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The very idea of social science modelled on the natural sciences involves insurmountable conceptual confusions and logical fallacies. - Winch, 1958: 95.

Abstract

The disciplinary matrix of politics has been at the epicentre of the theoretical and epistemic ferment which has characterized the social sciences in the past forty years. This epistemic ferment found cogent expression in the Nigerian social sciences in the 1980s and 1990s, as could be seen in the works of a number of scholars. By and large, however, the ‘search for a paradigm’ - an inclusive attempt to comprehend the theory and practice of states’ behaviour - which has characterized endeavours in the political science discipline, in the West and East is still an exception rather than the rule in the literature concerning Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The ‘golden age’ of contemporary political analysis - involving the best and brightest in both East and West - is still a distant future horizon for Nigeria. This paper argues that the reason for this epistemic ‘underdevelopment’ of political science in Nigeria has multiple causes and is organically linked to generational thought forces which devalue theory and method-in political science, castigate Marxist epistemology and seek through intimidation to make ‘disciples’ rather than ‘scholars’ out of the young ‘initiates’ into the discipline.

Introduction

The disciplinary matrix of politics has been at the epicenter of the theoretical and epistemic ferment which has characterized the social sciences in the past forty years. At the root of this controversy is the unsettled question whether the social sciences are “really scientific, or whether there is some feature of social life that prohibit the application of scientific techniques to the study of social phenomena” (Chilote, 1972:3). Critical and sweeping assaults were launching at the very foundation of the social sciences; that what was often paraded as scientific knowledge in the discipline was in fact a “disguised or of ideology that lent support to the status quo”; that the most conspicuous feature of the
discipline was “not their ability to illuminate existing social and political reality, but their inability to provide any critical perspective” on social reality, and that the “thinking exhibited in these disciplines gave a false legitimacy to the social technical control and manipulation that was infecting all aspects of human life” (Bernstein, 1979; Ake, 1979).

The traumatic legacy of the virulent polemics engendered by this debate in the nineteen sixties and seventies has been summarized by Bernstein (1979-XII):

The initial impression one has in reading through the literature in and about the social disciplines during the past, decade or so is that of sheer chaos. Everything appears to be ‘up for grabs’ there is little or no consensus - except by members of the same school or sub school -about what are the well-established results, the proper research procedures, the important problems or even the most promising theoretical approaches to the study of society and politics. There are claims and counter - claims, a virtual bubble of voices demanding our attention.

In the political science discipline, this debate has gravitated around the possibility of evolving a genuine ‘science of polities’. That is, a systematic application to political science of procedures evolved from the natural science, with the express aim of developing explanatory systems that transcend spatio-temporal parameters. As will be amplified upon, this aspiration has been beset from the outset (with the crystallization of the behavioural persuasion in the early 1950s) by fundamental divergences as represented by the nomothetic and ideographic schools of thought.

The former proffered the conviction that with application of scientific methodology to the investigation of social phenomena, political science has finally been placed on a firm empirical foundation and could be properly understood as “genuine natural science of individuals in society, differing in degree and not in kind from the well-established natural sciences” (Boger et al, 1970:81).

The latter, however, has argued that at the “core of all social sciences is the acceptance of a rigid dichotomy between fact and value, and since this rigid distinction is not tenable, the whole of social science collapses” (Bendix, 1963:53). In other words, according to this school, a perspective which advances a naturalistic interpretation of the social sciences is basically emasculated as it begs a number of fundamental questions bearing on the “nature of human beings, what constitutes knowledge of society and politics, how this knowledge can affect the ways in which we shape our lives, and what is and ought to be relation of theory to practice” (Bernstein, 1979:XV)
This epistemic ferment found cogent expression in the Nigerian social sciences in the 1980s and 1990s, as could be seen in the works of B J. Dudley, Claude Ake, Okadibo Nnoli, Bade Onimode, Peter Ekeh, Ikenna Nzimiro, Olajide Aluko, among others. By and large, however, the search for a ‘paradigm’ - an inclusive attempt to comprehend the theory and practice of states’ behaviour which has characterized endeavours in the political science discipline in the West and East is still an exception rather than the rule in the literature concerning Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. With a few exception, both in theory and method, political analysis in Nigeria remains a nascent field dominated by descriptive, though informative, analysis of domestic and international issues. A systematic inquiry exhibiting the conceptual, theoretical and methodological sophistication and convention readily seen in the works of Thomas Schelling, James Rosenau, Karl Dautsch, Amitai Etzioni, Paul Somker, Yu. Mikhaylov, M. Lomov and DV. D. Sokolovsky, among others, is yet to have a major impact on political discourse in Nigeria. The ‘golden age’ of contemporary political analysis which involves the ‘best and the brightest’ in both West and East is still a distant future horizon from Nigeria.

This paper argues that the reasons for this epistemic ‘underdevelopment’ of political science in Nigeria are basically three. First is the school of thought, which questions the epistemic relevance of the quest for theory in the social sciences in general and political science in particular. Second is the intellectual resistance (more of a habit rooted in academic socialization/acculturation than a conscious intellectual choice) in the Nigerian social science community to Marxist epistemology by certain generation of scholars and in the process undervaluing the critical theoretical directions which emerged from this radical paradigm associated with the historicist tradition. Third, and related to the second, is the widespread intimidating posture adopted by Nigerian academics toward the critical evaluation of their work by young ‘upstart’. This synthesis and evaluation of the current state-of-the-art in political science in Nigeria will proceed within the epistemic and ontological context of the debate over the naturalistic interpretation of the social sciences.

**Epistemic Context**

The quest for a science of politics, as noted above, constitutes the ‘core-complex’ of the behavioural movement, which dominated inquiry in the political science discipline in the 1950s and 1960s. The primary objective and orientation, according to one of its major exponents, have been toward “the construction of logically consistent models from which ‘truth’ is deductively derived (Eulau, 1963:17). As a consequence, the major tenets of the ‘behavioural credo’ express manifest concern for properties relating to
scientific investigation in terms of the ‘rules of interpretation’ and the ‘criteria of admissible explanation’. These, as Ronald Chilcote, among others, has noted include the quest for:

- uniformities in political behaviour, which can be expressed in generalizations or theory;
- verification or the testing of the validity of such generalizations or theory;
- techniques for seeking and interpreting data;
- quantification and measurement in the recording of data;
- values as distinguished between propositions relating to ethical evaluation and those relating to empirical explanation; with the construction of a theory or model, proceed through the ‘derivation of propositions and the design of research to test them, and concludes with the rejection or acceptance of the derived propositions” (Hempel, 1965:84).

The research-then-theory strategy begins with the selection of phenomenon, “proceeds with measurement and analysis, and culminates in the construction of theory based on the systematic patterns discovered in the process”. Despite the profundity and intractability of this controversy in the philosophy of social science, it is now widely accepted that these strategies are “ideal types that actually have little bearing on progress in the social sciences” (Bailey, 1977). In other words, theory and research constantly interact, and the constrast between them is more apparent than real. As Asher (1983:7) rightly notes, “[w]e may observe a certain relationship, propose a certain explanation for it, reason that if that explanation is valid some other relationship would be observed, and test whether the latter relationship is indeed observed”. Asher’s observation touches upon a crucial and related subject of dispute in political science that have raged between the ideographic and nomothetic schools of thought as embodied in the behavioural and post-behavioural literature. This concerns the nature and structure of admissible explanation in social research: deductive nomological (D-N model), inductive statistical (I-S model) or retroduction. The debate, of course, centers around the possibility of generating scientific theories in the social sciences, that is, one that transcends spatio-temporal parameters (Przeworski and Tenue, 1976). The ideographic scholars have understandably cited plethora of reasons why this ambition of the behavioural scholars is based upon “fallacious inference from spurious premises: incomplete factorial system; measurement error, complexity of social phenomena and cultural determinacy” (Nagel, 1961).

On this view, it has been passionately argued by the ‘ideographic’/post-behavioural scholars that the quest for a “naturalistic interpretation of social science rests upon a native epistemology” (Bernstein, 1981:27).

Social scientists... assume that there is a realm of objective facts. The facts which are taken to be the foundation
and touchstone for all higher theories. A more sophisticated understanding of epistemology, they contend has conclusively shown the inadequacy of such a naive view. We have learned that what we call facts or observation are themselves ‘theory-laden’ and shaped by our conceptual schemes. There are no uninterpreted or brute facts that are simply out there, unaffected by our theoretical and conceptual schemes.

Bernstein’s synopsis of the ‘epistemic crisis’ resulting from the revolt against the core assumptions and intellectual aspirations of behaviouralism underscores the daunting problem of ‘paradox of categorization’ in social research. Given both the conditionality of observation and the postulational nature of data involved, statements of a general nature are adjudged meaningless “because they involve concepts that are excessively general and violate the specific features of each social system” (Scarrow, 1969:11). Thus, Adam Przeworski and Henry Tenue have argued that “[t]he main argument against the possibilities of nomothetic statements concerning social reality stems from the observation that such statements are never universally true; even if they appear to be true, they are meaningless insofar as they are based on general concepts that “do violence” to the specific feature of each social system.

This debate about the very ideal of ‘science of polities’ modelled on the natural science thus involves, as Peter Winch (1958:123) has noted, “insurmountable conceptual confusion and logical fallacies”. At the root of this epistemic problem is the limit of general theoretical statements in political discourse as well as the nature of “standardized observations of social phenomena across cultures”. As one analyst has aptly noted, “a statement generalizing that political systems in which all parties that are ethnically based are unstable is judged to be improper because parties do not behave in a universal fashion”. Statements of general nature are thus “meaningless because they involve concepts that are excessively general and violate the specific features of each social system” (Verba, 1967:412).

Undaunted by the ‘ideographic revolt’ which sustains the historicist tradition in social inquiry, the behavioural scholars (nomothetic school) have generally contended that the ‘science of polities’ in the form of law-like statements (explanatory systems) are possible “if and only if spatio-temporal parameters are treated as residua of variables potentially contributing to the explanation”. In other words, that the relativistic assumptions that underlie the model of inquiry in social sciences (that the determination of social phenomena is context-specific to a given social systep or groups of social systems “so that the generality of statements concerning social reality is inherently limited”) provide only a necessary but not a sufficient reason why a science of politics modelled on the nature or experimental sciences is not tenable. Consequently,
the behavioural scholars have asserted, regardless of the extent or range of social diversity that naturalistic interpretation of political phenomena (in terms of general theories) is possible if and only if these phenomena are treated as components of social systems or ‘what appears to be a pervasive property of social reality.’ Przeworski and Tenue (1970:12) explain why:

Social phenomena are not only diverse but always occur in mutually interdependent and interacting structures, possessing a spatio-temporal location. If stable, these patterns of interaction can be treated as systems. Social systems are composed of interacting elements, such as individuals, groups, communities, institutions or government. What is important for comparative inquiry is that systems with which we ordinarily deal, such as societies, nations, and cultures, are organized in terms of several levels of components and that interactions within these systems are not limited to any particular level but cut across these levels. Thus, the behaviour of any element, such as an individual, depends not only upon his interaction with other individuals but also upon his interaction with institutions such as the church or the state.

The implications of the above postulate for cross-cultural observations are that,
given a degree of congruent of factorial systems, the determination of political phenomena could sufficiently be general “to warrant an a priori abstraction from spatio-temporal parameters”. The central problem of comparative investigation in political science, as one scholar has aptly noted, revolves, therefore, around the primary task of incorporating into measurement statements the context within which observations are made (Verba, 1967:117). However, since the structure of scientific revolution also exhibits the problematic tendencies of more than one theory explaining the same class of events, additional goals are often postulated that “provide criteria for the evolution of theories: accuracy, generality, parsimony and causality” (Przeworski and Tenue 1970:20; Boarger et al, 1970: 17). Thus, from the standpoint of the behavioural school, the science of politics is both feasible and desirable as a goal of scholarship in the social sciences. The principal task of research is to invent the logical and methodological strategies for solving the major problems in comparative inquiry as a basis for the development of scientific theories.

Nevertheless, despite the vigorous efforts of the advocate of ‘science of polities’ in the 1950s and 1960s the result has been far less than satisfactory, and the ‘rationalization for this disparity, between expectation and fulfilment, which play on metaphors of the ‘youth’, ‘immaturity’, ‘paradigmatic’ stages of
scientific inquiry have become thin and unconvincing”. (Euben, 1970:57). Thus, in an
indicting critique of behaviouralism, Michael Kirn (1977), among others, has noted that:

| It has been projected that the social science as they mature, will discover well-tested bodies of empirical theory which will eventually coalesce in ever more adequate and comprehensive theories. Yet if we judge the results to date of the endeavour to discover such theories, there is no hard evidence that this expectation is being fulfilled. There is lots of talk about such theories, elaborate classificatory schemes, but scarcely anything that resembles nontrivial theories of even the ‘Middle range’.

Kirn’s observation reflects the widespread and sometimes fierce attacks on the postulates of the model of inquiry derived from the natural sciences which gathered momentum in the late 1960s and 1970s (Easton, 1969: Hirschman, 1970: Heyl, 1975). This ‘post-behavioural revolt’, as it is widely known in the literature, has had the singular effect of a serious re- assessment of the original commitment to the “positivistic conception of scientific method prevalent during the behavioural period of the 1950s and 1960s” (Easton, 1985:43). The consequence of this assault on the naturalistic interpretation has been the emergence of “far more diverse approaches to political inquiry available today than during the behavioural period” (Bernstein, 1979:232).

However, despite the lapses and obvious dichotomy between expectation and fulfilment in the quest for a ‘science of polities’, the behavioural persuasion made significant departure from the commonsense, proverbial style of traditional political science, with its dependence on historical description and impressionistic analysis” (Toulmin, 1972: 77). In this regard, Easton (1985:1412), like Robert Dahl (1961) before him, has provided an incisive summary of the transformation in the disciplinary matrix of political science engendered by the behavioural movement.

| It has the effect of enabling political science to address... many technical aspects that have become central to its development -such as the place of theory in social research, the need for the rigorous method of research, the establishment of standards of professionalism among political scientists and social scientists in general... In short, we can now recognize the behavioural phase as one in which the social sciences, for whatever historical reasons and fortuitous circumstances, were busy strengthening the scientific bases of their research. |
However, recent the debate between the ‘idiographic’ and ‘nomothetic’ schools of thought on the crucial issue of the development of a ‘science of polities’ might seem in the extant literature, it is, nevertheless, rooted in fundamental expistemological divergences between two historical systems of thought which presently govern research practice in political science. This raises the issue of the theoretical and conceptual roots of the dominant paradigms (orthodox and radical) in terms of their respective origins in liberal and Marxist thoughts of the 18th and 19th centuries respectively, as mediated through positivist and historicist traditions. These two traditions have now crystallized into competing ‘world views’ commonly designated orthodox and radical paradigms in political science literature.

The recurrence of ‘Great Debate’ on almost all major issues of policy and theory in political science (that “political scientists talk at each other most of the times”) reveals competing ‘world views’ which “provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research” (Chilcote, 1981: 63). In other words, these ‘world views’ popularly called ‘paradigms’ with the publication of T.S. Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolution*, determine not only the ‘research programme’ but also condition the research agenda: the “core questions to be asked and about the methods and approaches by which those questions will be addressed” (Asher et al, 1985: 4). As will be seen below, these divergences could be seen today in the unsatisfactory state of research concerning issues of ‘development and under-development’ and the debate surrounding policy measures (such as structural adjustment programme) designed to cope with the deepening character of this crisis.

The implication of this observation is unalterably that the character of ‘scientific’ inquiry in the social science proceeds within a distinctive frame of reference or paradigm which a particular intellectual community “acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice”. Thus, in Kuhn’s analysis of scientific paradigms, contending theoretical postulates (explanatory systems) emerge, as Gill and Law suggest (1989:18):

Within the framework of paradigm, there is a scope for differences of opinion and the development of new, specific theories. However, the nature and extent of this scope can vary with the particular institutional features of the academic community, and also with the relationship of that community to wider political forces. In any academic community, those who lead tend to develop vested interests in their definition of a subject, and its disciplinary boundaries. Moreover, to gain an authoritative voice, initiates into the community must communicate their ideas according to the formal methods adopted by the community. Initiates must thus behave according
to the custom and practice of the community if they are to be influential and achieve positions of authority. These social processes tend to discourage challenges to the basic assumptions of the paradigm or perspective.

‘A paradigm is, therefore, widely seen in the social sciences as scientific community’s perspective of “its world, its set of beliefs and commitments -conceptual, theoretical, methodological, instrumental. The paradigm guides a scientific community’s selection of problems, evaluation of data, and advocacy of theory” (Chilcote, 1981: 58). According to Robert Holt and John Richardson (1970), a paradigm in the social sciences comprises five elements: assumptions and -concepts, theory, rules of interpretation, puzzles and criteria of admissibility. Ontologic predictive elements are particularly important. The ‘rule of interpretation’ tells us which of the statements in our language describe observable phenomena and just what observations will establish whether the prediction of a given theory is right or wrong. The ontologic-predictive element, on the other hand, defines “the boundaries of the set of potentially solvable puzzles, and suggests what a full-blown set of laws would be” (Holt and Richardson, 1970:27).

Although Kuhn’s thesis has been the subject of extensive criticism, as it appears to deny the possibility of any objective knowledge (Suppe, 1977: Lakatos and Musgrave. 1970), it, nevertheless, draws attention to the need to “reconsider how we do manage to acquire valid understanding about the real -world despite the fact that research may be saturated with evaluative presuppositions” (Asher et at, 1984: 6). Given the deep and persistent ‘epistemological divergences in the political science literature in terms of its mode of analysis and prognosis for action, it is not surprising that research in the discipline is presently governed by competing orthodox and radical paradigms and about the methods and approaches by which those questions will be addressed”. This paradigmatic dissensus in the discipline owes considerably to the pioneering works of Marx and Weber in the field of sociology of development. Marx concerned himself with development premised “on the interaction of people with the material world of productive forces and modes of production.” Weber identified “distinctive rational characteristics of the bureaucratic order of industrial states” (Atkinson, 1972: 119). As a consequence of these divergences, critics generally characterize Marx’s perspectives as “revolutionary and realist, his conception of development as dynamic; his method as dialectical; and Weber’s understanding is seen as static, his conception of development as evolutionary and idealist, and his method as rooted in ideal topologies” (Chilcote, 1981:107). The influence of these different approaches is evident in the contemporary conceptualisations and explication of the crisis of underdevelopment in the Third World,
The Nigerian Condition: Political Science and the Science of Politics

As noted in the introduction, the raging epistemic crisis in the social sciences found elemental expression in the Nigerian social science community as could be seen in the works of eminent political scientists and the proceedings of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) since the 1970s. Despite the extensive and profound analyses of pressing national and international development (such as political instability, civil - military relations, democratization, transition, external intervention colonisation and crisis of underdevelopment), by and large theoretical and methodological issues were relegated. Theory and method thus became stepchildren of benign hyperfactual ism generally assumed but seldom deserving collective and searching scrutiny of national professional associations.

Three reasons could be adduced for this condition of political science scholarship in Nigeria. First is the school of thought which questions the epistemic relevance of the quest for theory in the social sciences, in general and in political science in particular. These scholars - products of the British university system and scholarship - did not only dominate the first generation of Universities in Nigeria, but also set the agenda for pedagogy and research in political science. Their approach was not only atheoretical but also historical, descriptive, formalistic and hyperfactual. The late Professor of International Relations, Olajide Aluko, gave graphic expression to these tendencies in his Essay on Nigerian Foreign Policy (1981: 4), when he contended that:

Social science is not like the physical or natural sciences. Theoretical models involving prediction have proved even less useful in economics than in meteorology. And the discipline of international relations comprises many more complex variables that are neither quantifiable nor verifiable. So the use of models and theoretical analysis in international relations is less rewarding and less illuminating than in economics.

Aluko’s assertion only highlights one of the most intractable problems in the analytical literature in the social sciences: the dilemma involved in establishing a proper balance between theoretical rigour and empirical content. However, Aluko’s dismissal of models and theoretical analysis in international relations’ as less rewarding overstates the traditionalist case by glossing over the conventional wisdom in the philosophy of social sciences, that, as J. D. Singer put it,

Models, paradigms, and conceptual schemes are merely intellectual tools by which we order and certify that which would
otherwise remain a buzzing welter. Our mission in both teaching and research is nothing more than an effective amalgamation of insight with evidence, and of substance with technique. When one of the most eminent of our traditionalists describes his method as the art of ‘[mjustering all the evidences that history, personal experience, introspection, common sense and ...[I]ogical reasoning’ make available, it is difficult to quarrel. But, it must be added that history, experience, introspection, common sense and logic do not in themselves generate evidence, but ideas which must then be examined in the light of evidence.

Singer’s interjection may not be altogether satisfactory to Aluko and other eminent proponents of his school of thought in Nigeria as it begs what needs to be proven: that conceptual and theoretical schemes are a sine qua non to political analysis and substance must be effectively amalgated with technique of investigation. What is perhaps of paramount concern to this ‘eminent traditionalist’ is the positivistic idea of an ‘axiomatic and mathematized’ political science. Positivistic behavioural phase of political science, as noted above, has stressed empirical explanatory theories of human behaviour based on the discovery of “basic invariants, structure, or laws that can serve as foundation for theoretical explanations which will take a deductive form and from which we can derive counterfactual claims about the relations of independent and dependent variables” (Shapero, 1964: 387).

Such a naturalistic understanding of political inquiry was no doubt a product of the epistemic advances in the natural sciences and of other social sciences (such as economics and physiology), “using more rigorous methods of data collection and analysis”. They “suggested alternatives that led political analysis away from ‘common’ sense to ‘scientific’ sense where theoretical rather than social criteria set the problem of research and where technical skills took the place of mere description and common sense methods” (Eulau, 1963: 39). Nevertheless, positivistic model of inquiry (model of inquiry derived from the natural sciences) in political science has also exposed critical epistemological problems in terms of comprehending the “nature of the world we wish to know and understand.” Thus, Bernstein (1979: 228), among others, sharply concluded that:

The case for a naturalistic understanding of the social sciences is based upon dubious interpretations of the natural sciences. These fluctuate between forms of naive empiricism that emphasize the collection of data and processing of data - that is, building from the ground up - and more sophisticated forms of empiricism that emphasize the construction of hypothetical-
deductive explanatory systems. Yet these conceptions of what is presumably most vital and central in the natural sciences have been challenged and modified as a result of post-empiricist analysis in the philosophy and history of science.

This post-empiricist challenge to the classical positivist conception of inquiry owes considerably to the manifest constraint or limitation of this model in the vast array of fields in political science. Yet, as one analyst has noted, “these areas of political science are clearly subject to rigorous inquiry through the use of the normal rules of logic, through careful acquisition of data consistent with the canons of science, and through equally sophisticated analysis of data” (Easton, 1985: 149). This invariant awareness has engendered a more ‘relaxed’ understanding of the notion of science, one that “accepts non-axiomatized and non-mathematical statements as an integral part of scientific knowledge even in its ideal form” (Fiorina, 1975:73). As Easton (1985: 144) has rightly observed, “it is not only science in the old positivistic sense. Instead, we are adding a new and more relaxed understanding of the nature of science itself.

Nagel (1961) has, for instance, made a fundamental distinction between ‘controlled experimentation’ and ‘controlled investigation’ in scientific inquiry. While the former is often considered as sine qua non for achieving scientific knowledge, it is also widely recognized that since such “experimentation is impossible with large-scale social phenomena, we cannot discover and test general laws pertaining to such phenomena” (Nagel, 1961: 452). ‘Controlled investigation’, which has ‘the essential logical functions of experiment in inquiry’ has, therefore, served analogous role in social science inquiry as well! as established physical sciences such as astronomy, astrophysics, which are not[,] strictly speaking, ‘experimental sciences’. In other works, while the] experimental method can rarely be used in Political Science because of ‘practical and ethical impediment’, statistical and comparative methods havd played essential logical functions of ‘controlled investigation’ in the political and social sciences.

Thus, the positivistic interpretation of science can no longer be the yardstick or determinant of scientific knowledge in the discipline of politics. Unlike the earlier impression given by classical positivism of the Vienna circle, philosophy of science is “now discovering that there are many varieties o: outcomes with which scientists seem to be satisfied” (Suppe, 1979: 190) These outcomes include systems of classification, taxonomies, conceptua frameworks, and qualitative generalizations about evolutionary processes tha ‘do not permit prediction’, but in the “various sciences in which they are just a: acceptable as final products” (Easton, 1985; Toulmin, 1972; Shapers, 1974 Suppe, 1977). On this view, the history of inquiry in the natural sciences nov
seems to reveal that there is no single fixed kind of intellectual product, as classical positivism would have. We believe, that can be designated as “appropriate and necessary to achieve understanding of any given phenomena” (Asher et al., 1984:14). If this is the case, then Basin’s (1985) conclusion in his review article is incontestable:

Systematic classification of political phenomena for example, or conceptual frameworks, would be just as normal a product of scientific inquiry as any generalization about politics or any mathematical model. The only question one just asks is whether, at the time, the intellectual product satisfied political science, in terms of rigorous and testable understanding. This is to say, if the knowledge acquired seems to help us in attaining satisfactory explanation or adequate understanding of an empirically grounded sort, then that is the most we can ask of the methods of science.

Seen in this light, neither the excessive optimism of the positivistic behavioural phase nor the benign pessimism of the idiographic school adequately conveys the epistemological development in political science in the last three decades. In this regard, the question as to whether a science of politics is possible ceases to be a first order question in epistemology and becomes contextual and evaluative. Thus, the rejection of the credo of behaviouralism in political science academia in Nigeria (“the construction of logically consistent models from which truth is deductively derived”) by the traditionalists as represented by Olajide Aluko is only a reminder that although the great debate of the 1960s and 1970s may have lost much of its edge, many of the problems currently discussed are still classifiable within these terms”.

On this view, it may still be argued from the vantage point of post-modernist challenge in the late 1990s that since social sciences in general and political science in particular “grew out of philosophy, particularly the philosophy of history repercussions from the traditional controversies can still be felt”. The disputation, as noted generally above, concerns the “model of inquiry that is best applicable to social reality and the status of general statements in the social sciences”. In the specificity of academic debate among political scientists in Nigeria over the past couple of decades the issue of problem in research arguably revolves around (i) the nature of general theoretical statement in political science and (ii) the nature of ‘standardized observations’ of social phenomena across culture. While adherents of the traditional approach to political analysis in Nigeria fulminate against the possibility of ‘nomothetic statements’ (they are “meaningless in so far as they are based on general concepts that “do violence” to the specific features of each
social system”), a limited number of pioneering scholars in the field had sought, as J. D. Singer put it, “an effective amalgamation of insight with evidence.”

Thus, utilizing the game model, B. J. Dudley, in Instability and Political Order - Politics and Crisis in Nigeria (1973) sought to explain the debacle of Nigerian democratic experiment in terms of the flagrant violations of both the constitutive and regulatory regimes of that system. Similarly, Claude Ake’s extensive analysis of Africa’s social formation fundamentally contributes to the paradigm shift in the discourse on crisis of underdevelopment. To these examples may be added Peter Ekeh’s work on social exchange theory and O. Nnoli’s application of socio-psychological and Marxist categories to clarify the structure and dynamics of ethnic politics in Africa. As a tribute to the pioneering efforts of these ‘behaviouralists’, Bade Onimode (1996:60) has noted in his exposition on B. J. Dudley’s work, for instance, that:

Billy Dudley pioneered what may aptly be called mathematical politics in Nigeria and possibly in Africa. This quantification of political behaviour has progressed so much today that game theory is now regarded pervasively as an integral component of the social sciences. Dudley’s application of coalition game in the stylization of the triad to Nigerian politics was therefore a major contribution to political thought - regardless of what many may regard as the mystification of social theory through its mathematical treatment because of its regrettable exclusivity to mathematical elite.

Unfortunately, these brilliant and insightful efforts in political analysis in Nigeria still remain an exception rather than the rule. As could be inferred from the proceedings of the annual conferences of the Nigerian Political Science Association and current publications in the market, the mainstream efforts and analytical terrain are still largely dominated by traditional approaches that “constantly reveal the demise of regimes, personalities, orthodox prescriptions and projections”. Patterns of exposition have been predominantly atheoretical, descriptive, though informative, analysis of local land interstate issues intended, as Ray Ofegbu (1987) put it, “to provide the reader with an understanding of the most pressing problems of African states.” Hence’ the trenchant, if contemptuous, verdict of Chris Allen that “most international relations work in Africa can be safely neglected ... There are also very few studies of African foreign policy that are not both theoretically crude and largely descriptive.” It is as though the Nigerian/African scene is still an “isolated frontier for field research, bearing little or no relevance to issues of global dimensions” in theory and method.
Although under CODESRIA and African Political Science Association fora, major epistemic developments have been underway in the African political science circle, the impact of these theoretical and methodological directions in analysis has been limited in political discourse in Nigeria. There seems to be a widespread (both implicit and explicit) acceptance of the ‘idiographic’ thesis about the questionable relevance or desirability of theoretical enterprises (models, paradigms and conceptual schemes) in political analysis, as Olajide Aluko explicitly contends. Thus, as past eminent representative of this school of thought in Nigeria’s political science academia, his assertion that the “use of models and theoretical analysis in International Relations is less rewarding and less illuminating” reflects Winch’s (1958) contention that there are “insurmountable problems and conceptual confusions at “the heart of social scientific inquiry”. Central to this prevalent position are crucial epistemic issues relating to (i) cultural determinacy of social phenomena, (ii) manifest complexity of social phenomena, (iii) postulational or subjective nature of social data, and (iv) fact-value dichotomy and the problems of ethically neutral science of politics.

Although these factors constituted inhibitions to naturalistic interpretation of science of politics, in the light of the current and more relaxed understanding of the notion of science, systems of classification, taxonomies, conceptual frameworks and qualitative generalizations such the works of Synder and Bruck (1959), Kaplan (1966), Schelling (1963) and Morgenthau (1964) in International Relations are ‘just as acceptable as final products of scientific inquiry’. Hence, Nagel’s (1961) distinction between ‘controlled experimentation’ and ‘controlled investigation’, ‘suicidal predictions’ and ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’, ‘context of discovery’ and the context of validation of claims to knowledge’ as well as ‘logical and ontological truth’ in social research - as bases for valid scientific knowledge. In other words, the quest for theory, models and paradigm in political inquiry in Nigeria cannot just be lightly discounted by labelling such effort as ‘naive empiricism’. The epistemological question of how knowledge is acquired cannot be separated from the ontological question of the “nature of the world we wish to know and understand”. These essentially justify the quest to sharpen the tools of investigation in political science in terms both of the mode of analysis and prognosis for action.

The second reason identified above for the epistemic ‘underdevelopment’ of political science in Nigeria is the intellectual resistance (more of a habit rooted in academic socialization than a conscious intellectual choice) in the Nigerian social science community to Marxist epistemology by certain generation of scholars. The inevitable consequence of this resistance has been the manifest undervaluing (in some cases rejection) of the gamut of critical theoretical directions which emerged from this radical paradigm.
associated with the historicist tradition. Notable among these are the pioneering works of the Frankfurt School involving Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcugé, Habermas, Fromm and Reich whose centrality in the post-behavioural and post-modernist movement in political analysis is undisputed. Collectively, their efforts did not only suggest the necessity of ‘re-specifying the great philosophical questions’ in interdisciplinary research programme, but also “emphasize the necessity for social theory to explicate the set of interconnections (mediations) that make possible the reproduction and transformation of society, economy, culture and consciousness” (Held, 1980: 33).

With regrettably few exceptions, teaching, research and publications in Nigerian Universities have continued to reflect the pre-eminence of orthodox paradigmatic approach to political inquiry in terms its “compartmentalized view of society, its rationalist orientation, and its focus on problems delimited by disciplinary boundaries (Chilcote, 1981: 4). It is not surprising, therefore, that a student admitted into a graduate programme in International Relations in the University of Calabar in the 1990s claimed never to have heard the term ‘dependency’ in her undergraduate programme in one of the premier universities in the South-West. As if to confirm her incredible claim, an External Examiner from the same University (a self-acclaimed expert in contemporary political analysis) told a bewildered member of the political science department of University of Calabar in 1997 with all candour that ‘structural functionalist’ and ‘system analysis’ are the two pivotal analytical tools in political analysis and must be reflected every year in examination; questions!

Thus, the entire gamut of radical intellectual tradition in political inquiry represents at best for our learned professor ideological contestations rather than sociological analysis. As Toyin Falola and Julius Ihonvbere (1988: 2) have aptly noted:

Even in the face of the numerous crisis and conflicts confronting the African continent, the orthodox school has stuck to its tools of analysis, while a few scholars have attempted minor revisions, they unfortunately do not correspond to the levels of change and crisis in the continent... Given its largely descriptive, behavioural, and super-structural focus, the traditional perspective has been unable to provide a consistent and holistic framework with which to understand the extent to which the domestic economy influence and condition foreign policy.

Nigerian foreign policy, the subject of Folola and Ihonvbere’s concern, has been but one of the issue areas of fundamental paradigmatic differences in
analysis in the Nigerian political science community. The other major issue-areas include political instability (Bassey 1989) and the prevailing crisis of underdevelopment. Indeed, the latter issue - area had been one of the most theoretically divisive and productive of policy differences in Nigeria (as in other Third World formations) as the crisis of mass immiserization, stagflation, uneven development, alienation, mounting external debts and periodic out break of communal violence deepen.

As the intellectual ferment following the implementation of the World Bank structural adjustment programme in 1987 suggests, the orthodox paradigm which tends to be ahistorical in interpretation and analysis still retains wide acceptance in the academic and policy circles. Unlike the radical paradigm which is ‘holistic in interpretation and analysis’ and relates “politics to a conception of the state in concert with a hierarchy of constituencies in conflict with the masses of society”, the orthodox paradigm focuses on stable ‘systems whose elements are in equilibrium” and defines development as ‘evolutionary, generally unilinear, materialistic, and progressive” (Chicote 181:74).

In the context of the deep ideological cleavages which dominated competing models of development in the contemporary global order, it is not surprising that research projects sponsored in Nigeria by international ‘regimes’, such as the World Bank and related Foundations and Research agencies (SAREC, IDRC, Ford, Rockefeller, and MacAuthor Foundation, DANID, CIDA, etc), proceed distinctly within the paradigmatic context of orthodox world view. The products of these research and the policy prescriptions arising from them have generally come under unrelenting attack of revisionist scholarship which embodies ‘radical’ world views, as seen in the writings of Ake, Onimode, Ekuerhare. Nnoli., Toyo, Falola and Ihonvbere.

The dominance of the orthodox world view as determinant of research programme in Nigeria is undisputed. However, the deepening character of economic crisis, the widening social inequality, political instability and massive social trauma, all reflect in part the manifest poverty of the dominant orthodox paradigm in social enquiry. Bade Onimode (1988) in his work, *The Political Economy of the African Crisis*, highlighted, the five-fold major defect of this paradigm. First, the dominant orthodox paradigm of conceptions of reality is fundamentally incongruous with observable reality. Second, orthodox paradigm is “basically imperialistic, ideological and apologetic on behalf of capitalism, and as an integral part of the bourgeois ideology, it has been imported into the Third World, including Africa, as the intellectual handmaiden of imperialism”. Thirdly, for these ideological reasons, ‘bourgeois social science’ poses false problems and proffers “bogus, pro-imperialist solutions especially in the Third World”. Fourthly, orthodox paradigm “foists an irrelevant capitalist model, of development and growth strategies on Africa and
the rest of the Third World”. Finally, the Third World’s hapless dependence on bourgeois social science is the collective consequence of the persistence of colonial mentality in scientific endeavours, and “foreign intellectual domination in teaching and research with respect to curricula, publication and academic funding which underscore this external intellectual dependence”. It leads to teaching and researching according to the preferences of “imperialist mentors, rather than according to the social requirements of African and other poor societies. This is an additional source of the praxeological failure of bourgeois Social Science in Africa”.

Onimode’s caveat elicits some incisive conclusion about orthodox (Western) explication and prognosis concerning development process in the Third World social formations. Given the theoretical assumptions and emphasis underlying such policy direction, the dominant orthodox model of development has been largely seen as “fundamentally a rabid ideological mechanism of imperialist domination and exploitation”. This is so because of its “subjective and individualist utility theory of value, the use of marginalism involving psychological preferences, mathematical modeling and sophistry, partial and general equilibrium and preoccupation with scarcity, market exchange, and efficiency” (Onimode. 1985: 14). It is not surprising, therefore, that glaring defects of comparator capitalism in Nigeria (such as unemployment, poverty, uneven development inflation, alienation, social crises etc) are seen as rational reflections of productivity differentials among individuals in the dominant school of economic orthodoxy in Nigerian social science.

Finally, the problem of political analysis in Nigeria (why it remains a nascent field dominated by descriptive, though informative, analysis) is to be attributed to the practitioners themselves. One is referring here to the widespread intolerance and intimidating posture adopted by Nigerian academics towards the critical evaluation of their work by young ‘upstarts’. This intimidation has taken various forms often with incalculable consequences for the professional development of the unwary or overbold academic ‘initiate’. A recurrent manifestation is the incredibly uncouth tendencies of some senior academics at professional conferences to warn young ‘upstarts’ that they are few in the field in Nigeria and the latter’s papers might be send to them for professorial appraisal.

Other forms of intimidation involve negative appraisals of otherwise publishable journal paper if the writer has the effrontery of disagreeing with the evaluator’s earlier work. The subtle verdict is often that the paper contributes nothing new to knowledge only for the same paper to be published in a highly competitive international journal. Stephen Gill and David Law (1989: 18) explain this widespread phenomenon in Nigeria academia, albeit in a different context of paradigmatic imperatives noted above. According to them, in “any academic community, those who lead tend to develop vested interests in their
definition of a subject... Initiates must thus behave according to the custom and practices of the community if they are to be influential and achieve positions of authority”.

While intellectual revolution in the West since the late 19th century has compelled the expansion of academic space to accommodate such ‘young upstarts’ then such as Einstein, Planck, Bohr, Horkheimer and Habermas, the suffocating constriction of intellectual space in political science in Nigeria has had a rather telling effect on the development of the discipline as, with few exceptions, the cabal of senior academics in the discipline exercise a near despotic control of generational thought process through differential promotional criteria (at the level of professorial assessment), exclusion from research projects and downright or blatant intimidation: “If you like write as many papers as you please without people like us they can never be published”. It definitely could be argued that this enervating environment is clearly making ‘disciples’, rather than astute ‘scholars’ out of the new generation of social scientists in the country. One, therefore, wonders how a ‘Vienna Circle’ or a Frankfurt School of critical theory could ever emerge in Nigeria.

**Concluding Remarks**

The quest for theoretical systems in political science through the application of systematic procedures of investigation had been characterized by extensive epistemological and methodological debate in the literature. The post-empiricist and postmodernist challenge to the classical positivist conception of inquiry owes considerably to the express concern about the limitation of this model in the fields of political science.

This concern has informed the position of the dominant school of thought in the Nigerian political science academia in the past three decades as articulated by the late Professor of International Relations, Olajide Aluko. It is not surprising, therefore, that political analysis in Nigeria, with few exception, continues to exhibit the imagery of benign orthodoxy. However, under the impact of systemic challenges and research funding from international, regional and emerging national foundations and associations, there has been a perceptible and sustained change in analytical directions and greater inclination to confront theoretical and methodological issues in social inquiry. In this regard, the pioneering works of the late Claude Ake, Bade Onimode, Aron Gana, Okadibo Nnoli, Eskor Toyo, Peter Ekeh, and Ikenna Nzimiro definitely constitute a foundation upon which current and future generation of political scientists in particular and social scientists in general could build on. Such a development would depend inexorably on the extent to which our ‘senior colleagues’ cultivate the habit of intellectual tolerance toward younger ‘initiates’ into the political science community and the exposure of current
generation of students to contending paradigms and epistemic challenges beyond traditional orthodoxies. Perhaps, the manifest poverty of the unwhptesome present will irreversibly give way to a celebration of theory and method in political discourse in Nigeria.

References


