

Civil Society and the 2019 General Election in Nigeria

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Abstract

Civil society organizations are a wide range of associations and other organized groups, capable of articulating the interest of their members, molding and constraining state power. The noticeable divisions among the Nigerian civil society groups along the ethnic and regional lines have not helped its democracy advocacy. This has led to disunity and disagreement among the Nigerian CSO practitioners in terms of decision making and unity of purpose. Such inherent divisiveness weakens efficiency and makes the associations vulnerable to penetration by government agents. The theoretical framework that underpins this work is structural functional theory by Herbert Spencer and Robert Merton (1820-1903). The study applies same in the analysis. The paper uses documentary method for data collection and the analysis is based on content analysis approach. The study also relies on the Ex-post facto research design. The paper found that civil society organizations have played vital roles in the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria. Many of these groups such as Campaign for Democracy, Centre for Democracy and Development as well as Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, among others, were instrumental in the restoration of civil rule. The CSOs have also embarked on series of advocacy to mobilize the citizens and encourage them to actively participate in the voter registration exercises that preceded elections in Nigeria which contributed to the credibility of 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections. From the foregoing, the study suggests that if the continuous majority rule process in Nigeria is to be improved upon to enhance national advancement, the civil society organizations need to reposition and revive their ideological grounds.

Key Words: Civil Society, Elections, Democratization, Voters Participation

Introduction

Civil Society Organizations have become dynamic non-state operators of fair administration, burdened with the multifaceted duties of giving social welfare, monetary strengthening, compassionate administrations, political support, human capital advancement and financial exercises (Keane 2010, Ikelegbe 2013). Polite civil society is an important factor in creating popularity based administration through the advancement of responsibility, straightforwardness, rule of law, abbreviation of human rights misuses, and industrialist abuse.

It is known as the third part since it fills in as a lively social delegate between the state, business and family. Civil Society in Africa, and Nigeria specifically, is an ongoing marvel that portrays the ongoing power of neoliberal majority rule foundation (Harbeson, 2014). As indicated by Ikelegbe, Civil Society gives the oil that greases up the connection between the administration, business outfits and the individuals. He opines that developing majority rule governments particularly in Africa and Nigeria cannot be combined or continued without a virile and dynamic Civil Society (Ikelegbe, 2007).

Similarly, Diamond (1992) and Aiyede (2003) aver that a popular government is about compelling an effective portrayal and conveyance of the profits of good administration to the majority. Civil Society is, therefore, the sine-qua-non to equitable administration, which is tied to extending and upholding for monetary openings, rule of law, freedom of the press, halting ethno-religious viciousness, arrangement of fundamental infrastructural development. In view of the fact that the state speaks to the enthusiasm of the decision-making class, whose intrigue is to interminably control state power and apparatus of government at all cost, the enthusiasm of the individuals, particularly in rising vote-based systems in Africa, will be ignored (Bayart 1980, Ikelegbe 2007, Hearn 2017). Combined with this is the destitution of majority rule government in Africa, which is shown in the rising profiles of neediness, tyranny, human rights manhandles, hunger, uncertainty, endemic defilement and

pay off, ecological corruption, maladies, absence of education, sexual orientation savagery are being worked on (Abutudu, 2015).

In Nigeria, CSOs support in political decisions of the executives cannot be undermined. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) perceives that CSOs, as key partners, have assumed instrumental jobs in the political processes. The help from CSOs fortified the Commission's non-fanatic status and strengthened the purpose to make a level playing field for all ideological groups and contenders in the political system.

The dynamic cooperation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) has been recognized as a huge component in extending and uniting majority rule government around the world. CSOs have applied political weight for change, growing the domain of residents' support in the political procedure and expanding straightforwardness and responsibility in government. Again, CSOs have effectively upheld procedures and foundations of political and appointive changes, specifically, in growing comprehensiveness of the constituent procedure and guaranteeing a noteworthy respectability.

The Civil Society Organizations advocate for electoral reforms, media freedom, citizens participation; watch and report improvements in the political procedures. It is in acknowledgment of the tremendous commitments of CSO in developing the election process and the desires for joint efforts towards 2019 General Elections that INEC-CSOs strategic dialogue was imperative to have their contributions to encourage more prominent residents' interest through jumpers' projects and exercises.

The objectives of this paper are:

1. To examine the role civil society played to enforce democratization and improve the conduct of 2019 general elections in Nigeria,
2. To determine the challenges faced by civil society in the conduct of 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Civil Society

Civil society as a sociological term does not agree with a restraint definition. Researchers and logicians have utilized the term common society in various settings to mean diverse things (CIVICUS 2007). In any case, effort is made give a working definition in this paper.

In the traditional time, the term civil society was used to mean a system that was resolved to verify the standard of law for the benefit of all. It also involves the arrangement of fundamental rights, open security, instruction for all, and essential foundation like streets, power, pipe borne water, emergency clinics among others. Hence, common society was seen as a decent society where law based profits are conveyed to the masses. Common society is not the same thing as society.

Civil society as indicated by Chukwuma, (2005) is characterized with a lot of establishments, association and conduct arranged between the state, business world and family. These incorporate non-legislative association, private intentional association, individuals' associations, metro association, network based association, social, sexual orientation, strict, and social associations. Comparatively, Ikelegbe (2013) characterized civil society as the associational existence of residents portrayed by regular interests, common and public purposes, and willful aggregate independent activities. It stretches to incorporate each one of those affiliations that empowers residents to take an interest intentionally, uninhibitedly and straightforwardly inside the open domain, and work and capacity autonomous of and outside state and corporate powers however, relating with them. Civil society go about as a cushion against the intensity of the focal government and in that limit urges people to pursue their own courses unafraid of terrorizing from the focal government.

Furthermore, civil society is also seen as a field outside the family, the state and the market where individuals partner to propel normal premium. The quintessence of civil society has advanced the enthusiasm of a gathering

of individuals with a typical financial, political or social enthusiasm with the goal of not acquiring political power or making benefits but, to give and propel the course of good administration and basic needs of the society (Ghaus-Pasha 2014).

As indicated by Uwan and Yearoo (2009), civil society is characterized with the arrangement of establishments and associations that interface between the state, business world and the family. They further contend that common society is the field of un-constrained aggregate activities around shared intrigue and values. In principle, the establishments are unique in relation to the state, business and family world. However, the limit between the state, family, showcases that civil society are frequently mind boggling, obscured. They recognized common society to incorporate Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs), individuals' associations, network based associations (CBOs), city clubs, and worker's guilds.

Civil society along these lines is interpreted in this paper as meaning the interface between the government and the people. It gives the fundamental social oils that interface between the legislature and the residents particularly in the advancement of effective electoral process.

Elections

Robert (2011) views election as a formal group decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th Century. Elections may fill offices in the legislature, sometimes in the executive and judiciary, and for regional and local government. This process is also used in many other private and business organizations, from clubs to voluntary associations and corporations.

Democratization

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

According to Fadakinte (2013), democracy is a form of government by which citizens, through free and open institutional arrangements are empowered to choose and remove leaders in a competitive struggle for peoples vote. Diamond (2015) avers that Liberal Democratization is an effective transition to democracy and is a representative kind of governance in which qualified adult members of a given society elect their representatives through a periodic free and fair election. Democracy has recently become one of the fastest growing forms of government because of its ineluctable drive towards human freedom. It entrenches unlimited freedom and rule of law.

Theoretical Framework

This study relies on the propositions of structural functional theory. The Structural functional theory, or functionalism, is a framework that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability (Macion, 2012). It looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms (Talcott, 1970).

Functionalism considers both social structure and social functions. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. The structural-functional approach is a perspective in sociology that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. The theory further asserts that our lives are guided by social

structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behavior. Social structures give shape to our lives - for example, in families, the community, and through religious organizations. Certain rituals, such as a handshake or complex religious ceremonies, give structure to our everyday lives. Each social structure has social functions, or consequences for the operation of society as a whole.

A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole. In the most basic terms, it simply emphasizes "the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system". For Talcott Parsons, "structural-functionalism" came to describe a particular stage in the methodological development of social science, rather than a specific school of thought.

Structural-functional theory is relevant in studying electoral management bodies in Nigeria. This is because the electoral process is a complex process, which does not only take place in a complex environment, but also requires a specialized body with defined functions. Thus, it provides basis for understanding the nature and structure of electoral bodies, such as INEC and their functions, with a view to appraising its performance as an institutional structure responsible for conducting credible elections into various offices in Nigeria. This is very crucial since the discharge of its functions has implications for the solidarity and stability in the state.

Some of the Propositions of Structural Functionalism are:

People have social capital, and greater amounts of social capital translate into benefits. Well integrated members of an institution (those with substantial social capital) will remain members of the institution in order to maximize the potential of their social capital. Schepens found support for this proposition by examining religious switching; less than 5% of church members in the Netherlands shift their church associations during their lifetime, conserving and maximizing their social capital.

The society is cohesive if it consists of various intermediate groups which share the same norms. This assumption leads to another proposition.

The higher the level of integration between these intermediate groups, the more cohesive society will be as a whole. The absence of social cohesion can result in greater violence toward others and one's self.

Structural-functional theory is relevant in studying civil society, elections and democratization in Nigeria. This is because the electoral process is a complex process, which does not only take place in a complex environment, but also requires a specialized body with defined functions. Thus, it provides basis for understanding the nature and structure of electoral bodies, such as INEC and their functions, with a view to appraising its performance as an institutional structure responsible for conducting credible elections into various offices in a country of capitalists and few elites who strive to retain state power as well as the role of civil society in enthroning democracy in a dire state such as Nigeria. This is very crucial since the discharge of its functions has implications for the solidarity and stability in the state.

The Role of Civil Society in Enforcement of Democracy and Improvement of the Conduct of 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

During the 2019 General Elections, the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, after a very careful review of the electoral environment, agreed that many factors posed risks to credible elections in 2019 and that the minimum standards required to neutralize/mitigate those risks are as follows:

Non Partisan Security Agencies

There are three key security offices engaged with decisions in Nigeria the Nigerian Military, the Nigeria Police and the Department of State Services (DSS). As of late, concerns have kept on mounting about partisanship and politicization in the inclusion of the Military, DSS and Police in decisions (Aiyede, 2019).

With past encounters and reports, there are profound fears that the contribution of the military, DSS and police in elections is full of the informal job of helping the triumph of the incumbent officeholders by terrorizing voters, and at times, being the masterminds of brutality of the electorate. The Electoral Act 2010 (as altered in 2015) gives in Section 29 (3) as follows:

Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law and for purposes of securing the vote, the Commission shall be responsible for requesting for the deployment of relevant security personnel necessary for elections or registration of voters and shall assign them in the manner determined by the Commission in consultation with the relevant security agencies, provided that the Commission shall only request for the deployment of the Nigerian Armed Forces only for the purpose of securing the distribution and delivery of election materials and protection of election officials.

The implication of this arrangement of the Electoral Act is that security organizations ought not to send for political decision, security or obligations except if mentioned by INEC. It is the obligation of INEC to demonstrate the amount of important security workforce needed for elections. Without doubt, section 29(3) of the Electoral Act 2015 is unequivocal in expressing that the Nigerian Army must not be used for elections aside from securing election materials and election authorities, as might be directed by INEC. It implies that the practice by the Armed Forces of mounting checkpoints and barricades during elections might be illicit and should be stopped. INEC should build up a format for the execution of section 29(3) of the Electoral Act 2015 on the organization of security for the elections.

Voter Registration Integrity

Reports indicated inclusion of under-aged voters on the voters' register, a register which was utilized in the 2015 elections. There have also been reports of filling the Voters' Register with invented names. It hence, behooves on INEC to guarantee that the voter register contains only eligible voters who satisfy the prerequisites as set out in segment 12 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended in 2015). Situational Room in this way illustrated the accompanying least desires and requests from INEC with respect to the 2019 voters register:

Thorough review of the voter registers to expel various enrollments, under aged and dead voters in a joint effort with the National Population Commission to guarantee arrangement between political election information and statistic information. Strict adherence to Electoral Act rules and courses of events for posting the voter register so as to give voters time to check. Audit of the PVC assortment procedure and rates the nation over to guarantee the believability of the political decision results are not defaced by 100% assortment rates in any state. Auditable data on un-gathered PVCs in each condition of the alliance and convention for capacity and security of these cards

Card Reader Failure during Elections

INEC has resolved that episode structures will never again be utilized during decisions and that if a card reader does not peruse a unique finger impression/card, the thumbprint of the individual will be caught against the individual's name in a physical register and their telephone contact taken. This will be upon understanding by partners at the surveying unit, including the INEC Presiding Officer. Civil Society Situation Room made demands on INEC with respect to Card Reader disappointment and the utilization of the voter register: INEC will generally communicate this adjustment in method to voters before Election Day and guarantee that INEC staff and election observers know about the alternatives. INEC submits that a 5% card reader disappointment at any surveying unit will trigger an exceptional review of the outcomes at that PU.

Transparent Results Collation

Reports following elections in Nigeria have shown that the collation process is a hotspot for rigging of elections (Keane, 2019). Therefore, Situation Room has the following minimum expectations and demands from INEC regarding the collation of results:

- J INEC will publish the collation process and ensure that accredited observers and party agents have unfettered access to collations from the Ward up to the national collation centre level.
- J INEC should commit to publishing the PU results from the elections no less than 15 days after the election. Election results are disaggregated showing numbers from each ward to ensure easy comparison by observers.
- J Security agents do not play any active role in the collation process except to provide security to property and electoral officials.
- J INEC will publicly announce and publish the rules and guidelines applicable for the determination of re-runs in any polling unit during the general elections.

Efficient and Accountable Election Administration

Civil Society had the following minimum expectations from INEC on the general administration of the election:

- J The design of the ballot paper will exclude parties without candidates.
- J INEC will take measures to exclude or minimize the influence of state governors in the ad-hoc staffing required for the elections and ensure that ad-hoc staff gets adequate provisions before the elections to protect them from inducement.
- J INEC will share and publish and plans for the voting of IDPs around the country publicly as well as security agencies to ensure access, security and legitimacy of the process.
- J INEC will undertake a nationwide campaign about vote-buying, under-aged voting and security agencies brief about their role in the polling unit will include the handling of this criminal offense in a way that prevents under-aged voting and protects the polling unit staff from intimidation and violence.
- J INEC will take steps to promote inclusivity in the elections and ensure eligible voters are not disenfranchised by virtue of disability (Mercy, 2019).

Political Parties

Political Parties are major stakeholders in the electoral process and participate in different elections. Situation Room outlined the following expectations from political parties that participated in the different levels of the 2019 General Elections (Lee, 2019).

1. Respect the laws and rules of elections as stipulated in the Constitution and Electoral Act. Carry out their campaigns devoid of hate, mudslinging and violence.
2. Take part in Election Day activities without perpetrating electoral fraud, malpractice, rigging or vote buying.
3. Train and deploy polling agents to represent their political parties at every stage of the elections.
4. Commit to respecting the outcome of elections.

Restrictions on Opposition Campaigns

Civil Society has the following minimum expectations and demands from incumbent state governments and the Federal government and its agents:

- J Campaigns and the movement of candidates and party officials will not be unfairly restricted with denials to use public facilities such as airports; last minute curfews and any similar attempt to disadvantage candidates.
- J State institutions will not be used nor be involved in the intimidation and/ or harassment of candidates such as the arbitrary withdrawal of security personnel for elected officials.
- J Candidates and officials of opposition parties will be charged on spurious and/or suspiciously timed criminal and/or civil charges in the weeks leading to the elections

Violence Mitigation and Electoral Accountability

Violence has been a feature of Nigerian elections (pre, during and post) for decades and Nigeria has been caught in a cycle of state and private sponsored violence for years. Although ethnicity and religion should not play a

key role as it did with the 2015 elections there is still a sense that the 2019 elections was violent due to the high stakes placed on winning elections in Nigeria (Ndegwa, 2019). (Knowing the expected triggers for violence including hate speech, incitement, perception of bias by INEC and other stakeholders involved in managing elections, the minimum Situation Room expected from INEC was the security agents (including the Office of the National Security Adviser, and the Department of State Services), incumbent executives across the country and political party officials is as follows:

1. A mapping out of the hot spots for elections with risk mitigating plans involving communities, traditional and religious influencers, CSOs and the international community.
2. INEC, the National Broadcasting Committee (NBC) and state and federal prosecutors will have zero tolerance for hate speech, inflammatory comments and other conducts capable of triggering violence. INEC will publicly warn parties with offending candidates and maintain a point list to sanction erring parties; the NBC will withdraw ads and sanction television and radio broadcasters and prosecutors will file charges as applicable under the penal, criminal codes and other applicable laws.
3. The Media as a whole should avoid inflaming emotions over controversial issues, promote fact-checking before stories are released and the utilization of impartial and dispassionate reporting, take steps to educate the public against political violence and on voting procedure as provided by INEC.
4. Strict enforcement of electoral offences and penal laws as it relates to elections by relevant key enforcement agencies.

Civil Society and Challenges of 2019 General Elections

Voter concealment, low voter turnout were some of the difficulties that portrayed Nigeria's 2019 general elections. The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room as indicated by its report discharged on Tuesday in Abuja expressed that, the gathering blamed the choice by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to defer the political decision a couple of hours to the beginning of the surveys. It detailed that the deferment compounded voter lack of care in the nation.

The association said the deferral didn't just uncover INEC as poorly arranged for the surveys yet that it likewise contracted the across the country energy that had developed for the elections. "It made it unimaginable for some electorate who had ventured out before to cast a ballot in their voting public to take a subsequent excursion, exacerbating voter lack of care. According to the political decision checking gathering, in spite of the deferment and affirmation of progress by INEC, calculated and operational difficulties still undermined the discretionary procedure. There were huge deferrals to the beginning of casting a ballot because of the difficulties in sending INEC authorities and materials, and numerous situations where materials provided to surveying units were fragmented, seen in certain quarters as purposeful demonstrations of voter concealment (Uwen, 2019). The gathering additionally said reports got by observing groups the nation over demonstrated that political election commenced as late as 11 a.m. the nation over, making space for appointive acts of neglect. INEC materials did not arrive at a critical number of surveying stations the nation over until 11 a.m as casting a ballot likewise finished late and damaged the lead of the elections (Vasseh, 2019).

The resemblance of results was another significant shortcoming of Nigerian elections, stayed a worry all through the elections, with political election watchers detailing impedance with the procedure, particularly by ideological groups and security offices as a rule, with the dynamic support of INEC authorities.

The Role of Civil Society in Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

One may wonder why civil society organizations are so critical and vital to the issue of majority rule government democracy. The obvious answer to this inquiry is the progress between direct majority rules system and agent popular government that has left a gigantic hole among residents and their administrations, the developing populace of the entire world and resultant multifaceted nature of legislative exercises would likewise be extra factor. Accordingly, an electorate moves his faithfulness and trust for the administration he chooses. Consequently, one of the means accessible to electorates to check the excesses of elected officials is through

electioneering process, which is occasional in every four years. The following are some particular models with regards to the exercises of unmistakable common society associations towards advancing and guaranteeing political advancement in Nigeria.

1. Ensuring Credible Electoral Process: From 1999-2007 elections were faced with certain provoking issues that made a few Nigerians to lose trust in the appointive procedure as a result of inconsistencies that is related with the discretionary procedure. For instance, 2007 political decision was viewed as the most defective political election in Nigeria discretionary procedure (International Crises Group 2007, Awopeju, 2011, cited by Habu, 2015). Indeed, even the then president, (late Umaru Musa Yar'adua) conceded the inadequacies of the political decision and to resolve these issues, the president introduced Justice Uwais Electoral Reform Committee on 28 August, 2007. CSOs submitted tones of memoranda to the ERC offering proposals on how Nigeria can break the chain of her electioneering challenges. Without doubt, a good number of members from ERC were drawn from civil society. They helped in breaking down the difficulties of the Nigeria past elections (Ojo, 2011 cited in Omode and Bakare, 2014).

The commitments of CSOs in electioneering exercises cannot be overemphasized. They mapped out modalities on how to urge electorates to effectively participate in voter's enlistment practice before the election proper. Meeting under the umbrella of Domestic Election Observation Groups which incorporates Transition Monitory Group, Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria, Labour Monitory Team, Women Environmental Program, Center for Democracy and Development, Civil Liberties Organization, Alliance for Credible Elections, Electoral Reform Network and so forth. They conveyed around 50,000 prepared political decision monitory groups all through the nation during the 2007 general election (Akinboye and Oloruntoba, 2007 cited in Omode and Bakare, 2014). In line with the foregoing, civil society associations undertook voters' awareness exercises in guaranteeing valid political decision in 2011 and 2015 general election.

2. Guarding Against Democratic Threats: Ojo (2011) as cited in Odeh (2012), expresses that ex-President Obasanjo's party had endeavored to manoeuvre the Nigerian constitution in 2005/2006, to suit his third term agenda. This was truncated by the pressure from the National Assemblies, civil society groups. For example, the National Civil Society Coalition against Third Term (NACATT) led by late Bamidele Aturu, Peoples Problems and Solutions (PPS). From that point, in 2010, CSOs met people's high expectations in their acknowledgment of the then Vice President Goodluck Jonathan as the Acting President, when late President Musa Yar'Adua was bedridden in a foreign hospital. CSOs, for instance, the Save Nigeria Group and Enough is Enough Group rally held onto the activity and requested for a goal that will give due acknowledgment to VP as acting president. This prompted the reception of the now prevalent 'Doctrine of Necessity' by the National Assembly in March 2010. It should be noted that the CSOs need to cover more grounds in this job. For example, they have not done a lot to control the uncommon debasement among the decision class, which has become an extraordinary risk to the endurance of popular government in Nigeria.

3. Influencing Public Policy: Civil Society Organizations had over the years influenced government policies in various ways such as:

i. **Human Rights-Child Labour and Human Trafficking:** Here, children are compelled to work in order to enhance family wages. This resulted in the increase in the number out of school children and the increase in the level of poverty experienced in the country. CSOs, in their bid to salvaging the situation, joined forces with the state for the establishment of the Child Rights Law. Therefore, CSOs need to move in the direction of accomplishment in the rest of the states. As indicated by an investigation led by CSI (2007) cited in Odeh (2012), CSOs reacted to this through support crusades. The foundation of the National Agency for the Prohibition in Trafficking of Persons (NAPTP) shows some accomplishment by CSOs. Nevertheless, it is unequivocally communicated that state entertainers need to perceive CSOs as accomplices for significant effect in different circles of human right infringements.

ii. **Right to Life and Properties:** Reacting to the spate of bomb impacts by the Boko-Haram Islamic faction and the wanton annihilation of lives and properties in Northern Nigeria lately, Nigerian CSO, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), said the national government's inability to forestall the proceeding with viciousness and increase in loss of lives was a genuine rupture of its global commitments to secure citizenry privileges to life.

iii. **Checking the National Budgeting Process:** According to CSI (2007) cited in Odeh (2012), CSOs have built up the Budget Law and the financial duty to help screen the procedure. They are equally working with the government to create comprehensive expenditure guidelines at the national level. Regardless of these activities, it is still ahead of schedule to assess the adequacy of CSOs in the national planning process, since they have just been dynamic around there since 2003.

iv. **Crusade for Legal Reforms in the National Assembly:** The Freedom of Information Act would have been a mere mirage however for a CSO called Media Rights Agenda, which nearby others, supported a private part bill on the issue at the National Assembly. What's more, the battle by Citizens Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR) and different CSOs is the crusade for another constitution for the nation through the meeting of a sovereign national gathering (SNG).

v. **Guarding Against Unpopular Policies:** Kunle (2012), cited in Odeh (2012) saw that when the Federal Government singularly evacuated endowment on oil or Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), with its chaperon increment in fuel costs and hardships on the residents in January 2012, CSOs, drove by the NLC, prepared Nigerians from different backgrounds for what they tagged as the "mother of all protests". The administration switched the approach to N97.00/liters, for the citizenry, in this way thwarting possible impediments that could endanger the right procedure. In any case, nothing has been done on the issue of the debasement in the oil producing communities.

Advocacy Exercise Conducted by CSOs in Nigeria's 2019 General Elections

In Nigeria, CSO support in election management cannot be over emphasized. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) recognizes that CSOs as key stakeholders have played instrumental roles in the success stories recorded. The support from CSOs strengthened the Commission's non-partisan status and reinforced the resolve to create a level playing field for all political parties and contestants in the political process.

The active participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) has been acknowledged as a very significant element in deepening and consolidating democracy worldwide. CSOs have applied political pressure for reform, expanding the realm of citizens' participation in the political process and increasing transparency and accountability in government. CSOs have also actively supported processes and institutions of political and electoral reforms in particular, and in expanding inclusiveness in the electoral process thereby ensuring a greater degree of integrity (Ibe, 2019). All these have immensely contributed to the organization and conduct of free, fair and credible elections. The table below illustrates the advocacy exercise conducted by CSOs in the conduct of 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Table 1: Advocacy Exercise Conducted by CSOs in Nigeria's 2019 General Election

1	The CSOs provided a veritable interface with INEC, the security agencies and the populace
2	They effectively monitored the voters registration exercise in order to enable the eligible electorate exercise their franchise
3	Effectively monitored the display of voters' register for claims and objections between 6th and 12th November 2018
4	Monitored the clean-up of the register by INEC using the Automated Finger Print Identification System (AFIS)

Source: *Civil Society Situation Room Report, (2019).*

Conclusion and Recommendation

Civil Society Organizations, (CSOs), most likely, have been active forces in the democratization procedure in Africa since the 1980s and 1990s. There is, nonetheless, observable laxity in CSOs activism in recent years. With the interference of military and tyrant administrators in Africa, the level of civil society support and power have significantly dropped, and this repulsive situation has negatively influenced the nature of popularity-based administration in fourth republic of Nigeria (Fukuyama, 2019).

CSO need to wake up from sleep and wear the attire of activism to deal with undemocratic practices in contemporary Nigeria.

From the fore-going, the study suggests that if the majority-rule process in Nigeria is to be improved upon to enhance national advancement, the civil society must reposition and revive their ideological grounds.

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