Political Socialization and Social Harmony in China: Policy Lesson for President Buhari Administration of Nigeria

[1]Dr. Sulaiman O. Abubakar, [2]Dr. Mutiullah A. Olasupo
[1,2,]*Department Of Political Science And International Relations, University Of Abuja*

Abstract: Political socialization is an important aspect of solidifying a government's political legitimacy. China has a direct form of political socialization because it is a communist country. Communism uses indoctrination programs to teach or enforce a set of beliefs unto a group of people or an individual. This paper focuses on the presentation of China's political socialization to show how the China rise to become second largest economy in the world, the relationship between democracy and Socialism with Chinese characteristics, with economic development since the reform and opening up, the dramatic changes in the international and domestic situation as the social and political culture is brewing and undergoing profound rhythm, which had a profound impact on citizen's political socialization. This study also explains the absence of adequate data on popular attitudes as assertions about contemporary Nigerian political culture are highly speculative. Having adopted Social Capital Theory to provide framework for the study, the paper discovers that the strength of Chinese success story is in social harmony achieved through impeccable political socialization and for Nigeria to achieve social harmony and building a better society, the current political leadership of Muhammad Buhari should commence a process of solidifying efficacious political socialization among Nigerians and embark on the relentless pursuit of the goal of social ideal of humankind that would facilitate popular social consciousness. It is the conclusion of this paper that adequate political socialization is important for all governments in maintaining social harmony, cohesiveness of society and further reinforcing political legitimacy of the governments.
Keyword: Political Socialization, Harmonious Society, Social Capital Theory, Chinese Politics, Nigerian Politics

I. Introduction

Political socialization is the process by which political culture is transmitted in a given society. It occurs at both the individual and community level, and it extends beyond the acquisition of political culture to encompass the learning of more sophisticated political ideas and orientations. China has a direct form of political socialization because it is a communist country. Communism uses indoctrination programs to teach or enforce a set of beliefs unto a group of people or an individual. The mission of the Chinese leaders to create harmonious society gives them an intense concern for the processes of political socialization. They cannot accept socialization as a given process that simply maintains existing attitudes and orientations, but they insist that the process itself must change in order to facilitate transformation of popular social consciousness. By the same token, they see the establishment of new patterns in the structure and content of socialization and communications as essential to the attainment of the desired social harmony.

In the absence of adequate data on popular attitudes, assertions about contemporary Nigerian political culture are highly speculative. We can become better informed, however, by studying the relationship between revolutionary values and the inherited political culture in the Peoples Republic of China. The frantic efforts made by the Chinese government to structure several agents of socialization, the Cultural Revolution's impact on socialization, and the post-1976 modification of Cultural Revolution reforms constitute a great lessons for Nigeria to achieve social harmony and building a better society.

Having won the presidential election in a keenly contested 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, President Buhari admitted, in his inaugural speech, the paucity of right political socialization in Nigeria and quickly reminded all and sundry that Nigerians are heirs to great civilizations such as Shehu Othman Dan Fodio's caliphate, the Kanem Borno Empire, the Oyo Empire, the Benin Empire and King Jaja's formidable domain (Buhari, 2015). The fundamental objective of this paper is to examine the trend of political socialization in the People Republic of China and bring out those factors that contribute to social harmony in China. With immediate effect, the current political leadership in Nigeria need to commence a process of solidifying efficacious political socialization among Nigerians and embark on the relentless pursuit of the goal of social ideal of humankind that would facilitate popular social harmony, cohesiveness of society and further reinforcing political legitimacy of the government.

II.   Conceptual Clarification And Theoretical Framework
Political Socialization

Broadly construed, political socialization is the transmission of political culture to new generations of citizens in a given society (Beck, 1997; Almond, 2008). Political socialization is the process by which political culture is transmitted in a given society. It occurs at both the individual and community level, and it extends beyond the acquisition of political culture to encompass the learning of more sophisticated political ideas and orientations. Political socialization is a lifelong process and a variety of individuals and institutions contribute to its shaping effect. For example, individuals are politically socialized by such groups as their family, peers, and social class (Marshall, 1998). Furthermore, they are socialized by existing laws, media, religion, education, their own gender, and more. Basically, the process is never ending and the factors which shape it are all encompassing.

Those groups and institutions which contribute to the process of political socialization are known as the agents of socialization. These sources affect the development of political values and attitudes differently, but they all contribute to the individual's understanding of and orientations toward politics. The primary agents of socialization are those that directly develop specific political orientations such as the family. Whereas, the secondary agents of socialization tend to be less personal and involved in the process of socialization in a more indirect manner such as the media.

Basic political attitudes and values tend to be formed early in childhood and tend to be relatively consistent throughout life. Thus, the family is a very important agent of political socialization. However, the degree to which these basic political orientations are retained by the individual varies as a result of the discontinuities one experiences in their political socialization. Hence, this is where the other agents of political socialization become fundamental factors in one's political development.

In his article entitled; Building a Harmonious Socialist Society, Hu (2005) opines that political socialization is the product of interlocking sets of macro and micro level phenomena. The fundamental question underpinning macro level political socialization research is: how do polities transmit values, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and behaviors to the mass public? Micro level studies ask: how and why do people become citizens?

At the macro or political system level, political socialization is the means by which polities and other political societies inculcate appropriate norms and practices in citizens, residents, and members (Wattenberg, 2007). Polities convey established patterns of thought and action, laws and norms, and traditions and folkways through agencies, such as the family, educational system, peer groups, mass media, political institutions, community organizations, religious organizations, and the military (Marshall, 1998). To Mutiullah (2015), the kinds of questions that are addressed at the macro level focus on "where and how people develop the kinds of political orientations and practices that transform the design of democratic constitutions and institutions into the creation of real, functioning democratic polities".

At the micro or individual level, political socialization constitutes "the patterns and processes by which individuals engage in political development and learning, constructing their particular relationships to the political contexts in which they live" (Oddih, 2007). This is because political socialization as it were is the conduit-pipe through which the political cultural values and behavioral patterns of the society are imbibed and internalized. Children grow up to be responsible citizens through the interplay of various influences and institutions which are characterized as agents of political socialization – including family, religion, school, peer groups, and the mass media – that help shape their sense of civic duty and political self confidence as these would enlighten them about the significance of social harmony from childhood.

Social Harmony

Harmonious Society is a socio-economic vision in China. The concept of social harmony dates back to ancient China, to the time of Confucius. As a result, the philosophy has also been characterized as a form of New Confucianism. In modern times, it developed into a key feature of Hu Jintao's signature ideology of the Scientific Development Concept developed in the mid-2000s, being re-introduced by the Hu–Wen Administration during the 2005 National People's Congress. The philosophy is recognized as a response to the increasing social injustice and inequality emerging in mainland Chinese society as a result of unchecked economic growth, which has led to social conflict. The governing philosophy was therefore shifted around economic growth to overall societal balance and harmony. Along with a moderately prosperous society, it was set to be one of the national goals for the ruling communist party.

According to Hu Jintao (2005), a harmonious society is a society that is democratic and ruled by law, fair and just, trustworthy and fraternal, full of vitality, stable and orderly, and maintains harmony between man and nature. Building a harmonious society clearly indicates the shift away from the trinity of economic, political and cultural construction to a four-dimensional entity of economic, political, cultural and social-construction.

This conceptual adjustment marks the end of the previous model which concentrated on economic development, and the beginning of a new model that has various dimensions for sustainable development as its goal. An economics-centered model no longer suited the multiple needs of Chinese society and its development. It has been pointed out that China's experiments enroute from tradition to modernity, while they have had an economic basis as these have also been culturally normative attempts to reconstruct the country fundamentally as a "Learning Society" in the interests of the immense majority" (Morgan, 2000). The harmonious society in China therefore intends to direct Chinese reform towards a deeper level of socio-economic development and all members of society are given equal and fair opportunities to participate in all kinds of national construction, which includes social development where responsibilities, trust and cohesion are particularly emphasized. It enables individuals to give the best they can, take according to their needs, and live harmoniously within society (CCCPC, 2006). It is also a critical reflection on Chinese tradition, as stated above, which values harmony and characterizes human social values and moral responsibilities for healthy and positive relationships of human beings with nature, society and self. Besides, as a practical benefit, a harmonious society is a firm basis for a stable administration.

However, the current trend of events in Nigeria shows paucity of nation building ideology and the presence of a perverted political culture that is injurious to any polity. For Nigeria to achieve social harmony there is a necessity of an ideal form of political culture through adequate and effective political socialization into which the future generation must be initiated into. When a multiethnic country like Nigeria fails to politically socialize large numbers of citizens as members of a single community, the consequences are far-reaching. If there are multiple political cultures being perpetuated, members of the various sub-national communities will not be successfully integrated into the political system, and they will not share the norms, rules, and laws of the society.

Social Capital Theory

The concept of social capital theory became fashionable only relatively recently, but the term has been in use for almost a century while the ideas behind it go back further still. "Social capital" may first have appeared in a book published in 1916 in the United States that discussed how neighbors could work together to oversee schools. Author Lyda Hanifan referred to social capital as "those tangible assets [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit". That gives some sense of what's meant by social capital, although today it would be hard to come up with a single definition that satisfied everyone. For the sake of simplicity, however, we can think of social capital as the links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together.

There are many theorists of social capital, notably Pierre Bourdieu (1997), James Coleman (1997), and Robert Putnam. The last of these offers a succinct definition of social capital as: "The features of social life— networks, norms and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1996). The key feature of social capital according to this definition is that it facilitates coordination and cooperation for the common benefit of the members of the association (Grootaert, 1998). The collective character of Putnam's version of the concept is also evident as follows: working together is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital (Putnam, 1993). Hence: "As a property of communities and nations rather than individuals, social capital leads to positive outcomes, such as economic development and less crime. Cities that are well governed and moving ahead economically do so because they have high social capital. In other words, if your town is civic, it does civic things; if it is uncivic, it does not" (Portes, 1998).

The concept of a harmonious society leads us to consider that of social capital. There are many definitions offered for this concept which leads to lack of clarity about what constitutes "social capital". However, broadly speaking, social capital is defined by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2000) as "networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups". In this definition, we can think of networks as real-world links between groups or individuals. Think of networks of friends, family networks, networks of former colleagues, and so on. Our shared norms, values and understandings are less concrete than our social networks. Political Sociologists sometimes speak of norms as society's unspoken and largely unquestioned rules. Norms and understandings may not become apparent until they are broken. If adults attack a child, for example, they breach the norms that protect children from harm. Values may be more open to question; indeed societies often debate whether their values are changing. And yet values – such as respect for people's safety and security – are an essential linchpin in every social group. Put together, these networks and understandings engender trust and so enable people to work together. The varieties of social capital theory include these three main categories:

Bonds: Links to people based on a sense of common identity ("people like us") – such as family, close friends and people who share our culture or ethnicity.

Bridges: Links that stretch beyond a shared sense of identity, for example to distant friends, colleagues and associates.

Linkages: Links to people or groups further up or lower down the social ladder.

The potential benefits of social capital theory can be seen by looking at social bonds. Friends and families can help us in lots of ways –emotionally, socially and economically. In China, for example, an empirical research has shown that more people secure jobs through personal contacts than through advertisements. Such support can be even more important in countries like Nigeria where the rule of law is weak or where the state offers few social services: clans can fund the education of relatives and find them work, and look after orphans and the elderly.

Social capital theory has its critics. One argument that is made is that Putnam got it wrong when he said social engagement is eroding. Instead, it may just be evolving. Rather than joining groups in our neighborhoods, like bowling leagues, we are now joining groups made up of people who share our beliefs – fighting for environmental protection or child rights, for instance – rather than our locality. These groups – such as a branch of Greenpeace or Amnesty International – can exist in the "real" world. But they may also exist only virtually on the Internet, which is arguably creating whole new "communities" of people who may never physically meet but who share common values and interests. Not everyone, however, is convinced that these new forms of community have the same value as more traditional forms.

III.   The Inherited Political Culture And Social Harmony In China

A useful way of analyzing the inherited political culture and social harmony in China is by looking at post-1949 socialization processes that draw a broad contrast between the values promulgated by the regime and China's traditional political culture. Neither of these categories is precise or even demonstrably real. Traditional political culture is a loose category that conceals major differences and discontinuities in patterns of political attitudes existing in China before 1949, Revolutionary values are essentially ideal prescriptions that have guided CCP socialization efforts for most of China history; they have not been unchallenged even as an ideal. Moreover, the content and urgency of revolutionary values have varied greatly, from dogmatic exaggeration during the Cultural Revolution to significant modification during the post-Mao period.

As stated above, China built its harmonious society to direct Chinese reform towards a deeper level of socio-economic development. Founded upon the belief that human beings are the essence of society, serving the people is one of the most important aims of the CCP. A harmonious society requires and allows multiple needs to be met. Nevertheless, it is possible to isolate some common values to which the CCP has always been committed. Based on their practical experiences in China, the authors of this paper identify key themes that have exerted great influence on political socialization that establish a framework for harmonious society in china. These are as follows;

Collectivism: Communism calls for a redefinition of the social units to which primary loyalties are due and from which authority flows. In traditional China, the dominant social institution was typically a kinship unit: individuals geared their actions to its maintenance and prosperity and accepted the authority of its leaders over a wide range of their social behavior. In the Communist ethic, collectivism replaces particularism as the determinant of both loyalty and authority. Political authority, at whatever level, is superior to the claims of constituent elements within the community: loyalties belong to the collective regardless of personal associations and ties. As Maoist slogans like "serve the people" and "fight self" suggested, this principle requires dedication to the public cause and conscious suppression of inclinations to place selfish concerns above those of the collective.

Struggle and Activism: The traditional orientation emphasized the maintenance of harmony in social relations. People were to be orderly and peaceful, avoiding or suppressing displays of antagonism. It is pertinent to note that struggle is a key revolutionary value. Society is permeated with class struggle both as a consequence of exploitation and a condition of social progress. Citizens are expected to participate actively and voluntarily in this struggle, sharpening its features and challenging openly those whose positions or actions stand in the way of the socialist path. Commitment to political activism and struggle must replace old inclinations toward passivity and harmony. Since the Chinese Cultural Revolution, official emphasis has shifted away from antagonistic struggle and toward activism for modernization. The slogan "dare to rebel" has been replaced by "stability and unity."

Self-Reliance: The principle of self-reliance has been strengthened in the 1980s. There have been numerous campaigns against the "iron rice bowl" of total job security and individuals who have succeeded through their own efforts arc encouraged and their successes are publicized. On the other hand, the principle of self-reliance is

no longer interpreted as self-sufficiency. During the Cultural Revolution, units and regions were encouraged to supply all of their own needs, and the leadership was very cautious about dependence on foreign trade. China did not have a significant foreign debt. Currently, an emphasis on commodity production and cooperation has replaced self-sufficiency. Agricultural and industrial units are encouraged to produce for maximum profit (within plan guidelines), rather than to cover all of their own needs. China now expects international trade and credit to play a key role in modernization. In this area, self-reliance remains a caution against excessive dependence on the import of technology.

Egalitarianism and Populism: Hierarchical relationships were viewed as natural and necessary in the ordering of traditional Chinese society. The principles governing social hierarchy were complex, involving mixed considerations of age, generation, kinship, sex, wealth, scholarly attainment, and official status. Nonetheless, individuals knew who their superiors and subordinates were in various settings, so that a demarcation of authority and status was clear in most social relationships. Persons in higher roles in the hierarchy expected deference front those in lower ones and were characterized not simply by authority but by privilege and symbolic superiority relative to those beneath them. The Chinese Communist view of social stratification is much more egalitarian, especially in the Maoist version of revolutionary values. Although recognizing the existence of classes, the inevitability of some division of labor in society, and above all the necessity of maintaining political authority, this view is hostile toward the elaboration and reinforcement of hierarchy. It seeks to minimize material and psychological inequalities generally and to eradicate what it regains as irrational subordination, such as that of younger generations and women. In the inescapable political and administrative hierarchy, it is hostile toward privileges, symbols, and economic differences that set elites apart as a special group and give them an aura of superiority extending beyond their specific political roles. Despite current policies, permitting the accumulation of wealth and larger wage differentials, egalitarianism remains a value in Chinese politics.

IV.   Lessons For The Current Political Leadership Of President Buhari Administration

China's transformation from a poor developing nation into a harmonious society of economic giant today, offers great lessons for Nigeria. China is still a developing country and what it has managed to achieve in terms of solidifying its political culture to attain social harmony is very impressive and this can provide lessons for African nations, particularly Nigeria. China's transformation is inspiring and teaches that a nation that truly believes in itself and has the right mindset can overcome any challenge and achieve greatness. China has taught us that a nation can go through such a dehumanizing experience as it had happened in Nigerian society and still regain what was lost and rise again.

President Muhammad Buhari emerged victorious in the March 28, 2015 presidential election having defeated incumbent Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party. Nearly 30 years after he was ousted from power, and after three failed attempts to return, President Buhari, one of Nigeria's oldest former Army Generals and Heads of State, who embraced democracy and politics at the break of the 21st century, was sworn into office as the nation's 15th political leader. President Buhari has been described by many people as the "masses friend and the elites nemesis". He is feared by the elite over his likely crackdown on corruption, indiscipline and waste in government. President Buhari arguably has the largest street support among Nigerian masses irrespective of their ethnic and religious affiliation. He is also perceived as a strong character that is capable of solidifying Nigerian society and restores peace and social harmony.

It is pertinent to note that most Nigerians show greater sentiments, allegiance and loyalty to their ethnic groups, families, kinsmen or religious affiliations, rather than the country. This situation has given rise to negative social values and counter political behavior, which are inimical to socio-economic and political development of the nation. The moral debasement in our society cannot be overemphasized because moral virtues had been thrown into the wind due to the various negative acts and deeds of majority of the population within the society.

Infact, the major problem confronting Nigeria today is the general level of indiscipline and immorality. Gone are the days when morality and discipline used to be virtues. Today it is the exact opposite. We now live in a decadent society where morality and discipline are overboard. It is unfortunate that our society that was once upright with moral values can today be this morally ill. The problem is not only restricted to deviants in our society. Even the religious circle, schools, mass media, peers group and virtually all the existing agents of socialization in the country are not spared.

It is high time we restructure our society as it was done in China to renew our political culture to direct our "Change Reform" towards a deeper level of socio-economic development without suppression and marginalization, and we must emulate China by given every member of the society equal and fair opportunities to participate in all kinds of national construction. The Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of President Buhari needs to lead the nation in entrenching collectivism, self-reliance and egalitarianism through its

Change Reform. It is only through this process we can facilitate and maintain social harmony, cohesiveness of society and further reinforcing political socialization in Nigeria. Specifically, the government needs to vigorously implant new socialization process through National Orientation Agency. Such efforts should be directed to the agents of socialization including the family, the educational system, the communications network, and political and social experience.

Unlike Nigeria, the Chinese family has been and continues to be a stronger social unit than even the Western family. Bonds and obligations among family members are stronger and more explicit, divorce is rare, and the family is the basic unit, of the rural economy. The family exerts the first and most important influence on the formation of individual values. As Almond (2008), observed, the direct and indirect influence of the family – the first socialization source that an individual encounters are normally powerful and lasting. The family shapes future political attitudes by defining a social position for the child; establishing ethnic, linguistic, class, and religious ties, affirming cultural values; and influencing job aspiration. In order to contribute meaningfully to social harmony and democratic stability, the government should not be indifferent towards the family. In societies where governments support and nurture the family, the level of political consciousness is high. Nigeria is not known to support families and in homes where parents cannot cater for their children, the children are vulnerable to a lot of vices and abuses which are threats to social harmony and stability.

The system of public education that has emerged in China since 1949 is one of the state's most extensive and effective agents for entrenching Chinese political attitudes. The role of schools in transmitting civic education cannot be over-emphasized. This entails the inculcation of fundamental values and beliefs of society to the young. Through public education, states seek to influence young people before their moral character is fully formed. As Magstadt (2009) asserts, "the ideal of liberal education fits easily into the scheme of constitutional democracies that protect the right to question authority. Simultaneously, higher levels of education seem most likely to encourage citizens to participate meaningfully in politics". Education also affects the political skills and resources of the public. Educated people are more aware of the impact of government on their lives and pay more attention to politics. The better educated have mental skills that improve their ability to manage the world of politics. They also have more information about political processes and participate in a wider range of political activities. (Almond et al, 2008). To enhance societal stability in Nigeria, the government must refrain from its present lackluster approach towards the education sector and accord it the prime of place it deserved. Also, the need to abhor all forms of violence must be incorporated into our school curriculum. The political education that the pupils and students would receive will both in the short and long term deepen their political culture and socialization processes. Therefore, Nigerians should know the dynamic nature of our politics, and the emerging trends that shape the political culture and determine the direction of political socialization, and in relation to social harmony, should learn, imbibe and internalize the political sociology of electoral behavior through functional education. This would help the nation to deepen its emerging democratic order.

In China, the mass media also play a significant role in the political socialization and continuing education of citizens. Most of the media houses in Nigeria are publicly owned and are used as the mouth-piece of the government. This negates the principle of accountability in governance and negatively affects democratic stability. In Nigeria, government's desperate effort to brainwash the citizens with propaganda through the media and other agents of political socialization to love and trust their leaders is an exercise in futility because of citizens continuous negative experiences with government and her agents – the police, the teacher, the health official, the council boss etc. Added to these negative feedbacks are images of fractured infrastructures, high crime rate, teeming unemployed youths, excessively corrupt and gluttonous leadership in all tiers and organs of government. In this regard, a state that have agenda of social harmony and yearns for sustainable national development should educate its citizenry about the inherent dangers of allowing an entrenched culture of political violence as part of the features of the political system.

V.   Conclusion And Recommendations

The Chinese realized that they required stability and social harmony to develop and therefore adopted a renewed process of political socialization. Without the political stability that came from having a consistent government, the Chinese would not have been able to develop the way they have, and as quickly as they have. However, when a multiethnic country like Nigeria fails to politically socialize large numbers of citizens as members of a single community, the consequences are far-reaching. If there are multiple political cultures being perpetuated, members of the various sub-national communities will not be successfully integrated into the political system, and they will not share the norms, rules, and laws of the society.

It is important to recall, however, the difficulty of implanting a new socialization process in Nigeria as it was done in China. Although, powerful forces within the country are inevitable, the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari needs to vigorously re-orientate the people on renewed political culture and behavioral patterns. We must now do whatever is necessary to serve, further and protect our national interests. Nigeria

needs a political and economic system that ensures that Nigerian interests, such as food security, good quality healthcare, education for all, and access to opportunity for all, are met, is what the President Buhari must create at this stage. Turning a policy into practice is no small task, especially in a country of Nigeria's geographical and population size. Furthermore, given the unprecedented agitation for change by Nigerians, rigorous implementation of national policies and regulations are critical to meet the aspirations of Nigerian, thus, the President must make frantic efforts aimed at turning policy into practice.

Also very detrimental to social harmony is the political manipulation of exclusionary notions of citizenship, reinforced by competition over scare resources and socio-economic opportunities in crisis situations (Ntalaja, 2004). As a pre-requisite for social stability in Nigeria, the government of President Buhari should support and nurture families; schools should incorporate schemes that encourage students to constructively question authorities and motivate citizens to participate actively in politics. The government, through Independent National Electoral Commission, should make political parties be ideologically based and observe the tenets of intra-party democracy; the mass media should be neutral and be equally accessible to both incumbent and opposition; full citizenship rights should granted to all citizens irrespective of their place of residence; exclusionary notions of citizenship should not be manipulated. Finally, the success of the political socialization process as a whole can only be based on effective citizenship education whereby citizens develop the values, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions that enable them to relate to and function within the political system and thereby establish harmonious society.

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