

Attitudinal Rebirth for Patriotic Citizenry in Nigeria

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Abstract

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This paper expresses the need for attitudinal rebirth to repositioning the attitude of the Nigerian citizenry towards patriotic culture needed for democratic behavior. The virtue of patriotism towards national interest and values is almost at its zero point, particularly among the younger generation. There is a significant synergy between patriotism and attitude. Patriotism can shape and influence a citizen's attitude towards nation's values and conversely, attitude can impact citizen's patriotic feelings and behaviors. It is not an overstatement that the present state of the nation battles with many challenges because of citizenry's unpatriotic behavior intertwined with negative attitude towards national values and integrity. A new path forward is attitudinal rebirth. It is a transformative process that changes individuals' thoughts, feelings and behavior, leading to a renewed and improved outlook in life. Attitudinal rebirth is a vital weapon that is relevant in addressing the present societal vices and challenges of corruption, internet fraud, bad governance, examination malpractice, electoral malpractices, social injustice, etc. The first step in the rebirth process is awareness; recognizing the need for change. Re-orientation/sensitization of all citizenry, institutional reforms, overhauling of the kind of education given to younger generation, are some recommendations buttressed in this paper.

Keywords: Citizenry, Patriotism, Attitudinal rebirth, Awareness, Synergy.

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Introduction

Patriotism as a concept suggests that the citizenry develops and displays keen and earnest interest in all matters that pertains to the sovereignty and integrity of a nation. It implicates a high sensitivity of accountability towards national growth, development and sustainability. Patriotism binds the citizenry for unity and peaceable cohabitation; where the rule of law is supreme to all. Where there is no place for ethnicity, nepotism, mediocrity to strive. Referencing the last stanza of the Nation's National Anthem; "Where peace and justice shall reign"; where every citizen- children, adolescents, youths, adults and the aged is proud to be a citizen and able

to uphold the honour and integrity of the nation within and outside.

Patriotism is indeed a complex concept that is seemly multi-dimensional and multifaceted. It is a feeling of love, loyalty and devotion an individual has towards his/her nation's values and its people. It involves a sense of national pride, identity and belonging. It is the willingness to defend and protect the nation's interests, freedoms and well-being. It usually revolves around respect for national symbols; national pride and identity; loyalty to the country and its institutions; willingness to serve and sacrifice for the nation; advocacy for the nation's interest and well-being; critical thinking and constructive

criticism to improve the nation. Samsu (2022) highlighted six dimensions of patriotism as egocentric patriotism, value-based patriotism, uncritical authoritarian patriotism, constructive patriotism, fair patriotism and nationalism in the context of patriotism.

Patriotism is expressed when the following actions are more likely to be carried out by the citizens: voting and participating in the democratic process; celebrating national holidays and traditions; advocating for social justice and human rights; serving in military or public service; engaging in respectful dialogue and debate to promote national unity and progress(Elban et al.)

Patriotism is about balancing love for one's country with critical thinking respect for diversity and a commitment to the well-being of all citizens. Some alluring definitions by world classed leaders on patriotism, highlight the complexity and nuances of patriotism.

Mark Twain (1900) from his essay "the Czar's Soliloquy" defined "Patriotism is supporting your country all the time and your government when it deserves it".

Henry David Thoreau (1849), from his essay "Patriotism and Christianity" defined "Patriotism as loyalty to the country's ideals and not government's actions".

John.F. Kennedy (1961) from his inaugural address said of patriotism "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country".

Nelson Mandela (1993), in his book "Long Walk to Freedom" clarified that "Patriotism is not a short and frenzied outburst of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime".

George Bernard Shaw (1931) for his play "The Apple Cart" said of patriotism " as the conviction that a particular country is the best in the world because you were born in it".

Patriotism as a civic virtue connotes belief, emotion and democratic behaviour which are inherent in the attitude of the individual. And attitude plays a central role in human responses to change. Attitude as a chief cornerstone of an individual's complex value

system is an established fact. Attitude determines the way an individual looks at life. It is attitude that determines how individuals react to situation, overcome challenges, create bonds with others and nation and how they learn. One's attitude is not something that happens to you, but you choose your attitude. One's attitude is created by one's thoughts and thoughts are chosen. A negative attitude is a result of negative thinking and it is an indication of lack of mental discipline. A negative attitude is habit forming and does have an impact on self and others. A positive attitude is the result of a disciplined and deliberate way of seeing, thinking and responding to life. It is a mental discipline that is intentional and it is a mental toughness that is also habit forming.

Vargas-Sanchez *et al.* (2016), defined attitude as the way in which a person views and evaluate something or someone, a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation. Accordingly, it is traditionally structured along three dimensions; Cognitive (i.e. perceptions and beliefs); affective (likes and dislikes, feelings or evoked emotions); and behavioural (actions or expressed intentions toward the object based upon the cognitive and affective responses).

The Synergy between Patriotism and Attitude

There is a significant synergy between patriotism and attitude. Patriotism can shape and influence the individuals' attitude towards their country, its value and its people. Conversely, one's attitude can also impact citizens' patriotic feelings and behaviours.

The intersection between patriotism and attitude can be viewed from these ways:

National Pride: A positive attitude toward one's country that fosters national pride leads to increased patriotism.

Loyalty: A loyal attitude can strengthen patriotic feelings, encouraging individuals to support and defend their country.

Identity: A strong sense of national identity can shape attitude and thus influences how citizens

perceive themselves and their place within the nation.

Values: Patriotism can be influenced by a citizen's attitude towards country values such as freedom, democracy or equality.

Emotions: Attitude can evoke strong emotions, like love, respect or gratitude and these are good enhancers of patriotic feelings.

Behaviour: A citizen's attitude can influence their patriotic behaviours, such as participating in national events, voting or community service.

Social influence: Often, attitude is shaped by social environments that could lead to increased patriotism when encompassed by others who show similar values.

Critical thinking: A critical attitude can lead to a more nuanced understanding of patriotism, recognizing both the positive and negative aspects of national identity.

Empathy: An empathetic attitude is likely to broaden patriotic perspectives considering the experiences and viewpoints of diverse groups within the nation.

Personal growth: patriotism can influence attitude by encouraging personal growth, self- reflection and development of civic responsibilities.

Overall, the interplay between patriotism and attitude is complex and attainable. The understanding of this synergy can help to foster a more informed and thoughtful approach to national identity and civic engagement among citizenry.

State of the Nation: Patriotism, National Apathy or Defeatism?

It is factual and a reality of the Nigerian State that patriotic obligations among the citizenry has drastically declined, almost to a zero point. This is evident by the myriads of societal vices and menace that is threatening national unity and cohesion. These include corruption, prolificacy, banditry, ritual killings, kidnapping, increasing cyber-crime among the youths, election rigging and voting apathy, ineffective institutions, bad governance, income

inequality and economic disparities, social injustice and discrimination, high rate of unemployment and job insecurity, inflation and high cost of living, dependance on external economic factors, changing values and priorities, brain drain (The JAPA Syndrome), increased individualism and decreased collectivism, national anxiety, drug addiction and trafficking, human trafficking, "get rich quick" mentality, increasing labour protest and strike, stress, fear and uncertainty about the future, social media manipulation and disinformation, increased diversity and multiculturalism, religious bigotry, urbanization and migration, changing population demographics, limited opportunities for civic engagement, inadequate civic education, increased mortality rate, etc.(Balogun,2024; Mene,2024; Abdullahi,2024; Akintaro,2024; Okoh, 2024; Tijani,2024)

Do the aforementioned evidences tilt towards national apathy or defeatism? National apathy implies a lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern for one's country, its well-being and its citizens. Some features of national apathy observed included disengagement from civic activities, lower voter turnout, lack of national pride, indifference to social issues, cynicism towards government and institutions, limited knowledge of national history and culture, decreased sense of responsibility towards the nation and emotional detachment from national events and issues.

Defeatism, on the other hand, refers to a collective mindset or attitude that expects failure, decline or hopelessness. Some features of defeatism could be expression of pessimistic views on national prospects, lack of confidence in national institutions, belief in inevitable decline or collapse, hopelessness about national problems, disillusionment with national leadership, lack of national pride or identity and resignation to external influences or domination. A typical example presently in the state of Nigerian is the continuous brutal killings of citizens especially in the Northern Nigeria and all mitigating actions against such heinous criminal actions have recorded failures.

Therefore, the burning questions are 'Is patriotism no longer a cherished virtue of the citizenry, is the state tilting towards national apathy or is it in the danger

of being labeled a defeatist nation, a national malaise?’

Statistical evidences show that the unemployment rate is forecast to 3.54 million in 2024. In 2023, Nigeria’s unemployment rate surged to 5.0 percent in the third quarter of 2023, from 4.2 percent in the previous quarter. Likewise, Nigeria’s inflation rate rose to a 28-year high in June 2024. Headline inflation rose to 34.2 percent in June 2024 from 22.8 percent in June 2023 and 34.0 percent in May 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS, 2024). The inflationary pressures remain driven by currency depreciation with official exchange averaging 154,152\$ and 161,197\$ in September, and rising imported food inflation (36.4 percent) year-on-year.

Annual fraud count has surged by 112%, from 44,947 cases in 2019 to 95,620 in 2023. Concurrently, the financial losses attributed to fraud have escalated dramatically by 496%, soaring from ₦2.9 billion in 2019 to ₦17.67 billion in 2023 (Naira metrics, 2024). Nigeria has been ranked 5th in a global report on sources of cybercrime activities, coming behind Russia, which ranked number one and Ukraine, China and the United States which occupied second, third and fourth positions respectively (First-ever World Cybercrime Index, 2024).

Internet fraud is led by youngsters and university students. NBS revealed that 70% of Nigerian youths is engaged in internet fraud due to unemployment and poverty. University of Lagos Studies revealed that 30% of Nigerian students admitted to be involved in cybercrime. Nigerian Foreign Affairs Ministry, reported 1500 Nigerians are serving jail terms abroad for internet fraud. Severe consequences include damage to Nigerian International image and loss of billions of naira.

Okoh (2024), in her article that examined the social injustice in Nigeria emphasized that social injustice involves a comprehensive outlook of systematic inequalities, human right violations and discriminatory practices present in different aspects of the Nigerian society. Indices of Nigeria’s poor social justice show; Nigeria ranks 158 of 190 in social injustice; Nigeria’s social cohesion index weak at 39.6 percent; Nigeria ranks 120 of 142 on rule of law adherence; 70 percent of people in

detention in Nigeria have not been convicted of any offense, (Balogun, 2024).

On Transparency International’s 2023 Corruption Perception Index, Nigeria scored 25 on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). Nigeria by score ranked 145th country among 180 countries in the index. In the 2022 Transparency index, , Nigeria scored 24 out of the 100 points and ranked 154 out of 180 countries. In the 2020 index, Nigeria scored 25 out of 100 points and ranked 149 out of 180 countries surveyed. It seems corruption has become a cankerworm in the Nigerian society.

Adeyeke (2023), identified possible factors responsible for gradual decline in active involvement of youths in civic and political over the years as social-economic, cultural and political factors. Social-economic factors entail financial concerns and the pursuit of stable employment (amidst high rate of unemployment); and the challenge of apathy which results from negative perceptions about the effectiveness of participation. Cultural sensitivity to safety does hinder the level of civic participation of young people. Political marginalization wherein the youths feel alienated; thereby developing the feeling of being unvalued by the government of their country. The high-cost syndrome attached to political participation makes it difficult for young people with limited financial resources and other personal obligations to engage effectively. During the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria; despite the “Not Too Young to Run” law which reduces the age barrier for youths to run and hold elective political office, many young persons could not still afford the fee of the party’s nomination.

Indeed, the state of the nation is plagued by many civic problems. Vandalization of government properties by the citizens. (For example, Bayelsa state for three months was thrown into darkness because of the vandalization of the National Grid Electricity Towers in Igbogene and Ahoda axes. There is similar experience across other states in the federation. Drug abuse, poverty, diseases (recent incident of cholera and monkey pox). Others include overpopulation (recent statistics shows Nigeria’s population to be 233,731,230 as at Thursday, September 19, 2024. This is based on world meter

elaboration of the latest United Nations Data 1. Nigeria's population is equivalent to 2.85% of the total world population). Examination malpractice (a serious problem plaguing Nigeria's system of education today); bad governance, insecurity, political apathy, illegal mining/sand mining, nepotism/favoritism, flooding, frequent oil spillage in the Niger Delta, non-payment of taxes/rates.(Muktar et.al.2017; Udoms et al. 2024; Mumuni et al. 2024) The list is inexhaustible!

The New Path Forward: Attitudinal Rebirth

Recommendations, communiques, interventions, formulated policies by all concerned stakeholders to reduce the menace of national apathy and mitigate national crisis are laudable but only if conscientious and determined efforts are aggregated into actual implementation. However, this paper proposes national attitudinal rebirth to curb the Nigerian problem.

It is factual that positive attitudes and rich value system of the citizenry have gradually be eroded for the past decades. There is indeed a high lack of mental discipline amidst the citizenry and particularly among the youths of today. Therefore, the need to re-orientate them towards a disciplined and deliberate way of seeing, thinking, and responding to life. A mental toughness that is habit-forming-cum-attitudinal rebirth.

Attitudinal rebirth refers to a transformative process where an individual undergoes a significant change in his/her thoughts, feelings and behaviours leading to a renewed and improved outlook in life. A recent publication in Punch Newspaper (January 2024), the Governor of Kwara State, Abdulrahman AbdulRazaq called on all citizens to have an attitudinal rebirth for the country to move forward, saying the Nigerian patriotism level has dropped. The Federal Government is to unveil a new National Values Charter which will serve as Nigeria's compass for civic values, the Minister of Information and National Values said (Premium Times, September 20,2024). The Director General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Lanre Issa-Onilu reported that NOA has diligently worked to

produce a brand-new National Values Charter for the nation to a moral, ethical and cultural re-awakening. He said: "It is also for the entrenchment of right values, attitudes, habits and perspectives deep in the hearts and minds of all people of this great nation".

Attitudinal rebirth is a vital weapon that is relevant in addressing societal changes such as corruption, internet fraud, ethnics and religious conflicts, banditry/terrorism, kidnapping, examination malpractice, social injustice, election racketeering, drug addiction, etc. By fostering attitudinal rebirth, citizens can contribute to a more positive and progressive Nigeria.

The first stage of attitudinal rebirth is awareness that is recognizing the need for change. This awareness must be a top to bottom flow. The leaderships should recognize the need for a change and kick-start the change process in an exemplary role-play for followership to emulate. The change should not begin and end as party slogan without concrete and operational mechanism. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) is dedicated to fostering national unity and development by enlightening and engaging citizens with accurate and timely information. This is the right time to fully equip this agency so that it rises to its function and responsibility. It should be able to go to every nook and cranny of the land to sensitize the citizenry especially the youths and teeming adolescents on positive attitudes and social responsibility. It should organize citizen engagement initiatives and orientation programs.

Institutional reform is of significant importance. Policies that promote national interests and meritocracy against mediocrity should be implemented on all levels of leadership. Such reforms should be anchored on leadership by example. When leadership demonstrates patriotic behaviour, followership will align with patriotic behaviour as well. The syndrome "Do as I say and not as I do" is an impediment to patriotic behaviour and national interest. Enactment of laws that promote national interest should be uphold.

The education system needs an overhaul. The integration of civic education to foster national values in the younger generation cannot be overemphasized. This initiative should go beyond

mere introduction and recognition of Civic Education as a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary levels of education. Searchlight on content that can correct socio-political anomaly should predominate in the teaching learning process. Major problems confronting the subject of Civic Education in school such as inadequate manpower and rote learning method of teaching needed to be given premium consideration and possibly solutions. Teachers should be given specialized training packages and more teachers employed. Pragmatic theory of learning involves doing practical things that get results. Students should be given practical lessons that add value to their lives. Learning by doing method of teaching should be integrated into the system. Kayode Olawoyin (2017) posited that if Civic Education is well taught in schools and teachers act as role models to their students by exhibiting positive behaviours, the state of the nation will definitely become a better place and a just and egalitarian society.

Incentives: Reward patriotic behaviour and community service. Put in place Anti-corruption measures where institutions are strengthened to prevent corruption. The jamborees around the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) are not effective to fight the battles of corruption in Nigeria.

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) contribution for advocacy that promote national interest, and accountability, mobilize citizens for community engagement and collaborate with government and private sector in partnership should be able to foster attitudinal change and transformation of the citizenry.

The media and technology should be able to promote patriotic content for national unity and values. The engagement of citizens on national issues via social media campaigns is a right action. For online fora, constructive dialogue should be fostered such as national interest focused programming and other content that promote national interest. Citizens should be educated on responsible online behaviour via digital literacy.

Conclusively, implementing all proposed steps above requires deliberate intentional attention, collective effort, commitment and persistence; citizenry support and compliance; good governance for healthy standard of living of the citizens of the nation. Then the right path of development must be followed to mitigate national crisis and re-engineer a new itinerary for the state of the nation for growth, development and advancement, even as Nigeria is at her 64 years of independence and sovereignty. Indeed, the future of Nigeria should be anchored on attitudinal rebirth of the citizenry.

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