The scale **Journal Website:** https://thescalejournal.com.ng/
An Interdisciplinary Journal of
The ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF POLYTECHNICS - ZONE D
ISSN: 2992-3727 Published 30th November, 2025

PATRIOTISM AND NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS: PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL PROGRESS

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Abstract
Nigeria's development challenges continue to generate increasing scholarly and policy attention as the nation struggles with issues of political instability, insecurity, corruption, ethnic-religious fragmentation and weak civic culture. These challenges have collectively hindered sustainable national progress. The re – emergence of debates surrounding patriotism and national consciousness therefore invites interrogation into how civic values, collective identity and citizen commitment shape the prospects of building a stable, united and prosperous nation. This paper examines patriotism and national consciousness as vital catalysts for sustainable national progress in Nigeria. Employing the Social Identity Theory and Civic Republicanism as theoretical framework, the paper critically explores how patriotic culture, responsible citizenship, civic education, civic engagement and shared national identity contribute to development. It further assesses how the absence of national consciousness has encouraged corruption, secessionist agitations, weak institutions, elite predation and national disunity. The paper adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach relying on scholarly literature, policy documents and historical analysis. Findings reveal that patriotism and national consciousness are essential drivers of unity, collective responsibility, institutional trust and long-term national commitment. The paper concludes that national progress is achievable when patriotism is institutionalized through education, inclusive governance, civic culture, leadership integrity and equitable national policies:
Keywords: Patriotism, National Consciousness, National Progress, Re-orientation, Responsible Leadership.

INTRODUCTION
Patriotism has remained a disputed but indispensable concept in discourses on national development, democratic consolidation and societal cohesion. At its core, patriotism refers to a citizen's love for, loyalty to and sense of responsibility toward the nation (Dekmejian, 2018). It represents a cultural attachment to one's homeland and devotion to one's country characterized by positive emotional attachment and civic pride (Nwakodo & Onwuemedo, 2011). National consciousness, on the other hand is a shared awareness of belonging to a collective identity and pursuing a common national identity (Ake, 2016). In many advanced democracies, these concepts form the ideological bedrock upon which development is built. However, in Nigeria the meaning and practice of patriotism remain contested.

Post – colonial Nigeria has continuously grappled with ethno – religious polarization, identity-based politics, elite manipulation and declining civic trust (Falola & Heaton, 2018). These challenges have weakened the foundations of national consciousness and rendered patriotism fragile. As a result, the nation struggles to mobilize around a shared developmental vision. The central thesis of this paper is that when properly conceptualized and channelled, patriotism and national consciousness serve as indispensable pathways to sustainable national progress by fostering social cohesion, motivation, civic engagement and creating the psychological foundations for collective action toward development goals. It interrogates patriotism and national consciousness as essential pillars for sustainable national progress, particularly in the Nigerian context where civic, participation and national unity are often undermined by identity politics, corruption and weak governance. This paper employs Social Identity Theory and Civic Republicanism as theoretical frameworks to analyse how group identification process at the national level influence individual and collective behaviours relevant to development. The theories provide crucial insights into why people derive meaning and self-esteem from national

identity, how this affects their orientation toward fellow citizens and under what condition's national identity translate to development – enhancing attitudes and behaviours.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Patriotism

Patriotism is the emotional and ideological attachment of citizens to their nation. It includes the willingness to act in the interest of the country, defend its values, participate in civic duties and contribute to national development (Smith, 2017). It is the highest level of obligations expected of any citizen by the country. No wonder the 1999 constitution (as amended) of Nigeria stated it as one of the national ethics. Patriotism is one of the indispensable traits required of the citizens of any country that aspires for greatness. A patriotic citizen, according to Achebe (1983: 18) cares deeply about the happiness and wellbeing of the country and all its people. A patriot identifies self with the values of the country and promotes its image, locally and globally by his actions and conduct (Aguwa & Ehiodo, 2004). Patriotism has been categorized into: Constructive patriotism, symbolic patriotism and blind patriotism (Schatz & Staub, 1997). Constructive patriotism is that critical loyalty that pushes for reform and accountability. It is the model of patriotism that is necessary for sustainable national progress.

National Consciousness

Nnoli (2015) describes national consciousness as a collective awareness of belonging to a political community with shared values and aspirations. It is the mental orientation through which citizens prioritize national interest over narrow ethnic or religious identities. National Consciousness, typically is formed through the presence of common points in people's daily lives: national symbols, languages, colours, national history, bloodties, culture, music, cuisine radio television, etc. Under various social influences, people, incorporate national identity into their personal identities by adopting beliefs, values, assumptions and expectations which align with this national identity. Simply, put, national consciousness is the shared sense of belonging to a nation, usually characterized by a feeling of loyalty, patriotism and commitment to its common welfare and development. It involves prioritizing the nation's interests over personal, ethnic religious one and includes an awareness of shared identity, culture and history.

Sustainable National Progress

National progress when viewed from the lens of development refers to the sustained and multidimensional advancement of a country, leading to an improved quality of life for its citizens. It is a holistic concept that moves beyond a narrow focus on economic growth to include social, political and human development.

Sustainable national progress can be seen as a holistic and forward-looking model of national development that seeks to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It moves beyond traditional, narrow metrics like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth to include and balance three core of pillars of economic prosperity, social equity and inclusion and environment protection. The core idea is that these three pillars are interconnected and interdependent. Enduring national progress can only be attained when the pillars are in mutual inclusion.

According to the UNDP (2020), sustainable national progress involves long term economic political and social development that benefits present and future generations. It emphasizes political stability, economic growth, institutional efficiency, social cohesion and human development. These are all influenced by patriotism and national consciousness.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, and provides a powerful explanatory framework for understanding the psychological underpinnings of patriotism and national consciousness. The theory posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self – complex from their membership in social groups, including national groups. That is, people define themselves based on group membership. According to the theory, the mere awareness of belonging to a specific group involves positive emotions about the group and lead to a tendency to act on behalf of that group, even when others are sometimes personally unknown. The process of national identification involves both self – categorization (identifying oneself as a member of the nation) and affect (emotional attachment to this membership). This conceptualization helps explain why national identity can evoke such powerful emotions and motivate behaviors ranging from ordinary civic participation to extraordinary sacrifices in times of crisis. The theory suggests that national identity like other social identities, engenders emotions such as pride and love for one's national group and a feeling of obligation toward other members of that group.

From the perspective of the social identity theory, patriotism is a form of social identification at the national level. It is an emotional investment in the national in-group that satisfies the human need for belonging and esteem. It helps explain the visceral power of national symbols (flags, anthems), the joy in national sporting victories, and the anger at perceived national slights. It explains why people are willing to make sacrifices, from paying taxes to military service for their country (Anderson, 1983).

In diverse societies like Nigeria, strong ethnic identification often supercedes national identity, leading to division, mistrust and conflict. For sustainable national progress, Nigeria must activate a super ordinate identity – Nigerian identity that transcends ethnic religious differences.

Civic Republicanism Theory

Civic Republicanism is a tradition of political thought originating in Classical antiquity (Aristotle, Cicero), reviewed in the Renaissance (Machiavelli), and central to the founding of modern republics like the United States of America. It offers a distinct vision of freedom and citizenship.

Civic Republicanism emphasizes civic virtue, public good, active citizenship and collective responsibility (Petit, 1999). It contends that patriotic citizens are essential in building durable democratic institutions and sustaining national progress. For a civic republican (citizen), patriotism is not merely a feeling of affecting. It is the active exercise of civic virtue in service of the republic (country). The patriotic citizen is the one who stays informed, deliberates responsibly, holds leaders accountable and is willing to make sacrifices for the good of the nation. It is a demanding, practice based, love of country, focused on its ideals and institutions rather than its ethnic or cultural purity. From this perspective, patriotism is not blind loyalty or passive love but a commitment to promoting good governance, accountability and the common good.

The dual – theoretical framework provides a very robust explanation for the necessity of both patriotism and national consciousness for sustainable progress of any country. While the social identity theory provides the mechanics of national identity, the civic republicanism provides the essential normative framework for channelling national sentiment toward constructive ends.

PATRIOTISM AS A FOUNDATION FOR NATIONAL PROGRESS

Scholars believe that the foundation of any country's progress is in the degree of its citizens patriotism. Patriotism ensures a state's survival at all cost, time and situations (Aliyu, Ayogu & Wakili, 2019). A state that has a high level of patriotic citizens will constantly maintain dominion in all ramifications

(Taylor 2017). Patriotism is a strong belief in one's country's potential greatness (Brown, 1998). In a country where a greater majority of the population are patriotic, the impacts are seen on the following:

i. **Good Governance:** Patriotic citizens demand transparency, vote responsibly, reject corruption and hold leaders accountable. When citizens value national interest, public officials are compelled to perform better (Osaghae, 2017).
ii. **National Security:** Insecurity thrives where citizens lack loyalty to the state. Patriotism fosters community policing, intelligence sharing and cooperation with security agencies (Adebayo, 2020). According to Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq 2024:14), of Kwara State, Nigeria, "our responsibility includes supporting the security agencies with useful information and acting intelligently to support the security agencies".
iii. **Economic Development:** Patriotic attitudes encourage tax payment, protection of public property, purchase of locally produced goods and reduction in brain drain. A patriotic citizen understands that he or she has a role to play in the development of his country. Countries like Singapore and China use patriotic mobilization to drive industrialization (Opara,2020)
iv. **Nation Building:** The only practical basis for nation building is patriotism. That is, the feeling on the part of the citizens or groups that their future is linked with their country alone; that individual or group success is inextricably linked with the progress of the country; that the interests of the country must be held supreme, and that if sacrifices are required for the safety or advancement of the country, they must be made willingly. Without such feelings of patriotism, as are defined here, no country can be run successfully (CPS, 2011:1). Patriotism promotes unity, shared identity and intergroup trust. These are crucial for nation – building and long-term stability.
v. **National Unity and Social Cohesion**: In a heterogeneous country like Nigeria, patriotism can encourage citizens to transcend ethnic, religious and regional differences for a shared national identity. This unity is vital for building a stable society and undertaking complex, long-term national projects.
vi. **Public Accountability**: Patriotic duty requires leaders to act beyond self – interest and party politics, anchoring their decisions in the service of the state. It provides the moral compass to priorities public and national interest and drive policies that ensure stability and equity for all citizens.

NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AS A DRIVER OF DEVELOPMENT

National consciousness is a collective awareness of shared identity, values and a common destiny that can profoundly influence a country's development. By promoting unity and aligning individual priorities with national interests, it drives progress across economic, political and social spheres. A lack of national consciousness, conversely, can lead to instability, corruption and stalled development (Barrett, 2014). National consciousness drives development by:

i. **Reduction of Internal Conflict:** By forging a national cohesion of the diverse groups under a shared common identity, it helps states overcome internal conflicts and identity-based divisions. This stability is an essential requisite for economic development, as conflict, crisis and political instability affect development adversely. In addition, national consciousness fosters discipline and coherence (Ansoms, 2013).
ii. **Enhancing Institutional Legitimacy:** When citizens identity with the state, institutions gain legitimacy, thereby enhancing policy adoption and compliance (Migdal, 2019). This will further strengthen governance, which leads to more efficient delivery of economic goods and services to the citizens.
iii. **Mobilizing Resources:** In times of national crisis or emergencies, a strong sense of national consciousness can mobilize human, financial and material resources needed to address the challenge. It fosters a collective 'we" feeling that drives citizens to make personal sacrifices for the common good.

iv. **Promoting Democratic Culture:** National consciousness encourages participation, civic responsibility and respect for democratic norms (Diamond, 2019). A strong national consciousness fosters a sense of responsibility and attachment to one's country. This can be expressed through patriotism, a willingness to participate in community development, and a commitment to civic values like honesty, discipline and cooperation.

v. **Facilitating the Provision of Public Goods:** A unified and patriotic citizenry is more likely to accept mass taxation and government authority. This makes it easier for the state to raise needed funds for the provision of basic public goods like infrastructure, education and education which are cornerstones of modern economic development.

vi. **Supporting Economic Nationalism:** For ages, national consciousness underpinned economic policies aimed at fostering domestic industries and economic self – reliance. This can be deliberate strategy to achieve modernization in developing countries and protect a nation's economy during crises.

IMPEDIMENTS TO PATRIOTISM AND NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN NIGERIA

The issues undermining patriotism and national consciousness in Nigeria include persistent ethnic and religious sentiments, corrupt and selfish leadership and the absence of shared national identity. These factors foster a sense of division and underline loyalty to the country, often leading to a focus on individual or group interests over the common national good (Oladiti & Ajiboye, 2020). Some of the key impediments include:

i. **Ethno – Religious Fragmentation:** Identity politics in Nigeria entrenches division and hampers national solidarity (Suberu, 2015). Strong ethnic, religious and tribal sentiments often take precedence over national identity, leading to inter – ethnic rivalry and suspicion

ii. **Absence of Shared Identity:** The absence of a strong, unifying national language or identity is a major impediment to fostering a collective national sense of belonging.

iii. **Poverty and Inequality:** Socio – economic hardship diverts attention from national issues towards survival instincts and in turn undermines civic engagement. Issues like insecurity and inequality can make citizens feel disconnected from the country and less inclined to be patriotic.

iv. **Poor Leadership and Bad Governance**: Selfishness among leaders undermines national unity and creates a lack of trust. A lack of accountability and inability to meet the needs of the citizens alienates them from the state. The absence of examplary leadership erodes patriotic morale.

v. **Corruption:** Systemic corruption destroys trust and weakens willingness to defend or invest in the country (Transparency International, 2022). Corruption among leaders underline national unity and creates a lack of trust.

vi. **Weak Civic Education:** When civic education is poorly institutionalized, citizens' level of political and civic awareness becomes low and this affects the level of Civic commitment (Idibia, 2017). Again, such a situation will result to a general sense of apathy or disillusionment with the country.

vii. **Lack of Patriotism:** Unpatriotic attitudes among both the leaders and the citizens, driven by greed hampers the prioritization of the common good.

viii. **Political Instability:** Events like military coups and unresolved leadership conflicts have deeply threatened national unity. The nature of politicking, electoral contests and lopsided national appointments have drastically eroded some citizens interest in the country.

REBUILDING PATRIOTISM AND NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN NIGERIA

To rebuild patriotism and national consciousness in Nigeria, a concerted effort is needed to address systemic corruption, improve governance, foster national unity beyond ethnic, tribal & religious and religious lines, refine our politics, and re-engage the youth. The continuous decline in patriotism and

national consciousness among Nigerians is a serious concern and urgent steps are to be taken to reverse this negative trend (Ochube, 2025).

Scholars like Onwuegbuchulam & Mtshali (2017), recommend the following steps:

i. **Strengthening Civic Education:** Reintroducing civic education in schools, media and public institutions can promote national values, rights and responsibilities. The recent reintroduction of Nigerian History Curriculum for primary and junior secondary schools is in order. This will help the upcoming generations to reconnect with their roots, inspire in them national pride and provide a shared understanding of the country's history. Also, it is imperative to incorporate Guidance and Counselling in our school system. This will help to promote patriotism and national integration among students.

ii. **Reorientation Campaigns:** Deliberate and well – thought out national orientation campaigns can reshape attitudes toward corruption, violence and public property. Government agencies like the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should step up its awareness campaigns. Programmes such as the Nigerianisation Movement and the planned launch of a National Values Charter should be beyond political purposes. They should be tailored to inspire patriotism, rebuild the country's moral and social fabric, and foster national unity.

iii. **Promoting Good Governance and Responsible Leadership:** A key factor in fostering patriotism is a responsive government that lives up to its responsibilities and performs effectively. Patriotism grows where leaders act with integrity. Accountability systems must be strengthened on public organizations. When leaders in public offices are responsible, they meet the needs of the citizens. A happy and prosperous citizenry is more invested in the country. Economic opportunities help transform grievances into patriotism.

iv. **Strengthening National Symbols and Identity:** National holidays, museums, cultural festivals and civic rituals can foster emotional connection to the state. Organizing national cultural festivals and encouraging Nigerians to learn about other cultures can promote tolerance and understanding. Respecting national symbols like the flag, reciting the national anthem and pledge, and participating in national events are emphasized ways to build emotional attachment to the country.

v. **Implementing National Integration Policies:** Implementing policies that promote intergroup relations – such as federal character, inclusive governance and decentralization is essential. To foster harmonious relationships, it is recommended that the government eliminate all shades of injustice to citizens and groups in the country. Political positions and jobs should be equitably distributed. Fair treatment will give everyone a sense of inclusiveness and justice. Admissions into unity schools and postings of corpers for national service should be carried out bearing in mind the primary objectives for their establishment.

IMPLICATIONS OF PATRIOTISM AND NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL PROGRESS

Patriotism and national consciousness have significant and complex impact on sustainable national progress. A healthy level of both can foster a country's progress by unifying diverse citizens toward common goals of the country. These are the key implications for sustainable national progress:

i. **National Unity and Stability**: Patriotism reduces tension and enhances collective national resilience. A shared national identity helps to bridge ethnic, religious and cultural divide by fostering mutual understanding and a sense of a common brotherhood. This reduces internal conflicts and creates a stable social and political environment necessary for development. Where national consciousness is high, conflicts are replaced with dialogue, cooperation and shared aspirations.

ii. **Socio – Economic Development:** Patriotism and national consciousness support economic policies, boost productivity, strengthen local industries and reduce dependency on foreign products.

iii. **Civic Engagement:** Patriotic and nationally conscious citizens are more likely to participate actively in democratic processes such as voting, community service and advocacy. This leads to more effective governance and a stronger participatory democracy. Patriotic citizens resist electoral malpractice, corruption and authoritarian rule.

iv. **National Security**: A united, patriotic and nationally conscious citizenry will more readily cooperate with law enforcement and support effort to combat insurgency and crime. This creates a safer environment conducive to development and investment as well as community life.

v. **Collective Responsibility**: Good patriotism is positively associated with pro – environmental behavours, as national loyalty can compel citizens to preserve and protect their country's natural resources and environment. A patriotic and nationally conscious citizens is a responsible citizen who understands that he has a role to protect public utilities and the environment.

CONCLUSION

Patriotism and national consciousness are foundational pillars for sustainable national progress in Nigeria. The absence of a shared national identity and the prevalence of ethno- religious divisions have undermined the nation's unity, institutional growth and development.

Strengthening patriotic values, fostering national consciousness and promoting civic responsibility constitute strategy pathways toward building a democratic, stable and prosperous Nigeria. Sustainable development or national progress is not simply a function of economic resources or political structures but of the collective will of citizen's commitment to national advancement. Nigeria must therefore re-awaken the spirit of patriotism and national consciousness to realize her developmental aspirations.

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