

## Nigeria

The economical path that a country pursues often defines that country's prosperity and political success. If pursuing the right one, the country will become a powerful role-player in the political and economical world arena; however, if it pursues a path that does not suit the country's needs or a path that is much too advanced and complex for its people to adapt to, it will destroy that country's politics, economy and ultimately, its society. The latter is the case of many third world countries that live under the illusion of "development" through the quest of first world economic paths which are not adequate for several reasons, such as lack of consensus, little natural resources, primitive economy and industry, economic imperialism by part of first world countries which establishes a legacy of servant nations, or a mix of all these reasons.

Nigeria is a typical example of such a third world country; even though it has a powerful source of wealth, such as oil, and a potential to become a strong economy, the economical path it is currently pursuing fails to tailor to the needs of its society and its present economical state. Nigeria is a country that has been plagued by ethnic violence and religious conflict, which has ultimately been a detriment to the advancement of the country. In the following pages, I will be discussing Nigeria's political history, its society and the economical path it should be pursuing according to its past and present.

Present-day Nigeria is and has always been a combination of several ethnic groups, each having its own political background and history. In the pre colonial era, Nigeria was unofficially divided into a Northern and Southern part. Northern Nigeria was influenced by Islamic cultures and became part of well developed Islamic empires. As the rulers of small city-states in the north accepted Islam, so did their people, spreading a common culture throughout the northern territory.

The political units in pre colonial Nigeria had ties with the Islamic world and participated actively in diverse historical conflicts for the leadership of Islam. The city-states of Nigeria acquired advanced bureaucracies to provide centralized rule. These structures were not necessarily modern, but were very impressive for their time. However, despite common culture and religion, there was no unified political structure in northern Nigeria because the city-states were quite autonomous. The political heritage of northern Nigeria was a decentralized autocratic rule through hereditary emirs.

After Islam was reestablished, a new empire came to being - the Fulani empire, which developed its own economical and political aristocracy. The Fulani established one of the most centralized kingdoms in Africa and a rigid class hierarchy. These political features created habits of attitudes of political deference and subordination in Nigeria. Other kingdoms such as the Yoruba in the south and the Ibo in the east also flourished, however they were very vulnerable to the European intrusion that would come later.

In the south, political institutions were not as centralized as in the north, nor as highly developed. There was more participation in the decision-making process and politics in the south soon became means for social mobility. In southeast Nigeria were the Ibos, a society in which political power was always decentralized and each village had autonomy. There was open participation and collective political leadership.

Nigeria inherited an assortment of political legacies - these diverse people were fused into a single state under colonial rule; this fusion was the beginning of Nigeria's road to being a less than prosperous country. The northern people, with a developed culture and politics resisted European changes, while the Ibos and the Yorubas in the south were much more open-minded and accepting of the new European ways.

As a cause of this northern Nigerian resistance to European change, at the end of the colonial era, the northern part of Nigeria became poorer and less educated than the south. Economic development proceeded much more rapidly in the south, and the native leaders of Nigeria were more often from the south.

In 1923, Nigeria was ready for independence. Several parties developed, which brings about the presence of negative consensus in Nigeria. Even though they all had a common goal - getting rid of imperial rule - they found it very difficult to unite. In the midst of this ethnic turmoil and power struggle, the British appeased the Nigerians with quasi-legislative bodies with limited power. The better education and economy in the

South created even more ethnic differences. The well-educated southerners were the ones who obtained positions of power, while the northerners were in disadvantage due to their lack of European education.

Finally, in the mid 1950s, Britain agreed to grant independence to Nigeria. The first Nigerian republic was based on parliamentary government - but unlike Britain, Nigeria had a federal structure of 3 states or regions: the Northern, the Eastern and Western Regions, each having considerable autonomy.

Nonetheless, the democratic system proved inadequate for Nigeria - the parliamentary government failed mainly due to negative consensus. Nigerians wanted their government to distribute wealth equally among the states, but neglected to see any concern in actually developing new ways of sparking up and developing the economy, rather than just distributing resources. A new Nigerian middle class emerged and became wealthy, while the majority of Nigerians saw little improvement in their lives. Corruption was rampant and the new democracy lost credibility in the eyes of the Nigerian people.

The situation escalated; disputes and tensions were on the rise, and by 1965, unrest and violence were very common in Nigeria. A near total breakdown of law and order provided the immediate cause for military action to take place. Only six years after independence, Nigeria was already experiencing a military coup. Moreover, many years of social and political turmoil were yet to come. Over the years, Nigerian society has been plagued with threats of secession, ethnic tension, several coups, and even periods of

dictatorship. This instability and disappointment in government intensified the negative consensus in Nigeria. In 1998, the last dictator dies and Nigeria attempts to return to civilian rule. The current president, Olusegun Obasanjo, a native Yoruban, was elected in 1999 and since then has been trying to restore democracy back in Nigeria.

Nigeria is presently pursuing a bourgeois economic path - however, it is rather detrimental to the country to be on this path, especially because of its turbulent political past and its underdeveloped economy; even though Nigeria has a powerful source of wealth, which is a must in order to follow the bourgeois economic path, its economy is mono-productive, oil-dependent, and its industries are rather primitive. Also, it is a disadvantage for Nigeria to have just recently come out from under imperial British rule, which had given Nigerian society a servile mindset and is now struggling to become an independent country with civilian rule. The economy has not had enough time to develop on its own, and the fact that the country is greatly in debt hinders the “good intentions” to start developing with a first world economic path.

I believe that Nigeria should focus on developing its economy before it even attempts to have a capitalist economy. Nigerian economy would be a good candidate for a Stalinist economic model, precisely because it needs government aid in order to start up and flourish in time. Stern rule is needed in a land of negative consensus such as Nigeria, which would be brought indirectly by the Stalinist model of economics. It seems to me that government aided development of Nigerian industries, agriculture and overall economy would greatly amass a considerable amount of wealth and create a stable

economy that would be ready to take “the next step” into becoming a bourgeois economy.

However, the Stalinist economic path would bring more economical torment into Nigeria, a country that is still struggling to become fully democratic - its economic path would clash with its political ideals, creating even more chaos and underdevelopment. Moreover, Nigeria, just as many other third world countries, also needs the help of the more developed countries, such as more investment, partial pardoning of foreign debt and technologic ideas from the first world. In time, though, after the government has stabilized, and globalization has more time to cover more places in the world, Nigeria *could* be able to pursue a Stalinist economic path, develop its economy and then slowly start switching to a bourgeois economic path in the future, finally being able to become a prosperous, successful, developed country.