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ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft/Leibniz Information Centre for Economics
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Stomach Infrastructure: Lessons for Democracy and Good Governance

Emmanuel Olusegun STOBER

*Bucharest University of Economic Studies
6 Piața Romană, Sector 1, Bucharest, 010374, Romania
stober.emmanuel@gmail.com*

Abstract. *In 2014, a new paradigm shift occurred in Nigeria which defiled the expectation of many social and political analysts. This paradigm was later titled 'Stomach Infrastructure' – a concept of inducing potential voters to support a particular candidate in an election, creating thus a new barometer for measuring good governance. To understand the concept of stomach infrastructure, this study makes a graphical comparison between stomach infrastructure and physical infrastructure, as they are both dividends of democracy. But to sum it up, stomach infrastructure is, first and foremost about the people's survival. It is a living and stress-free man that can enjoy the benefit of a modern city or world class physical infrastructures. Thus, building stomach infrastructure is about following the natural sequence of actions in governance. It is about understanding the bottom-top, gradual approaches in developmental strides. It is about carrying everybody along, everyone at his own pace.*

Keywords: *good governance, Nigeria, rational choice, social exchange, welfare.*

Introduction

Stomach infrastructure is not a new phenomenon in Nigerian political landscape, even if it was recently echoed by the shock victory of Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) Ayodele Peter Fayose over the then-incumbent All Progressives Congress (APC) governor Kayode Fayemi in the 2014 Ekiti State governorship election. There is more to Stomach infrastructure than just a simple analogy of some social commentator – as a way of inducing potential voters to support a particular candidate in an election.

Former President, Goodluck Jonathan, while speaking at a PDP rally tagged 'Unity Mega Rally' in Benin Edo state, said PDP as a party believes in stomach infrastructure because they must ensure that there are food security and job creation in the country. He also pointed out that any leader who claimed not to believe in stomach infrastructure was not ready to lead,

as “you cannot lead hungry people”. It is for this reason that his administration has worked and succeeded in cutting the widespread poverty in the country by at least 50%. Whether or not his claim is true, it is left for observers to judge the country’s situation.

While physical infrastructure is a long-term project, stomach infrastructure is short-term oriented. According to (Adindu, 2014) assessment, the contrary is that one cannot be emphasized over the other. Physical infrastructure is the vision that APC governor Kayode Fayemi religiously pursued in Ekiti state. It is an elitist dream of building projects of modern world – big classroom blocks with information and communications technology facilities, conducive well-equipped housing estates, big roads, big hospitals with world class equipment, big multipurpose centers, multinational banks, and industries.

Meanwhile, stomach infrastructure looks down to the people’s immediate needs: empowerment program for unemployed youths and widows, maintenance assistance to the aged, health foundation to assist the poor, agricultural facilities for the rural poor farmers, skill acquisition centers for poor unskilled men and women, loan grants for seed capital to enable them take off in little measure, direct food relief for the poorest of the poor, borehole in rural communities to solve water scarcity problems, establishment of small-scale cottage industries in the villages where the rural community can work and also acquire experience on how to produce minor things. Stomach infrastructure does not require a Doctorate degree in economics or developmental studies, nor does it need a power-point presentation in a posh conference room to be understood.

To understand the concept of stomach infrastructure, this study will make a graphical comparison of the stomach and physical infrastructure, because they are both dividends of democracy. The next section is a literature review, it connects electorate behavior with social exchanges theory, rational choice theory and welfare framework. The third section looks into a welfare state of Nigeria and how stomach infrastructure evolves over time and the citizenry view concerning level of performance of their government. And the way forward for good governance is discussed in the fourth section for closing.

Literature review

Voting behavior in Nigeria is largely determined by some form of identity factor such as family lineages, religion, and ethnicity lines etc. An individual voter uses ethnicity as the proxy for the expected benefits for voting for a particular candidate (Ajiboye, 2015). There is also something in it for most voters before choosing their rightful candidate – the exchange of social and material resources.

The Social exchange theory was officially advanced in the late 1950s by the work of social psychologists (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and in early 1960s in the works of the sociologists (Blau, 1964; Homan, 1961). Richard Emerson and Karen Cook further expanded the framework through a series of innovative laboratory experiments and theoretical studies during the 1970s and 1980s. The social exchanges theory is embedded with the core assumptions about the nature of individuals and about the nature of relationships. It is important to note that this theory is a bit more complex than a simple economic model of costs and rewards. The costs of social exchange relationships can involve punishments, the energy invested in a relationship, or rewards forewent as a result of engaging in one behavior or course of action rather than another (Blau, 1964). The likelihood that a relationship will continue cannot be determined by satisfaction alone. The level of available alternatives will define the individuals' decisions to continue or end a relationship. This is why some relationships may survive in spite of violence due to lack of better alternative. Hence, the determining factor to stay or end a relationship cannot be said to be a matter of how rewarding such relationship is. However, rewarding relationships are more likely to be stable due to the fact that extraordinary outcomes, in terms of opportunities, reduce the possibility of a superior alternative existing.

Exchange in the content of change is a constant phenomenon. Exchange embodies the basis of human behavior (Homan, 1961) and is persistent all through social life (Coleman, 1990). Social life is viewed by social exchange theory as entailing exchanges among social actors of a variety of valuable resources, including material goods, financial resources, and intangible social goods such as humor, respect or information (Dowd, 1975). In order to apply the concepts of social exchange theory to voters' behavior and voting outcome, this study will review the relative power of electorates in the exchange which may be conditioned by socio-economic status, while having other social factors in mind as well as the various types of exchanges

that are ongoing between the voters and political office seeking candidates with their campaign promises.

The market situation for political functioning can as well be explained by the rational choice theory that deals with the economic interactions between parameters such as resources, goods and technology and a voting outcome or choice. Rationality according to (Downs, 1957) “An Economic Theory of Democracy”, is the assumption that voters and political parties act directly according to their own interests. The central argument of this theory is that political parties in democratic politics are equivalent to entrepreneurs in a profit-maximizing economy. In order to maximize the profit of their investment, they are most likely to formulate policies they believe will generate the most votes, just as entrepreneurs produce products that will transform their businesses. Therefore, we can assume that citizens behave rationally in politics. Either directly or indirectly in many cases, interesting decisions about economic policies are made through the power of the ballot, this empowers the central government or it’s bureaucracies that are controlled by legislative bodies, or by legislative bodies themselves to be the custodian of the policies. In a democracy, the majority always makes the rule of the entire populist’s choice, both for political choices and economic ones. The central theoretical problem with the majority and their voting has been known since the time of Condorcet’s *Essai sur l’application de l’analyse à la probabilité des décisions rendues à la pluralité des voix*, published in 1785: Voting may be logically inconsistent. The reality of voting cycles has therefore given an awkward moment to economists that recommended legislation about economic choices, especially choices among alternative distributions of income or wealth.

The aims of the welfare state can be categorized under four general headings. It should support living standards and reduce inequality, and thus it should avoid costs explosion and prevent behavior that encourages moral hazard and adverse selection. Barr Nicholas (2004) presented the welfare state as “Shorthand for the state’s activities in four broad areas – cash benefits; health care; education; and food, housing, and other welfare services”. Marcuzzo (2005) in her paper argues that in order to advance individual freedom, the state must adopt an active role in social reform; the new measures resulted in the simultaneous introduction of old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, sickness benefits and progressive taxation. This is why it will not be out of point to say that the fundamental framework of any society is not just modern road network, railways or broadband connectivity. The welfare state is the key to good governance.

Social care, welfare, social infrastructure or stomach infrastructure depending on which name you most prefer, is as much a piece of economic infrastructure as are train lines, bridges or high-speed broadband.

Welfare is thus modeled dynamically by Mensah (2011) as a function of 1) private capital endowment; 2) a vector of public assets that transpire through the manifestation of the prevailing institutions; 3) household's characteristics; and, 4) household's livelihood vulnerabilities. The vulnerabilities of households depend largely on government policies in term of social infrastructures. If we cut social services for young people, then we see a huge financial cost to society, both in the short term in increased crime rates and in the long term in a less well educated, less well-adjusted generation growing up (Ramsay, 2012). This painted picture led to large-scale unemployment level in Nigeria, hence creating soldiers for the dreaded Boko Haram terrorist group in the northeastern Nigeria, created armed robberies in the southwest, kidnapping in the east, oil bunkering and insurgency in the Niger Delta (south-south), ethnic conflicts and political thuggery all over the country (Stober, 2015). This is why it is not surprising that Nigeria is facing a gross abuse and underutilized human resources with direct impact on national productivity and competitiveness. As a result, there is no particular economic reason to cut spending on stomach infrastructure in favor of physical infrastructure, other than an ideological opposition to the welfare state. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Ekiti people just had to discontinue their relationship with Fayemi's administration after an unrewarding 4 years.

The welfare state

The concept of the stomach infrastructure gradually crept into the Nigerian political lexicon. Almost all the elections that have been conducted in the country, irrespective of the level, were won and lost courtesy of the stomach infrastructure. Politicians who appealed to the conscience of the masses via their stomach always had the upper hand against those who tried to use other measures. Even the largely celebrated presidential election victory of Moshood Kashimawo Olawale, Abiola of the Social Democratic Party in 1993 was won via stomach infrastructure. M.K.O Abiola, as popularly called, was able to gain the love of Nigerians and enormously harvest their votes, not because of the policies he promised to initiate and put in place when elected into office, but because of his large-heartedness which appealed to

the masses. He knew exactly what the masses needed because he was once in their shoe. Therefore, he went around the country campaigning and distributing bags of branded rice and other edibles to cheer Nigerians. They were held spellbound by his seemingly bottomless pockets that he was ever willing to dip into and generously dish out the goodies that flowed to the long-suffering and economically disadvantaged plebeians (George, 2014).

When Lamidi Adedibu died on the 11th June 2008, many people reportedly wept and moaned in his house at Ibadan Oyo State for many days which in the opinion of (Agosu, 2014) is not because of the love they had for him but because of the fact that there would no longer be free food for them after his demise. Similarly, many people were equally reported to have lost their lives while several others sustained injuries two different times at the late Chief Olusola Saraki's residence in Kwara State, in a stampede that occurred when they were trying to collect their share of the free food Saraki usually distributed during Salah celebrations. Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria's former military Head of State also understood this idea of stomach infrastructure very well. He is famous for his generosity and people skills traits which kept him relevant in Nigeria's power play.

Even in this current dispensation, Governor Rauf Aregbesola (2015) of Osun State understood the concept of stomach infrastructure. A poll on voter preference conducted by Upward BAO Consulting prior to the 9th August 2014 governorship election, which was sought to know the respondents' views on level of performance of the incumbent administration in Osun State, revealed that 81% of the respondents approved that the incumbent Governor Rauf Aregbesola has performed creditably, citing the Osun Elementary School Feeding and Health Program now known as O-MEALS — this program provided for 254,000 elementary school pupils, capacity building, and empowerment for 3007 community caterers, backward integration to local poultry industry and farmers' welfare (Osun State Government, 2014). Forty thousand youths engaged through Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme O-YES (Osun State Government, 2013), road networks, free home base Medicare including eye treatment and surgery for about 14,000 elderly citizens, with N10,000 (\$67) monthly allowance for 1602 critical vulnerable elders without any kind of support from anywhere and security of lives and property, as indicators of performance. Hence, this gave him victory over his contenders, Senator Iyiola Omisore of the PDP and Akinbade of the Labor Party for a second term in office as the Osun State governor.

For that reason, we can confidently say that stomach infrastructure goes beyond the distribution of food items. It is about the people's welfare, employment generation and job security. Even with the level of development in the developed countries, no politician can win an election or be reelected back to the office by putting physical infrastructures above joblessness; there must be a point of convergence between physical infrastructure and the people's welfare 'stomach infrastructure'. This is why governments at state levels are now implementing some forms of social infrastructures in connecting to their citizenry, and their results cannot be ignored. The case of Osun State shows a correlation between O'MEAL and enrolment in elementary school; within the first 5 weeks of the introduction of O'MEAL program, elementary school enrollment increased by 25% from 155,380 to 194,253 pupils and later increased to 252,793 pupils at the end of the year 2012 (Aregbesola, 2015). Amongst the most important basic needs of life for the immediate survival of mankind in any human society, today is food. Abraham Maslow (1943) hierarchy of needs as revealed in (figure 1) articulates that food, as part of the physiological needs, is the most basic for human survival.

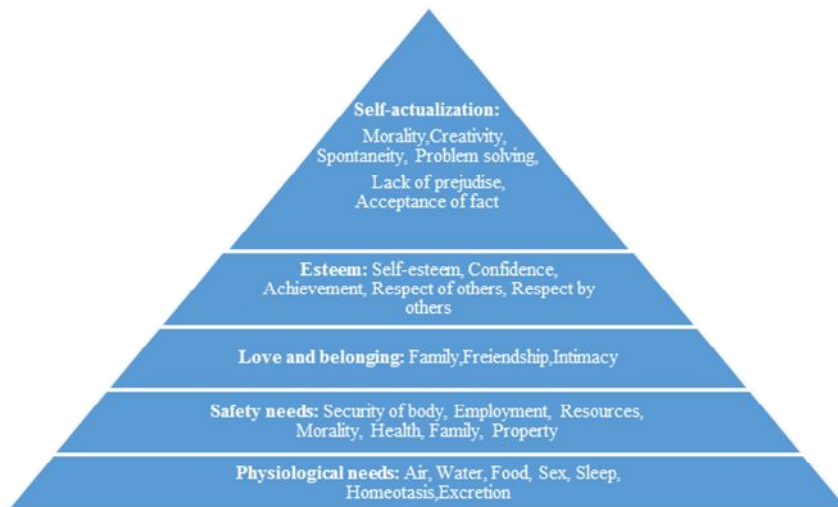


Figure 1. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs

Since man is said to be a perpetually wanting animal, ordinarily the satisfaction of the above wants is not altogether mutually exclusive. The hierarchy principle is usually empirically observed in terms of increasing percentages of non-satisfaction as we go up the hierarchy (Maslow, 1943). In a situation where 33.1% of the population is considered poor based on

2013 rebasing of the economy (NBS, 2013), the physiological needs will be the most appropriate for the government to first meet. A hungry man cannot be productive nor can he give his children the required minimum education except when the education is free, which is not the case in most parts of Nigeria unless you want a mediocre education. Only a well-fed voter will withstand the torture of the blazing African sun for several hours at a polling unit in the name of exercising his constitutional right.

Maslow's (1943) explanations and interpretations of the human condition remain fundamentally helpful in understanding and addressing all sorts of social and behavioral questions. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, psychologists have tried to understand humans. This brought about the theory of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud (1910) and the behaviorism by J.B. Watson (1913) and B.F. Skinner (1974). Both had tended to portray human beings as faulty machines. In their different ways, they had dehumanized our understanding of ourselves and what it means to be human. Abraham Maslow (1943) was dismayed by his attempt to reduce humans to mindless mechanisms. Thus, he was inspired to find what constituted positive mental health and happiness, not just mental illness and misery. Maslow (1943) argued that human beings are motivated by different factors at different times. These driving forces are hierarchical, in a bottom-up approach. Higher needs only appear after lower needs are fully satisfied.

It is this notion that most existing proposals equate welfare with well-being. Bernheim and Rangel (2009), define welfare directly in terms of choice. It entails a generalized welfare criterion that respects choice directly, without requiring any rationalization involving potentially unverifiable assumptions concerning underlying objectives and their relationships to choice. In the case where behaviors of interest defy conventional rationalizations, one must open the door to unconventional rationalizations. As a general matter, one can offer many unconventional rationalizations for any particular behavioral pattern, even when behavior satisfies standard axioms (Bernheim, 2009). Thus, it is essential to move away from a central planning process to a more inclusive and community-driven planning process where the government is responsive to the present and future needs of society. Ayogu (2007) rightly concluded that overall, the question is not about whether infrastructure matters but precisely how much it matters in different contexts? The Ekiti State context required a human face in policy formulation.

The introduction of the Teachers Needs Development Assessment Tests was another policy summersault of Fayemi's administration. Many of the teachers affected have been in that profession when he was still probably in his early years in the high school. You cannot subject people to computer-age assessment tests they are not used to without first giving them training to that effect. Many people will argue that it is obvious he used the tests as a camouflage to weed many of the teachers from employment in a state that is already plagued with 28% unemployment (NBS, 2011). Fayemi ought to know that he was taking the means of livelihood away from the very people he confesses to being serving when, in a swoop, he sacked 5,000 poor, rank and file local government employees to spite Fayose and Segun Oni. He ought to know that his action would not only affect the 5,000 people, but also all their family members who rely on them to go to school, be provided for, including feeding (Akeredolu, 2014). He also refused to pay the 27.5% Teachers Pecuniary Allowance (TPA) until very close to election time. At the same time, he gave priority to donating cars to people in high places. He defaulted in his promise to keep the Ekiti State University tuition fee low when he raised it beyond every reasonable level.

The essence of fashioning stomach infrastructure cannot be ignored; Ayodele Fayose explained his concept of the subject to the Ekiti people – as part of his administration's welfare program to banish poverty and hunger in the state. The welfare program is not just about food alone, but also about health care, provision of medication supply to the hospitals, eradication of diseases, clothing, and housing, which are the basic essentials of life, without which physical infrastructure will be meaningless.

The way forward

Democracy remains a popularity contest, and for as long as everyone above the age of 18 can vote, then the wishes of the majority must be taken into account to a significant extent (Macebong, 2014). Good governance needs to be rooted in the policy of the day. Good governance according to Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center (2007) is a normative conception of the values according to which the act of governance is realized, and the method by which groups of social actors interact in a certain social context. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of

society. The government needs to observe the eight major characteristics of good governance which are effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, consensus oriented, responsiveness, transparency, rule of law, and most importantly citizens' participation. All the citizenry must feel that they have a stake in the state – do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This includes all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, to have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being. With Good governance, processes and institutions should produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal.

The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance should also cover the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment (UNESCAP, 2014). As part of good governance, it is the fundamental duty of the government of every country to ensure food security of its citizens is met. Since industrial revolution always follows an agrarian revolution, priorities need to be set based on what is essential at the moment. A hungry man is an angry man, a sad one indeed. When a man has enough to eat and feed his family, then he can think productively on what to do with the excess. Hence, the invention of storage facilities like silos, refrigeration and heating, food canning and processing. Political office holders must understand the concept of social contract – a way of putting the people first in all your activities. Therefore, politicians should remain connected to the electorate after election victory to avoid Fayemi's type of pitfall.

In conclusion, I will like to stress that stomach Infrastructure is, first and foremost about the people's survival. It is a living and stresses free man that can enjoy the benefit of a modern city. Thus, building stomach Infrastructure is about following the natural sequence of things in governance. It is about understanding the bottom-top, gradual approaches in developmental strides. It is about carrying everybody along, everyone at his own pace.

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