

SINGAPORE, FROM THIRD WORLD TO FIRST WORLD: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEASONS FOR NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *In the last half of a century, some Asian countries have broken the jinx of underdevelopment by cultivating the hitherto fallow economic ground. These countries are now referred to as the Asian Tigers, given their levels of economic growth, development and technological advancement. This study takes a closer look at the economic breakthrough of the island state of Singapore which despite its peculiar ecological challenges, with particular emphasis on the nature, character and style of leadership from independence. The study explores the linkage between political leadership and economic development and the reforms which has positioned Singapore as “global financial and economic hub in the heart of the Asian continent. The study identified strong visionary and patriotic leadership character and a switch to technical education and industrial scale manufacturing as a panacea for development. This study therefore recommend that leadership in Nigeria should emphasize the development of the agricultural and manufacturing sector and a paradigm shifts towards technical education, improve security, political stability to attract foreign directs investment to act as a catalyst for a fast and sustainable economic development.*

Keywords: *Development, leadership, economic development.*

INTRODUCTION

Singapore, a former British colony, got her independence in 1963 as part of the federation of Malaysia and in August 1965, Singapore was expelled as part of the Malaysian federation, thus Singapore became fully independent state, the British having disengaged earlier.

The sever of ties between Malaysia and Singapore came at the heels of two riots between the Malays and the Chinese population, there were worries on the part of the ruling United Malays National Organization on the inclusion of the Singapore’s Chinese majority in the Malaysian Republic.

Over the years, the expulsion of Singapore has proved to be a blessing in disguise, the economy of Singapore is highly developed free market economy, Singapore’s economy has been ranked as the most free in the world, Singapore is ranked number 7th on the world least corrupt country index (CIA 2012).

At 14.2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Singapore has the third highest per capita to GDP in the worlds in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) (Heritage foundation 2013) Singapore is

Benson, I.W. & Poronakie N. B.

a pro-business country with one of lowest tax rate in the world. The main stay of the Singapore economy is particularly in the export of electronics, chemicals, refining and services which places her as a regional hub for wealth, management, Singapore is the export re-refining centre of Asia, as she engaged in the importation of raw material which are refined for re-export. The strategic positioning of Singapore puts her in a better competitive position as against her neighbours in sea port services with a trade to GDP ratio averaging around 400% during the period 2008-2011. With modern port facilities and skill workers, the Singapore ports are ranked as the world second busiest port by cargo tonnage.

Land and People of Singapore

A former British colony, now a member of the common wealth of nation, Singapore, officially known as the republic of Singapore is an island city state off the coast of southern Malaysia.

Singapore consists of the island of Singapore and about 63 other islets within its theoretical waters forming an archipelago. The city state has grown to become a global financial hub strategically located at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, the narrowest part of the Strait of Malacca which in the shortest sea route between India and China.

With a 100% urban population which as at 2017 stood at 5,898, 000 (five million, eight hundred and ninety eight thousand with a projected population increase of 5% by the year 2030 with lowest birth rate in the world. Geographically, Singapore is located between the coordination 1.22N, 103, 48E that is between longitude 1⁰09N and 1⁰29 N and latitude 103⁰36E and 104⁰25E. The main Island covers a total of 6448sqm about the size of Chicago, her major natural resources are its location and its deep water harbours. The climate condition of Singapore is tropical, like most of her southeast Asian neighbours, Singapore is generally hot and humid all year round with the temperature almost not dropping below 20⁰c (68⁰f) during the day. November and December is the rainy season, the best time to visit Singapore as a tourist is between June and August Singapore's neighbours are Malaysia and Indonesia.

At independence, in 1963, Singapore was part of the independent state of Malaysia before she was expelled in 1965 due to racially induced violence which had killed 28 persons and many injured between the majority Muslim Malays and the Chinese minority population. Because of her multi-racial population composition, Singapore has four (4) official languages (Mandarin Chinese, English, Tamil and Malay) and no official religion. Singapore has only 2% arable land, 6% permanent crop, forest and woodland occupies 5%, others 89%. Fresh portable water and arable land are designated as precious resources in Singapore due to its scarcity. Singapore imports over 60% of her fresh water needs from her Malaysian neighbour. Despite all these, the country has been able to transform within a short period of time from a poor underdeveloped nation at independence, to a developed society with very high GDP per capital income. It is this phenomenal transformation from a third world country to a first world country in the face numerous daunting challenges that the work seeks to dissect with a special interest in the nature, character and contributions of leadership to fast and sustained development of Singapore.

Research Questions

1. To what extent did leadership contribute to the rapid development of Singapore
2. What lessons are there for Nigerians to learn

Theoretical Framework

Two theories were adopted for this work, a combination of which is thought to be more effective in carrying out the analysis of this work.

First this work adopted the transformational leadership theory and the modernization theory, emphasizing the linear stage growth model of W.W Rostow.

The transformational leadership theory emphasizes a leadership model where the leader works with his team to identify needed changes, creating vision to guide changes and executing the change in line with committed members of her team. The focus of transformational leadership is to transform others to support each other and the leader to achieve organisational goals. Transformational leadership style brings about positive changes in the character of the followership as the leader often acts as a role model whom the followers seek to emulate. The qualities of the transformational leader are what distinguish him from others. The anchor point of transformational leadership is the promotion of a consistent vision and mission of the achievement of organizational set goals (McGregor 1978) (Burkus 2020).

Ronald (2009) has shown in a research that groups led by a transformational leader have a higher level of performances and easily attend their goals. Modernization theory on the other hand is useful in the explanation of modernization processes within a given society. It refers to a set of progressive transformation from a traditional (pre modern) to a modern society. The high point of the modernization theory is suggestive of the fact that, a hitherto traditional society can attain economic development if it undergoes a process of cultural and political changes by adopting a more modern method or practice.

According to Goorha (2010) the modernization theory is used to study the process of social evolution and the development process of societies. While Power (2018) posited that modernization theory is employed in the description and explanation of the processes of transformation of a society from traditional or under developed to modern.

Since the 1950s, the tackling of the sociology of national development and under development had adopted as its major perspective, the modernization theory, it is aimed at emulating the ways through which the pre modern European and American societies had attained modernization by studying its economic growth process and the manifest changes in the social, cultural and political structures. The modernization theory also studies the consequences of growth in the economic sphere, which are needful for industrialization and economic growth and developments. Rostow (1960) stages of economic growth emphasizes the importance of new values and ideas favouring economic progress along with education, entrepreneurship as a precondition for "take off" to self-sustained economic growth. Modernization theory posits that the causes of lack of economic and social development which precipitate under development are to be found within the domain of traditional societies, therefore for a society to develop economically, it has to deal with internal mechanizations and move towards changes in socio-cultural structures and personality types.

Development according to Sid (2018) is a process that creates growth, progress, positive changes or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components. The end purpose of development is the rise in the quality of lives of the population and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities for all without harming the environment. Development is the process of societal changes that moves the underdeveloped nations of the world from their present state of economic backwardness and slow socio-cultural change to a more dynamic state characterized by economic growth and political transformations that aid in the improvement of lives of the members of society (Gwetan 2013). Chandler (2007) opined that, development is a broader concept that recognizes all the psychological and material factors that measure the wellbeing of the human species, development, though multi-faceted, is

Benson, I.W. & Poronakie N. B.

human centred, it broadly entails that process that empowers man to maximize his full potential. This position has prompted, Amartya (1998) to develop “the capability approach” which defined development as the tool which enables individuals to reach the highest level of their ability through the granting of freedom of action in the spheres of economics.

Rabie (2016) viewed development as both a vision to create a new and improved better living conditions in line with strategies that defines the goals of society and how it seeks to accomplish them, while also first identifying the likely huddles society may face and the needed sacrifices that is expected of the society in the match towards this goal.

According to Todor (1981), the process of development involves major societal change in the social structure, popular attitude and national institutions as well as accelerated economic growth, this it thought will lead to the reduction of societal inequalities and the eradication of absolute poverty.

The security-development nexus has triggered barrage of debates on the concept of development, as is says that conflict is a harbinger of underdevelopment. Though both concepts are different, they seem inseparable as they keep having effect on each other (Chandler 2007, Stan 2004). Oladeji and Foloronso (2017) agreed that security is a panacea for development and economic growth, therefore the focus of political leadership should be social and economic development, and the absence of security. According to Oche (2001) Igbuzor (2011) insecurity will distort both social and human capital and cause underdevelopment. Therefore Nwanebo and Odigbo (2013) had opined that to attain national cohesion, socio-political and economic advancement, emphasis should be placed on security.

Gana (1983) sees development rather from the political perspective, as the immense capacity to mobilize for effective participation in the development process. Gana posited that only a strong politically willed and determined leadership can achieve development. While Nnoli (1981) agreed with Rodney (1974) when he viewed development as man’s progressive, qualitative and continued self-improvements, by extending and socially reproduce through labour and the rtransformation of her environment with the application of other tools of development.

Leadership in Singapore:

The study of leadership in Singapore can never be devoid from the study of the person and leadership style of Lee Kwan Yew. Mr Lee was the leading politician in Singapore prior to her independent in 1965. Lee was to become the first prime minister of independent Singapore from 1965-1990 before ascending the position of minister’s mentor. Lee Kwan Yew, a fourth generation Singapore ethnic Chinese was born in 1923, admitted into the Tolukkurau English school in 1931 and later in 1935 attended the Raffles institution, where he obtained scholarships having come top in the 1940 school certificate examination (Cavendish1998).

Due to the events of the Second World War and the Japanese occupation of Singapore (1942-1945) Mr Lee’s university education was delayed. Lee want to study in England, briefly attended the London School of Economics and later the Fitz-william College in Cambridge where he studied law and was called to the Middle Temple in 1950. In 1969, Lee was elected an honorary fellow of Fitz-william College.

Upon his return to Singapore, Lee worked with John Laycaux’s law firm, he also worked as a legal adviser to the trade and student union. Mr Lee’s first experience with politics in Singapore was his role as elected agent for Laycocks under the banner of pro-British progressive party in the 1957 legislature council elections. He got the opportunity to formally enter into politics when the members of the Singapore Chinese middle school union launched an anti-colonial, non-violent protest against the enactment of the national service ordinance law on 3rd May 1954. His appearance as a defence lawyer for the student who were arrested as a fall out of the process was a

great boast to his reputation as a “left wing lawyer as which ultimately springboard Mr Lee into Singapore politics through the Malaya communist party.

Lee with a group of fellow English educated, middle class men whom he described as “bear swilling bourgeois” form the socialist (PAP) in 1954 in an expedient alliance with the pro-communist trade unionist. Lee was to become the first secretary general of the People’s Action Party (PAP) a position he held until 1992. Except for a brief period in 1957 when her reign was truncated by the actions of the pro-communist party left wing which was quickly brought under control by Lim Yew Hock.

In the 1955 elections, Mr Lee, won the Tanfon Pagar seat in the legislature, and became the opposition leader against the David Saul Marshall’s labour front led coalition government. Mr Lee was one of the PAP’S representation to the two constitutional discussions held in London over the future states of Singapore (Mausy & Milne 2002).

Pre 1959, the British has given Singapore a measure of self-government with authority in all matters except defence and foreign affairs. Mr Lee’s party, the PAP with 43 of the available 51 legislature assembly seats, given Lee the opportunity to emerge as the countries first prime minister pre independence up until June 1963 when the merger with Malaysia was consummated. (Kwuan 1998)

Lee was the strong voice in the campaign for merger with Malaysia in 1961, using the result of the referendum held in September 1962, in which 70% of the votes were cast in support of the proposal to demonstrate that the people supported her plan, most of the other votes were blank, (30%) as Lee had not given option for a “NO” vote.

Consequent upon her campaign, on the 16th day of September 1963, Singapore became part of the new federation of Malaysia. The July 1964 race riot in Singapore which killed 23 people and leaving 100 others injured between July and September was the last strew that broke the camel’s back. Singapore was effectively expelled from the Malaysian federation. Mr Lee continued to work behind the scene to see how the merger could work, before he was convinced by Gohkang Swee that the severance of singapore with Malaysia has become inevitable, prompting Lee to sign the separation agreement on 7th of August 1965 (National Library Board 2006).

As the prime minister designate of the now independent and autonomous state of Singapore, Mr Lee went on a six week isolation in one of the island, leaving the parliament on what Dr Tor Chin Chye called “suspended animation” until it was reconvened in December 1965.

Political Structure Post Independence

For over three decades before the first government transition in 1990, Singapore operated a unitary system of government with a single tier of legislative house. Mr Lee oversaw the political, social and economic development of the state of Singapore for over 30 years without break, implementing his vision and politics, transform the island state to a global economic hub. At independence, the state of Singapore was vulnerable, Lee began to seek for international recognition, Mr Lee led Singapore to join the United Nations on the 21st day of September 1965, and founded the Association of South East Asia Nation (ASEAN) on the 8th of August 1967 collaboration with four (4) other countries

Lee Kwan Yew appointed Gohkeng Swee as the minister of interior and defence to build the Singapore Armed forces (SAP) while request was made to Israel and Taiwan for help in the areas of military adviser, training the facilities especially with the treat from Indonesia and the communist party.

Mr Lee introduced the policy of conscription for every able bodied over the age of 18 years and achieved the building of Singapore armed force, the Singapore police force and the Singapore civil defence.

Benson, I.W. & Poronakie N. B.

By 1967, the armed force of Singapore has a national service battalion of (16,000) men with 14 battalions with (11,000) men in the reserved Singapore police.

Singapore's Economic Development Model

Development model is a conceptual framework often used as a guide in the understanding of development process and forming a prognosis for contrived development, put differently, model is another word for methodology. Model is therefore the binding force that holds other sub models together and provides a formal framework of the processes and the resources in the process of development.

Therefore to achieve economic development, which in the overall is the well-being of the human capital over a period of time as indicated by an increase in national income, social well-being of people, increase in productivity, gross national products (GNP), gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita income. By the late 1950's it was obvious that Singapore will be economically backwards if she is only tied to her old economic roles as an entrepot. Therefore the decision by Lee Kwan Yew's government to adopt the Chenery's pattern of economic development.

Chenery (1960) economic development model examined the pattern of development of a country at the per capita income level. The main pillar of the model is predicated on:

- i) A steady accumulation of both physical and human capital
- ii) Shift from agricultural production to industrial production
- iii) A scarce change to consume demand
- iv) Marked increase in urbanization
- v) A decline in family size and demographical transition.

The Lee Kwan Yew's government placed a premium on rapid industrialisation, with emphasis on employment which led to achieving a very low unemployment ratio compared to other Asian countries.

Having solved the problems of unemployment, the emphasis of government in the 1970's was shifted to skill labour and technology to man and equip modern industry in the areas of machine tools, petro-chemicals, electronic and other precision work. Given the high level of private participation through foreign direct investment (FDI) which turned out to be an important corner stone of her development.

In the 1990's, the economic development strategy emphasis was on manufacturing and service provision. The economic development board of Singapore formed in 1961, succeeded in guiding Singapore in her early quest for rapid industrialization, while the strategic economic plan (SEP) of 1991 was focused on education and human resource to enhance exports competitiveness.

The direct involvement of government in economic policies is exemplified by the support of the operation headquarters (HQ) which encouraged many foreign companies to use Singapore as her regional headquarter or as a central distribution centre for the Asia region helped in giving capital and building the economy of Singapore within a short period.

At independence, the total GDP of Singapore stood at USD 320, however, fifty (50) years after independence, the GDP per capita of Singapore has risen to an incredible USD 60,000 (CIA 2017) the economy is thus regarded as one of the world's fastest growing economy, placing her at the sixth (6th) position in world in terms of GDP per capita.

Economic Policies

At independence in 1965, the Singapore domestic market was small, with a very high level of unemployment and poverty. The major challenge of the Kwan Yew led government of Singapore was on how to provide a stable job for the people due to the high level of unemployment which was averaging 14%, while GDP per capita was about USD 516. A largely illiterate population with over

70% of households living in squatters and crowded slums around the city. The government response towards economic development, was the establishment of economic development boards to spearhead an investment drive to open up the new found nation for investment by creating conducive business atmosphere. The economic development boards under Hon. Sui Sen receiving technical assistance from the famous Dutch economist Albert Winsome identified tourism and manufacturing as avenues for employment generation.

The only know natural resource of Singapore is her deep sea, at independence; the Lee Kwan Yew government had converted the Naval Dock yard left by the British for civilian use. This deep sea harbour has been successfully turned into one of the world's busiest sea port. Also acknowledging her strategies positioning at the straits of Malaysia which is the shortest sea rout between India and china, Singapore channelled her human and material resources towards manufacturing, global commerce, using her ports as transit point for most of the Asian countries.

By establishing world class infrastructure in Singapore, the Lee's government was able to attract American, Japanese and European entrepreneurs with professionals to set up bases in the country. By the mid 1970's, multinational national cooperation like the Texas Instrument, Hewlett Packard and General Electric has arrange to lay the foundation of what has made Singapore a major electronic exporter.

The government of Singapore under Lee Kwan Yew started several new industries notably, the Steel Mill, under the National Iron and Steel Mills, other service industries like Naptune Orient Lines and the Singapore Airline. Foreign bankers were given assurances of Singapore reliability and top class social infrastructure, (Chartter and O'Donnell 2008).

Within ten years of independence, Singapore had recorded huge inflow of foreign investment which was averaging 75% in the manufacturing sector alone by the year 2007. The stock capital of Singapore had increased 33 time by mid 1992, achieving also a ten fold increase in the capital to labour ratio, with many household moving from the lower income status to the middle income status. Between 1960 to 1999, the Singapore's economy has produces real growth averaging 8.0%, and after the regional financial crises, the economy grew at the rate of 5.4% followed by 9.9% in the year 2002. Because Singapore is the major electronic manufacturer, the electronic markets slowdown in the United States, Japan and Europe as well as the world wide electronic slump had reduces the estimate growth rate of 2.2% (CIA 2012),

Government linked corporations played a major role in the development of Singapore's domestic economy, the public sector was use both as an investor an and as a catalyst for economic development.

The sovereign wealth fund of Singapore (Temasuk Holdings and GIC private limited) are used by the government to manage the countries reserve for both economic development and for commercial basis. The fully and partially state owned enterprises operated on a full small commercial basis with no competitive advantage over private owned enterprises. At 2014, Tenaska holds 69 billion Singapore's dollars in assets, accounting for 70% of the total capitalization of Singapore listed companion.

Despite the small geographical size of the island city state of Singapore, she is currently the fifteenth largest trading partner of the United States, while her biggest trade partner is Malaysia. Trade between the two countries stood at a whopping 91 billion US dollars in 2012 accounting for over a fifth of the trade within the ASEAN. The total trade of Singapore in 2014 equalled 982 billion Singapore dollars.

Current issues

Naturally, the major challenge that state of Singapore faces is the non-availability of fresh water. Singapore at independence imports 100% of her fresh water needs from Malaysia, presently, she imports 60% her fresh water for drinking and sanitation from Malaysia, having found a way to

Benson, I.W. & Poronakie N. B.

use technology to desalinate and purify sea water and the harvesting of rain water as a designated area within the reserved wood land.

As an industrialized nation, Singapore is also faced with the challenges of industrial population and waste disposal presently, Singapore is 100% urban area therefore, there is limited land area available for waste disposal.

CONCLUSION

Lessons for Nigeria

If Nigeria is aimed at developing her economy, there are multiple lessons that Nigeria learnt from the success story of Singapore the areas of leadership, economic policies and development models.

Leadership and Political Stability

The leadership of Lee Kwan Yew spent over three (3) decades between 1959 and 1990 said Mr Lee as prime minister presiding over many of Singapore's advancement in both the economic and political sphere.

The Kwan Yew government in Singapore signifies petroleum, and political stability. Incessant change of government is economical to economic development and investment. As no investor will commit her resources in an unstable polity. In response to some of the critiques, Lee Kwan Yew started thus:

"Such disciplinary measures was necessary for political stability which together with the rule of law was essential for economic progress."

The political stability and economic advancement of Singapore under Lee Kwan Yew had a profound effects on the communist leadership in china as major effort was geared towards emulating the economic process, entrepreneurship and subtle suppression of deserting voices, prompting the leadership of Deng Xiaoping to send over 22, 000 Chinese officials to under study her method.

Technical Education and Industrialization

Lee Kwan Yew as prime minister recognized the fact that without industrialization, there can never be development. Therefore he channelled all efforts towards ensuring that Singapore build world class critical infrastructure that will enhance and encourage industrialization.

The combination of political stability, modern infrastructures and zero tolerance to corruption acted as a catalyst for foreign direct investment which has proven to be a panacea for economic development.

Technical knowledge is a basic requirement to run an industrial set up. Mr Lee having noted this emphasizes the switch to technical education to increase the employability of the citizens. The overall effects of low unemployment rate on the economy manifest. Nigeria, places more premium on paper certificate without a concomitant technical knowhow placing more emphasis on craft and technical education will greatly enhance the productivity and spur economic growth.

Identifying Areas of Advantage

Singapore was quick to identify and capitalize on her area of strategic comparative advantage over other. The location of Singapore on the strait of Malaysia and her deep sea harbour gives her an advantage over all other south east Asian countries located as the shortest sea rout point between China and India, Singapore took advantage to make her part a transit point for goods and services.

Secondly in her quest to create employment for her teeming citizens, Singapore developed her tourism potential to attract foreign tourist, generate revenue and create employment.

Nigeria needs to identify her area of advantage and explore same. Nigeria is blessed with vast arable land and abundant human, resources. An investment in massive mechanized agriculture will create the needed employment for the youths, create wealth and produce raw materials for the industrial sector.

A thriving agricultural sector will also put Nigeria in a situation where she will be self-sufficient and have food security. The tourism potentials of Nigeria are enormous, if those potential are properly harnessed, apart from generating revenue in foreign currencies, it also has the capacity to employ more persons only second to the agricultural sector. The tourism sector can offer employment directly and indirectly. Therefore as the sector does not require professionalism in all the areas to participate in the sector.

Nigeria is a tropical country with abundant sun light. A diversification towards renewable energy will be beneficial. The production and utilization of solar energy will greatly decrease dependency on desired power and increase productivity while cost will be reduced. The channelling of the proceeds from petroleum in solar power equipment production for export is another area that can be of economically profitable in the long run.

De-emphasize Religion and Ethnicity

Singapore is a multi-ethnic and multi religious country like to Nigeria. In recognition of the harm that region and ethnicity can cause, the Singapore government upon independence deemphasized the significance of both. Singapore unlike Nigeria has no official religion while the issue of religion considered very important in Nigeria that the constitution lays credence to it, and given it official status, the dogmatism that follows religious bigotry has hampered in no small measure the development of Nigeria.

Because of her multi-ethnic nature, Singapore has four (4) official languages. On the other hand, Nigeria has English only as her official language. English language as the only official language has negatively contributed to the ease of doing business in Nigeria therefore also affecting her economic development.

Corruption

The major bane of Nigerians development is corruption. The endemic corruption has in no final measure demeaned the development of the country. Singapore under Lee Kwan Yew has zero tolerance to corruption. The near absence of corruption couples with dedication and integrity impacted positively on the economic development of the south East Asian country.

Aside the judicial canning for misdemeanours, Singapore met out the capital punishment for cases involving corrupt practices and drug trafficking.

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