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Achievers and Laggards in Demographic Transition: A Comparison of Indonesia and Nigeria

GEOFFREY MCNICOLL

Over the last 50 years many developing countries have experienced demographic transitions from high to low death and birth rates; others have barely begun that process. What explains that delay? Among broad regions the most striking contrast in this respect, as also in development performance more generally, has been between East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa—regions that many observers in the 1950s and even 1960s would have seen as similarly placed in development level and prospects. Such a comparison, however, is necessarily blurred. A sharper focus can be attained by narrowing its scope, looking at pairs of countries, one from each region, that share some similarities in their initial conditions but diverge in their subsequent paths. Thailand and Ghana are often paired on that basis: starting at comparable levels of real income around 1960, the first showed a six-fold rise by 2000, the second, virtually no improvement; both saw gains in life expectancy but with Thailand maintaining a significant advantage; and from fertility levels of 6 children per woman in the 1960s, Thailand currently averages about 1.8, Ghana still about 4.

Another plausible country pairing is the subject of the present chapter: Indonesia and Nigeria. Both are populous, relatively resource-rich, and culturally diverse; both experienced political turbulence and secessionist struggles in their early years of independence; both have had authoritarian governments over much of their histories as independent states, lately giving way to the forms, and, to differing degrees, the substance, of democracy. In the late 1960s their average incomes were about the same, and both had high levels of fertility and mortality. Their subsequent economic and demographic performance, however, has been radically different. From the 1970s on, Indonesia moved toward an East Asian style of growth, recording strong expansion in agriculture and manufacturing—though with a major setback in

the late 1990s; in Nigeria both those sectors stagnated in an economy increasingly dominated by oil and natural gas revenues. Indonesia made considerable strides in reducing poverty, Nigeria almost none. And while Indonesia currently has a life expectancy close to 70 years and fertility averaging little over 2 births per woman, Nigeria's life expectancy is still below 50 and its fertility is above 5.

In what follows I look more closely at this divergence, both economic and demographic, and consider various explanations for it: differences in governance and policy choice, differences in inherited resources and institutions, and differences in external conditions. Each of these appears to have played some part. However, in the case of trends in fertility (my main focus of attention), I argue that differences in institutional inheritance have been especially important, putting significant obstacles in the way of a Nigerian fertility decline that were not present or could be fairly readily overcome in Indonesia.

Comparative economic–demographic development

Background

Indonesia declared independence from its colonial Dutch rulers in 1945, its economy in shambles from the effects of the Great Depression, which devastated its agricultural export sector, and from four years of wartime occupation by Japan. Several years of revolutionary struggle against the returning Dutch forces followed, with sovereignty finally acknowledged in 1949. Belated Dutch efforts to establish Indonesia as a federal state had been abortive, succeeding only in giving the idea of federalism a colonial taint. The unitary state that in fact emerged was easily able to defeat various local rebellions that broke out in its early years—in the process, overcoming Islamist protest against its secular basis and suppressing regional resentment about the inevitable dominance of Java (with near two-thirds of the population).

Over the 1950s and early 1960s, postwar economic recovery faltered and political instability steadily increased. A fragile constitutional democracy was replaced in 1958 by Sukarno's so-called Guided Democracy, in effect a balancing act over a left-to-right spectrum of communists, nationalists, the politically engaged army, and major Muslim parties. The Communist Party, centered in Java and Bali, sought to mobilize its large if mostly nominal membership in a radical agrarian movement in support of land reform, eliciting intense hostility from landholders, most of them small rice farmers. By the 1960s, decay in the country's physical infrastructure had become acute. The civil service, led by Sukarno's "cabinet of 100 ministers," grew to vast proportions even as administrative capability fell, not least in revenue collection, and high inflation destroyed real incomes.

A coup attempt in 1965 instigated by a group of left-wing army officers with support from Communist Party elements precipitated months of violent reprisals by Muslim groups, with strong army backing, against Communist Party members and sympathizers throughout the country. Probably several hundred thousand were killed, mainly in rural Java and Bali, and thousands more imprisoned. A military regime took power, sidelining Sukarno and his leftist-nationalist supporters but also not conceding much to his Muslim opponents. In 1967 the leading army commander, General Suharto, became president, heading a regime that called itself the New Order. Drawing on technical expertise from University of Indonesia economists—the famed “Berkeley mafia”—the new government rapidly brought inflation under control and, with a renewed influx of foreign aid and investment, set about reconstruction and serious development planning.

Nigeria emerged from a much briefer colonial experience—comparable at least in the familiar story of European trading interests spawning a chartered company, leading in turn to takeover by the metropolitan power, in this case Britain. However, there was no British equivalent to the meticulous intervention in the rural economy and local government that the Dutch pursued in Indonesia. The northern and southern Nigerian protectorates and the colony of Lagos had distinct economic bases and separate political origins; they were brought together administratively in 1914, the combined region becoming the Federation of Nigeria in 1947. Self-governing status was attained in 1954 and full independence in 1960.

The federal structure recognized (and entrenched) the marked cultural and economic differences among the major regions and ethnic groups—Hausa and Fulani in the North, Igbo in the South and Southeast, Yoruba in the Southwest, together making up roughly two-thirds of the population. Each of these three regions was far from economically homogeneous and each contained numerous smaller ethnic groups; tensions among them rooted in inter-regional and inter-ethnic differences remained a fundamental political reality of independent Nigeria. An even simpler faultline that echoed the colonial history, North versus South, also retained major significance, identifying areas of similar demographic weight but with apparently distinct interests and aspirations. A substantial part of the country’s subsequent political history can be interpreted in terms of the management of competing regional and ethnic claims on power and resources.

Civilian rule was short-lived. Two military coups in 1966 brought to power the first of a succession of military governments that were to rule the country for most of the next three decades. Widespread anti-Igbo violence in response to the initial coup led to the Biafran civil war of 1967–70, fought over the attempt by the Igbo to carve out an independent state in their region. It was decisively won by the federal government and its predominantly northern-led army. A much expanded military role in Nigeria’s economy and public administration was an outcome of the conflict.

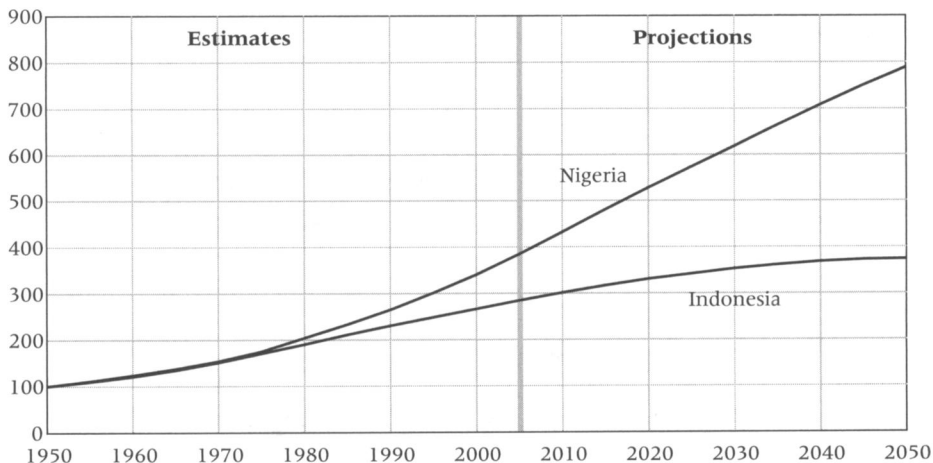
Basic economic and demographic indexes

The bottom-line demographic contrast between Indonesia and Nigeria is seen in the population trajectories in Figure 1. The critical differentiation comes in the two to three decades after 1970. The figure also shows the UN medium projections (usually taken as forecasts) of growth up to 2050. These projections assume the completion or steady progress of demographic transition: Indonesian fertility, already low, leveling out just below replacement; Nigerian fertility halving by 2050.

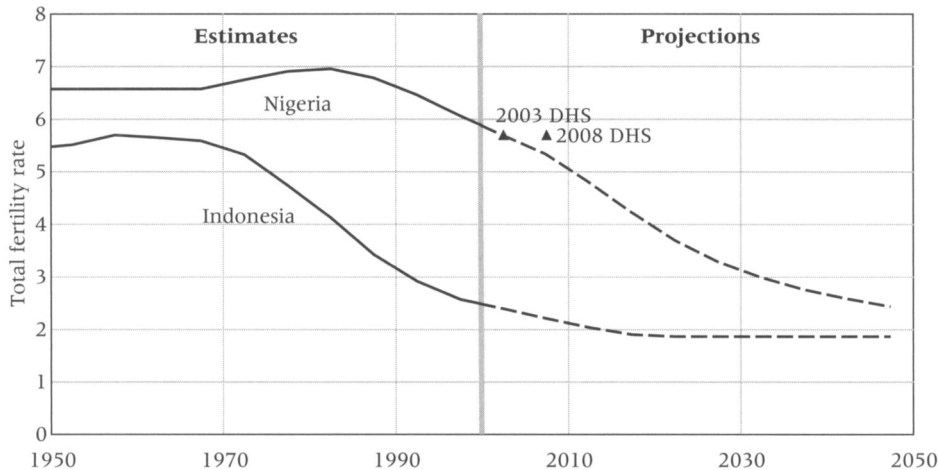
The population growth rate in Indonesia has already fallen to less than half its peak level (2.4 percent per year, reached in the early 1970s); in Nigeria, a higher peak (3 percent) was reached a decade later and growth is now estimated at 2.3 percent. In 1965 Nigeria had just half the population of Indonesia; it is now about two-thirds the size. By 2050 the two countries' populations are projected to be virtually identical, both around 290 million.¹ But at that time it is likely that Indonesia will have virtually ceased growing whereas Nigeria, even with the assumed near-completion of its demographic transition, would still be adding around 3 million persons annually.

Fertility trends in the two countries, as reconstructed by the UN Population Division, are plotted in Figure 2. Indonesia's fertility transition started in the 1970s and fertility fell by half in about two decades. It is now believed to be not much above the replacement level of 2.1.² Nigeria's fertility shows no decrease until the 1990s, and then only a moderate decline. A 10 percent fall in fertility is often taken as marking the onset of the transition; by that measure the Nigerian transition could be said to have started around 2003.

FIGURE 1 Population growth in Indonesia and Nigeria, 1950–2050, estimates and projections (index, 1950 = 100)



SOURCE: United Nations 2009 (2008 Revision, medium variant).

FIGURE 2 Fertility trends in Indonesia and Nigeria, 1950–2050, estimates and projections

SOURCE: United Nations 2009 (2008 Revision, medium variant); Nigeria DHS (2009: 51). Broken lines indicate projections.

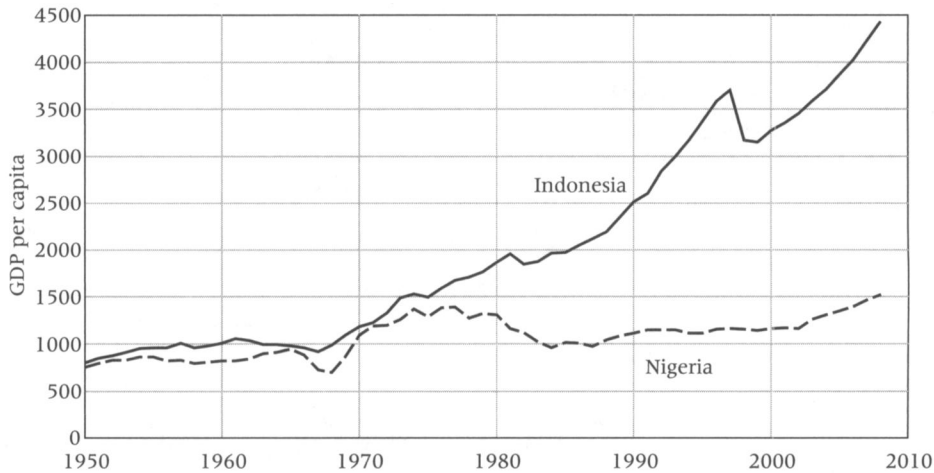
However the 2008 Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) recorded no further decline since then.³

In life expectancy, Indonesia showed a gain of some 20 years over the four decades since 1970, paralleling achievements in its broader region though at levels well below the region's best performers; Nigeria saw only a small improvement—about 5 years—over the same period.

Economic divergence is most simply captured in terms of per capita GDP in constant dollars. Maddison's estimates are shown in Figure 3. Income levels in the two countries were essentially still equal in 1970; by 2000, even allowing for the dramatic downturn caused by the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98, Indonesia's average income was approaching three times Nigeria's, a differential that has been maintained despite Nigeria's recently improved performance.⁴ Poverty figures are even more telling: Indonesia recorded a strong decline in income poverty up to 1996, resumed after the crisis, with the poverty rate (proportion below the country's poverty line) falling from 60 percent in 1970 to well below 20 percent in recent years; an opposite trend was recorded in Nigeria, with poverty rates more than doubling in this period. Around two-thirds of Nigeria's population subsist at or below the \$1.25 per day level.⁵

Notwithstanding Indonesia's much faster economic expansion, the structural shift of population toward the cities has proceeded at roughly the same pace in the two countries. Underlying that similarity, however, are very different modes of support for the urban population: Indonesia's growing manufacturing and service economy on the one hand, Nigeria's oil-based rentier economy on the other.

FIGURE 3 Income growth in Indonesia and Nigeria, 1950–2008
(per capita GDP in constant 1990 US dollars^a)



^a1990 international Geary–Khamis dollars.
SOURCE: Maddison 2010.

A framework for explanation

What underlies these striking differences in outcome—in particular, the differences in progress toward demographic transition? The explanatory framework I draw on can be briefly described as follows.⁶

I start with the simple observation that various combinations of socioeconomic development and cultural change can bring about a society's demographic transition. In a familiar account, the pressures for change have been the aspirations (and vulnerabilities) that come with improving economic conditions; but equally, demographic change even at low economic levels may be traceable to shifting attitudes about authority and women's agency, or to anticipation of new economic threats and opportunities ahead. These would likely describe most historical transitions, often in the face of lackluster public health interventions and official opposition to birth control. The operative forces might be called "natural" drivers of the transition.

Governments may hope to speed up, or perhaps initiate, this "natural" transition through various policy measures. Policies can be explicitly aimed at improving mortality and lowering fertility. Others principally aimed at promoting different aspects of economic and social development may contribute to demographic transition as a welcomed side effect. Together, direct and indirect policies constitute a second set of forces for transition: policy drivers.

How effective policy drivers are, however, depends in many ways on the existing institutional context and other features of the society inherited from the past—what can be called its *legacy*. Particular elements of this legacy may

blunt or distort the outcome that is sought. To the extent that is so, there is potentially a further route for policy efforts to promote demographic transition: by removing or diminishing legacy obstacles.

In addition to the effects of natural and policy drivers and legacy obstacles, transition outcomes for a society are also to varying degrees influenced by trends, conditions, and fortuitous events in the broader economic and political environment—in the society's external circumstances. Any explanation of divergent outcomes needs to recognize contingency.

In the discussion below of the Indonesian–Nigerian divergence I look first at policy differences. In broad terms, Indonesia adopted effective policies; Nigeria did not. This is not the whole story, or even, I will argue, most of it, but it warrants attention. I then turn to legacy factors—looking especially at the contrasting institutional endowments of the two countries as of the 1960s, just prior to the decades of strongest divergence. Finally, I consider differences in the natural drivers of transition and in contingent circumstances. The overall approach to explanation—and in particular, the selection of factors held as likely to have been influential—can always be challenged, but that is the case for any historically grounded argument about social change. Demography's well-known statistical bent here offers no purchase on the problem.

Policy differences: Indonesia vs. Nigeria

Development policy

The contrasting economic performance of Indonesia and Nigeria has been explored at length in two monographic comparative studies: Bevan, Collier, and Gunning (1999)—one of a number of twinned country analyses in a major World Bank project on the political economy of poverty, equity, and growth organized by Deepak Lal and Hla Myint—and Lewis (2007). Both monographs locate the main source of the divergence in policy differences. They are agreed on one major difference: Indonesia did and Nigeria did not change its industrial policy from import substitution to export promotion. From the 1970s, in Lewis's account, Indonesia adopted liberal macroeconomic policies along with strategies to promote nonoil exports, foreign direct investment, and integration into international markets—the cluster of policies usually described (and now often castigated) as the “Washington consensus.” Nigeria, in contrast, favored an inward-orientation and political control of trade and investment, insulating the economy from global markets. Its vastly overvalued currency prevented any emergence of internationally competitive industries. Differing elite attitudes toward private capital were another factor. In Indonesia, a system of crony capitalism emerged in which the political elite and the military, in alliance with local entrepreneurs, cornered major sectors of the economy—a corrupt system in many respects, but still operating

within a macroeconomic framework that fostered growth, including growth in manufactured exports. In Nigeria, government support of private capital was much less effective, with pervasive ethno-regional politics encouraging rent-seeking and blocking development of a coherent investment strategy. As in Indonesia, corruption and cronyism were pervasive, but in Nigeria the political uncertainties faced by the elite favored capital flight rather than productive domestic investment.

Indonesia's reform in the post-1967 New Order period was partly forced by the inescapable fact of declining government revenues. Oil production was expected to drop as reserves dwindled, although the revenues it generated rose for a time with the OPEC-led surge in prices. Nigeria's oil reserves were substantially larger, allowing production to expand and making the country increasingly a resource-based economy. Indonesia certainly had other natural resources that partly substituted for falling oil exports—timber, coal, and copper, for example—but found the policy discipline to avoid “Dutch-disease” side effects, discipline that eluded Nigeria.

A policy-centered interpretation of the disparity in growth performance does not solely point to Indonesia's espousal and Nigeria's rejection of liberal economic policies. Major differences in two other policy areas also contributed, both of them emphasized in the Bevan et al. World Bank report. Indonesia devoted substantial resources and energy to enhancing agricultural productivity, particularly by smallholders, and to the goal of attaining self-sufficiency in the main staple crop, rice. Nigeria's agricultural economy was allowed to decline as the overvalued currency turned the domestic terms of trade against it; the country became a major food importer. Finally, Indonesia adopted a number of social policies that benefited the poor, particularly through village public works programs, expansion of primary education, and subsidized prices for rice and cooking fuel. In the manner of the East Asian hyper-growth economies it added equity to growth as a policy objective. Nigeria kept a low domestic price of gasoline but otherwise did little to intervene to halt a rise in income inequality.

Population policy

Interventions aimed at bringing about changes in fertility are the main constituents of population policy. Mortality decline is of course equally a part of demographic transition, but the relevant policy content is better seen as part of a broader public health agenda, closely tied to other elements of social development. It is also an area where, for the most part, service *demand* can be taken for granted; in the case of fertility, demand for birth control services is often weak. Leaving that aside, however, we can examine how Indonesia and Nigeria approached the issue of birth control as public policy.

Neglect or even disavowal of a population problem characterized the Sukarno era in Indonesia. This stance was decisively changed in the late

1960s as one of the first orders of business of the New Order government. The subsequent rapid expansion of a family planning program in Java and Bali, extended, within a few years, to the whole country, is widely viewed as a signal success story in population policy annals.⁷ The program gained from Suharto's strong support, effective top-level management, and foreign assistance in supplies and logistics. Arguably, at least as important a contributor to its performance was the program's ability to draw on a mobilized regional administrative hierarchy that had been firmed up in the 1960s chiefly for security reasons. Provincial and local officials were enlisted in promoting the program's ambitious goals—set in terms of target numbers of “acceptors.” (The program mainly purveyed oral contraceptives: “acceptance” did not necessarily translate into a change in number of births.)

In Nigeria family planning activism was notably absent. Government denial of the need for birth control (on grounds, mainly, of abundance of natural resources—Sukarno's argument too) and resulting policy inaction persisted longer than in Indonesia, leaving program activity, such as it was, largely up to NGOs. Official statements mildly in support of birth control began to be issued in the 1970s, and a National Population Council was established to formulate and coordinate policy. Desultory official activity largely reflected a lack of urgency about the issue at high levels of government and satisfaction with the private sector taking the lead. Opposition to target-setting in family planning program performance, let alone in fertility outcomes, found broad international support at the 1994 Cairo population conference and may have helped justify this hands-off position in Nigeria. Eventually, however, demographic realities intruded. Some strengthening of goals took place under President Obasanjo in a 2004 policy statement that called, *inter alia*, for “progress towards demographic transition to reasonable birth rates and low death rates.” Full country-wide access to contraceptive services was envisaged and the target set of a decline in total fertility of 0.6 children every five years. (That is roughly the pace anticipated in the UN's current medium projection series.)

Successive DHS surveys record Nigeria's low and barely rising contraceptive prevalence rates. By 2008, just 10 percent of currently married women were using a modern method of contraception (chiefly condoms and injectables), another 5 percent a traditional method (chiefly periodic abstinence). Rural use rates were less than half the urban levels. There were large regional differences: the 15 percent country average use-rate breaks down to about 23–32 percent in the South and 7 percent in the North (Nigeria DHS 2008, pp. 70–71).

What might have been done to jump start Nigeria's program in the 1970s? Survey-based estimates of “unmet need” for birth control are often used to argue for program investments but would not have served that purpose in Nigeria given the country's very high desired fertility.⁸ Indonesia's attention to population in the Suharto regime seems to have had origins

in Malthusian thinking—as it had in Dengist China and in India in the mid-1970s, but with less coercive results than in those cases. The Nigerian government's views became nominally in favor of family planning from the 1970s on, but actual program performance languished, any sense of urgency on the demographic front perhaps attenuated by the easily acquired stream of oil revenues. But even in the absence of that excuse, slowness in coming to terms with population growth might have been expected, given a political landscape fractured by ethnic, regional, and religious divisions.

Shaping the policy space

Policy choice in development and population entails both technocratic and political calculation. But that choice, and any resulting achievement, is constrained by the existing institutional and cultural makeup of the society and its endowment of human and natural capital—what I termed earlier its legacy. Elements of this legacy can help or hinder the drivers of economic and demographic change and themselves can be the object of policy action: they therefore belong in any explanatory calculus.

In the Indonesia–Nigeria comparison an emphasis on policy difference, as in the discussion thus far, downplays any legacy effects. Indeed, in the case of the World Bank study the authors flatly dismiss such influence: “As of the mid-1960s there was no basis for a forecast of divergence in either policies or performance; a thesis of historical determinism is therefore unsustainable” (Bevan et al. 1999: 424). This is perhaps an understandable position for the Bank to take since, along with its loans, it is a major purveyor of policy advice. But it goes much too far. No one is defending historical determinism tout court; path-dependence, however, is a real phenomenon. There *was* a basis to forecast an economic divergence between Indonesia and Nigeria, even if not recognized at the time. Discerning such a basis in retrospect—not merely differences in the initial stocks of natural and human capital and in the existing physical infrastructure, but also differences in inherited economic and political institutions—is simply to acknowledge some degree of historical contingency—a routine expectation for any historically grounded account. And Bevan et al. implicitly recognize this in a few cases, for example linking Suharto's pro-poor policies to the expectations on the government built up under Sukarno—a point to which I return. In the demographic case, notably in explaining the divergent fertility paths of the two countries, policy and performance are arguably even more constrained by legacy factors.

Legacy differences: Indonesia vs. Nigeria

There would probably be little disagreement about the kinds of legacy factors likely to bear on demographic transition, leaving aside issues of relative

weight. As already noted, factors promoting or impeding economic development in general make up a major part of these, since sustained economic growth eventually produces a modern demographic regime—not least through the simple process of urbanization. Legacy factors more closely linked to fertility make up a partly overlapping set. Human capital is the major common element. Other elements are features of family and household organization, kinship systems and community structure, belief systems (mainly as they affect agency), and aspects of public administration and local government organization. I discuss these briefly in turn as they manifest themselves in Indonesia and Nigeria.

Human capital

Health conditions and educational levels in the population are the main relevant dimensions of human capital. On health, the murky estimates constructed from subsequent censuses and surveys suggest comparably poor conditions in the 1960s in the two countries, with Nigeria marginally worse off. In both countries, health services, outside the few city hospitals, were rudimentary. On education, Indonesia was ahead, having had more time to overcome colonial neglect: it was advancing toward full coverage at the primary level (compared to just 30 percent enrollment in 1965 in Nigeria), and had an advantage too at secondary and possibly at higher levels. Gender differences in Indonesia were less marked: for instance, male literacy in 1970 was 50 percent higher than female in Indonesia, but more than double the female rate in Nigeria. The statistics in Table 1 signal the comparative human capital situation at the aggregate level. Regional differences were important in both countries, but Indonesia even by the 1960s had done much to lessen them—in particular, moderating the Java vs. “outer islands” gap—while Nigeria’s north–south difference, especially in education, remained substantial.

Improvements in health and education, as well as being welfare goals in themselves, are major contributors to development performance more

TABLE 1 Indicators of social development, Indonesia and Nigeria, mid-1960s

	Indonesia	Nigeria
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	155	166
Life expectancy at birth (years)	44	39
Adult literacy rate (>15 years, %) ^a	54	25
Secondary school enrollment (% of age group)	12	5
Higher education enrollment (% of age group)	1	0.4

^a 1970

SOURCE: United Nations (1990, 2009); World Bank (1986).

generally and to demographic transition. An early disadvantage in these sectors, however, can be overcome by strong government action, certainly over the space of several decades. Less easily remedied, and hence more telling as legacy elements, are the factors that elevate or downgrade the policy priority of social development at large.

Family systems

Cultural variation within each country undermines most generalizations about Indonesian and Nigerian family systems: nearly every assertion needs to be qualified with ethnic or regional specification and acknowledgment of exceptions. That said, Indonesia's dominant family systems were (and are) broadly nuclear, with relative household economic autonomy—manifested, for example, in individualized land ownership. Kin-based influence on economic and demographic decisions from beyond the nuclear group was fairly weak—indeed, communal landownership and periodic reassignment of use rights, fairly common in colonial times, was village- rather than kin-based. For the increasing proportion of the population with no property stake in agriculture—sharecroppers, wage laborers, small-scale traders, and the like—the pressures of an expanding market economy further promoted individual and household autonomy. Arranged marriage, and for women very early marriage, used to be prevalent, along with high divorce rates, but in the post-independence decades steadily gave way to companionate marriage and a narrowed age difference between spouses. Compared to many other developing countries, social relations in Indonesia display relative sexual equality. Although technically permissible under Islamic family law, and occasionally practiced by prominent individuals (Sukarno famously), polygyny has always been rare in Indonesia.

Nigeria's dominant family systems were and are less easily characterized. Several distinctive features stood out, though with varying regional incidence. Lineage influence on family decisions, mainly from the husband's side, was significant. Fostering of children, especially between relatives, was widely practiced.⁹ Polygyny was common, and, partly as an outcome of polygyny, spousal age differences tended to be large.¹⁰ And whether polygynous or not, families would often be "non-pooling" in budgetary terms—the wife or wives and children having (notionally) a separate household budget from that of the father. The overall picture, then, is of a complex organizational setup in which childraising costs and child-labor benefits were not neatly contained within nuclear units, and were likely to be unequally shared between spouses. Both costs and accountability were diffused.

These contrasting family systems plausibly had significant effects on fertility. Indonesian families for the most part were unable to offload childraising costs, hence were responsive to the competitive pressures of the expanding

market economy and its educational requirements by lowering their planned family size. In Nigeria, the analogous effect—the quality–quantity substitution of Beckerian family economics—was obstructed by the mesh of transfers among kin and possibly too by the non-pooling household.¹¹ The critical question for fertility decline is how quickly that obstruction will erode. (That it is eroding and will eventually disappear, absent a rather dire development scenario for the country, seems certain.)

Kin and community

Rural social organization in Indonesia, colonial and in part pre-colonial in origin, comprised a territorially based hierarchy of provinces, districts, sub-districts, and administrative villages. These units could be and were mobilized in maintaining physical security and carrying out line-ministry extension activities in areas such as public health and agriculture. This top-down administrative system became increasingly ineffective over the Sukarno presidency as political unrest grew. It was reformed under Suharto, becoming sternly authoritarian with ex-military personnel appointed to many regional and local leadership positions. (Village heads were not themselves government officials but, even where elected rather than appointed, had quite limited freedom of action.) Political stability and quiescence were additionally maintained by a regionally deployed military hierarchy that paralleled the civilian one at each administrative level.

Nigeria's social organization reflected a different kind of colonial influence: the policy termed "indirect rule," by which the colonial government superimposed itself above the existing structures of authority—emirates, kingdoms, chieftaincies, and their various subordinate levels. Where these institutions could not be found, they were essentially invented for the purpose. Graf (1988: 7) writes that "indirect rule tended to reinforce the most conservative aspects of traditional political organization while shutting out pre-colonial tendencies towards supra-ethnic group cooperation." It produced "extremely diverse, and to a large extent, developmentally dysfunctional structures" of local government (*ibid.*, p. 180), which persisted after independence. In 1976 nationwide uniformity of a sort was imposed through the establishment of elected local government councils as a third level of government below federal and state.¹²

One of the forms of local social organization that remained important in Nigeria, separate from the village community, was the lineage. As in much of sub-Saharan Africa, lineages had been traditionally influential in land allocation among their members and could exercise some degree of control over members' marriage decisions. That influence steadily weakened with the spread of individualized land titles and widened economic opportunities, but some features persisted—especially the expectations on members to

favor kin.¹³ Those practices, widely found in traditional societies but perhaps especially intense in Africa, are what Goran Hyden (1983) has called the "economy of affection." Strong obligational ties of that kind were much less evident in Indonesia, at least as a routine expectation, although nepotism on a fairly spectacular scale characterized Suharto himself.

Belief systems

In Indonesia, census data record some 86 percent of the population as Muslim, 9 percent Christian, and 5 percent other faiths. Fervent Muslims are a much smaller proportion, however: many Javanese, for example, appear to carry the affiliation lightly. Christians are mostly located in the eastern provinces. This degree of Muslim dominance might be expected to relegate religious conflict to the periphery of national politics, but there has long been contention over the role of Islam in government, with Muslim parties decrying the secular state and pressing for greater incorporation of Islamic beliefs and practices.

Nigerian religious divisions, more evenly balanced, are more socially and politically consequential: about half the population, predominantly in the North, are Muslim; 40 percent or so are Christian of various strands (including a burgeoning evangelical component); the rest mainly espousing indigenous beliefs. Religious influence is felt particularly at the state level—even extending to adoption of sharia law in some northern states—and gives added potency to regionalism in national politics.¹⁴

In both countries Islam and Christianity endeavor to impose their moral beliefs on adherents, and where they have the opportunity on others as well, in matters such as sex roles and marriage. For Muslims, Koranic schools, existing alongside the public education system, are a major vehicle for this purpose. A different, older set of beliefs—in a supernatural world—predates those religions and coexists with them. These primordial beliefs are influential in certain areas of life, notably in the understanding of illness and infertility and thus in choice of health-seeking behavior. In Indonesia they have largely lost force, overtaken by the spread of clinical medicine and modern pharmaceuticals. In Nigeria that is not the case: "indigenous beliefs," standing alone or melded uneasily with a formal religion, constitute for many an intricate and pervasive spiritual reality, one inhabited by ancestral souls and local deities, demanding obeisance or needing placation, benign or sometimes malevolent. (This realm figures daily in the country's lively tabloid press.) In the context of rural society these beliefs would tend to sustain the power of elders and lessen the independence and agency of the younger generation. Over time, that influence is no doubt waning, especially in the transformed social and economic setting of the city.

Governance

Indonesia emerged from colonial rule as a unitary state, federalism firmly rejected and the country's ethnic divisions increasingly seen as a cultural rather than political characteristic. This was no accident. In retrospect, Sukarno, while rightly criticized for incompetent economic management, was singularly skillful in wielding symbols of unity and creating nationalist sentiment (a point stressed by Bevan et al.). Choice of Indonesian (at the time, not widely used) as the single national language in education and government was a major move, lessening the sense of domination of the polity by Java and the Javanese. Nigeria's federal system, in contrast, sought a fair power-sharing balance between North and South rather than suppression of regionalism. This seemingly very reasonable aim, however, entrenched an ethno-religious and regional basis of national politics. In Nigeria, as Kalu (2004) puts it, "ethnicity is a political, rather than a cultural phenomenon." Given the state's institutional weakness, "ethnic identity will continue to be perceived as the most effective strategy for making demands on the state. This in turn, will tend to increase the capacity of the elites to manipulate ethnic differences to achieve their own goals."

A crucial further difference in the two countries' governmental legacies followed from Indonesia's violent suppression of agrarian radicalism in the 1960s, described earlier. Pointing to the supposed communist threat, Indonesia's militarized government forbade nearly all village political activity, allowing space only for a single state-sponsored party. This depoliticization not only precluded any leftist opposition (or expression of views that could be portrayed as leftist) but equally applied to the Muslim parties on the right, giving the government free rein in designing and implementing its programs. In contrast, Nigeria's distributional politics below the federal level continued relatively unabated under military rule.

As legacies, these differences in the character of the national polity and its relationship to regional and local authority arguably had profound consequences for development. They likely mattered too for the course of fertility. In Indonesia, a strong central-government commitment to nationwide programs—in agricultural extension and public works on the economic side, in education, health, and family planning on the social side—brooked no political resistance and faced comparatively little dissipation of effort through local rent-seeking. In Nigeria, national commitments in those program areas, such as they were, tended to lose force in the course of transmission out to the regions and localities in the face of competing political interests and opportunism. Specifically on fertility, a further problem for Nigeria was the perception that birth control would affect the relative population sizes of the regions and thus the (population-weighted) regional claims on power and

resources. The politicization of census-taking, a longstanding problem in Nigeria, was a manifestation of that concern. Both countries experienced decades of strongly authoritarian central government, but only Indonesia found ways to direct that authoritarianism to productive ends in effective regional public administration and extension programs reaching down to local levels. In the United States a dictum of policymakers looking to institutional reform in today's economically turbulent times is "don't let a crisis go to waste"; something similar should perhaps be said of dictatorships.

Decentralization, emerging as a favored theme of development thinking, eventually came to Indonesia, starting, in 2001, with fairly radical devolution of financial and program responsibility to provinces and districts. Democratic accountability no doubt gained; how greatly efficiency may have suffered is not yet fully apparent. McLeod (2004: 368) characterizes the reform in blunt terms: "Indonesia gained democracy but lost effective government." Timmer (2004: 198), more circumspectly, says much the same, describing the change

TABLE 2 Contrasting legacies: institutional inheritances in rural Indonesia and Nigeria, c. 1960s

	Indonesia	Nigeria
<i>Family and household system</i>	Mainly nuclear, minimal kin-group influence	Nuclear and extended (covering co-wives); non-pooling household budgets; residual lineage influence; informal child-fostering common
<i>Gender relations</i>	Substantial gender equity, minimal polygyny	Entrenched role differentiation in household economy and labor force; widespread polygyny; unequal inheritance in <i>sharia</i> areas
<i>Community structure</i>	Well-defined administrative villages; pressures for conformity from local community rather than kin	Less formal administrative roles for communities below Local Government Areas (LGAs); kinship competing with territoriality as principle of affiliation
<i>Land rights</i>	Privatized in Java and Bali and becoming so elsewhere, but with social pressures against sales to outsiders; substantial tenancy but absence of large holdings; residual areas of shifting cultivation in outer islands	Communal or lineage-based ownership still common; conflict between grazing and farming systems in North
<i>Legal system</i>	Mixture of customary and statutory systems	Mixture of customary, statutory, and (in some northern states) <i>sharia</i> systems
<i>Local government</i>	No district-level financial or program autonomy	Substantial devolution to states and LGAs.

as a shift from “economic policy designed and administered by an insulated group of skilled technocrats, to a politically responsive system with few public institutions in place to protect economic policy from polemicists.” In some respects, the country has been creating the conditions for administrative incoherence that Nigeria began with. The hope would be that enough of a modern political and economic dispensation has been created to preclude backsliding. Nonetheless, “it is entirely possible,” Timmer writes, “that Indonesia will follow a path that looks more like Africa than East Asia” (ibid., p. 197).¹⁵ The demographic significance of the shift, however, is likely to be minor: by the time it occurred, the country’s fertility transition was largely complete.

A rough summary of some of the contrasting institutional legacies of the two countries spelled out above, as of the 1960s, is given in Table 2.

Legacy-based effects on fertility

The likely effects on fertility of these contrasting legacies can be briefly stated.

Human capital deepening. Both countries inherited major weaknesses in health and education. Both had the resources at hand in the 1970s to repair them, which as a byproduct would give a strong impetus to demographic transition. Indonesia invested heavily in these sectors, Nigeria much less. Why? The example of social policy in nearby Asian countries—the original “Asian miracle” economies—must have been influential for Indonesia; West Africa offered no such positive neighborhood effects. But part of the answer, too, plausibly lies in a legacy factor that was operative in Indonesia: the expectations of government created by Sukarno’s leftist rhetoric of the 1950s and early 1960s. These expectations the successor regime felt it had to accommodate, even though the events of the 1960s had vitiated any potential political opposition.¹⁶

Family nuclearization and economic autonomy. Family change is a politically sensitive area, but many governments have little compunction about intruding—and after all, what could be more sensitive than reproductive behavior, altering which is the widely accepted objective of family planning interventions? Indonesian family structure seemed primed for fertility transition. A Nigerian fertility transition, however, would arguably have called for undermining patriarchal and lineage interests and attaining greater agency for women. Land rights are an important entry point here. Post-colonial Indonesia inherited or soon established systems of peasant proprietorship, receptive to productivity-raising interventions: economic accounting lay at the level of the family unit. Nigeria’s rural economy, reflecting the complexities of family and lineage and the politics of land titling, was still far from individualized ownership. Changes are undoubtedly underway as the market economy deepens and urbanization proceeds, but on a time scale that remains uncertain.

Community roles. Program management in Indonesia, not only in family planning but also in various other government-led extension activities, was assisted by drawing on community solidarity and social pressures in the context of an authoritarian structure of public administration and a co-opted village leadership. Nigeria's more free-wheeling political life at the local level stood in strong contrast, messier and less beholden to top-down directives—although in that sense less coercive. These different legacies seem to reflect fundamental societal differences between the two countries, perhaps inaccessible to any policy.

Belief systems. Organized religion and occult beliefs are among the most entrenched parts of a society's heritage; both potentially bear on fertility behavior. Indonesia's co-optation of Muslim leaders in support of the government's family planning campaign was a notable policy achievement. Although aided by the imposed political quiescence of the time, it suggests the scope for enlistment of religious backing of such programs elsewhere. In Nigeria, however, that enlistment, had it been contemplated, would no doubt have foundered on Muslim-Christian ethno-religious rivalries. The health domain is less fraught: co-optation of traditional healers as part of a health network has been accomplished in many places, serving both to expand the supply system and to defuse potential resistance to it.

Governance. Rural society in Indonesia in the 1970s would have seemed to observers to be characterized by physical security, social stability, and effective public administration—qualities that anyone who knew the country pre-1965 would not have imagined to lie in its near future. They are qualities too that are still not much found in Nigeria. In Indonesia those conditions immediately derived from the militarization of provincial and local government following the surge of anti-communist communal violence, but the form they took built on existing administrative arrangements, a legacy of former regimes. They undoubtedly benefited the processes of development and fertility transition—not as necessary conditions but certainly as helpful background features in the early stages.

Demographic transition by default?

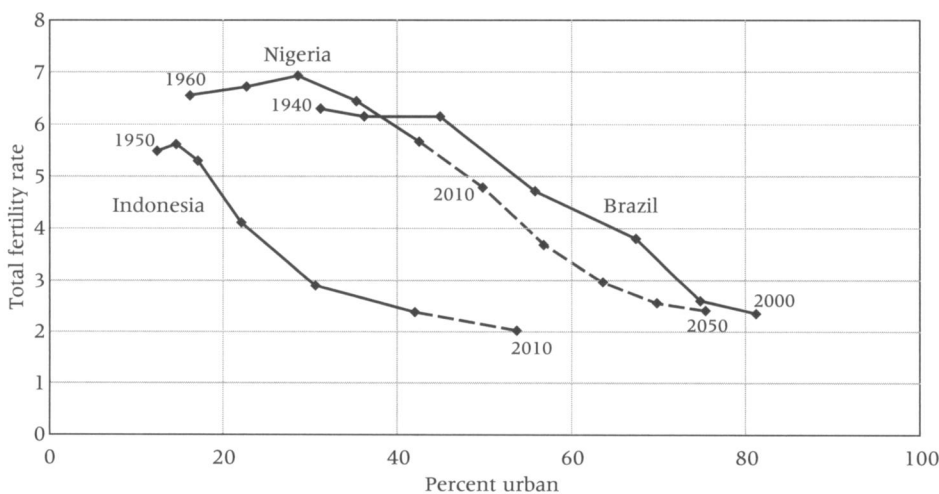
Historical demographic transitions, as remarked earlier, took place with no direct government involvement or in the face of active opposition. Smaller family size was a response by individuals to improving child survivorship and perceptions of a changing opportunity set, actual or anticipated. This was the experience of Western societies in the early twentieth century and of pre-World War II Japan. It was repeated in Brazil in the postwar decades. It points to the possibility of a comparatively policy-free route of demographic transition for Nigeria, one that relies mainly on socioeconomic drivers such

as higher incomes, achievements in health and education, urbanization, and, more elusively, “ideational change”—a transformation in attitudes and values affecting fertility but not necessarily tied directly to present material realities.

Urbanization is the most straightforward of such drivers. Urban fertility decline is probably less impeded than rural fertility by legacy obstacles—city dwellers are less beholden to social traditions and cultural dictates. There is an appreciable urban–rural fertility difference in Nigeria—1–2 children in total fertility according to the 2008 DHS (4.7 versus 6.3)—and that differential could increase fairly quickly: certainly there are well-known African instances of very low urban fertility, such as Addis Ababa. If so, a Brazilian-type fertility decline could be envisaged for Nigeria. The UN medium projections for Nigeria seem to foresee that scenario: they show fertility dropping to 2.4 (near 2050) at an urban share of 76 percent. Brazil reached that fertility level with about the same urban fraction. Indonesia’s fertility transition, in contrast, has been much less urban-centered. (See Figure 4.)

Ideational change by its nature is harder, perhaps impossible, to predict. The dynamics of values are mysterious. Ideational change, many believe, underlies simultaneities in fertility declines between distant regions and under widely differing material circumstances. Some see it in the substantial fall in fertility in Bangladesh in the 1980s and 1990s that occurred despite lackluster economic progress. Soap operas in Latin America are often pointed to as agents of influence in changing attitudes toward family size in that re-

FIGURE 4 Fertility and urbanization transitions in Indonesia and Nigeria compared to Brazil’s transitions



NOTE: Data points are at ten-year intervals: 1940–2000 for Brazil, 1950–2010 for Indonesia, 1960–2050 for Nigeria (UN estimates and medium variant projections). Broken lines indicate projections.

SOURCE: United Nations 2008, 2009; Merrick and Graham 1979 (Brazil 1940 data).

gion, though their effect is hard to separate from that of a vibrant consumer economy. And in Africa, the very rapid spread of cell phones and their ramifying applications is a wholly new phenomenon with the potential to generate ideational change in numerous spheres of life.¹⁷

A note on contingency

The onset and pace of demographic transition in a country, like development more generally, reflect not only that country's unique legacies and array of policy interventions but also the effects of external economic and political conditions.¹⁸ Indonesian economic performance under the Suharto government gained greatly from spillover effects of the progress of its dynamic neighbors, from America's political and military involvement in Southeast Asia, and from a favorable international trade regime. Indonesia was able to construct a labor-absorbing manufacturing export economy during the "window" of the 1980s and early 1990s when Western demand was surging and protective barriers were low, as its oil exports dwindled. Nigeria's regional neighbors have mostly offered object lessons in policy failure—with the exception, in recent years, of Ghana. Foreign investment in the country has been largely confined to the resources sector, though China's entry as investor may broaden that focus in the future. Awash with oil revenues, Nigeria developed no manufacturing sector of any significance and efforts to do so now face daunting competition from the manufacturing powerhouses of Asia. Indeed, the benefits of globalization for Nigeria are unclear: Collier (2007) argues that globalization tends to reinforce the bad governance of poor, resource-rich countries.

For fertility decline, a particular circumstance, already mentioned, has been the shift of international attention away from population problems as the large falls in Asian birth rates became apparent. Those falls, along with the sentiments opposed to target-driven family planning programs, Asian-style, that found expression in the 1994 Cairo Agenda, eroded both interest in and foreign assistance for birth control—despite Africa's still high fertility. Evidence of the situation is seen in the almost total neglect of population issues in recent accounts of Africa's development problems and priorities—for example, in the widely publicized 2005 report of the Commission for Africa—or in the agenda and activities of the African Union.

Final remarks

Each component of demographic modernity—low mortality, low fertility, and low natural increase—offers major benefits for well-being and for the development effort, at least until serious population aging sets in. Yet in a significant number of countries, many of them in Africa, the pace of demo-

graphic transition has been sluggish. The comparison between Indonesia and Nigeria set out in this chapter has asked why. (The details would differ in other country pairings, but the main thrust of the argument would I believe be preserved.) Policy differences are part of the explanation. On the mortality front the ingredients of effective policies and program designs, appropriately tailored to social and economic conditions, are well-known, attested from many decades of experience. The fertility side is less clear-cut. Ultimately, fertility decline can be seen as a necessary accompaniment of attaining a modern mortality regime. But it is not an immediate accompaniment, and often the delay stretches into decades, all the while with rapid population increase. The most straightforward policies to favor it—through family planning programs—have at best a mixed record of achievement. The main obstacles in the way of fertility transition, I have argued, are found in the institutional legacies of the past: social realities of the kind that Chinua Achebe referred to (in his essay *The Trouble with Nigeria*) in writing of his country as being held in “the dead grip of the patriarchs of an obsolescent dispensation” (1983: 61). But while some legacies are indeed all but immutable, many are not, and the broader policy task is to discern how to nudge into being a new dispensation, one within which fertility levels can be reached that are in accord with the needs of a modern society and the emerging desires of its citizens.

Notes

Figures in this chapter are available in color in the electronic edition of the volume.

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the XXVI International Population Conference, Marrakech, September–October 2009. Comments from Terry Hull and Daniel Sala-Diakanda are appreciated.

1 Although earlier Nigerian censuses have often yielded data of dubious quality, the 2006 census population total, 140.0 million, is believed to be roughly accurate. The UN medium projection estimates for 2010 are Indonesia 233 million, Nigeria 158 million. For 2050, the equivalent estimates are Indonesia 288 million, Nigeria 289 million (United Nations 2009).

2 The 2007 DHS estimate for 2005–7 is 2.6, an apparent stalling over the previous decade (see *Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey 2007*, p. 48). Hull and Hartanto (2009) argue persuasively that this figure is inflated as a result of the DHS’s undersampling single

women not in their parents’ household; they arrive at an adjusted total fertility rate of 2.3.

3 *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008*, p. 54. Regional differences are marked and persistent: the 2008 survey has total fertility averaging near 7 in the northern states, around the national average (5.7) in the central region, and in the range 4.5–4.8 in the south.

4 World Bank purchasing power parity estimates of per capita gross national income are roughly parallel, though the differential is narrower. The 2007 estimate for Nigeria, after several years of strong oil-sector performance, is \$1770; the equivalent figure for Indonesia is \$3580 (*World Development Indicators 2009*).

5 Lewis 2007: 198–199; World Bank 2010: 381.

6 This framework is described more fully, and applied to fertility transition, in McNicoll (2009).

7 For details see McNicoll and Singarimbun (1983) and Hull and Hull (1997).

8 According to the 2008 DHS, the average ideal number of children was 6.1 for Nigerian women at reproductive ages and 6.7 for currently married women. For men, the corresponding averages were 7.5 and 8.8 (Nigeria DHS 2008, p. 114).

9 Caldwell and Caldwell (1987) estimated that one-third to one-half of West African children were fostered-out for some period during their upbringing. For example, data for Ibadan around 1980 collected by Isiugo-Abanihe (1985: 61) showed 37 percent of males and 33 percent of females at the time currently fostering-in one or more children under age 15.

10 They still are: countrywide, according to the 2008 DHS, 33 percent of married reproductive-age women (over 40 percent in the northern states) and 19 percent of men were reported to be in polygynous unions, mostly involving a single co-wife (Nigeria DHS 2008, pp. 92–93). The proportions have been decreasing: they were appreciably higher in the 1990 DHS.

11 Fapohunda and Todaro (1988: 578–579), referring to Yoruba society in particular, summarize the pronatalist inclinations built into family arrangements:

[C]hildren generate net positive income flows to extended families by providing labor, guaranteeing financial security, and enhancing family power through enlarged social networks. The elders, in turn, encourage the birth of many children by arranging early marriages, by exerting pressure on young parents to observe postnatal abstinence practices that maximize the number of surviving children, and by easing parental budget constraints through intrafamily transfers.

How economic change affects the fertility of non-pooling households is unclear.

12 Rising civil disorder and ineffective policing in the 1990s led to emergence of

vigilante groups—the Bakassi Boys in the southeast, most notoriously, but also similar groups in other regions. Meagher (2007) suggests that this shows the resilience of Nigeria's civil society.

13 Writing of Nigeria, Smith (2007: 163) describes “the contradictory pressures of increasing individual ambition and continuing obligations to kin and community, all in a context of economic insecurity.” There is, of course, a complementary benefit to the recipient of support. Secondary education is a chokepoint where that assistance comes into play: the “fierce competition” to get into favored secondary schools in Nigeria calls for mobilizing the efforts and resources of “families, kin groups, and communities” (*ibid.*, p. 69).

14 As alluded to earlier, Indonesia experienced several regionally confined Islamist rebellions in its early years of independence, and one, in Aceh, that persisted for decades. Both countries have seen recurrent episodes of Muslim–Christian communal violence in areas where local proportions of each faith are comparable: murderous clashes in the eastern Indonesian provinces of Sulawesi Selatan and Maluku, and in Plateau and Kano states in the central region of Nigeria.

15 An altogether rosier anticipatory view of (financial) decentralization is presented in an account from the World Bank (2004: 92–93) of Indonesia's Kecamatan [Subdistrict] Development Program, entailing block grants to local governments.

16 This argument is made persuasively by Bevan et al. (1999); Timmer (2004: 197), however, sees Suharto's embracing of pro-poor policies as somewhat of a mystery.

17 One major telecommunications company in Africa, the MTN Group, records in its 2008 annual report that it had 23 million subscribers in Nigeria, which it estimated amounted to 55 percent of the market.

18 This is the category “circumstance” in the framework referred to in note 6 above.

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