

POLITICAL EDUCATION AND NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABLE SECURITY GOALS

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ABSTRACT: *In the last decade, Nigeria has been under the yoke of hideous security challenges ranging from Boko Haram insurgency, herdsmen atrocities, kidnappings, hostage takings and abductions, militancy, banditry and the menace of cultism. By all objective standards, Nigeria could rightly be described as one country in a state of unconventional war in multiple fronts. The armed forces of Nigeria and indeed the entire security architecture have been strained and stretched to the limits. Successive Governments have tried to degrade and defeat this rampaging horde of terrorist groups without the desired results. There is therefore the urgent and compelling need for a paradigm shift from the strategy of military option and counter insurgency. A new model of engagement within the context of mass political education is being advocated by this paper as a viable strategy to subtly galvanize the society and defeat organized terrorism now ravaging Nigeria. To realize this objective, the paper adopts the historical and interpretive research method. The paper also recommends that Nigeria's educational system should be revamped with emphasis on core values of patriotism, civic obligations and responsible citizenship.*

KEY WORDS: political education, security, terrorism, core values and strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is currently at the cross road of security night mare. Quite a number of strategies have been adopted to resolve and indeed end the ever worsening security threats but to no avail. The most intriguing aspect of this rising insecurity is the political under current fueling their nefarious activities. The motive force is not simply to unleash violence and mayhem, rather most of the armed groups invoke the propaganda of imminent creation of an Islamic state under sharia law and the annihilation of the Nigerian state with its secular legal system. One of the principal objectives of Boko Haram for instance is the rejection of Western Education which is dubbed evil. Some unwary and gullible citizens in the north east and North West states of Nigeria where these terrorist group operate are deceived to enlist as suicide bombers and child soldiers. Refworld.org (2018) reported that violence against civilians including targeted attacks on education was part of Boko Haram's strategy. Human Rights Watch equally reported that approximately 10,000 civilians died in Nigeria between 2009 and early 2016 as a result of Boko haram's activities. The Nigerian government has over the years adopted the military option of counter insurgency which has failed to yield the desired results. It has therefore become imperative that a new strategy be engaged to get to the root of the matter with a view to arresting the crippling insecurity threatening the sovereignty of the Country. Given the preponderance of misleading ideologies being espoused by the terrorists, it behooves of the Government to initiate and indeed sustain massive political

education across the nation to stem the tide of separatist agitations, insurrections, insurgencies and armed banditry. Political education represents a viable strategy to achieve and ensure the realization of sustainable national security in Nigeria. According to Fanon (2000), to educate the masses politically is to make the totality of the Nation a reality to each citizen. It is to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens. Political education goes to the roots of the national ethos, core values and emphasizes the country's manifest destiny. Confronted with the debilitating challenges of insecurity, Nigeria can only overcome through the process of galvanizing and mobilizing the people to shun the divisive enticements and embrace the consciousness of common identity as Nigerians. This underscores the primacy of political education which involves the concept of democracy, encourages civic participation as well as the development of political knowledge through the activities of active learning in the community (Annette, 2000). The political education process as an ethical paradigm shift would ultimately checkmate the power elite class who employ dubious strategies to confuse and confound the masses into engaging in sundry ethnic violence, electoral malpractices and other forms of criminality. It is only the strategy of political education that would expose and explode this conspiracy and enlighten the people to make informed political decisions.

Contextual Clarifications

In order to properly align and situate the key words in this paper, we would attempt to clarify them within the context of this study.

Political Education

The concept of political education is concerned with those aspects of the general education process which inculcates political values, principles, proscriptions and prescriptions within the culture of a given society or community. Political education encompasses the entire gamut of the political super structure-the institution of the state, government and governance, the electorate and indeed all elements of the democratic establishment. Azeez and Ebenezer (2017), defined political education as getting people to take part in their government, to assume their responsibilities of contributing to the development of the society, to make them aware of their rights and defend them without fear, to harness and tap the latent forces in the people, to make them see politics as an essential aspect of the entire social fabric and to make them less vulnerable to induced influences in the political process. In this regard, political education cuts across the social divides since politics is also conceived as 'the authoritative allocation of scarce resources.' Political education equally consists of the enabling capacity for individuals to understand 'who gets what, why and how'-through the management of state power and authority Onuigbo *et al* (2018) observed that political education refers to the transmission and acquisition of political knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for informed participation in the political process. A politically educated citizen is a citizen that has acquired basic political knowledge and awareness that enhances the citizen's involvement in conventional political activities such as registration as a voter, voting in elections, running for political positions, and membership of political parties. While political education clearly suggests political participation and engagement, it is also at the vortex of socio-economic relations and class formation in the society. In his contribution,

Westholm (1990) believes that political education is the basic concept which constitutes a necessary condition for comprehending the contents of public debates.

Essentially, political education is a liberating phenomenon. It exposes the distortions in the stratifications of social privileges and engenders popular demand for equity and the rule of law in the society. As a result, Asogwa (2016) asserts that political education is a continual and long term learning process by which people acquire political cognition, attitudes and behavior. It is therefore a process by which political culture is transmitted in a given society which enables citizens to imbibe the knowledge and skills essential for informed and effective citizenship.

Security

Security is the absence of insecurity-the condition that assures one of the safety of life and property. It is a situation of peace, free from danger. In the context of this study, security is at the core of the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution. The Nigerian armed forces especially the military wing is charged with the constitutional responsibility of providing security as follows:

1. Defending Nigeria from external aggression
2. Maintaining its national integrity and securing its borders from violation on Land Sea or air,
3. Suppress insurrections and act in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the president subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly (Constitution of Nigeria, 1999)

Beyond the protection of Nigeria's territorial waters and National integrity, security involves much more. According to Eme and Onyishi (2014), citing Dyke,1996) the state is secure only when the aggregate of people organized under it has a consciousness belonging to a common sovereign community, enjoy equal political freedom, human rights, economic opportunities and when the state itself is able to ensure independence in its development. Security is therefore the assurance by the state that citizens can freely exercise and enjoy their fundamental human rights within the law without let or hinder.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a form of organized violence unleashed on innocent and unarmed people by faceless armed groups using guerilla warfare tactics to instill fear and inflict pain. The Oxford Advanced dictionary (2015) defines terrorism as the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act. It is often advisable to go beyond the definitions and describe the activities of terrorist groups to capture the full essence of terrorism. In this regard, Kaarbo and Ray (2010) stated that the ultimate goal of all international terrorism is political. Most terrorist goals involve a sense of governance, real or imagined which the perpetrators seek to overcome either by forcing authorities to accede to their demands or by forcing them from power entirely.

Political Education and Threats to National Security

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria had experienced series of political upheavals which continue to threaten its sovereignty and corporate existence. These crises include coups and counter coups,

a 30 months internecine civil war, and cycles of ethno-religious violence. When it appeared the country was settling down to genuine democratic culture from 1999, Nigerians woke up in 2009 to behold the emergence of full blown terrorism represented by the dreaded Boko Haram. From then on the terrorist wave increased with herdsmen rampant killings and kidnappings, professional kidnappers for ransom, armed banditry, cattle rustlers, hostage takings, ritualism and cultism. Nigeria has indeed been invaded and permeated by terrorism in various contours and diversities. Calls for restructuring and Separatists agitations have taken the centre stage of the National Question debate. In the midst of these threats to National security, the political elite usually stand aloof as the people- the masses continue to bear the brunt of this needless escapade due mainly to poor grip of political education. As noted by Nnoli (1984) the people are socialized into the norms of philistinism and opportunism, bribed into disbelief and cynicism, and thoroughly alienated from their work and society. Today, they are an empty shell of themselves. There is no food, no water, no light, no education, no security. Simply nothing. They live a life of nothingness. This deplorable turn of events was caused by the failure to give political education its pride of place in the scheme of things.

Rather than do that, the political elite fed the people with sterile ideologies of ethnic jingoism, and religious bigotry. They abandoned the people in the quagmire of political illiteracy. According to Gamji.org (2020) there is the failure to educate and inform the masses of Nigeria about what politics is and what it is not. We began to wonder whether that is one of the deliberate measures of under-education perpetrated to muzzle the masses and create a myopic view of politics. It is the dominant ruling class that manipulate the process of political education to inculcate violence and rigging during elections. On the contrary political education is designed to equip the people with the proper mindset to stand up for the country and defend her integrity.

One of the major threats to national security is the prevalence of political illiteracy among the people in Nigeria. It should now be a deliberate policy of the government to address this issue and mandate agencies like the National Orientation Agency, Independent National Electoral Commission and the Federal/States Ministries of Information to embark on mass political education of Nigerians to realize a politically informed polity. On account of its inherent dynamic, political education is easily and readily assimilated by the people because political decisions directly impinge on the daily lives of the people. For instance the cost of fuel, electricity tariff, oil spillage, mode of transportation, construction of road network, location of airports etc are all products of political decisions. Through the mass media, political parties' rallies, sermons in the Churches and Mosques, the average Nigerian improves on his knowledge and understanding of the political development in the country. It therefore behooves of the leaders who are currently battling the scourge of insecurity and indeed at all levels of authority to engage the strategy of political education. Asogwa (2016) had lamented that the level of political education in Nigeria since independence is far from being ideal. The political integration without socio cultural integration of the diverse people of Nigeria is responsible for most of the problems in the country. It may need to be reiterated that among the principal responsibilities of the government in Nigeria should be to embark on accelerated political education to address the many traces of political illiteracy that pervade the polity. This poverty of political education shows itself in intolerance, bribery and corruption in the electoral process, politics with bitterness (Akinwumi and Ohyoma,

2018). The people need to be schooled on the principles of freedom to choose their leaders. The freedom of choice is a symbol of democracy, which Nigeria embraced since 1999. Political education recognizes democracy as a platform to engage in active politics. It enables the individual participant to exercise his/her franchise and the right to be voted for.

To achieve sustainable national security, political education strategies would involve a new demonstration and understanding that power truly belongs to the people through their votes. Quality political education in the polity resonates with informed voting pattern and credible result. The people now decide on the basis of their convictions, party manifesto, pedigree of contestants and past experiences if need be. A well-entrenched culture of political education displaces the negative practices of vote buying, salt and rice inducements and ballot box snatching. No country will be secure without a secure electoral process founded on a firm footing of sound political education. Nnoli (1984) had noted that political education of the masses comes from the close interaction with their leaders, in which the one teaches and learns from the other. Through such an interaction, the masses generate forces which supply the leaders with their dynamic and make it possible for them to forge ahead politically, economically and socially.

Political education is therefore a powerful means and tool of social re-engineering and reconstruction. It is only through a polity with appreciable level of political education that the people and the leadership can attain a synergy of purpose to secure the country. Most of the threats to national security are due to social discontent, made worse by poor communication of political education. The people with limited grip of political education and politics generally are always suspicious of their leaders. They regard their leaders as liars and cheats, exploiters who must not be trusted. These disgruntled elements believe that the only way they could get even with their leaders is to cause mayhem and join terrorist groups to threaten the sovereignty of Nigeria. It is only political education that would bring the angry masses and their leaders together to resolve the misunderstanding. Ekuri (2017) observed that political education in Nigeria should be designed to facilitate the transformation of Nigeria's environment and culture which is currently largely negative to one where people are enlightened to be politically conscious and organized into popular formations for the defense of democracy and social justice.

Insecurity and Political Education

It has already been established that political violence, and other forms of terrorist acts, are currently thriving in the body politic of Nigerian society due to poor/negative political education or even lack of it. The rampaging Boko Haram insurgency, herdsmen killings, abductions and other forms of crimes and criminality gained their foot hold in Nigeria because political education was neglected. The strategy of political education has the capacity to turn around the cloud of insecurity hovering over Nigeria by creating a new belief system in the citizens. With improved governance and equitable service delivery of dividends of democracy, the few that sabotage the efforts to defeat perpetrators of insecurity will be made to understand their mistakes. The inflamed propaganda of ethnicity, religious chauvinism, geopolitical agitations and hate speech will no longer dominate the political and social debate and space. Ejirika (2014) noted that quality of education of a nation is a direct function of a Country's national security, noting that education is as important as national security. To buttress this argument, Joshua et al(2016), stated that Boko Haram insurgency

has become a festering sore because the Nigerian military is fighting 21st century Islamic insurgency with 19th century military education.

The State, National Security and Political Education

Political education as an agent of socio-economic and political change in the society redefines and re-interprets the institution of the postcolonial state as a community based custodian of legitimate power and authority rather than a tool in the hands of the elite class for primitive accumulation of capital. Invariably, the people identifies with the state in the quest for sustainable security in Nigeria. This is in keeping with the true definition of the state as essentially a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory (Asif, 2008) The centrality of the state as represented by the government of the day is to mobilize and politically educate the Nigerian citizenry through formal and informal means to combat the surging wave of insecurity without counter violence. This has become imperative because without subtle internal connivance, the terrorists will not be able to penetrate Nigeria's borders. This equally brings to the fore the role of a politically motivated and well informed military in the campaign to root out insurgency from Nigeria. According to Fanon (2000), the Army is not always a school of war; more often it is always a school of civic and political education. The soldier of an adult nation is not a simple mercenary but a citizen who by means of arms defends the nation. That is why it is of fundamental importance that the soldier should know that he is in the service of his country and not in the service of his commanding officer. What this implies is that the military and their civilian counterpart combine their intellect and energy to fight the invaders from their own positions of strength. No more the scenario where the soldiers deride the people as 'idle civilians'.

Assured of this unity of purpose, the government in a renewed effort to provide and cement the culture of political education, must evolve a programme of economic empowerment for the teeming unemployed Nigerian youths. More often than not, the terrorists have won followers among the people by providing them with a means of livelihood. Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram used this trick to attract many youths to his fold. Yusuf had provided services that the government neglected. Yusuf also arranged affordable marriages for his members. Some of the young men who joined the group had been previously unemployed, underemployed or relegated to subsistent agriculture. Now, as a result of the community support programmes, they are able to buy motor bikes taxis called 'Okada' (Oxfordre.com, 2017). It is within this context that the political education programme of the government would catch up with mass appeal. This aspect of the political education mantra is very crucial in view of the high level of unemployment in Nigeria. According to Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, (2011), about 35 million Nigerian youths are unemployed. This speaks volume of the economic requirements of the political education process in order to galvanize popular support and commitment in ridding Nigeria of the virus of insecurity and attain sustainable national security in no distant time..

CONCLUSION

This study has tried to present the instrument of political education as the most compelling and comprehensive approach to achieving sustainable national security in Nigeria. It is undoubtedly a tasking and onerous project but given the universality of its approach, it represents a viable and realistic alternative to the jack boots of military action. For close to two decades now military counter insurgency measures have not taken the country out of the woods. It had rather drained the national economy and worsened the security outlook in the polity. Many Nigerians are daily dying from attacks from the terrorist groups and the government seems overwhelmed by the magnitude of these acts of violence. Political education through formal and informal means will empower the citizens to acquire necessary knowledge, skills and orientation to understand the dynamics of government and governance. The strategies are unique because they address the mind and consciousness of the people. Political education is basically an ideology, an awareness, a patriotic zeal to become an informed citizen and overcome the debilitating barriers of ethno-religious and imposed class limitations. It is a process of enlightenment on how our common wealth are managed, the power that is inherent in our votes, the power to speak to power and the inalienable right to recall a non performing legislator. Political education also encompasses the economic dimension of the society. The fact that the government in power must be accountable to the people, through the provision of employment, infrastructural facilities such as electricity, water and Housing schemes. Political education strategy stands out as the ultimate arrangement to realize a sustainable national security for Nigeria.

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