

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND STATE FRAGILITY IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

EDOGHOGHO OMOREGIE
Department Of Political Science
Faculty of Social Sciences
Ambrose Alli University
Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria
Email; omoregieedos@yahoo.com
(+2348035735313)

&

SUNDAY AIDELOJE
Department Of Political Science
Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Unizik)
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria
Email: sundayaide@gmail.com

&

JOHN ANANI A. ANETEKHAI
Department Of Policy and Development Studies,
Ambrose Alli University (AAU)
Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria
Email: dr.anetekhaijohn2525@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper analyzes how state institutions' activities can either lead to a stable or a fragile state which in turn can as well guarantee security or be a threat to national security in the system, just like the case in Nigeria which is the main focus of this paper. Failure in state institutions can easily snowball into state fragility in the system; this in turn becomes a threat to national security. As part of efforts in structuring this discourse, other possible courses of state fragility are identified and highlighted but emphases are placed on democratic institutions like the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary, and activities of all other sub- institutions under these major ones, considering the statutory roles of these institutions in democratic systems, the paper shows that, failure on the part of these institutions in the effective performance of their roles can lead to a fragile or vulnerable state, which in turn threatens the security of the nation. Democratic state institutions in various systems are saddled with enormous responsibilities. Paradoxically these institutions overtime in Nigeria are observed to be engulfed in activities bordering on corruption, ineffectiveness, legitimacy crises amongst others, these hampers the state from effectively exercising jurisprudence over its territories, solve problems emanating from unemployment, underdevelopment and effective conflict management in the system. The aforementioned vices, portends threat to national security. The paper utilizes the

qualitative source of data gathering, which includes Books, journals, magazines, internet materials and others. These are carefully analyzed. The structural functionalist theory is deployed as the foundational medium of analysis. This paper has as part of its recommendations the following: there is the urgent need to strengthen human capital development through well structured educational system in Nigeria, the need for massive infrastructural development cannot be overemphasized in the country, this will enhance the living conditions of the people. There is also the need for the political leadership of the country to aggressively fight the evil of corruption in both public and private lives of the people; this is one way of tackling the legitimacy crises political leaderships are facing in Nigeria.

Keywords: State fragility, National security, Institutions, Development, Government.

Introduction

The literature conceptualizing a fragile state may have commenced in the 1990s prominently, but the notion has been germane in the political economy of most states in Africa, South America and Asian countries. Torres and Anderson (2006:23) are of the view that, the process of state formation and building in most African states for instance, was riddled with conflicts, violence and uncertainties. Part of the uncertainties were the inability of these states to create strong institutions which are to cater for challenges of state development like infrastructure, building human capacity through education, providing gainful employment for teeming school leavers, effective agency to integrate and manage the predominance of ethnic groups in the state. Nigeria for instance is said to accommodate not less than three hundred ethnic group. Omoregie, Itakpe and Agazuma (2019:57) argued, that, a state like Nigeria with mosaic ethnic proliferations are bound to experience challenges arising from group actions whereby some of the groups struggle for hegemony while others exhibits fear for marginalization. The resultant effect of the aforementioned has a way of creating tension in the state and the inability of the system to create institutions or agencies to effectively put the situation in check; this can expose the weak nature of such state and consequently pose a threat to national security. Chizen, Mortinier, Revehill and Rothchild (1992:312) argued that, most Africa state that have at one time or the other gone through the route of crisis, taking the form of civil wars like that of Nigeria 1967-1970, Arms conflicts, Religious intolerance resulting in conflicts, corruption on the part of leadership and endemic poverty and frustration amongst the people. These are challenges that make the state fragile and as a result, threaten the nation's security. Crises are known to be part of every human society; these may arise as a result of competition for power, employment, and desire to compete for scarce socio-economic resources amongst others. Dorff (2000:12) opined that, historical antecedents has shown the level at which crises emanates from states, they attributed these mainly to power relations. This refers to will and method of power acquisition as well as the usage of such. It must be noted however, that adequate and institutionalized agencies must be put in place to check this factor in line with the ancient power maxim, which infer that power corrupt and absolute power corrupt absolutely (Omoregie 2018:46). Nigeria over time has shown its level of institutional weakness, this culminated in the avoidable civil war it experienced in 1967-1970, Where lots of lives were lost. Not too long after that the state had to grapple with the issue of militancy, hostage taking and destruction of oil installation in the oil rich Niger delta region of the country, in this scenario, the country leadership initially under the military and subsequently

under democratic rule, once again showed its level of ineptitude, resulting in the usage of military option as a way of coercing the people of the region from agitating for social and infrastructural development and employment of people in the area. Not until 2009 when the then government of late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua introduced a program he tagged Amnesty to solve the problem then. As at today, it is a different case scenario. Also, to mention are the activities of a dreaded terrorist organizations, the Boko-Haram, the Fulani herdsmen and other group involved in all sort of killings, kidnapping for ransom, destruction of property, banditry and other forms of criminality and sundry crimes. With the activities of the aforementioned group, the country leadership is called to question because of its inability to fulfill the core webberian functions of ensuring law and order as well as the protection of the lives and property of the citizenry. The absence of strong institutions in the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary to put in check the pressure emanating from the activities of these groups and other element identified in this discourse, has made the state fragile to the extent that the national security is threatened.

Conceptual Clarification

State Fragility

State fragility is a phenomenon that is coined out of the wellness of a state. When we refer to a state wellness, it implies whether such state is unstable. Evans cited in Osaghae (2007:7) describe a state naturally as a powerful and over reaching entity, that effectively control a geographical domain. It has influence over key agencies roles. In this sense, a state is powerful if it actualizes its primary or core webberian functions of effectively securing lives and property of its citizens. Hague and Harrop (2001:52) infer a state as a political community, formed by a territorially defined population. They further asserted that the subjects are characterized by its loyalty to one government that is expected to protect and ensure greater happiness for a larger number of the populace.

The corollary of the aforementioned conceptualizations are definitions of stable or strong state paradoxically, a fragile state refers to a state inability to effectively carry out its fundamental or basic roles such as the protection of lives and property, provision of amenities and infrastructure, providing employments and enabling environment for its citizens to be economically empowered and ensuring that there is effective maintenance of law and order in the system. Such states are also referred to in the literature as weak states, failing states or collapsing states. Griffiths (2006:23) opined that fragile states are states or regimes that lack the required capacity to muscle its authority to enhance collective decisions on how to deliver public goods. This implies that, state fragility takes society back to the hypothetical state of nature by Thomas Hobbes (1985:71) where lives were assumed to be brutal, solitary, poor and short because of the absence of civil laws. The effects of state fragility are devastating. Citizens in such states engages in large scale civil disobedience, there is the breakdown of all machinery of maintaining law and order resulting in vices such as insurgency, terrorism, amongst others in the system. Dorff (2000:9) expressed the views that, fragile states are distress states as such they indirectly provide opportunity for territorial expansion for the political and economic developed states. The implication of this assertion is that weak states provide opportunity for their re- colonization; therefore the western world capitalizes on this opportunity by deliberately offering friendship in times of need, this is amplified through aids

and other social intervention assistance tied to stringent conditions which on the long affects the future economy of the concerned states.

National Security

A state is assumed to be secured, if it is not in a situation where it loses its state sovereignty and independence which are core values, as well as its wishes to deter aggression or to be victorious in war if unavoidable. In achieving these Akpuru-Aja (2009:60) emphasized that national security presupposes the existence of a nation which shares consciousness, a people who have agreed to live and work together. Security is the direct opposite of insecurity and it refers to a situation of being insecure, unsafe and frightened with danger and the want of security or stability around the system, Nigeria's national security objectives can be itemized as consisting of the following concerns: peaceful coexistence, food security, sustainable socio-economic development; and democratic development, which involve strengthening the rule of law; creating a democratic political culture, and nurturing civility suitable for democratic sustenance (Jega, 2007:133).

Robert McNamara (1968:87) noted that the security of any nation lies not solely or even primarily in its military capability, but equally in developing relatively stable patterns of economic and political growth. National security has also been defined in terms of capacity to achieve reconciliation among diverse groups in the society (Nabon, 2012:223). Nweze (2004:85) defined national security as the preservation, protection and guarantee of the safety of life, property, wealth of the citizenry and measures to guard against threat to national sovereignty. Therefore, every aspect of the society is saddled with the responsibility to promote security. So, the nation security is the concerns of the state institutions as well as individuals, associations, political parties amongst others. The concept entails that all segments of the society are responsible in ensuring that security is achieved in the political system, though the state through its accredited institutions like the military, Para-military and police are statutorily empowered and commissioned to superintend over activities aimed at ensuring security in the system through the maintenance of law and order. National security is therefore, an all encompassing condition in which citizens can live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance, enjoy the protection of fundamental human rights; have access to resources and necessities of life; and inhabit an environment which is conducive to their health and well-being. Although total security is rarely possible, Nigerians deserve a strong nation with her fundamental values intact and her institutions and people secure. As part of the means for achieving these, all efforts must be geared towards the protection of values, independence of both territorial and consciousness and projects good humanity in a system. Reilly(2001:16) advocated an amalgamated measure enhanced by states, aimed at achieving mutual survival, coexistence and safety within and outside the state.

Theoretical Discourse

The structural functionalist theory is deployed to explain the relationship between variables in this study. Varma (2007:56) argued that the structural functionalist theory is a broad based approach which has its foundation from sociology and anthropology. It has a lot of proponents. They include Spencer, Parson, Moor, Milton, Almond and Powell amongst others. The functionalist is set out to interpret society or the socio-political system with inter-related

parts. In this sense the approach views the society as a whole in terms of functions. The theory is set to probe into the primary roles of states democratic institutions and how well it functions in the system. The theory assumes that roles are bond in institutions and social structures which are functional to the extent to which they assist society in operating and fulfilling its functional roles or mandate. It engenders society to function smoothly. The understanding of the functionalist approach here is that, Nigeria as a state is a system which has democratic institutions and agencies that represents the sub-systems with inter-dependent parts, these sub-systems must effectively contribute through its role, to the survival of the entire system and also make the system strong otherwise, the system becomes weak and fragile and may therefore lack the required capacity to sustain the survival of the system, thereby engendering a threat to national security.

Basic Elements of Fragile States

1. Weak Institutions

A fragile state is easily characterized and recognized through its weak democratic institutions such as the executive, legislature and the judiciary. Osaghae (2007:9) is of the view that developing states like Nigeria lack the desired strong political and democratic institutions needed to stabilize the polity. The corollary of the above assertion lies in the fact that, the Nigeria democratic institutions are seen to be neck deep in corruption and corrupt activities, they lack the required effective state economic strategy to enhance the living standard of the people to the extent that, poor governance, poverty, incessant break down of law and order, amongst others are obvious in the Nigerian public life. Being a state official is not seen as a call to service, rather it is seen as an opportunity to engage in primitive accumulation of state wealth for personal use. Members of the three democratic institutions in Nigeria have on several occasions been called upon to provide explanations for their actions and inactions. In many occasion they have been indicted. The prominent factor that drives weak institutions is corruption these takes the lion share of why the institutions in Nigeria are weak to the extent that nation building has become so impossible, overtime. Obama (2009:13) urged Africans to place high premium in building strong institutions that will outlive individuals and enhance the living standard of the people through people centered development strategies, rather than investing massively in building strong men. The call to deemphasize investing on building strong men for institutions is bone out of the fact that strong institutions can drive development, stability in the system, security of lives and property among others. Drawing from the aforementioned analysis, the absence of strong institutions in Nigeria has led to the loss of state autonomy in economic sense, in formalization, privatization of state utility to personal property, exclusionary rule, neo-patrimony and the politics of primitive accumulation by the leadership.

2. Insecurity

Another prominent feature of a fragile state is the nature and type of insecurity elements that troubles the state. These includes unemployment, political instability, lack of social trust among various ethnic, religious and social groups, bad government, inability to effectively exercise jurisprudence over state territory, thereby, leading to the recent conceptualization of ungoverned territory. The coast of factors that militates against effective security in the system has also been expanded by Dudley cited in Smith (2009:163) who argued that under-development in itself is an element of state fragility, in expressing this belief, he inferred that

development cannot be discussed without firstly answering these three fundamental questions which are : what is happening to inequality in the society, what is the state of poverty in the system and what is the state of unemployment in the system, the aforementioned assertion points to the fact that there are a whole lot of other factor like individual frustration as a result of not being able to actualize one's self within the system. These factors are evidently the root cause of the insurgency and terrorism issues presently being experienced in contemporary Nigeria.

3. Inability of State to Provide Reasonable Public Services

Government in every state is primarily created to provide fundamental functions such as basic infrastructure in form of good roads, constant and stable electricity, portable water supply, standard educational institution amongst others, to make life more meaningful for its citizenry. Aisedion and Omoregie (2018:221) argued that, though the Nigerian state have always made good and robust policies towards enhancing areas of human needs of its citizenry even if there are little or nothing to show for it. They further argued that corruption remains the core reason for the above assertion. This implies that, the level of corrupt practice amongst Nigerian policy makers and public officials are on the high side, posing a cog to the state inability to effectively perform its statutory responsibility of providing reasonable services to the citizens. Consequently, the state is weak or fragile to the extent that it has negatively affects national security.

4. Terrorism and Banditry

Another fundamental feature of a fragile state that has serious national effect on its security is the inability of state security institutions to curtail the activities of terrorist and bandits. Garment, Prest and Samy (2008:103) argued that, though contemporary terrorism is trans-national in nature but states must put machinery in place to ensure that the activities of the perpetrators of terror in the system are effectively checked. The inability of any state to create this measure, in other to secure the lives and property of its citizens shows such state as a fragile state. In this wise, the inability of the Nigerian security agencies to proactively engage and curtail the activities of the sets; Boko-Haram and those of the Herdsmen all over the country as well as bringing the perpetrators to book, show that the security architecture deployed by the relevant agencies are inadequate in strategy and structure, so, it shows the fragile nature of the state which negatively affect the security of the nation.

5. Strike/Boycott

The frequent resort to strike and boycotts by industrial unions in Nigeria makes the state to be vulnerable and exposes the government inadequacies in negotiations, commitment and ability of the state to heed to the demands of these unions is a sign of fragility. Croecker (2004:7) argued that states through its government agencies are to engage and plan with all sectors of the system with a view to ensure that all plans are executed systematically. In Nigeria it is a paradox, because the aforementioned attributes of effective engagement of the labour unions by government institution is absent even where they seems to engage, the government do not honour its own part of the agreement reached. A typical example is the agreement reached with the Academic staff union of university (ASUU) in 2009. The outcome of this agreement has not been honoured even more than ten years after. So also it is with all other labour unions resulting in the incessant strike and boycotts witnessed in Nigeria today.

The inability of the state and its institutions to effectively harmonize its activities in line with the demands of the various labour unions, resulting in the frequent strikes and boycotts, portrays the state, as being fragile to the extent that it possesses a serious threat to national security

Causes of State Fragility

Various factors has been adduced by scholars as the root causes of state fragility, amongst these are the inability of the state to come up with an acceptable power sharing formulae amongst the ethno-religious configuration in the system. Schraeder (2004:13) argued that crises may occur in multi-ethnic systems like those of the developing countries, if the power structure is not conceptualized to reflect the interest of all groups. In the foregoing circumstances, violent crises may erupt, like what happened in the African states of Congo DR, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi. Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Somalia amongst others in recent times. The violent crises that erupted as a result of power struggle between groups based on ethnicity shook the foundation of each of these states and there was near if not total breakdown of law and order in the systems, making the states fragile and constituting a serious threat to its national security.

Groups actions in extreme interest game can lead to a situation whereby the state becomes weak, Varma (2007:200) argued that, crisis within and between groups that makes up a system, that are naturally in the process of balancing and limiting each other's interest, have a way of snow-balling into violent conflicts, thereby exposing the vulnerability and weakness of the institutions and by implication the state. Another factor is unemployment and lack of empowerment in the system. As the say goes, the idle mind is the devils workshop, one of the economic indices for determining development is employment, when youths are gainfully engaged, the crime rate in the system will be drastically reduced and then this will create an enabling environment for investors both domestic and foreign to do business. It therefore implies that a system that lacks effective machinery for creating jobs for the teeming population of school leavers, the inability to also empower these youths, this will mount negative pressure on the system thereby weakening the state and resulting to being threat to national security.

Corruption is another factor that weakens the Nigerian state, the high level of corrupt practices in the country has dented the international image of the nations, to the extent that studies over the years of most international bodies like amnesty international, transparency international have always portrayed Nigeria as ranking either first or second in corruption index among comity of nations in the world. This has impacted negatively on both its leadership and followership in the country, resulting in leadership legitimacy crisis a situation whereby both the leadership and followership are in mutual distrust. Even the setting up of two agencies, the Independent Corrupt practices commission (ICPC) and the Economic and financial crime commission (EFCC) to tackle corruption issues has not helped the situation that much as the leadership of these agencies is sometimes suspected to be collaborators. Corruption in the public and private life of the citizenry has seriously caused state fragility in Nigeria.

The practice of Authoritarianism in any state, which involves violation of civil liberties, engaging in extra-judicial killings, violence against civilians and prosecution of an avoidable civil war, just like Nigeria had between 1967-1970, also, political leaders who use violence means to co-opt opposition or discerning voices in the system, makes the state fragile and threaten national security. In addition, Kaplan (2008:63) argued that a competitive election not well managed, in a fragmented country as it applies to Nigeria and many African countries where fragmentation takes the form of ethnicity, religion and cultural divides can place serious pressure on the state institutions and if not effectively addressed, it can engender state fragility and pose serious threat to national security.

The Implication of State Fragility on National Security

A fragile or weak state is of serious threat to national security. If a state is assumed to be secured, according to Akporu- Aja (2009:185) then such state must be in a situation whereby it is not in any way near losing its sovereignty, independence, core values the ability to deter aggression or to be victorious in wars if unavoidable amongst others. While on the other hand, Imobighe (1998:18) argued that security entails freedom from or elimination of threat not only to the physical existence of the state, but also to its ability to protect the generality of its citizens and provide a congenial environment for their development, enhancement and general well-being. In addition to the aforementioned conceptualizations on security, Kursim (2007; 24) emphasizes the role of other elements apart from the application of military power for the protection of the territory. By viewing security in a more broad sense, that is, security can be addressed if issues of education, good health services, culture, environment, values, employments, provision of basic human needs like shelter, food, preservation of ethical, moral, religious and historical monuments and edifices are effectively handled. This implies that apart from states worrying about keeping and enhancing the nation's security through protection of its territory, lives and property, it is also concern about other areas which may not necessarily come under physical security. These include social-cultural development, economic development, food security, employment and job security amongst others.

The high level of unemployment and lack of basic infrastructure in Nigeria in general and particularly the south- south part of the country known to be the oil rich zone of the country has been adduced as one of the major reason for the high level of youths restiveness, culminating to violent conflicts between the people and the government, the inability of the concerned government institution to effectively address the salient issues has in most cases led to a situation, whereby the state is viewed as being fragile in nature and the consequence of this is a serious threat to national security.

These factors also account for the high level of kidnapping, banditry, terrorism and other sundry crimes in the north eastern, north western and north centre parts of Nigeria, these has resulted to wanton killing and destruction of property, economic loses, insecurity amongst the people of the locality, shortage in food production because it is no longer safe for farmers to go to their farms, even the schooling in these area has become impossible because of the experience of the Chibok girls secondary school in Borno and another secondary school in Dachy local Government Area in Yobe states, where students were forcefully adopted by the suspected terrorist group in Nigeria, Christened, the Boko-Haram group in 2014 and 2017 respectively.

In the light of the above analysis, government is generally seen as a body saddled with the responsibility of creating institutions to principally drive the function of enhancing the general welfare of the people. Lim (2010:210) argued that the entire essence of government in the state is to preserve the lives, property, and formulate policies and programmes that will enhance the living standard of the people. The aforementioned assertion implies therefore, that state institutions are created in the system to manage certain aspect of the human needs without which the citizen of the system will not be seen as living a normal life, for instance, the executive as a democratic institution is amongst other things saddled with the duties of executing and implementing good policies and programmes that will have positive impact on the people. The legislature is another democratic institution established, to anchor law making and act as a check on other state institutions. The judiciary on the other hand, is commonly referred to as the last hope of the ordinary man in the system, the institution is meant to adjudicate and interpret the laws in the system in an impartial manner.

Having given a summary conceptualization to the three major institutions concerned in this discourse based on their primary functions, it is surprising to note that, these institutions in Nigeria democratic space are not seen to have fared well because, rather than its activities strengthening and deepening the state in terms of stability, these institutions, has contributed in no small measure in the level of fragility that have bedeviled the country, this is so because taking an in-depth view at the activities of some of the agencies under the executive, such as the Nigeria police, military, ministry and other agencies like the customs, immigration amongst others, are seen to be so immersed in anomalies like financial recklessness, corruption, ineffectiveness in the performance of its duties leading a situation whereby these institutions suffers legitimacy crises because the people lacks confidence in them, these are parts of the signs that renders the state fragile, to the extent that it poses a threat to national security.

The legislature and judiciary are also engaged in all forms of corrupt activities ranging from the legislators demanding for financial gratification in assisting ministries and agencies pad up or inflate its budget allocations, legislator assumes the function of contractors to agencies of government such as the Niger Delta development commission (NDDC). The judiciary on the other hand, that ought to be a potent democratic institution as it is in advanced political climes, where its pivotal role in enhancing democratic values through the concepts of impartiality, incorruptability and judicial independence, where landmark judgments are received based on the principles of fair hearing, equity and good conscience. But Nigeria desire more from its judiciary, this is because, judges has been described in many quarters as merchant judges, that market judgments to those that can acquire it or simply put, the highest bidder. There have been many cases where judges were investigated and subsequently indicted in Nigeria on account of illicit practices, corruption and sometimes judgments and granting of injunctions from these court are laughable even to the ordinary man. This is evident in the manner in which courts in Nigeria keep overturning judgment pronounced by the different level of courts. These activities are counted as some of those negative elements that weaken the system and render the state fragile to the extent that, it becomes a serious threat to the nation's security.

Conclusion

African states, of which Nigeria is inclusive, are found to be lacking in creating or building strong institutions whether political, social, cultural, economic and environmental. These have impacted negatively on its drive to achieve development in every sphere of its national life which includes the area of national security. Scholars at various times have inferred that investing so much on physical security and losing sight of other indices which drives development and human security such as, social security, job security, provision of basic amenities amongst other are seen as false security. In fact, it is an effort in futility to dissect security from development. These two concepts are axiomatic in nature, this implies these concepts occupy different sides of the same coin, it therefore connotes that, security and development reinforces each other in any system. Development is quicker in a system that has good security and security enhances Development in the system.

At the core of both development and security, are strong state institutions that will drive the desired national security and development. African leaders would rather build strong individuals rather than institutions, this action has retarded African states so much that development and effective national security has remain a mirage. It is expedient for Nigeria to begin to place high premium on creating strong institution that will take care of the political, social, economic needs of the citizenry and therefore, being able to tackle and resolve challenges that emanates from the system. State institutions; on the other hand, refers to a structure whose activities and actions are centered on means of managing and distributing public goods in the system. Harrop and Hague (2001:135) classified the nature of state institutions into two categories, these are: weak and strong institutions. They further explained that states institutions whose activities and actions conforms to laid down rules and regulations are referred to as strong institutions while on the other hand, those that do not conform or perform its roles effectively are classified as weak institutions. Barak Obama (2009:15) while on a working visit to Ghana, the then President of the United States advocated the usefulness of strong state institutions. He urged African state to invest its resources in creating strong institutions to replace the issues of strong men and weak institutions. He further, advised that, African should rise above the character of creating and sustaining strong men but should emphasize and build strong institutions that will drive its national development. Strong state institutions make a stable state and in turn guarantee an effective national security but weak state institutions breed's state fragility to the extent that it threatens national security.

Recommendations

- The right legislation to promote human rights in the system must be judiciously followed in Nigeria.
- The Nigeria political leadership should focus more on providing massive infrastructure to drive development that will in turn make life more meaningful for its citizens
- Employment and job creation must be looked into with sincere approach. State institutions should provide jobs as well as the enabling environment for business and private initiative to strive in the system.

- Corruption in both public and private life of the citizenry must be checked, condemned, treated as criminal by all, this is the only way the citizen can have confidence in the country leadership
- .The general living condition of the people must be of utmost concern of the leadership, hence, the state institutions must come up with achievable and time bound economic policies that will benefit the people on the long run.
- State institutions must be strong; one way of ensuring this, is to make these institutions to obey rules and regulations upon which it was created.
- The role of human capital development in any systems, institution and organization cannot be over-emphasized, to this ends; the educational policy in the country must be made emphasize creativity and technical education which will go a long way to cushion the effect of relying so much on only government employment and jobs.

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