

LEADERSHIP, ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AND DEVELOPMENT: NIGERIA AND THE CHALLENGE FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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21st and 22nd Convocation Ceremonies Lecture

Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State

20 June 2014

PROTOCOLS

Chairman, Your Excellencies, My Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Chairman and Members of the Governing Council, Vice-Chancellor, Management and Senate, Staff and Students of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Gentlemen of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen.

PREAMBLE

Permit me to register my deep gratitude to God Almighty, the Creator, Saviour and Deliverer, for the privilege of delivering this lecture. I thank the Vice-Chancellor of this great University, Professor Olusola Bandele Oyewole, and his Team for the honour of addressing you on this auspicious occasion. I, therefore, approach this task with great circumspection, conscious of the weight of the responsibility. I shall speak on the topic: **“Leadership, Economic Nationalism and Development: Nigeria and the Challenge from the Global South.”**

This topic was inspired by the implications of two milestones in recent history - the Centenary in January 2014 of the amalgamation of the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria to form the country, Nigeria (cf. Olukoju, 2014a), and the 90th birthday of Singapore's Founding Leader, the legendary Lee Kuan Yew (LKY), in September 2013. Those milestones are of great significance when reflecting on the contrasting fortunes of both countries in the second half of the twentieth century.¹ As will be made clear in this lecture, the lack of *leadership* fired by *economic nationalism* in Nigeria contrasts sharply with the role of the two elements in Singapore, that jumped from Third to First World status in one generation. That Singapore is no isolated example is buttressed by two other examples from the Southern hemisphere – contemporary Qatar and Meiji Japan, which also followed the same trajectory of development that poses a challenge to contemporary Nigeria. But, before delving into the heart of the subject, kindly permit me to make some remarks about monocausality, which is implicated in the topic of this lecture.

THE PARADOX OF MONOCAUSALITY

Chairman, sir, causation and chronology are critical to the enterprise of the professional historian. Historians, seeking explanation for developments, usually grapple with causation – the remote and immediate causes or reasons for the occurrence of particular events. They usually prefer a cocktail of causes (multicausality) to a single, preponderant explanation (monocausality) when accounting for certain developments (Afigbo, 1977; 1978; cf. Eyinla, 2012). This is in view of the complexity of the human mind/nature, and the multiplicity of factors and actors to be dealt with in explaining a single event or phenomenon. However, historians, too, are conscious of the need for the ordering or hierarchy of causes, as it is often necessary to categorise causes into the remote and immediate (triggers or catalysts) so that appropriate weight can be assigned each of the elements in the historical equation. Hence, though most historians will condemn monocausality, everyone would subscribe to a hierarchy of causes in explaining events.

Two striking quotations may be cited to show that even non-specialist historians would like to place emphasis on one or a few factors that are deemed critical to the past, current or future state

¹ I shall not comment on the ongoing National Conference, whose outcome is being awaited. But my thoughts on it are stated in Olukoju, 2014b.

of affairs. One is the famous dictum of Lord Lugard, the British agent of the amalgamation of the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria: “the material development of Africa may be summed up in one word – transport.” (Lugard, 1922:5) The other is the celebrated quip by the great Pan-Africanist and first President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Playing on a passage of *The Holy Bible* (Matthew 6:33, KJV), he exhorted his fellow nationalists: “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you.” (Cited in Cooper, 2002: 67) These two examples highlight the differential and respective emphases of a colonial governor and a leading anti-colonial nationalist – albeit in different contexts - on the most critical agent of development in colonial Africa. The former, who was primarily interested in exploitation for the benefit of his home country, emphasized rail transport infrastructure (the famed “iron horse”); the latter, fired by the dream of freedom and development for his people, stressed the primacy of getting the political equation right as a precondition for the socioeconomic development of the continent. The irony is that both were right in their different contexts, and they are both right even today, especially when the two monocausalities are taken together.

This background is necessary to underline the focus of this lecture on leadership and economic nationalism as critical factors in national development.² While acknowledging the contribution of other factors to development and underdevelopment, especially in Africa and the Global South (Eyinla, 2012), it is necessary to highlight the most critical factors that propelled countries at a similar level of development to the great heights that they have attained today. But let us proceed with the clarification and contextualization of “Leadership,” “Economic Nationalism” and “Development.”

LEADERSHIP, ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Chairman, sir, the central argument advanced in this lecture, as epitomised by three Global South exemplars, is that leadership, propelled by, or utilizing, economic nationalism, produced the spectacular development of hitherto backward or underdeveloped countries in peculiar national and historical settings (cf. Eyinla, 2012: 9-10). An attempt will now be made to provide working definitions of these terms.

² This lecture reflects the writer’s sustained interest in the challenge of development in the Nigerian and comparative contexts. See, Olukoju, 2002a, 2003b, 2003c, 2008, 2013, 2014a, 2014b.

“Leadership” is open-ended. My favourite way of defining it is to quote the views of some great leaders who have “walked the talk.” The Nigerian statesman, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, for example, once referred to leadership as the ability to think a decade ahead of one’s peers. A leading advocate and exemplar of corporate good governance in Nigeria, Dr. Christopher Kolade, explained that “leadership is behaviour and performance, and not just position. Position may confer authority but performance and behaviour earn respect, and help to release rather than control the energy of others.” (Kolade, 2012:17) He added that leadership must be qualified and its purpose identified. Hence, to Peter Drucker’s “effectiveness” must be added “goodness,” a quality that reflects “certain accepted values.” (Kolade, 2012: 21, 23; Cf. Olukoju, 2002a)

For comparative purposes, we may quote selected contemporary Western political, military and business leaders’ illuminating perspectives on leadership:³

- “Leadership is about change; changing an institution and employees stuck in old ways. It is creating a sense of urgency, hope and change of direction.” – Lou Gerstner (“Mr. Turnaround” at IBM and two other MNCs)
- “Leadership is about taking tough decisions, especially, unpopular ones.” – Tony Blair (Former UK Prime Minister)
- “Leadership is getting people to do what YOU want them to do because THEY want to do it.” – Christie Whitman (First female governor of the State of New Jersey, USA)
- “In the toughest situations, the most important thing is leadership” – Admiral Mike Mullen (former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff: highest ranking US military officer)

No matter how we define leadership, we can identify some key functions of a leader in an organization or the political sphere.⁴ Leadership unveils a clear vision to give direction to corporate goals; devises strategies for achieving them; mobilizes followers; manages the

³ The quotes are owed to Fareed Zakariah’s Global Public Square (GPS) programme on Cable News Network (CNN), 2011. They have been used by this writer in a module of the Caleb University Leadership Academy Series that he initiated in 2011 as Vice-Chancellor.

⁴ Ayobolu (2014:64) sums up the character of the leadership that Nigeria needs as follows: “strong, competent, visionary ... with character and integrity.”

dynamics involved in the process of change; engages in problem-solving and ensures continuity or sustainability through a succession plan. Consequently, leaders must be daring, constantly challenge the *status quo* and think outside the box. They are responsible for generating the vision to meet a desire for change; raising awareness and mobilizing followers, communicating the vision and intention, and taking personal responsibility through exemplary leadership.

“Economic nationalism” as a concept in political economy has a long history dating back to the nineteenth century. Friedrich List’s 1844 book, *The National System of Political Economy*, is taken as a major defining statement in the evolution of “economic nationalism” as a body of ideas or public policy. However, as Helleiner (2002) has made clear, the concept is ambiguous, given the diversity of writers and national interests involved in the articulation of the term. At one extreme, it is often seen as both negative and anti-developmental when perceived as a form of autarky and protectionism. List, for example, is associated with the idea of infant industry tariff protectionism. Economic nationalism has thus been depicted by some authorities as “a statist tradition of thought that has its roots in mercantilist doctrines of the 17th and 18th centuries.” (Helleiner, 2002: 309, citing Gilpin, 2001: 14; also, Levi-Faur, 1997, Olukoju, 2003a) Shechter (2008:571) graphically describes it as “the notion that a nation requires a strong, independent economy to liberate itself and compete with other nations.”⁵ Pickel (2003: 122) agrees that economic nationalism “is not so much about the economy as it is about the nation – the economic dimensions of specific nationalisms make sense only in the context of a particular national discourse rather than in the context of general debates on economic theory and policy.”

That said, economic nationalism has survived in various forms till today. Helleiner (2002: 310), citing Shulman (2000), posited that “economic globalization has not eliminated economic nationalism as an ideology but rather changed the techniques that nationalists use to achieve the same ends of bolstering power, prestige or the prosperity of the nation.” Hence, even in the United States of America, the exemplar of free market capitalism, the agricultural sector continues to receive huge subsidies, which gives it an undue advantage over foreign competition. During the global recession of 2008-09, for instance, economic nationalism, once regarded as an anachronism in the age of free markets and globalisation, took centre stage. The

⁵ For case studies of Egypt and West Africa, see Schechter (2008) and Olukoju (2010), respectively.

influential *Economist* of London (5 February 2009) lamented as follows: “Economic nationalism – the urge to keep jobs and capital at home – is both turning the economic crisis into a political one and threatening the world with depression. If it is not buried again forthwith, the consequences will be dire. ... As countries try to save themselves they endanger each other.” In effect, when push comes to shove, even the rich and powerful cry, and resort to weapons often associated with the poor and weak!!!

During that crisis, European bankers, workers and their allies cried to their national governments for intervention. They advanced three arguments to justify the recourse to economic nationalism (*The Economist*, 2009). First, for purely commercial reasons, banks felt safer retreating to their home markets, where they understood the risks and benefited from economics of scale. Second, for political reasons, politicians could afford to spend taxpayers’ money at home if the costs of doing so were not too high. Thirdly, the economic policies were presented as stop-gap measures that would not go to the extreme. But the magazine was not quite convinced that such forces could be restrained: “when nationalism is on the march, even commercial logic gets trampled underfoot.”

Meanwhile, in the Global South, economic nationalism has deep historical roots, especially in the context of foreign (Western) political and economic domination. For instance, the government of Meiji Japan supported, from the 1860s on, national shipping lines till they successfully drove competing Western lines out of regional and coastal shipping. In colonial India, blatant economic nationalism - the combination of Boycott with *swadeshi* – was employed against British business in protest against the partition of Bengal in 1905. British goods were specifically targeted and boycotted as a weapon of economic resistance. Concurrently, local production was undertaken to provide an alternative to the boycotted goods. The famous Indian nationalist leader, Mahatma Gandhi, exemplified this policy by jettisoning his (law profession’s) Western dress (suit, shirt and tie) for the peasant’s cotton loin cloth (*dhoti*). *Swadeshi* (the manufacture and patronage of local textiles) boosted local industry and employment, while its combination with boycott devastated British economic interests.

In colonial Nigeria, the British deployed economic nationalism in their own interest, vis-a-vis their European and Japanese competitors. In the 1930s, they used import quotas to dislodge

rising Japanese textile imports (Olukoju, 1999) while, during the Second World War, they adopted the “Buy British, Sell Foreign” policy. (Olukoju, 2002b) The latter ensured that British exports enjoyed monopoly in Nigerian markets while sales of Nigerian produce exports specifically to foreign markets earned hard currency and stabilised balance of payments.

Globalization has tended to weaken the appeal and efficacy of economic nationalism as a force in national economic development. Yet, it has failed to erase the nation as a unit or framework of analysis of inter-state relations. This explains the continuing persistence and relevance of economic nationalism. Several countries have managed to harmonize economic nationalism and globalization in some innovative ways. For example, by promoting local industry, governments can create avenues for expansion into markets beyond the national boundaries (Szakonyi, 2007). Concurrently, the same government could lift some trade barriers and encourage foreign direct investment in sectors of the economy, which could then experience significant growth to the advantage of the national economy. What is required in such circumstances is the intervention of an “adaptive developmental state” that adapts economic nationalism to the imperatives of globalisation (Wong, 2004). But care must be taken that crony capitalism, which often accompanies (and undermines the lofty goals of) economic nationalism does not have the kind of negative effect observed in East Asia (White, 2004).

Finally, the idea of “development” (and its obverse, “underdevelopment”) has attracted much scholarly attention, especially since the 1960s. Though often loosely used in daily discourse, “development” is a multi-dimensional concept that is open to many definitions and descriptions depending on contexts, interests and individuals. For our purpose, we may conceive of it as a combination of political, economic and social changes producing sustained economic growth, higher standards of living, even or fair distribution of wealth, political, social and economic freedoms and inclusiveness, and measurable satisfaction. “Development” must be about people (their wellbeing, welfare and participation in the process), endogenous and sustainable for it to be a positive phenomenon. It is, however, interesting that not everyone shares this rosy picture of “development.” Rist (2010: 23), for example, defines it as “the general transformation and destruction of the natural environment and of social relations in order to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared by means of market exchange to effective demand.”

Such a view focuses on the costs and burden of “development” borne by the people and their natural environment. This is where emphasis on sustainable, people-orientated development, not the cold and sometimes dubious statistics of Gross Domestic Product and profits, is imperative.

The foregoing leads us to consider the contrasting experiences of Nigeria (the famed “Giant of Africa”), and three spatially dispersed and racially diverse Asian countries. We begin with Nigeria, our primary focus.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES: CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

The leadership terrain especially in post-civil war Nigeria, like the rest of post-independence Africa, has been a barren landscape (Hardball, 2012:64; Obayuwana, 2011:5). There has been no articulated vision of leadership and good governance beyond mere sloganeering. Yet, a nation’s values and vision – articulated and personified by the leadership - drive its developmental activities (Jegade, 2013:80). The Americans, for example, place much premium on inclusiveness, accountability, rule of law, freedom for all and diversity, and their leaders constantly emphasize these virtues in their speeches and public policies. The Japanese extol hard work, discipline and innovation as their common ethos, which their leaders promote and subscribe to. The Nigerian case is different. No leader, since the First Republic, has articulated a vision of Nigeria’s greatness and carried it through. None too has run a government renowned for financial accountability, sound public policies, civility and discipline, and a consistently high rate of service delivery.

The damning verdict on leadership in Nigeria is confirmed by the country’s placement in the Ibrahim Index for African Good Governance (IIAG) the benchmark set by the Sudanese billionaire, Mohammed (Mo) Ibrahim, who instituted a prize of \$5 million for the African leader that epitomised good governance and exemplary conduct in office. It is astounding that only three African leaders – Joachim Chissano of Mozambique, Festus Mogae of Botswana and Pedro Pires of Cape Verde – have won it since 2007 and none has been found worthy since 2011. More confounding is that Nigeria is currently ranked 41 out of 52 places in Africa (Hardball, 2013). Yet, the country is basking in the euphoria of its recent election to a Non-Permanent Seat on the United Nations Security Council – an expensive distraction given the poor

state of governance back home. A columnist recently described contemporary Nigerian leaders as follows:

They are untouchable, inaccessible, inexplicable, inscrutable, intricate, complex, very high-handed, overbearing, overreaching, over the top in their dealings, and ridiculously superfluous. They are gods. At least they think they are. When they travel, roads are shut down, when they fly out, the airports are cordoned off. They will never travel except in a motorcade and convoy, because they are gods who don't travel solo. (Ojo, 2013: 24)

This type of leadership manifests itself in the Nigerian political culture that creates and reinforces impunity and contempt for the people (*The Guardian*, 4 March 2014). Although the people may be complicit in creating this anomaly, examples from other countries of the Global South demonstrate how leaders at critical junctures of their national history took the destiny of their countries in their own hands to confront and defeat anti-developmental ideas and practices. The following passages illustrate the Nigerian condition.

The proliferation of (mainly sinecure) political offices – Ministers and Supervising Ministers of, Ministers for and Ministers of State, Special Advisers (even where there are Ministers and Commissioners), Senior Special Assistants and Special Assistants - which began right from the Second Republic is generally accepted to have been largely responsible for the huge recurrent expenditure at the Federal and State levels. However, beyond cost, the quality of the Cabinets appears to have dropped significantly since the First Republic. It has become a pattern to grant such appointments as mere patronage to reward political patrons (political godfathers) for their financial and electoral support. Invariably, such office holders cannot focus on their primary responsibility as they also have to do the bidding of their patrons, recoup their investment in the election and build their own stockpile for the next election as Governor or Senator. In such a situation, the cabinet does not necessarily contain men and women that are the best and brightest, unlike the assembly of talent that cabinets represent elsewhere (*The Guardian*, 9 October 2013:12). An additional feature of the political landscape is the building of political dynasties as children now inherit their fathers' political mantles, while siblings and clans monopolize offices in the process.

A carryover from the unitary command structure of military rule in Nigeria is the over-centralisation of services, which invariably imposes great hardship on the people. Not only do people have to queue and suffer needlessly to procure centralised vehicle number plates, international passports, Certificates of Occupancy and sundry operating licences, they also have to run the gauntlet of the callous exploitation of their misery by unscrupulous officials who resort to contrived scarcity and racketeering. This has made toting a way of life as Nigerians deal with over-centralization and monopoly. The calamity of the recruitment into the National Immigration Service is a case in point.

The absence of consumer protection and quality control is a mark of leadership failure in Nigeria. Telephone service providers, for example, literally defraud their customers through sub-standard services that will not be tolerated elsewhere in the world, for which Nigerians are charged outrageous rates. Not until one of the service providers broke ranks with the others did Nigerians get the “privilege” of per-second billing. But they continue to rip-off subscribers through various Ponzi schemes. By debiting them with charges of, say, N10-50 for an unsolicited text message service, a service provider with 14 million subscribers would harvest at least N140 million in an instant (Oluwajuyitan, 2013: 20). As for quality control, Nigerians are seemingly now used to various categories of “Tokunbo” vehicle spare parts dumped on the country by unscrupulous importers, with some degree of official connivance, and fake or adulterated medicine either imported or produced and distributed within the country. There have been fatalities arising from the dispensing of fake or sub-standard drugs and from motor accidents caused by fake vehicle spare parts. The volume, pervasiveness and economic value (in billions of naira) of the illicit business, and the deep complicity of various cadres of officials, have hampered efforts to combat the menace. The influx of fake imports has been helped by the porous nature of our borders, complicity of customs and security agents, and the exclusion of the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) from the seaports (Oluwajuyitan, 2013: 20).

Warped political values and the militarisation of politics and political discourse characterize the nation’s political landscape. While politics is characterised by bluster all over the world, the language register of politics in Nigeria contains menacing and unnerving expressions, such as the boast to “capture” some states or the pledge to “deliver” votes from a constituency as elections

are turned into a “do-or-die” contest. Such expressions are laden with anti-democratic and anti-developmental meanings and sub-text. The declaration of “capturing” a State, for example, has the following connotations and implications.

First, it suggests a state of war or conflict in which might is deployed often to overwhelm right. In a purely political setting, there is the denotation of an undeclared war in which there would be losers and winners – a zero-sum game. Second, the word “capture” implies that the people of the constituency are mere captives, who have only the rights of “prisoners of war” at best. This is demeaning and uncomplimentary. Third, if a war will be fought as implied in “capture,” the victors who have overrun an “enemy” territory are at liberty to behave like an army of occupation and take the spoils of war. This explains why States and other constituencies “captured” by unpopular conquerors suffer plunder as the conquerors did not owe their victory to the consent of the people and, so, feel entitled to the resources of the vanquished. In like manner, for Nigerian politicians to boast that they would “deliver” a State meant that they either had “captured” the place or were sure that they could afford to pay the price of the captives to be delivered bound hand and foot to the new overlords. The long record of electoral heists in Nigeria, not only in opposition territory, shows that the price for the people’s mandate had been paid to all or any of the following: electoral officials, security agents, political fixers or party representatives at the polling booths or collation centres. Somewhere along the line, there is a commodification of the people’s mandate – their votes and voices.

The unholy alliance between dubious business people and corrupt politicians has been a Nigerian albatross. To be sure, crony capitalism played a helpful, though often controversial, role in the rise of the Asian Tigers (White, 2004). Hiding under the cover of economic nationalism, indigenous capitalists in those countries had taken advantage of their political contacts to build monopolies supposedly to counter foreign competition. However, in many cases, Nigeria inclusive, such cronyism has produced monopolies for party and personal advantage only. In the Nigerian Second Republic, for example, favoured members of the ruling party thoroughly abused the import licence regime. Since then, oil block licences have been given out as patronage to favoured party supporters, who then feathered their own nests and corrupted the political process with their ill-gotten wealth, all at the expense of the country.

Sheer incapacity of government has been a bane of development in Nigeria. Inability to ensure continuous electric power supply to local industries has forestalled full industrial capacity utilization, significantly increased the cost of doing business, and contributed to high youth unemployment and restiveness. Yet, attempts to privatise inefficient state-owned enterprises did not always pass the transparency test. This has hobbled the privatisation exercise with credibility challenges.

It is often said that a major challenge facing Nigeria and other underdeveloped societies is the absence of strong institutions. In the particular case of post-independence Nigeria, the country exemplifies the trend of weak or mediocre leadership undermining hitherto strong institutions to serve their narrow interests. Right from the First Republic, ordinarily neutral institutions, such as the judiciary, police, army, and electoral and census commissions, have been suborned or subjugated by overbearing office holders. Regional, ethnic, religious and partisan political sentiments crept into the appointment of functionaries into these bodies, and the beneficiaries of such favours invariably did the bidding of their benefactors. Electoral malfeasance in the country could have been tamed if returning officers and security agencies had been as neutral as provided for in the statutes that created them.

The lingering effects of the Nigerian civil war and decades of military rule have also affected the Nigerian society. This is reflected in the assault on citizens' fundamental rights, including the right to assemble or associate, guaranteed by Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution, which is constantly abridged by those who should have been busy enforcing citizens' rights. Surely, all that the security agencies were required to do was to obtain a guarantee of good behaviour on the part of the organizers of any peaceful assembly backed by police presence to ensure compliance. Following worrisome developments in a particular State, a newspaper deplored the denial of the simple right of assembly and the impression created by security agencies that only some preferred groups could assemble and ventilate their grievances (*The Punch*, October 3, 2013:.22). It counselled the Inspector General of Police to refrain from emulating his blatantly partisan Second Republic predecessor. The newspaper stated that the choice for him was between having "a modern, efficient, intelligence-led and courteous police force" and "compromising professionalism and honour and ... pleasing persons in power." The point is that when security

agencies allow themselves to be used as tools in political contests, they might soon end up as victims in the crossfire. In the meantime, they run the risk of turning a supposedly democratic country into what a critic has called “a police state in its most brutish form.” (Mohammed, 2013:57)

An accompaniment of leadership failure in Nigeria is mediocrity and the rise of the personality cult, symbolized by the “big wo/man” syndrome. While all countries have their own notables, who command respect or adulation on account of their charisma and/or outstanding achievements, the Nigerian ‘big wo/men’ are in a class of their own. A newspaper columnist graphically captured the ways of specific “big men” of a State in his region, whose name will not be mentioned here, as follows: “watch the unmistakable arrival of Prince A... at the airport, or the stir when next Chief C... enters the Transcorp Hilton Hotel in Abuja, or the stampede that heralds ... [E’s] arrival at any occasion.” (Igwe, 2013:26) These might be extreme cases, involving rich and powerful non-holders of public office, and it is not, in any case, peculiar to “big men” from that part of the country. But it is a sad reflection of the times.

The personal appropriation of the nation’s security apparatus is a defining trait of big men and women, a legacy of military rule and its successor regime. A good number of security personnel guard the persons and property of the rich and powerful – in the face of rising security challenges - leaving the vast majority of the people to the tender mercies of violent criminals. In consequence, neighbourhoods and communities have had to raise vigilance groups to fill the gap. But this has often caused grave errors, such as miscarriage of justice, human rights abuses and loss of lives, as aggrieved persons resort to self help.

The misapplication of the nation’s security personnel and infrastructure is best epitomised by the use of convoys. Pandemonium and mayhem (“sorrow, tears and blood,” according to Fela) trail the convoys of State Governors, Ministers and Commissioners – complete with blaring sirens, horsewhip-wielding and combat-ready security detail, chasing lesser mortals out of the way to create a path through chaotic traffic for their principal. Beyond massaging the ego of the “big man,” it is difficult to understand how this brazen show of brute power aids any form of development. Sadly, since the era of military rule, such displays of naked power have become part of daily life in Nigeria, leading to the murder and maiming of numerous citizens. Bullion

vans and even ordinary citizens drive against the traffic, big wo/men and ordinary persons jump queues practically everywhere, and brazen power is displayed to demonstrate that certain people are above the law. A concerned Nigeria lamented rhetorically: “Why do we seem to disdain the law; why do we like to do those things that make for disorder?” (Nnoli, 2013: 20) He, therefore, recommended “a change in (Nigeria’s) philosophy, orientation ... to revisit our idea of greatness and the great man, power and the powerful man.”

The high cost of governance has become a debilitating feature of leadership failure. This is epitomised by the lopsided allocation to recurrent expenditure vis-a-vis capital expenditure. At the federal level, the proportion was 74.4 per cent and 67.5 per cent in 2011 and 2013, compared with capital expenditure of 25.6 per cent and 32.5 per cent in 2011 and 2013, respectively. This situation is a far cry from the ideal of a preponderant allocation to capital expenditure, which generates growth and development. As the Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA) urged in an advertorial: “govt. still needs to further reduce its recurrent expenditure as this will free resources for the much needed improvement of our infrastructure.” (*The Punch*, 24 Sept. 2013:56:)

In the face of government failure over a long period of time, the middle class – the backbone and barometer of societal development – has been decimated and compromised. Long years of oppressive military rule and economic deprivation have had a deleterious effect on the middle class, forcing it to embrace a national culture of low expectations – satisfaction with or acceptance of mediocrity. This, in turn, has bred a culture of apathy and passivity, except on occasions, when the minority erupt in protest if a critical but modicum element of its lifestyle faces mortal threat, such as an astronomical increase in petroleum retail prices. In the end, many members of the middle class – and the vast majority of Nigerians – have also resigned themselves to intellectual indolence and obscurantism. This is reflected in poor reading habits, typified in the craze for soft-sell magazines, addiction to home video, especially of the Nollywood genre, and the Facebook culture.

Since the 1980s, as a result of the combination of a succession of brutal, inept and corrupt military regimes, the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), devaluation of the currency, massive capital flight and erosion of values, Nigeria has slid down the ladder of

global ranking. Domestic industries lost their competitive edge in the face of spiralling costs of production occasioned by the failure of public electricity supply, graft, insecurity, etc, coupled with an official policy of import dependency fuelled by easy money from the badly managed oil sector. Under the pressure of foreign imports, both goods and intangible cultural objects, and a weak quality control regime, anything foreign was deemed superior. This was a classic case of culture cringe or inferiority complex. We began to judge the success of our endeavours or social class by the calibre and cost in hard currency of foreign keynote speakers and consultants that we imported, the cost and sophistication of our cars and gadgets in our homes, the foreign countries where we spent the vacation or held the talk-of-the-town weddings of our children, foreign schools which our children attend, our foreign-designed apparel and accessories, and, now, the cost and configuration of our private jets.

This way of thinking started way back in the 1970s, the heady days of the oil boom, when we developed an insatiable taste for bread and parboiled rice, leading to a massive food import bill dominated by wheat and parboiled rice. Nigeria's romance with bread has been documented in a notable book, *The Wheat Trap* (Andrae & Beckman, 1985). Our automobile import dependency syndrome, given our taste for the latest expensive cars from German, British, American, Japanese and South Korean automakers, has turned us into a dumping ground for anything foreign and exotic on wheels. The abuse of import duty waivers and misuse of the import licence mechanism to dump all manner of foreign goods on the country reached a nadir under President Shehu Shagari, but the practice has survived into the current dispensation.

Nigeria is a veritable importers' paradise. Some Nigerian importers have indeed made good by simply importing foreign-made vehicles without partnering their suppliers to establish local assembly plants that could indigenize technology and retain some of the capital exported abroad. Matters are not helped by the government's failure to solve the problem of electricity power generation and supply, the backbone of any country's economy and social life. This has made us the world's leading importer of electric power generators, including the smallest ("I better pass my neighbour") type. The massive generator import regime has spawned local billionaires, boosted foreign industries, led to massive capital flight, polluted the environment and led to many avoidable deaths from inhalation of noxious fumes in households.

The management of the national wealth is a major concern considering the vast amounts of revenue that accrued to the country over the last forty years. Not only did Nigeria earn billion-dollar annual revenues from its regular crude oil and gas exports, the country was a direct beneficiary of three cycles of crude oil export boom arising from the Arab-Israeli War of 1973; the First Gulf War of 1991 and the Second Gulf War of 2003, respectively. Much of this wealth has been dissipated in the plethora of government's white elephant projects all over the country – the jinxed Ajaokuta Steel complex and the moribund steel rolling mills, the under-utilized airports and seaports, new State Houses, and the heavy investment in building the federal capital city - and the direct pillage of the national treasury through inflated, phantom or abandoned contracts. The indictment of ten of General Yakubu Gowon's twelve military governors by the General Murtala Mohammed-led successor government now pales to nothing when compared with the mind-boggling heist recorded since then. Each regime since Shehu Shagari's Second Republic has tried to outdo its predecessors in infamy to the extent that even bureaucrats and technocrats in government are now implicated in billion naira scams.

Things are so bad now that we have as many as two national institutions dedicated to investigating and prosecuting economic crimes against the country. At least three of Nigeria's former governors, who had managed to evade justice in the country, have either been indicted or jailed abroad. Foreign countries have either seized or repatriated stolen wealth acquired by state officials who abused their privilege to steal the people blind. We can go on and on. The point is that we seem to have come to terms with corruption as a way of life. Otherwise, why do we wink at claims by political parties that they have allocated or spent billions of Naira on an election, when only the electoral body is supposed to spend any significant amount of money on logistics and the emolument of its officials? The answer is that we all know what those funds were spent to achieve – oiling vote-catching machines.

Another illustration of the poverty of leadership in Nigeria is the manner of asset declaration. Politicians on assumption of office would declare assets running into hundreds of millions of Naira without providing proof of how they acquired such assets and how much tax they paid on them. It has been suggested by some that the figures were declared in anticipation of the politicians' worth on exit from office!!!

What is most riling was the statement by a leading elected official on national television that he did not “give a damn” about the necessity of asset declaration. Nigerian leaders do not seem to care at all about the state of the country’s underdevelopment. Official insensitivity on such issues is legendary, and rather than respond to public complaints, they tend to railroad wrong-headed and unpopular decisions and fix unrealistic deadlines for compliance. The handling of the new vehicle licensing scheme is a case in point. Another is the cycle of perennial shortages of refined petroleum products and the inability of local refineries to operate at full capacity to meet rising domestic demands.

An exasperated Nigerian lamented that while Venezuela and Iran with a poorer grade of crude oil refine enough for local consumption and export, Nigeria with its Bonny Light, about the easiest to refine, revels in fuel importation, and even marks dubious anniversaries of its under-achieving existence. The commentator bemoaned the fact that: “Nigeria is perhaps the only country in the world without a national air carrier and whose flag is conspicuously missing in the international maritime industry. There is no country in the world with key iron ore deposits like Nigeria that does not have a functional steel industry. ... Nigeria does not look ... like a country whose leadership devout (sic) time to serious thinking and reflections.” (Onunaiju, 2013:64)

It is clear from the foregoing that Nigerian leaders cannot escape blame for much of the crisis of development in the post-independence period. The poor score card of leadership is complemented by the low score on economic nationalism. The fact that many Nigerian leaders have at various times been accused of siphoning state resources into offshore bank accounts and of acquiring expensive property in foreign countries confirms that they are economic saboteurs rather than patriots. This practice and the many policies which indulged the fancies and conspicuous consumption of an indulgent and effete elite, further aided capital flight and loss of government revenue. By creating a ready market for foreign imports, they also implicitly shipped Nigerian jobs overseas by generating employment for the nationals of those countries.

The Nigerian experience examined above is in stark contrast to positive developments elsewhere. That leadership and economic nationalism drive development is amply demonstrated by three case studies of phenomenal development in the Global South, as we will now show.

GLOBAL SOUTH EXEMPLARS

The Meiji Japanese *Genro*: The Virtue of Patriotic, Collective Leadership

The overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate on January 3, 1868 by a group of young Japanese warriors (*samurai*) was a turning point in modern Japanese history. During the three and half centuries of Tokugawa rule (1603-1867), Japan was consolidated into a feudal state under the military and political rule of the Tokugawa shoguns and nominally under the Emperor. The intrusion of an American fleet under Commodore Matthew C. Perry in 1853 and the resultant “unequal treaties” virtually imposed by the militarily superior Americans created an awareness of national weakness and a need for an appropriate response from Japanese nationalists. Accordingly, a group of young samurai, the oldest of whom was the 43-year old Tomomi Iwakura, displaced the Shogunate and established an oligarchy that shaped the fortunes of the country into the twentieth century.

The oligarchs, who styled themselves as the *Genro* or Councillors to the Emperor, were Iwakura, Takamori Saigo (who fell out with the rest and died in an uprising in 1877), Takayoshi Kido, Kimmochi Saionji, Aritomo Yamagata, Kaoru Inoue, Toshimichi Okubo, Hirobumi Ito, Masayoshi Matsukata, Iwao Oyama, Tsugumichi Saigo and Kiyotaka Kuroda. Though four of them died before the end of the century, of the rest who survived into the next, Saionji lived till 1940. That gave the oligarchs longevity to consolidate the new order.

The *genro* introduced far-reaching political, social and economic reforms, beginning with a declaration of intent which forbade anyone of them aspiring to personal rule. They instituted a modern bureaucracy based on a merit-driven system, which subsequently became the fulcrum of modern Japanese government and a major driver of government policies till date. Competence or achievement, instead of ascription, guided appointments into public offices. Education was given priority such that by the end of the century, Japan had one of the highest literacy rates in the world. Schools, including universities, were established or expanded to promote literacy and acquisition of technical skills. A formal constitution was proclaimed in 1890, which abolished the old class system (especially the *samurai* class) and replaced the feudal domains into which the country was divided with the prefectures under centrally appointed governors. It also instituted a Western style democratic system, based upon a bicameral legislature on the German

model. Meiji Japan also consciously understudied and adopted best practices from countries adjudged to be the best in any particular field – Prussia (infantry), Great Britain (navy), United States (business), The Netherlands (port engineering) and France (legislation and local government). Experts were invited from abroad at great expense to transfer expertise to Japanese while young Japanese were carefully selected for overseas training. Official delegations were also sent abroad to obtain first-hand experience of Western countries. Iwakura himself had led a Mission to the West in 1871-73.

In short, Japan under the Meiji *genro* was determined to catch up with the West within the shortest time possible. The Japanese Dream, as it were, was couched in a rallying cry: “Fukoku kyohei!” – rich country, strong military. Military reforms, including the building of a conscript army and a modern navy, rapidly catapulted Japan into an Asian power after victories in the Formosa (modern Taiwan) Expedition of 1874 and the defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. The sensational victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 made Japan an emergent world power, a far cry from its position of military impotence during the American naval show of force in 1853/54.

Economic reforms in the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors were driven by direct and indirect government intervention. The government encouraged merchants to adopt Western methods of doing business and even operated commercial schools for teaching modern business skills. It can be said that Meiji Japan typified and pioneered the Developmental State Model that later superintended the phenomenon of “Asian Tigers” in the twentieth century. From 1872, Japan had a Central Bank and a national currency, the *yen*, which is one of the strongest and most stable world currencies today. A combination of subsidies, tax holidays, enforced mergers and direct investment by the government in the development of ports, roads and telegraphs resulted in the emergence of strong and competitive Japanese banking, shipping and shipbuilding companies, light and heavy industries, and commercial firms, which successfully edged out Western competition from critical sectors of the economy. Government support ensured that Japanese firms took advantage of military expansion on the Asian mainland and favourable circumstances to win a market for Japanese products.

Japanese pioneering of State-led development with unprecedented transformation within a decade was a phenomenon of the second half of the nineteenth century. Equally spectacular were the Singaporean and Qatari successes in the second half of the twentieth century.

Lee Kuan Yew: Integrity, Vision and Transformational Leadership

The rise to greatness of the tiny City-State of Singapore is usually associated with the country's Founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew (LKY). Graduating with a First Class Honours degree in Law from Cambridge, LKY was a leading light of the anti-colonial movement in the British colonial territories of modern Malaysia and Singapore – the Federation of Malaya - which attained independence as separate countries in 1965. However, the breakup of the Federation meant that Singapore, a tiny island nation sandwiched between Malaysia and Indonesia along the Straits of Malacca, stood no chance of survival given its lack of natural resources, and its insignificant population and territory. What the country lacked in those respects was compensated for by the sterling leadership of LKY. We cannot afford to recount the history of the country in this lecture but we need to highlight the role of leadership and opportunity in its transformation.

Faced with daunting odds, LKY raised a formidable team of likeminded patriots, articulated a vision for the emergent country and set about achieving the goals. As has been noted by a commentator, LKY had “an astonishing team of men of exceptional calibre and integrity who yet – and this is crucial – did not covet the premiership for themselves.” (Chang, 2013). The men and their qualities were described as follows: Dr. Gyoh, “a dispassionate pragmatist ... opened Singapore up to the world when the fashion was to turn inwards, and ... [also] built up the army and the national reserves;” Mr. Rajaratnam was “an evangelist for an ideology of multiracialism that would hold a young country together;” and Dr. Toh projected “steeliness that galvanised his comrades” when in 1961 the merger with Malaysia split the People's Action Party. The important thing is that these were not mere paperweights and sycophants, but important actors in their own right. According to a writer, “it was the way they challenged and complemented Mr Lee that made him the leader he was.” (Chang, 2013)

Among LKY's personal attributes was his “unwavering dedication” to the cause of Singapore (Keat, 2013). This informed his worldview which hinged on certain core beliefs. The first was

about the place of his country in a world riven by crises. He himself had sung four different national anthems representing different phases of national life under British colonialism, Japanese occupation, a short-lived Malaya Federation and independent Singapore. Hence, his major preoccupation was the survival of his minuscule, resource-poor country in a world of unending competition for mastery by the big nations and the struggle for survival by the smaller ones. A fundamental article of faith for LKY from the beginning was that, for Singapore to survive, it had to be “relevant and exceptional.” “No one owed Singapore a living,” he argued, “it had to be exceptional or it would not survive, there was no place for idle passengers in this journey to excel.” (Kwang, 2013)

Second, he held on to some core values – that the success of nations depended largely on how best they organized themselves, and what values and cultures underpinned them. Accordingly, he posited that societies needed to promote excellence and competition mediated by cooperation for the common good and care for the underprivileged.

Thirdly, he believed in the virtues of strict adherence to the rule of law and good governance, and the building and sustenance of strong institutions. Respect for the rule of law, in his view, was “vital to economic progress,” and it was the enforcement of the rule of law that made Singapore very attractive to foreign investors and safeguarded the safety and fundamental rights of Singaporeans (Toh, 2013). Yet, he reasoned that good governance must be driven by “leaders with the right values, sense of service and abilities.” For him, leaders must forge a vision for the nation with the people, see themselves as stewards and develop a succession plan to carry forward the vision. His belief that leaders must lead by example ensured that corruption, which undermined practically all post-colonial territories, was unknown in Singapore.

LKY’s personal traits which undergirded his leadership style included the following: always posing the “So?” question to get to the kernel of an argument or implications of a fact; openness to superior ideas; meticulous collection of facts drawn from voracious reading, careful listening and a disciplined mind to constantly refresh his mental map; and a consistent focus on Singapore in all his actions and thoughts. This was encapsulated in the “So?” question: “So, what does this mean for Singapore?” On his overseas trips, he always focused on what new ideas, projects or objects he could transfer to Singapore for adoption. He had a single-minded

focus on achieving results, turning adversity to opportunity and pursuit of long-term interests of the country. It is significant that, in spite of his country's tiny size and seeming insignificance, both the United States and China respected the personal integrity of LKY as an honest broker in mediating their tense relations in 1999 over such issues as China's entry into the World Trade Organization, the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and the status of Taiwan. Meeting the parties separately at the ASEAN Regional Forum in Singapore in 1999, he so objectively articulated what each side stood to gain from cordial relations that relations thawed and a turning point was reached in the fraught Sino-American relations.

The phenomenal rise of tiny, resource-poor Singapore from third to first world status within a generation can be traced to inspirational, visionary, patriotic, sacrificial and determined leadership of LKY and his carefully chosen ministers. He ran a transparent government with no tolerance for corruption, a rare feat in the entire Global South. The government objectively assessed its situation and took practical steps which included “[b]eneficial diplomacy, trade by barter, technological transfer and robust human capital development.” (Badejo, 2013) A striking feature of these efforts was that development was conceived as endogenous – driven by internal dynamics – and that the country's meagre resources available were fully optimised. Practical steps were taken to expand the land size through reclamation; the famous British naval base was turned into a dockyard for shipbuilding and repairs; the natural harbour was developed into one of the world's busiest and most efficient seaports; a colonial military complex was converted into a university while an airfield was transformed into a cargo airport (Badejo, 2013). Singapore's public housing scheme was an uncommon achievement which effectively housed every family and gave the citizens a stake in their country. But beyond physical infrastructure was the forging of a national identity out of three racial groups – Chinese, Malay and Indian - with a merit-driven social system where talent and excellence were rewarded. This was how Singapore became an Asian Tiger under a focused and patriotic leadership. A similar feat was achieved much later in Qatar under the remarkable and patriotic leadership of a sheikh.

Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani: Achieving the Qatari Dream in a Decade of Change

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, ruler of tiny oil-rich Qatar, like the Japanese *genro*, took power by force. He staged a bloodless palace coup against his father on June 27, 1995 but

voluntarily abdicated in favour of his own son on June 25, 2013. In just eighteen years, he replicated the feat of Lee Kuan Yew, by transforming his minuscule emirate from regional obscurity into regional and global prominence. He conceived and executed a Qatari Dream of a small country with global reach by creating from scratch the Al-Jazeera global cable news network and Qatar Air, one of the leading players in the global aviation industry. In the diplomatic realm, the country became a respected power broker in the Middle East and beyond.

The Qatari Dream had several components – visioning, state branding, deployment of soft power, diplomatic deftness and strategic investment of the country’s huge oil wealth (Barakat, 2012; Peterson, 2013). The Emir envisioned a country that punched far above its weight, and set about achieving that objective. He deployed wealth in pursuit of development, properly so-called, which meant not only external power projection and influence, but a domestic impact on citizens’ living conditions. An oil-rich country like Nigeria, Qatar embarked on strategic economic diversification, combining the following strategies: reducing over-dependence on oil and gas revenues, expanding the tourism, steel and petrochemical industries, privatizing state enterprises, creating an investor-friendly regulatory environment and strategically investing its huge oil and gas revenues in worldwide ventures (Barakat, 2012: 5). Its global investments represented “a sound economic policy of recycling oil and gas income into future income streams,” which also created “awareness of Qatar’s financial strength” and reinforced its brand as “an international economic force.” (Peterson, 2013:2)

Sheikh Al-Thani undertook the difficult task of state branding through cultural and sports branding (Barakat, 2012; Peterson, 2013). In addition to its soft power projection abroad, the policy served the domestic purpose of “fostering a sense of national identity, loyalty and social cohesion.” (Barakat, 2012: 9) Instruments of state branding included: the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development; the annual Qatar Cultural Festival; the spectacular Museum of Islamic Art, different museums of history, textiles, photography and modern art; the Al-Jazeera satellite television network; the globally competitive Qatar Air; local campuses of leading American universities; local branch offices of the Rand Corporation, the Brookings Institution and the Royal United Services Institute; hosting of regional and global

golf, lawn tennis and motor racing tournaments; and a successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

In spite of his celebrated achievements and relatively good health, Sheikh Al-Thani stepped down for his son – like Lee Kuan Yew. Unlike many African rulers, he did not turn public office into a retirement home, like Robert Mugabe, Felix Houphouët-Boigny or Jomo Kenyatta, and did not stay in office till he became too infirm to rule and needed to be shoved aside, like Habib Bourguiba, or brutally murdered, like Robert Tolbert, Samuel Doe and Muammar Ghadafi.

THE WAY FORWARD: SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

The examples considered above demonstrate why and how leadership and economic nationalism can transform a nation's fortunes. Nigeria needs what can be described as “meaningful and purposeful leadership” that possesses “an appreciable and considerable depth of thinking beyond the conventional.” (Onunaiju, 2013: 64) Nigerian leaders should learn to be civil and humane, exemplary and self-sacrificing. Without the collective leadership of the Japanese *genro* type and a leader that stands out of the pack like LKY, Nigeria cannot successfully push the agenda of real transformation.

Nigeria needs visionary leadership with a Big Nigerian Dream that rests upon the fundamental restructuring of government and a radical change in the way the business of governance is conducted. The integrity of such leadership, and its commitment to tackling corruption and profligacy is paramount in sending a signal that it would no longer be business as usual. Such leadership must be able to launch a frontal attack on systemic corruption, block loopholes that facilitate capital flight, including luxury imports and medical safari, as well as public officials' penchant for overseas jaunts. The leadership must be able to redress the lack of public accountability (which is prevalent across all tiers of government), lack of transparency in the award of oil licences (*The Punch*, 16 September 2013: 24) and the scourge of inflated contracts and abandoned projects. Nigeria can learn from Singapore's record of stamping out corruption. The legendary Lee Kuan Yew (2000:534) attributed the success of his country's anti-corruption drive to: “first, good intelligence; next an impersonal, not a subjective approach; third, solid backing from the top for anti-corruption investigation and prosecution.”

A corollary of systemic corruption is profligacy or waste in government. A long list of abandoned contracts and white elephant projects point to misplacement of priority and official myopia. The unresolved controversy over the purchase of two armoured cars for the purported use of a minister for the sum of N375 million has raised a number of issues apart from the cost. First, the same sum of money would pay the minimum wage of N18,000 to 20,833 workers or build 150 classrooms and 37 wards of hospitals in this country which is notorious for dilapidated school infrastructure and inadequate hospital wards. Second, the expenditure in hard currency simply enriched other countries and denied Nigerian small-scale enterprises and their potential employees much-needed capital and income. Sherifdeen Tella, a Professor of Economics, asserted that: "If that money had been invested in something produced in Nigeria, it would have helped to generate employment. Spending such amount of money to import cars that we don't need is only creating jobs for other countries and killing jobs in Nigeria." (Okpi, 2013: 5)

Revenue losses can be stemmed through diligent wealth surveillance and efficient taxation to ensure equitable contribution to the national pool by every productive person. A conducive environment for honest endeavour can be created by addressing the issue of high cost of doing business in Nigeria. For cost savings and efficiency, the number of foreign missions should be trimmed to a manageable and productive number, instead of the current unwieldy number based on a self-delusional symbolism of being the "Giant of Africa." The size of our foreign contingents to various international meetings and sporting events must also be reduced to the barest minimum.

Maximizing the potential of our foreign missions, we should charge them to understudy their host countries' best practices and transmit same for domestic adaptation. For example, the Nigerian Ambassador to Ethiopia observed that Ethiopians of all classes, unlike Nigerians, were fastidious adherents of law and order. "One thing I admire about Ethiopians," he noted, "which I know we can copy is respect for law and order. They don't require a big stick to obey the law." (Ogundele, 2013:68) The Ethiopian situation was evidently a case of self-discipline by both leaders and the people.

Economic nationalism even in the age of globalisation and free trade agreements must be practised. If the United States of America still subsidizes its agricultural sector, there is nothing

stopping Nigeria from giving judicious and properly conceived and administered state help to national industry. We can emulate how Singapore aided the Neptune Orient Line and how the nineteenth-century Japanese nurtured domestic capital to take on and beat off formidable foreign competition. Our economic nationalism does not require a slogan though one may be useful as a tool of mobilisation just as the Ethiopians used to adopt “Ethiopia Tikdem” (“Ethiopia First”) as a galvanizing rallying cry.

There must be a resolute determination at all levels of government to reverse the allocation to recurrent, as against capital, expenditure. That this can be done with positive results has been demonstrated by the Edo State government under Governor Adams Oshiomhole. He reported his displeasure on discovering that 85 per cent of the State budget was being devoted to recurrent expenditure with only 15 per cent going into capital expenditure. He then decided to reverse it in ratio 60:40 in favour of capital expenditure, with undeniable results in the infrastructure development and urban renewal projects executed across his State (Onuorah and Abubakar, 2013:10). This trajectory of capital investment in infrastructure for overall development is strongly recommended for Nigeria and has parallels elsewhere. As Wong (2004:357) notes, the “developmentally oriented state” in China maintains a “focus on infrastructural and catch-up development, exemplifying the classical developmental state model.”

A corollary of this is the need to drastically reduce the cost of governance. This can be tackled in various ways, including the elimination of “ghost workers” (such as through biometric identification), reduction of the bloated size of the bureaucracy, abolition of the Senate and limiting the House of Representatives membership to a maximum of six per State (with half elected on the basis of equality of States); ending sinecure appointments made to please political patrons, limiting the number of aides to the President and Governors to a maximum of six; limiting the size of the cabinet of each State to a maximum of twelve Commissioners; and the pruning of Ministries to a manageable number and of Ministers to eighteen in all (three per geopolitical zone). Nigeria can no longer afford the luxury of appointing Ministers and Commissioners to represent all States and Local Government Areas. Whereas the Regional Premiers of the First Republic had at most eighteen ministers in each of their regions, we now

have hundreds of Commissioners and Special Advisers/Assistants governing the same territories with poorer results. This practice is primitive and a drag on national development.

In addition, the abolition of severance package and pensions for political appointees as well as a drastic slash in the remuneration of political appointees are urgent imperatives. A situation where federal lawmakers, in a poor country that Nigeria is, reportedly earn more than their counterparts in the G-8 countries is unacceptable and unsustainable. The latest report that a State Governor awarded himself a N100m retirement health insurance has made the country a laughing stock in the comity of nations. Public servants – for that is what they are – owe to the public that pays them full disclosure of their true earnings, and how much they pay as tax! Nigeria must see itself, not as a rich country, but as one that is struggling to get out of poverty. It is a poor country with a few rich people, and that does not translate to development, properly defined. That Nigeria has some dollar-denominated billionaires and a high per capita ratio of private jet ownership does not make it a rich country, as was argued by its President in a recent interview.

In addition to integrity and competence at all levels of government, Nigeria needs reliable data on the human and natural resources critical to national development. As it is, the country lacks reliable data on practically all aspects of national life. One striking example is cadastral data, which pre-modern Japan, for example, had collected through a cadastral survey in 1582!!! Such data is needed in Nigeria to authenticate and appreciate the land resources, identify every settlement, “validate the property rights” and “enhance ... [the] productive capacity” of the citizens (Durojaiye, 2013). It will also aid wealth surveillance and tax collection. We cannot evade the issue of reliable census figures, especially details such as the number of school-age children, women, youth, the aged and the unemployed, so that we do not continue the syndrome identified by Wolfgang Stolper in the 1960s – “planning without facts.” (Stolper, 1966; Dare, 2013) The global advances in technology have made it possible to get accurate census data by the use of biometric enumeration. This will also aid our electoral and other practical needs. Here, the Nigerian power elite has to sacrifice its lust for power for its sake and plunder for primitive accumulation in pursuit of commonsense development. Fear of losing their hold on power – if true figures alter the power dynamics – should not be allowed to stall national development for

which we need hard data on how many people live where, do what or belong to which age bracket.

There should be policy cohesion, consistency and harmony within and across tiers, the lack of which often gets Ministries in the same government to work at cross purposes. That this has not been the case is illustrated by a Nigerian investor who lamented “the contradiction wherein another ministry grants tariff waivers for the importation of palm oil while the ministry of agriculture is trying hard to promote local production by prompting farmers to expand plantation holdings.” (Odum, 2013:44) Another example, acknowledged by the Minister of Agriculture, is the massive import of rice – Nigeria is the world’s largest importer – from Thailand and India, countries which heavily subsidize rice production for export at the expense of local production in Nigeria (Njoku, 2013: 44).

Related to this is the need to make value addition a core principle in export promotion, as illustrated by the drive for cassava exports. Though Nigeria is the world’s leading producer of cassava at 46 million metric tons per annum, with the prospect of earning about US\$5 billion based on an annual exportation of 37.5 million metric tons, farmers still remain poor because of the “poorly developed markets.” It is also significant that little or no value addition takes place in the process, thus robbing the country and the producers of enhanced income (Njoku, 2013: 44). As a corollary, local industry should be encouraged while also enforcing quality control of imported and local products (Oluwajuyitan, 2013: 20). This is a means of making Nigerian products first choice in the West African market.⁶

A major policy goal is addressing youth unemployment both for economic growth and national security. The Ministries of Labour and Agriculture should collaborate to develop schemes to attract the youth into the agricultural economy - horticulture, poultry, fish farming, etc. - in suburbia and the countryside. Deliberate efforts should be made to get everyone engaged in formal and informal vocational education, skill acquisition and job creation. Practical skills acquisition or vocational training should be properly integrated in the school and after-school curricula. A special focus can be given to training and re-training of workers (with internships in

⁶ This writer watched a television documentary on a young Anglo-Ugandan woman who returned home to develop fashion products out of cow horns for the East African regional market

foreign countries, where appropriate) in the critical real estate sector – plumbing, masonry, carpentry, house painting – where there is a major national emergency. Our apprenticeship system should be revamped to ensure that trainee artisans in formal and informal settings are properly trained, licensed and registered before they are unleashed on the socio-economy. That is one sure way of ridding the country of incompetent and corrupt artisans, especially plumbers and automechanics.

Infrastructure development should be promoted to benefit the mass of citizens –investing in and attracting foreign investment into the transport and energy sectors. This contrasts with projects, such as new State Houses and banquet halls, which are used by only a tiny fraction of the populace. Contracts for all major public works must be awarded through a transparent process and the justification for such projects should derive from open stakeholders’ meetings, leading to adequate provision in the budget.

The provision of affordable health services is also critical to national development. In addition to funding medical education and increasing health facilities, fairly spread out to meet people’s needs, specialist facilities should be developed to cope with the increasing rate of cancer and other deadly ailments requiring specialist treatment, especially surgery. Government could, for example, reverse the medical tourism to India – a multi-billion naira capital flight - by replicating world-class healthcare facilities in Nigeria and offering equally qualified Nigerians in Diaspora commensurate conditions of service to operate in such hospitals.

The foregoing multi-pronged developmental agenda can be achieved through two complementary strategies. First, the devolution of power to the country’s six geopolitical zones (not the old regions) on the model of Nigeria’s First Republic is a fundamental imperative. We can learn from current practices in Spain and Canada. This should align with regional/zonal collaborative development and consciously aim to create multiple centres of development across the country to stem heedless drift to Lagos, in particular. The over-mighty central government must shed weight – excessive powers and excess resources, which are usually frittered away or purloined. Policing too should follow the same trajectory – there ought to be devolution and inter-tier coordination. States and Local governments too should share the burden of policing

beyond making material contribution. A truly federal system allows for concurrent police formations with joint leadership and operations across tiers.

The second strategy is positive and constructive inter-governmental relations. Shorn of bitter personality clashes, party rivalry and brinkmanship, cordial and constructive Federal-State relations would have achieved cost-sharing in inter-state infrastructure development. This would facilitate the construction of bridges, highways and rail lines across State and regional boundaries. The potential of such cooperative efforts in Nigeria is immeasurable but the possibility of it is doomed by the “do-or-die” politics, which is not aimed at developing the contested terrain. Such contests can be likened to turf fighting between rival mafia gangs in an American or Italian city. Accordingly, Nigerian office holders should abandon their fixation on the next elections, morbid anxiety over life out of public office and the survival of their political party - all at the expense of real issues that affect the people.

Coupled with inter-tier relations is the horizontal partnership among States in the same geopolitical zone, or even between proximate States in different zones, such as between Ondo and Delta; Edo and Kogi; Enugu and Benue; Plateau and Bauchi, etc. The first principle is that local problems are almost always best resolved by those closest to them. The second is that pooled resources rationally allocated would yield better returns than what any single party can achieve doing it alone. Third, regional cooperation would make for re-allocation of resources, shifting them to areas of greatest need to avoid waste and duplication. One State can spare teachers or health workers that the other lacks. Fourth, inter-state cooperation is likely to address the plight of marginal communities, usually isolated at the margins of their States. The good news is that some zones, the Southwest and Southeast, for example, have embarked upon some sort of regional cooperation though there are early signs of personality clashes and brinkmanship amongst the leading political figures. One hopes that institutional and cultural safeguards, popular pressure and enlightened self interest would override such constraints.

CONCLUSION

While making due allowance for context and culture, this lecture has dwelt upon two major dynamics in the rise to greatness of selected countries of the Global South. The following major conclusions can be drawn from the case studies in relation to Nigeria.

First, size may be a factor in national greatness but Qatar and Singapore – two tiny countries wielding influence out of proportion to their size – demonstrate that it is not enough to flaunt size and population as markers of greatness. Nigeria’s claim to the title of “Giant of Africa” on account of its sheer size and huge population sounds hollow when contrasted with the global economic and political influence of tiny Singapore and Qatar, the land size and population of which cannot match those of either Lagos or Kano States!!!

Second, all the leaders considered in this survey had a dream or vision for their respective nations. No nation, it can be concluded, can rise above the dream or vision of its leaders.

Third, arising from this was the willingness of the leadership to engage the best hands for the task of actualising their dreams. Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew– much like Chief Obafemi Awolowo in Western Nigeria of the 1950s - was surrounded by a stellar cabinet to which each Minister brought talent and character.

Fourth, a common trait in the Global South leaders surveyed above is the extent of personal sacrifice, self-assessment and self-development undertaken by them. Lee Kuan Yew, for example, was a cerebral leader who never stopped learning and was always watching out for something to take home from his foreign trips. They also demonstrated personal discipline, including keeping their immediate families on a leash – unlike the typical African or Nigerian First Family. An aide of LKY commented on Mrs Lee, with whom he travelled and had a close relationship, as follows: “Mrs Lee was supportive, without intruding – and she was certainly not “just a busybody.”” (Keat, 2013) Nigerian First Ladies should emulate Mrs Lee, who was unobtrusive, yet effective in assisting her husband in a strictly private capacity.

Fifth, the argument that Nigeria’s heterogeneity⁷ does not permit the emergence of “strong leadership,” as happened in a supposed “cohesive and homogeneous (sic)” Singapore (Bokini, 2013: 22) is facile. For, Nigeria too had its “strongmen” – Generals Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha and Olusegun Obasanjo (even as civilian President) – who deployed their willpower and the weight of their office in a different direction. The resources, time and energy devoted to

⁷ According to Bokini (2013: 22), Nigeria’s “diversity and heterogeneity ...made it impossible for the emergence of a benevolent autocrat who will impose his will and idealism on our society, the way Lee Kuan Yew did in Singapore.” But, any of Generals Babangida, Abacha and Obasanjo, inheritors and builders of Nigeria’s famed imperial presidency, was much better placed than LKY to change the country. That they did not - in spite of their awesome powers and enormous resources - was a clear failure of personal leadership.

hounding their real and perceived opponents or adversaries or some other vain pursuits could have resolved developmental challenges in the transport and power sectors, at least. The argument that one could not build a nation and develop the economy at the same time ignores the historical fact that Spain, Germany, Japan and the United States were not turn-key projects but products of nation-building, under strong, patriotic leadership, which was also accompanied by economic development.

Sixth, leadership is not a divine right⁸ – it is attained or earned by fair means, a credible track record, sound character and on commonly agreed parameters. The path to Nigerian leadership must be paved with a clear vision, exemplary character, fairness, concrete accomplishments and a popular mandate, rather than any sectional sabre-rattling. The attainment of the Presidency in 2015 must be earned by undeniable achievement rather than by dubious ascription founded on region, religion or resource control.

Finally, this lecture submits that whether in terms of nation-building or economic development, the fundamental question is the political question. It is imperative to resolve the issues of leadership, nationalism (loyalty or dedication to the nation-state and the defence of its interests above all) and policy coherence as a precondition for development. This calls for men and women endowed with purpose and a sense of history, capability for imposing order on the prevailing confusion, and willingness to make the sacrifice required to lead the country to endogenous and sustainable development.

Returning to our opening discussion on monocausality, we hold that leadership is the one critical factor that is capable of changing Nigeria for good, as epitomised by our examples from the Global South. As my spiritual father, an uncompromising cleric, loves to say: “A leader’s sin is a leading sin.” When we get exemplary and galvanizing leaders (both individual and collegiate) of the calibre of LKY, Sheikh Al-Thani and the Japanese *genro*, the country is bound to change for good.⁹ Aligned with that overriding factor is the need for economic nationalism – “Country First” - to drive development on the platform of a Democratic Developmental State.

⁸ See the persuasive position of a major Nigerian newspaper: “Debunking That Strident Claim to Preidency,” *The Punch*, Editorial, 8 November 2013, 22.

⁹ This is not an uncritical advocacy for, or endorsement of, the “Great Man” leadership style. See, for example, Chang, 2013.

There has been much talk, especially since January 2014, about the Centenary of the Nigerian State, as we know it. But we should be more concerned about the Nigerian Century, which should supersede the Nigerian Centenary. For that to happen, we need a Nigerian Dream driven by Patriotic and Visionary Leadership, focused on catapulting the country into the ranks of its former peers that cast off the chains of underdevelopment. If this lecture starts us off thinking which way to go as we approach 2015, then, that purpose would have been well served.

I thank you for listening. God bless.

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