THE DEVELOPING WORLD AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES: INTERROGATING THE DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY OF MALAYSIA:

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Abstract

The development strides' taken by the state and leadership of Malaysia over the last four decades are worth commending. Her high growth rate is consistent with high GDP, high GNI per Capita, low poverty indices, improvement in the quality of life, income distribution, promotion of growth and equity, racial harmony, religious tolerance and political stability. Malaysia, under the current leadership of Prime Minister Najid Razak, has colonial realities that correspond with those of other colonized countries of the developing world and also inherited the colonial legacies enumerated in the development literature. Being in the same predicaments with her sister countries in the global south, Malaysia was also faced with the option of following the development routes suggested by the Bretton Woods Institutions or those of dependency scholars. However, Malaysia attempted a now successful path unique to her realities with a mixture of the values of prior development theories where necessary. By implementing short and medium term goals towards the achievement of the long-term goal of vision 2020, the country has been able to navigate her way out of a deep-seated racialized poverty to becoming a high-incomemiddle-class society where others in her category particularly, Nigeria, have failed. What did Malaysia do differently from other countries in the global south like Nigeria? With the use of documentary observation method and descriptive analysis, this paper attempts to answer this question by interrogating the development trajectory of Malaysia. It concludes by suggesting ways Nigeria could learn from it.

Keywords: Developing World, Development issues, Development Trajectory, Racialized Poverty, Vision 2020

Introduction

As a country, Malaysia is on the verge of surpassing the US\$15,000 Gross National Income (GNI) per capita indicator of an advanced country by 2020. For over four decades, the country has maintained over 6 percent GDP growth per annum, achieved steady reduction of poverty indices from 52.4 percent in 1970 to 3.8 percent in 2009 and 1.7 percent in 2012 (Ragayah, 2014; Manaf& Ibrahim, 2017). It has one of the best economic growth records in Asia in over 50 years amidst multiple challenges and economic shocks. Between the 1970s and 1980s, Malaysia was able to transform from a predominantly agriculture-based economy to manufacturing, and by the 1990s was already into modern services provision. Malaysia's rise from the ranks of a low-income economy in the 1970s to a high middle-income economy by 1992 has remained unchanged as the national per capita income which stood at US\$350 in 1970 multiplied 25 folds to US\$10,796 as at 2014 (Rudner, 1983; Aslam and Hassan, 2003). Other indicators of Malaysia's development success include improvement in the quality of life, income distribution, low poverty indices, promoting growth and equity, and maintaining racial harmony and political stability.

The story however, was not always this palatable, because, like all British colonized territories, Malaysia was also exposed to the harsh realities of colonialism is characterised by economy disarticulation, ethnic divisiveness, political instability, minority and majority identities, and the overall outcome of metropole and peripheral dependency. As a result, the Malaysian society was structured between the predominantly poor indigenous majority, the economically buoyant Chinese and India population and the others (Lee, 2004). Also, ethnic realities are such that each race is identified with particular economic function such as agriculture and low income earning/ industrial and high income earning; and geographical location such as the concentration of predominantly high income earning race in certain states and predominantly low income earning race also in other states (Ratuva, 2013). This divide also affected the facelift of the country in such a way that rich and poor states are divided along these lines.

At the onset of independence in 1957, the country's development predicament was not different from other colonized territories. There was then need for rapid economic growth, extreme poverty reduction, political stability, ethnic unification and social cohesion. This would require equity in wealth distribution, equal access to social services, employment and participation as well as a nationalist driven responsible leadership.

Propelled by the developmental needs of the country, a comprehensive development plan was embarked upon. The process began with market-led policies followed by government-led policies and later a fusion of both; the social engineering was such that it had both preference and prejudice for development (Lee, 2004). The implication is that while a certain aspect of development was concentrated on, another aspect suffered. However, the significance of the Malaysian experience lies in the fact that the identified gaps observed in each development planning stage were addressed in the next, hence development planning from 1957 was constantly improved upon till it got to the present New Economic Plan (NEP). The NEP was broken into stages to cover a life plan of 30 years (1990 to 2020) and is in its final stage of implementation. The success of the NEP is that the actors, what they did differently from other third world countries in their category, and how Nigeria can learn from their experience is the focus of this paper and document analysis would be used throughout the work. Meerman (in Ragayah, 2014) summarizes the success of Malaysia development planning thus:

Malaysia's recent growth history struck me as a paradox. How could a country grow at more than 6 percent annually for over three decades (1970-2006) despite three recessions, while investing a sizeable proportion of its resources in redressing ethnic disparity? Seen from another perspective, how was it possible to evolve in one generation from a largely rural (70% in 1970) primary producer to a partially industrialized, urban (64% in 2006), middle-class country, while implementing a deep, invasive, and costly social policy? Meerman (in Ragayah, 2014:18)

From this point on, the article is broken into five main sections. The first is the literature review under the theme "Countries of the Global South and Development Issues: Malaysia in Focus." Secondly, we looked into the history and structure of Malaysia, the predicaments along the way

of their development, development planning and policies. The third section examines the role of the state, leadership and their implications for Malaysia's national development. The fourth section focuses on the point of difference and lessons Nigeria could draw from them, and the fifth section concludes this paper.

Countries of the Global South and Development Issues: Malaysia in Focus

The term development particularly as it concerns newly emerging nations gained significance in the years following the Second World War as a result of the challenges the Western World faced in rebuilding a society shattered by war. Institutions were built (IMF and World Bank) to help manage this task along with theories explaining the special challenges faced by the backward recently independent countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, and how these challenges could be overcome to place these newly independent countries on the path to industrialization (Rapley, 2007). On this premise lies all the issues that relate to development among developing countries. Some of these countries like Malaysia have attempted with much success to overcome these challenges and bring their countries out of the quagmire of poverty and habitual dependence.

Issues like development is largely multifaceted, proceeding from different orientations and theoretical underpinnings. For instance, a convergence of modernization scholars predicted the development of these newly independent and developing countries on the condition that they follow the trajectory mapped out by more developed countries (Alapiki, 2005). The narrative in their variants covered issues that would require a move away from traditional societies and values (such as a deficient need for achievement, unmitigated population increase, corruption, etc) to the adoption of western values and orientation which are assumed to be more rational based (Offiong, 1980; Ibaba, 2004).

It is indicated here that many of these societies failed in their development endeavour because they appear to be tradition-bound and exhibit values that are inimical, hostile or ill-disposed to development (Ibaba, 2004). Whereas, the dependency orientation presents a departure from this position; arguing rather that new and developing nations are better off de-linking from the industrialized nations because the structure of the global world system is skewed to their disadvantage. Immanuel Wallerstein (in Alapiki, 2005). It should be noted however that both arguments are not without criticism though, it appears that a well-balanced development would require elements from both the modernization and dependency positions firmly rooted on the existential realities of particular countries.

Malaysia, like most of the countries in this category, is a product of colonialism with its attendant disarticulation of previously traditional and homogenous societies; unmitigated exploitation of resources; adulteration of values and imposition of the preferred leadership class. Despite these numerous challenges coupled with a society divided along ethnicity, poverty and geography, leadership in Malaysia has been able to put their country on the map of world's highest developing countries (Ragayah, 2014). The literature with regards to Malaysia development trajectory explained this success from the point of view of rapid economic growth

with emphasis on income distribution, industrialization and capital development (Lee, 2004); of state policies that emphasize growth and equity (Ragayah, 2014); and policies formulated and implemented with the rakyat (people) as the centrepiece of all development efforts (Malaysia 11MP, 2015).

In other words, development planning, defined by Todaro (1992), is a conscious government effort to influence, direct and sometimes control changes in principal economic variables with regards to consumption, investment, saving, import, export and so on of countries in a given period of time for the achievement of predetermined objectives. In the case of Malaysia, it has led the country out from amongst the world's poorest to one of the fastest developing nations in the world. With outstanding performance on all indices of development such as the GNI which is at the verge of surpassing the US\$15,000 Gross National Income (GNI) per capita indicator of an advanced country by 2020.

A steady GDP growth rate per annum of over 6 percent in over four decades, steady reduction on all poverty indices from 52.4 percent to 3.8 percent between 1970 and 2009 and as low as 1.7 percent in 2012 which is significant to almost 97 percent decrease in poverty in a little over four decades; a national per capita income that has risen from US\$350 in 1970 to US\$10,796 in 2014 (Rudner, 1983; Aslam and Hassan, 2003; Ragayah, 2014; Manaf & Ibrahim, 2017). In addition, New Economic Plan (NEP) of Malaysia is instrumental to the improvements in quality of life, income distribution, low poverty indices, growth and equity, and maintaining racial harmony and political stability.

While Ragayah (2014) and the Malaysia 11MP (2015) applauded the massive involvement of the state and the role of leadership in the success story of Malaysia, Lee was critical of the extent of the state's involvement and what ends development in Malaysia served. He maintained that development is "a process of evenly distributed progress in well-being, encompassing economic, social, political and cultural life" (2004:66). It is instructive to note that the concerns Lee raised concerning people-centred development are being addressed in subsequent development plans (Dahlan, 2015; Iskandar, 2016), however, the same cannot be said of the state's involvement.

Thus far, the massive involvement of the state in Malaysia's development trajectory and the success achieved so far appear to challenge previous and existing order of strictly economy led development. Perhaps Rodney's claim that development at any level (individual, group or society) is determined by the state (1972) bears relevance to the success story of Malaysia. Taking a cue from the perspective of the role of the state in Malaysia's development, the paper attempts to draw lessons that Nigeria may learn from.

The approach of this paper is a description of what is already known with regards to the development paths taken by Malaysia and less to inform on anything new. This is of particular importance to this work which aims to bring this information to bear on Nigeria's chosen path to development particularly with regards to the role of the state. The major reference would be the Malaysian development plan NEP and other journals, articles and reports on Malaysia

development trajectory. In other to effectively capture the route to the success of Malaysia, it would be appropriate to look at the history and structure of the Malaysian state

History and Structure of Malaysia Society

Malaysia is a federation of 13 states and one federal territory (Dahlan, 2015). Prior to the British occupation, Malaysia like most British colonies was a homogenous society if the geographical distribution is the main unit of measuring homogeneity. Gullick (in Jamil, 1999) described it as a singular society of Malays, the indigenous people. In 1880, they constituted about 90 percent of the population in Peninsular Malaysia. However, after the exit of the colonialist, a significant transformation had taken place in the once homogenous population with the addition of Chinese and India via the British policy of encouraging migration, thus making it a pluralistic society. The result is a transformation from a largely mono-ethnic society into a multi-ethnic one (Santhiram, 1999).

Hirschman earlier observed that “ethnic frictions and antagonism are recurrent problems in developing societies in Asia, Africa and Latin America....” (1986:330). Ratnam (1965) cited in Jamil, (1999), noted that cultural homogeneity in Malaysia is long lost as each ethnic formation has a language of its own as well as practice separate religion, culture and custom. The composition of the ethnic groups is thus: Malays 55.1 percent, Chinese 23.7 percent, Indians 7.2 percent and others 14.0 percent of the total population of 30.5 million as at 2014 (Dahlan, 2015). With regards to language, the Malay ethnic group speaks the Malay language which also provides for them a rallying point and binding force. The same is obtainable for the Indians. However, the Chinese though bound by a common culture and heritage speak a number of dialects which include Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin. The Chinese though a multi-linguist group that barely understand one another, but for the purpose of education and writing use the Mandarin dialect. The implication here is that, while oral language serves as an integrating force for the largest ethnic group, it is the written language that does so for the second largest ethnic group (Santhiram, 1999). These different identities make Malaysia a pluralist society.

There is also an economic aspect to this divide on account of the British creation of artificial occupation for segregating the people along ethnic lines. For instance, the Malays in agriculture-related economic activities, the Chinese in commerce and the Indians in the plantation (Jamil, 1999). This appears to provide a fertile ground for the interethnic division, economic imbalance and the absence of social cohesion and solidarity between the ethnic groups. This character of the state is also replicated in the character of politics where political parties take on the character of pressure groups clamouring for the interest of members of their ethnic orientation. It seems the leadership of the country rode on what appears to be a disadvantage (that is the ethnic divide and conditions of poverty) as a rallying point for achieving rapid economic growth for the whole country

At independence, the socio-economic structure inherited from the British remained intact, hence, while achieving rapid economic growth in the post independent era, the society developed along

dualistic lines in three dimensions which are the agricultural sector that is the main source of employment; the estate with relative high productivity and the “traditional activities of rice and rubber smallholdings with low productivity” (Ragayah, 2014). As a result of this disparity, implementations of rural development programmes tend to heighten the level of inequality. For instance, estates can easily adapt to changes in the rubber industry than smallholding, just as the introduction of technology is less rigorous on the estate than the peasant or traditional producers. The result is that the peasant or traditional producers continue to produce less while the estate continues to produce more, thereby widening the income gap.

Development Predicaments: Ethnic Divide, Wealth/ Poverty Distribution, Political and Social Cohesion

At independence, the development challenges of Malaysia were multifaceted. On the one hand is the division of the country's citizens along ethnic lines characterized by different languages, and economic functions which serve as determinants to rich or poor categories, while on the other is the unbalanced development of the different states also along ethnic lines. These had serious implications for politics, wealth/poverty distribution and social mobilization. A combination of these factors has led to different levels of conflict in many developing climes (Bowe, 1991) including Malaysia. However, Malaysia is a classic case of the coexistence of some major groups with distinct racial, linguistic, religious and cultural identities and perceptions. Abraham in (Haque, 2003). Though her population is predominantly Moslem, Malaysia was able to achieve religious tolerance to an extent.

Ethnic Divide

The development predicament of Malaysia carries with it ethnic induced social strife resulting from the pursuit of ethnic interest. This situation is deepened by the fact that the constitution entrenches such divides in its classification of Malays (broader usage “Bumiputera” meaning son of the soil) and non-Malays (Haque, 2003). This classification has far-reaching effects on state policies especially with regards to the contestation among the various ethnic groups for the sharing of economic, political and social resources. The formation of this ethnic structure has its roots in the British colonial legacy and local factors that promote the principle of special rights for Malays. The unique case of Malaysia is that the dominant ethnic group (the Malays) is predominantly poor and rural while the Chinese and Indians though in varied proportion represent the rich and urban. Hence policies that lean towards affirmative action take the form of preferential policies or special rights in Malaysia and the ethnic dimension of public policy remains important (Nagaraj, Nai-Peng, Chiu-Wan, Kiong-Hock & Pala, 2015).

Wealth/Poverty Distribution

Economic power is not evenly distributed among the major ethnic groups. The Malays though politically significant fall short of economic power and are concentrated in less developed states and rural enclaves. Economic activity for the group is predominantly in the lowest paid occupation such as rice cultivation, rubber small holdings and fishing (Ragayah, 2014). Going further, Ragayah in comparing the economic strength of the major groups averred that the Malay

group is also characterized by a mass of poor people, a very thin middle class and a sprinkling of the very wealthy; the Chinese are characterized by high concentration of middle class and an insignificant number of low income earning class; whereas the Indians are located somewhere between the Malays and the Chinese. Ragayah observed that:

Among the major groups, the Malays, though politically powerful, are concentrated in the less developed states and rural areas as well as being in the lowest paid occupations (rice cultivation, rubber smallholdings, and fishing). This group has a mass of poor people, a very thin middle class and a sprinkling of the very wealthy. On the other hand, the Chinese mostly have moved out of the lower-paid occupations in the agriculture and low-skill service industries into the more highly-paid ones. On average, they earn double the mean income of the Malays and have a near absence of very low-income families and a high concentration in the middle class. While the Indians have very poor households, they generally tend to fall in the intermediate position between the Malays and the Chinese. Inevitably, the near-balance in indigenous and immigrant groups would influence the political climate in Malaysia (Ragayah, 2014:19).

This situation along with rising unemployment among youths (male and female) is made worse by the unbalanced nature of ethnic groups. A situation where one group (the Malays) is mainly employed in the agricultural sector with the highest incidence of poverty and another group (the Chinese) is concentrated in mining, manufacturing and construction with high per capita product giving the appearance of close correspondence between the ethnic groups and their occupational specialization (Thillainathan in Ragayah, 2014). For instance, in a paper presented at the Sixth Session of the Standing Committee on Resource Research and Development (Malaysia, 1976), for 49.3 percent of all households in Peninsula Malaysia received income was below the poverty line and inequality was high.

The inequality like poverty maintained a close correspondence with the various ethnic groups. And because states are predominantly inhabited by particular ethnic groups, it gave rise to regional imbalance. To this end, Malaysia was faced with a precarious situation where inequality has important racial parallels attended by racial specialization in economic activities (Ragayah, 2014).

Political and Social Cohesion

As a result of the composition of identities (ethnic group determines economic function/status and habitation) united with various sections of Malaysia population, the society before and after independence was divided along ethnic lines. This distinct division within the state posed a challenge to development policies where policies appear to favour one group at the expense of others. This, however, cannot be divorced from early British colonial policy, which prioritized the needs of certain groups over others as well as other internal factors. Shamsul Haque (2003) explains it thus:

In facilitating colonial rule, the British made treaties with the Malay rulers (Sultans) to assist them in governing their Malay subjects, planted the seed of fear among Malays about the threats and challenges from non-Malays, and assumed a role of self-proclaimed protector of Malay interest and rights in various spheres of society.... Beyond this colonial factor, there were major local forces that also led to the formation of the state and its constitution based on the principle of special rights...prior to Malaysia's independence. For example, although the year 1946 was the year of the inaugurating the Malayan Union model of nationhood that hardly guaranteed any special privileges to Malays, the same year also marked the formation of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) as a political organization that rejected the Malayan Union concept, opposed the excessive recognition of non-Malays at the expense of Malay rights and eventually led in 1948 to the replacement of the Malayan Union model by the Federation of Malaya that provided only limited citizenship status to non-Malays.... In fact, it is this ethnicized model of nationhood designed by the UMNO that came to be one of the core components of the 1957 Constitution....(Haque, 2003:244)

These speak volume to the political and social disarticulation of the society at independence and the hurdles the leadership faced with regards to the development expenditure. It is on this premise that the planning, strategies, and implementation of development goals were achieved and concretized.

Development Planning and Implementation

Development in Malaysia is often spoken in terms of the nation's economic goals and achievement as well as in terms of a political platform and rallying point (Lee, 2004). This is because development planning and implementation are state-centred. In other words, the state plays the role in setting the agenda, defining the values, and directing both economy and society to follow its instruction towards the achievement of set goals. To this end, it is assumed that the state is authoritative in its development expenditure (Slater, 2003). Also, the Malaysian state did not tow the line of any particular ideological disposition in its development planning, rather, it pragmatically responded to the material needs of the society and ambitions of political leaders (Lee, 2004).

Three key factors can thus be identified as playing major roles in the development planning in Malaysia when social and political factors are combined. These are a strong state, pragmatism and materialism.

Development planning in Malaysia in the 1960s focused on rapid economic growth, the reason put forward for this is the need for necessity and sustainability of the rapid population growth being experienced. If living standards were to be sustained and improved, there was the need to expand the economy, increase employment and output (Malaysia 11MP, 2015). With the passage

of time, population growth as a reason for rapid economic growth assuaged and wealth redistribution, equity and national integration became the focal point of development planning.

This is because while the policies implemented prior to the 1970s achieved satisfactory growth in the economy, they failed to entrench equity or significantly reduce poverty. The high incidences of poverty and inequality made worse by its ethnic character is said to have been the proximate reason behind the Malaysia race riots in 1969 (Ragayah, 2014). The government responded to this need by instituting the New Economic Policy (NEP) that was to direct the nation's development trajectory from 1970 to 1990. Ragayah captures the NEP in this manner:

The NEP was launched with the objective of attaining national unity and fostering nation-building through poverty eradication and economic restructuring so as to eliminate the identification of race with economic functions. Since the implementation of this policy, Malaysia has achieved growth, structural transformation, and poverty alleviation and improved income distribution in an ethnically diverse society with growth being accompanied by improved income distribution (Ragayah, 2014:18).

The success of the NEP thus indicates the promotion of growth, equity and maintaining racial harmony and political stability such that between the period of 1970 and 2012, poverty incidences in Malaysia had reduced from 52.4 percent to 1.7 percent (Ragayah, 2014:18; Manaf & Ibrahim, 2017). It would be instructive to note that though macroeconomic policy in Malaysia can be classified into three broad phases (the market-led development 1957-1970, the state-led development 1971-1985 and the liberalization and globalization phase 1986 onward), development planning from the NEP upward is broken into periods of five years, each adding up to a total of eleven medium-term plans within the long-term plan tagged vision 2020. The long-term plan is divided into four phases- the New Economic Policy (NEP), the National Development Policy (NDP), the National Vision Policy (NVP) and the New Economic Model (NEM) (Dahlan, 2015).

National Development Plan 1957 – 1970 (first Malaysia plan)

This is characterized by the stage of market-led development implemented between 1957 and 1970 (Ragayah, 2015). It focused mainly on the achievement of rapid economic growth based on the government set goals with a target of achieving a faster rate of economic growth, lower degree of economic instability, lower levels of unemployment, the eradication of poverty and more equitable distribution of income. During this era, the government pursued laissez-faire policies towards the achievement of industrial development.

Even though the economy was market-led, the government's extensive intervention was recorded in the area of promoting rural development and the provision of social and physical infrastructure. At this time, the Malaysian economy relied heavily on rubber and tin, hence government intervention was geared towards the development of the private sector and reduce the dependence on rubber and tin. Development spending during this time was biased in favour of the rural areas as observed by Bowie (1991:69), "...agriculture and rural development

accounted for 22.3 percent of spending while industrial development received 2.4 percent”. Primary commodities were the main income earners of the state even though import substitution was encouraged but not at the expense of agriculture. However, as agriculture became established, the government emphasis shifted to industrial development. The policies implemented achieved the first two targets as growth rate averaged 6 percent but this failed to reflect on the level of absolute poverty particularly as the predominantly poor Bumiputeras remained trapped in their low-productivity rural occupations (Ragayah, 2014). In addition, there was a widening gap between rural and urban household incomes with poverty and unemployment hitting the roof. These in addition to other factors culminated in the worst racial riots Malaysia ever experienced. This led the state to reconsider its strategy hence the second phase which is the state-led development planning- the New Economic Plan.

The New Economic Policy (NEP/OPP1) 1971 -1990 (2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Malaysia plan)

The macroeconomic policies during this period were mostly state-led as a result of the failure of the previous plan to drive home the targets of lower levels of unemployment, eradication of poverty and more equitable distribution of income. Here state policies shifted to embrace national unity as its overriding goal. To achieve this, the state aimed first to eradicate poverty by raising the income levels and employment opportunity of all Malaysians irrespective of race, and second, to restructure the Malaysian society in such a way as to eliminate the identification of race with economic functions and geographical location (Ragayah, 2014). The idea of the NEP was that its implementation would give rise to the expansion of the economy in such a way that no group within the Malaysian society will feel deprived, thereby promoting a sense of belonging for all. The strategy was that poverty reduction programmes integrated employment generation as one of its instruments for escaping poverty in the long run.

Hence, fast pace economic growth was now premised on income redistribution to increase the opportunities for more education, better jobs and higher incomes, particularly to the disadvantaged groups. This strategy was partly thwarted by the economic recession of the mid-1980s which forced the leadership to reconsider its state-led development policies and to embrace private sector-based and foreign investment-led growth and structural change. Internal policies were then geared towards investment promotion (liberalization and globalization) via the Promotion of Investment Act (1986) (Lee, 2004).

A combination of favourable external conditions which led to the relocation of many Asian manufacturing ventures to South-east Asia provided massive foreign direct investment benefits to Malaysia within this period. By 1988, towards the end of the NEP, the country had again established rapid growth, only this time, the aim was to achieve the full potential output growth that the economy could generate, focusing on increasing productivity, efficiency and competitiveness (Lee, 2004). The implication here is that the ambition for rapid economic growth from independence to 1990 served three different purposes, first was to respond to the needs of a growing population; the second was to redistribute wealth for equity and national integration; and the third was for increasing productivity, efficiency and competitiveness.

Amidst criticisms of poverty being measured by income alone and policies being ethnically bias (Lee, 2004), the success of the NEP indicates the promotion of growth, equity and maintaining racial harmony and political stability such that between 1970 and 1990, poverty rate had dropped from 49.3 percent to 16.5 percent as well as the appreciation of other indicators of growth as expressed below.

Table 1: showing the growth trajectory of the NEP (1970-1990)

YEAR	POVERTY RATE	GDP	GNI Per capita
1970	49.3%	5.99%	USD335
1980	37.4%	7.44%	USD1,836
1990	16.5%	9.01%	USD2,514

Source: National Development Planning Practices in Malaysia (2015:5) -document observation and analysis

National Development Policy (NDP/OPP2) 1991- 2000 (6th and 7th Malaysia Plan)

The era was the continuation of the liberalization and globalization phase that started in 1986. The experience during this period of policy implementation had a mix of the continuation of the NEP objectives of eradicating poverty and restructuring society and its own target of accelerating poverty eradication and reducing the social and economic imbalance. The strategy employed was still that of growth with equity, hence there was not so much fundamental change in the NDP policy. The observed difference is that the NDP was private sector driven, unlike the NEP which began as state-led in the first three quarters. Although private sector-led, the government played a supportive and complementary role (Ragayah, 2014). Also, with the expectation of the establishment of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the WTO agreements by 2003, the government proactively implemented tax reforms that would later increase Malaysia's international competitiveness. Unlike the NEP where rapid economic growth addresses specific challenges, rapid growth under the NDP is criticized for achieving its own end. Also, development under the NDP had become less independent or internally inspired and more dependent on FDI especially as it concerns production and high technology sectors. These challenges notwithstanding, the success of the NDP are as indicated below:

Table 2: showing growth trajectory of the NDP (1991-2000)

YEAR	POVERTY RATE	GDP	GNI Per capita
1995	8.7%	8.5%	USD4,438
2000	9.83%	8.86%	USD3,836

Source: National Development Planning Practices in Malaysia (2015:5) -document observation and analysis

Malaysia's National Vision Policy (NVP/OPP3) 2001- 2010 (8th and 9th Malaysia Plan

The economic orientation of this policy flows from the NEP and the NDP hence these two previous policies are contained in the NVP or Third Outline Perspective. The policy responded to criticisms that the previous policies emphasized rapid economic growth to the detriment of human capital development hence, the NVP in addition to economic growth addressed development aspects that were more socially inclined. Among the major thrust of the policy as put forward by Ragayah (2014) are first building a resilient nation by fostering national unity, inculcating the spirit of patriotism, nurturing political maturity, cultivating a more tolerant and caring society with positive values, and raising the quality of life as well as increasing economic resilience. Second, it seeks to promote an equitable society by eradicating poverty and reducing imbalances among and within the ethnic groups as well as region. Third, it aims at sustaining high economic growth by strengthening the sources of growth, the financial and corporate institutions as well as microeconomic management. Other thrusts of the policy include the promotion of competitiveness in a globalized world, develop a knowledge-based economy, strengthen human resource development and environmentally sustainable development for long-term growth. This policy also recorded progress in the growth of the economy as stated in table 3 below.

Table 3: showing progress trajectory of NVP (2001-2010)

YEAR	POVERTY RATE	GDP	GNI Per capita
2005	2.7%	5.33%	USD5,309
2010	3.8%	7.43%	USD8,465

Source: National Development Planning Practices in Malaysia (2015:5)-document observation and analysis

Malaysia's New Economic Model 2011-2020 (10th and 11th Malaysia Plan)

This new policy is born out of the concern that the old models though very successful may be out of date and can no longer sustain the development goals of present-day Malaysia. Giving that the country is caught in a middle-income trap where growth and prospect have weakened (Ragayah, 2014). The government in this regards introduced four pillars to enable Malaysia to achieve the status of a developed state. These are the 1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now concept; the Government Transformation Programme (GTP); the New Economic Model (NEM); and the 10th Malaysia Plan 2011-2015 (10MP).

The whole essence is to provide new growth model that will be fundamentally different from the previous ones and would present creative ways to revitalize the private sector while depending less on foreign labour. One that would strengthen the domestic market and public sector while at the same time present a transparent and market-friendly affirmative action. This comprehensive economic transformation programme puts Malaysia on the path of becoming a high-income country with its gross national income as at 2014 standing at USD10, 796, its GDP at 6.03

percent and poverty level at its lowest of 0.6 percent (Dahlan, 2015). The challenges presented in the 10MP are being addressed in the ongoing 11MP (Dahlan, 2015).

The success of Malaysia is indicated by her structural transformation from an agricultural base to an industrial economy as well as the improved quality of life and income distribution with low poverty incidence. Specifically, selected areas of the economy such as education, employment, export-oriented industrialization, rural development, restructuring of equity ownership and asset accumulation are areas where other developing nations with similar realities can benefit from. Education and employment, for instance, are two main strategies used to tackle poverty and restructure the society. In the same vein, wealth redistribution was used as a strategy for securing political and social cohesion thereby bringing stability to an ethnically diverse society where ethnicity corresponds with poverty and geographical location.

The Role of the State/ Leadership

Two major agents are identified in the economic development planning in Malaysia, the government (state/leadership) and foreign capital. Our interest is the state, this is because firstly, whatever level of development that must be achieved, must be within the ambit of the state (Rodney, 1972). Supporting this argument, Rodney also observed that the state could both develop economies and alter societies in such a way as to make them suit human needs. “Underlying this was a belief that the state could embody collective will more effectively than the market, which favoured privileged interests” (Rapley, 2007: 2). Secondly, the strategies applied in Malaysia (state-led development engineering) are intended to be pointers as well as lessons to Nigeria.

The state was mainly involved in the agriculture sector and also in economic activities via the establishment of state enterprises (Aslam and Hassan, 2013). The NEP, in theory, gave the state a justification for intervening in the economy in such areas as labour organization, capital restructuring (acquisition of private companies) and the establishment of public enterprises. Companies in the major income areas such as plantation and tin mining were pressurized by the state to restructure their equity in line with NEP objectives. The rapid establishment of the state-owned enterprises gave the state complete control over national production thus accounting for about one-quarter of economic activities in Malaysia, responsible for almost one-third of the growth in investment and became a major borrower in external market (Fatimah, 1990). Agreeing with this line of argument, Aslam and Hassan (2003) noted that in 1951, there were only 10 public agencies in Malaysia, but this number increased in 1989 to 1,139 under the NEP.

One unique character of leadership in Malaysia is the ability to use the same British policy that meant to divide the people as a strategy for uniting the country and articulating their interest towards prescribed goals. The state provided a set of altruistic rationales for ethnic preferential policies. It is instructive to note that under the British rule, the colonial policymakers tried to justify these preferential policies in the name of ensuring the welfare of the Malay rulers and their subjects and preserving the traditional way of Malay lifestyle disrupted by the immigrant communities and cultures (Means, 1986). During the current postcolonial period, the agenda of

preferential policies have been advocated by the state on the ground that these policies would assist the economically disadvantaged Malay population, eliminate rural (mostly Malay) poverty, and reduce interethnic income inequalities (Aslam and Hassan, 2013).

Within the framework of the NEP, the state emphasized the growth centre strategy in addition to other strategies such as new land and resource development, in-situ (top-down approach) rural development, rural urbanization and industrial dispersal strategies to eliminate poverty, reduce disparity among regions and states in order to promote economic growth. The state achieved rural industrialization and development of new growth centres by encouraging industries to move into the hinterlands with rewards such as “tax holidays, investment allowances, provision of industrial estates and free trade zones” (Aslam and Hassan, 2013).

By virtue of its use of wide-ranging policies and rules, the state has been able to address critical problems and issues relating to ethnicity in Malaysia, a country that typifies a classic case of the coexistence of major ethnic groups with distinct racial, linguistic, religious, and cultural identities and perceptions. The extensive role of the state in managing, reinforcing and re-engineering the ethnic identities in Malaysia is partly the reason for the much-talked success of the Malaysian development expenditure.

Implication on Malaysian National Development

Apparently, there are those who disagree with the preferential policies of the Malaysia state on the basis that they deepen inequality and reinforces ethnic division (Khoo, 2005); however, the overall success rate of the policies and the implication on Malaysia’s national development cannot be denied (Lee, 2004). Beginning with education, the state provided special preference policy in education has effectively increased the representation of the underrepresented Malays in education. Based on the traditional poverty correspondence with race, the Malays had the highest number of the uneducated single group. By introducing quota percentage in admission policy, the state was able to reduce the number of uneducated Malaysians, whereas the richer ethnic groups, in turn, took advantage of private education on the basis of affordability (Thillainathan, 1976). The idea here is that when public funds are used to sponsor education, the target should be on the disadvantaged and underrepresented in society and not the privileged.

The state preferential policy also aimed to reduce the level of poverty among Malayan households. This ethnicized poverty has its root in British colonial rule by virtue of the Malay Reservation Act and the Rice Land Act which allocated specific land areas exclusively for rice farming to Malays. Most of the lands belonging to poor Malays were confiscated by the richer Malaysian aristocrats thus preventing them from using such lands for the cultivation of more profitable cash crops and rubber plantation (Aslam and Hassan, 2003). The colonial rule also enforced the structure of occupational segregation as discussed above; this meant a consistent lower income would accrue to the Malays. But with the implementation of the NEP’s preferential policies, decades later, changes have occurred in the occupation structure in Malaysia such that between the years 1990 and 2000, the proportion of Malays in agriculture occupation decreased from 37.0 percent to 21.5 percent and increased from 10 percent to 13.6 percent in other professions (Crouch, 2001:229). Crouch also noted that poverty also declined

from nearly 50 percent in 1970 to 15 percent in 1990 as a result of an unprecedented growth rate of more than 8 percent for almost a decade (2001:251-252). Malaysia has become a relatively wealthy state with income levels improved for all ethnic groups although more to the benefit of the Malays.

Reduction of socioeconomic inequality among the major ethnic groups is also a central target of the NEP preferential policy. This challenge was also a colonial legacy and continued into the 1970s, even now, the disparity still exists as a result of observed gaps in income between the different ethnic groups (Aslam and Hassan, 2013). However, the policy has been able to as observed by Crouch, (2001) encourage social mobility among Malays, create a pool of Malay entrepreneurs and expand the Malay middle class through preferential treatment in the form of loans, contracts, concession and scholarships

The NEP preferential policies in Malaysia, in general, has been effective in education, business, politics and administration and has been efficient in mitigating the high incidences of poverty. It also engendered social cohesion and national integration to the benefit of the entire population in all sectors of the economy, the equation is such that all the ethnic groups are stakeholders (Aslam and Hassan, 2003), hence, non would benefit from carrying out actions that would have detrimental effects.

Having discussed the trajectory to Malaysia's development achievements in the previous sections, the next section would conclude this paper with a focus on what Malaysia did differently and suggestions on how Nigeria can benefit from the success and avoid the pitfalls. The economy of Malaysia has achieved growth in the past four decades as a result of deliberate policymaking and strategic implementation. Apart from a few hitches here and there, these policies have been able to restructure the society in economic, social and political terms. The successes achieved in significant poverty reduction and ethnic unification has put Malaysia on the map of world's highest developing country (Bhalla and Kharas, 1992:64).

The Point of Difference for Malaysia and Lessons for Nigeria

Generally, policy making in Malaysia has followed a strategic, sound and consistent pattern. This perhaps constitutes the first lesson for Nigeria. As a country, Nigeria has some of the best minds in the world; has rolled out sound policies which when implemented to the latter have the potential to engender the needed transformation. Some of such policies particularly in the agricultural sector include the River Basin Development Programme (RBDP), Green Revolution, School to Land, Operation Feed the Nation (OFR), Directorate For Food, Road, and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) (Obiora&Emodi, 2013). However, these and other sound policies not mentioned appear to have 'comatossed' on the altar of inconsistency in implementation; where it appears that more often than not policies are politicized both in planning and implementation, or implications of trickle down effects seem not to be taken into consideration.

It seems also that the attributed failure to implement is a function of leadership failure that appears to be characteristic of the Nigerian state. According to Chinua Achebe, Nigeria is

problematized where leadership is concerned; the leadership is more tendential towards corruption, indiscipline, bad leadership style void of exemplary leadership (Achebe, 1983). It therefore appears that there is more incentive for her citizens to be unproductive than productive. Hence the faulty nature of some of the policies which appear doomed from inception. We turn to the specifics.

Economic Growth and Investment

To begin, economic growth in Malaysia was not accidental; rather it was a conscious strategy to grow the economy. All the different stages of development planning in Malaysia from the 1st MP to the 11th MP carried with them the characteristics of economic growth and expansion; first, to address a rapidly growing population, secondly, to address income inequality demonstrated as wealth redistribution and thirdly, for the sake of just growing the economy that is investing for growth sake and increasing the countries capacity for international competition.

Malaysia went a step further by preparing in advance for bilateral and multilateral policies such that the country was strategically positioned to take advantage of policies that were to be implemented in the near future. Examples include the reforms made in her taxation system in anticipation of the establishment of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements as a strategy for increasing her international competitiveness (Ragayah, 2014).

Juxtaposing this to the Nigerian situation in the early 1970s, it seems the period of economic boom was a serendipitous phenomenon lacking strategic planning and leadership guidance. How else would the leaders in the 1970s complain of how to spend money when it seems that there was an unmitigated rise in population, high level of poverty both of the people and other sectors of the economy and of course the quality of citizens appear to be watery at best? The answer speaks volume of the poverty of visionary leadership in Nigeria. It appears as though most of the development plans made so far were deadbeat and the few promising ones are either not pursued with the necessary vigour or lack consistency (Ohale, 2004). A cue to be borrowed from the Malaysian experience is that economic growth is not an accidental discovery and will not happen by chance, it appears Nigeria needs to put her vision to work; she needs to implement her sound development plans and then work towards solving her leadership concerns.

Emphasis on Developing Agriculture

Next, Malaysia recognized her area of comparative advantage which is agriculture and made large budgetary allocations to that sector. With the improvement in rural infrastructure as a result of the public investment, the sector became attractive to private sector investment. Now even though the state depended on rubber and tin as main income earners and emphasized import substitution, it ensured the nurturing of agriculture to an established stage before shifting emphasis fully on industrialization.

The implication here is that even though the level of homegrown technology might still be low, the state can guarantee that supply of raw materials to serve local industries are homegrown. This means therefore that the value chain for the cultivation and processing of a single commodity impacts positively on local lives as they get to benefit from forward and backward linkages. With agriculture, Malaysia was able to develop and sustain a middle-high income earning class from a predominantly poor population of Malays (Khoo, 2005). With serious leadership, Nigeria could have achieved this with crude oil, palm oil and rubber.

However as agriculture is the focus here, suffice it to say that before the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in Nigeria, agriculture provided the means of her sustainability. However, this sector was neglected and its development and establishment not taken seriously. The consequence is increased poverty and rise in other indices of underdevelopment. Borrowing from the Malaysian experience, Nigeria could begin a comprehensive mass remobilization of her agricultural sector through sound planning and strategic implementation.

The agricultural transformation agenda is a good place to start albeit with some modification; such as considering the topography of each region so as not to treat all of them equally, for instance, Bayelsa state would do better cultivating rice, plantain and fish farming than say yam, tomatoes or cucumber. The point being made is that raw materials for local processing of these commodities should have an established local source. A case in point is the recent policy on tomato puree. It is instructive to note that Nigeria still imports fresh tomatoes from Ghana. If Nigeria can honestly implement the fine policies written on paper with regards to agricultural development, the country will derive benefits that can address the ever-increasing poverty indices.

Affirmative Action Policy

Again, Malaysia took advantage of a British colonial policy meant to perpetuate divisiveness as a strategy in uniting the different ethnic groups. Many often criticized the affirmative action as a preferential treatment to Malaysians (Lee, 2004), as it appears at the implementing stage that the policy was skewed in favour of a particular ethnic group, the end result was to the benefit of all Malaysians. The fact is that the policy can be perceived as some kind of poverty alleviation policy geared towards addressing mass poverty. That the Malays benefitted more attest to the fact that majority of the poor were Malays. It instructive to note, that while this policy was entrenched during colonialism under the guise of protecting the Malays, it served to impoverish them hence the racialization of poverty. The leadership in Malaysia recognized that poverty impedes development in a number of ways (Ibaba, 2004), hence they tackled poverty putting all sentiments aside.

Also, the leadership in Malaysia was able to mobilize the different ethnic groups into one political unity via its wealth redistribution affirmative action. If only the leadership in Nigeria can stop giving poverty alleviation programmes an ethnic face and tackle it headlong irrespective of the ethnic group that would benefit the most, development planning would begin to make sense in the face of poverty reduction. Also, if the bickering about how the colonial government

amalgamated people of different ethnic backgrounds can give way for a united common platform in the interest of all, then and only then would effective mobilization for development become possible.

While I agree that the population disparity and ethnic diversity between Nigeria and Malaysia is wide, the strategy for elimination ethnic tension and cleavages and engendering social cohesion and national integration can serve as a model for solving the challenges of ethnicity in Nigeria. In addition, as result of unity among the Malaysians, the environment was conducive for foreign direct investment. The leadership did not need to go globe-throating in search of investors; they only needed to ensure a favourable environment.

Education as a Strategy for Ending Long-term Poverty

The provision of education was used as the fastest tool in the drive to eradicate poverty. Skilled-based education consciously implemented by the state enabled productivity to increase in Malaysia (Lee & Nagaraj, 2006). Education also enabled the creation of a new middle class of Bumiputeras and helped to reduce income inequalities between and among ethnic groups (Iskandar, 2016). This is a lesson Nigeria cannot afford to ignore because as it stands, the public education system in Nigeria appears to be in a state of comatose, but it is supposed to be the instrument for social engineering. In addition, the leadership in Malaysia tailored their policies to reflect local needs and concerns as against pursuing white elephant projects or attempting to catch up with the western developed world.

Continuation and Consistency of Policy Mechanisms

The most critical of all the lessons to draw from the Malaysian experience is the issue of continuity. Rather than every regime change and discard previous development plans to initiate a new one, they should simply follow the trajectory of the existing plan and build on it. In cases where flaws are observed, they don't just discard the entire plan, rather, they ensure that the next planning phase addresses the failures observed in the previous one. For instance, all the successive policies initiated after the NEP were all fundamentally drawn from the NEP.

Also, when the NEP and the NDP faced criticisms of laying too much emphasis on economic growth to the detriment of human capital, the next plan that followed which is the NVP in addition to economic growth addressed development issues that were more socially inclined. Again, at the level of the 4th MP, income and GDP were being used as a measurement for growth and development. But upon the realization that this measure lacked effective categorization, other development indices were employed. Hence, by the time the 8th MP was being implemented, the under-listed indices was used to categorize states in the country into more developed and least developed for the purpose of policy implementation

- 1) GDP Per capita
- 2) Unemployment
- 3) Urbanization rate
- 4) Registration of car and motorcycle per 1,000 of the population

- 5) Poverty rate
- 6) Population provided with piped water
- 7) Population provided with electricity
- 8) Infant mortality rate
- 9) Number of doctors per 10,000 of the population (Aslam and Hassan, 2003).

The leadership class in Nigeria appears to be popular for making sound policy with failure to implement. In the same vein, the country seems to lack the culture of continuation. Take for instance the Agricultural Transformation Agenda of the previous administration, which has the potential based on its planned implementation to increase food production, reduce poverty and urbanize rural enclaves; though a particular region would have benefitted more, the overall growth in that sector would have been to the advantage of the country as a whole. But that project appears to have been abandoned with the change in administration (Atani, 2017).

Again, Ohale (2004) and Alapiki (2004) stressed the role of corruption in the failure of most development plans in Nigeria. Finally, the leadership in Malaysia was not ashamed to admit where a policy is a complete failure and do well to revise it (Ragayah, 2014). The lesson here is that the government should take responsibility for their failures rather than look for whom to blame. It is high time the leadership in Nigeria owned up to the failure of development planning and implementation, and began a turn around to redirect the course of the country rather than the present merry-go-round planning and policy approach it appears to be pursuing. Its better late than never.

The successes recorded in Malaysia are not without their failures which Nigeria must avoid. These include what Rahman (2008) described as state-government-party collusion which is also termed corruption, cronyism and nepotism (Ragayah, 2014). A phenomenon that transcends ethnicity and enables a section of society to accumulate wealth rapidly thus deepening the inequality. The NEM is designed to partly address this challenge. Other pitfalls in the Malaysia development journey are low investment in primary education; spending huge amount on subsidies not targeting the poor; the preference of local producers for foreign workers particularly in unskilled labour which has led to several problems; improvement in health does not correspond with the early retirement age, this is because the improvement in the health sector has increased life expectancy for males to 71.6 and that of females to 76.4 (Malaysia 11MP, 2015), whereas the retirement age for public sector is 58 while private sector is 55 (Ragayah, 2014), this has caused problems of inadequate retirement fund; and lastly, the delay in implementing progressive taxation (Ragayah, 2014)

Conclusively, while Malaysia was divided along ethnic lines, there was a disparity in religion also. The country thrived on religious tolerance and a secular society. The same cannot be said of Nigeria where religious intolerance has instigated high level of insecurity. Insecurity is an impediment to economic growth and development. The Nigerian government has a responsibility to learn from the Malaysian experience if true unity in diversity is to be achieved along-side economic growth and development.

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