

DV435 Economic and Political Geography of Nigeria

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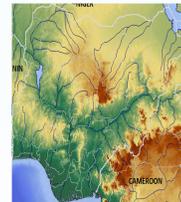


Introduction

Often nicknamed the “Giant of Africa,” the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the most populous country on the African continent. This poster examines Nigeria through four lenses: Location Endowment Population, Colonial Economy and Institutions, Economic Geography, and Political Geography in order to establish baseline knowledge on the effects of colonialism on the state and the legacies the post-colonial state inherited.

Location Endowment Population

I.1 Location



F.1. Wikimedia Commons: Nigeria relief map.



F.2. Maps of the World: Nigeria's rivers

Nigeria is situated in West Africa. The territory has a total area of 923 770 km² and it is endowed with oil and mineral resources. Nigeria has 8,600km of inland waterways. The main water sources are: the Niger River and its tributaries; the Lake Chad and the Atlantic sea (see figure 2). The country is not landlocked (access to the sea) and, with exception of the North-East, there is presence of rivers “leading into the interior of the country”, hence with low transport costs (Bloom and Sachs, 1998). Nigeria arable land is 36% (FAO, 2005). However, FAO (2017a) calculates that arable land has diminished in the past years: from 37 000 (x 1000 ha) in 2007 to 34 000 (x 1000 ha) in 2016. The country has fertile land mainly in the south/south-west and less fertile in the central-north part of the country. Overall (FAO, 2017b) “Nigerian agriculture is primarily rainfed and characterized by low productivity, low technology and high labour intensity.”

I.2 Agro-Ecological Zones



Based on rainfall and temperature Nigeria has eight agro-ecological zones (FAO, 2005). As in figure 3, conditions are more favorable for agriculture in the South than the North. Nonetheless, the North features more rural households (reliant on agriculture) than the South: agricultural income is higher (60%) in the north and lower (26%) in the south (World Bank, 2014).

F.3. Agriculture Nigeria: agro-ecological zones. Please note that, although there is no major change, the World Bank (2014) and Sowunmi and Akintola (2010) identify 7 major argo-agricultural zones, differently from FAO (2005).

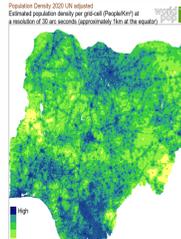
I.3 Mineral Resources Endowment



Nigeria is endowed with abundant mineral resources including gold, iron, zinc, rare metals, etc. (Ahmed, 2017). Nigeria is considered a *resource-rich* country, due to the exploitation of oil reserves (Ndulu and O’Connell, 2008). Nigeria is the largest oil-producer in Sub-Saharan Africa, with about 32 percent and 34.2 percent of Africans oil and gas reserves respectively. As per Figure 4, minerals are distributed mainly in the central - north and oil in the south-east.

F.4. NEITI: An overview of the distribution of Nigeria's mineral resources

I.4 Population



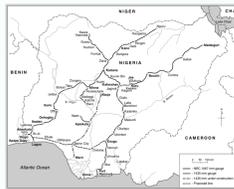
F.5. World Pop: population density estimated UN adjusted 2020.

Nigeria’s population is around 206 million people. FAO (2019) reports that between 1974 and 2012, urban population grew around 26% (45.2% of the total). As per Figure 4, it is possible to see that Nigeria’s population distribution is highly uneven between North -particularly North East- (low population density) and the South (high population density). This is also in line with colonial legacies (see column II) wealth distribution (see column III) and of political power distribution (see column IIII).

Colonial Economy and Institutions

II.1 Colonial Land Division

In Nigeria, like in many West-African colonies, there were no European settlers to speak of (Berry, 1993). In the pre-colonial structure, land was owned by families and communities, the heads of which distributed it based on the needs of subordinates (Oluwatayo et al, 2019). During colonisation, British authorities attempted to continue this tradition through a state form that Mamdani (1996) calls “decentralised despotism”, wherein a hierarchy of appointed chiefs representing ‘native authority’ indirectly ruled the peasant population - a strategy that was more easily implemented in the northern Islamic emirates with established written tradition than in the south and east, where societies and boundaries were ambiguous (Berry, 1993).



Map 1. (Top): Crop Commercialisation in Nigeria. Source: University of Texas Libraries
Map 2. (Bottom): Nigeria Railway Network. Source: Odeleye, 2000

II.2 Movement of Labour

Amin (1972) characterised Nigeria as a colonial trade economy, which was geared towards export-oriented agriculture. The ‘rich’ coastal area was the heart of industry and the production of cocoa & palm oil, while the northern Hausaland and Sokoto Caliphate region produced groundnuts and cotton (Watts, 1983). Osoba (1969) identified three major trends in Nigerian migration: the first two being inter and intra-regional migration from the hinterland to areas of greater economic activity, and the third being migration from rural areas to centres of administration and commerce in pursuit of better educational and employment opportunities.

II.3 Mining and Infrastructure

Railway construction began in 1898 by the British colonial government as a means of consolidating power in a newly established territory. Two major railway lines running diagonally from the major ports of Lagos and Port Harcourt provided access to inland agricultural resources. Thus, groundnuts from the north, palm oil from the east, and cocoa from the west were transported to the seaports and contributed to a flourishing economy (Odeleye, 2000). Following independence, the Nigerian government abandoned further railway development in favour of road transportation. Furthermore, the once agrarian economy became oil dependent following the discovery of crude oil in a commercial quantity in 1956 (Okotie, 2018). The first oil field came on stream two years later, and Nigeria is Africa’s leading oil exporter today.

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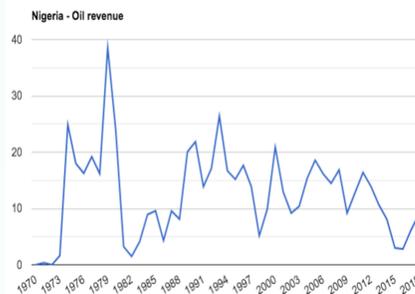
Economic Geography

III.1 Spatial Inequalities and Poverty Incidence

Although the percentage of citizens living below the poverty line is 11.5% higher in rural areas than in urban areas this disparity is relatively slight in comparison to the regional distribution of wealth (Oxfam, 2017). In North-West of Nigeria 81.2% of those living in deprived Sokoto State live below the poverty line, in the wealthier state of Niger only 33.8% of people are classified as such (ibid.). Several factors can explain regional imbalances such as localised conflicts and unrest, disproportionate allocation of investment funds, legacies left by the administrations of British Colonialism and the Royal Niger Company and the location of natural resources (Mayowa, 2014).

III.2 Resource Wealth

The shift to an oil-based economy in Nigeria marked a substantial transition away from the economic system left behind by colonialism. During colonial times the Nigerian economy depended heavily on three major agriculture exports - groundnuts, palm produce and cocoa. After oil production began in 1958 the transition to an oil-based economy was relatively rapid. However, this transition often brought plight to those living in oil regions where competition for profits inspired conflict. Rents are poorly distributed to the masses and fifty years of resource wealth has failed to produce economic development both in oil regions and across Nigeria, enriching the elite (Ovadia, 2013) For many decades the Nigerian government favoured a dependence on oil rents as a source of export income at the expense of the agricultural sector and in Q4 of 2018 the oil and gas sector accounted for 93.8% of the total export revenue (Nigeria Data Portal, 2020). This strategy has left Nigeria vulnerable to oil price volatility and when crude oil prices collapsed in 2015 leading to a dramatic drop in oil revenue as shown in the graph below. The country found itself engulfed by poverty, unemployment and insurgency, forcing the government to pursue economic diversification (Gokmenoglu, Bekun and Tansipar, 2016). Nigeria has attempted to remedy its oil dependency through resurrected interest in the agricultural sector to reduce dependence on food imports and providing support to the Telecoms industry which has helped drive growth in the non-oil sector (ibid.). However, Nigeria’s forex market continues to struggle and further investment in agricultural modernisation will be critical to addressing resource curse problems.



See World Bank (2020) available at https://www.theglobeconomy.com/Nigeria/Oil_revenue/

Political Geography

IV.1 Administrative Boundaries and Political Economic Significance



The legacy of indirect rule is one that is still seen in contemporary Nigeria. Upon independence, the newly formed state knew that a central government could work only if regional and ethnic authorities permitted it. (Mizuno, 2013) Boone (2003) makes the case that national governments temper their administrative power to regional and ethnic authorities who needed a mutually beneficial relationship in order to siphon surpluses made by people of the region. In the Nigerian post-colonial state, the government requires the support of regional and ethnic leaders. (Mizuno, 2013) That is what leads to political parties having stronghold in certain regions of the country compared to others. Political parties today are often smokescreens of disguised regional and ethnic interests which leads to a large chasm between the two major parties, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the creation of battleground states (Figure 3) when there is not enough political clout held by certain ethnic groups in the region to be consistently tethered to a political party.

IV.2 Resistance and Political Mobilization in Colonial Era

Colonial resistance and political mobilization featured particularly in the southern region of the country which coincidentally is the major economic stronghold of the country and also the home of the two largest political parties. Instances such as the Aba Women’s Riot which was the result of the socioeconomic and political difficulties that arose with trying to install indirect rule in southeastern Nigeria, i.e. the counting of women and children to be taxed; an occurrence that never happened prior to colonialism. (Zukas, 2009). Another instance is the Abeokuta Women’s Revolt which was also in response to taxation by the colonial government. The women of Abeokuta refused to pay any taxes until they were represented in their local governments. (Byfield, 2003)

IV.3 Geographic Electoral Patterns and Territorial Cleavages

In the 2015 Presidential election, the outcome showed that the two major political parties, APC & PDP have pull with certain ethnic groups. This shifted slightly for the APC, but the PDP remained consistent. According to Figure 3, PDP stronghold is in the southern region of the country. In 2015, the party recorded the lowest voting rate in Borno followed by Yobe, Kastina, Bauchi, Kano, Kebbi, Jigawa, Niger, Gombe and Sokoto (all Northern states). In comparison, the APC thrives where the PDP does not. The APC’s reach covers the entire Northern geopolitical zone. In 2015 the APC recorded their lowest votes in Bayelsa, Enugu, Abia, Ebonyi, Cross River, Delta, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Imo (majority South East & South South states). (Lawal, 2016)