IMPACT OF PRAGMATIC POLITICAL SOCIALISATION ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research utilised Secondary sources of data to generate and analyse the data. It is discovered that Nigerian politics has elements of political underdevelopment and uncertainties which manifests in form of frequent defection of politicians from one party to another, electoral violence, voters’ apathy and poor implementation of government/party programmes and policies. The paper conclude that pragmatic political socialisation is the panacea for consolidating the 2015 electoral gains and Nigeria’s unity; and recommended a well-coordinated and invigorated agencies of political socialisation that will instil and disseminate positive political philosophies; educate the mind and psyche of political class and citizenry to imbibe genuine, progressive and developmental political/ governmental skills and knowledge; and to eschew politics of sentiments and parochialism for sustainable socioeconomic and political development.

Keywords: Political Socialisation, Pragmatism, Political Party, Electorates and Elections.

Introduction

Nigeria was enthusiastically welcomed into the comity of nations on May, 29th 1999 when the military handed over to a democratically elected government. Expectedly, there was tremendous optimism for a politically stable and economically buoyant nation with all features and privileges of democracy in full swings. Paradoxically however, the above expectation seems to be a mirage as the people became disillusioned by the initially much desired democratic governance. Ethno-religious politics; electoral malpractices; political violence; inter and intra party conflicts; high level of bribery and corruption, coupled with deliberate attempt to amend political parties and the nation’s constitutional provisions for personal aggrandizement became the visible feature of the over 16 years democratic experiment of Nigeria. The above unfortunate developments exhibited by some political elites has and is sending a wrong undemocratic signal to upcoming generation of politicians in the nation as some of them seems to already been recruited and initiated with spirit of politics of bitterness, sectionalism and alienation. This if left unchecked is capable of not only affecting

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politics generally in the nation, but of institutionalising dichotomy and mistrust among the various ethno-religious clusters in the nation and attracting the military to politics again. Externally, Nigeria will be a bad example not only in the region but continentally. This paper therefore examined what connotes political socialisation, medium of political socialisation, indices of political underdevelopment and implications of absence of strategic political socialisation on the nation’s politics and recommendations are advanced.

**Statement of the problem**

Nigeria’s democratic experiments from 1999 to 2015 has suffered and is still suffering because of ugly developments such as destruction of lives and properties due to political violence as a result of perceived electoral malpractices in some parts of the nation in spite of the clearly defined electoral guidelines from the electoral body. There are cases of youths being used as political thugs during elections, which have led to political violence; subsequently affects voters turnout during campaign and voting. There are incidences of intra and inter party conflicts; mass defections of party members to another party immediately after elections, cases of invalids votes during the counting of votes cast, some elections were considered inconclusive, delay in formulating and implementing policies and programme by political office holders etc. Are all these the consequences of the absence of proper political socialisation/orientation in the country?

**Method and Material**

Secondary sources of data were used by the researcher. Books, Magazines, Internet materials, Journals, News and Conference papers explored to generate data for this study and content analysis was used for proper discussion.

**Conceptual Issues**

*An over view of Nigerian democratic experiment*

Nigeria as a sovereign nation state got her independence in 1960 and the democratic government in place then was toppled by some young military officers’ on 15th January 1966. The military ruled the country from that period to 1979 when Nigerians were given another opportunity to exercise their franchise and had a taste of democratic governance, which was also halted in 1983. In 1993, Nigerians were to experience another civilian regime but unfortunately, the military derailed by annulling the electoral process. However from 1999 to 2016, Nigeria and Nigerians came and remain under democratic government. From the period under review, Nigeria has had elections in 1999; 2003; 2007; 2011 and 2015 respectively.

Based on these periods of uninterrupted political experiment, one may be tempted to say that Nigerian politics and electoral processes have developed since there are significant levels/evidences of continuity, stability and global commendations especially on the 2015 elections in line with the political development model advanced by Coleman and Pye (1965). They opined that under traditional political system, people were not involved in politics; government simply exercised power over them. But under what can be described as political development, people are closely associated with politics; they do
convey their demands and opinion to government. They express their support or opposition to government policies and decisions. Government broadly relies on legitimacy of its acts in order to secure the support and cooperation of the people. These were the cases in Nigeria in pre-colonial days and even some years after; but events before and from 2015 election indicate positivism.

Paradoxically however, some political observers did not see any tangible developments in Nigerian democratic experiments due to obvious reasons. To this school of thought, there are visible or noticeable evidences of political underdevelopments in Nigeria if compared with political activities and stabilities in countries like Britain, United States of America among others which can be discerned thus:

i. **Politics of Bitterness**: Political process in Nigeria from the 1960s to date was characterised by political thuggery, victimisation, enmity, sectionalism and hatred. These are all politics of bitterness that are inimical to the growth and development of democracy in Nigeria according to Usman (2009). Politicians that are not politically socialised or oriented have the propensity to engage in the politics of bitterness both within and outside their respective political parties, constituency, and local government, state and even at national and global levels. No wonder political activities and electoral processes in Nigeria are characterised with bitterness and hatred in Nigerian Northern/Southern relations.

ii. **Political Thuggery**: There are ample cases of political violence in the nation even before this political dispensation. In Nigeria for instance, there was sectional and sentimental destruction of lives and properties in some sections of the nation, following the 2011 general elections, popularly called 2011 post-election violence; where thugs of particular political party outrageously attacked and vandalised government properties, other political parties’ properties, homes of non-indigene and shops, which often resulted in the loss of lives. The perpetrators were mostly politically uneducated and unemployed youth that were used as thugs by politicians (Hamidu, 2013). People without positive political socialisation could easily be recruited and used to disrupt public peace and security and even destroy democratic process they are supposed to safeguard.

iii. **High Numbers of Invalid Votes**: During elections which is the most conventional way of electing leaders, cases of invalid votes were and are recorded, owing to poor or non-effective political socialisation and orientation and perhaps the nervousness of the electorates who were screened and given ballot papers to thumb print in the boxes provided for the party/candidates of their choice. Some voter’s usually get confused and thumb print either on the lines separating two boxes, thumb printing twice in different boxes or not thumb printing at all. During the collation and counting of the ballot papers at the polling units/stations and collation centres, such votes are classified as invalid votes. The electoral body officials and the party agents do find it difficult to determine who or which party the voter voted or intended to vote for (Adebiyi & Abdulrahman, 2012:50-66). This has cost the electoral body financial waste, the electoral officials at the polling units and
party agents sometimes exchange some nasty words over such, and the electorates also wasted their precious time since such votes would not be counted.

iv. **Political Apathy:** Inadequate and absence of political education can and has in some instances encouraged political and voter’s apathy in the country. Whenever and wherever the citizens are not oriented politically, they hardly come out to register and obtain their voters cards and to even come out to be screened and cast their votes during elections. Ignorance of the importance of credible political system and electoral processes made some qualified Nigerians to remain passive or be apathetic which are all detrimental to political development of any given nation, Nigeria in particular (Hamidu, 2013).

v. **Poor implementation/ inconsistent Government Policies:** Owing to inadequate political socialisation and civic education, many politicians and political office holders hardly execute and implement good government and ministerial policies in the nation (Madubuike, 2007:24&25). Good policies and programmes of the state that have direct bearing or that seem to be having significant impacts on the citizen, the state and the nation at large are either not fully implemented, some are kept in view (KIV) and in some cases abruptly changed or dropped by successive administration and politicians or politicised to the detriments of the local population. For instance construction and developing of housing units, roads and other infrastructures have suffered neglect and abandonment by successive regime/administration after the initiating administration have expended huge state resources for political reasons. Nigerian politicians and public office holders are deficient in project continuities no wonder there are many abandon projects dilapidating all over in each states of the federation. Besides, some of such political office holders lack the versatile and technical knowledge to execute the projects/programmes or are not time conscious of the regime.

vi. **Increase in Bribery and Corruption:** Insufficient political education facilitates bribery and corruption at all levels. Citizens are not motivated to go out en-mass to register, get their voter’s card and even to subsequenty vote during election. Lack of political orientation of their civic responsibilities, and obligations, warranted the adoption of financial inducement and reward by politicians and their supporters for the prospective voters to go and get their voter’s cards and to go out to cast their votes on Election Day. In some rural areas, electorates are wooed and some even sale their cards to the highest bidder. This explains why during elections, underage children are given such cards with monetary inducements to go to the polling station, claim ownership of such cards and cast their votes for their ‘Oga’, in what Ejumudo (2012:19) called ‘buying vote’. Citizens, who are ignorant of their political rights, see their rights as privileges. To get those privileges also, they must or are expected to give bribes. Some electoral officials are also accused of being corrupt in the discharge of their duties before, during and after elections where they are given money or promised something tangible to
falsify figures, leak vital electoral secret or connive to delay, siphon or mutilate electoral papers (www.vanguardngr.com Retrieved on 18/4/2011).

vii. **Defection of party members and formation of political parties:** In Nigerian politics, there are rampant cases of party members defecting from one party to another especially after their initial party failed or performed poorly in an election. For instance before the 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections, some politicians were defecting to Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) from other political parties. In preparation for the 2015 general elections however, some PDP members who felt cheated, side lined among other internal crisis also left PDP, prominent among them were the then Governor Murtala Nyako, Rabiu Kwankwaso, Ameachi of Adamawa, Kano, River states respectively; Ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar; Labaran Maku, Bukola Saraki, just to mention but few. The second sets of defectors who left PDP when it lost the Presidential elections includes several serving and ex-parliamentarians and other office holders too numerous to mention as itemised by Jackson, Yusuf and Ajayi (2015). Since then many other people are still defecting from PDP and joining All Progressives Congress (APC). Similarly, some politicians leave one party to form another party before general elections due to perceived irregularities in the former party or the fear that that their political ambition was at stake. Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) was formed before the 2011 general election by some people who felt All Nigeria Peoples’ Party (ANPP) would not support their interests; Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) was formed before 2007 general elections by some politician mostly from PDP and unfortunately some of them still returned to PDP after the said election and APC with its allies came into existence before the 2015 general elections. Incessant formation of political parties and mass defection of same people from one party to another is an indication that Nigerian politics and politicians are not having strong political ideology and philosophy observed Hamidu and Hassan (2014: 40). In advanced democracies these are not the case, party and politics are based on ideology no matter which political party is in power.

viii. **Non Accountable and Responsive Governments:** Ignorant of their civic rights owing to passive political orientation deprives the citizens from holding their elected leaders accountable for the revenue generated internally and the ones allocated by the federal government. Each month, government at all levels gets and received money meant for the development of the land and citizens but without corresponding development in terms of availability of food, security, job opportunities, structural development, provisions of basic amenities etc. Ignorant and uneducated citizens cannot question the rationale of political insensitivity of the ruling elites; hence the nation and citizen remains in perpetual circle of poverty and infrastructural decay according to Madubuike (2007:28&29).

The aforementioned factors are not however exhaustive. Each one of them has negative effects on the state, political class and the citizen at large in terms of stable and progressive political development of the country. The implications of the above are:
i. Every governmental level in the nation remains perpetually poor, underdeveloped and non-progressive politically and otherwise.

ii. The masses get poorer and poorer due to the absence of dividend of democracy, while the politicians get richer and richer.

iii. Nigeria’s democracy will not be prevailing and thriving which shall be a bad example for other countries even beyond Africa.

iv. Ethno-religious crisis, intra and inter-party crisis and defection from one party to another will be inevitable.

v. There will hardly be internal party democracy and smooth political transition in the nation.

vi. Upcoming politicians will be following the faulty precedence of their predecessors.

vii. Ethno-religious and partisan politics will be institutionalised in the nation instead of competence and capability of candidates.

viii. Every politician will be recruiting and training his/her thugs and ethnic militias.

ix. Elections in Nigeria will hardly be credible and acceptable both internally and externally.

x. Elections in the country will be characterised with bloodshed and violence in terms of clashes between rival thugs and security operatives at one hand.

xi. The nation’s leadership portfolios would be manned by inefficient and ill-informed politicians/political officers that cannot make and implement result oriented policies for the nation.

xii. Violence and unconstitutional means would be adopted as the best option in expressing grievances and changing government.

xiii. Military personnel will and must be used during elections to provide security against the conventional police in view of the various political thugs in place.

xiv. Military incursion or coups and counter coups could resurface or be rampant that could hamper the nation’s socio-political development (Madubuike, 2007:250).

Political Socialisation and Nigerian Political Development

Every child is born void of any physical knowledge and information. Whatever the child is taught by, and sees from the parents, teachers in school and in the larger society, is what is imprinted on his/her mind. The child grows up with such ideas and philosophies that have either positive or negative effects on the society. The processes by which that infant learn, assimilates and integrates into his/her societal system and culture is what socialisation is all about. Socialisation is the process or means and mechanism by which an individual or group of people acquire their societal norms, beliefs, tradition, cultures and general mannerism of his immediate environment.

Almond (1969:7) defined Political Socialisation as:

*The process of induction into the political culture is the end product is a set of attitudes, cognitions, standards, and feelings toward the political system, it various roles, and incumbents. It also includes knowledge of values, affecting and feelings toward*
the input demands and claims into the system, and its authoritative output.

This definition agreed that political socialisation is a process of induction, training and orientation for the citizen to acquire or learn his immediate environment political culture and system. To Dibie (1999:23), Political Socialisation is the “process of acquiring political beliefs, values, attitudes as well as citizenship training that shapes a citizen’s political behaviour. It is also the process of political learning from childhood to grave. It is a life-long developmental process”.

Corroborating with the definition above, Ball (1986:64) gave a significant descriptions and purpose of Political Socialisation in and for Nigerians thus:

Political socialisation is the establishment and development of attitudes to and beliefs about the political system. The process may encourage loyalty to the nation, fostering of particular values, and it may increase either support for or alienation from the system. It is particularly important in the degree of participation in political life that is expected of groups and individuals. Political socialisation is not a process confined to the impressionable years of childhood, but one that continues throughout adult life.

From the above views of Dibie and Ball, one can see that Political Socialisation is not and cannot be limited to children. It is a continuous and life-long processes that everyone is expected to be opened to and support, because learning is continuous, new and dynamic ideas and discoveries are made daily. Political Orientation is synonymous to Political Socialisation, in that it is the way by which citizen or people are told and taught on how to be aware of the political processes of their units, organisations and the nation at large. Political orientation is however narrower and it is done occasion ally while Political socialisation is broader and it is institutionalised. Political education is equally another concept in this paper. Because of their relatedness and for the purpose of this paper, they are and can be used interchangeably. Pragmatic Political Socialisation/orientation therefore, is the deliberate concerted effort to revolutionise and reinvigorates the existing political system. It is the improvement and sustainability of all political institutions, electoral processes, human and material components in and of the state for national development.

The Mediums of Political Socialisation in Nigeria

The mediums of socialisation, popularly called agents of Political Socialisation in the country like in most other countries are: Family; Schools, Peer Group; Religious Institutions; Political Parties; Mass Media; Unionism; and some government agencies (Kapur, 2008:63-65; Babawale, 2008:222-223 & Dibie, 1999:23-24).

i. The Family: This is the first and basic socialising agency for the child. Parents are the instructors in this institution even though in an informal way. The parent’s political belief, perception and orientation is transferred and impacted on the child which have immediate and remote consequence
on the larger political system. Politically passive parents are likely to groom a politically passive individual for the nation and vice versa. This basic unit of the society therefore must and should be encouraged to know and disseminate positive political orientation to the child up to adulthood.

ii. School System: The school as an institution is where both formal and non-formal training and socialisation takes place for the child. The child from infancy to early adulthood spent significant time in the school interacting and associating with people from different ethno-religious background of various age categorises in the class, on playground and in some cases in the hostels. The child is also being taught by teachers in a conventional way to make him/her a responsible and morally sound member of the society. In the school, from primary to tertiary institutions, there are formal and structured modes of training for the inculcating of political skills, wisdom and principles that make students and learners politically socialised. Such formal training gives the learners the basic and functional knowledge for personal and societal productivity. Besides, there are also clubs and societies in the school system that aid political socialisations (Babawale, 2008:222-223).

iii. Peer Groups: Both at home and in the school, the child has peers, friends that he/she spent time with, discusses and shares variety of issues and chooses their role models. The political beliefs and views of the peers do directly or in directly influence the political beliefs and behaviours of the child. Therefore, the mind set and thinking of these teenagers must and should be positively politically oriented for the good of the nation as they shall be the leaders of tomorrow.

iv. Religious institutions: In Nigeria, the two most popular religious system, Christianity and Islam are known to be intimating their adherence to go out and obtain voter’s cards and vote during elections. However, the political belief, philosophy and maturity of the religious leaders of the various religious groups have impact and effect on what they teach and guide their followers in the nation. The public and secret utterances of these religious leaders can mar or make Nigerian electoral processes in particular and democracy at large. Religious leaders must and should be positively politically oriented to guide and groom their subjects progressively and developmentally.

v. Political Parties: Political parties are vital stakeholders in political orientation for their members and the larger community. The political beliefs, ideology and perception of each party member are dependent on the leadership style of the party. Where party leadership are elected base on party constitutional provisions and the leadership allows internal democracy to thrive, such ideology will engulf the party members who will in turn demonstrate same anytime, anywhere. But where reverse is the case, members of such political party will constitute a nuisance not only to their party but in the large community in their utterances, campaigns, even during election. This will show a bad precedence to the upcoming
generations. Political socialisation of the party members is therefore very imperative.

vi. Mass Media: Radio, Television and other electronic devices that can reach thousands of people are examples of electronic media. Newspapers, magazines, books etc. are example of print media. These are vital medium for educating people politically. The reports they carry or pass to the audience generate reactions which could facilitate political stability or crises. There is need for media house owners and workers to be politically socialised and oriented for balance and constructive reportage that would guarantee national security and development.

vii. Unionism: Unionism at both occupational and school level get it members politically socialised and oriented, through their internal politicking, attendance of meetings or associating with other sister unions, publications etc. As trade organisation and mini- pressure group, the political belief, philosophy, perception and secret party affiliation of the union leaders has effects and impact on the union and it member in expressing their grievances’. Positive Political socialisation is needed to get the union to play the game by the rule within their jobs, labour organisation’s provisions and to replicate same during electoral processes for national security and development.

viii. Governmental organisation: In Nigeria, there exists a government agency called National Orientation Agency (NOA). This agency is meant to orient or educate the citizenry on every vital government programme and policies for proper understanding, acceptance and support by the citizens of the nation. It also educates the citizens politically. This governmental organisation has offices in almost every state and local government areas of the federation for the purpose of public enlightenment. Getting the personnel of this parastatals positively politically socialised will aid them to positively orient Nigerians politically.

The aforementioned agencies though in existence, seem not to be effectively playing their roles in the past due to various challenges like lack proper recognition, mobilisation, funding etc by machinery of the state; hence the nation’s political system looks epileptic and uncertain for a long period.

Prowess of Pragmatic Political Socialisation on Nigerian Political Consolidation and Development

In the history of the Nigeria’s political experiment, 2015 electoral processes was commendable and memorable in a number of ways: The electoral body, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) used electronic device which is believed to reduce cases of multiple voting and other electoral vices; Nigerians were united under the auspices of A.P.C; Electorates came out en-mass to cast their votes in the elections; the incumbent for the first time in history lost and accepted the will of the people; there was little or no strong litigations against the election results and the process was logically concluded with the handing over by defeated Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Goodluck Jonathan to the winning candidate Muhammadu Buhari of All Progressives Congress (APC) on 29th May 2015. This is not to however say everything in and about that
electoral process was absolutely perfect. In spite of some challenges, at least both the local and international community were happy and felicitates with Nigeria; hence the need to begin the journey of sustaining and consolidating such gains and improve on them for positive political development as the country looks forward to 2019 general elections and beyond.

Pragmatic Political socialisation if pursued can play an important role in stimulating and promoting sustainable socio-political and economic development of Nigeria in ways like:

i. Raising a literate and politically enlightened politicians and citizenry in the Nigerian state. Politically socialised citizen will hardly be involved and engaged in political thuggery, assassination and other criminal activities against his state. According to Aina (1992) the benefits of education and political socialisation in particular in combating restiveness include an increase in earning power of the youth; preparation for the advancement of self-respect, which would stop them from being wrongly used by politicians as corroborated by Muhammed (2000).

ii. Enhancing and rejuvenating the political skills and development of the citizens, especially the politicians to play politics in an organised, purposeful and conventional way as practised in the developed countries. Consequent upon pragmatic political socialisation electorates, politicians and the general public will all be playing politics according to the rules of the game. Breaches in and of national and political party’s constitutional provisions will be reduced to the barest minimum since everybody is politically socialised and oriented to know his rights, obligations and limits (Oyedepo, 2012).

iii. Serving as an instrument of achieving social change by exposing the citizens, students and politicians especially to the ideals, correct constitutional provision, functions of governmental units, political parties, electoral system etc. Proper political socialisation of the citizens on these vital areas will facilitate social change; identify sources of conflict and resolve them for peaceful coexistence, structural development and smooth political transitions (Obi, 1999:127-128).

iv. Serving as the vanguard for uniting the diverse regions and different ethno-religious divide in the country. Pragmatic political socialisation will promote or foster understanding between and among various regions, geo-political zones; political parties; religious and ethnic groups and reduce or eliminates previous negative and inimical attitudes among sectional political leaders; political parties and geo-political zones in the country in an integrated manner. Integrated education according to McGlynn and Bekerman (2007: 689), is ‘the education together in equal numbers of children, who are more usually educated separately in countries that have suffered from protracted ethnic, political and religious conflicts and which provide opportunities to develop, respect and understanding for alternative culture’. This will transform communal relations and change their hearts and minds towards each other for positive relations in Nigeria.

v. Enabling the individuals to understand, respect and care for other citizens of the nation; avoiding and escaping from any form of violence. Recognising
every individual’s rights and privileges will assist every individual to respect state authority and government in pursuing peace, security and development. The politically socialised youth and the citizen will be productive, innovative and cooperate with the state apparatus to preserve the state and ensure it achieve its goals amicably (Enemuo, 1999: 146).

vi. Training and producing intellectuals and political scientists who would serve as technocrats of the state, trainers of politicians and potential politicians, decision makers, implementers and researchers for and at all levels of our governmental system. Without such political socialisation or training, political science as a course will be affected; politicians and electoral bodies will lack political advisers, researchers etc. (Tuatongha, 2012: 167)

vii. Helping electorates; political parties and electoral bodies to experience numerical growth and development in terms of political participation, turning out for voter’s registration, casting of votes etc and it will reduce cases of invalid ballots. Politically socialised voters will make electoral system and practises less cumbersome. The e-voting system introduced in the 2015 general elections will be consolidated and improved upon once Nigerians are politically oriented and there is stable power supply in the land (Hamidu, 2013).

Pragmatic Political Socialisation if pursued and achieved will minimise, if not completely eradicate political party’s conflicts; there shall be stable and progressive democratic experience in the nation with full dividend of democracy provided and the frequent use or dependence on security personnel during electoral processes in democratic dispensation will be reduced.

Conclusion

Having seen the dangers and effects of weak political socialisation on the state, its institutions and citizens, the paper emphatically concludes that Pragmatic Political re-orientation of the entire citizens, electorates, politicians and security operatives are the sine qua non for consolidating the 2015 electoral successes and Nigerian political stability that will boost socioeconomic development.

Recommendations

In line with the findings, it is therefore recommended that:

i. Political education should be made compulsory in all our educational system (through General Studies courses for instance);

ii. Political Scientists should be encouraged and supported to organise Workshops, Seminars and Conferences for politicians and public administrators;

iii. Government should sponsor the writing, publishing of books and films, using all the native languages to politically educate the people generally;

iv. The spirit of patriotism and nationalism should be re-ignited in the hearts and mind of Nigerians like the first generation politicians; and,
v. Mass Media owners and practitioners should exhibit high sense of professionalism with patriotism when covering and reporting any political issues for national peace, security and development.

References


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