

Hegel, Gramsci and Diamond on State and Civil Society

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A b s t r a c t

The substance of this paper is situated within an academic research on the nature, upshots and implications of the relationship between the State and civil society in contemporary societies, through a comparative study of the theories of three great thinkers, G.W.F. Hegel, Antonio Gramsci and Larry Diamond. The central objective of the paper is to explore the implications of the relationship between civil society and the state for the possibility of social transformation and further democratization of contemporary African societies. Sources of data were secondary; from books, archival materials, internet sources and journals. Method of data analysis is logical presentation, reasoning and coherent argumentation, as well as critical evaluation of established theoretical paradigms and analysis of objective realities in contemporary society. Both the Instrumentalist and Structuralist Marxist theories of the State advanced by Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas respectively were adopted to serve as the theoretical framework for the study. Conclusively the study observed that the ability of the State to absorb shock or crisis depends on the organization and level of social cohesion in civil society. It therefore recommends that civil society organisations should be accorded an unfettered sphere within which to operate freely and independently of the State. The unique contribution of this paper to knowledge is its exploration and utilization of the divergent theoretical views of Hegel, Gramsci and Diamond for the purpose of achieving social cohesion and transformation in modern African societies, particularly Nigeria.

Keywords: *State, Civil society, Democracy, Class struggle, Hegemony*

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Background to the Study

Modern political theory primarily centres on the state as its object of study and any discourse on contemporary political theory cannot ignore the state (Morris, in Gaus and Kukathas eds, 195-209). Conceptualizations of the state therefore preoccupied the minds of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, who utilized it to describe the transition from the state of nature to civil government through the social contract. More often than not civil society is contrasted from the state but two dimensions of the problematic are the definition of civil society and its delineation as well as its relationship with the state. Rousseau (quoted by Cress ed., 1987), tracing the origin of civil society accredited it to the first person that enclosed a plot of land, called it his and made it possible for others to accept his claim as the true founder, it is the realm of mutually recognized and beneficial economic pursuits.

From another perspective civil society is “*understood as a defence against excessive state power and atomized individualism*” (Ray, 2007). To Hegel civil society meant bourgeois society, the realm of economic competition as opposed to the state (Bottomore, 2001). The universal interest, for Hegel, is realisable only through the state, rather than by bourgeois rationality leading inexorably to the general good as espoused by Adam Smith.

Marx “borrowed” the concept from Hegel (Poulantzas, 1978, 124) and deployed it to define the transition from feudalism characterized by a blurred civil society to capitalist society, in which a civil society clearly distinguishable in terms of crass materialism, self-aggrandisement, individualism, social atomization, and profit maximization, have been firmly established. It was essentially the separation of the producer from the means of production and his exploitation as an individual producer in the modern industry. This view of civil society, composed of voluntary personal activism, distinguishes it from the family, the realm of natural association. Marx and Hegel therefore held essentially similar conceptualizations of civil society but aiming in different trajectories, for Hegel the consolidation of bourgeois society, but for Marx the continuous development of revolutionary consciousness for the purpose of establishing a more progressive society (Bottomore, 2001).

However, similar philosophical and theoretical discussions on civil society and its complex relations with the state are not very common. Political thought, in most cases, deals with the nature and character of the state as well as its proper synergy with the rest of the society and the divergent opinions on this subject have engaged the minds of political theorists right from the classical epoch. Plato's conceptualization of the Greek organic state was composite and made an unclear distinction between state and civil society and that trend endured through the medieval and early modern epochs until, perhaps, Hegel. In constructing the ideal state Plato observed that it needed all the elements of the bourgeois definition such as territoriality, population, government and sovereignty. In the polemic against Glaucon he averred that they would need to enlarge their state to make it healthy and make room for various occupations such as hunters fishermen, artists, sculptors, painters and musicians, poets as well as manufacturers of domestic equipment of all sorts, including tutors, nurses, cosmeticians, barbers, butchers and cooks. They would even need pigs and cattle in great quantities to afford them meat (Plato, 2007).

Plato, in this statement, obviously collapsed civil society in the state and made the latter all encompassing. Liberal definitions of the state right from the classical period contain all four elements of territory, population, government and sovereignty. Though a distinct sphere of civil society is robustly identified the specificity adorned it by Hegel in contradistinction to the state appears lacking. The social contract had actually been formulated within civil society to enable the emergence of the state, but as an organized moment of interdependencies with a dynamic of its own appears to have been largely ignored. Hobbes (1982 p. 274) mentions “*any numbers of men joined in one interest or one business, of which some are regular and some are irregular. Regular are those, where one man, or assembly of men, is constituted representative of the whole number. All other are irregular*”, i.e. the state and its institutions being permanent and voluntary realms of civil society. Without actually deploying the term, civil society, he divides it into private and public realms, but subordinates both to the state. Some civil society organizations are created and operate under legal prescriptions, i.e. bodies politic, “*which are made by authority from the sovereign power of the commonwealth*”, like political parties. Private are those “*constituted by subjects among themselves*”. He makes a further distinction among the private organizations between those that are “*lawful*” and “*unlawful*”, in other words, those that are more or less institutionalized and operate within the ambit of the law and the anomic or non-conformist such as militant, insurgent and cult groups (Ntete-Nna, 2001, 303-304). Despite these assertions the concept of civil society in its dynamism is not given a rigorous theoretical attention.

Viewing the state organically, as Plato (2000) and Aristotle (1999) did, tends to collapse into it the related concepts of government and civil society. Consequently, they appear not to have clear definitions of these concepts. What is discernible in classical political thought is the clear absence of a distinction between the state and civil society. Aristotle (1999) juxtaposes the state, constitution, sovereignty and government with statements like a “*constitution is the arrangement of magistracies in a state . . . in democracies the people are supreme, but in oligarchies, the few . . . consider what is the purpose of a state and how many forms of government there are by which human society is regulated?*” (Aristotle, 1999, 59).

References to human society and even how it relates to and is regulated by the government, appear quite regularly in the literature on classical political theory, but not civil society as a distinct social sphere in constant interaction with the state, sometimes contending with and at other times protecting the state depending on the circumstances and contexts. In the medieval era the Church-dominated society as distinct from the Roman Empire or state, would appear to constitute civil society, but the inseparability of Church and State would create theoretical problems of civil society analysis. Thus state and civil society were interwoven in medieval society, just as in early modern society both constituted and were juxtaposed under the concept of commonwealth.

From Wood (2000, 239) the modern conception of “*civil society that appeared systematically for the first time in the eighteenth century*” is something quite distinct from what earlier thinkers viewed simply as society. In contemporary usage civil society represents a separate sphere of human relations and activity, different from the state but sometimes neither public nor private

or at other times perhaps both at once. To some, like Diamond, it embodied a whole range of voluntary formations and social interactions distinct from the private sphere of the household and the public sphere of the state, but to others, like Hegel, a network of “distinctively economic relations, the sphere of the market place, the arena of production, distribution and exchange.

A clear conceptual distinction between the pre-modern ideas of society should be clearly distinguished from the modern concept of civil society, couched with a specificity that earlier ideas never possessed. Even the social contract theorists and Adam Smith tended theoretically to subordinate the state under the civil society since its protectionist actions were viewed as a threat to the profit-seeking adventures of the emerging capitalist class. Among the classical political economists, the term 'civil society' was conceptualized as being synonymous with the commonwealth or political society without any opposition between them. This theoretical conflation ensured a subordination of the state to the “*community of private-property holders*” (Wood, 2000, 240). The gradual evolution of the concept of civil society and its relation to the state have assumed a specificity in contemporary social formations that needs to be given, in each context, a special analytical attention. That precisely is what this study seeks to achieve.

The Problem

The problem statement of this study focuses on the problematic of civil society in relation to the state in Third World countries, including Nigeria. The relationship between civil society and the state is a very complex phenomenon mediated by several forces and producing rather contradictory results in different social formations. The strength or weakness of civil society has implications for the nature and character of the state in contemporary society. One major problem associated with Third World countries is that of a weak and disorganized civil society unable to extract and defend civil rights from the state, easily penetrated by the state resulting in political instability and economic underdevelopment as opposed to the proper balance between the two in the advanced countries leading to their politico-economic stability and development. Civil society has been identified as the realm of economic activities and other forms of social interaction or relations which form a pattern that either sustain or weaken the state. Gramsci's classic comparative statement on the relationship between civil society and the state in the eastern socialist and western capitalist countries sets the tone for this paper.

In the East, the State was conspicuously dominant state and civil society “primordial and gelatinous”, but in the West, there was a mutual relationship between State and civil society, which ensured that whenever the State was threatened “a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State therefore acted as an outer ditch, behind which “there was a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks”, though there were contextual peculiarities among the western capitalist states (Anderson, 2017).

A particular pattern of articulation of civil society with the state in a social formation is indicative of the possibility or otherwise of socio-political and economic stability and development. Political contests, support patterns and economic competition and struggles

within the realm of civil society are defining and distinguishing features of contemporary societies that reflect in the character of the state. Gramsci's central concern is that the state, having been shielded from these contradictions through ethical consolidation or solidarity, makes the possibility of revolutionary action, as envisaged by Karl Marx, very remote in western capitalist formations. That is to say that the capacity of the advanced societies to contain these contradictions is responsible for the political stability enjoyed by them. When these contradictions and conflicts are resolved or contained within civil society the state tends to sustain its stability and prosperity. Otherwise every social conflict impacts on the state directly causing political instability through the constant mobilization of its forces to intervene in these conflicts. Civil society is therefore a bulwark that defends and protects the state against the direct impact of socio-economic conflicts, while at the same time demanding and maintaining civil rights against the state.

However, this is not the case in the underdeveloped countries of the Third World, which have been exposed to several dimensions of political and economic instability such as military coups, inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, electoral malpractices, economic underdevelopment, the debt burden, multilateral intervention in economic policy drive, etc. These realities of the social order in Third World countries involve constant state intervention which eventually weakens it.

Civil society sometimes contends with the state, at other times supports it and could even defend and shield it from the danger of any internal or external aggression. These realities make the relationship between the state and civil society very complex and sometimes contradictory. Civil society is also the arena of articulation and dissemination of social values that strengthen the social fabric, including economic and political values. The ethical foundations that weave society together and make it possible for the defence of national or patriotic imperatives are articulated in civil society. The differing theoretical approaches undertaken by Hegel, Gramsci and Diamond as well as the implications of these approaches for Third World countries like Nigeria constitute the focus of this paper.

Aim and Objectives of Study

The aim of this study could be stated as the need to comparatively interrogate the theoretical conceptualizations and implications of the complex relationship between the state and civil society in various categories of modern states. The specific objectives are to:

1. Comparatively study the theories of state and civil society by Hegel, Gramsci and Diamond.
2. Clearly define the lineaments of the relationship between civil society and the state in contemporary society.
3. Examine the implications of their respective points of disagreement on the role of civil society in the consolidation of the state.
4. Show how a proper comprehension of the dynamics of civil society reveals the character of the state in any particular social formation.
5. Demonstrate how the state is affected, negatively or positively, by the socio-cultural divergences or cohesion in the civil society.

Research Questions

1. Why is it necessary to compare the theories of state and civil society by Hegel, Gramsci and Diamond?
2. How could the lineaments of the realms of civil society and the state in contemporary society be identified and analysed?
3. What are the implications of the respective points of disagreement between Hegel, Gramsci and Diamond on the role of the civil society in the consolidation of the state?
4. How would a proper comprehension of the dynamics of civil society reveal the character of the state in any particular social formation?
5. How is the state affected, negatively or positively, by the socio-cultural divergences or cohesion in the civil society?

Methodology

This is a decidedly qualitative study and therefore adopted mainly secondary sources for data gathering such as books, journal publications, archival records, newspapers and internet sources. Data analysis is based on logical and systematic analysis of historical accounts and theoretical materials on the operational concepts as well as baseline data on particular social formations under investigation. Data presentation is done in form of simple tables, graphs and pie and bar charts.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework for this study was provided by the Structuralist theory of the state as articulated by Nicos Poulantzas (1978) and the Instrumentalist version of state theory by Ralph Miliband, both of which are versions of the Marxist Theory of the State. “*The State in Capitalist Society*”, by Ralph Miliband (1969), has become the classic statement of what has been termed "instrumentalism" (Albo and Jenson, 1987). Miliband claimed that in capitalist society it was necessary to distinguish between the ruling class of civil society and the governing class which held positions in the institutions of the state. In so doing he identified a gap between the state and civil society, but at the same time a close relationship between the two through the direct social and economic links of state personnel to the capitalist class. Miliband's central thesis is that in Marxist theory the ruling class in capitalist society is the class that owns and controls the means of production, by virtue of which ownership it controls the economic power of the state and uses the state as its instrument to dominate the rest of the society (Barrows, 2002). The corporation, as the centre of capitalist economic activity, is the primary institution for defining and identifying the capitalist class. Consequently, “*members of the capitalist class are identified as those persons who occupy the managerial and ownership functions of corporation*” (Barrows, 2002, p. 15). This capitalist class, operating in civil society, is involved in a relationship with the state. This Miliband attempted to establish through an empirical study to demonstrate how the capitalist class maintains its political hegemony through to recruitment process which ensures the occupation of state positions by members of the capitalist class. Miliband identified five (5) components of the state viz;

1. The governmental apparatus which consists of elected legislative and executive authorities at the national level that make state policy

2. The administrative apparatus consisting of the civil service-bureaucracy, public corporations, central banks, and regulatory commissions which regulates economic, social, cultural and other activities.
3. The coercive apparatus, consisting of the military, paramilitary, police, and intelligence agencies, which together are concerned with the deployment and management of violence.
4. The judicial apparatus, which includes courts, the legal profession, jails and prisons, and other components of the criminal justice system
5. The sub-central governments such as states, provinces or departments; counties, municipal governments, and special districts (in Barrows, 2002 p. 16).

In his account, moreover, the possibility of democratic control of the state was limited further by the economic constraints of private ownership and ideological processes that produced popular consent to the class-based rule of capital. In this way the institutions of the state met the instrumental needs of capital, even when the state was relatively autonomous from the capitalist class. On the other hand, a clear statement of structuralist conceptualization of the state, is represented by Nicos Poulantzas (1978). Poulantzas' primary concern was not to establish a direct link between the state and the capitalist class, but focused rather on the objective structural relations which involved the state and also manifested in the class struggle.

Poulantzas (1978) introduced a full-fledged regional theory of the state which identified three regions or levels, the economic, political and ideological which relations with each other defines the specificity of the state in a particular society as well as the nature of the class struggle. In Poulantzas' theory the relative autonomy of the state in the capitalist mode of production was due to a separation of the juridico-political level from the economic level and cemented by the ideological apparatuses. In addition, in concrete historical conjunctures, the state had an autonomy from the power bloc (the political expression of the capitalist class). The fulcrum around which Poulantzas' argument revolves is that the state in capitalist society is structured in such a manner as to guarantee the protection of the economic interests of the dominant class by sometimes granting concessions to the dominated classes which are usually contrary or against the immediate interest of the economically dominant class as a means of achieving the ultimate or long-term protection of the interest of the economically dominant class. The state was a set of institutions which sustained the structural stability of the capitalist mode of production or general maintenance function by constituting the factor of cohesion or "*the regulating factor in its global equilibrium as a system*", and also a site of class struggles. In this way Poulantzas granted a critical role to politics but also made visible the structural constraints of reform within capitalist society.

What Poulantzas set out to contest against liberal scholarship was the attempt to present the modern capitalist state as an embodiment of the general interest of the whole society, i.e. the general will or the commonwealth or society or nation), defined in terms of the collective principles of liberty, equality, representation, universal suffrage, popular sovereignty, inalienable rights, etc. Poulantzas (1978, 124) articulates the problem as one of a separation between civil society and the state and which thrives on alienation, i.e. on the basis of a

relation of the subject (concrete individuals) to “*its objectified essence*” (i.e. the state). It is an approach that prevents or obfuscates an understanding of the relation between the state and the class struggle. It also results in masking a complex set of real problems posed by the capitalist state by hiding them under the ideological fog of the separation of civil society and the state.

Marx viewed civil society in terms of the separation of the producer from the means of production, as distinct from “the feudal ties of personal dependence”. With this separation civil society becomes the arena of capitalist productive activities in modern industry and at another level separated from the state. To achieve the purpose of emphasizing the presence of the class struggle Poulantzas introduced an interrelated regional theory of the state which locates the state at the political level but gives a “specific relative autonomy” to each of the levels though simultaneously the class struggle pervades all three levels. At the arena of industrial production, the class struggle manifests in the exploitation of labour power and the concentration of the means of production in the hands of the bourgeois class.

The state, located at the ideological level, plays a role in the class struggle through the control of the coercive apparatuses, while the ideological apparatuses ensure the hegemonic rule of capital. All three levels therefore play roles in the class struggle, which is why he insists that the notion of separation of the civil society from the state is only superficial. He emphasized the fact that corresponding to the juridico-political instance is a juridical and political ideology, which depends on the ideological domination of the exploited classes. Consequently, this juridico-political ideology was the universal religious belief system (the Church) which became the dominant ideology of the feudal mode of production (Poulantzas, 1978, 128).

Civil society is therefore not just the universal world of needs but indeed an arena of class struggles, the economic, political and ideological class struggles, all structurally interwoven, while instrumentally reshaping each other. Consequently, the system maintenance role played both by the state in civil society is also an aspect of the class struggle.

Discussion

This paper is limited to the theoretical positions of these three thinkers on the concepts of civil society and the state, excluding a statement on their personal biographies, except where it has a direct bearing on their theories since the socio-historical contexts in which they wrote more often than not affect their thought patterns.

G.W.F. Hegel

Hegel's ideological background, either as a conservative or liberal, has been a contested subject among his followers. He fits into either of them depending on the definition given them and the interpretation given his thought. Hegel's thought was greatly influenced by the historical development of Germany relative to England and France during the period of transition and evolution of liberal capitalism in Western Europe. His most prominent work on the concepts of state and civil society is the *Philosophy of Right*, which has been interpreted to mean rather an ethical theory of legal rights, by providing a normative justification of the social role of legal rights in the contemporary liberal society.

Although the term 'civil society' was used by political thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau to describe civil government as distinct from natural society or the state of nature they failed to develop a rigorous theory of the relationship between civil society and the state. Marxist conceptualization derived from that of Hegel's *die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, or civil or bourgeois society, as the realm of economic production, exchange and competition, which is a moment of progress from individuals living in the unity of the family. From Hegel civil society is contrasted with the state, or political society, through which the universal interest could be realized. Civil society, to Hegel, is the arena of particular needs, self-interest, and divisiveness, with a potential for self-destruction (Bottomore ed., 2001, 82). Hegel disagrees with previous bourgeois theorists like John Locke and Adam Smith (2012) that innate capitalist rationality in civil society leads to the general good or welfare. To him it is only through the state that the universal or general interest becomes realizable.

Individuals as a mass are themselves spiritual natures, and they therefore embody dual moment, namely the extreme of individuality [Einzelheit] which knows and wills for itself, and the extreme of universality which knows and wills the substantial. They can therefore attain their right in both of these respects only in so far as they have actuality both as private and as substantial persons. In the spheres in question, i.e. family and civil society, they attain their right in the first respect directly; and in the second respect, they attain it by discovering their essential self-consciousness in (social) institutions as that universal aspect of their particular interests which has being in itself, and by obtaining through these institutions an occupation and activity directed towards a universal end within a corporation (Hegel, 1991, 287).

Hegel makes a philosophical distinction between the family and civil society. To him the family is not integrated or collapsed into civil society. That gives the individual a dual personality as a member of the family and as an active participant in civil society, and each membership confers a distinct and special mode of rights – natural and civil rights. Family membership rights and interrelationships are directly and naturally obtained and ordained, whereas in civil society occupations, interests and participation are influenced by endowments nurtured through institutionalized rights and engagement. Particular and universal ends are accordingly achieved through participation in these spheres of social membership. The third factor or realm is the state, which he called “the nervous system”, with its internal organization. The laws which govern these institutions also provide the rationality and ethical standards which manifest within them. He argued that the ultimate truth of these institutions is to be located in the spirit, which is the state that serves as their “*universal end and known object*”. The family is also ethical though not at the level of the state, “*in civil society, however, separation is the determining factor*” (Hegel, 1991, 286).

He divides the entire social structure into three components – the family, civil society and the state – between which there is constant interaction, and with the state acting as the nervous system. In other words, the two are energized by the state, as they evolve and develop within it. The institutions or standards of rationality which govern relations and interactions within the family and civil society emanate from the state. This rationality attains its fullness and

perfection only within the state, meaning that the ethical standards or laws which rule or govern rational interactions within civil society proceed or are extended by the state.

Consequently, only the state is capable of seeking the universal or general good of the entire social structure or rather the universal rationality manifests itself within the family and civil society through the state. This is where he rejects the possibility of bourgeois rationality seeking the general good of the society, i.e. the benevolent selfishness of bourgeois market relations serving the general interest or needs of the society in that famous passage: It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages (Smith, 1976, 26-27).

To Hegel this philosophical position is rather partial, particular and selfish, seeking only self-fulfilment. The ethical standards or laws of social institutions within which individuals seek and realize their self-consciousness are provided by the state. The ultimate truth, which is the universal rationality, is in the Spirit or Idea, but manifests itself partially within civil society as the spirit. The family, though a divine creation rather than a product of human consciousness, is nonetheless guarded by ethical standards or laws emanating from the state. In civil society however there is separation of individuals from family ties and interactions are defined by bourgeois rationality in the market.

Hegel regards the family as the first ethical root of the state; the corporation, based in civil society, is the second. In the family individuals exhibit subjective particularity, whereas in civil society there is a separation between internally imparted particularity of need and satisfaction and abstract legal universality of rights and freedom. However ethical fulfilment and perfection come only through the unity of both moments in the state. This inward unity of family and civil society and actualization of the universal rationality results in the general welfare or good of the market society. The sanctity of marriage and the honour attached to the corporation are the two moments around which the disorganization of civil society revolves.

Hegel recognised the state as the reality of the general will, a reality which it possesses as its particular self-consciousness and then disseminates to assume universality. At this stage it becomes the rational in and for itself. "This substantial unity is an absolute and unmoved end in itself" and is embedded in the state, and through it freedom becomes the highest right, so that ultimately the highest right is extended through the state to regulate relations between individuals, "*whose highest duty is to be members of the state*" and remain loyal to the state (Hegel, 1991, 273-275).

Consequently, Hegel's liberal vision is individualistic and conceives society as the outcome of the actions and interactions of individual human beings in pursuit of their private or selfish interests. The spirit or state is an ethical spirit which emphasizes and enforces values of individual conscience, responsibility and decency in socio-economic interactions and pursuits. This limited ethical state intervention is necessitated by the potentially destructive

effects of unlimited freedom of market pursuits, since family or individual morality is partial, narrow and limited. Herein lies Hegel's critique of liberalism.

Consequently, his definition of freedom in the liberal context is not one of arbitrariness or acting without restraint, doing whatever one likes, actions whether good or bad are considered rational in the liberal sense, which he regards as shallow and immature, but rather action guarded by ethical universality of objectivity, which is possible only within the state or spirit. Hegel's concept of freedom is guarded by rationality, i.e. the extent to which individuals act with rationality or taking actions in line with reason. That is what he refers to as the ethical life, which is also the most fulfilling life, and made possible by the ethical standards set by the state, the ethical spirit. "The rationality of the modern state requires that the abstract right of persons be safeguarded; this is the primary function of legal institutions", and is his philosophy of right (Hegel, 1991, 285-286).

Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci was born in 1891 in Sardinia, Italy. Born with a malformed spine he won a scholarship for indigent students from Sardinia in 1911 to study at the University of Turin. It was during this period that he was exposed to both Hegelianism and Marxism. In 1915 he joined the staff of the Socialist Party Weekly and became a full-time journalist. He became active in the Italian Socialist Movement during the period of the Mussolini fascist dictatorship and was eventually arrested, tried and jailed. It was in jail that he wrote the "Prison Notebook", in a very difficult and unconventional language as a means of avoiding censorship. Just as Marx was greatly influenced by Hegel so was Gramsci influenced by both, particularly on his conceptualization of civil society and the state. Consequently, it would be useful to start from Marx. He espoused his ideas on civil society in his writings such as "*On the Jewish Question*", "*Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*" and "*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*". Marx used civil society in his early writings to denote the change from feudal to capitalist society. He defined civil society as the arena of selfish and aggressive materialism, of the freedom and choice in the capitalist market, of capitalist exploitative property relations, of the arena of class struggle. He insisted that civil society arose from the destruction of medieval society, which had no clear objective distinction between the state and civil society owing to the unity that prevailed between the Catholic Church and the medieval Roman Empire.

Marx adapted Hegel's formulation of the distinction between the state and civil society by denying the universal role of the state and insisting that the state expressed the manifestation and condensation of the class struggle in the civil society. This discovery compelled Marx to devote his life's work to undertake an anatomy of civil society through a critique of classical and liberal political economy. The differentiation between state and civil society was actually a pre-condition for Marx's analysis of capitalism, which would require a deprivation of the Hegelian bourgeois rationality of its universal benevolence (Wood, 2003).

Marx was quite early in recognizing the emerging separation between the state and civil society which used to be fused under feudalism, cemented by mutual loyalty to the Church

and ecclesiastical officials exercising feudal authority in their domains. Only under capitalism did this separation emerge in bold relief but yet with constant interaction between them. The patterns, implications and outcomes of this relationship between the two realms is the central focus of this paper. When Marx declared that “the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie”, he was referring to this complex relationship, the various strands of which later Marxist theorists, like Gramsci, were left to explore. As Wood (2003, 239) correctly observed;

The very particular modern conception of 'civil society' – a conception that appeared systematically for the first time in the eighteenth century - is something quite distinct from earlier notions of 'society': civil society represents a separate sphere of human relations and activity, differentiated from the state but neither public nor private or perhaps both at once, embodying not only a whole range of social interactions apart from the private sphere of the household and the public sphere of the state, but more specifically a network of distinctively economic relations, the sphere of the market place, the arena of production, distribution and exchange.

The relationship, patterns and mutual roles in the dynamics between the state and civil society under capitalism is unique and distinct from previous modes of production. The bourgeois revolutions that swept across Europe from the 17th century smashed the feudal state and in its place established the capitalist state, a hegemonic state to protect and best serve the interest of the capitalist class. The meaning of the English Civil War precisely was to establish the ascendancy of the capitalist state and political economy over the feudal mode. The distance between Kings Charles 1 and Charles 11 was also the precise measure of the degradation of the English Crown as the crucible of political authority during the transition from feudalism to capitalism. It marked the transfer of real political power not only from the king to Parliament but also from the Crown to the emerging bourgeois class represented, at the executive level, by the Prime Minister and within the legislative domain by the House of Commons.

Even the actual legislative role was wrested from the House of Lords, the king's peers, by the Commons controlled by the elements of the new economically dominant bourgeois class. It was a violent process, which peaceful negotiation could not halt, the price of which was the glorious head, but not the Crown, of King Charles 1, but nonetheless rendered the Crown hollow. This process of transition is what Gramsci meant when he asserted that the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism involved consolidating the new economic order on behalf of the ascending class including the denigration of the institution of the Crown. Consequently, the transformation of the ruling class manifested itself in a struggle to secure the domination of a wholly new society through a domination of the new form of property in the means of production. That was the economic essence of the English Civil War, the replacement of the political and juridical conditions of feudal exploitation with conditions facilitating capitalist exploitation (Katz, 1993, 378-9).

The English bourgeoisie was involved in a struggle on two fronts, to wrest both political and economic power from the Crown, to achieve which purpose it cultivated, recruited and

obtained the support and collaboration of the peasantry and serfs, successfully convincing them that it was a struggle for their emancipation. In reality however it was only a transfer of the chains of servitude from one set of masters to another. The complexity of the strands of that transition and its implications was what Gramsci set out to explore, in a somewhat different dimension in relation to socialist revolutionary strategy. Gramsci's primary concern was to deal with the question why the socialist revolution occurred in economically backward Russia rather than the more advanced west as well as the possibility of such a momentous event occurring in the capitalist west. He located the problem as well as the possible solution in the level of development of civil society and the nature of its relationship and interactions with the state. The success of a socialist revolution in the west required a different kind of struggle and strategy, which was precisely what Gramsci formulated in his theory of civil society.

Gramsci's reformulation and revival of the concept of civil society was to make it a central organizing principle of socialist theory and strategy for revolution. The essence of this new formulation was to acknowledge the complexity of political power which orthodox Marxism may have taken for granted regarding the possibility of revolutionary transformation of the parliamentary or constitutional states of the West. He was the first to recognize this difference and contrast it with the more openly coercive autocracies of the East. The challenge was supplanting or transforming “*a system of class domination in which class power has no clearly visible point of concentration in the state but is diffused throughout society and its cultural practices*” (Wood, 2003 241). Gramsci therefore recognized the need to appropriate the concept of civil society to deal with a new terrain and a new kind of struggle which would take the battle against capitalism not only at the level of economic deprivations but also its cultural and ideological roots on a daily basis.

Political power, the exercise of it, and its retention with all the freedom, rights and liberties of the citizens in liberal society, is far more complex than the ties of domination between serfs/peasants and their lords under feudalism. With the diffusion of political power, they became gradually refined and relied less on autocratic coercion but rather more on the active support of the dominated and exploited classes, a phenomenon Gramsci tagged 'hegemony', as opposed to direct domination. He distinguished between civil society and political society of the state and located the two in the superstructure. Referring to them both as 'levels' and belonging to the 'superstructure' could convey two meanings, first, maintaining the orthodox Marxist and First International 'base' and 'superstructure' divide, and, second, introducing a new theoretical schema – the economic, political and ideological levels, an idea explored further and developed into a regional theory of levels by Louis Althusser (1970) and Nicos Poulantzas (1978).

Furthermore, defining civil society as the “*ensemble of organisms commonly called private*” (Gramsci, 1999, 144) would mean dividing the society into just two realms of civil society and the state, as distinct from the Hegelian three-fold schema. From this conceptualization the family is fused with civil society, and accordingly plays a role in the institution of ideological function of class hegemony. Ordinarily the state functions by direct domination or command

or coercion through the deployment of its coercive state apparatuses. Such is the situation or experience when the civil society is undeveloped, primordial or gelatinous. However, such deployment of force becomes a superfluity as civil society develops a national culture and an ethical state evolves requiring citizens to live by generally acquired moral standards and culture.

In the East the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one State to the next, it goes without saying—but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaissance of each individual country (Gramsci, 1999, 494).

It is ideological sturdiness, through the effective deployment of both ideological and coercive state apparatuses (Gramsci 1999, Althusser (2005), Poulantzas, 1978), that defends and sustains the state against both domestic and external threats, making the use of force unnecessary. With the further development of civil society, the state becomes more secure and the entire society more stable. It is this stage of the development of civil society that provides the fortresses and earthworks that guide and defend the state. Such a situation gives the assurance of not only the economic development but also political stability. It is therefore a measure of the weakness of civil society for the system to experience socio-political instability. Protectionism and economic nationalism are concepts associated with the cooperative or positive interaction between the state and civil society in both the state and the international political economy. In the same vein the concept of Interventionist State is of economic origin, and is connected with tendencies supporting protection and economic nationalism as well as the advancement and promotion of the national economy within the international competitive environment. Indeed, it is this competitive international struggle that is meant by the term “international anarchism”. It is a dialectical process of constant interaction between the political and the economic in the advancement of the national interest aided by both coercive and ideological apparatuses.

Gramsci makes a sumptuous distinction between the coercive and ideological apparatuses that stabilize both the state and civil society. The former represent force while the latter provide the system of hegemony, which he defined as ruling with the consent of the ruled not just through periodic elections but by accepting, imbibing and living by the ethical values and culture that have been established for the citizens by the state and civil society. The relationship between the state and civil society is not as straightforward and simple as has been presented here, for which reason he recognizes a “*struggle between civil society and political society in a specific historical period*” (Gramsci, 1999, p. 506). It should be borne in mind that Gramsci's theory of civil society was designed as or intended to serve as a strategy for effectively tackling and possibly destroying the private-property-oriented capitalist civil society to pave the way for a socialist revolution.

The discovery that the “*ruling class did not have to resort to force to maintain its dominance*” has been identified as the core of Gramsci's theory (McLellan, 1980, 185). A regulated society

would involve the state acting as “night-watchman” with the use of coercive instruments to secure obedience, loyalty and civility but with the emergence of numerous civil society organizations or groups playing the role of ideological indoctrination state coercion gradually becomes less visible in the process of social regulation. The model has been illustrated by Anderson (2017) thus:

Hegemony	Domination
Consent	Coercion/Force
Civil Society	State
Fortresses/Earthworks	Primordial/Gelatinous
West	East/Third World
Stability	Revolution/Instability

On the role of the state Gramsci presents the equation that: “*State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion*”. The establishment of hegemony does not make the state lose its coercive capabilities, but during the transition a process is set in motion in which the state becomes less coercive as cultural or ideological hegemony takes ascendancy. Under such conditions it “*is possible to imagine the coercive element of the State withering away by degrees, as ever-more conspicuous elements of regulated society (or ethical State or civil society) make their appearance*” (Gramsci, 1999, 532).

Authoritarian or forceful state intervention is usually an undesirable economic phenomenon in a liberal society, a process that passes through different phases from the gelatinous to the formidable earthworks. Eventually the ethical or interventionist or regulatory state replaces the night-watchman authoritarian state as civil rule by hegemonic adaptation gains preeminence over domination. Gramsci recognizes a multiplicity of private organizations made up of two parts, “natural” (family) and voluntary or contractual (associations independent of government participation), which constitute the hegemonic ideological apparatuses of civil society. These numerous institutions include the political party, the intellectuals, the family, media, etc. A complementary model in which the state also plays an ideological role has been sketched by Anderson (2017) thus:

State	Civil Society
=	=
Political Hegemony	Civil Hegemony

The state balances the various interests struggling against each other for hegemonic control in civil society while also complementing ideological stability of the society as an educator, by struggling against “*social dangerousness*”, acting as a civilizing institution, as an instrument of rationalization, a rewarder of good conduct, creator of the “*collective man*”, and thus “*turning necessity and coercion into freedom*” (Gramsci, 1999, p. 502). In acting as producers of a new hegemonic culture and as defenders of the existing order the “*superstructures of civil society are like the trench systems of modern warfare*”, which structures are the state or political society and civil society functioning together (Gramsci, 1999, 489).

These diverse tendencies may combine in various ways, and in fact have so combined. Naturally liberals (“economists”) are for the “State as *veilleur de nuit*”, and would like the historical initiative to be left to civil society and to the various forces which spring up there—with the “State” as guardian of “fair play” and of the rules of the game. Intellectuals draw very significant distinctions as to when they are liberals and when they are interventionists (they may be liberals in the economic field and interventionists in the cultural field, etc.). The Catholics would like the State to be interventionist one hundred per cent in their favour; failing that, or where they are in a minority, they call for a “neutral” State, so that it should not support their adversaries (Gramsci, 1999, 532).

A multiplicity of combinations of natural society, civil society and political society (or the state) produce diverse types of society, such as liberal, socialist, welfarist, interventionist, developmental, predatory, etc. Sometimes the state becomes interventionist on behalf of a particular fraction of the ruling class or the exploited classes but at other times exercises relative autonomy from the struggles in the civil society. Civil society could also align with the state in defence of a particular economic system like liberalism or socialism, when it is threatened or confront the state in defence of civil rights for the citizens, or environmental protection, etc. Family sometimes also plays a role in determining the pattern of government structure and ideological hegemony. There's also the expectation or even struggle launched by segments of civil society for the state to act in its interest or remain neutral and only enforce the rules. Such is the fluidity of relations between natural society, civil society and political society. The particular pattern that relationship assumes at any particular historical moment or conjuncture in a nation is what needs to be studied in order to define the politics of that nation-state.

Larry Diamond

Like Hegel, Diamond could be classified as a liberal scholar. What that signifies is the ideological persuasion that informed his thought as well as the ethical construct, content and values which he sought to defend. Also, like Hegel he advanced a tripartite theory of the modern social formation, i.e. the state, civil society and society in general. It is noteworthy however, that his concept of “society in general” appears to be a comprehensive formulation that encompasses the state, civil society as well as all other institutions or groupings outside the organized realm he calls civil society. This slightly diverges from Hegel's natural society, which refers to the family. To Diamond civil society meant the realm of organised social life that is “open, voluntary, self-governing, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules”. It is distinct from society in general in that it involves citizens collectively and voluntarily organized in the public sphere to express their interests, passions, preferences, to exchange information and ideas, to achieve collective goals, to compete with each other for state attention, to make demands on the state, to advance and protect the interests of their members, to improve the structure and functioning of the state, and to hold state officials accountable (Diamond, 1997).

Civil society is not one that sprang up naturally but is rather voluntarily or consciously organised with particular objectives in mind either for the advancement of the entire society or

the peculiar interest of their members. His distinction between civil society and “society in general” would still leave a huge fraction outside the realm of organised and active groups. In other words, families and the unemployed, to the extent that they have no organisational base, remain outside civil society. This is of interest to this paper as Nigeria parades a very huge population of unemployed citizens, street beggars and a large horde of hawkers. Be that as it may the idea of being “bound by a legal order” would mean operating on the basis of legal boundaries set by the state. This would raise questions of legal constraints that could impede freedom of action, particularly on the part of labour, which might appear to be the actual target. Diamond's conceptualisation of civil society excludes the individualistic and inward-looking family life or religious worship centres as well as the political society which he associated with political parties and campaign organisations (Diamond, 1997).

First, it is instructive to note that he designates as “democracies” a particular set of states, i.e. the liberal democracies, an ideological appropriation common with liberal scholars which has been flawed. Macpherson's (1972) classification into liberal, socialist and Third World democracies would be analytically more appropriate. Second, civil society as an intermediary phenomenon makes it clearer, but the conflation of political parties with the state, probably because they engage in political activities such as campaigns muddles up the trichotomous schema. Though political parties place members and compose the membership of the legislative and executive institutions they really do not belong to those institutions that have exclusive legal right to exercise political authority. That also provides them with the leverage to exercise relative autonomy. Political parties are not in any position to exercise such authority, but at best can only pressurize or influence actors in the state and that makes their inclusion in political society or the state rather misleading. Political party activities belong more to civil society than political society or the state. Winning positions “for themselves” within the state does not really mean they belong to that state institution, as those that have been so placed, more often than not exercise relative autonomy from the political parties that provided the platform for them. For the reason stated here this paper would treat political parties as civil society organisations. Explaining his compartmentalization of civil society further he states that:

Civil society encompasses a vast array of organizations, formal and informal. These include (1) economic (productive and commercial associations and networks); (2) cultural (religious, ethnic, communal, and other institutions and associations that defend collective rights, values, faiths, beliefs, and symbols); (3) informational and educational, devoted to the production and dissemination (whether to profit or not) of public knowledge, ideas, news, and information; (4) interest groups, which seek to advance or defend the common functional or material interests of their members (for example, trade unions, associations of veterans and pensioners, and professional groups); (5) developmental organizations, which pool individual resources and talents to improve the infrastructure, institutions, and quality of life of the community; (6) issue-oriented movements (for example, for environmental protection, land reform, consumer protection, and the rights of women, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, the disabled, and other victims of discrimination and abuse); and (7) civic groups, which seek (in non-partisan fashion) to improve the political system and make it more democratic (for

example, working for human rights, voter education and mobilization, election monitoring, and exposure and reform of corrupt practices).

It is noteworthy that political parties are not mentioned under any of these categories, reinforcing his assertion that they belong to the political society or the state. This line of thought has not received universal acclaim, except under certain conditions, such as Apartheid South Africa, settler colonialism generally or the party in socialist states. Democratization involves a process of detaching the political party from the state (Matshiqi, n. d.). The National Democratic Institute (2014) equates political parties with civic groups all playing key roles in developing and sustaining democracy rather than being fused with the state. Part of the problem may have stemmed from the characterization of the state as political society, which would require a clear distinction between the two as deployed by Hegel, Gramsci and Diamond.

His sevenfold classification of civil society comprises economic groups, cultural associations, informational and educational groups, interest groups, developmental organizations, issue-oriented movements and civic groups. More significant however is his complete alienation of anomic groups from civil society arguing that by carrying arms to fight and conquer or subdue the state and denigrate its authority and the rule of law such terrorist or non-conformist groups cannot be part of civil society. The role of civil society in the defence of the state, through its ideological instruments, draws its significance from this assertion. Non-conformist, radical, terrorist and militant groups have to be excluded from civil society as they constitute a threat to liberal democracy, capitalism and the neoliberal state.

Examining the position of civil society relative to the state Hueter (2003) though put the state as first among equals nonetheless identified some mutually beneficial areas between the two realms, as civil society in developing countries needs several fundamental concessions from government. It is these concessions or civic space that enables civic society organisations to operate freely. A sympathetic government is necessary for the existence and effectiveness of civil society. Without the cooperation of the state civil society would have difficulty operating freely and independently. It is however doubtful if this civic space is provided on a platter of gold. More often than not the creation, consolidation and expansion of the civic space is the result of a prolonged struggle and tends to become stable the more the state advances in economic development. In underdeveloped and unstable social formations civil society is often viewed as an enemy of the state to be conquered or suppressed, a disposition which ironically denies the state the ideological solidity and stability it could derive from the former, as in the advanced capitalist states. It is this struggle that defines the relationship between the two realms in Nigeria (Coleman, 1958, Sklar, 1963, Nnoli, 1978, Kukah, 2003, Ntete-Nna, 2004).

Conclusion

This paper set out to achieve some objectives such as clearly defining the relationship between civil society and the state, examining the points of disagreement on the role of civil society in the consolidation of the state, showing the dynamics of civil society in the character of the

state in any particular social formation and demonstrating how the state is affected, negatively or positively, by the socio-cultural divergences or cohesion in the civil society.

In conclusion therefore civil society and the state play roles that are mutually beneficial to each other in the process of development of the society. A state that introduces policies that are destructive to civil society would feel the negative impact of such policies. This is because the ability of the State to absorb shock or crises depends on the organization and level of social cohesion in civil society. The conceptualization and comprehension of civil society keeps expanding along different lines as society develops. Exploring the complexity and contradictions of the relationship between civil society and the state must take into cognisance the peculiarity of each social context. Within each society particular administrations or regimes display differing dispositions toward civil society which affect the process of socio-economic development.

However, from a Marxist or Gramscian perspective civil society in the western capitalist states is structured and functions in such a manner as to defend the state in periods of social crises, a feat that is achieved by ideological means. Consequently, for revolutionary change to occur in western societies an ideological battle or struggle is necessary as a component of the class struggle. This applies to the dependent capitalist states of the Third World.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing discussion the following recommendations are rather expedient.

1. States should encourage the development of civil society as a dynamic and robust civil society is beneficial to the state.
2. Civil society should continue to engage the state for concessions on democratization particularly in developing societies since the granting of civil and democratic rights does not come on a platter of gold.
3. Civil society should remain conscious of its responsibility to protect and extend civil liberties and democratic values particularly under authoritarian regimes.
4. Civil society should avoid being influenced by ethnic, regional, partisan, sectional, and religious sentiments or considerations in its struggles with the state. Each administration should be treated equally.
5. Efforts by the state to break the ranks of civil society organizations such as labour should be firmly resisted. Otherwise it could be rendered impotent and unable to fight for democratic and civil rights.

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