

Metaphors of Underdevelopment: Reflections from Nigeria

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Abstract

This is not an expeditionary effort stretching out to obtain new data and expand the frontiers of knowledge, therewith. If anything, it is explanatory and confirmatory. By exploring for and collating known data, this work seeks to confirm what I already know; many of you also knew, but we are not being frank enough to admit it. Far from being developed, or developing, Nigeria is underdeveloped, as compared to the developed world. In this respect Nigeria is really underdeveloped. Under present circumstances, I doubt if it will ever develop.

Introduction

That Nigeria was a pearl state, beacon of hope and aspiration for its people on Independence in 1960, but now in ruins, is nowhere more compellingly, though sympathetically stated, as in *Karl Maier's* book, *This House Has Fallen – Nigeria in Crisis* [Published 2000]¹. This tragic collapse, *Karl Maier* and many other observers, have convincingly stated is due to leadership failure. By their actions and inactions the Nigerian leaders/elite have now completely reduced Nigeria to a failed state, despite the screaming self-serving rhetorics to the contrary².

It is the view of this lecture that to this tragedy, there is a drama – the drama of stating what nowadays has been called the “Nigeria Project” in the loftiest of ideals, while the reality is nothing less than what in effect, had reduced these lofty ideals, which are at once imperative and peremptory, such as peace and stability; etc to mere clichés³.

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Also as clichés the drama is that they evoke the most fervent emotions among both the leaders who reduced the Nigerian state from pearl to pariah status, and the subjects; nay, the victims, otherwise called the masses who yearns for development, but could never attain it shackled as they are by their false consciousness to their degraded circumstances. To that extent, these lofty ideals of unity, development, peace, stability; etc are nothing more than fetishes, worshipped by both the powerful and the victims of power, cynically by the powerful, and endured helplessly by the powerless. These lofty ideals do not in fact mean anything – but for them “we will die!, would be the response from every Nigerian throat; if you ask them⁴!

The staging of this drama was both spectacular and conspicuous in what some see as the best years of Nigerian democracy, the Fourth Republic [1999-2007], which is most grotesquely enacted in the high tango that went on between the top most actors in the Nigerian polity, now called Project by some political wordsmiths. These top actors were of course, *Chief Aremu Olusegun Obasanjo*; and his Vice; *Turakin Adamawa Atiku Abubakar*, now both of them sufficiently chastened; and destined to languish in ignominy.

Dramatic and perilous as this drama is, this paper suggests that this development, which in fact is both the cause and effect of underdevelopment in Nigeria, is neither uniquely of the present in Nigeria’s history; nor is it uniquely a Nigerian phenomenon. This has been amply captured and reported by Jean-Francois Bayart, Stephen Elis and Beatrice Hibou in their revealing study of the state in Africa, entitled *The Criminalization Of The State In Africa* [African issues series; 1999]⁵. It is stating the obvious that this drama is the major cause of underdevelopment, instability and will even bring about the break up of the Nigerian state as indeed would all other states of Africa, if un-counteracted by rigorous revolutionary action.

But the well-known and legendary survivability of the Nigerian/African elite or leaders, and the very phenomenon called the State in Political Science, have seen to it that in one form or another, things go on and on as they are. The state endures; and the elite survives. The elite engage in mere brinkmanship, dragging the state to a cliff-edge, but always managing to come back again. It is only the masses who suffer – or even perish, as when flare-ups occur; or when pestilence attack, which are both common and repetitive in Nigeria; and indeed in Africa as a whole⁶.

But Nigeria can be a more severe case; a more special instance. This can be seen when Nigeria with its enormous resources, both human and natural, is compared with other countries; countries with similar history and circumstances. Despite its endowments Nigeria does not seem to have performed any better, if not worse than others, with fewer endowments and potential, be it within or outside the African continent. This has been the fate, and the tragedy of Nigeria, and of Africa.

Because of this it cannot be but concluded that the Nigerian elite whose duty and responsibility it is to enable Nigeria to realize its “manifest destiny”, have betrayed this responsibility and effectively rendered Nigeria’s aspirations for development, unity and stability into mere clichés; being worshipped not because of their essence, but because, if one might say so, of their propaganda power.

Propaganda though it is, it is clear that the elite are willing to test mainly ours, but certainly also each other’s will to the limit – a brinkmanship of a most cynical kind. That is why Nigeria remains a toddler, after nearly fifty years of Independence! At the moment there does seem no prospect of affairs getting better, but by revolutionary violence. This lecture leaves the manner and nature of determining their future to Nigerians themselves. But it is in keeping with, and the fulfillment of my 40 [forty] years of teaching Nigerians for, and by struggling for a more just, developed and egalitarian Nigeria that I write this lecture in a manner that would reveal the true picture, and also the criminal conspiracy of cynicism, which disabled all of us Nigerians, thus to tolerate that our country, Nigeria to be a country “where anything goes”, to borrow a phrase from none other than *President Olusegun Obasanjo* himself!

Theoretical Perspective

Man in the state of nature does not need the political contraption called the State. But it is idle to talk of man remaining in “the state of nature”, if only because of Man’s very advanced biological complexity as a vertebrate, which decreed for it higher degree of need and ultimately a higher standard of living. The ensuing struggle among this very species to enable each to attain “a higher standard of living” inevitably inaugurated a “war of all against all”, and without intervention, life would certainly be “short; nasty and brutish”, as Hobbes had put it. Despite all its burden on Man, the State is therefore a necessity, if only to help Man save himself from himself!

And once the State has come into existence there was no easy way of stopping it! Cohen has emphatically stated this:

Give or take a few multinational corporations, the state is the most powerful organizational structure ever developed in the history of the planet. It literally moves mountains and redirects rivers, and it has on occasion sent untold thousands even millions to their deaths.

Cohen, along with other philosophers, political scientists, social anthropologist; etc, down the ages, has asked the obvious question: why did the state come into being? Why would Man tolerate it, despite its repressive presence and functioning? The state no doubt creates inequalities. Why do men accept state imposed inequalities? [Cohen...]

What compelled Man to prefer self-preservation rather than self-destruction, Cohen and others would argue, are what propelled men towards the state. Therefore, we may not need to go very far into the issue of the origin of the state; before we see that Man has already chosen not to remain the animal he actually is and is indeed destined to make himself the master, not the servant in the universe. For, man has higher faculty and more accomplished capabilities. It was inevitable that man would need; and he had evolved an ever more complex, more inclusive [and] more differentiated systems of social organization that has come to be called the State [Cohen]. In short, it can be said that the State came into existence to serve man; help him survive, develop and progress. At its most sophisticated form, the state is to secure the greatest good, for the greatest number of its citizens.

But this would not be without its costs; and it may also not be easy. This is because the perfect state does not, and may never exist; nor would a perfect leader ever exist. So, what this lecture is saying is: relatively speaking, how well Nigeria has performed since Independence compared to some other countries with similar endowments and opportunities, given the more than average endowments Nigeria has above its peers in the comity of nations. The question is: has the Nigerian State secured the greatest good for the greatest number of its citizen? If not, why not. And, why did Nigerians tolerate it, as it has no *raison d'être*, other than the citizens' best interests?

The Role of Leadership

The function of the state indicated above and the functionality, in this case, of the Nigerian state, both presume territorial base and a leadership role, as imperatives of the formation of the state; or indeed of its growth and development.

Of these two imperatives, leadership is perhaps the more crucial, for; it can easily be stated that it is leadership that shapes and directs; if not indeed, that which initially provided the very spark that kick-started the formation of the State. Most folklore accounts of the emergence of states and kingdoms in Africa feature gambits of some "great men" or women-leaders, as they are called, - as the cause. It cannot be illogical therefore, if we say that whatever Nigeria has or has not become, it is due primarily to the deeds and/or misdeeds of its leaders.

This does not mean that the followership has no role or relevance. It has both role and relevance. The leader and the led have equal but different relevance and significance: the leader leads; and his people follow. It is a joint venture in which acquiring the common good is the objective. The redoubtable *Imam Ahmed Ibn Fartua*, a sixteenth century and court chronicler of Borno, writing, no doubt about his master *Mai Idris Ibn Ali [Alauma]* 1580-1616 had written:

Thus every people rely on the imitation of its leaders. The leader goes before and the people follow him. He leads them to the garden as it were by a bridle

after giving them the Book of direction, glad tidings about the Faith, right direction and sure guidance in the path of Law. So every man knows his rights and his obligations. Most excellent is the fame of just deeds on the part of a king for one day is equal to service of God for sixty years [Tijani, 1980, p.297].

But of immediate relevance; and also of a frightening dimension, becomes apparent when scholars discern that atrophy has set in between the leader and led. *Lipset* has written:

The poorer a country and the lower the absolute standard of living of the lower classes, the greater the pressure of the upper strata to treat the lower as vulgar, innately inferior... Consequently, the upper strata... tend to regard political rights for the lower strata, particularly the right to share power, as absurd and immoral. The upper strata not only resist democracy themselves; their often arrogant political behavior serves to intensify extremist reactions on the part of the lower classes [Diamond; quoting Lipset; p.12].

Here, *Lipset* was of course talking of two antagonistic classes facing each other. But leading each class there must be an individual leader. Leadership is an imperative. The emotional and ideological imperatives that tied the leader and the led; the ruler and the ruled together, was explained by scholars and philosophers to be based on very many grounds.

Imam Ahmed Ibn Fartua's rendition of the relationship between his master, *Mai Idris Alauma* [1580-1616] and the citizens of the *Mai's* domains, speak of amity as the basis. Some philosophers and political theorists would suggest that a "social contract" of some sort must have existed between a ruler and the ruled to allow power and authority to flow down from above, and acceptance and obedience to flow up from below, to make governance feasible. Thus, simplistically speaking, while personal ambition, love for grandeur; crude materialism or any such thing can explain the pursuit of leadership role by any individual, the acceptance of or compliance to the whims of any such individual by a group cannot be explained by reference to individual trait. Only group inclination and group orientation can explain this.

In other words, taking up a leadership role is always by the initiative of the individual concerned. But to be accepted as a leader is always the function of a group consideration of the worth of those seeking to be leaders in terms of proven performance and capability.

But in the real world this model can very well be idealistic and simplistic. Suffice it to say that high performance and prosperity usually go together and can very well be due to the sagacity of leaders. Conversely, low performance would breed loss of prosperity; suffering, conflict, and even collapse of the State.

This lecture sees this scenario being acted out over and over again in Nigeria, to the extent that we can now say that our well founded aspirations for development; peace, unity have become a mirage—indeed clichés, if ever we mention them, with consequences that can only be bitter and horrendous, if it were not stemmed.

This lecture further asserts that it is the Nigerian leadership; and the Nigerian elite that are to blame, and it is also in their power to remedy the situation and stem the tide. But can they? Will they?

Nigerian Tragedy

The probability is that Nigerian leaders/elite can, but will not simply because it is not “Social Contract” or any such idealistic consideration as amity that formed the true basis of the political community called State. Rather, it was force; monopoly of inflicting violence upon the other, that gave the state its essence and staying power. That this is hardly noticed, if it were not indeed endorsed by the very class of people against whose best interests the state remorselessly worked, is because of the power of ideology. Ideology has the power of not only *misrepresenting* reality, but *mystifying* reality. But even as misrepresentations and mystifications, which indeed were all what a “ruling ideology”; that is the ideology of the rulers [or; “dominant ideology”] is supposed to be and intended to be, it has the potency of inducing those at “the receiving end” to tolerate even the most glaring of inequalities *infinitum*. Exposing both the process how this can be achieved, and the vocabulary that cloaks the bitter pill with a coat of respectability, *Istvan Meszaros* has written:

Naturally, the ruling ideology has a vested interest in the preservation of the status quo in which even the most glaring inequalities are already structurally enhanced and safeguarded.

Hence it can afford to be “consensual”, “organic”, “participatory”, and the like, claiming thereby the self-evident reasonableness of [ruling with] “moderation”, “objectivity”, and “ideological neutrality”.

But *Meszaros* has insisted almost immediately: “yet the fact of the matter is that we are talking about class societies, which are of necessity, torn by internal contradictions and antagonisms.”

This, obviously, is between the “rich” and “poor”; “weak” and “strong”; with ideology always favouring the “better off”! Ideological misrepresentations and mystifications can postpone the resolution of these contradictions and antagonisms for quite sometime, by reproducing and perpetuating the “hierarchical structural framework of super-ordination and subordination”, by presenting and maintaining a *semblance* of communality across the ages. But, this cannot last forever. The truth is that the level of exploitation of the Nigerian people; and their land and resources had

been remorseless and horrendous. And it had gone on for too long. And; it was the leadership in particular that was responsible. This lecture will attempt a deeper appreciation of this fact by a comprehensive comparative method. I believe the picture will be much clearer! But let us recognize, without wishing to blame the victim, the *have-nots* also have not made their redemption easy, if at all possible. The false consciousness engendered by tradition and culture, ignorance and illiteracy, and the deliberate cultivation of same by the same Nigerian elite has virtually rendered the division permanent and resolution of the conflict by peaceful means impossible!

Nigeria – a Sketch

“Bound to violence”! is the epitaph one foreign journalist hung on Nigeria in the early 80’s. Much as patriotic Nigerians would not admit this, and are known to have gone into tantrums over this allusion and in a cacophony of the languished voices had protested the incivility of the journalist concerned very vehemently. But with the advantage of hindsight; some 25 years after, one would wonder if the journalist was not correct. If he is not; it is only to the extent another observation, also by a foreign journalist, this time in the form of a simile is correct. He has observed: “*Nigeria, is just like an unfortunate sick man. He refused to respond to treatment. But he also refused to die!*” This is no doubt in reference to our now well proven failure to develop; and refusal to break up! As the first journalist had observed, I think our unfortunate fate seemed to have been programmed into our country’s very being.

Nigeria, no doubt, is heterogeneous and extremely divided country. It is a country that very roughly had been divided into three [3] unequal geographical zones by natural barrier, the rivers Niger and Benue. The great rivers confluence at Lokoja, some two-third down the south of the country, before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean through a web of ever flooding deltaic region—as such, this land mass could not be said to be a natural platform of extensive and intensive intermingling, if not indeed exactly an intimidating wasteland. This, fortunately it was not to be as man increasingly learnt to conquer nature. People had learnt to flood across the big rivers both ways, and they had indeed made them highways of river borne commerce, in addition to the multiple other bounties they had offered man, if assiduously exploited.

Within these apparently self-contained regions—West and East of Niger/Benue confluence; and the bulk in the North, huge and historic polities have developed. Later, these were fused into one by British colonialism, which also gave it the name Nigeria.

Nigeria is said to boast of some 140 million people in population, divided up into some 250 ethnic groups with distinct ethnic language/dialects. The geographical spread of the motley of people shows a few mega-ethnic groups dominating in each region; the Hausa and Fulani in the North; the Yoruba in the West and the Igbo in the East. In each region the numerical strength of the identified dominant group is so

large that respectively, the particular group had remained in advantage permanently, since in democracy, “majority rules”, as they would say. Thus, throughout the period of democratic dispensation [1960-1966; 1979-1983] the Northern region of Nigeria was seen as the domain of the Hausa/Fulani majority ethnic group; the Western region was seen to belong to Yorubas; and the East; to the Igbos. In addition, each region harbours numerous other ethnic groups; some of them quite substantial [ranging from one [1] to quite a few millions; such as the Kanuri; the Nupe and the Tivs in the North; Edo in the West; and Ibibios and Ijaws in the East. If we consider that there are said to be 250 distinct ethnic groups with distinct ethnic languages, the above disposition of ethnic groups on the Nigerian geographic space is a gross oversimplification, hiding rumbles of earthquake proposition, over what Nigerians call “sharing the national cake”. But more appropriately, it must be called “booty sharing”, as perceptive Nigerians had always insisted that the “national cake” had never been cooked! Nigerians were just “sharing” and fighting what they have themselves called “natural resources”.

Such a situation had no doubt predisposed Nigeria to constant flare-ups of instability, if not actual breakdown of law and order. Indeed, once Nigeria had had to fight a civil war of nationwide effect, not to mention numerous intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic clashes. One such affected the Yorubas of the West; and there was a major revolt of the Tivs in the North, against Hausa/Fulani domination.

But in the final analysis, it was not ethnicity *per se* that very nearly brought the canopy down on Nigeria. Rather, as *Clif Himmelstrand* has pointed out; it was the “interplay among ethnic affiliations, size of ethnic groups, and administrative boundaries” [*Lijphart*; p.164]. This is true when you consider that what proved to be the most debilitating flaw in Nigeria’s federalism is that it is not an ethnic segment in any of the regions that came anywhere near total domination, but in fact a multiplicity of ethnic groups coming to form the greater majority within a common regional boundary; that is the North. The North, *Lijphart* points out, comprises 60% of Nigeria’s total population; and 75% of Nigeria’s land area. On most occasions, and in most circumstances, “the North” was expected to “stand together”, if their leaders so directed them; in Nigeria before the civil war. And, the North attempted that. There could not have been greater source of instability.

Yet, Nigeria and Nigerian affairs remained firmly in the hands of these so-called leaders who invariably preferred to be ethnic champions; and champions of their respective self-interests, rather than of Nigeria. Observing this, *Lijphart* had said:

From the consociational point of view [*Lijphart* defines “consociation as cooperation among elite of competing segments in plural society], however, the federation appears to have been designed in such a way as to virtually guarantee its failure [*Lijphart*; p.163].

Well, not quite! The Nigerian federation is still standing. But tottering! And this has been so since 1960 – thanks to an effective form of elite accommodation that absorbs ever across ethnic, regional and religious lines united in common concern for mutual self aggrandizement, even though the rhetoric is particularistic, focusing on the regional or ethnic.

Impact on Administration

That such a self-serving leadership posture would not fail to have the most devastating effect on governance, administration and especially on the entire development prospects of the nation has been confirmed by many of the leaders in their own words; and by facts and figures, in most scandalous ways. Then reigning President of Nigeria, *President Olusegun Obasanjo*, was one Head of State who never felt restrained by his high office, to say it as it is even if it is very embarrassing, to most Nigerians. One day, perhaps shocked to his bone marrow by what his top most security report showed him, he had moaned about Nigeria in what must seem extreme anguish. He had said: “Nigeria? What can you do with a country where its national policemen are renting out their gun to armed robbers!”

From a completely different, but equally disheartening perspective, I have heard the also then Head of Service of the Federation *Alhaji Mahmud Yayale Ahmed* admit: “Nigeria is a country where one [1] percent of the population [i.e. the public servants] are consuming 60% of the nation’s wealth!

In a way that confirms; but at the same time, that also reveals the homicidal dimension of the Nigerian leaders/elites’ thievery. *Mallam Nuhu Ribadu*, the irrepressible former Chairman of the purposefully established Economic and Financial Crimes Commission [EFCC], has revealed that since Independence in 1960, some \$350.0 billion has flown put of the country, and into private bank accounts of Nigerians and collaborators in safe-heavens, abroad. This amount is exactly about ½ of our entire national earnings since Independence. And, you can be sure that a mere few; not even one [1] percent of Nigerians, as was mentioned earlier, succeeded in draining out this colossal amount from the country. Little wonder; a perceptive humourist was heard to have been describing Nigeria: *a sick anaemic patient that refused to respond to treatment; but that, which also refused to die!*

Nigeria – a Raped, Ravaged country

If you feel all that has been said about are fallacies; and are emerging from some rabble-rouser’s imaginations, let us refer to some United Nations Development Programme [UNDP—a parastatal of the United Nations Organization] statistics to convince our doubting Thomases. Some of the statistics might come from computer library Encarta 2008 ed, mainly because this source presents the data just in the

format I need; and one can vouchsafe for its accuracy. First, a general view of Nigeria's development profile:

The UNDP Human Development Report [Nigeria 2004], which is entirely devoted to the presence of HIV and AIDS in Nigeria and their impact on sustainability of human development had bluntly stated: "The Nigerian economy has witnessed negative growth in the last two [2] decades [i.e., since the early '80's – mini]"

After revealing in the very first sentence of the issue's Executive Summary that Nigeria harbours 10% of the world's total AIDS presence, which was then put at 40 million, the report disturbingly added that Nigeria's AIDS pandemic, even at that level, "is yet emerging; it is still far from maturing". Sixty percent [60%] of Nigeria's population; mainly youth, because HIV/AIDS essentially trail the youth, are doomed to perish within a decade, if Nigerian leadership continues in its own lackadaisical ways. I chose to present this as the larger picture of the jeopardy Nigeria is in. But from whatever perspective you choose to look at the problem, Nigeria is in no small jeopardy. I chose four [4] compound variables: Agricultural Production; Education and Health; Transport and Communication; and The Economy to draw a descriptive picture of Nigeria's development crisis. But I focused on sub variables that would graphically establish the poor living condition of ordinary Nigerians, explicitly such as per capita calorie intake [Agriculture]; literacy rate [Education]; Life Expectancy [Health]; radio and passenger vehicle distribution [Transportation and Communication]; income per capita [Economy], to mention a few. These variables would not only explicitly expose Nigeria's development status compared to other nations of similar experience historically, politically and ecological background, but also say much about how people – centred had government and Nigerian leaders had been actually regardless of their loud rhetorical claims.

To give the study as deep and as broad focus as possible I have also chosen nine [9] countries - three [3] each from Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America to compare with Africa. This is to give the spatial perspective sufficient consideration – to see whether, our development fate has a regional dimension; or; it is specific to Nigeria. Care has been taken to see that all the countries being compared with Nigeria have similar fate in history. At least, all had suffered the same fate of colonial domination in the past, even though under different colonial masters of European nationality. The "wind of change" of the late '50's and early '60's had liberated all of them, thus rendering whatever differences in rate of development a peculiarity to the specific country concerned.

To correctly answer this question – is it environment; or is it in our nature – that we failed to develop, is necessary as it has been rendered impossible by the current climate of pseudo-intellectualism fueled by some kind of pseudo-anti-colonialism; now turned into anti-imperialism, which forecloses all discussion by insisting that "we are our own". This posturing had not only dissuaded us to ask this basic question but

had indeed put thick blinkers onto our eyes that we cannot see reality, even though we are living in the thick of our unpalatable reality – underdevelopment. Comparative method and comparative studies, which are not quite the most popular engagement of Nigerian academics, will reveal startling facts about the Nigerian condition, as I will extensively dwell upon them here below.

The Anguish of Nigerians

Let us identify certain countries among the so-called “developing” part of the world, which can be quite legitimately be compared with Nigeria, to clearly bring out the development status of Nigeria in the world.

As we have indicated earlier, we will restrict ourselves to the “Third World/Developing” countries. For lack of space and time we will pick only three [3] countries from each zone of the world. Thus from Southeast Asia, we pick Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. This is because these are three [3] countries, which had suffered the common fate of colonial domination. Indonesia for instance occupied by Japanese; and later the Dutch, and did not fully recover itself from its colonial status until 1969, when the United Nations Organization gave it such recognition.

Vietnam’s case was even more tortuous. It was nearly bombed out of existence by imperialist United States of America [USA] but for the indomitable determination of the Vietnamese people who wrested out their freedom out of the American’s hands in 1976.

Malaysia is the oldest of the three nations selected in Southeast Asia with a history of human settlement dating back to some six thousand [6000] years [Encyclopaedia Britannica; 1994-2001]. Malaysia was successively dominated by the Portuguese; the Dutch and ultimately the British, from whom they got their Independence in 1957.

Just as these three [3] countries of Southeast Asia had shared the common fate of colonial domination under different European colonizers, they also feature similar socio-economic characteristics to that of Nigeria. All the countries exhibit social and cultural heterogeneity, which Nigeria also exhibits. While there perhaps the similarity ends, the differences are not however too great to deny us comparison.

In terms of land mass size [Indonesia; 1,904,570 sq km; Malaysia 329,758 sq km; Vietnam 331,690 sq km]; and population; Indonesia 241,973,880; Malaysia 23,953,136; Vietnam 83,535, 576, respectively; each of these countries are big enough and populous enough to present challenges of governance and can therefore be legitimately compared with Nigeria, at whatever level.

So also the countries we have chosen from mother continent, Africa: Angola; 1,246,200 sq km in area, 11,190,786 population; Cameroon: 475,442 sq km area, 16,380,005 population; Sudan; 2,505,800 sq km area, 40,187,486 population. We

chose size and population in each respect because these are the imponderable that truly matter in managing development.

In Latin America, we will focus on Argentina; 278,400 sq km in area, 39,537,943 population, Brazil; 854,404 sq km area, 186,112,790 population; Mexico; 1,954,382 sq km area, 106,202,900 population; as these figures would nearly equivilate Nigerian figures in terms of presenting management problems to leaders, especially if development is the premium.

Vietnam in Southeast Asia [331,690 sq km area; 83,535,576 in population]; Libya in Africa [1,757,000 sq km area, 5,765,563 in population]; and Cuba [114,525 sq km; 11,346,670 in population] are considered here because they explicitly espoused socialist mode under their respective Iconic leader as mode of development. It would be interesting to see, on comparison with the others if this mode has delivered the promise it had held for the people yearning for development.

Nigeria in Comparative Perspective

For simplicity of presentation and also to bring out the Human Development dimension sharpest, we will consider variables that most closely relate to human survivality and development. With this perspective, for instance we can focus on the Economy and compare Nigeria with the other countries along such variables as Gross Domestic Product [GDP]; per capita income; total literacy rate etc.

Data Presentation, Interpretation, Analysis and Conclusion

Below, we present, in bar graph format, the performance of three [3] other countries in each of the three [3] regions of the world of Southeast Asia; our mother continent Africa; and Latin America, which are all pejoratively called Developing [less diplomatically, underdeveloped] in contradiction to the definitely developed countries of the Northern Hemisphere; basically Western Europe and Northern America. We set to compare these countries – specifically Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam in Asia; Kenya, Cameroon, and Sudan in Africa; and Argentina, Brazil and Mexico in Latin America, on one hand; and Nigeria, the subject of our study, on the other.

We chose these countries principally on the basis that they were all ex-colonies; they are all primary producers; and roughly, to the extent that size is a factor, none of them can be classified “micro” either in terms of landmass, or population. In whatever respect, they would each present some kind of complexity; and therefore demand a modicum of skill and dedication in their management, if indeed, *development* is their priority, as leaders of “developing countries”, are always telling us since the days of our anti-colonial struggles, and especially after Independence; dating from 1960, in most cases.

Numerous are the variables we can pick to make such comparisons. But for this study we chose Gross Domestic Product/per capita [GDP/p.c] and Gross National Product [GNP/p.c] as these reflect total performance; and can be seen to intimately express the condition of living of ordinary Nigerians. Other variables of equal potency are Life Expectancy at birth, Literacy Rate, total [i.e. both male and female]; Electricity Consumption per capita; Passenger Vehicles per 1000 people; and Radio Receivers. Life expectancy rate stands out as the single most spectacular expression of “the good life” a nation affords its citizens, as it at once indicates how well are the people living and how happy are they. “*A Healthy people are a Happy people*” as an adage goes, saying in fact that happiness and long life are on the reverse side of the same coin. Also, neither could possibly exist if illiteracy and ignorance dominate the country. Transport and communications are essential for a healthy growing nation, and economists chose to show this by presenting the percentage of tarred road in the country; and the number of radio receivers, telephone lines etc in the country indicative of how well informed and aware are the citizens of the country.

All these variables are herein presented in bar graph form comparing Nigeria with all the countries selected from their respective regions. The result is both disappointing and worrying, as far as Nigeria is concerned.

Interpretation

For instance, the Gross Domestic Product per capita reading shows that Nigeria presents the lowest performance when compared with the countries of Southeast Asia, with the countries of Latin America. Even in Africa, it is the least impressive. In terms of Gross Domestic Product per capita [P.C.] Nigeria’s impressive showing still puts it last with Nigeria showing 752 dollars per capita while Cameroon is showing 1,034 dollars in 2008.

Life expectancy rating is generally very poor in Africa. On average, children from the countries in our comparison can only expect to live up to about 48 years of age. Nigerian child, can expect to live slightly less than that, even in this case. In the developed world it is about 70 years.

Literacy rate [total] is quite high among all the countries we are comparing; all the Asian countries achieving nearly 90% [Vietnam is really over 90%]; Nigeria showing about 70.7%. But when it comes to Electricity Consumption, Malaysia is well above every country compared of the nations here presented, 3,015 KW/hrs; annually, while Indonesia, the next highest with less than 463 KW/hr and Nigeria, the lowest, with less than 200 KW/hrs [117 KW/hrs]. In Latin America, Argentina is exhibiting over 2000 KW/hrs [2,168 KW/hrs], while Nigeria is the lowest with its less than 200 KW/hrs [117 KW/hrs]. Even in Africa Nigeria is the lowest, while our neighbour Cameroon is exhibiting 173 KW/hrs, to Nigeria’s less than 120 KW/hrs [117 KW/hrs].

In the transportation sector, Malaysia exhibits overwhelming superiority with 222 passenger vehicles per 1000 people, while Indonesia shows less than 20 [14] per 1000 people; Vietnam, no number stated, but their dependence on bicycle is legendary, which their long drawn heroic war against America might have impacted upon making vehicular transportation not easy. Even in this sector where the Nigerian's, crave for personal motorcar is as legendary as that of the Vietnamese for bicycle [in this case, imposed on them by circumstances], Nigeria is showing infestimal number compared to Malaysia. Obviously, it is lack of means; not lack of wish!

In Latin America, both Argentina and Brazil indicate impressive figures; about 140 vehicles for 1000 people; Mexico is about jumping into the second world, with Electricity Production capacity of nearly 200,000 KW/hr annually, while Nigeria's is about 16,000. Cameroon and Liberia, with about 21 for 1000 people respectively. In this region; in the love for motorcars, if nothing else; Nigeria score is impressive, showing higher consumer impulse than at least one [1] country.

Where number of radio receivers in a country is mentioned to exhibit level of awareness of the people, Nigeria is definitely above Indonesia and Vietnam with about 230 receivers per 1000 people, while Indonesia is showing about 155 or so; and Vietnam 105 per 1000 people. But Nigeria's superiority is misplaced and misleading; as Nigerians cannot certainly be more aware than the Vietnamese who defeated a world superpower, after thirty- [30] years of grueling war! Nigeria's radio prevalence can be for entertainment only.

Compared with Latin America, Nigeria has stepped down to its usual last position; with Argentina showing nearly 700 [681] persons per 1000. But in Africa, Kenya commands the second position; with 229 per 1000 and Nigeria peaking at 226 respectively.

Special Case Countries: Cuba, Libya & Vietnam

Mono-causal power can certainly not be claimed in respect of any variable in the development process. Development is always a group activity, and a function of many variables acting together. Without prejudice to this view however, the criticality of leadership in the development process cannot be denied. In view of this, we here selected three [3] countries for comparison with Nigeria; one each from the three [3] regions of the Southern Hemisphere, generally referred to Developing/Underdeveloped namely: Cuba, Libya and Vietnam. Even by folklore account, the leaders of these countries had been so prominent in the lives of their people, and the course of history of their country that we can call them iconic leaders. Coincidentally, each of these countries also claim for themselves a different mode of development, as is signified in their official name, viz: Republic of Cuba [Socialist, as is well known]; Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya [Socialist; Republic];

and Socialist Republic of Vietnam [Microsoft/Encarta 2008]. Methodology buffs would wish to argue whether leadership or the [Socialist] system that is responsible for the clear superiority these three [3] countries show over Nigeria. It may be both, because a good leader may not operate a bad system for success; nor also a good system could succeed to its maximum best under a bad leader. Suffice it here for us to say that in none of the variables we have chosen Nigeria has done better than these three [3] countries. Indeed in the critical areas of Gross Domestic Product per capita; Life Expectancy at birth; Literacy Rate; Electricity Consumption per capita; Passenger Vehicles per 1000 people; and Radio Receivers, is not Nigeria better than any of these countries – in fact, nowhere near them. Some facts and figures will draw an agonizing picture.

For instance, where Cuba is showing nearly 80 [77.6] years for Life Expectancy; Nigeria is showing about 47; Sudan is showing 59.3 years. Vietnam is showing 71.1 years. Literacy rate is a bit better [Argentina, 97.2%; Nigeria, 70.7%; Sudan, 63.2%; Vietnam, 94.4% - 2005 estimate]; Electricity Consumption Argentina – 2,168 KW/hr; Vietnam-454 KW/hr; and Sudan – 88 KW/hr; for Nigeria-117 KW/hr [Encarta, 2008]. Even against Sudan, Nigeria did not present a good showing. For instance, in Gross Domestic Product per capita, Nigeria shows 752 US dollars to Sudan's 760; in life expectancy Nigeria shows 48 years while Sudan is showing 58 years; in Electricity Generation, Nigeria is showing 15.6 billion KW/hr, while Sudan is showing mere 3.2 billion KW/hr. In Literacy Rate also, Nigeria is showing better; 72% to Sudan's 63%. It is perhaps these few flashes that make Nigerians feel leader of Africa. But this can be dangerous illusion and self-deception!

Conclusion

So, true to my conviction throughout my academic life stretching for thirty six [36] years in the University; in nearly 100 academic and personal opinion published papers, I have insisted that Nigeria is not developing, relatively speaking. I am glad my Vice Chancellor, JD Amin and the University of Maiduguri have given me the opportunity to prove my point in facts and figures, in this lecture. With no intention of admitting that I am now tired and willing to surrender, I wish to inform my Vice Chancellor that I may now wish to withdraw from the frontline and challenge younger Nigerians to come out and accept their responsibilities. The future is theirs. I am willing to train and guide them. The job is not even started!

To put it graphically, let me say that given the picture I have painted above [and facts and figures I have given] to say that we are developing is a mere cliché; the posturings of our so called leaders saying that they are developing Nigeria without really meaning it, is to make a fetish of the concept of development. And it is mere brinkmanship that these same faithless leaders are shamelessly claiming to organize free and fair elections, and if nobody doubts it, or challenge their encumbancy or interest, is at the risk of his dear life. As can be seen in the just concluded Local Government elections

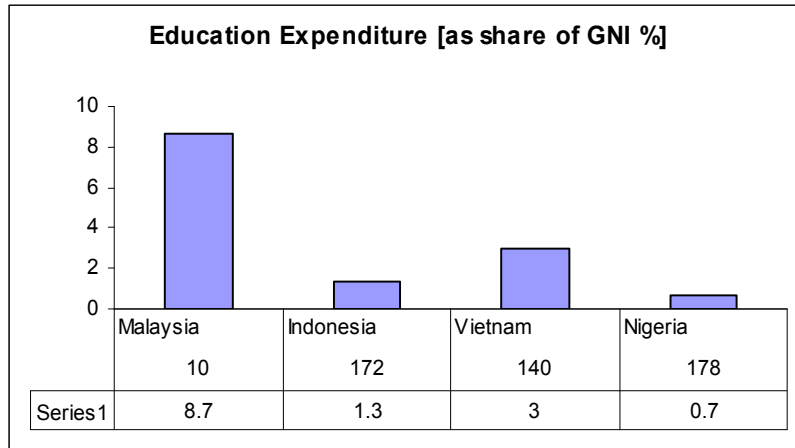
in Borno “free and fair” election that produced 100% victory to one side did not happen even in the days of the prophets!

What future does this scenario portend for Nigeria? After 48 years of Independence; trillions of dollars of national wealth obtained and expanded; after a three [3] year long murderous Civil War fought and; mercifully, unity achieved; it cannot be said that Nigeria had not got all its options. It had indeed; had got them and exhausted them.

To be quite frank, Nigeria is now left with only *one* option – *violence*. Within this *one option*, we might pray for remission – *organized violence*; where a good leader would emerge to direct the violence, and lead it to a positive resolution of our multi-various contradictions – which the good Lord might grant. But not because of the faithless leaders. Because of the hapless, suffering masses! May God/Allah hear our prayers. Amen!

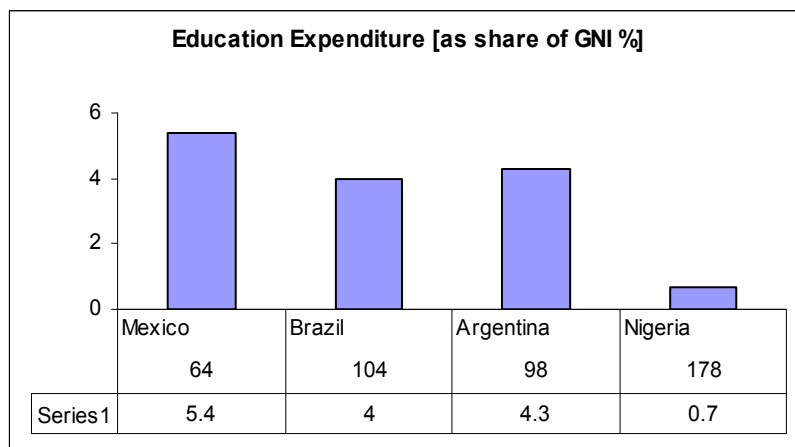
EDUCATION EXPENDITURE AS SHARE OF GNI %

Asian Countries



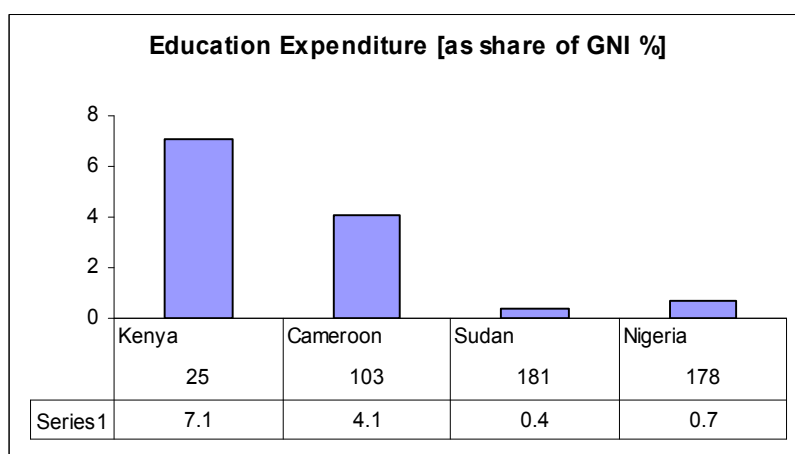
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Latin American Countries



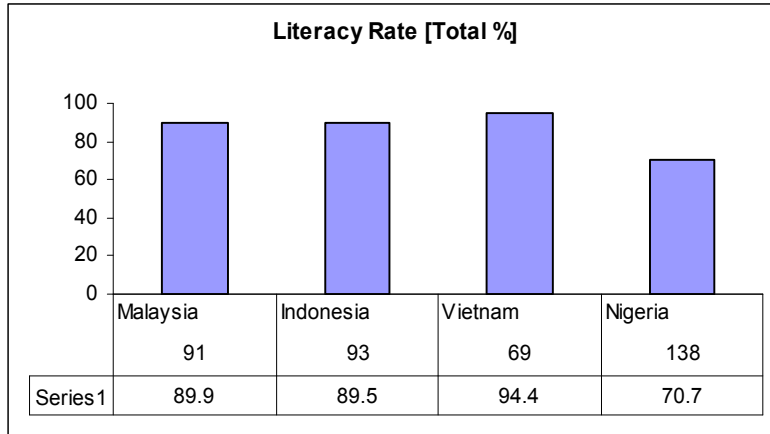
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African Countries

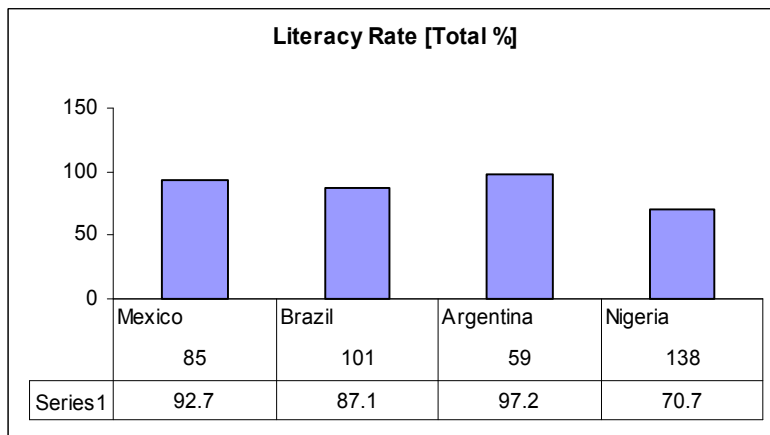


LITERACY RATE [TOTAL %]

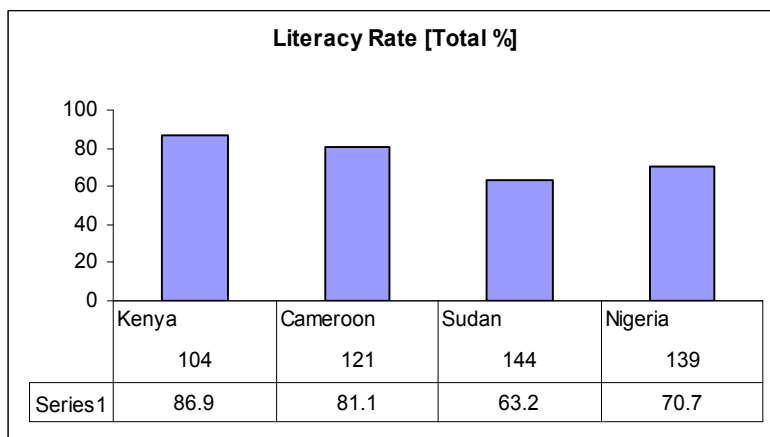
Asian Countries



Latin American Countries

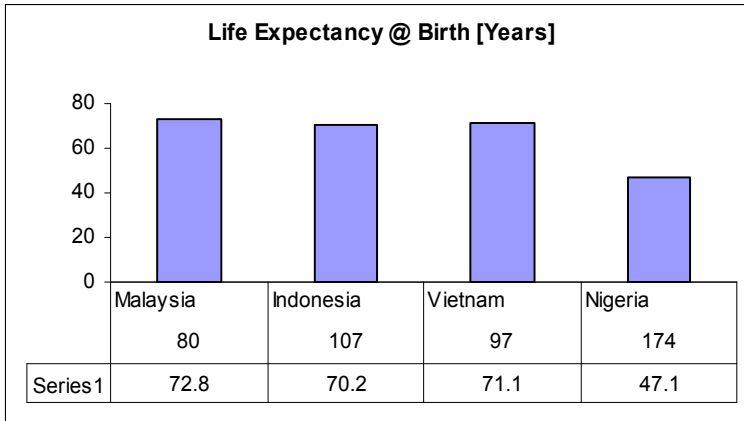


African Countries

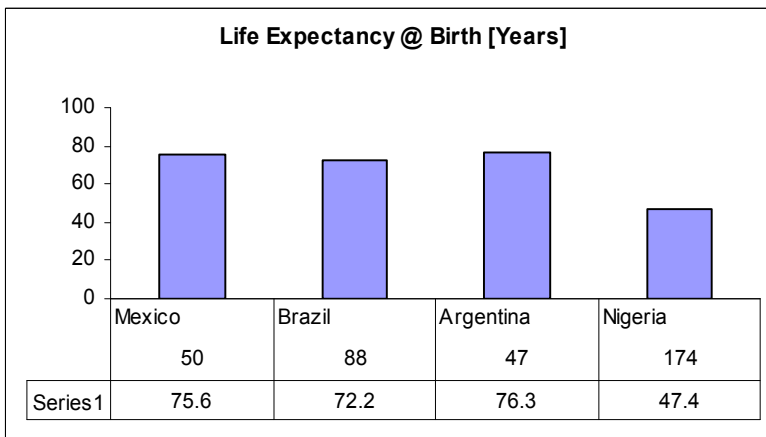


LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH [YEARS]

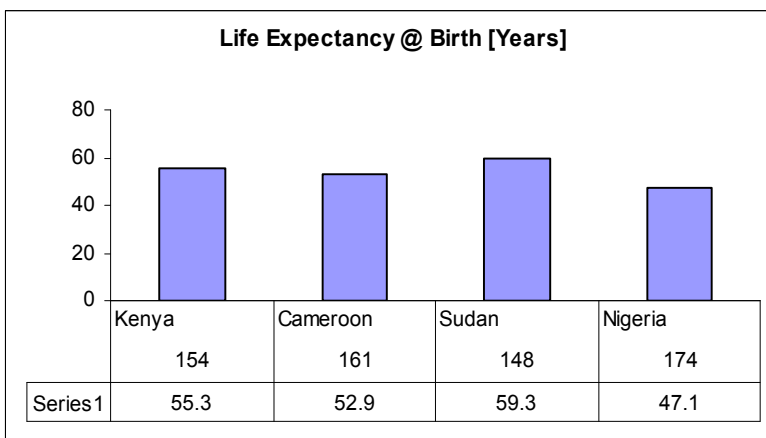
Asian Countries



Latin American Countries

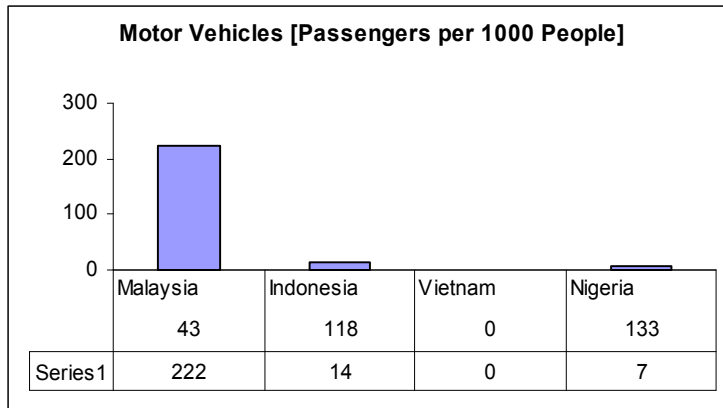


African Countries

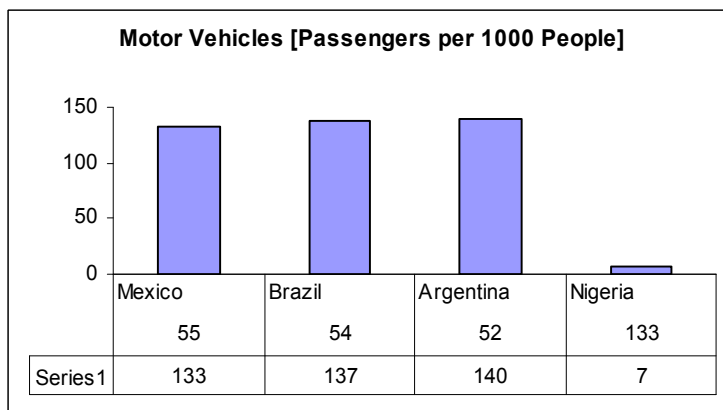


MOTOR VEHICLES [PERSANGERS PER 1000 PEOPLE]

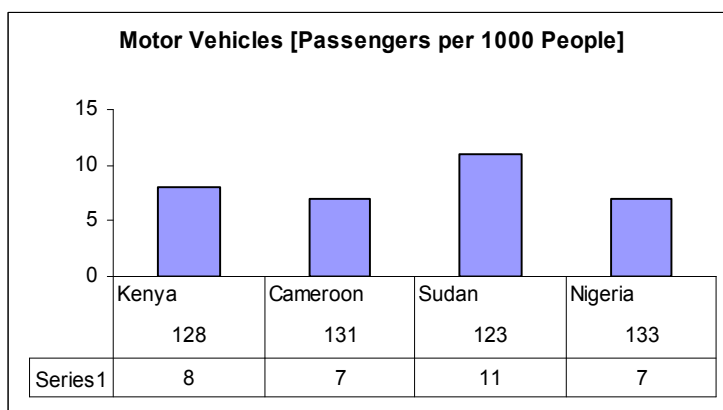
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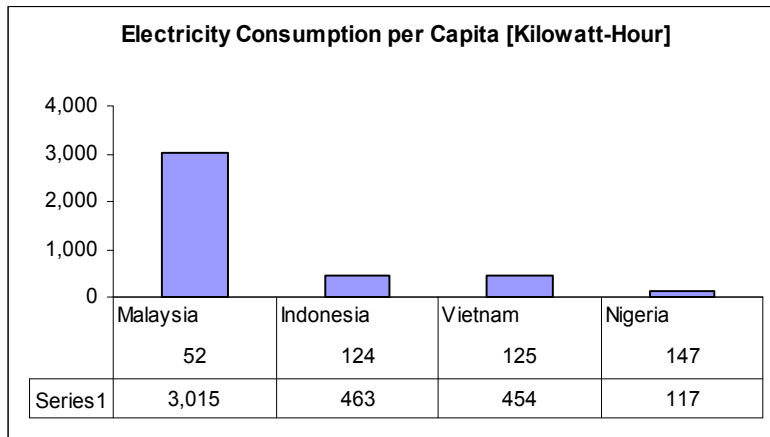


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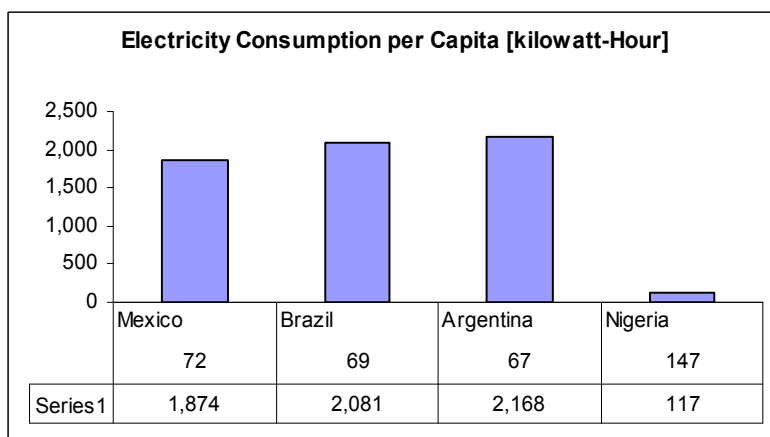


ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION PER CAPITA [KILOWATT-HOUR]

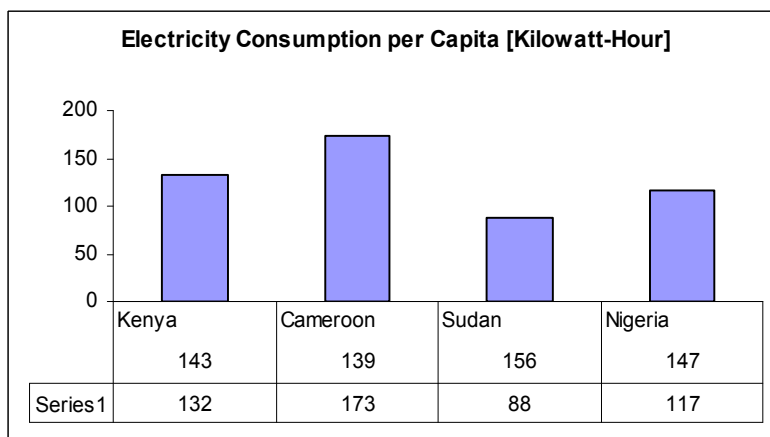
Asian Countries



Latin American Countries

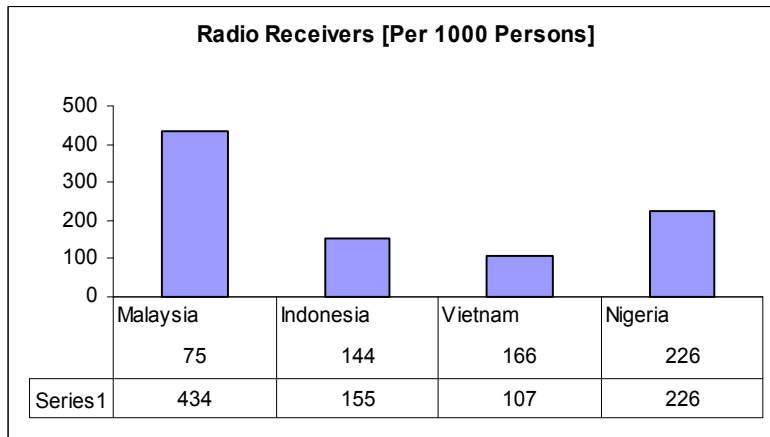


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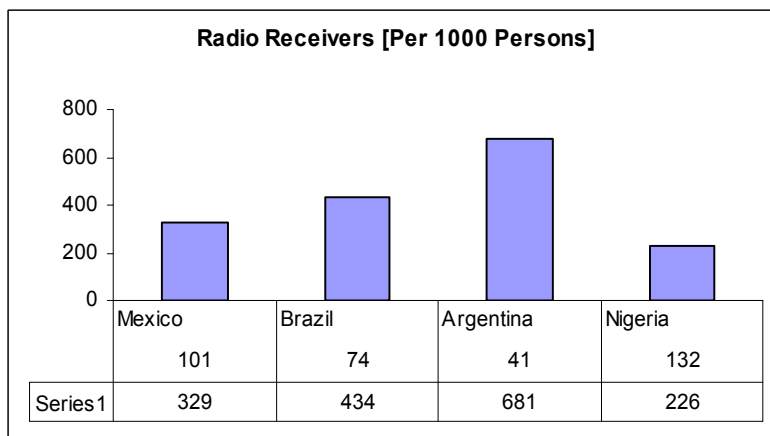


RADIO RECEIVERS [PER 1000 PERSONS]

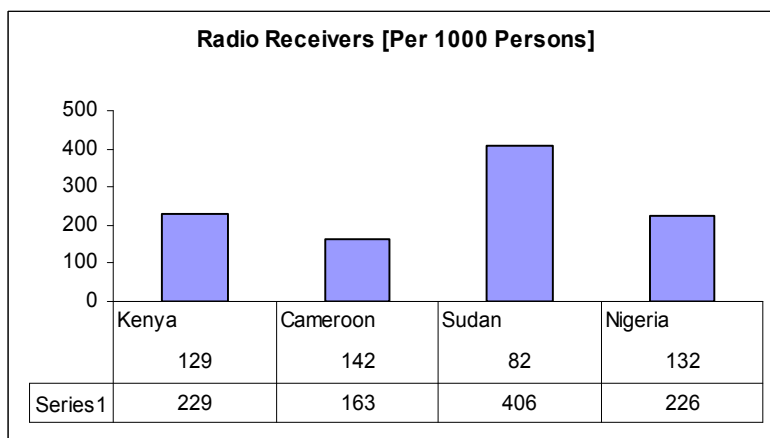
Asian Countries



Latin American Countries

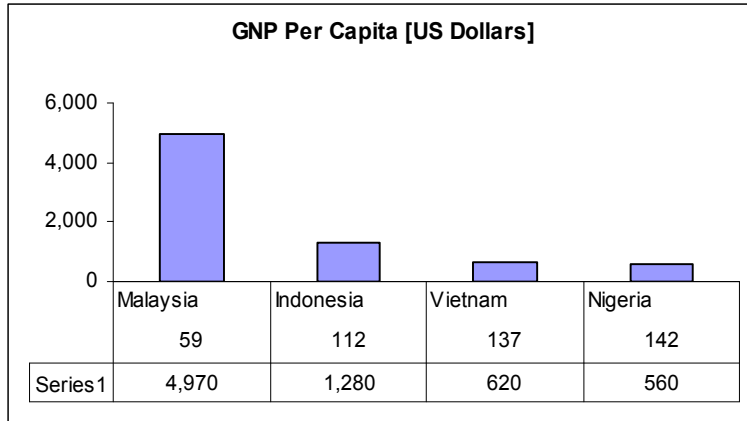


African Countries

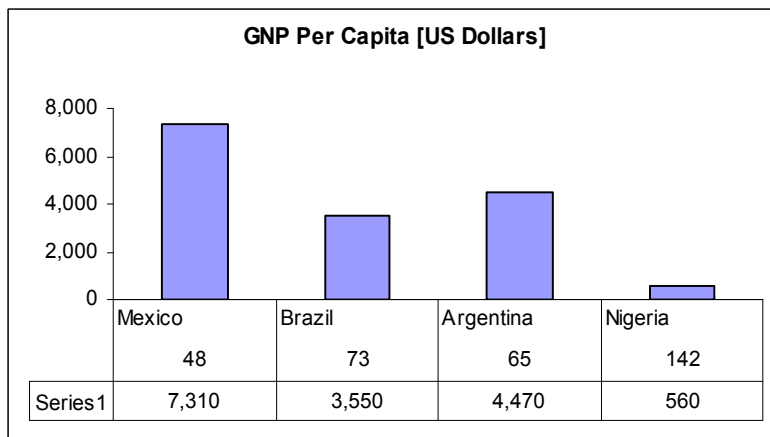


GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT PER CAPITA [US DOLLARS]

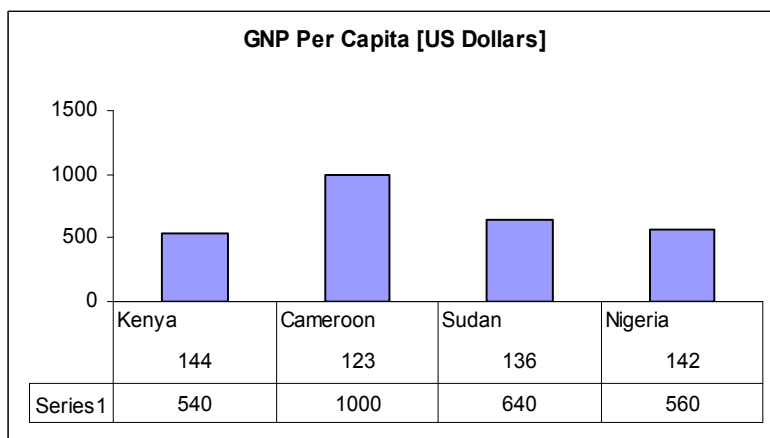
Asian Countries



Latin American Countries

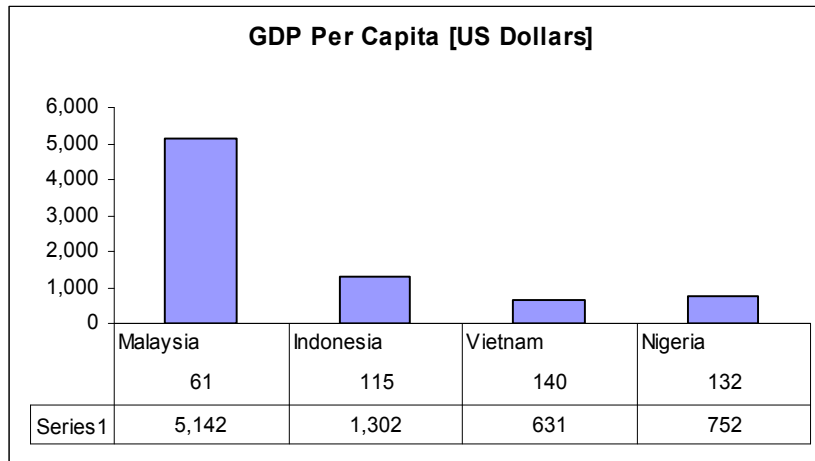


African Countries

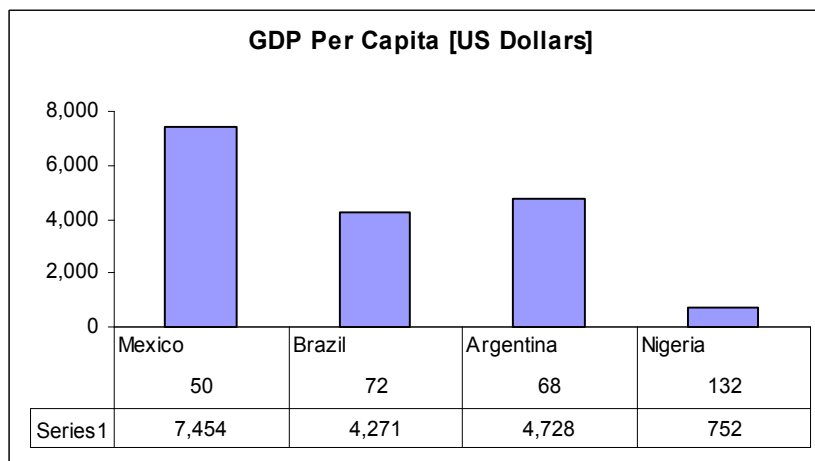


GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT PER CAPITA [US DOLLARS]

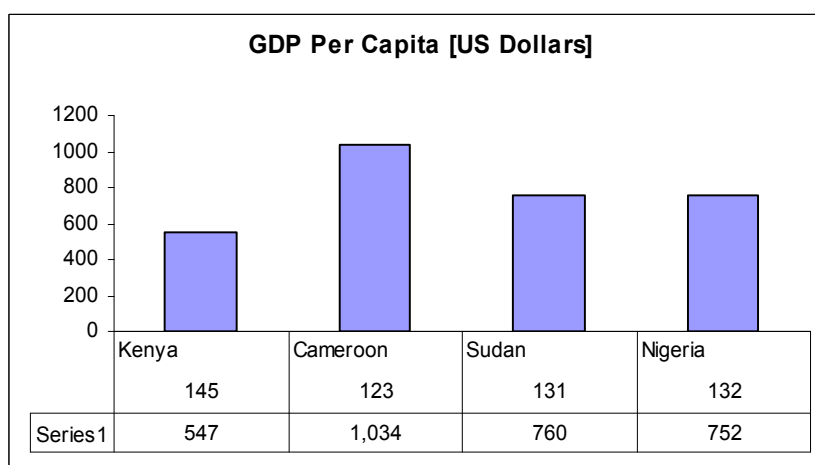
Asian Countries



Latin American Countries



African Countries



Notes

1. Karl Maier – *This House Has Fallen-Nigeria in Crisis*, Penguin Books Ltd. 27 Wright Lane, London, W85TZ, England; 2000 AD.
2. The most abrasive of such criticisms, which has continued unabated since the First Military Coup d'etat in January 1966 could be said to have reached its crescendo with the publication of Patrick Wilmot's *Nigeria – The Nightmare Scenario*; Pub. Bookcraft, Ibadan, Nigeria; Farafina, Lagos; Nigeria, 2007.
3. The concept of the “Nigerian Project” was coined by some observers of the epileptic efforts of a succession of Nigeria's leadership, which never seems to succeed since Independence in 1960, which indeed as recently as this New Year of 2008, had evoked such views of desperation as “*vision in the time of political glaucoma*” by Louis Odion [honoured as the Columnist of the Year by NMMA in *Sunday Sun*, Feb. 10 2008, back page]; and “Managing Nigeria's Crisis of Democracy” by Calistus Oke, in *National Mirror*, Feb. 7 2008; back page also a regular column, captioned “*Heart of the Matter*”.
4. The dramatic attestations of this are the numerous symbolic exhibition of development. some sham, some real as demonstrated in every recurring “stone laying” and “commissioning ceremonies” mounted by State Governors – or even Chairmen o local government councils, always accompanied by dancing and drumming from the helpless masses, and self-serving praises and encomiums among the gluttonous elite.
5. Jean Francois Bayart, Stephen Elis and Beatrice Hibou; *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*
6. This is nowhere demonstrated more trenchantly than Nigeria, which went into a civil war soon after Independence in 1960, and still wallowing in both poverty and political instability.
7. Obasanjo said this in one of his numerous TV discussions, which at the time I considered as a joke, but today would demand a more assiduous study because of the way and manner Obasanjo himself left the stage; what he left behind; and the very opaqueness of the way forward.
8. Not only the inevitability of the rise but also the expansion and the consolidation and ultimately the domestication of the human device for living called the State were aptly captured and described in the book of readings ed. by Peter Skalnik, *Outwitting The State*; Transaction Publishers, new Brunswick [USA] and London [UK] 1989. Further, the zoologist Desmond Boris has opined that *Man* is animal, but not just animal; meaning a superior animal. In *Hard Talk*, a BBC world [TV] discussion programme with Stephen Sucker, 12th February 2008.
9. Roland Cohen “State Origins: A Reappraisal”. In *The Early State*, ed HJM Claeson and Peter Skalnik; The Hague, Mouton; 1978.

10. These basic questions have been severally asked by classical and contemporary scholars down to our time, and it was aptly raised and answered for all by Aristotle in his mention of the individual's pursuit of good life for himself, taken together with Thomas Hobbes' suggestion of the common good in the contention of which the State must arise as an arbiter. See a brief presentation by J.O. Eneh and C.B. Okolo "The Common Good and Political Stability" in Maduabuchi Dukor; ed. *Philosophy and Politics – Discourse on Values, Politics and Power in Africa*; Malthouse Press Ltd., Lagos, 2003; p.54-60.
11. This as much is stated by Skalnik in his "Introduction" when he said: "The history of humanity in the last few thousand years has been a history of expansion and conquest...". "Expansion" connotes territoriality; and "Conquest", connotes leadership. Peter Skalnik, "*Outwitting the State: an Introduction*", *ibid.* p.1. The criticality of leadership in those processes, no less the embedded contradictions in the democratic state are succinctly stated by Ruscio when he said "Fear of leadership is a basic justification for democratic forms of government". But he immediately added "yet it is impossible to imagine a strong, healthy democracy without leadership". Kenneth P. Ruscio, *The Leadership Dilemma in Modern Democracy*; Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, Cheltenham, UK; and Massachusetts, USA; 2004
12. Kyari Tijani, *Political and Administrative Development in Pre-Colonial Borno*; Ph. D Thesis; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; 1980.
13. All factual and statistical data used in this lecture are invariably derived from the Microsoft Encarta 2008 software CD version and Encyclopedia Britannica 2001 software CD version off the internet, and are therefore accordingly acknowledged.