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The Elite and the Weakening Capacities of the Nigerian State

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Abstract:

Negative epithets have been used to describe the Nigerian state since independence due to the problems the state has been confronted with. Some of these problems had been traced to the way and manner the state was created, developed and nurtured on the one hand. On the other hand, some scholars attribute them to post-colonial elite leadership failure. However, many of the said problems are persistent and recurrent thereby making it difficult for the state to develop the capacity to withstand the pressure of global capitalism and centrifugal forces arising from the prevailing elite politics. The seeming weakening capacities of the state to deliver the goods of effective governance exude in all that is wrong with the Nigerian state with overall impact on all spectra of the nation's life. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the linkage between elite activities and the incapacities of the state. It is within the analysis of these two but interwoven spheres that one can come up with strategies and policy options for enhancing the capacity of the Nigerian state. The central argument of this paper is that the elite by their actions and inactions tend to weaken the capacities of the state which demonstrates in concrete terms the inability of the Nigerian state to provide security and other basic needs of life for its citizenry. The paper concludes by suggesting possible and practical ways the capacity of the state could be enhanced.

Keywords: *Elite, incapacitated state, state capacity, state*

1. Introduction

By every attribute of state-ness, the Nigerian state today like its African counterpart is in the throes of monumental crises that put to test its capacity in all its ramifications (see Abutudu, 2005, emphasis added). These crises include: security crisis; industrial sector crisis; crisis in the economy (economic recession); political crisis (executive-legislative conflict or inter-governmental relations crisis); crisis in the agricultural sector; the crisis of restructuring the nation's federal structure; resource control conflict; inequitable distribution of national resources and contested citizenship; etc. These crises in part have been attributed to the way and manner the state was constituted and constructed, and on the other hand, the acquisition of political power and its deployment in the management of state's affair (see Obakhedo and Obakhedo, 2015). As a matter of facts, the political and socio-economic transition of the Nigerian state influenced by elite politics with intended and unintended consequences has given rise to socio-economic inequities and inequalities and a disconnect between the state and the civil society which exude in corruption, ethno-religious conflicts, violent crimes (such as kidnapping, armed robbery, piracy, smuggling etc), withdrawal of support from the state and so on and so forth see Obakhedo and Obakhedo, 2015; William, 2005).

Experience has shown that the proportions, varying patterns and dimensions of these crises are capable and indeed have questioned the will, strengths, and capacities of the Nigerian state (see Obakhedo and Obakhedo, 2015, emphasis added). It is against this backdrop that the capacity of the Nigerian state to deliver on its mandate of nation-statehood has been a topic of intellectual discourse in recent time. This is because of the traits and tendencies of weakness, incapacitation and failure that it exhibits. To this end, some scholars have specifically argued that by any attribute of statehood and state capacity, the Nigerian state like its counter-part in Africa in contradistinction to European and American counterpart is a weak and incapacitated one (see Onyeoziri, 2002; Harty 2001; Grindle, 1999; Nettle, 1968; Tilly, 1975, emphasis added), and others based on their research findings refer to this state as the: crippled giant, underdeveloped, weak, prebendal, decadent,

criminalized, greedy, *kleptocratic*, crony, irrational, illegitimate, rogue, failed and collapsed state among others (Osaghae, 2002; Doornbos, 1990; Nnoli, 2000).

This recurrent debate about the nature and character of the Nigerian state in particular and the state in Africa in general had generated posers and questions among scholars. Among the leading questions in relation to Nigeria are: What exactly is wrong with the post-colonial Nigerian state? Why does it look so "totalizing" and yet weak? Why is the Nigerian state so weak and incapacitated? Or, *why has the state become so helpless, incapacitated and ineffective?* (see Onyeoziri, 2002; Osaghae, 2000).

Some scholars tried to provide the answer. While some sought to analyze the incapacitated or weak nature of the post-colonial African State (including Nigeria) using the theory of extraneity, which seeks to explain away the fact that all that is wrong with the state (corruption, de-legitimization, incapacitation etc) is traceable to the power of global capitalism in shaping the manifest destiny of the Nigerian State as a peripheral capitalist formation, and the epochal consequences of colonialism (see Osaghae, 2000; Onimode, 1982; Nnoli, 1981; Ekeh, 1980), others argue otherwise. According to the argument, the colonial state was arbitrarily created or imported without the interests of the colonized and in contra-distinction to the state's counterpart in Europe (Osaghae, 2000; Ake, 1996). They further argue that the institutions of the colonial state - the bureaucracy, police, military, legislature, judiciary, education and monetary system, were imported wholesale from Europe and imposed on the citizens and the state was a tribute-exacting military state whose main purpose, far from the welfare of the colonized, was to facilitate the colonial enterprise through maintenance of law and order, forced labour, taxation, exploitation of resources and other objectives of global capitalism and colonialism (Osaghae, 2000; Ake, 1996).

The transition of the state from a colonial state through the merchant state (1960-1966), the war state (1967-1970 or the period Abutu referred to as a transition period), the rentier state (1970-1981), the austerity measure state (1982-1983), the militarized state (1984-1985), the structural adjustment state (1986-1993), the pariah-military state (1993-1998) and the democratic state (1999 till date) is a meaningless transition (see Abutu, 2010, emphasis added). As it appears, the governing elite or ruling class lacked the necessary credibility to reap much gain from the transition with the concomitant linkage and incorporation of the state into a global capitalist economy (see Abutu, 2010, emphasis added).

The Nigerian state being a colonial creation is a product of the conquests and amalgamations of the indigenous pre-colonial political systems (nations) such as the Edos (including the Binis, Afenmais, Esans, etc), the Angas, the Anang people, the Ebira, the Ibos, the Ijaws, Yorubas, the Hausas, the Fulanis and so on who had their well-established systems of government and administration that were at various levels and stages of development (see Natufe, 2006). This balkanizing act of the colonialist set the stage for the heterogeneity of the Nigeria nation-state which did not evolve like its social contract counterpart in Europe and the Americas (see Ebohon and Obakhedo, 2012). The post-colonial state being a victim of alien importation and being imported wholesale with a fundamental disconnect between it and the civil society in contradistinction to its European counterpart (Osaghae, 1998; 2000) was therefore on the path to perennial weakness with proclivity to failure and collapse (Akude, 2007:1).

Despite the heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian state and its concomitant defects, Nigeria at independence, was seen as a beacon of hope to many other nation-states in the continent as she held the prospects of a strong developmental state that would be a rallying point to others - a regional economic hub, political force and an African regional super-power (see Ebohon and Obakhedo, 2012). But some other scholars argue that in addition to the epochal consequences of colonial rule and the state's incorporation into a global economy, certain other issues of national development traceable to the politics of the governing elite tend to weaken the state. To this end, Julius Ihonvbere (2004) argues that the characterization of the Nigerian state can be located in the nature of our historical experience and the consequences of that experience; the nature and character of the Nigerian post-colonial state; the character, hegemony and accumulative base of the Nigerian governing (as against ruling) class; government's loss of credibility and extra-legal strategies of engaging the state by the citizens, corruption and compromise of the judiciary, and lack of the citizens commitment to uplifting the nation; and the nature of contestations and engagements within and between Nigerian social classes.

In light of Ihonvbere's contention, Nigeria that was expected to have been on the same developmental ratings with South East Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan) including Brazil at independence in 1960 is today bedeviled with an array of avoidable intractable problems that constitute all that is *currently wrong with the state most of which are* largely attributed to the inability of its managing elite since independence to put the country on the right path of development and on a sound footing (Ebohon and Obakhedo, 2012, emphasis added).

Some of them are worth mentioning here. On the issue of national security challenge, there seems to be an apparent state's loss of monopoly of violence as democratization of violence pervades the entire political space. The security situation in the country has reached unprecedented proportions despite monthly and yearly huge security votes and defence spending by the three (3) tiers of government. The array of security challenges that currently confront the Nigerian state threatens it to its very fabrics. They include: secessionist's threat from the south-east [(Biafra secessionists-Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Survival of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Biafra Independence Movement (BIM)], Islam-based insurgency in the north-east (Boko Haram insurgency), militants' threat in the south-south (Niger Delta militancy), ethno-religious conflict, kidnapping, Fulani herdsmen/cattle rustlers clashes with host communities in virtually all parts of the country including the phenomenon of armed robbery, piracy, smuggling, etc. In all of these, there are a lot of individuals and non-state actors who compete with the state in the arena of monopoly of legitimate use of force and from the

kaleidoscope of events across the country the state seems to be facing an open challenge to its state-ness by the elite and their allies. All of these tend to weaken the capacity of the state.

On the economic front, Nigeria is said to be recovering from recession and is still facing continuous depreciation of the naira which have increasingly made many Nigerians conceive of their day-to-day survival on the ability to earn hard currency as in the era of the Structural Adjustment Programme, SAP (see Abutudu, 2010). The reverberating effect is that many Nigerians have more than ever before resorted to migration to Europe (and especially Italy and Spain), Asia (especially India, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates) and other African countries where foreign currency can be earned, in most cases, doing all kinds of menial jobs, getting involved in drug and human trafficking, prostitution, harvest of human parts and several other crimes with many dying on the Mediterranean Sea on a daily basis and others subjected to various forms of human degrading treatment in their countries of refuge or in transit (see Abutudu, 2010). Nigerian citizens are also being trafficked locally on a daily basis and women sell their ones to be able to cater for themselves while others take to baby factory business.

According to Abutudu (2010) in the manufacturing sector, the crisis is manifested in a snow-balling process of de-industrialization as industries are confronted with the near permanent phenomenon of declining capacity utilization due to unfriendly business environment which had made many companies to close down while others moved their businesses to other West African countries such as Ghana, Senegal and Cote d' Ivoire. In fact, there are allegations of how some members of the elite connived with foreign companies operating in Nigeria by cleverly avoiding payment of royalties and requisite taxes into government coffers running into billions of dollars (see Ovuakporie, 2017, emphasis added).

In the area of public administration of the country, governance and the dividends thereof appear to be a mirage and an insurmountable problem, as issues of legitimacy, access to power and resources, individual and collective rights and entitlements, accountability, transparency, rule of law, constitutionalism, poor economic performance, equity and justice continue to loom large and frequently provoke contestations and conflicts (Onyeoziri, 2002; Osaghae, 2000, emphasis added). Closely related to this is the crisis of penetration, involving the inability of the state to effectively establish or extend its presence and authority over large parts of the country, especially the rural areas that lack basic amenities, and sector of national life (such as effective policing and security of lives and property, collection of taxes, customs and excise duties and enforcement of key legislation (Osaghae, 1998). There is also the problem of endemic and pervasive corruption the Nigerian state has found itself in a situation it has become incapable of fulfilling some basic functions of a sovereign government - security of lives and property of its citizens, and ability to provide reasonable public services due to appropriation of state expected revenue by private individuals who compete and contend with the state in the arena of monopoly of violence and revenue generation (Onyeoziri, 2002; Osaghae, 2000).

From the foregoing, one is tempted to believe that certain pathologies of elite politics are specifically Nigerian: ethno-religious conflicts; Islamic fundamentalism; the extant pervasive kidnapping; political violence; morbid corruption; arson; piracy; smuggling; ritual killings; hired assassination; electoral fraud; followership apathy; leadership stasis; parasitic statism; militarism; insufficient accountability of public officials; lack of transparency; and differential incorporation of ethnic groups with its attendant conflict among others (Obakhedo and Obakhedo, 2015; see also Sklar, 1991:85). As it appears, the governing elite had eroded the legitimate authority of the state to make collective decisions through state personalization or appropriation. In view of its current weakening capacities, morbid corruption and unabated security challenges, very negative epithets are being used to describe the Nigerian State like its counter-parts in Africa as being: crippled giant, a soft, underdeveloped, irrelevant, weak, swollen, predatory, prebendal, parasitic, precarious, patrimonial, neo-patrimonial, decadent, criminalized, greedy, non-developmental, kleptocratic, crony, venal, irrational, incomplete, illegitimate, rogue, fictitious, failed and collapsed state ..." (see Obakhedo and Odigie, 2011; Osaghae, 2002; 2000; 1998; Nnoli, 2000:3; Doornbos, 1990; Hyden, 1983).

In a nutshell, the two schools of thought on the incapacities of the Nigerian state, have come up with identifiable reasons for this capacity degeneration, namely: the way and manner the Nigerian state was created; post-colonial leadership flaws; global capitalism; political instability; contested boundaries; the nature of the economy; and alienation of the citizens and the civil society from the arena of the state (Onyeoziri, 2002; Osaghae, 2000). The foregoing serves as a useful point of entering the discussion on the elite and the weakening capacities of the Nigerian state but before any comprehensive discourse is achieved, there is the need for us to conceptualize and contextualize the discourse.

2. Conceptual Discourse

2.1. The State

According to Migdal (1988), a state is 'an organization, composed of numerous agencies led and coordinated by the state's leadership (executive authority) that has the ability or authority to make and implement the binding rules for all the people as well as the parameters of rulemaking for other social organizations in a given territory, using force if necessary to have its way'. A state has also been perceived to be in existence "whenever there can be discovered in any community of men a supreme authority exercising control over the social action of individuals and groups of individuals and itself subject to no such regulations" (Mahajan, 2009:133; see also Ojo, Obakhedo and Obakhedo, 2015).

In light of the above, a state exists when it meets the following criteria: "It has a definite territory and boundaries; it has a definite population (citizen) on whose patriotism, as well as the technologies and resources available to them, the strength of the state greatly depends; it has a government that following Weber's (1964) classical definition has a monopoly of force within a territory; and it is formally independent, meaning that its government is recognized by other states under international law and conventions as sovereign" (Osaghae, 1999:183). This makes the state no matter how quasi, weak or powerful it may be, formally equal to other states (Osaghae, 1999; Brownlie, 1979; Jackson, 1990)

2.2. State Capacity and Incapacitated State Defined

2.2.1. State Capacity

There are different dimensions to defining state capacity. We shall examine the four-fold dimensional perspective of Grindle. In the contention of Grindle, state's capacity is a nation-state's ability to:

"Set and enforce the broad sets of rules that govern economic and political interactions...to ensure the stable functioning of authoritative institutions (institutional capacity); "manage macro-economic policy and analyze economic policy options more generally (technical capacity); "deliver goods and services such as public health and education, provide physical infrastructure and carry out the normal administrative functions of government such as revenue collection, necessary economic regulation, and information management (administrative capacity); and, "respond to societal demands, allow for channels to represent societal interests, and corporate social participation in decision making and conflict resolution (political capacity)" (Grindle, 1996:9).

Besides Grindle's four-dimensional conceptualization of state capacity, Mann (1984) also views state capacity in terms of "infrastructural power" defined in contradistinction to "despotic power" as "the capacity (of the state) to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm (Mann, 1984:189). Thus, from the foregoing, in a precise definition, state capacity refers to the ability of the state to govern effectively and respond to the daily challenges of governance through effective everyday interactions between government and citizens, rather than the broader rules of the game that comprise institutional capacity (see Grindle, 1996).

However, some of the theories developed by scholars to analyze the capacity of states are worth mentioning here. They include: Social capital theory; Ethnic heterogeneity and homogeneity theory, and, Relative autonomy theory. The three (3) are discussed in another article by both authors. Whichever of these theories possesses the sound analytical and theoretical relevance to understanding the capacity of the Nigerian state will more or less depend on an in-depth comprehension of the bases of Nigerian politics. However, a proper understanding of these different theoretical perspectives and their impact on the capacity of the Nigerian state will be much more meaningful when one considers the strategic elite perspective (Onyeoziri, 2002).

2.3. Incapacitated State

Defining an incapacitated state may seem problematic because of the controversy that such classification is capable of stirring up. But from the contention of Eizenstat; Porter and Weinstein, (2005) and the definition of state's capacity by Grindle (1996) and Mann (1984), one can glean the meaning of the concept. According Eizenstat; Porter and Weinstein, (2005) while discussing factors that predispose insurgencies contend that incapacities of the state grow out of gaps which have been created by the state and its managers (the political class and/or the governing elite); namely: security gap; capacity gap; and, legitimacy gap. To them, security gap exists in a state when the government cannot protect the citizens against internal and external threats among others and rebellious armed groups or criminal non-state actors may use violence to exploit this security gap as we have seen in Nigeria, Haiti, Nepal, and Somalia (Eizenstat; Porter and Weinstein, 2005, emphasis added).

Closely following the security gap in Eizenstat *et al's* classification is the capacity gap. A capacity gap is said to exist in a nation-state when the government cannot provide the survival needs of the citizenry – water, electrical power, food and public health, closely followed by education, communications and a working economic system (Sagraves, 2005, emphasis added). In the contention of Eizenstat *et al*, capacity gap can lead to a loss of public confidence in the government and the state, and then perhaps political upheaval and this sometimes co-exists with security gap or grows out of it (Eizenstat; Porter and Weinstein, 2005, emphasis added). In the North-East geo-political zone of Nigeria and North-Western parts of Cameroun, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, segments of the population are cut-off from their governments because of endemic insecurity arising from the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin on the one hand and the war on terror and ethno-political conflict on the other hand (Eizenstat; Porter and Weinstein, 2005, emphasis added). The last of the gaps as disentangled by Eizenstat *et al* is the legitimacy gap. A legitimacy gap exists in a state when the citizens are not allowed to elect those who govern them even though there is democracy and periodic elections. In such elections, there are usually manipulated results, fraud and violence thereby denying the citizens of legitimacy by choice and consent. On the contrary, a government that is perceived to exist by the consent of the governed, has minimal corruption, and has a working law enforcement and judicial system that enforce human rights (Eizenstat; Porter and Weinstein, 2005, emphasis added).

Therefore, an incapacitated state is a state that is lacking institutional capacity, technical capacity, administrative capacity, political capacity and infrastructural power and ipso facto creates a gap between the state and the citizens either because the basic elements of statehood are non-existent or are they are too weak to sustain the capacities of such a state.

Thus, a state that is incapacitated is not able to govern effectively and respond to the daily challenges of governance through effective everyday interactions between government and citizens, and the citizens are forced to either disregard the state or classify it as an illegitimate state. Suffice it to say that the above definition captures the extant position of the Nigerian state.

2.4. Elite

Pareto (1968) believed that every society is ruled by a minority that possesses the qualities necessary for its accession to full social and political power - those who score highest on scales measuring any social value of commodity (utility) such as power, riches, and knowledge (see Osaghae, 1998). These privileged members of the society provide leadership and are the main aspirants to and competitors of political power and privileges (Osaghae, 1998). It is for these reasons that Mosca (1939) describes the elite as the ruling class, which is "always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings", and the non-elite as "the more numerous class "which is "directed and controlled" by the elite. According to Perry (1980) in order to justify or rationalize their use of power, the elite take recourse to what Pareto and Mosca variously called "derivation" and "political power" respectively or the myth which they create in order to dup the masses into subservience. These myths or ideologies usually consist of "a set of general moral and political principles which the society at large will be prepared to acknowledge as enhancing universal validity" but actually aims at furthering selfish interests of the elites (Perry, 1980:56).

2.5. *The Incapacities of the Nigerian State: The Failure of the Post-Colonial Elite*

Over the years, the narrative by the political class and some scholars is that the failure of Nigeria in delivering the dividends of good governance is a product of colonial rule and the 'forceful' incorporation of Nigeria's economy into a global competitive capitalist economy. However, some other scholars while not downplaying the power of both colonialism and the effect of the international capitalist economy in shaping the manifest destiny and incapacitated nature of the Nigerian state, argue that the Nigerian post-colonial elites constitute the greatest impediment to the capacity enhancement of the state nearly six (6) decades after political independence (see Obakhedo and Odigie (2011); Osaghae, 2000; Onyeoziri, 2002, emphasis added). This latter school of thought has led to the delineation of two paramount ways of explaining the weakness of the Nigerian state - the first which is historical and structural sees it as the product of colonialism; while the second emphasizes the failure of post-colonial Nigerian elites (Osaghae, 2000, emphasis added). It is the latter school that we intend to examine in this paper.

2.6. *Elite Character and the Nigerian State's Incapacities*

The point of departure in assessing the Nigerian state's incapacities is the characterization of the elite. It is of paramount importance to note that some other scholars x-ray the capacity of a state from the point of view of heterogeneity of the ethnic groups in that country. To this end, ethnic heterogeneity and homogeneity theory of states capacity stress that states that are ethnically-fragmented tend to adopt poor policies and have weak institutions because of their ethnic diversity, while on the other hand, an ethnically- homogenous state possess stronger attributes of state capacity (Grindle, 1996).

The Nigerian elite are numerous but along the line of heterogeneity, they are diverse and they include the following among others: governing/ruling elite, political elite (political class), military elite, bureaucratic elite, economic elites, ethnic or regional elites, traditional elite, religious elite, industrial/manufacturing elite, agricultural elite, religious elite, working class elite, student unions elite, *etc* who in one way or the other exact some forms of influence on the political process with attendant consequence on the capacities of the state.

It is germane at this point to examine certain characteristics of the Nigerian elites that have over the years hindered the capacity of the state. From the foregoing analysis, Nigeria can best be described as a heterogeneous or ethnically-diverse state, and the weakness of the Nigerian state is situated within this context (Obakhedo and Odigie, 2011). The heterogeneity of the elite in terms of factionalization, fractionalization, fragmentation and segmentation along ethnic, religious and regional cleavages is central to our analysis of the weakness and incapacitated nature of the Nigerian state. To this end, it has been argued that one of the causes of the weakening capacity of the Nigerian state is the character of the state and that of its leading personnel (governing elite) who do not only see themselves as standing above the people, but also fail to see the state as deriving its legitimacy from the people (see Cabral, 1969, emphasis added). Certain characteristics of the Nigerian elite which tend to weaken the capacity of the state have been identified by William D. Graf. To him, the characteristics of the Nigerian elite are that:

They necessarily cohere around the state apparatus to appropriate it for personal benefit-both civilians and military; they are essentially non-productive. Thus, in a large measure, they relate to the state in a parasitical mode of relationship; and, they are fragmented, fractionalized, factionalized and segmented along ethnic, regional and religious cleavages as situations and circumstances demand (Graf, 1988).

To this end, Ebohon argues that:

It is often the case, that policy thrust of government reflects the interest of the dominant elites contending for hegemony in modern states. In the developing countries in particular, the state is privatized, political institutions easily submerge or dance to the drumbeat of the power elites. These states are new, fragile and lack a tradition strong enough to foist on it the capacity to resist manipulations by the dominant classes in society. The state and politics therefore are not only

central but constitute everything. Therefore, in a contest of zero-sum politics and politics of the stomach, exclusion tends to marginalize and alienate. In the developing countries of Africa, the idea of an impartial state, moderating the interest of different groups in the society is controverted by a large body of empirical evidence ... (Ebohon, 2006:137).

As pointed earlier, it is of interest to note that the state captured in Ebohon's analogy was vulnerability to 'capture' by individuals and groups that strive to fill the vacuum created by the 'withering state' in the era of globalization. But, it is important to note that the Nigerian state is part of the low-income countries thus described above.

In the light of the above, one reason that could be adduced for the incapacity of the Nigerian state is the emergence and behaviour of elements of the ruling class or the elite which in itself has increasingly cultivated for the state, the image of irresponsibility and unreliability in both the domestic and international contexts (Abutudu, 2010:354) occasioning the erosion of legitimacy by choice associated with competitive democracy and its replacement with money and 'mafia/militants' politics where there seems to be a decline of state authority leading to new forms of socio-economic and political expressions. This is traceable to the elites' capture of the state due to its vulnerability arising from its shrinking power and eroded legitimacy.

2.7. Elite's Incapacitation of the State through Elitist Politics and Elite Corruption

Even though it is not possible for us to ditch the extraneity theory, it is however right to argue that after five decades of political independence, the Nigerian post-colonial elite constitutes the greatest clog in the wheel of the state, and *ipso facto* promotes its incapacitation since the state as captured by them at independence is without structural roots in the society and thus hangs in the balance like a 'ballon in the sky' (Hyden, 1983). The corollary of this competitive elite politics engaged has made life for the average Nigerian is best captured by the *Hobbesian* state of nature that is *narrow, nasty, short, brutish and bestial*. To this end, many analysts reduce Nigerian politics (played by the military and their civilian counterparts) to grotesque metaphors as "political rascality" (Ihonvbere, 2004), "politics of the belly" (Bayart, 1993) and the "banality and vulgarity of power" (Mbembe, 1992a, 1992b).

This is truest when one examines the bases of Nigerian politics, especially from the elitist, godfatherist and prebendalist perspectives which explains abuse of government positions and use of resources for personal ends in terms of patron-client and patrimonial relations-which, according to Joseph (1987) constitute "the common thread underlying ethnic, regional and religious identities. It is in fact stating the obvious, that control of state power is the object of political competition in Nigeria where the state is the "producer" of all resources and benefits (Ake, 1996). This to him has produced an *instrumentalist view of politics* in which the public domain is seen as a channel for individual or partisan enrichment.

On democratic credentials through which the governing elite emerge, Nigeria prides herself as a democratic nation-state. In a democracy, government legitimacy derives from the popular perception that government abides democratic principles in governing, and is legally accountable to its people (Charlton, 1986). This rational-legal authority derives its legitimacy from the popular perception that the government's power derives from established law and custom (the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in this instance) which is co-terminus with representative democracy (see Weber, 1964, emphasis added). However, in Nigeria popular legitimacy is wanting. This is because legitimacy which is based on democratic core values, personal national experiences and the inter-relatedness between the state with its institutions and the civil society is lacking. Experience has shown that elections in Nigeria are fundamentally flawed and marred by violence. But contrary to the above principle, the elite grossly manipulate the political process which most times resonate in fraudulent elections with concomitant political instability.

On the issue of elite corruption, Julius Ihonvbere captures it aptly thus:

Nigeria in 1999 had all the features of a failed state: institutions and structures had collapsed; political spaces were suffocated; civil society was intimidated; and government had lost all its credibility. Extra-legal strategies of engaging the state were commonplace; the judiciary had been corrupted and compromised, and citizens hardly devoted any time to how to uplift the nation (Ihonvbere, 2004).

It could be inferred from Ihonvbere's point of view that the governing elite fails or refuses to capture the state and transform it from a weak one to a strong and virile one, the state then becomes a victim of criminalization and de-legitimization which manifests through endemic corruption or profiteering by ruling elites and resistance to transparency, accountability and political representation (Fund for Peace, 2009).

In a nutshell, the politics both the military and civilian elite that had presided over the affairs of the country play has exacerbated endemic corruption, prebendal politics, cleavage conflicts, political crises and instability, increased violence, religious riots, ethno-religious and sectional conflicts, military coup d'etat as witnessed in the past and even the 1967-1970 civil war and this has indeed engendered tribalism and ethnic politics with concomitant mutual suspicion between and among members of the governing elite (see Agbebaku and Aidelokhai, 2005, emphasis added). This accounts for why there is widespread loss of popular confidence in state institutions and processes with undesirable corollary of weakened state's capacity.

2.8. Elite's Incapacitation of the State through Lack of Nationalistic, Patriotic and Visionary Leadership

One way the elite had been blamed for the incapacitation of the Nigerian state is its inability to provide visionary and nationally-oriented leaders who will galvanize and mobilize the resources of the country-both human and material for the ultimate development of the country (Osaghae, 2000; Onyeoziri, 2002). It is against this backdrop that the elite have been

accused of lacking adequate leadership skills with the appropriate finesse leading to dismal performance of the various sectors of the nation's economy. In our contention therefore, such missing leadership link would have been the one with excellent administrative and personal qualities such as love for the country, moral uprightness, incorruptibility, sound-mindedness and confidence among others upon which confidence between the leaders and the led is built (see Onyeoziri, 2002; Osaghae, 2000). As a corollary, this elite's unpatriotic and non-nationalistic leadership gradually eroded the 'public sphere' which is essentially the framework for strengthening and deepening state's capacity replacing it with the 'private sphere' (Habermas, 1986; Giddens, 2008) thereby resulting in the personalization and privatization of the state (Obakhedo and Odigie, 2011) which usually manifest in corruption and prebendalism (see Diamond, 2004). These elite influences tend to weaken and erode the capacity of the state.

Another way the elite have been implicated in the incapacities of the Nigerian state is in the area of constitution-making. On the one hand, it has been identified that one of the things responsible for the weakness in the capacity of the Nigerian state is the way and manner the extant 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic (As Amended) was produced and handed down to the Nigerian people by the military. On the other hand, there is appears a growing resistance and opposition from a section of the elite to constitutional amendments that bother on fiscal and true federalism, devolution of powers to federating units (the states) and judicial and local government autonomies. There is a broad consensus among Nigerians across all spectra that these amendments if carried out would help deepen national unity and foster the capacity of the state. It is on this premise that there are arguments among Nigerians that a constitution must reflect an: expression of the will of a nation, the reflection of its history, fears, concerns, aspirations, visions and indeed, the soul of the nation and, "not merely a set of rules and laws regulating society and government", nor a mere social contract or even a ground-norm like the 1999 Constitution (IDEA, 2000).

2.9. *Elite's Incapacitation of the State through Failure to Provide for the Citizenry*

Therefore, one of the consequences of negative elite actions in the course of their running state's affairs is that such a state cannot provide necessary basic amenities for its citizenry on the one hand, and on the other hand, government would appear to be abandoning its basic functions of maintaining law and order, and securing lives and property and equally the responsibilities of ensuring and enhancing the welfare of the people including the monopoly and legitimate use of force. This makes the state ill-equipped and incapacitated to assert its autonomy which will secure for the citizenry, good governance, justice, fairness and development (Onyeoziri, 2002) which form the fulcrum of the main purpose of government. It is trite to note that the essential reason for the existence of any government is the general welfare and security of the citizens (the protection of the lives and property of the citizenry). It is a fact that it is through government that the will of the state is formulated, expressed and realized. Therefore, the failure of government is synonymous with state's failure. If the government is strong, the state would be strong and vice versa. The underlying interpretation of this scenario is the fact that many Nigerians across all spectra no longer see the state as an object of permanent obedience (see Osaghae, 2000; Ihonvbere, 2004). From experience and recent revelations on the activities of the Nigerian elite, it is clear that the state has been appropriated and privatized by the elite and the state in this scenario becomes helpless and weak in its capacity to *compel obedience, monopolize violence, and legitimately use force* in the face of criminalities, to make lawful order that border on lawful generation of revenue through effective taxation and collection of royalties for the smooth running of state's affairs (see Obakhedo and Obakhedo, 2015; Ebohon, 2006; Hyden, 1983); Osaghae (2000; 1999). A state that its laws are not obeyed by the citizens (e. g. ordinary citizens, criminals, clergy, law makers, security agents, traditional rulers, businessmen, and bureaucrats) can best be described as a collapsed or failed state or an incapacitated state (see Ojo, Obakhedo and Obakhedo, 2015; Obakhedo and Obakhedo, 2015). As a matter of fact, it can easily be said that the Nigerian state had been rendered incapacitated, ineffective and weak by a combination of the above that directly challenge state authority, since it appears that the state had been robbed of its ability and discipline to prevent threats to public safety and national integrity and it is assailed by active challenges to its legitimacy (see Osaghae, 2000; Ihonvbere, 2004).

2.10. *Elite's Incapacitation of the State through Exclusion of the Civil Society*

In the contention of Mann (1984), a virile civil society is an asset to what is referred to as the "infrastructural power" of the state with a greater proportion of a pool of resources (financial, administrative, institutional, human and material) that invariably, the state can tap from on its day to day governance, thus enhancing the legitimacy and capacity of the state (see Onyeoziri, 2002). Yet this vital partner of the state seems to have been excluded from the nation's political process in Nigeria by the nature of elite politics (military and civilians alike). The ensuing yawning gap between the civil society and the state with its managers (government, public servants and bureaucrats) due to lack of continuous intercourse of transformation between them (Osaghae, 2000) is contributing to the weakening capacities of the Nigerian state as the mass of the citizens are withdrawing their support from the state because they see both the state and government as illegitimate. The irreducible role of the civil society in relation to building and sustaining state's legitimacy as captured by Eghosa Osaghae (2000) is four-folds:

- To set the public agenda as emboldened in the common good;
- To set the rules and ethos of public conduct and governance;
- To mediate relations between state and society – harmonizing the organizing principles of the state with those of the society; and,

- To ensure that the state reflects the social reality and is committed to the pursuit of the public good which is unlikely without the guarantee of freedom.

Today, the legitimacy of the Nigerian state and its governments is being contemplated by citizenry because a comprehensive system of accountability that comprises of three forms of institutions of accountability; namely: *horizontal*, *vertical* and *external* accountability aimed at tackling the menace of corruption that pervades the nation's political landscape is lacking even while it appears the anti-corruption bodies *i.e.* the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and a host of a network of audit agencies; parliamentary oversight and investigative committees set up to fight the menace have compromised and politicized (see Diamond, 2004, emphasis added).

3. Concluding Remarks

From a cursory look at the incapacities of the Nigerian state, it can be inferred that the status of any state is a product of the actions and inactions of the governing or ruling elite which in our case has been traced to the pre-and post-independence unhealthy political competition between the nationalists cum politicians leading to downward spiral hurtling towards state incapacitation. This in part is responsible for the inability of the state in its incapacitated form to respond to certain challenges that include: entrenched corruption; ravaging poverty; security of life and property; conflict management and prevention; legitimacy crises, globalization and the challenge of human capital flight; human development and citizens empowerment; private sector development, etc. (see Osaghae, 2000).

Therefore, the central argument of this presentation from the foregoing analysis is that the Nigerian state is weak and needs to be enhanced in terms of its capacity and these challenges of course call for good governance on the part of government which is presently lacking in our system.

We dare need to add that this can only be possible if the elitist composition of the state and the attitude of its managers which epitomizes corruption and criminal politics is significantly altered and the state restructured to reduce its vulnerability to sectional capture and be transformed into a credible agent of distributive justice, since the nature, institutions and performance of the state are a crucial factor in any attempt to stabilize democracy and engineer national development (see Osaghae, 2000; IDEA, 2000). The political alienation and social exclusion which they engender weaken the capacity of the state to deliver the goods of governance (IDEA, 2000).

Lastly, a restructure of the character of the state will help resolve the problems in the political realm that bother on how to effectively structure the federation to accommodate the various groups and guarantee their access to power and equitable distribution of the country's resources thereby increasing the political visibility and relevance of the state in the life of the citizens (see Onyeoziri, 2002; Osaghae, 2000). This will engender development and enhance the Nigerian state's capacity.

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