



Patriotism: A Vital Tool for National Integration and Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria

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Abstract

It is commonly understood across societies that patriotism represent promotion of love and loyalty for the rule of law so as to ensure sanity in a society. Nigeria as one of the heterogeneous state with numerous ethnic groups needs to be introduced with policies that encourage solidarity in order to avoid discontent. It is in this view, the paper developed to measure the relevance of patriotism for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria with specific objectives; to analyze current levels and influences of patriotism in Nigeria; to identify impacts of patriotic sentiments on national identity, unity, and stability; and to assess the role of government for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. Secondary data i.e. Thesis, Dissertations, Journal papers, Conference papers, websites etc were employed for the realization of the present study while content analysis was used for analysis. The study finally found some patriotism gaps among Nigerian citizens as such the study recommends: strengthening patriotism through Nigerian educational initiatives, symbols, civic participation, good governance and equitable nationalist policies will at least manage the gaps and bring about sanity in the country.

Keywords: *heterogeneous, sanity, loyalty, unity, stability*

Introduction

Nigeria is not in exceptional position when talking about high population in Africa. The country has been recognized as Africa's most populous with over 200 million people and 250 ethnic groups. This multiplicity embodies Nigeria's richness but also its fragmentation (Osaghae, 2005). Colonial rule concentrated power and wealth among three majority groups i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba respectively sowing ethnic discontent (Falola, 2001). Cycles of military dictatorships and democratic reforms further exacerbated regional and religious

tensions. Secessionist movements, minority agitations, and episodes of mass violence have erupted, threatening national unity (Danfulani, 2006). Patriotism and nationalism were interchangeable concepts to mean the same thing. The great nationalists have shown their concern and agitations to emancipate colonized countries from colonial domination during colonization. However, managing the leadership by the successors so as to encourage and promote national unity in Nigeria has become an issue in present day time. It is pathetic to learned that the leadership structure has been coming from sections, regions, and cut across different ethnic groups and religions but it (only) remained a curse to Nigeria's national unity through ethnocentrism nepotism and sentiments (Ndubuisi K.E, 2019). It has been gathered that violence has affecting developmental programmes in Nigeria since independence, destruction of live and properties has been noticed and recorded under different violence and in different phases, approaches and dimensions. 2021 eleventh report on violence in Nigeria gathered lost of lives of about 2,116 in the year 2021 against 3,295 in 2020 as a result of *Boko-Haram* insurgency while 273 casualties and deaths were recorded during IPOB agitations across south eastern part. Several issues have been checkmating the peaceful co-existence in the country.

Amidst forces of disintegration, building widespread patriotic sentiment that cuts across ethnic allegiances is imperative for an integrated, peaceful Nigeria. This paper investigates patriotism's role in forging national identity and fostering social cohesion across divides

Aim and Objectives

The paper examines patriotism as a vital tool for promoting integration and harmony within Nigeria's diverse, multi-ethnic population. The specific objectives are to:

- 1) Analyze current levels and influences of patriotism in Nigeria
- 2) Identify impacts of patriotic sentiments on national identity, unity, and stability
- (3) To assess the role of government for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria

Historical Effort for Patriotism in Nigeria

Shortly after Nigeria's independence in 1960, the new government sought to foster unity and national identity among its multiplicity of ethnic groups. National civics curriculum was developed to emphasize Nigeria's anti-colonial independence struggle and promote shared heritage (Adeyemi, 2012). The National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) launched in 1973 mandated university graduates to spend one year working in a region other than their home area, aiming to build inter-ethnic exposure and cohesion (Omojola, 2010).

Leaders promoted national symbols like the Nigerian flag and coat of arms, along with rituals like Independence Day celebrations, to evoke patriotic pride (James, 2010). The National Pledge and national anthem aimed to affirm commitment to the Nigerian state across regional and ethnic identities. Patriotic rhetoric that promoted “One Nigeria” permeated political discourse, especially under military dictatorships seeking legitimacy through appeals to unity (Obi, 1997).

However, uneven economic development and concentration of power/resources among majority groups bred resentment from marginalized minorities (Danfulani & Shuaibu, 2014). Military suppression of dissenting voices contradicted rhetorical unity (Inokoba & Maliki, 2011). Neoliberal reforms weakened labor solidarities, eroding working-class nationalism (Jega, 2000). The project of crafting an overarching patriotic Nigerian identity remains incomplete. More participatory, decentralized, and equitably nationalist strategies are required to build mass patriotic sentiment.

Conceptualization

Patriotism

Patriotism refers to a spirit of devotion, allegiance and attachment to one's nation (Stanley, 2010). It bonds citizens under shared national identity and perceived commonality. In ethnically/religiously diverse societies, patriotism can overcome factional loyalties by fostering overarching unity and purpose.

Patriotism and Integration

There has been strong and positive correlation between patriotism and national identity across 92 countries with emphasis that patriotic national attachment overrides commitment to one's ethnic group. Rituals, symbols like flags, anthems, and public holidays holistically represents both traditional and constitutional effort to encourage integration and national unity in Nigeria.(Merollaetal.2013, CoendersandScheepers2004, Li & Brewer, 2004).

In Nigeria, studies have found moderate levels of patriotism and national identity, inhibited by strong ethnic and religious affiliations (Ekwujuru *et al.*, 2020; Olasupo, 2011). Aziz (2018) showed significant positive relationships between Nigerians' patriotism and attitudes like national identity, willingness to obey laws, and civic cooperation. Olasupo et al. (2019) found exposing Nigerian students to patriotic symbols increased national identity and support for integration.

However, Danfulani (2006) argues that Nigeria still lacks the widespread patriotic fervor requiring to overcome divisions. Strategies suggested to boost patriotism include curriculum emphasizing Nigerian history/culture,

civic education, good governance, equitable economic policies, and social justice (Ijim-Agbo, 2020; Olasupo et al., 2019). This literature underscores patriotism's potential to promote national integration in Nigeria, if purposefully cultivated.

Theoretical Framework

Social identity theory provides a useful lens for examining patriotism's relationship to national identity and integration. This theory posits that individuals classify themselves into social groups to bolster self-esteem, with in-groups eliciting greater positive regard (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). National identity can function as a salient in-group. Patriotism powerfully affirms one's national in-group identity, fostering perceived solidarity with fellow group members (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). This parochial altruism toward the national in-group overrides negative biases toward out-groups, facilitating inter-ethnic tolerance and cooperation. Contact hypothesis further suggests patriotic inter-group bonding reduces prejudices (Allport, 1954). Together, these theories illuminate psychological mechanisms underpinning patriotism's impact.

Comparative Analysis

Singapore's government successfully cultivated patriotism through compulsory military service, civic rituals, and history education to unite its multi-ethnic citizenry (Liu et al., 2009). In Tanzania, Nyerere promoted Kiswahili and ujamaa socialist policies to transcend tribalism through nationalist identity (Mwakikagile, 2009). These cases demonstrate well-designed policies' potential. However, Nigeria's greater size and ethnic diversity pose greater challenges for integration through patriotism compared to Tanzania and Singapore (Mustapha, 2014). More differentiated strategies tailored to each region may be required, while preventing domination by majority groups.

Patriotism Measurement Methodologies

Quantitative measures like national identity or patriotism scales allow comparison but lack nuance compared to qualitative assessments through interviews, focus groups and rhetorical/narrative analysis (Coenders & Scheepers, 2004; Huddy & Khatib, 2007). Surveys should incorporate regional, ethnic and religious identity measures to capture multifaceted allegiances. Assessments must be culturally contextualized to accurately capture Nigeria's complex realities. Mixing robust quantitative data with ethnographic insights is optimal.

Conclusion

Targeted efforts to strengthen patriotic sentiments through education, symbols, participation, and unifying economic policies are vital for Nigeria to surmount ethnic/religious tensions and forge an integrated, peaceful

nation. Deepening attachment to shared identity and values is crucial for stability and prosperity. It has been noticed from our foregoing discussion that number of countries has made it through patriotism, so also Nigeria made effort during the earliest time to advanced the use of patriotism for national cohesion and development but lacking some engagements to make it more proper.

Recommendations

- Incorporate Nigerian history, cultural diversity, and nationalist symbols more extensively into school curricula
- Institute national service programs encouraging youths from diverse groups to work together
- Leverage holidays/rituals emphasizing common heritage to nurture unity
- Promote inclusive governance and economic policies that distribute opportunities equitably
- Launch civic campaigns on patriotism's role in furthering national interest and identity

Fostering widespread patriotic loyalty to the Nigerian nation that supersedes factional loyalties is essential for stability and development. This requires comprehensive strategies embedded throughout social, cultural, economic, educational and political spheres.

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