democracy itself. This is why a political economy of democracy provides important insights into the interplay between economic reproduction and accumulation on the one hand and the political framework within which social forces interact on the other. Interrogating civil society's role in democracy from this perspective derives from some of the fundamental assumptions of dialectical materialism, the mode of analysis that frames Marxist political economy. First, it places emphasis on the primacy of material conditions. This is that, as Ake put it, it considers 'economic needs as man's most fundamental need and economic activities as the basis of all other activities'.[1] Second, it emphasises the dynamic character of reality. In this, dialectical materialism considers society as constantly in flux, a product of the contradictions inherent in its relations. In short, it sees harmony in discord and conflict in harmony. Third, it takes account of the interrelatedness

[1] See C. Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa*, New York: Longman, 1981, p. 1.

and even mutual interdependence of different elements of society. Thus, politics depends on the economy and vice versa.[2]

This section reacts to this understanding of society and consequently constructs a political economy of democracy. This is critical because it helps situate democracy within the prevailing neoliberal environment and allows for the interrogation of patterns of accumulation in the context of their role in politics. It also places civil society and the democratic process within the framework of political economy, thereby drawing attention to the class based conflicts that frame social interaction and to the economic foundations of democracy itself.

There are two key areas to look at in constructing a political economy of democracy in Africa. The first is the economic origin of the modern democracy movement. By this, I refer to the underlying economic motivations that drive concern for the democratisation of the character of governance. The most pressing concern in this case is that of the ordinary people, who, I suppose, everything is all about. Even though they are by no means the only stakeholders of the democracy movement in Africa, the ordinary people are by far the most important. To be sure, all other stakeholders in the democracy movement; international NGOs, western governments, international financial institutions, ethnic or national groups and the political class, may have other motivations for insisting on democracy in one form or the other. However, their claim to legitimacy derives essentially from purporting to engage in the democratic struggle on behalf of the ordinary people. Therefore, the motivation of the ordinary people, that is, what recruits them to participation in the democracy movement, is what is at issue. Ake demonstrates the centrality of not just the ordinary people but also of their essential motivation to understanding what he called the 'unique case' of democracy in

[2] Ake provides a very brilliant analysis of dialectical materialism and its advantages as a mode of analysis. See C. Ake, 'A Political Economy of Africa', *Ibid*, p. 1-8. Other scholars have also addressed this issue. See for instance T. Aina, 'What is Political Economy?', *Op. Cit*, p. 1-15.

Africa when he noted that 'the democracy movement in Africa is a powerful, objective, historical force in that it expresses the desire of ordinary people to gain power and material improvement'.[3] Thus, the participation of ordinary Africans in the democracy movement is driven essentially by economic motivations.

The above does much to underline the prime motivation for Africa's long struggle for democracy. The development crisis has been a powerful incentive for ordinary Africans to demand for increased participation in the political process. Whereas liberal democracy seeks participation for its sake, the African concept of participation is meant to secure concrete economic benefits rather than abstract political rights.[4]In the African context of extreme poverty and underdevelopment, 'concrete economic benefits' often refers to bare survival for a significant percentage of the population.

Interestingly, the political elite in Africa have also discovered the value of democracy. Their discovery of democracy also has very clear economic undertones. In their own case however, democracy has become attractive because they appear to have discovered that capital accumulation can indeed continue unrestrained under 'democratic' settings. This discovery is not entirely novel, after all the state has for long been a platform for the appropriation of public resources rather than a tool for the provision of public goods. The state and its resources have thus been so privatized that it has become hostage to forces of capital.[5] In fact, it is precisely the implications of this appropriation of the state that drove

[3] See C. Ake, 'The Unique Case of African Democracy', *Op. Cit.*, p. 240. A similar argument is advanced in P. Chabal, "A Few Considerations on Democracy in Africa", *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2, 1998, pp. 289-303.

[4] Claude Ake treated this contradiction between what he regards as the African concept of political participation and the liberal perspective quite brilliantly in C. Ake, 'The African Context of Human Rights', *Africa Today*, Vol.34 No. 1/2 , 1st Qtr-2nd Qtr, 1987, pp. 5-12.

[5] See for instance C. Ake, "The Future of the State in Africa", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1985, pp. 105-14; D. Richards, R. Gelleny and D. Sacko, "Money with a Mean Streak? Foreign Economic Penetration and Government Respect for Human Rights in Developing Countries", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 2001, pp. 219-239; A. Zalik, " The Niger Delta: 'Petro Violence' and 'Partnership Development' ", *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 31, No. 101, 2004, pp. 401-424 and S.

domestic demand for democratisation in the first place. What is new however, is their discovery that democracy, that is liberal electoral democracy, does not necessarily prevent accumulation through the state. The state can be run pretty much the same way it was being run under military and one party rule with only different rhetoric and symbolic gestures.

The coalescing of two objective forces for democracy made the one-party or military system unsustainable for the ruling elite all over Africa. According to Obi, 'Africa, in the spirit of the global moment has embraced democracy or, more precisely, liberal or multiparty democracy. This has found acceptance within Africa's political elite.' Continuing, he notes that 'with a few exceptions, democracy has taken root and gained legitimacy in Africa as the most viable form of political organisation and governance underlined by rule of law as opposed to rule by brute force.'[6] These two objective forces were however in fundamental opposition. While one (the people) was interested in democracy for the expectation that it will redress decades of misrule, redistribute appropriated state resources and recapture the state for its owners; the other (led by international capital) saw it as an opportunity to homogenize global capitalism, confront the vestiges of statism and of course advance the world view of neoliberalism. The ruling elite found solace in the type of democracy being advanced from outside Africa because it provided the only possibility of retaining their appropriated privileges. Thus what began as a movement for grassroots democracy degenerated into what Obi innovatively describes as a 'tyranny of choices'.[7] Multi party elections were consequently conducted without fundamentally changing the distributive and acquisitive character of the state.[8] It is interesting to note that Africa's new democracies in

Barnes, "Global Flows: Terror, Oil, and Strategic Philanthropy", *African Studies Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 2005, pp. 1-22.

[6] C. Obi, *No Choice, But Democracy: Prising the People out of Politics in Africa?,* Claude Ake Memorial Lecture Series, No. 2, Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2008, p.7, 8.

[7] C. Obi, 'No Choice but Democracy', *Ibid*, p. 8.

[8] Many scholars have engaged this problematic of voting without choosing. See for instance S. Adejumobi, "Elections in Africa: A Fading Shadow of Democracy?", *International Political Science Review,* Vol.21, No. 1,

Samuel Huntington's famed 'third wave' have largely sustained the dominance of the ruling elite using pretty much the same tactics that liberal democracy had been out to stamp out. In Nigeria for instance, widespread abuse of human rights, gender insensitivity, corruption and economic crisis have remained central features of the polity. The country continues to rank low in freedom and democracy indicators despite eleven uninterrupted years of civil rule and there is little to suggest that the next decade will be any different.[9] The government maintains its dominance through repression and a patronage system that has been significantly expanded since 1999. For instance, there are reports that the about five hundred members of the National Assembly receive about 25 percent of the entire federal recurrent budget despite being a statistically insignificant percentage of federal employees and mostly working part time.[10] With huge funds like this subsisting side by side with widespread poverty, it is easy to fund networks of patronage that help sustain the dominance of the ruling elite.

Where democracy becomes a platform for claims to the economic resources available to a given state or society, many of the ills often associated with the political process in Africa is guaranteed to exist. It is often said for instance, that underlying the political process in Africa is a dependence on patronage systems.[11]At the heart of this system is the appropriation of state resources and its redistribution to members of the privileged prebendal class. This is what cements the alliances that control the levers of state power and those that challenge for it.

The implication of the above is that at the heart of the demands of all the stakeholders in the democracy movement in Africa is the need to answer questions relating to access to

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2000, pp.59-73 and W. Fawole, "Voting Without Choosing: Interrogating the Crisis of Electoral Democracy in Nigeria", In: Lumumba-Kasongo (ed.), *Liberal Democracy and its Critics in Africa: Political Dysfunction and the Struggle for Social Progress,* Dakar: CODESRIA, 2005, pp. 149-71.

[9] See for instance the Freedom House Scores, 2008 and Polity IV Democracy Level Index, 2008 for Nigeria.

[10] O. Josiah, *Jumbo Pay: Sanusi at Senate, Refuses to Apologise*, The Punch, December 2, 2010.

[11] See for instance R. Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991.

economic resources being controlled by the state. It therefore stands to reason that democracy cannot be understood without looking critically at its economic foundations. Implicit in the growing preference for democracy, in its varied forms, is an understanding that the evolution of the modern state requires some sort of broad participation. More importantly, however, it is the economic implications of being excluded from power that is arguably the most powerful incentive for participation in the democratic process in spite of its many flaws. This takes us to the second issue that must be understood for any construction of the political economy of democracy. This is the economic implication of democracy.

This can be addressed from multiple angles. In the first place it will be prudent to address the debate around the implication of popular participation for development. There are two major strands in this debate. One side argues that autocracy, albeit a benign one, is better at mobilizing economic growth in poor countries. They assume that there is a 'cruel choice' to be had between democracy and development. This school does not extol the virtues of autocracy, rather, they call for a gradual approach to democratisation in the developing world. They call for caution in the promotion of democracy. The potential of violent states emerging as may be the case if the Muslim Brotherhood wins democratic elections in Egypt or as is presently the case in the Gaza Strip where Hamas took over in democratic elections are one of the fears expressed in the literature. It is also assumed that autocracies are far more efficient than democracies because they do not have to pander to various interest groups. While this perspective of democracy and development was particularly useful for the justification of many strategic partnerships in the cold war period, it is important to note that it has survived Samuel Huntington's third wave. For instance, Fareed Zakaria, a democrat by all standards, comes to the conclusion that democratic gains cannot be reversed after states achieve the magical 6000 US Dollar per capita income benchmark. He therefore reasons that

the goal of democratic states should be to support 'liberal autocracies' in the developing world.[12]

Many advocates of rapid democratisation however challenge these arguments. They note that whereas the theoretical advantage appears to lie with gradualists, the empirical evidence points at something else. Halperin, Siegle and Weintein for instance, in a highly empirical study of this subject, argue that democratic states at all income levels indeed do 20 to 40 percent better than autocracies in generating higher life expectancies, increasing literacy, access to basic utilities, education and relative peace.[13] Other scholars have arrived at similar conclusions by noting that rather than democracy slowing down development, it is precisely the lack of democracy that ensures that development will be unsustainable.[14]

The tension between these two perspectives of the democracy-development nexus has resulted in a perverse compromise that has suited the goals of autocratic governments all over the developing world. While states like Nigeria have for instance conducted multiparty elections, it has not resulted in any fundamental reversal in the authoritarian character of the state. At least even if only for reasons of power consolidation, one may safely assume that even the worst authoritarian state would want economic growth in so far as it does not undermine the governing elite's hold on power. Since it has become unfashionable to sustain that hold through bare faced dictatorship however, governing coalitions in Africa have generally been successful in transforming the state into a civilian one, pursued neoliberal economic reforms and yet retain its authoritarian character. As Gana described it, they have

[12] F. Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, New York: WW Norton, 2003. Many other scholars share similar perceptions of the democracy-development nexus. See for instance, S. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968; R. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy", *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 273, No. 2, 1994, pp. 44-76 and M. Quibria, *Growth and Poverty: Lessons from the East Asian Miracle Revisited*, Asian Development Bank Working Paper No. 33, 2002. This perspective is also evident in the orthodoxy governing major IFIs. See for instance World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

[13] M. Halperin, J. Siegle and M. Weinstein, 'The Democracy Advantage', *Op. Cit.*, p. 10-15.

[14] A. Przeworski et. al., "What Makes Democracy Endure?", *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 7, 1996, pp. 39-55; T. Carothers, 'How Democracies Emerge', Op. Cit. pp. 12-29.

adopted liberal democracy but disembowelled it of content.[15] The authoritarian nature of the state has remained unchanged not necessarily because of any fundamental flaw in the institutions of politics but rather because of the nature of the economy and its linkages with political institutions. Thus, forms of accumulation relating to wage exploitative and monopolistic practices of both national and multinational enterprises, rent seeking state capitalism and the regulation of petty –commodity production have encouraged the development and intensification of authoritarianism in the country.[16]

It is this compromise that has become the defining feature of democratisation in Nigeria. Indeed, the retention of the state's authoritarian character is one of the factors that drive Nigeria's civil society into the arms of foreign donors. The state continues to embody the antithesis of modernisation, freedom and human rights that civil society so desperately champions. There is also growing disillusion with the democratic enterprise. The high hopes of the late 1990s are gradually giving way to cynicism and despair; a sign of simmering discontent with the performance of Nigeria's civilian despots.

Democracy is still the most preferred model for Nigerians as well as other Africans. However, the corruption, profligacy and inefficiency of the political class are raising tensions that may undermine civil rule and bring back the days of bare faced despotism. At the heart of the discontentment with democratisation is the perceived inability of the political class to resolve the economic crisis. Even though some advances in core development indicators are evident, there is a pervasive perception of any gains as too little too slowly. The current economic crisis appears to be deepening the impatience of the public with politicians and this

[15] A. Gana, "Conclusion: The Democracy-Development Nexus" in: A. Gana and Y. Omelle, *Democratic Rebirth in Nigeria, 1999-2003*, New Jersey: Africarus Multimedia, 2005, p.282.

[16] Extensive analysis of this issue can be found in Y. Bangura, "Authoritarian rule and Democracy in Africa: A Theoretical Discourse", in: P. Gibbon, Y. Bangura and A. Ofstad, 'Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment', *Op. Cit.*, pp. 39-83.

is already raising concerned eye brows in policy circles.[17] If nothing else, the tendency of the public to measure democracy by the progress it makes in answering economic questions, is a major indicator that democracy cannot be understood outside the economic context within which it operates.

Modern liberal democracy is also virtually impossible without a virile civil society. Implicit in this tendency to link democratisation to the density and vibrancy of civil society is the neoliberal view of the role of private forces in development. In spite of this however, civil society often thrives on the rhetoric that it represents the pristine social values of society. The question is however that can civil society be uncommodified where democracy itself has become based on transactional rather than social values? Where civil society is run by transactional rather than social values, what will be the implications for democracy? These fundamental questions strike at the very heart of civil society's role in the democratic process and the next section will be an attempt to answer them.

6.2 Implications of Neoliberal CSOs for Democracy

In this section I engage the question of what the commodification of CSOs does to democracy. Does it strengthen or undermine democracy? I believe a useful take off point in this argument is to revisit the relevance of civil society itself to democracy. This will appear to be a rather obvious point. After all, there is a consensus in the literature that is shared by this study that, for good or evil, civil society is central to the fermentation of democratic values. However, the implications of a commodified civil society environment cannot be

[17] See for instance W. Bello, "The Capitalist Conjuncture: Over Accumulation, Financial Crises and the Retreat from Globalisation", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 8, 2006, pp. 1345-67; A. Bigsten and D. Dureval, "The African Economy and its role in the World Economy", *Current African Issues*, No. 40, Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2008; A. Arieff, M. Weis and V. Jones, *The Global Economic Crisis: Impact on Sub-Saharan Africa and Global Policy Responses,* Congressional Research Service Report No. R40778, Washington: CRS, 2010; and B. Gills, "Going South: Capitalist Crisis, Systemic Crisis, Civilisational Crisis", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2010, pp. 169-84.

fully appreciated if it is not stressed that democracy as it is presently understood cannot survive without a vibrant civil society. Therefore, the nature of civil society and its dynamics is a very critical factor that underscores the depth, scope and sustainability of democracy.

The question should also be raised that what kind of values should undergird a democratic edifice? Should the values be transactional or social? That is should values be driven by the market or by social relationships, by reality or by criteria inherent in values themselves? These questions are important for understanding the changes that marketization is introducing into politics in Nigeria and the implications of these changes for the quality of its democracy. Where social values drive politics, it is likely that Ake's conception of participation will gain primacy. Ake argues that:

> liberal democracy offers a form of political participation which is markedly different from and arguably inferior to the African concept of participation. For the African, especially the rural dweller, participation is linked to communality. Africans do not generally see themselves as self-regarding atomized beings in essentially competitive and potentially conflicting interaction with others. Rather, their consciousness is directed towards belonging to an organic whole. The point is to find one's station in life, not to assert one's interests and claims over others. People participate not because they are individuals whose interests and needs ought to be asserted, but because they are part of an interconnected whole. ... more often than not, it is the involvement in the process rather than the acceptability of the end decision, which satisfies the need to participate.[18]

It may be argued that this is a rather simplistic or even naive conception of African politics. It assumes that people are driven by the interests of the collective even though this does not conform to the rational self-regarding decisions expected in a market based economy. It is difficult to assail Ake's critics in this regard. However, their case becomes brittle if one factors into the equation what some scholars have described as Africa's 'economy of affection' or the continued salience of primordial links. Surely these phenomena indicate some sort of collective interests. In fact, it is precisely the growing penetration of

[18] C. Ake, 'The Unique Case of African Democracy', *Op. Cit.*, p. 243.

transactional values or its imposition that has alarmed scholars like Ake. Again, the reality is that African economies are only marginally capitalist. In reality they are pre-capitalist or at best very primitive forms of capitalism. Therefore, social values still play very significant roles in the distribution of incomes even though transactional values are growing in strength.

The points raised above are important because they highlight the challenge of determining whether to analyse civil society from a value based or ethical perspective or through purely impact path dependent lens. As I have noted earlier, this study does not question the normative agenda of civil society, rather, it examines the implications of civil society's linkages with foreign donors in framing the impact of its interventions in the country.

Having giving this broad background, I now proceed to examine what commodified CSOs mean for democracy in Nigeria. I have identified three broad implications of neoliberal civil society for the democratisation project in Nigeria. In the first place, where CSOs have lost or have had their normative agendas watered down by the insecurity created by the struggle for organisational survival, they also inevitably lose the moral high ground. This may appear to be a rather petty loss. However, the NGO sector, in particular, depends significantly on its occupation and/or appropriation of the moral high ground. Their claim to legitimacy is often not derived from representation of society, at least not directly, or in the way of national parliaments, rather, it is based on their self and public perception as 'doing good'-that is of framing the normative agenda of governance on behalf of society. This is a very important social capital with which NGOs balance their weaknesses relative to the state. Commodification not only forces NGOs to act in ways that detach them from the brutal realities of poverty, it also demonstrates their connections to the ruling elite, thereby alienating them from the critical mass. This opens up civil society to abuse by the state and its

eventual emasculation. Of course, an emasculated civil society cannot challenge the excesses in the exercise of state power neither can it promote popular democracy.

In previous chapters, I have established that civil society faces significant organisational insecurity as a result of the marketized and highly competitive operational environment within which it has to survive. This organisational insecurity tends to divert the efforts of CSOs into narrow internal challenges. Of course this is not to suggest that CSOs stop advocacy of public issues, after all, it is the public face of CSOs that ensures and justifies their continued existence. The point being made is rather that CSOs inevitably have to frame that public face in a way that ensures the continued survival of the organisation. Thus, organisational survival comes first before responsibility and accountability to local constituencies.[19] The implication is that a linkage deficit emerges between the CSO and its constituency that undermines its ability to genuinely seek and get feedback from them. It is difficult to imagine a civil society that promotes democratisation and is yet detached from the local communities in whose interest it purports to act. It is also difficult to imagine civil society being detached from its constituency were it not responding to perverse incentives and constraints created by a neoliberal environment. This is because the emergence of social movements within civil society largely depends on intricate webs of linkages that connect the leadership with both the active and passive followership. It is based on social rather than transactional values. Social values, it must be noted, thrive on the existence of a collective social imaginary. Transactional values on the other hand are individualistic, legalistic and autonomous. They are based on market principles of competition and on the binary logic of winners and losers. This is what commodification introduces into civil society's interaction with its constituency. Therefore, marketized CSOs, regardless of their normative agendas,

[19] Jens Steffek and co addressed this problem quite extensively. See J. Steffek et. al., 'Whose Voice', *Op. Cit*

cannot play a progressive role in democratisation. Rather, they tend to pursue incremental progress that ultimately makes them unwitting defenders of an oppressive system.[20]

Finally, commodification tends to entrench the civil society within the emerging middle class. By implication, it encourages CSOs to concentrate in urban centres like Lagos and Abuja, further deepening their disconnection with the ordinary people in the rural areas. This is very bad for democracy. First, it denies the large rural population a voice in governance that may have been provided by linkages with a vibrant civil society movement. Second, it encourages the emergence of a civil society largely interested in a stable polity. This is of course not bad in itself except that Nigeria's polity is so fundamentally flawed that stabilising it arguably implies developmental stagnation. In the end, civil society unwittingly becomes a tool in the hands of the state for the perpetuation of an oppressive system.

The above demonstrates what a neoliberal operational environment does to civil society's ability to engage governance issues within the context of democratisation in Nigeria. The debate on whether civil society ought to be driven by a contractual, that is transactional, value system or a normative one is critical to the way the sector evolves. In truth, civil society is at a crossroads. It operates within a neoliberal context and must take notice of this fact if it will survive. At the same time, civil society must retain its ethical values and goals if it will continue to be perceived as setting the normative agenda on behalf of the people. This dilemma relates to civil society's navigation of competing spaces of accountability and may ultimately determine the overall utility of the sector as a force for expanding democratic freedoms and for recapturing the state and its resources for the ordinary people.

[20] See I. Shivji, 'Silences in the NGO Discourse', *Op. Cit.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary

This study has interrogated the role of transnational donors in framing the architecture of civil society in Nigeria. In particular, it focussed on the way transnational donor support shapes the operational environment of civil society and the implications for democratisation. The study is based on two main hypotheses. First is that the proliferation of civil society groups in the light of political liberalization will significantly intensify competition for funds from foreign donors and increase organisational insecurity for all the groups. Second, the study assumes that the marketization of many donor funding programmes will generate incentives that encourage competition rather than efficiency thereby undermining civil society's normative agenda within the democracy movement. In addressing these, the study traced the historical trajectory of civil society in Nigeria from its pre-colonial times, to colonial contact and to the modern period. This historicisation helped to demonstrate the long standing linkages between transnational donors and civil society in Nigeria and how these linkages have framed the latter's operational environment.

The study also identified the main strategies with which donors engage with civil society in Nigeria and notes that they are mainly rooted in the transactional values of neoliberalism. The responses of civil society to the incentives and constraints that are the consequences of the specific nature of donor support and engagement is thus inevitably market based and neoliberal. In addition, the study examined the implications of these responses to the nature of civil society's participation in the democratic process in Nigeria. It also made a critical assessment of three specific case studies that help to demonstrate the nature of donor involvement in CSO activities in Nigeria and how it impacts on these

organisations. These analyses also bought into bold relief, the implications of the operational environment of civil society in Nigeria for its role in democratisation.

7.2 Findings

The results showed that colonial contact was the origin of modern civil society in Nigeria and that it was that period that established and deepened linkages with transnational civil society movements and donors. The skewed nature of the colonial relationship thus played a major role in framing the nature of relations between modern civil society and donors. It was also found that foreign donors not only set the ideological and programme agenda of civil society in Nigeria, but also legitimate, fund and provide the evaluative frameworks for their advocacy. As a result of this, the study found that transnational donors easily frame the institutional and operational environment of civil society through the effective use of engagement strategies like renewable contracting, donor coordination and competitive tenders. The study also found that the environment created as a consequence of these strategies increases organisational insecurity for all CSOs by creating or deepening operational challenges related to principal-agent problems, multiple principals and reduction in programme initiative. It also creates incentives for opportunistic and fraudulent behaviour since CSOs are forced to respond to a highly competitive environment that sometimes threatens the very survival of the organisations. The study also found that CSOs respond to these challenges in diverse ways. These include proliferation, corporatisation, westernization and sometimes fraud. The challenges above, the study found, seriously undermine the ability of civil society to play positive roles in democratisation. While CSOs appear to participate more in recent times, the study showed that the neoliberal framework within which they operate and define their roles, limits their ability to connect to the ordinary people and thus detracts from their relevance as a conscience or voice for society.

The study concludes that structural contradictions within the operational environment of civil society, rather than the dispositions or normative values of individual CSOs are often to blame for opportunistic behaviour. Thus, civil society's internal crisis must be understood within the broader context of economic crisis generated, among other things, by the relations of power and control in the international political economy. As a consequence, civil society is severely limited in its capacity to play a progressive role in democratisation.

7.3 Policy Recommendations

In the light of the above findings, I wish to make the following policy recommendations:

A. CSOs should place greater emphasis on generating funds from internal sources. This is important to reduce their dependence on foreign donors and thus mitigate the impact on their operational environment that external support brings. As a way to make up for obvious paucity of funds within the country, CSOs could focus on limited areas of advocacy to reduce the logistical requirements. They can also engage in greater networking and coordination to leverage their limited capacities.

B. CSOs should also make greater effort to link advocacy campaigns to ordinary Nigerians. There is little doubt that many advocacy campaigns aim at some form of common good, however, bringing the common people into advocacy planning is a crucial step to deepening the ability of CSOs to promote political participation and democratisation.

C. CSOs should be more open to deepening challenges of the neoliberal framework. It is important that CSOs and actors demonstrate greater openness to alternative paradigms that seek to either reframe or, in fact, undermine the present neoliberal system of governance. The ability to accept the possibility of new ideas providing better

alternatives is at the heart of scholarship and progressive governance. CSOs must thus be prepared to be the realm of vibrant and open debate rather than doctrine.

7.4 An Agenda for Future Research

While this study has demonstrated the role of donors in framing the institutional environment of civil society and the implications of a commodified civil society for democratisation, there are grey areas that will benefit from deeper interrogation. In the first instance, scholars need to rethink the assumptions that undergird the examination of civil society's role in democratisation. For instance, can civil society be a harbinger of freedoms when it is increasingly being held hostage by capital?

Research must also interrogate the intersection between studies of multinational corporations and civil society. This is because, as was demonstrated by this study, it has become imperative to disengage from the assumption that civil society is separate from the market. Since civil society within peripheral formations like Nigeria is driven by an external dynamic that is clearly controlled by transnational donors whose organisational structures increasingly resemble multinational corporations, it is critical to advance our understanding of civil society by finding the intersection between civil society and multinationals. This research agenda becomes all the more important in the light of the emerging de-territorialisation of civil society and the growing importance of highly marketized transnational organisations in framing the dynamics of 'global civil society'.

I also believe that civil society research must continue to expand towards the understanding of its role in global governance issues. A useful starting point would be the participation challenges and dynamics of civil society in regional organisations like ECOWAS. This area is already benefiting from interrogation by scholars of regional and

global governance alike.[1] However, as helpful as these studies have been, their contributions have been from the perspective of global or regional institutions rather than from that of civil society itself. Therefore, scholars of civil society must engage the dynamics of civil society's expansion into global governance in order to fully understand the forces that aid and/or constrain it and why this is happening at this particular moment in history.

The emergence of a global civil society has been clearly identified by the literature. But there appears to be a need to define the extent of globalism that can be imputed on civil society. For one, it is important to examine the nature of the linkages that undergird the so called global civil society. Do these linkages not merely mirror the interactions of dependence and dominance that has been identified by literature on international politics and economy? What does this say about the understanding of civil society as a realm of civility, and now, global conscience?

Finally, civil society literature cannot afford to become fixated on static theories. There is thus a crying need to develop theories of civil society that take into account the emerging dynamics in civil society's evolution from a territorialized to a de-territorialized entity and from one on the sidelines of development and governance to one fully integrated in the networks and interactions that drive policy.

7.5 Conclusion

There is little doubt that the civil society-donor coalition has been very active in promoting a liberal political climate in Nigeria. Indeed, many studies tend to discuss the return of civilian rule in terms of the resurgence of civil society and its growing density and

[1]See for instance M. Edwards, *Civil Society and Global Governance*, n.d http://www.unuedu/millenium/edwards.pdf, accessed on May 12, 2010; M. Muchie, A. Habib and V. Padayachee, African Integration and Civil Society: The Case of the African Union, *Transformation*, Vol. 61, 2006, pp.3-24; F. Olonisakin, ECOWAS and Civil Society Movements in West Africa, *IDS Bulletin,* Vol. 40, No. 2, 2009.

vibrancy.[2] The rhetoric has been strong with regard to this coalition bringing about democratisation in the country and this is not unconnected to the prevailing orthodoxy in liberal democratic literature that civil society is a positive force for advancing the frontiers of freedom. One of the main contributions of this study is an invitation to rethink this rather optimistic view of civil society. This call has, of course, been earlier made in the literature. What is perhaps new is the call to examine the way civil society's operational environment, as shaped by transnational donor engagement, rather than its normative agenda, impacts on its role in democratisation.

The challenge before civil society in Nigeria is to find a balance between its need for the supports being provided by donors and its accountability debt to the society it purports to represent. This is crucial because it strikes at the heart of civil society's autonomy and thus legitimacy, and its capacity to engage in widespread and sustained advocacy. In so many ways, civil society's struggle for autonomy is representative of and directly linked to the broader struggle for a third independence in Nigeria. The first and second independence had secured relative freedom from colonialism and military dictatorship respectively. The third independence will be expected to secure a bottom up approach to democratisation and, perhaps more importantly, economic prosperity. As is evident from the foregoing, civil society will be central to this process. Thus, reformulating the internal character of civil society will have direct bearing on society's broader struggle for redistributive democracy.

It remains to be seen how civil society, in its present formulation, can provide the leadership that the Nigerian society requires to challenge the dominant powers of its repressive state. As was demonstrated in this study, civil society faces the same linkage challenges that bedevils the state and may thus be a compromised democratisation platform.

[2] E. Obadare, 'The Press and NGOs', *Op. Cit.*

For one, civil society organisations are hardly as democratic as they should be. With authoritarian tendencies deepening and expanding within modern civil society movements, much hope cannot be placed on them to effectively challenge state repression. Again, civil society, as a consequence of widespread and growing organisational insecurity, is faced with coordination challenges. While coalitions and alliances appear to be thriving in the NGO sector, other parts of civil society, like grass roots movements are moving apart. The continued salience of primordial linkages plays a large part in this phenomenon. It is thus evident from the foregoing that civil society has not provided answers to many of the divisive features of the Nigerian society; nor can it. The perception of civil society as a 'cure all' answer to Nigeria's democratisation challenges is thus misleading and raises undue hopes about its potential as an agent of change.

Civil society is faced with an internal crisis that cannot be abstracted from the broader economic conditions of Nigeria. The connection between civil society's challenges and the context of economic crisis can be easily gleaned from the following: First, the intervention of the global 'development community' is based on neoliberal reforms that place emphasis on the involvement of civil society in the governance process. While this inevitably raises the profile of civil society vis-a-vis the state, it also subjects it to some of the fundamental flaws of the neoliberal system. One of this is that, it marketizes civil society's response to governance and deepens its disconnection to the critical mass. Second, the prevailing climate of economic crisis increases the incentives for the appropriation of civil society by a growing class of educated middle class opportunists that invariably undermines civil society's standing as a conscience for society. Third, the very nature of economic reproduction in Nigeria which is service oriented and based on exploitative contractual relations, appears to have penetrated civil society significantly, thus deepening the linkages between the sector and the market. With such linkages to the economy, addressing some of the challenges of

civil society will require challenging the distributive and acquisitive character of the Nigerian economy.

Even though the civil society is faced with serious challenges that raise questions about its role in democratisation, it is by no means a lost case. For one, civil society is a highly dynamic sector that cannot be written off, no matter its present challenges. Second, alternative academic literature is also increasingly establishing its dominance of social science research and may yet play a role in reconnecting civil society movements with progressive trends within the Nigerian grassroots. Unlike the political class where it may be extremely naive to assume that they desire a reformulation of the status quo, many CSOs and individual civil society activists are deeply and genuinely interested in making things better. This is a basis for hope in the role of the civil society, notwithstanding the immense challenges the sector faces.

Unfortunately however, the future of Nigeria's democratic experience cannot be based solely on such tenuous hope. Civil society must begin to understand the immense challenges it faces. It must lose some of its triumphalist edge and perhaps even its over bloated perception of itself. In the end, rather than the perception of 'doing good' or an oversupply of good intentions, it is the nature of civil society, its interactions with other social formations within and without the Nigerian society, and the character of its operational environment that will determine how it will use its assured public space in Nigeria's democratisation.

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Mr. Gbenga Gbarada, IPSC Office, Lagos, Nigeria, October 17, 2010, 10.00am.

Mr. Gboyega Atoyebi, Dennis Hotel Abuja, February 26, 2010, 5.00pm.

Mr. Joseph Amenaghanon, OSIWA-Nigeria Office, Abuja, Nigeria, October 7, 2010, 3.30 pm

Mr. Joseph Izibili MRA Office, Lagos, November 10, 2010, 9.00am.

Mr. Shaba Tope, ERN Office, Abuja, Nigeria, October 7, 2010, 11.30am.

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Appendix 1

Sample Questions for Field Interview

What does your NGO/Organisation do?

What kind of supports is received by your NGO from foreign sources?

Who are the main support givers?

What category of support is largest?

How is support determined?

What conditions are often attached to support?

How do these conditions impact on your operations?

How do overall donor funding programmes impact on your organisation's structure with regard to planning, staffing, programme development and implementation etc?

How free is your organisation in determining the parameters of programme evaluation?

How often does your organisation provide reports to donors?

Are these reports prerequisites for contract renewal etc?

Does your organisation compete with other NGOs for funding on similar projects?

Does this impact on proposal development and how?

Are there specific programme examples you would like to share?

Any comment on the nature of donor relations with your NGO?

Any comment on Nigeria's current democratic experiment?

What role is, will and can civil society play?

Appendix 2

Sample Organisations

Name	City	Main Advocacy Area
AIDS Care Education and Training (ACET)	JOS	HIV/AIDS
Alliances for Africa (AfA)	Lagos	Gender, Governance
Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)	Abuja	Security, Governance and Democratisation
Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion HIV/AIDS Department	Abuja	HIV/AIDS
Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC)	Abuja	Capacity Building, Documentation
Common Cause Initiative (CCI)	Abuja	Human Rights Advocacy
Constitutional Reform Dialogue Mechanism	Abuja	Constitutional Reform
Electoral Reform Network (ERN)	Abuja	Electoral Reform
Gender and Human Values Proactive (HUVAP)	Kaduna	Gender
Initiative for Peace Building and Social Change (IPBSC)	Lagos	Peace Building
Integration Mediation Centre (IMC)	Kaduna	Peace
Islamic Aid and Development Organisation (IADO)	Jos	Religion
Laraba Shown Foundation	Abuja	Gender

Local Government Initiative-Open Society Institute (LGI-OSI)	Budapest/Abuja	Capacity Building
Media Rights Agenda (MRA)	Lagos	Media
National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN)	Abuja	Youth
Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (NEPWHAN)	Abuja	HIV/AIDS
New Era Educational and Charitable Support Foundation	Jos	Education
Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA)	Abuja	Religion
Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA)	Abuja	Capacity Building, Governance Advocacy
Poor AIDS Rights Initiative for Nigeria (PARIN)	Abuja	HIV/AIDS
Right Enforcement and Public Centre (REPLACE)	Abuja	Human Rights, Justice Reform
Rural Institution Building Programme (RUFIN)	Abuja	Rural development
Third National FADAMA Development Project	Makurdi	Rural Development, Agriculture
United Nations Development Project (UNDP)	Abuja	Capacity Building, Funding, Governance
West Africa Civil Society Forum	Abuja	Capacity Building, Funding,

(WACSOF)		Governance
Women Aid Collective (WACOL)	Abuja	Gender
Young People's Initiative	Calabar	Youth