Process of Democratisation in Botswana: The Role of Civil Society

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Abstract: The objectives this article is to examine the roles of civil society in process of democratization. Civil society is an important part for build up of democracy in developing country. Despite, weak civil society and non-democratic culture is at large degrees, political instability and conflicts are common in Africa, the civil societies with civility and social capital are taking a crucial role for construction and survival of democracy in Botswana. Moreover, civil societies can hold government reforms, confront corruption, advocate respect for human rights, promote and defend democratic processes and institutions. The participation and involvement of women as a civil society organisation can make deeper to democratisation process in existing society. The civil society can assist to bring into being; a more sustainable peace, economic development, government policy and stable government in Botswana. Civil society takes a greater role in governance and consolidating democratic process in Botswana.

Introduction

Civil society has significant role in Democratisation process and governance. Civil society cannot avoid from study of democratisation in any stage. They are important part of political transformations. Democratisation often comes out as a result from various factors of unrest such as protest taken placed by civil society and influences from international community. The process of democratization and political transformation began in southern Europe in mid 1970s; there were falls of right-wing authoritarian regimes. It has expanded towards Latin America and parts of Asia in 1980s. Again, this movement widely move on Africa countries in 1990s. The political system has transformed from traditional and strong authoritarianism to an organized form. Political liberalization slightly took placed in developing countries. Civil society groups are coming up with political transitions in this region. They got strong influenced from international communities to bring up civilian and political rights. The growing up of civil society, involving organisations independent is seen as an important ingredient in democratisation process.

Civil Society is also considered to be an anchor of democracy. Civil Society is generally used as a descriptive concept to assess the balance between the state authority and civil organized
groups. The concept of civil society as noted is distinct from the state. It can be said to name the space of uncoerced human association and also set of relational networks-formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology-that fills this space. The attributes of the civil society are civilian, political rights and associational autonomy. Civil society organizations and political parties are also involved in electoral process; the functioning of the legislature; the promotion and protection of human rights; anticorruption strategies; decentralization; and local governance system and governance in crisis and post–crisis situations (Shabbir Cheema 2005).

One of often-raised questions concerning democratization and democratic consolidation is whether political leaders or the public (civil societies) make consolidate democracy. The role of civil society in creation of democracy has emphasized in many studies. Likewise for democratic consolidation, this, as one study suggests, depends on the emergence of a unified civil societies that commits itself to democratic rule. It happened in third world countries that one cannot overlook the contribution of the public masses to democratization and democratic consolidation. In these countries, without the participation of the masses or civil society, democratisation should be a dream. Although their role was only supportive, it lent popular weight to the democratic transition and helped deepen democracy. As these countries now consolidate their democracy, it is interesting to note to what extent civil society has contributed to the process.

**Civil Society**

The civil society can be defined as organizational life that is voluntary, self- generating, self supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It consists of a vast array of organization, both formal and informal: interest groups, cultural and religious organizations, civil and development associations, issue-oriented movements, the mass media, research and educational institutions, and similar organizations. The difference between these groups and other groups is that they are concerned with and act in the public realm, relate to the state, and encompass and respect pluralism and diversity.

Civil society consists of individuals from different groups who are seeking change within a society. Through organizing themselves in various forms of protests they demand their rights. Civil society has proved to be powerful when a few societies have transformed from non-democratic into the democracies. Civil society, in the context of promoting democracy, can be in three ways.
“First is to explore the role of civil society role that plays a democratic consolidating, the reason being that even though frequently discussed in the literature on democratic consolidation, the role civil society remains unclear. Second is the dynamics between civil society and other factors that shape democracy. Here the reason is the importance of questioning the extent to which unilinear models of explanation are helpful. Third is the significance of ‘civil’ in society, the point being that the concept inevitably implies something normative and the need, therefore, to identify attributes. Not all the associations are necessarily source for the growth of democratic values. Only those that in one way or another foster ‘civic’ values may have effects” Caroline Boussard (2002).

Civil society is a keystone for democratic governance. It can act as a galvanizing force for positive social change. Civil society organizations represent for raise of different voices, perspective, and values in a pluralistic society. A vibrant and active civil society is a critical element in human development, since it is the part of society that connects with individual, public realm and state. Civil society can provide to checks and balance on government power, monitor social abuses, and offer opportunities for people to develop their capacities Shabbir Cheema (2005). Today, there is a growing dichotomy between domestic and international governance in; crisis and post crisis situation. In this sense, they are cross cutting and are, therefore, in examined politics in sense that civil society is growing on a national level. Meanwhile, it is clarifying its role through global issues such as environment, debt, human rights, crisis, and so on.

Civil society is as ‘that texture of our lives with others which does not need governments to sustain it because it is created by grass-root initiatives’ Dahrendorg, Ralf (1997). Central feature is association, which provides the necessary element of cohesion in civil society. The market (in the economic realm) and the public (in the political realm) are where the associations of civil society interact. Civil societies provide the deep structures where the constitution of liberty finds its anchor.

Civil society, as defined before, is the space of uncoerced human association and also set of relational networks that fill this space. It enters explanations of democratization in terms of its relationships with state and class divisions. Democratization being stimulated by the growth and vitality of civil society is also a constant theme in other contexts. Democratization in parts of Africa, Asia and the former eastern Europe and Soviet Union has been stimulated by the development of a proliferation of autonomous groups and social movements—students, women, trade unions, church groups, consumers, the environmentally concerned, tribals, farmers, lawyers and other professionals, and so on. Such growth of civil society frequently
involves the mobilization of independent media which can bring pressure to bear on authoritarian states.

It is drawing attention that a dense civil society may not necessarily pro-democratic. It is also possible that the civil society group can be hostile to democracy. However, civil society is bridge among state and society, among elite and non-elite. When an urban working class is weak, civil society provides a convenient means for maintaining between the authority of dominant classes and minority.

When democracy is read with the qualifying word liberal, two broad attributes of the state, and two broad aspects of civil society are considered to be its hallmarks. The attributes of the state are accountable to government and free/fair elections. The attributes of the civil society are civil/political rights and associational autonomy. These attributes are accepted to be the points of differences between liberal democracy and other types of political systems. A liberal democracy is a type of political regime in which binding rules and political decisions are made not by the entire community but by representatives accountable to the community.

**Civil society in Botswana**

In Africa, civil society organisations are relatively weak in terms of constituting an autonomous base for influencing public policy and deliberate democratic pressure in government. In Botswana, civil society organisations also have similar character with other African countries. However, the organisations of civil society are developing in Botswana to compare with others. The civil society in Botswana consists of a mixture of forces promoting and undermining the organizational structure of groups. This entire organization group is uncertainty due to lack of government policy toward civil society organisation.

In beginning, civil society is weak and it has alternatively been characterized as inactive with minimal influence on public policy. Civil society in Botswana can be best described as moving from intermittent actively to institutionalized structure. Development is more advanced in groups enjoying a geographic concentration of membership, permanent staff, regular circulation of leadership, close association with similar organizations in neighbouring states and minimal government regulation John D. Patrick P. Molutsi, Gloria Somolekae (1996).
Civil Society towards consolidation of democracy

Civil society organisation in Mali has taken many steps to influence to government for making policy. Checking Corruption and Abuses of Power, Stimulating Political Participation, Citizenship and Leadership Education, Promoting Political Democratic Culture, Free flow of information, Promoting economic reform, Coalition and Consensus Building.

Despite the weaknesses of civil society in Botswana, civil society has involved actively on process of citizen control over government’s policy making. When political parties largely focused on ethnic concerns, civil society groups have focussed a critical force. They are in promoting debate on issues of national agenda. In Botswana's case, social groups are appearing in a number of cases to teach the politicians and civil servants, the importance of debating on policy issues in public John D. Patrick P. Molutsi, Gloria Somolekae (1996). To be sure, they must go further and induce their members to see group interests as more important than ethnic concerns in elections, thus undermining the current ethnic basis of Botswana's party system. This will require that group leaders gain increasing control over the agenda setting process in partisan politics relative to that now enjoyed by party leaders.

Social groups can break down the isolation of bureaucratic policy makers from the public. The more effective groups in Botswana have actually begun to take policy research and analysis for new government programs outside of the bureaucracy. This allows groups which are going to be affected by a program or law to formulate the choices involved. With regard to implementation of government policies, civil society groups allow members added control over the delivery of government services in some cases. Most interesting is the connection with foreign aid. By becoming a channel for foreign aid contributions, civil society groups give international actors an opportunity to facilitate autonomous social organizations in either opposing or supporting government policies John D. Patrick P. Molutsi, Gloria Somolekae (1996). At a minimum, this means foreign aid can help create a demonstration effect regarding the role of civil society groups in a democracy.

Civil society in Botswana had grown and developed such that by the end of 1999, consisted of approximately 150 indigenous NGOs, around 50 communities based organizations, some 23 trade unions, and a handful of business associations Maundeni, Dorothy Mpabanga, Adam Mfundisi, David Sebudubudu (2007). Generally the civil society organizations emerged in the 1980s, the private media in Botswana has generally played its watchdog role satisfactorily, and
investigative journalism has in the past exposed corruption in government, mismanagement, human rights abuses and other miscarriages of justice.

The involvement of organized civil society in the democratization process in Botswana is emerging in crucial ways that ‘exit’, or disengaging from the formal sector, has not been an option for the non-partisan organized civic organizations. Engaging the state in a non-partisan manner has been a characteristic of all these organizations. All of them have actively promoted the interests of their constituencies and have engaged the state in order to achieve their goals of social development and political participation.

Civil Society (NGOs) in Policy Making

The NGOs are imposed in categorical imperatives for measuring the strength of civil society; it reviews the perceptions of the chief executives of civic organizations and their strategies for influencing public policy. The important information is revealed by focusing on their perception of the role of local NGOs, trade unions and human rights organizations in the Botswana setting dominated by the developmental state Maundeni (2004). There are certain decisions that only civic organizations can make, thus, helping the government to overcome problems or continue policies that would benefit the nation.

Their common perception is that they help in the definition of the national interest, in the loosening up of the dominance of the developmental state over the policy process, and in compelling policies to be more accessible to those that they would otherwise not reach. The NGOs leaders perceive themselves as providing a moralizing voice that broadens governmental definition of the national interest, providing alternative policy frameworks, and providing restricted pressures that encourage government to implement policies that its officials have little or no interest in pursuing Maundeni (2004). So the civil societies have given the pressure to the government indirectly.

There are many civil society organizations in Botswana that play a crucial role in democratic development. Civil society organisations have participated in less numbers among African nations. Even on, Botswana has enough evidence on civil society for greater role in influences on governance development. Therefore Botswana is one of special case among African nation toward successful working. This cannot be comparable with other continents. Therefore,
participations of civil organizations in democratisation process in Botswana are less to compare with any other outside non African nations.

However, the involvements of such civil society organizations are weak but they have greater role for social development. They played an important role for construction of Botswana society. Among the organizations that can assist to well function in Botswana are Emang Basadi, Ditshwanelo, Botswana National Youth Council, trade unions and the Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organizations Maundeni, Dorothy Mpabanga, Adam Mfundisi, David Sebudubudu (2007). Such civil society organizations are engaging actively on promoting interest of the people. In following sections can discuss the importance of civil society organizations in democratic consolidation.

**Media**

The media has been a backbone to democratization. It provides a forum for public debate of issues and the necessary checks and balances on the activities of the government of the day. The media had delivered all the information regarding the society, the relation between state and society. It is obvious that, the press cannot effectively carry out these functions if it is not free to do so.

The media in Botswana gets actively involved after the mid 1980s, the private media in Botswana did not play any significant role. The Botswana Guardian, 1983, Mmegi Wa Dikgang, in 1984 and the Gazette in 1985, others include the Midweek Sun, The Voice which are latest to appear in the Botswana media scene Somolekae (1998). The constitution of Botswana provides no explicit protection for freedom of the press. The freedom of the press in Botswana is embraced under the freedom of expression basically the freedom of expression relates to the right to hold questions, the right to be informed, the right to inform or to communicate interference Article 12(2) of the constitution also provides limitations to these freedoms. These include interests of defense, public safety, public order, public morality, or public health, etc. Somolekae (1998). So, the Botswana press has limitations from the Constitution of the land.

Despite huge limitations, they are only the bridge between state and society. Media provide a platform for political participation and accountability of institutions. It keeps political debates alive in a free, independent and critical manner between political parties and the electorate.
Moreover, they are unable to utilize the private media due to unavailability of resources. The journalist has claimed openly, any issues coming from time to time. They complained about the National Security Act, Police Act, and The Presidential Privileges Act. And other problems are related to the internal problems of the media itself Somolekae (1998). These have been identified as the crucial role and response of the media on development of society.

Therefore democratization process and media are inseparable in existing system. Despite many limitations of media in African nations, Botswana is one well performance of media. Liberty of media has provided by the state. Role of media in social development is effective both rural and urban areas of Botswana.

**Women’s NGOs**

Among the groups that the state initially excluded and labeled are women’s groups. There are basically two kinds of these groups in Botswana, the veteran old organizations such as the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), or Botswana Council of Women Somolekae (1998). These have been dealing with purely welfare matters for decades and they enjoyed a good relationship with the state.

During the mid 1980s, radical women’s groups entered the political scene. Examples here included Emang Basadi, and Metlaetsile. From the onset, these organizations set out to challenge the state on policy issues. Emang Basadi was formed in 1984 to pressure the government to repeal all legislations which were discriminatory against women. At first, the reception was bad. Overtime, Emang Basadi together with other NGOs, began to network and push as a united front. When not much progress was being made, the groups under the leadership of Emang Basadi switched focus to a political agenda. The organization came up with a political education project to sensitize women about their political rights, encouraging them to vote for candidates who are committed to addressing the issues and concerns of women. This strategy seems to have worked.

Summing up what they considered to be gains in the 1994 elections, a newspaper editorial stated as follows: “There are 4 women in parliament, compared with 40 men, that is roughly 9 percent. In the last parliament there were two women against 38 men, and that was about 5 percent of the seats in the legislative body. On the face of it, the women’s gains in parliament are modest, but in percentage terms the representation has increased by almost 100 percent. Not
bad for an institution whose majority of members held women in contempt a mere five years ago. What is even more important is that the attitudes of decision-makers towards women are changing. In just 18 months women have succeeded in convincing their male counterparts that they have an equal right to our national heritage” Somolekae (1998).

**Trade Unions**

Trade unions are one of the organized associations that have been internationally recognized as a civil society. They are ‘membership’ organizations that partly depend on membership dues to finance their activities. The most significant unionized sector has proved to be the teaching profession. The teachers unions, the Botswana Teachers Union (BTU) with 11 000 members, the Botswana Federation of Secondary Teachers (BOFSETE) with 3 000 members and the Botswana Primary Teachers association (BOPRITA) have flourished. While BOFSETE and BOPRITA represent the interests of secondary and primary teachers, respectively, BTU represents those of primary, secondary and tertiary teachers. The teaching establishment stands at 22 000 Maundeni (ed.) (2005). This is a large constituency deserving two or three unions.

These organizations involved putting pressure on the policy of the government of Botswana. One of the instances of their active involvement was against the school categorization system. The replacement of the management of central employer for all teachers was against the rights of the teachers. This management has categorized the student in some categories and the head teachers are also not transferable between different categories of schools. The different categories of schools even determined the pay rates for the head teachers.

The BTU was opposed to a categorization system that brought divisions into the teaching fraternity. These were some of the central democratization issues that the teaching unions were sponsoring Maundeni (ed.) (2005). But it should be emphasized that all the teaching unions were able to maintain their non-partisan approach, although they also failed to form an umbrella body. The need for an umbrella body is evidenced by BOFSETE which has now joined BOCONGO. The BTU members help to improve the rights of the civil organizations and help them to participate with a strong in the national policy process and development of democratization.
Ditshwanelo

Ditshwanelo is a non-partisan and non-membership NGO that focuses on the protection of human rights. It does not rely on a large base of human rights activists in the manner that trade unions do with employees and has no membership to fund its activities. It is a small service NGO that seeks to protect the marginalized and the poor. This organization has been trying to bring up the weaker section of the society.

It distances itself from political parties and does not take any government funding even if it could be offered. It is a small and seriously under-resourced NGO that finds it extremely difficult to raise funds locally, as the local business community always wants to know the position of government on a particular issue before donating funds. But Ditshwanelo has played a central role in the democratization process in Botswana.

One of Ditshwanelo’s biggest constituencies, and a central focus of the organization, has been the marginalized community of the Basarwa, or San, who faced eviction and forced removals from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR), their ancestral lands Maundeni (ed.) (2005). Ditshwanelo was also concerned about the human rights violations of the Basarwa in other areas as well as this organization campaigns on the death penalty.

Ditshwanelo has been calling the attention of public through the press. It also emphasized to the people living with HIV/AIDS and this has presented an additional constituency for it to work for and protect. Ditshwanelo organization has concerns that the Botswana government is still not committed to the protection of human rights. ‘Ditshwanelo has not succeeded in bringing a different orientation in the thinking of government on issues of human rights. But this organization is always trying to move up the society, attracting the international organization and taking a crucial role in democratization of Botswana.

Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organizations

It is an organization which was formed by many NGOs organizations in 1995. The mother body came to be known as the Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organizations (BOCONGO) Maundeni (ed.) (2005). It is a non-partisan council, consisting of over 70 NGOs from various fields, such as youth, human rights, health, trade, environment, publishing and so
on. BOCONGO’s goals are to assist member NGOs through capacity building, networking and information dissemination, and policy advocacy Maundeni (ed.) (2005).

However, BOCONGO has no political empowerment programmes and does not mobilize resources for purposes of influencing voting in the general elections. This may be explained by the fact that the Botswana government funds half the salaries of BOCONGO’s secretariat and donors such as the African Development Foundation, fund specific projects.

**Conclusion**

From above discussion, it can come to conclusion that civil society has taken a crucial role for democratisation. Number of Civil society organizations has emerged in 1990s in Botswana. Civil society in Botswana is relatively weak till 1990s. However, they are coming up in early 1990s. Their stand toward democratisation is in good positioned and taken pivotal role in process of democratic consolidation. Among the organisations; women NGO Ditshwanelo is also shared good contribution. Civil society organizations as non-partisan and non-membership NGO focuses on protection of human rights, Trade Union etc. The NGOs established linkages with foreign countries. This makes more effective to concern issues of civilian rights, women right, all issues other than political parties. The NGOs are becoming a channel for foreign aid contributions. It gives international actors an opportunity to facilitate autonomous social organizations in either opposing or supporting government policies.

It needs autonomous and able to resist manipulation by the state and business interests over people. A strong and reliable civil society can represent the interests of people and the community. Civil society can serve to check on used of power by the state. There are signs of an increasing strength and assertiveness in civil society in the democracies. It will be stronger, more autonomous and play a meaningful role for democratic consolidation in the future. Civil-society organizations will be more active in stimulating the political awareness of the mass public and encouraging their political participation to protect their own interests.

Through these efforts, governments can become more accountable and responsive to the people’s needs, and the elites and the mass public will be more committed to democracy. Hence, democratic consolidation will be achieved. The governments in Asian democracies can accelerate the development of civil society. Instead of using a corporatist model to co-opt civil society and restrict its autonomy, states can provide assistance to civil-society organizations to
perform their functions more effectively. This assistance should be in form of financial support and training of personnel. In addition, civil society’s autonomy should not be violated. The governments should not be afraid of free civil society since it encourages governments to be more honest, accountable, transparent and responsive to the public demands, which will win the support of the people and strengthen their legitimacy.

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