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PUBLIC POLICY, INTEREST GROUPS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The centrality of public policy in the life of people cannot be overstated. It is the instrument through which governments achieve their objectives and goals for the citizenry. Yet, effective public policy is a product of a complex and dynamic process, drawing efforts and contributions from different groups and agencies. One of these agencies are interest groups. They do not only exert influence on government policies in their members' interests, they help in promoting effective public policy for sustainable national development. For many years under military rule in Nigeria, their activities were restricted. However, under civil rule, it would seem their activities in the policy process and by implication national development could be enhanced. The paper, with the aid of the political participation theory argued that the goal of sustainable national development under democratic rule, can only be achieved if interest groups are well positioned to influence public policy making and implementation in the interest of their members and society in general. However, this appears not to be the case after a decade and half of the practice of liberal democracy. This presents a challenge worthy of scholarly investigations, a matter which this study executed. The study discovered that interest groups are thinly spread, lack financial autonomy, institutional depth and internal democracy, among others. It submitted that unless interest groups are professionalized, financially stable, institutionally strong positive leadership, among others, they cannot make valuable contributions to public policies and sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Public Policy, Interest Groups, Democracy and Sustainable National Development.

Introduction

Public policy is the major instrument for development at any level of government. Through public policy, government set out its plans and programmes for the people. Government everywhere, exists to meet the needs and aspirations of the citizenry. But development in Nigeria has faltered mainly because under years of military rule, the people were hardly integrated into government policy making process. The military in government believed it had all the answers to problems plaguing the nation-state. Expectedly, more than three decades of military rule became years of disjointed approach to planning and development because the people who are the recipients of these efforts were not really involved in these processes.

The result is palpable for all to see: teeming population of unemployed, decay of existing infrastructures, fall in school enrolment and rise in school drop-outs, power failure, housing crisis, poor health service delivery, among many others. The return to civil rule in 1999 raised hopes of stemming the tide of socio-economic and political decline in the polity. In spite, of several reform measures undertaken in the period under review, there is no qualitative change in the standard of living of the people. In many cases, the situation of the people has grown worst! Public policy remains the means through which things can be turned around for good. But they can bring about the much needed changes, if interest groups are accepted and promoted as principal actors in the policy making process and national development.

For example, in advanced democracies, interest groups are deliberately sought after by political institutions and political leaders who see their closeness to the electorates as avenue to understand their needs and improve on the quality of public policies and ultimately achieve the goals of sustainable development. The flourish of interest groups in different fields in the run-up to the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria and thereafter, could positively impact on the people's well-being and welfare. However, both exogenous and endogenous factors in the policy process combine to vitiate the effect of interest groups activities on public policy and national development. Can public policy and interest groups bring about the much needed change in the present state of national development? Perhaps, this question can only be answered after a thorough examination of issues it throws up. The study applies a histo-analytical method drawing in the process its data from the observation method. This method allows one to have direct observation of the event being investigated without asking questions from the respondent (Kothari and Garg, 2014).

To address the subject matter of this study, it is organized in the following sections. The first section, indulged in conceptual and theoretical exploration. The second examined the features of the variables of the study. The third, discussed the relationship between public policy, interest groups and sustainable national development. The fourth analyzed challenges facing interest groups in their role in the policy process and by implication sustainable development. The concluding section proffers the way forward for the country.

Conceptual and Theoretical Insights

Public policy over the ages has been a major instrument in the hands of governments for bringing about social welfare and well-being of the people, they are meant to serve. Perhaps, this explains why the concept has received much scholarly attention. But there have been varied views on what the concept means. Some of these views posit that public policy is “the relationship of a governmental unit to its environment”(in Sharma, Sadana and Kaur, 2012). This is a broad definition of the concept because it tends to leave many scholars thinking of what it actually entails. Again, another view suggests that it could refer to “...whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (Dye in Sharma, Sadana and Kaur, 2012). Henry (2005) offers a dimension that sees public policy as “a course of action adopted and pursued by government”. This view does not tell us the philosophical basis of this government course of action. It is in this light that Pfiffner avers that public policy is the determination, declaration and crystallization of the will of the community (in Adebayo, 1979). This will or expectation of the people could be among others; the provision of water, housing, education and security. The people’s participation in the policy process is crucial to the support for and success of government policies (Laxmikanth, 2011).

Public policies are made by among others; political institutions such as: parliament, political executive, political parties and the judiciary (Ikelegbe, 2006). Yet, in representative democracy, the enterprise of public policy making and implementation are facilitated and made wholesome by non-governmental actors and agencies which can be referred to as interest groups. In advanced democracies, they play principal roles in ensuring that their members’ interests are factored into every policy coming from government. In the United States of America, government officials desirous of the success of government policies, go out of their way to ensure that the interests of these groups are sought and represented in major government policies. To bridge the gap in popular representation created by the movement from direct to indirect democracy, consultations with stakeholders on every policy issue are required for such policies to get the support of the targeted group and its effectiveness realized.

All these are aimed at achieving democracy that is, the government of the people through their elected representatives. Some of the core values of this system include: freedom, liberty and fraternity. These elements are encapsulated in the Lincolnian conceptualization of democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people. In the context of Africa however, social democracy appears more feasible due to the high level of poverty, impoverishment, illiteracy, high mortality rate and infrastructural deficits. All these neglects came with colonialism and the marginalization of the colonized. In the post colonial era, these incidences have been exacerbated by mal-administration and bad governance (Eneanya, 2013).

What then is governance? Like many concept in the social and management sciences, the concept of governance has not elicited definitional consensus. Perhaps, this is not unconnected with its many sub-sets and ideological bias put into it by the Bratton-wood institutions – the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Governance may refer to the way and

manner public resources are managed to achieve greater welfare and well-being for the citizenry. Ayee (2008) avers that governance “refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage the affairs of a nation”. The World Bank (1989) notes that the litanies of Africa’s development problems are traceable to governance challenges. Also, Ayee (2008) posits that governance essentially embraces three components. The form of political authority in a country - autocratic or democratic; how power and authority are exercised in the management of social and economic resources and the ability of government to carry out its functions equitably through the design, formulation and implementation of good policies and programmes.

Thus, democratic governance could then mean how political institutions manage power and authority in an accountable way to achieve the goals of sustainable growth and development in a polity. It entails accountability, the rule of law and constitutionalism in the exercise of State power.

Features of Democratic Governance

As a political practice, democratic governance has some universal principles. These include: the concept of the rule of law which subscribe to the exercise of power that is limited to a set of rules; legitimate power comes from the people who exercise such powers directly through popular assemblies or other mode of representation; those chosen by the people are accountable to them by giving effective account of their service to the people; the right of the people to participate in the management of public affairs through free, credible, transparent and democratic elections; decentralization of political power, rights to organize and the independence of associational groups from the state; and the right of the people to change any government that no longer serve their interest (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1997). In the words of Abraham Lincoln (in Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1997) “This is a most valuable.....a most sacred right....a right which we hope and believe, is to liberate the world”. With the return to democratic rule in most African countries, it is expected that popular participation of the citizenry in policy making will improve, responsibility will match accountability and the general condition of living of the people will improve.

All these can be predicated on well established theoretical platforms such as: the utilitarian theory, political participation theory, the pluralist theory among others (Sapru, 2008). While no single theory can exhaustively explain the whole range of issues under investigation in this study, a combination of theories might prove more effective. Though every theory comes with its own short-coming, however, I subscribe to the political participation theory that emphasizes the imperative of an all inclusive political system and process that draw together social forces and make them the cornerstones of the democratization process. The people in any political society are the essence of the democratic system and they do this through their participation in the political process.

Ake (1994) sees popular participation as the involvement of the people in the process of setting goals and making decisions about involvement in the process not just the acceptability of end results which satisfies the need to participate. Anthony Downs (in Barry, 1993) recalls that what the reason for participation in politics is, winning elections. Not to serve the general interest but personal ones. As Downs put it: “politicians ...never seek office as a means of carrying out particular policies, their only goal is to reap the reward of holding office”. Perhaps, this has trickled down to the electorates who see their participation in politics as a means of getting their share of the “national cake”. However, Riker (in Barry, 1993) in a rebuttal of Down’s position on the essence of participation in politics, argues that such exercise brings satisfaction such as “compliance with the ethics of voting, affirming allegiance to the political system, affirming a partisan preference, deciding on going to the poll....and affirming one’s efficacy in the political system”. This view aligns with Ake (1994) position, where he avers that participation entails the exercise of power, however small or symbolic. Again, this is in line with the African traditional values and norms which emphasize communal interests and actions to achieve the collective goals (Owolabi, 1999). To this juncture, another question could be asked: what has been the nature of interest group activities in public policy making and implementation since the return to civil rule? In an attempt to answer this question, public policy and interest groups activities are considered below.

Public Policy and Interest Groups Activities

The essence of every government in any country is to ensure the welfare and well-being of the citizenry. This truism is given fillip by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that says “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government....” In pursuance of this goal, political institutions such as parliament and the Executive arms are created to enact policies to actualize this mandate. Equally important are state bureaucracies that are capable of directing public policy to serve the national interests and the articulation of body of moral doctrines which disciplines the competition for private advantage (Williams, 1980). Not a few scholars (Akhakpe, 2014; Ademolekun 2000) have questioned the performance of the senior civil servants in this regard. Far from being brokers or mediators in the competition for private advantage, senior civil servants have been enmeshed in the very struggle for primitive accumulation of wealth in the country.

While the Nigerian civil servants are schooled in the West Minister model of the civil service with its emphasis on the principles of permanence, neutrality and anonymity, the political misfortune of the country that brought the military to power in 1966 also, brought the higher civil servants into politics (Adebayo, 1979; Olugbemi, 1979). With negative consequences on the ability of top civil servants to direct public policy. Contrary to the tradition of the British civil service that requires civil servants to be handmaid of policies while their political masters – ministers and commissioners make public policy, in the case of the Nigerian civil service, the reality is that “it has been the administrators who have been both masters and the instrument of policy” (Adebayo, 1979). It would appear that the situation in Nigeria has began to change with the return to civilian rule though the technical advantage still lies with the higher civil servants.

This could change positively as more educated politicians are elected into the National Assemblies.

Interest groups in advanced democracies like the United States, seek to exert influence on government officials on key decision making issues in order to have policies that favours their members. They pay lobbyists and even sponsor members of parliament sympathetic to their course, to always push for their interests. This is particularly typical of associational groups that cut across wide varieties of interests – agriculture, maritime, transport sectors, among others. They also put pressure on special areas in the state bureaucracy where they feel the interests of their members need to be given high priority. This further makes higher civil servants key factors in the determination of what finally comes out as government policies. In view of the preeminent position of higher civil servants in the public policy making process, it is safe to say that the level of development in the country can only be related to the degree of nationalism and patriotism that they hold sacrosanct and cherish!

The premium placed on interest groups as key participants in the policy making process is perhaps borne out of the fact that modern liberal democracy is not representative enough of the people and political pluralism need to be encouraged to get social forces and sectional groups involved in the affairs of governments. In the US for example, conscious of the need to carry the people along, government deliberately seek the cooperation and contributions of interest groups in the policy process because the success or failure of government policies lies in their partnership. Thus, the role and activity of interest groups are robust in this political system. Their rich pedigree makes them crucial for democratic governance (Eneanya, 2013).

Same may not be said of the Nigerian case that has less experience in democratic rule. Aiyede (2005) notes that different interest groups sprang up prior to the return to civil rule in 1999. The resurgence of interest groups is part of the struggle to expand the democratic space particularly in the areas of directing the attention of the state to the social needs of the people and uphold their civil and political rights. It took the form of “...efforts by various groups to prevent the state from introducing or imposing policies that they consider discriminatory or unfavourable, as they pursue their separate interests within the public space”(Aiyede, 2005). The democratization processes gave impetus to the activities of interest groups. Prior to this time, they were tentative and episodic only intervening in the policy process when the need arises.

However, with the return to civil rule, interest groups have been very visible putting pressure on centers of policy making either in the legislative or the executive arm. They engage policy in advocacy, sponsoring candidates into the National Assembly and lobby those in committees of the National Assembly to pass bills favourable to their interests. Sometimes, monetary inducement is used to ensure favourable policies are formulated and passed into laws. Also, interest groups has had to develop associational networks that cut across traditional, social cleavages of ethnicity and religion that have been so markedly exploited by (Political and Military leaders) to perpetuate neo-colonial rule (Aiyede, 2005).

Interest groups also extend their activities to areas of policy and programme implementation. According to Ikelegbe (2006) “they attempt to ensure that such policies are properly implemented, that their intentions or objectives are achieved and appropriate results are obtained”. In the course of such action, policies may be modified or changed entirely due to inputs from interest groups in terms of suggestions, critique and representation to public policy actors (ibid). These efforts could go a long way towards improving the performance of such public policies.

Besides, civil society – an umbrella term for all non-governmental organizations are beginning to claim propriety right over the state as the state itself is weaned out of it. Therefore, it can hold the state’s operators accountable for their actions and inactions that affect the life of the citizenry and society (Ekeh, 1991). Given the way the state emerged in Nigeria, civil society that pre-dated the colonial state, tends to intervene in its affairs episodically and tentatively. Thus, in terms of promoting democratic governance, it is only beginning to exert itself as a force to be reckoned with. Yet, if national development is to fulfil its full essence in the life of the people, public policy needs to be mediated by interest group activities if not for anything else but to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness.

How this plays out perhaps is simple! If national development is seen as a composite process that entails socio-economic, political and cultural advancement of a country or nation, these processes can only be fruitfully realized on the platform of democratic governance. Political and administrative office holders should be able to give account of their stewardship periodically in a democratic system where there is free and fair elections and one man one vote. Also, this practice ought to be sustained over time for the citizenry to achieve a high standard of living rather than development processes that are suspended over and above society. Consequently, a people alienated from their government tend to suffer from poverty, malnutrition, high infant and maternal mortality, infrastructural decay, among others. What has changed in terms of national development in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999? Or is it still more of the same discredited pasts? We will attempt to answer these questions in the section that follows.

Public Policy, Interest Groups and Sustainable National Development in the Fourth Republic

The time is evidently past when public officials are expected to sit on the developmental sidelines, limiting their roles to fixing of general rules and to providing certain basic services and incentives for those private entrepreneurs who are the major players in the complicated and existing game of fashioning profound changes in economic and social systems of developing countries (emphasis added) (LaPalombara, 1967).

The rider to this section underscores the prime position of senior civil servants in fashioning sustainable national development in developing societies particularly in Africa. The contribution

of the civil service to national development in Nigeria under military rule was massive though scholars and progressive forces in the country feel that those contributions were more in the negative (Olugbemi, 1979). This is perhaps palpable in the sorry state of things in various aspects of the society – education, health, infrastructure, security, among many others. All these could have happened due to the circumstances the country found itself after independence and the ensuing military rule that came as a rescue effort.

But the Fourth Republic has survived a decade and half of civilian rule. The context is definitely different. There is more political openings with the mushrooming of associational groups pressing for varied interests. Political office holders are in charge of state affairs and the administrative executives are behind the curtain ostensibly giving advice and effects to settled policies.

Since the return to civil rule, a lot of policies have been enunciated and pursued under various development strategies such as: National Economic and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the State and Local chapters (SEEDS) and (LEEDS) respectively. Poverty alleviation programmes were perhaps the most celebrated of the first stanza of civilian rule. The transformation agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan has been in the front burner since 2011 with several efforts geared towards economic recovery, social engineering and political stability. The latest being the rebasing of the economy that is expected to make the Nigerian economy the fastest growing one in Africa. This could translate into the economy being the investment destination for many prospective investors. Being the largest economy in Africa, there is a large market that could attract profit seeking ventures. But all these can only be harvested, if the civil and public servants rise up to their responsibilities by bringing various interest groups into the thick of the development efforts of government for them to be realized efficiently and effectively.

Under democratic rule, interest groups exert influence on the policy process from the stage of policy initiation, formulation to implementation. This is necessary for there to be policy sustenance, efficiency and effectiveness. Interest groups keep their eyes on these processes for their interests to be met. In this way, interest groups help bring government closer to the people by making available to policy makers vital information that could improve their final outcome of public policy. Government cannot be everywhere at the same time nor does it have the wherewithal to ensure that all policies made are effectively implemented. Here lies the significance of interest groups in the attainment of sustainable national development. As LaPalombara (1974) admonishes “the crisis that today’s national leaders must carry, as well as the developmental goals they set for themselves and others would be close to failure, if they attempt to function without such groups”.

However, the practices of interest groups politics belie the supposition of their roles in a democratic system. Public policy formulation and implementation in the context of interest group activities have not really aided or facilitated sustainable national development, judging from the disjuncture between what governments brings forth as its policies and programmes and

their impacts on the welfare and well-being of the people. For example, poverty has increased, unemployment has grown, many children are dropping out of schools, there are infrastructural deficits and rising cases of insecurity in the land. What is responsible for this state of affairs? The section that follows seek to address this question.

Challenges Facing Public Policy, Interest Groups and Sustainable National Development

Public policy is dynamic and by virtue of its dynamism, it is bound to face different kinds of constraints. This condition is sometimes promoted by the failure of interest groups to join hands with policy makers in promoting policy efficiency and effectiveness. Interest groups do not seem to interface enough with policy makers either because they are not properly integrated into the policy process, failure of the system to absolve them or they are just non-committal to issues bordering on their members interests. Interest groups in Nigeria appear not to have the antecedence of association with democratic institutions with a view to engaging policy makers in collaborative efforts towards sustainable national development (Udoh and Ukpere, 2011). This may be as a result of many years of military rule.

Also, interest groups appear not to have the resources to promote the kind of activities that can bring about qualitative change in public policy and national development. Huge amount of resources is needed to gather information that can improve public policies, run a well staffed secretariat and shoulder recurrent and capital expenditures. Most of these groups are administered as personal businesses. Such financial deficit makes them susceptible to undue state influence that water down their efficacy as pressure groups.

Government institutions and officials appear very evasive of interest groups in the running of State affairs particularly under the existing policy regime. A government that knows the relevant of interest groups in the success or failure of public policies would deliberately cultivate their cooperation in the initiation, formulation and implementation of public policy. It would seem that many years of military rule did not allow the robust engagement of interest groups with centers of policy making and implementation. Besides, commitments to policy making appear to be lacking on the part of leaders of these groups as many of them only react rather than being proactive in dealing with policy and national development issues.

Interest groups have to be brought to the center of the policy process for them to have propriety rights over what comes out from the government policy machineries. The political culture of a people determines the contribution they can make to the policy process and development efforts. Unfortunately, there is still the dominance of subject political culture in the country (Almond, 2007). Majority of Nigerians are only active in public affairs during election periods. Similar account can be rendered of interest groups members who will always ask what their immediate gains are in any given policy rather than what they can contribute to it.

Also, it would seem that there are too many interest groups in a particular area of policy advocacy. And this appears to be a Nigerian syndrome where several groups tend to gravitate towards issues that are popular at a given point in time. Too many groups in a particular policy

area do not give room for the pull of resources to ensure better performance. Besides, this creates unhealthy rivalries and dissipation of energy rather than directing same at sustainable national development. With the return to civil rule however, associational life has blossomed with all manners of pressure groups claiming to be fighting for the people while ostensibly using the people as a front to achieve their personal interests. This has made sectoral linkages of these groups difficult. As atomized groups, they can only achieve very little. Petty rivalries, jealousy and in-fighting have tended to vitiate the ability of these groups to contribute to the policy process and bring about sustainable national development. In spite, of the return to civil rule in Nigeria, this problem still hinders the quest for sustainable national development (Aiyede, 2005).

The twin challenge of democratic deficit and corruption remain big obstacles to the effective role of interest groups in the policy process and sustainable national development in Nigeria. Democracy is lacking in many of these interest groups which make corrupt actions and activities possible and thriving. In this circumstance, public policies cannot be credible and national development realizable. Prebendal use of public office for personal and group interests still persist in the public realm and this has been frustrating efforts at national development. Proper and better information gathering should be prioritized. This must begin from institutions of higher learning where research takes place. This would mean that government should put more funds into education to make higher institutions sources of vital information for development. Also, the civil service should be professionalized particularly through training and retraining of its staff on how to meet the exigencies of our time. This perhaps is the only way development can progress unhindered. In the light of the foregoing, what can then be done to remedy the situation and place the country on the path of unreliable national development? To this we now turn in the final section of the study.

Public Policy, Interest Groups and Sustainable National Development: The Way Forward

From the proceeding section, we can deduce that all is not well with public policy and the development thrust of the government. The return to civil rule has not brought substantial changes to what the situation under military authoritarian rule was. As Olowu (1999) graphically put it; this is because there is:

Weak policy analytical capacity in line ministries and the existence of a glass-wall between researchers and policy makers, poor management of the information for policy analysis and little linkage between policy making and implementation, on the one hand and between implementation and evaluation on the other hand.

These views appear to summarize the litany of obstacles to sound public policy for sustainable national development. Definitely, if public policies are meant to promote the welfare and well-being of the people, they must be organized to get these goals impact positively on them. This is where interest groups become relevant in the policy process. Unfortunately, this important aspect in the policy process is constrained by several factors as discussed above. What then is the way out? Several remedial steps could be taken.

Policy makers should pay attention to specific social problems rather than the application of a holistic approach to policy making and implementation (Eneanya, 2013). Why we agree that governments have enormous social responsibilities to attend to, taking them one at a time ensures efficiency and effectiveness in resolving them. It is in this regard that interest groups come in handy! They can help fulfill the objectives, plans and programmes of government if they are involved in identifying what they need, how they need them and where they need them. This can be regarded as the bottom-top approach to governance. In both the visible and hidden clusters of the policy making stages, interest groups are significant actors and more than ever before need to be cultivated for optimum performance of public policy and sustainable development (Henry, 2005).

Furthermore, interest groups themselves have to shed some of the lethargies that tend to obfuscate their roles in policy making and national development. There is little interface and collaboration of interest groups with political and economic actors except when they come out to conflate with governments in form of campaign for human and peoples' rights, strike actions, among others. More collaboration and cooperation with stakeholders are needed for their efficiency and effectiveness (Nkamnebe, et al, 2011). Similarly, among interest groups, there should be synergy rather than in-fighting and petty brinking among these groups. Some of the interest groups are spread too thinly across subject areas which water down their efficacy in promoting the public interests. They could be more effective and efficient if most of them pull resources together in pursuit of certain common goals.

All these boil down to proper funding of interest groups. Some of the interest groups that dot the political landscape in Nigeria are self financed by their founder and leaders thereby limiting their ability to pursue and achieve the course for which they are set up. Efforts should be made to recruit and make members finance these groups. This will require mobilizing and convincing skeptical Nigerians of the desirability, utility and efficacy of their bounding together to achieve the transformation of their targets for the good and development of the nation. This is perhaps possible if certain financial requirements are meant.

This would entail the practical exercise of internal democracy in these organizations. The people are entitled to know what is going on within their groups, and decide on what should be done per time. More importantly, transparency and accountability should be the watch words in the management and administration of these organizations for efficient and effective discharge of their responsibilities. This should continually be on the agenda of public and private organizations in the Fourth Republic democratic dispensation.

Corruption remains a major challenge to the pursuit of the goals of sustainable national development. This is an age long problem that is found in virtually all organizations. But it has to be reduced or eliminated for them to achieve their objectives. Again, democracy is a key to its resolution. Democracy thrives on popular participation of the people as key to its sustenance.

Government at all levels should deliberately cultivate the collaboration of strategic groups in policy initiation, formulation, execution and evaluation. Of the different streams in the policy making process identified by Henry (2005), we subscribe to the policy stream model that takes policy making away from the political to the cluster of policy actors where interest groups are significant forces.

Conclusion

Public policy is an important instrument for bringing into fruition the programmes of the government in power. This is why efforts should be made to ensure that its objectives are realized for the welfare and well-being of Nigerians in particular and the Nation – State in general. It is for this reason, interest groups are seen as some of the enablers and bulwark of public policy making and implementation to ensure that the greatest happiness of the greatest number of the people is achieved and national development promoted in the polity. However, much of the country's post-independence years were spent under military authoritarian rule were, interest group activities were restricted as the military mostly operate with decrees.

But interest groups were in the vanguard of the struggle for the return to civil rule. With the return to civil rule in 1999, the expansion of the democratic space has seen the flourishing of interest groups in virtually all areas of societal life, pushing for democratic governance through their intervention in the public policy process. The evidence before us however show that under civil rule, the impact of interest group activities on the policy process has not been substantially effective because of myriad of challenges facing them, ranging from: poor organization, resource gap, leadership deficit, lack of institutional autonomy, to lack of internal democracy within their fold, among others.

These challenges obscure their activities in the public policy process and the delivery of democratic governance. Several steps have been suggested to remedy the situation. Among which are: stronger institutional and organizational base, more financial inflow and its efficient management, more collaboration with similar interest groups, better sourcing of information, among others.

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