

**MUHAMMADU**  
**BUHARI**

**THE NIGERIAN LEGACY: 2015-2023**



**JOURNEY TO THE PRESIDENCY**

Edited by  
Udu Yakubu

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**VOLUME ONE**

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## **Foreword**

**by**

**Mamman Daura**

Fate and Destiny play a vital part in the affairs of men. Nowhere is this more evident than in the path and pattern of the rise to political ascendancy of President Muhammadu Buhari. The compelling and unquenchable desire to make a difference in the affairs of one's country, which was driven by a firm belief that destiny and history were on his side, propelled Muhammadu Buhari to an historic victory at the presidential election in 2015.

President Muhammadu Buhari was no stranger to public office in Nigeria, having been appointed Federal Commissioner of Petroleum and Natural Resources following the coup that brought General Murtala Muhammed to power in July 1975. He had distinguished himself in that office and when his name came up on 31st December 1983 as the new military ruler after yet another coup that toppled the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari, there was a sense of relief and assurance, from within and outside the continent, that Nigeria had found a hero who would restore national prestige and order among the citizenry. He did not disappoint as he instituted several economic and social reforms, including the adoption of a new currency, and declaration of war on indiscipline, which he had identified as the root of Nigeria's social and economic challenges and its difficulties in attaining its rightful place in the comity of nations.



Volume One aptly titled ‘The Journey to the Presidency’ captures in poignant details the various stages and aspects of Muhammadu Buhari’s strive for power that ultimately led to his stewardship of Africa’s most populous country from May 2015 to May 2023. Structured into 15 chapters, the volume provides an invaluable insight into the character and resilience of the man, Buhari, who went from defeat after defeat in three consecutive elections to a victory that was unprecedented in Nigeria’s political history, by defeating an incumbent president and presidential candidate of the ruling party. Buhari’s victory became a rallying cry for opposition parties across Africa as it emboldened and encouraged them not to lose hope in their quest for political office through the ballot box. The ripples of Buhari’s election in 2015 were felt across Africa.

Volume One unveils in fine details the ups and downs of Muhammadu Buhari from being a hero of the revolution against indiscipline and corruption between 1984 and 1985, to a tyrant in the portrayal of the successor government of Ibrahim Babangida and an object of political derision as a result of his unrelenting quest for power through the ballot box and his repeated failures in 2003, 2007 and 2011. Yet, he knew something that few Nigerians then knew – that his time would come as indeed it did on his fourth attempt. Nigerians watched with admiration and respect as he took the mantle of office at Eagle Square, Abuja on 29 May 2015 in the full glare of the global community, including dozens of African leaders from Central, Eastern, Northern and Southern Africa there present. And I was privileged to be one of those present to honour this unique man of immense inner strength and courage.

President Muhammadu Buhari is a man of great influence and accomplishment, both in Nigeria and abroad. As a leader, he pushed for the reform of public institutions, and the betterment of Nigeria’s economy. He has also championed the fight against corruption and violent extremism in the country with uncommon determination. He has been commended for his commitment to promoting economic development, social justice and human rights.

In addition to his dedication to promoting the advancement of Nigeria, President Buhari is also a strong advocate for the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, committing to the growth and integration of the region. As a man, President Buhari is a strong and tough leader, with a clear vision of where he wants Nigeria to be.

Anyone familiar with the political history of Nigeria since independence would attest to the overwhelming challenges of being the president of Nigeria for eight years. With its huge population and immense human diversity, Nigeria is a mini-Africa about which many predictions had been made of its imminent collapse. Under his leadership, President Buhari managed to surmount the many obstacles and challenges contending against the sovereignty of the country from within and outside her shores. These challenges were accentuated by his failing health soon after assumption of office, which resulted in his absence from duty for prolonged periods. Some gave him no chance of recovery and completion of his tenure, but he survived it all and was elected for a second term in 2019.

In recognition of his efforts to rebuild the nation and restore integrity to government institutions, the international community conferred numerous honours on Buhari, including the prestigious Charlemagne Prize and the Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership.

My personal impression of President Muhammadu Buhari is that of a man determined to serve and deliver to his people a country that they would be proud to call home. In spite of the twists and turns of governance in an African environment, and in particular a country as diverse as Nigeria, Buhari made numerous notable achievements in the eight years that he was president. He sought to vigorously tackle corruption in the country and implemented several reforms to improve the economy, governance practices and the standard of living of Nigerians. He also sought to improve the security situation in the country by increasing the number of troops and police personnel deployed to fight terrorism and insurgency and providing them with state-of-the-art equipment.

President Buhari also sought to improve the country's infrastructure with a focus on roads, railways, and power generation. He sought to improve the education system and significantly increased the annual budget for education. His National Social Investment Programme measures were unprecedented and changed the lives of millions. These and other achievements of the Buhari administration are laid out in subsequent volumes of this mega legacy document, which I strongly recommend to everyone to read in order to fully understand and appreciate the vicissitudes of leadership and governance in developing countries in general and Nigeria in particular, and how the factor of leadership can make all the difference. These volumes will also help future academicians and historians to get a balanced picture of Muhammadu Buhari's eight years as president.

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## **Preface & Acknowledgements**

It is important to state, from the outset, that this historical compendium is neither a commissioned, nor a government-solicited, nor a government-censored work. It is a self-motivated initiative of the editor and represents one citizen's determined desire to chronicle for posterity the stewardship of one of Nigeria's most enigmatic public personalities, Muhammadu Buhari, over a period of eight years. The primary focus of the study is on the administration of President Buhari from 2015 to 2023, but it begins with a miniaturised biography of the man as background to the five-volume compendium. It goes back in time to his formative years as a young military officer through to his first appearance as head of state during the military era, and subsequent forays into politics under a democratic climate between 1999 and 2023.

President Muhammadu Buhari's style, which influenced his administration greatly, is his natural shyness and reticence to publicity. Thus, the administration that he led will be remembered, among other things, as one that sang quite little about its achievements while in office. The reasons for this reluctance to self-proclamation include not only the president's reserved nature, but also the huge, overwhelming nature of the problems inherited by the administration, and the equally huge and larger-than-life expectations of the citizens on what a Buhari government could do. Solving these problems continued for the greater part of the administration's life, and was compounded by economic recessions,

the global COVID-19 pandemic that brought the entire world to a standstill, and other events like the Russia-Ukraine war that did huge damage to global economies, Nigeria's included. So, there wasn't much appropriate time and space to dwell on the things that were done by the administration.

The project benefitted enormously from the buy-in and steady support of Malam Mamman Daura from conceptualisation to implementation to actualisation. To be categorical, this work came to life because Malam Daura was relentless in his support and encouragement, but without any financial support or editorial interference. He supported the project on the ground of its independence of the administration, sharing the editor's perspective of the need for a scholarly, constructively critical, clinical, and empirical assessment of the administration, a work whose making should be as objective as possible and as detached as possible from major players in the administration. Thank you, Malam!

On his part, President Buhari acquiesced to the effort but with zero financial support. He did not think that he should use public funds to advance the story of his administration outside of whatever the statutory agencies for publicity and communications were doing. Ironically, the President had complained publicly at the commissioning of a facility in Imo State in late 2022, that the efforts of his administration were being grossly under-reported. But he was not willing to help himself in that regard. We are, however, thankful to him that we received his nod.

Unfortunately, many senior officials of the administration were not willing to be a part of this project because there was no directive from above. Midway into the project, we had intended to have a sixth volume that would focus on 'insider perspectives' – those in the administration directly telling the story of the administration from the angle of their sectoral participation. We reasoned that it was well within the ambit of critical, objective engagement to accommodate narratives and perspectives from frontline players in the administration. Certainly, there could be critical variations between the perspectives and research outcomes

presented by independent researchers and those of key players within the administration. In the context of independent inquiry, our quest in this regard was not channelled through any instrument of government. We received 4 out of 75 vigorously solicited chapter contributions. Understandably, it is not a government project so officials were wary of even dabbling into narratives about the administration

Fortunately, however, the main design of the research and publication was to have independent and fair-minded experts and scholars research and write about the story of the administration from, as much as possible, detached, clinical dispositions and perspectives. In all, 94 contributors (authors and editors) voluntarily participated in this monumental work, each according to their areas of specialisation or interest. Invitations were sent to hundreds of scholars, experts and professionals in various disciplines and sectors across the country. Over 90 percent of them were not previously known to the coordinating team.

A considerable number of would-be contributors, especially from the universities, declined to be a part of the project for reasons that ranged from the impasse between the federal government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), to intensely personal and pecuniary objections. The pecuniary element, in some cases, was largely because of a wrong impression that a project of such magnitude, significance, and scope must have been sponsored and funded by the government. It was indeed a gross and misplaced perspective.

The consenting contributors were given individual letters of engagement, research and writing guides, and a concept note that provided the rationale and direction of the study and specified the broad objectives of the work. The main objective of the project was to produce a definitive and authoritative story of the President Muhammadu Buhari Administration, a story that is scholarly, scientific, empirically engaging, and critically grounded. Specifically, the entire project aimed to capture the achievements and legacies of President Buhari's administration. In doing that, contributors were

to avoid praise-singing, but rather properly engage the work and achievements of the administration. They were also to draw attention to any shortcomings and failures, which should, however, be properly contextualised and constructively discussed within appropriate subsectors/subject areas. Contributors were also expected to be clinical in their approach and to strive to achieve fairness, contextual awareness, and critical balance in their analyses.

The compendium is divided into five volumes each focusing on key sectors and sub-sectors including the economy, national security and human development, industry and infrastructure, and governance and foreign relations. There are 125 chapters spread across the five volumes and each volume has its foreword and an introduction. The idea is to make each volume semi-autonomous while retaining an overarching symbiotic relationship. At the end of each volume is a list of contributors to that volume.

Without any shred of immodesty, this work presents the definitive history of the eight years of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. We make bold to state that there is nothing else like this compendium in the present. This publication is unprecedented in the history of any administration in Nigeria, especially in terms of its scope, editorial independence, depth of critical engagement, elaborate authorial authority, and scholarship.

We are deeply grateful to all those who morally and physically contributed to the publication of this epochal work and in particular, wish to register our sincere gratitude and respect for the contributors who saw this assignment as a patriotic call to duty and offered their services despite any personal views or objections they may have about the president himself or his administration.

Very importantly, the making of this historical compendium was extremely demanding in all regards, cost included. I most sincerely thank Alhaji Sayyu Dantata, Mr Mohammed M. Nami, and Mr Lamido Yagudu for their invaluable contribution without which it would have been extremely difficult to achieve the project. I also thank Alhaji Umaru Mutallab, Alhaji Ahmadu Rufai Machika, and

Engr. Mansur Ahmed for their goodwill and support throughout the project. These are all great men whose encouragement in various ways helped to birth this work.

To wrap up these preliminary remarks, there can be no greater justification for a work of this magnitude than the testimonies of 'detached' global actors about the impact of the Buhari administration on Nigerian development. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its April 2023 'World Economic Outlook' report had retained its growth forecast for the Nigerian economy in 2023 at 3.2%. The nation witnessed an economic growth of 3.0% in 2022, and that rate, in negative reckoning, was attributed to the Russia-Ukraine war, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and rising inflation. Against Nigeria's expected growth of 3.2% in 2023, the global economy is expected to fall to 2.8% in the same period, according to the IMF. Invariably, the foundations for growth laid by the Buhari administration were beginning to yield results.

Describing the Nigerian economy as 'one of the most stable in Africa', the IMF had stated that despite the global challenges of inflation, the conflict in Ukraine, supply-chain disruptions and the lingering post-pandemic stress, Nigeria's business climate had been stabilised through improved infrastructure, increased investments opportunities, growth-driven reforms, and the ease of doing business. These are the legacies of the Buhari administration.

Regarding security, the report of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2023 (published in March 2023), showed that Nigeria moved to eight position, moving down two steps from its place in 2022, an indication that the nation's ranking had improved. Nigeria had also improved by moving two places to rank sixth in the 2022 terrorism index from the initial fourth position it had occupied since 2017. The GTI revealed that Nigeria, Syria and Somalia were the only countries among the 10 most impacted by terrorism to record an improvement in score from 2020 to 2022. The GTI provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism over several years.



While sub-Saharan Africa recorded the largest increase in terrorism deaths in the last few years, the ‘impact of terrorism continued to decline in Nigeria’ in the Buhari years. Nigeria thus moved down the ladder of nations most impacted by terrorists. In the sub-Saharan region, she recorded the largest decrease in the number of deaths from terrorism in 2022. ‘Deaths fell by almost a quarter, from 497 in 2021 to 385 in 2022, and are now at their lowest level in Nigeria since 2011’. The GTI also disclosed that the spatial dynamics of terrorism had changed over the last two years (i.e. 2021-2023) in the Sahel. ‘Previously, northeastern Nigeria, along with Chad, Cameroon and Niger was the epicentre of terrorist activities, with ISWAP and Boko Haram responsible for most of this. Since 2020, deaths from terrorism have declined in Nigeria’s Borno State and the neighbouring areas of Chad, Niger and Cameroon’. Prior to this, deaths in Nigeria had peaked in 2014 at 2,101 deaths before declining in the subsequent years. Deaths from terrorism in Nigeria decreased by 43% in 2021, and 35% in 2022.

The war against ISWAP and the Boko Haram insurgency resulted in the steady decimation and decline of the terrorist groups, which no longer had a hold on any Nigerian territory. To all intents and purposes, Boko Haram and ISWAP as organised terrorists groups were at the nadir of their existence in Nigeria, remaining only to be completely finished off and confined to history. These are some of the legacies of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

The five volumes tell the story of the Buhari administration in critically varied ways, and invite the reader to engage the ensuing narratives with an open and fair mind. The narratives are historically foregrounded, enabling the reader to see the administration in the broader timeframes of what had been, and the changes that came into being. Change was not just a mantra for winning power; it was at the centre of the administration’s agenda for national transformation and development, and was vehemently pursued. But it was also a cosmic element that rattled not just the administration but the entire nation, as when COVID-19 struck, or

when the international oil price turned round for a steady, determined downward slope, for examples.

Much as we tried, we fell a little short of covering all the aspects of experience that we had aimed for. There were a lot more challenges and illuminating engagements of the administration than we could adequately grasp within the resources available to us. Fortunately, this leaves room for more work to be done. What is presented in these volumes is significantly huge, and we are happy that we were able to achieve this in less than one year. The work is significantly historicised, tells the story of the Buhari administration, and very importantly as well, the story of Nigeria from May 2015 to May 2023.

**Dr Udu Yakubu**

June 2023





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## Introduction

*Journey to the Presidency* is the first of five volumes in the compendium on Muhammadu Buhari's tenure as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. Structured in 15 chapters written by 10 authors, this volume provides invaluable insights into President Buhari's background, character and rise to power. Undeterred by personal challenges and political setbacks, he achieved one of the most spectacular election victories in Nigeria by defeating an incumbent president. The volume begins with a short biography from childhood to military school to high command. It captures the subject's values, essence and his evolution into a strategic leader.

The chapters include numerous anecdotes that illustrate how the President handled situations of national significance across various sectors. It provides detail on the President's leadership style and the strategies with which he achieved results. The narrative describes his first government role as Head of State from December 1983 to August 1985 and the high points of that era. Muhammadu Buhari established his reputation for incorruptibility in this role and brought this with him as he assumed the presidency on 29 May 2015 as a quasi-mythical figure on whose shoulders the ailing Nigerian nation could rest and be resuscitated back to health.

The combined themes of incorruptibility and invincibility are referenced in relation to the narratives that have formed around Muhammadu Buhari over the last four decades with a view to debunking several myths and misconceptions and buttressing the leadership strengths that he embodies. Citing historical figures



whose lives have been shrouded in myths and mystery, the volume cleverly navigates the torrents of truths, half-truths and lies to find the true Muhammadu Buhari and what he stands for.

The focus then shifts to Buhari's entry into national leadership when he was named Head of State on 31 December 1983 following the toppling of the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari. There is an assessment of the role and impact of Buhari's leadership on national development during the short period he was in power. This aspect of the work provides insights into some of the factors that led to his overthrow in August 1985. He learned valuable lessons from that experience, which he must have retained for his future incursions into political leadership.

He doggedly pursued the highest office in the land through democratic elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011. It was quite obvious that he was living up to the injunction that all our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them. He was like a man possessed of a demon seeking success, and he drew on lessons learned from each failure but never gave up on his quest.

Extensive discussion of the strategies adopted by Buhari and his fellow political travellers describes how they determined to capture political power. Buoyed by lessons picked up from earlier failures, he and his team realigned themselves and created a powerful coalition, the dynamics of which were enough to sweep away the entrenched party that had monopolised leadership in Nigeria for 16 years.

It was inevitable that the status quo would change after such an onslaught; indeed, change was on its way. The volume explores the nation's hunger for political and economic change and examines the nature and state of the country before 2015 that worked in the opposition's favour to wrench power from a sitting president. But change does not occur in a vacuum. It is said that where there is no vision, the people languish in blindness.

The theme of 'vision' is explored further in an in-depth examination of the manifesto of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and its whirlwind tours of the country, where it espoused its vision

for a new society through its change mantra. Having been sufficiently aroused and now hungry for change, the electorate turned out in the millions to cast their votes and be a part of the new reality that was offered by the APC. Thus, history was made and the party began to deliver what it had promised to Nigerians.

The volume captures the challenges and intrigues in governance amidst the national expectations and inherited problems and challenges, which were exacerbated by President Buhari's repeated illness and frequent absences from the country for medical reasons. In addition to these political and health issues, the new government had to grapple with the scourges of insurgency, insecurity and economic decline. The volume assesses the government's strategies for dealing with these threats as the economy was in recession. It became clear that a new approach was sorely needed, and the Buhari administration devised new policies and programmes to create global partnerships that aimed to reposition the country for economic growth and development.

The volume also explores the contexts, contents and dynamics of the campaigns leading up to the general elections in 2019, which were a forgone conclusion judging by the performance and sure-footedness of the APC administration led by President Buhari. Nigerians were satisfied and confident enough to re-elect the APC for another four years, ending on 29 May 2023. President Buhari was succeeded by another stalwart from the All Progressives Congress, Asiawaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, when the baton changed hands on 29 May 2023. In summary, Volume One focuses on President Buhari's journey to Aso Rock, contextualises his rise to power, describes the administration's vision and challenges, and the early steps and efforts it made to change the inherited narrative of governance.

**Udu Yakubu**  
**Chijioke Wigwe**

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**Inaugural Speech**  
**by**  
**His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari**  
**President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria**  
**29 May 2015**

I am immensely grateful to God who has preserved us to witness this day and this occasion. Today marks a triumph for Nigeria and an occasion to celebrate her freedom and cherish her democracy. Nigerians have shown their commitment to democracy and are determined to entrench its culture. Our journey has not been easy, but thanks to the determination of our people and strong support from friends abroad, we have today a truly democratically elected government in place.

I would like to thank President Goodluck Jonathan for his display of statesmanship in setting a precedent for us that has now made our people proud to be Nigerians wherever they are. With the support and cooperation he has given to the transition process, he has made it possible for us to show the world that despite the perceived tension in the land, we can be a united people capable of doing what is right for our nation. Together, we co-operated to surprise the world that had come to expect only the worst from Nigeria. I hope this act of graciously accepting defeat by the outgoing President will become the standard of political conduct in the country.

I would like to thank the millions of our supporters who believed in us even when the cause seemed hopeless. I salute their

resolve in waiting long hours in rain and hot sunshine to register and cast their votes and stay all night, if necessary, to protect and ensure their votes count and were counted. I thank those who tirelessly carried the campaign on the social media. At the same time, I thank our other countrymen and women who did not vote for us but contributed to make our democratic culture truly competitive, strong and definitive.

I thank all of you.

Having just a few minutes ago sworn on the Holy Book, I intend to keep my oath and serve as President to all Nigerians.

I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody.

A few people have privately voiced fears that on coming back to office I shall go after them. These fears are groundless. There will be no paying off old scores. The past is prologue.

Our neighbours in the sub-region and our African brethren should be rest assured that Nigeria under our administration will be ready to play any leadership role that Africa expects of it. Here, I would like to thank the governments and people of Cameroon, Chad and Niger for committing their armed forces to fight Boko Haram in Nigeria.

I also wish to assure the wider international community of our readiness to cooperate and help to combat threats of cross-border terrorism, sea piracy, refugees and boat people, financial crime, cybercrime, climate change, the spread of communicable diseases, and other challenges of the 21st century.

At home, we face enormous challenges. Insecurity, pervasive corruption, the hitherto unending and seemingly impossible fuel and power shortages are the immediate concerns. We are going to tackle them head on. Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted national responsibility to us. We must not succumb to hopelessness and defeatism. We can fix our problems.

In recent times, Nigerian leaders appear to have misread our mission. Our founding fathers, Mr Herbert Macaulay, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Malam Aminu

Kano, Chief J. S. Tarka, Mr Eyo Ita, Chief Dennis Osadebay, Chief Ladoke Akintola and their colleagues worked to establish certain standards of governance. They might have differed in their methods or tactics or details, but they were united in establishing a viable and progressive country. Some of their successors behaved like spoilt children, breaking everything and bringing disorder to the house.

Furthermore, we as Nigerians must remind ourselves that we are heirs to great civilisations: Shehu Othman Dan Fodio's caliphate, the Kanem Borno Empire, the Oyo Empire, the Benin Empire and King Jaja's formidable domain. The blood of those great ancestors flows in our veins. What is now required is to build on these legacies, to modernise and uplift Nigeria.

Daunting as the task may be, it is by no means insurmountable. There is now a national consensus that our chosen route to national development is democracy. To achieve our objectives, we must consciously work the democratic system. The Federal Executive, under my watch, will not seek to encroach on the duties and functions of the Legislative and Judicial arms of government. The law-enforcing authorities will be charged to operate within the Constitution. We shall rebuild and reform the public service to become more effective and more serviceable. We shall charge them to apply themselves with integrity to stabilise the system.

For their part, the legislative arm must keep to their brief of making laws, carrying out over-sight functions and doing so expeditiously. The judicial system needs reform to cleanse itself from its immediate past. The country now expects the judiciary to act with dispatch on all cases, especially on corruption, serious financial crimes or abuse of office. It is only when the three arms act constitutionally that government will be enabled to serve the country optimally and avoid the confusion all too often bedevilling governance today.

Elsewhere, relations between Abuja and the States have to be clarified if we are to serve the country better. Constitutionally, there

are limits to the powers of each of the three tiers of government, but that should not mean the Federal Government should fold its arms and close its eyes to what is going on in the states and local governments; not least the operations of the Local Government Joint Account. While the Federal Government cannot interfere in the details of its operations, it will ensure that the gross corruption at the local level is checked. As far as the constitution allows me, I will try to ensure that there is responsible and accountable governance at all levels of government in the country. For I will not have kept my own trust with the Nigerian people if I allow others abuse theirs under my watch.

However, no matter how well organised the governments of the federation are, they cannot succeed without the support, understanding and cooperation of labour unions, organised private sector, the press and civil society organisations. I appeal to employers and workers alike to unite in raising productivity so that everybody will have the opportunity to share in increased prosperity. The Nigerian press is the most vibrant in Africa. My appeal to the media today – and this includes the social media – is to exercise its considerable powers with responsibility and patriotism.

My appeal for unity is predicated on the seriousness of the legacy we are getting into. With depleted foreign reserves, falling oil prices, leakages and debts, the Nigerian economy is in deep trouble and will require careful management to bring it round and to tackle the immediate challenges confronting us, namely: Boko Haram, the Niger Delta situation, the power shortages and unemployment, especially among young people. For the longer term, we have to improve the standards of our education. We have to look at the whole field of medicare. We have to upgrade our dilapidated physical infrastructure.

The most immediate [challenge] is Boko Haram's insurgency. Progress has been made in recent weeks by our security forces, but victory cannot be achieved by basing the Command and Control Centre in Abuja. The command centre will be relocated to Maiduguri and remain until Boko Haram is completely subdued. But we cannot

claim to have defeated Boko Haram without rescuing the Chibok girls and all other innocent persons held hostage by insurgents.

This government will do all it can to rescue them alive. Boko Haram is a typical example of small fires causing large fires. An eccentric and unorthodox preacher with a tiny following was given posthumous fame and following by his extra judicial murder at the hands of the police. Since then, through official bungling, negligence, complacency or collusion, Boko Haram became a terrifying force taking tens of thousands of lives and capturing several towns and villages covering swathes of Nigerian sovereign territory.

Boko Haram is a mindless, godless group who are as far away from Islam as one can think of. At the end of the hostilities, when the group is subdued, the government intends to commission a sociological study to determine its origins, remote and immediate causes of the movement, its sponsors, the international connexions, to ensure that measures are taken to prevent a recurrence of this evil. For now, the Armed Forces will be fully charged with prosecuting the fight against Boko Haram. We shall overhaul the rules of engagement to avoid human rights violations in operations. We shall improve operational and legal mechanisms so that disciplinary steps are taken against proven human right violations by the Armed Forces.

Boko Haram is not only the security issue bedevilling our country. The spate of kidnappings, armed robberies, herdsmen/farmers clashes, cattle rustlings all help to add to the general air of insecurity in our land. We are going to erect and maintain an efficient, disciplined, people-friendly and well-compensated security forces within an overall security architecture.

The amnesty programme in the Niger Delta is due to end in December, but the Government intends to invest heavily in the projects and programmes currently in place. I call on the leadership and people in these areas to cooperate with the State and Federal Government in the rehabilitation programmes which will be streamlined and made more effective. As ever, I am ready to listen to



grievances of my fellow Nigerians. I extend my hand of fellowship to them so that we can bring peace and build prosperity for our people.

No single cause can be identified to explain Nigeria's poor economic performance over the years than the power situation. It is a national shame that an economy of 180 million generates only 4,000MW, and distributes even less. Continuous tinkering with the structures of power supply and distribution and close on \$20 billion expanded since 1999 have only brought darkness, frustration, misery, and resignation among Nigerians. We will not allow this to go on. Careful studies are under way during this transition to identify the quickest, safest and most cost-effective way to bring light and relief to Nigerians.

Unemployment, notably youth unemployment, features strongly in our Party's Manifesto. We intend to attack the problem frontally through revival of agriculture, solid minerals mining, as well as credits to small and medium size businesses to kick-start these enterprises. We shall quickly examine the best way to revive major industries and accelerate the revival and development of our railways, roads and general infrastructure.

Your Excellencies, my fellow Nigerians, I cannot recall when Nigeria enjoyed so much goodwill abroad as now. The messages I received from East and West, from powerful and small countries, are indicative of international expectations of us. At home, the newly elected government is basking in a reservoir of goodwill and high expectations. Nigeria, therefore, has a window of opportunity to fulfil our long-standing potential of pulling ourselves together and realising our mission as a great nation.

Our situation somehow reminds one of a passage in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

There is a tide in the affairs of men which,  
taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life,  
is bound in shallows and miseries.

We have an opportunity. Let us take it.

Thank you.

**Muhammadu Buhari**  
**President, Federal Republic of NIGERIA**  
**and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces**

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# 1

## **Muhammadu Buhari: Man, Officer and Leader**

**Udu Yakubu**

### **Introduction**

In over five decades of service to the nation, President Muhammadu Buhari has displayed uncanny gallantry in his series of political adventures. Losing elections three consecutive times would have been enough to make even the bravest politician abandon the presidential race. His third electoral loss in 2011 was so disappointing that he declared that he would no longer partake in an electoral process to achieve his ambition to be Nigeria's civilian president. However, being a man of valour and persistence, he once again offered to serve the fatherland in the build-up to the 2015 general elections. He was simply too brave to concede. Besides, his love for his country overcame his personal disappointment at losing those times (2003, 2007, and 2011). He could not sacrifice his desire to help create a functional country on the altar of personal hurt or disappointment. All the dangers in the world would not deter him.

In addition to appearing at critical moments when he served as a military officer, he also showed up in precarious circumstances from when he started electioneering to his two terms as a civilian president. The road to Aso Rock was strewn with mines, broken glass, bombs, and a host of other deadly threats, but Buhari stayed focused, disciplined and brave; he would not budge. On 23 July 2014, he had a close shave with death when a bomb exploded near

his armoured vehicle at Kawo, Kaduna. Scores of people lost their lives and many others were injured in the blast. This happened less than a year before the general elections and he was highly favoured to clinch his party's presidential ticket. He and his entourage were in traffic near the Kawo Bridge and a vehicle moved to overtake them. His escorts stopped the vehicle, but the occupants managed to detonate a bomb. Human flesh and bone were strewn everywhere, but no one in his vehicle was injured. It was suspected that certain opponents wanted to stop his campaign by any means. Fortunately, he survived the attempt on his life.

Buhari was the target of an assassination attempt that resulted in the deaths of many innocent citizens. He recognised it for what it was and was deeply saddened by the dozens of wasted and injured lives, but he did not relent. As a veteran of many battles, he had experienced worse. He engaged in his campaign with renewed vigour and proceeded to defeat the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, in the 2015 presidential election, in his fourth attempt at the polls. This in itself was no mean feat, as it was the first time an opposition candidate defeated a sitting president in Nigeria's turbulent democratic history.

Earlier in the electioneering process, Buhari met with Senator Rabi'u Kwankwaso, then governor of Kano State, who fortuitously gifted him the armoured Jeep in which he was riding when his convoy was attacked. Following the incident, he reflected on the gift of the car, saying, 'I think Kwankwaso was being generous. He said I should use it because he believed the competition I was going into involved people who would like to eliminate me.'

That attack was an inkling of what lay ahead. Other spates of verbal and physical attacks on his personality occurred during his campaigns. However, Buhari continued to display uncommon bravery and a readiness to confront whatever awaited him as president. The attacks continued even after his confirmation as Nigeria's president on 29 May 2015, but he took them in his stride, refusing to be unduly distracted. He often dismissed false

allegations with subtle humour, as when his Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, complained to him about the terrible things that were being written about him (Osinbajo). At other times, the President simply overcame his enemies' machinations, as when his advance convoy was attacked in Katsina in July 2022 during his trip to Daura, his hometown, for the Sallah celebrations.

On that occasion, armed men targeted the convoy of cars carrying the advance team of security personnel and aides ahead of the president's vehicle. The attackers probably thought that he was in the convoy. Garba Shehu, the Senior Special Assistant to the President on media and publicity, reported that the attackers opened fire on the cars from advantaged positions. However, the security personnel that accompanied the convoy repelled them.

Notwithstanding this attempt on his life, he went about his presidential business undeterred. It takes one with guts to do this. He had always accepted that enemies would continue to attempt to either eliminate him or undermine his work and the achievements of his administration. He had undergone coups and counter-coups as an army general. He had first-hand experience in a full-blown shooting war. All of these experiences enhanced his sense of danger and contributed to his appreciation of safety.

It is instructive that the Nigerian political landscape experienced seismic shifts during the two periods that he graced the national leadership scene with his purpose, direction and discipline. Muhammadu Buhari is the second of two generals privileged to have had the opportunity to serve Nigeria both as Military Head of State and Civilian President. The first and only other was General Olusegun Obasanjo.

President Buhari's life has undoubtedly been a tale of tall dreams, motivations, strength, integrity, resilience, fatal twists and reinvigorating turns. This explains why his desire to lead Nigeria again could not be extinguished by the weight of three successive defeats at the polls. His defeat of the then-sitting President, Dr Jonathan, in February 2015 remains a source of inspiration to many, especially the young people who saw his success as a clear

demonstration of the belief of the former South African president, Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013) that *the greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall*. President Buhari became a practical proof of the virtue of integrity and the power of resilience.

Against this backdrop, we unfold in the remaining sections of this chapter the life and times of the boy who rose from the dusts of Daura to the pinnacle of influence and power in Nigeria's political firmament.

### **Early Life**

Muhammadu Buhari was born on 17 December 1942 into the family of Malam Hardo Adamu, a respectable Fulani chieftain of Dumurkol, Mai'Adua Local Government Area, in the present-day state of Katsina. He was born in Daura, where Adamu settled and traded in goats, cattle and sheep. Adamu's grandfather was Yusuf, the man who founded Dumurkol, which is five miles to Daura's northwest. Buhari's mother, Zulaihat, was one of Adamu's three wives. She was of Kanuri and Hausa descent. This shows that Buhari, though Fulani, also has a mix of Hausa and Kanuri blood in him.

Buhari, the last and youngest of his mother's six children and the twenty-third of his father's children, was named after Muhammad al-Bukhari, a 9th-century Persian Islamic intellectual. Muhammad al-Bukhar was the famous author of Sahih Bukhari (a collection of hadiths). 'Buhari' or 'bukhari' is an Arabic adjective that refers to a citizen of Bukhara – an Uzbek city known for its scholarly achievements during the Abbasid Caliphate. The 'Muhammadu' in Buhari's name means 'praiseworthy' or 'glorified', and is, of course, the Prophet's name. These names would follow the boy throughout his life as his adventures in and out of power justified their potency.

Hardo Adamu died when Buhari was only four years old. The boy was then raised by Zulaihat, his mother. The Habe emir made a custodianship arrangement for Zulaihat that would ensure that all of her children would grow up and be supported under the auspices of royalty, class and the best of values. Emir Musa's son, Waziri al-

Hasan, took up the responsibility of guardianship over Zulaihat and her children. Gradually, Buhari began his lessons in bravery, culture, care, class and love. The vast kindred system had a huge impact on him; he developed an interesting relationship with Mamman Daura, his elder brother's son who was three years older than him, and who became his solid inspiration. Although the latter is technically Buhari's nephew, it is no stretch to call him (Daura) his uncle despite their closeness in age. He has been so largely perceived in public because of the positive role he has steadily played in Buhari's development. He literally sparked Buhari's interest in education, and influenced the trajectory of his career.

### **Entanglement with Nature**

Buhari was not particularly enthusiastic about schooling as a young boy. His earliest education started from the Quran. He fetched firewood for his Quranic teacher every morning before attending formal school. He preferred to be out of the house tending livestock and enjoying nature. He could not sit still in the house. Nature was his most captivating classroom in boyhood. He would spend time feeding the cattle, drinking from their water and watching the magnificence of the days' rise and fall as they encapsulated the motion of time. This helped him to develop a sense of patience and keen observation. His romantic tendencies towards the natural world imbued him with a rare passion for the sciences when he started school.

### **Early Education**

Buhari's initial avoidance of formal education drew intense punishment and flogging as his schoolmaster was bent on aligning the boy with the way of the books. Waziri al-Hasan and Mamman Daura eventually prevailed on him and encouraged him to pursue his studies with gusto. They told him that education would lead him to great heights in life. Buoyed by their encouragement, he altered his focus and prioritised his studies. His primary schooling was in Daura and Mai'adua. He proceeded to Katsina Middle School in 1953



before attending Katsina Provincial Secondary School from 1956 to 1961.

His early encounters with formal education were in the Hausa language. This was a strategic approach to help the boy enjoy schooling. As he progressed, the language of instruction was switched to English. Surprisingly, he mastered general studies, mathematics, Arabic and English with ease as a boy. The boy who was once a reluctant student became a fierce advocate and lover of books and knowledge. He was also interested in developing his body so that he would be able to withstand whatever came his way. This explains his involvement in cross-country races. Every stretched sinew, every long leap and every drop of sweat during his races slowly contributed to his spirit of endurance, persistence and resilience.

Buhari's life in boarding school was filled with memorable experiences. This helped him cope with the loss of his father, as the teachers ensured that no child lived in the shadow of their parents. The teachers were primarily British and encouraged their pupils to do things the right way and see themselves as important people, with the ability to achieve greatness and become the best they could be. The same was true of an American Peace Corps teacher who infused him with the love of biology. He never outgrew this love. He began to entertain the idea of studying medicine.

He had held several leadership roles in school: he was a class monitor in Form One; house prefect in Form Five and a house captain and head boy in Form Six. His academic life was top-notch. He not only led on the academic front; he also blazed a trail with his leadership acumen. He was a very competitive student. At 18, he entered the Elder Dempster Shipping Line competition for secondary school students. Winners would spend their summer holiday in England. It was an elite competition and he did not seem to have a chance of being selected. In those days, Barewa College, Zaria, was the school of choice for the wards of the elite. The school had been established in 1921 by the British Governor General, Hugh Clifford. Naturally, the society's elites sent their children there.

Buhari competed against the children of such men and won. He made preparations to spend his summer holiday in Britain.

What he encountered upon disembarking from the ship in Liverpool had a long-lasting effect on his psychology, dreams and aspirations. He had never seen such orderliness. He could sense the unwritten code of conduct that the British obeyed without force or fuss. He desired the same sense of order and more for his beloved country.

### **Journey to the Military**

Buhari returned home from his holiday a changed young man. He was torn between studying medicine and becoming a military officer. However, his desire to become a medical doctor remained somewhat stronger. He had just finished secondary school and was considering where he thought he would be able to make the greatest impact. At the Nigerian College of Arts, Sciences and Technology, he had the opportunity to study pharmacology. However, the long years of demanding studies that the course involved and the fact that he might not be able to influence his country to replicate the orderliness he saw in Britain deterred him from accepting the opportunity.

At this time, the Emir of Katsina was calling on young men to join the army. Hassan Katsina, the emir's son, had already become a military officer. Officer Hassan used to take secondary school boys for night walks. Buhari was greatly influenced by these walks, as he enjoyed the beauty of the night sky and the adventure that came with night outings. It reminded him of his first classroom – nature. The idea of becoming a military officer began to take hold in his mind as this path would enable him to promote the order he witnessed in Britain. Being trained as a military officer could also support further studies. Mamman Daura endeavoured to show him the huge opportunity that joining the military represented.

In 1960, Buhari was convinced that he wanted to be a military man instead of a medical doctor. He had the physical qualities, as he was about 6 feet 4 inches tall, around the same

height as America's Abraham Lincoln. However, the route would not be easy. Many people his age around the country sought the same spot in the military. He had to pass exams before he could clinch a spot during the selection. He was a brilliant 19-year-old who passed all of the required exams, but still, more than 70 candidates would be considered while only around 35 would gain admission. He was one of the selected few. Thus began his adventures and career in the military.

### **Military Training**

In Kaduna, in 1961, at the Nigerian Military Training College, teenaged Buhari underwent seven months of basic training. At the time, Nigeria had been an independent nation for barely one year. The military was mostly guided by British personnel. The young officers received the British standard training, which emphasised key values as well as physical training to strengthen the officers' endurance. There was no room for physical or mental weakness; any sign of these would result in sending the officer home.

Getting married or impregnating someone showed a lack of readiness for the discipline and rigours of military life. The school would send such an officer packing. No one was allowed to be the weakest link in the chain. The trainees' bodies and minds had to be ready for a Spartan existence. The young officers-in-training completed a series of writing tasks and strenuous physical routines. The officers gained in-depth knowledge of maps, topography and how to march through strenuous terrain with burdensome packs strapped on their backs. English language study was an integral part of the training as military officers were expected to be able to communicate effectively – effective communication could win or lose wars. They were also taught how to work with numbers in mental games of mathematics as this could determine many outcomes in the art of war. The young officers were trained and tested on their general knowledge of facts and figures about Nigeria and the rest of the world.

Young officers were expected to know the military hierarchy and bestow maximum honour on their superiors, without forgetting the crucial importance of mental and physical sturdiness and unwavering discipline. This uncompromising orientation was intended to prepare the officers to fight at any time and, if need be, to die defending their country's honour and territory. These teachings inspired a strong spirit of nationalism in young Buhari. This was evident in his handling of the threat to Nigeria's national peace and integration in 1967. About 50% of officers in his set failed to graduate; they were sent home for various reasons. No amount of corruption or sloppiness was tolerated. The training demanded that the officers had a mindset of leadership, loyalty to their motherland, team spirit, national integration, duty and hard work. Each student's record was painstakingly compiled, protected and consulted whenever needed. Officers were required to be able to understand and interpret intricate data and circumstances for strategic reasons, as the difference between life and death could lie in the decisions they made based on their understanding of convoluted data or situations.

Courage was one of the most powerful values instilled in him at the military college. He learnt how to ignore the voice of fear and follow his strongest conviction. The officers were taught that if they could not be brave in situations that needed them to be, they would be understood to have compromised their country. Cowardice should not be given room to fester. They were to be brave, march out and do battle, regardless of the situation. The spirit of sportsmanship and teamwork was encouraged among the officers through participation in sports and night walks through arduous territory.

Buhari knew exactly what his responsibilities were and his dream for his country. This allowed him to adhere to all the rules and regulations of military life until he completed his first military training in 1962.

**Further Military Training Abroad**

Young officers were then sent to Europe for more training, as was the practice before the Nigerian Military Training College (NMTC) became the Nigerian Defence Academy in 1964 when it acquired the full right to commission officers. When Buhari finished his training at NMTC, he was sent to Britain. Between 1962 and 1963, he received officer cadet training at Mons Officer Cadet School in Aldershot, England. In 1963, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant after his training in Aldershot, when he was 20 years old. He thereafter served as Platoon Commander of the Second Infantry Battalion in Abeokuta, Ogun State. Between November 1963 and January 1964, he completed another course at the NMTC – the Platoon Commanders' Course. The significance of this course to a service-oriented person such as Buhari cannot be overstated. The course was designed to train the students in the art of leadership, a key component of military service. Leadership is the backbone of every country, community and household. The decisions that leaders make determine the destinies of the people under them. He must have realised during his first visit to Britain that the order he encountered at Liverpool's port was created by the leaders of the country. He was more inspired to encounter this course that was fully dedicated to leadership.

Raising leaders in the military is crucial as the more senior officers do not serve forever. Therefore, training officers of the lower cadre is a priority. The college deemed it worthwhile to inculcate young officers with the key characteristics that are germane to the military. Every officer was expected to have the presence of mind to know what to do, how to do it, when to do it and how to inspire, lead or make others do it. This meant that making leaders from the junior officer cadre was of paramount importance to the Nigerian Army. Buhari understood this and attended the Platoon Commanders' Course with all his might and mind. He paid utmost attention to the commanders and participated in every leadership task. He knew he would need every lesson in the future. The image of the orderliness he experienced in Britain remained in

his mind. He wanted his country to reach that level and knew it was not possible without proper leadership attributes and training. He saw himself as a man who would provide people with purpose, motivation and direction.

In 1964, he attended the Army Mechanical Transport School in Borden, England, for another course – the Mechanical Transport Officer's Course. With this course, he learned how to manage the affairs of the army's mechanical transport department. He applied himself to every aspect of mechanical training. He returned to Nigeria in 1965 and was allowed to serve as the Commander of the Second Infantry Battalion. He also became Brigade Major, Second Sector, First Infantry Division. His military promotions encouraged him to keep giving his best for the country's well-being.

### **The Roar of War**

The 15 January 1966 coup d'état in Nigeria was orchestrated by aggrieved young military officers protesting the poor running of the country's affairs and the irresponsible deeds of the men who caroused in the corridors of power. By an uncanny coincidence, most of these young officers were from the eastern part of the country. The coup resulted in the fall of the First Republic and the killing of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, and other notable northern and southwestern figures. The government of Nigeria's First Republic, led by Nnamdi Azikiwe as President and Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who was also killed by soldiers of eastern origin, was toppled. General Aguiyi Ironsi, also from the eastern region of the country, became Nigeria's first Military Head of State. The ethnic composition of the conspirators and the political and military personnel who lost their lives in the coup conjoined to raise serious disquiet among other ethnic groups in Nigeria, particularly the Hausa-Fulani. This eventually led to the counter-coup of 29 July 1966. Aguiyi Ironsi, who had assumed power six months before, was killed along with his host, Lieutenant Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi, the military administrator of the Western Region. The Igbos felt cheated and wanted to leave Nigeria. They

demanded the creation of a sovereign state of Biafra, composed of states from the eastern and parts of the mid-western regions of Nigeria.

After months of intrigues, including a failed peace accord signed in Aburi, Ghana, by Nigeria's new Military Head of State, Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, and the military administrator of the Eastern Region, Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, on 30 May 1967, Colonel Ojukwu declared the immediate creation of Biafra as an independent nation. This, regardless of his intent, meant that war had begun. Biafran troops quickly conquered the mid-western region of Nigeria and started the march to Lagos. Gowon, in his capacity as the Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, immediately placed an embargo on 'Biafra' and then sent soldiers to halt the rebel aggression and drive towards Lagos. The international community took sides: the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Chad, Niger and a host of other countries stood with Nigeria, while Portugal, France, the Ivory Coast, Haiti and Gabon supported Biafra.

Lieutenant Buhari was one of the brave young officers who executed the counter-coup that brought General Yakubu Gowon into power. He knew that he would have to give everything to protect the government he helped bring to power. Moreover, he knew that if the southeast was allowed to secede, the southwest would soon agitate to become its own country, and the nation as it was would disintegrate.

### **Impact of the Civil War**

With the outbreak of the civil war in May 1967, Nigeria was boiling over. The Igbo had made good on their threat to secede from Nigeria and the federal military government of Yakubu Gowon refused to tolerate the violation of the territorial integrity of Nigeria, let alone preside over its disintegration. The federal military government thus mobilised many enlisted soldiers to go to war to keep Nigeria intact. As they battled on the war front, their spirit of patriotism and nationalism soared. They were ready to give everything to keep

Nigeria unified and peaceful, even to the ultimate sacrifice. Buhari was one of the young officers who went to war with this mindset. He was the Brigade Major of the Third Infantry Division at the onset of the war. He fought bravely at Awka before commanding a brigade at Makurdi.

He was the Adjutant and Company Commander of the 2 Battalion Unit, Second Sector Infantry of the 1st Division. Under his superintendence, the battalion advanced from Gakem near Afikpo to Ogoja, with support from an artillery squad led by Gado Nasko. On their way to Ogoja, Buhari and his men encountered brutal rebel forces that fired at them with bitter venom. Many of his men fell. A soldier standing beside him was killed by a rebel sniper. By sheer providence, Buhari survived such life-threatening moments in his illustrious career.

His battalion went on to subdue Ogoja within one week, seeking to gain entrance into Enugu at the flank so that they would be able to overpower the rebel stronghold. When the mission of conquering Afikpo was accomplished and he and his men sought to join with the 3rd Marine Commandos to gain entrance into Enugu via Nkalagu and Abakaliki, he was called up to go to Nsukka as the Brigade Major of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, which was led by Joshua Gin.

On the battleground, he oriented his men, reminding them that the war was not against the Igbo but the rebels, as many of his superior officers were Igbo, as were some of the men at the front with him. He sincerely wanted a unified Nigeria. He detested wars and wanted the order he saw when he first visited England to descend upon his country. The war showed him how expensive that order could be.

During the war, many of his men were felled by typhoid, malaria, hepatitis and other illnesses. He did everything to maintain his men's safety as they marched through forests, villages, towns and cities. In the month of Ramadan, neither Buhari nor his men fasted because it would reduce their strength with fatal consequences as they prosecuted the war. He understood that Islam



is a religion of peace and understanding that can permit human exigencies.

### **End of the War**

By the end of the war, Buhari had been promoted to the rank of Brigade Major and Commandant of the 31st Infantry Brigade. This promotion spoke volumes of his irrefutable and tremendous impact on the war. He went on to serve as the Assistant Adjutant General of the First Infantry Division Headquarters between 1971 and 1972. His sense of organisation developed significantly as the Chief Administrative Officer in charge of military personnel records. He learnt to analyse and use the personnel data available to him to educate the Nigerian military.

For further mastery of leadership expertise, in 1973, he was sent to Defence Services Staff College in Wellington, India, where he improved his leadership proficiency, as he submitted to the rigours of learning and discipline that came with the training. Between 1974 and 1975, he became the Acting Director of Transport and Supply at the Nigerian Army Corps Supply and Transports Headquarters.

### **Political Appointment**

Buhari was instrumental in the 1975 military coup d'état that installed General Murtala Muhammed as Military Head of State. Unsurprisingly, General Murtala Muhammed gifted him the governorship of the North-Eastern State – Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Taraba, Yobe and Adamawa. The appointment came in August 1975 and met him as a man of value and discipline. He was undoubtedly capable. His leadership attributes were evident; he had displayed them many times before the appointment. He oversaw the affairs of the Northeast, what are now six states of Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Yobe and Taraba, from 1 August 1975 to 3 February 1976.

The North-Eastern State was split into three states – Gongola, Borno and Bauchi, on 3 February 1976. He was the first governor of the newly-created state of Borno. However, he held the

position only through 15 February of the same year, when General Murtala Muhammed was assassinated in an abortive coup.

The military coup of March 1976 that resulted in the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed saw General Olusegun Obasanjo, the then second in command to General Muhammed, take over the reins of leadership as Military Head of State. General Obasanjo swiftly appointed Buhari as the Federal Commissioner for Petroleum and Natural Resources. In 1977 when the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) was created, Buhari served as the chairman of the body, and remained in that position until 1978. The NNPC resulted from the merger between the Ministry of Petroleum and the Nigerian National Oil Company.

During his tenure as federal commissioner, he ensured that the government made huge investments in petroleum storage facilities – a gathering system, pipeline system, chemical storage facilities, refineries, railroad facilities, etc. Ultimately, 21 petroleum storage depots were constructed and he set in motion the construction of pipeline systems intended to help connect Bonny Terminal and the refinery at Port Harcourt to all of the depots. He also signed the contract that would eventually ensure the construction of the Kaduna refinery.

### **Back in Training and Service**

Between 1978 and 1979, Buhari served as Military Secretary at the army headquarters. During that time, he was also a member of the Supreme Military Council. He was a colonel (1978–1980) when he left to further his military studies at the US Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He spent ten months studying on-campus and completed the studies with two years of distance learning. On completing the programme, he was awarded a master's degree in Strategic Studies. This supplemented his knowledge of war and international strategies and helped him polish his already exceptional leadership attributes.

When he returned to Nigeria after his studies in the US, he held various positions in the Nigerian Army: General Officer

Commanding (GOC), 4th Infantry Division: August 1980–January 1981; General Officer Commanding (GOC), 2nd Mechanised Infantry Division: January 1981–October 1981; General Officer Commanding (GOC), 3rd Armed Division: October 1981–December 1983. By 1983, he had commanded three of the four Nigerian Army divisions; he was the only army officer to have done so.

### **Becoming Military Head of State**

On 31 December 1983, the military struck again. Buhari was one of the leading officers who executed the 1983 Nigerian coup d'état. He was the General Officer Commanding (GOC), Third Armoured Division of Jos, when the military overthrew the weak, ineffectual civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. President Shagari was inaugurated on 1 October 1979 and was at the helm until 31 December 1983, when the military moved to overthrow him. The success of the Buhari-led coup brought him into power as Military Head of State, while Tunde Idiagbon functioned as Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters (second-in-command in government).

Military officers always generated valid reasons for seizing power. Major Adewale Ademoyega published a book, *Why We Struck*, in 1981, in which he explained why the military disrupted the first republic. General Buhari also offered his reasons for seizing power in 1983. These included the high level of corruption among civilian politicians and the continuing economic downturn that resulted in hardship and mass suffering in Nigeria. General Sani Abacha, who was then a brigadier and who announced the overthrow of the Shagari government on 31 December 1983, explained the overthrow of the administration due to a 'great economic predicament,' an 'inept and corrupt leadership' and a 'hopelessly mismanaged' economy, which made Nigeria a 'debtor and beggar nation' (Abacha, 1983). The other reasons he cited include the deplorable educational system, unemployment, food insufficiency and the poor healthcare system.

Many have stated that Buhari was reluctant to snatch power from President Shehu Shagari, but the other military officers

persuaded him. Even when he agreed, he insisted on a bloodless change of power. He seized power and then sent Brigadier Ibrahim Bako and his men to arrest Shehu Shagari. Ibrahim Bako turned out to be the only known fatality of the coup; even then, his death was believed to be an accident.

### **Power and Authority**

Upon his assumption of power, Buhari was eager to affect the lives and general well-being of Nigerian citizens. This led him to embark on several policy measures that had the unintended consequence of imposing some economic hardship on the populace initially. He set about altering the political power arrangement, first, by restructuring the government and installing a Supreme Military Council, a Federal Executive Council and a Council of States. A massive retrenchment exercise was conducted among the police and the civil service, eliminating 17 permanent secretaries, 13 naval officers and 34 police bosses. Some of the laws instated for the smooth running of government included the State Security (Detention of Person) Decree, the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree, the Public Offenders Decree and the Civil Service Commission Decree.

The promulgation of the Public Officers Protection against False Accusation, otherwise known as Decree 4 of 1984, by the Buhari administration, elicited widespread condemnation from commentators. However, the regime remained steadfast. The decree prohibited publishing firms, writers, journalists, etc. from publishing anything that the regime considered false. It stated, *inter alia*, 'Any person who publishes in any form, whether written or otherwise, any message, rumour, report or statement [...] which is false in any material particular or which brings or is calculated to bring the Federal Military Government or the Government of a state or public officer to ridicule or disrepute, shall be guilty of an offence under this Decree.' This decree officially silenced all government critics whether academics, entertainers or politicians.

Similarly, the Buhari administration's promulgation of the Special Tribunal (Miscellaneous Offences) Decree No. 2 of 1984 was considered draconian by many domestic and international observers. The decree sought to frontally tackle drug trafficking in Nigeria. Section 3 (2) (K) of the decree provided that 'any person who, without lawful authority deals in, sell, smoke or inhale the drug known as cocaine or other similar drugs shall be guilty under section 6 (3) (K) of an offence and liable on conviction to suffer death sentence by firing squad.' It also targeted oil theft and other economic crimes. The capital punishment that the decree attached to drug trafficking was heavily criticised. Buhari remained adamant that although he did not know much about most of the targeted drugs, he had been reliably educated on their detrimental effects not only on Nigerians, but on the world at large. When the renowned Sheik Abubakar Gumi confronted him about the harsh penalty for drug trafficking, he defended it by stating that he was not the one killing people; that offenders sinned against the state and not him personally.

### **Setting Up the War Against Indiscipline**

One innovation by the Buhari administration that was clearly borne of the Head of State's desire to replicate the orderliness he observed in Britain during his schooling was the introduction of the War Against Indiscipline (WAI). The programme and its enforcement agency, the WAI Brigade, were created to combat indiscipline and corruption in the Nigerian society. Starting from the coup speech broadcast that brought the regime to power, the conspirators' loathing of the widespread corruption and indiscipline that characterised Nigerian society during the Second Republic was apparent. The WAI was, therefore, inaugurated on 20 March 1984 to decisively address corruption and instil discipline in Nigerian citizens. It had five critical aspects: queuing, work ethic, nationalism and patriotism, anti-corruption and economic sabotage and environmental sanitation. The administration believed that the average Nigerian was unruly and needed an iron hand to reset their

mental state. Seemingly minor offences were punished with bizarrely long sentences. Whip-wielding military officers were installed in public places, e.g. airports, bus stops, banking halls, train stations, etc. to beat civilians into order. Students who were over 17 years of age were never to be caught cheating during exams – such an offence merited 21 years of imprisonment. Civil servants caught arriving late to work were made to ‘frog jump’ to their offices. Different Nigerian states took the execution of the programme to bizarre levels. Single women in Kaduna State, for instance, were asked to marry and stop prostituting themselves. Nigerians and the world over remember the Buhari administration more for its intolerance of indiscipline and corruption. Buhari loved his country and had not forgotten the order and sanity he encountered at the port of Liverpool as a boy. He had not forgotten his desire for such orderliness in Nigeria and accepted his opportunity to fulfil that dream.

He also wanted to free Nigeria from its overwhelming foreign and domestic debts. Oil had become Nigeria’s major means of international revenue generation and he sought to diversify Nigeria’s revenue base. There was also tremendous foreign pressure on him to weaken the naira against major international currencies, but he remained unwavering due to his deep sense of patriotism.

As part of his measures to support the economy, he devised some of the best-kept secrets in public policy-making in Nigeria. Even his close associates in the military were not privy to one of these secrets, which he shared only with his Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters, Tunde Idiagbon. This was a change to the nation’s currency, the naira. The naira was printed in a secret foreign location and brought to Nigeria. Many corrupt politicians had stashed cash in foreign bank accounts and unusual places in their Nigerian homes, including water tanks, underground tanks, ceilings, etc.

As soon as the public was informed that a new currency was available from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and that they would have 14 days to exchange their old currency for the new,

people raced to exchange their cash, especially corrupt politicians and businessmen who had stockpiled millions of naira during the Second Republic. Nobody was allowed to trade more than 400,000 naira at any given time in any bank. Those who sought to exchange more than 400,000 naira were questioned, and if they failed to provide convincing answers about the source of their wealth, law enforcement agencies swung into action to book the suspect. Many corrupt politicians and public office holders who attempted to launder large sums of money quickly found themselves and their accomplices confronted by the law.

### **Conclusion**

The Buhari administration's arrest and trial of corrupt politicians and other politically exposed people had far-reaching effects in very high places. Corruption eventually fought back. On 27 August 1985, General Muhammadu Buhari was toppled in a coup that was planned and executed by his close associate, General Ibrahim Babangida, in conjunction with some members of the Supreme Military Council. Some quarters argued that the coup was not unconnected with Buhari's hard stance on the import licence regime. Import licences were used to curb the effect of inflation. The federal government granted state governments the right to import food items. The states, in turn, disreputably sold the import licences to wealthy men who could pay handsomely for them. The wealthy men then imported the food items, hoarded them and sold them at prohibitive prices, thereby defeating the federal military government's aim in issuing the licences. Many members of the ousted National Party Nigeria (NPN) administration built stupendous wealth from such dealings. Government clamped down heavily on many people who tried to sabotage the system.

After the palace coup of August 1985, Buhari was arrested and detained in Benin city, in a bungalow heavily guarded by military officers. His family members were allowed to visit him and he had access to a TV that showed only two channels. Some of the officers who were closest to him at the time asserted that he had

known a counter-coup was imminent, but to stop it, he would have had to execute six to eight renowned military officers in active service. He considered that option very costly.

He spent three years in detention, where he prayed, ate three meals a day, exercised, read newspapers and welcomed visitors who were mostly family members. When his mother died in December 1988, the public pressed General Ibrahim Babangida to release him from detention. Babangida bowed to public feeling and released Buhari, who went to his hometown of Daura and kept a low profile for a long time before returning to run for the office of president as a civilian in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015. He won the seat in 2015 and was sworn into office as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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## 2

### **Muhammadu Buhari: Presidential Style and Leadership**

**Udu Yakubu**

#### **Introduction**

The name, 'Muhammadu Buhari', conveys legendary and mythic significance in Nigeria's political stratosphere. The puritanical aura it exudes has over the years imbued it with unprecedented national and global strength. However, the man behind the name is a paragon of humility, firmness, truth, loyalty and patriotism. He easily gained a powerful reputation for his campaigns against corruption, but little did people know that his persona as an apostle of discipline, patriotism, frugality and verity exists beyond the precincts of reputation; it is the character of the man. He is the same person before the public's eyes and behind doors. Buhari does not need to live in the corridors of power to show the world that he is a man of impeccable character. Character is said to be like smoke; as much as one tries to conceal it, it will find a way to slip out. He was not obsessed with power, but providence found in him a man who was suited for exalted positions.

Notably, while some of his behavioural patterns were the product of painstaking cultivation, others were manifestations of his natural makeup. His great sense of responsibility was not stumbled into when he attained power. As a schoolboy, he held several key positions: class monitor, house prefect, house captain and head boy.

In these positions, his leadership qualities began to emerge as he showed that he loved to diagnose and solve complex issues for people's general well-being. He also never wasted words; he expressed his mind as briefly and clearly as possible. During this period, he realised that to make a great impact, it is important to be strategically placed in positions that enable swift actualisation of the desired effect. He knew that if he could apply his innate leadership qualities in key positions, his country would be changed for the better, and he understood the place of education in national development. Thus, he changed his childhood disposition towards education and took his studies seriously. He understood that if he had studied his childhood dream, medicine, his impact would be limited to the health sector. This informed his decision to heed the Emir of Katsina's encouragement for young men to go into the military.

Throughout his military training, Buhari appeared as a man of tough resolve, endurance and desire for constant development. This explains why he went through all of the levels of his training with the determination of a Trojan. The subsequent ongoing leadership training he received helped to refine and position him for the task ahead, including intricate matters of national and international significance. This chapter draws upon numerous anecdotes that illustrate President Buhari's dexterity in handling complex national and international issues to review his leadership style and the strategies by which he achieved numerous outstanding results.

### **Early Leadership Experiences**

When the Nigerian Civil War broke out in 1967, Buhari had amassed numerous military and leadership training experiences, both at home and abroad, as a military officer. All of these experiences were instrumental as he led his men on crucial military expeditions. The troops he commanded conducted themselves with utmost discipline, dedication and professionalism. Thus, they recorded victory after victory against the rebel forces they encountered.

Furthermore, showing that he was not all mettle and no heart, he took utmost care of his soldiers as they journeyed through towns, villages and forests. He was attentive to their health and discouraged them from abstaining from food during fasting seasons, in line with religious dictates in conflict or strife situation, to protect their stamina and support their overall survival in hostile territories. He took care to protect them from diseases such as malaria, typhoid, hepatitis, etc., which were rampant in the theatres of war. Buhari extended his kindness to all of his men, who included soldiers of Igbo extraction. He also taught his soldiers that the war was not against the Igbos as a people but against rebel groups who had taken arms against the Nigerian state, threatening the nation's continued existence. Such thinking grew from his deep well of patriotism and ardent desire to keep Nigeria an indivisible, united nation. He inspired nationalism in his followers every time he was presented with the opportunity to lead.

When General Murtala Muhammed appointed him as the military governor of the North-Eastern State on 1 August 1975, he handled the political and economic affairs of the state with utmost integrity. His tenure in that position was short-lived due to the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed on 13 February 1976 in an abortive coup.

Murtala's successor, General Olusegun Obasanjo, moved Buhari to the sensitive position of Federal Commissioner for Petroleum and Natural Resources in 1976. After a discussion to identify a disciplined, truthful person who could manage the affairs of the petroleum ministry, opinions were unanimously in his favour once Buhari's name was mentioned. He applied his ingenuity to the position as he made landmark impacts in his management of Nigeria's petroleum industry. Therefore, when the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) was established, he was appointed the first chairman of the board.

Notably, most of Nigeria's refineries were built under his oversight as chairman of the NNPC. The refineries were not only constructed but also put to efficient use. Buhari was instrumental in

the construction of 20 oil depots across Nigeria. This project involved installing more than 3,200 kilometres of pipelines. He signed a forward-looking contract that eventually put the Kaduna and Warri refineries in place after his tenure. He engineered the master plan that brought Nigeria's petrochemical and liquefied natural gas into modernity, even after he had left power. His record of probity in public office remained undented, despite the efforts of detractors to throw dirt at him at one time or the other. Some of his most determined critics, like Nyesom Wike and Femi Fani-Kayode among others, subsequently recanted and vouched for his faithfulness, financial discipline and patriotism.

Buhari's Spartan military training as a young officer at the Nigerian Military Training College was a crucial influence on his leadership style as he gradually proceeded through the military ranks. That disciplined lifestyle affected his handling of Nigerians when he later served Nigeria in different political capacities, acting as a combatant in the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970); Military Governor of the North-Eastern State of Nigeria (1975); Federal Commissioner (equivalent to a ministerial appointment) for Petroleum and Natural Resources (1977); the first chairman of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC); Military Head of State (1983–1985) and democratically-elected president (2015–2023).

Within the military, he displayed noteworthy leadership qualities in positions such as military secretary (1978–1979), the Supreme Military Council, General Officer Commanding (GOC), 4th Infantry Division (August 1980–January 1981), General Officer Commanding (GOC), 2nd Mechanised Infantry Division (January 1981–October 1981) and General Officer Commanding (GOC), 3rd Armed Division (October 1981–December 1983).

He presented shining examples of quality leadership in his short reign as Military Head of State. The most notable, perhaps, was his disdain for corruption and disorderliness, which led to the introduction of the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) and the launching of its enforcement arm, the WAI Brigade. Under this

programme, people were required to queue when necessary regardless of their social status, and army officers and other law enforcement agencies were installed to whip erring members of the public into line. The WAI Brigade addressed issues surrounding disorderliness, poor work ethics, lack of nationalism and patriotism, corruption and economic sabotage and poor environmental sanitation.

All public officers who were indicted on corruption-related charges were summarily tried by military tribunals created for that purpose and headed by capable military officials and dismissed if found guilty. People, particularly the high and mighty, whose sources of wealth were questionable were arrested, prosecuted accordingly and served punishments commensurate to their offences. While they served their jail terms, their unlawfully acquired assets were confiscated by the government. For the first time, Nigerians began to control themselves, became acutely aware of their civic duties and began to understand the role of government in achieving a society free from vices.

Buhari's military administration performed an incredible surgery on the Nigerian people's collective psyche, transforming it from individualism to forced nationalism. Law and order reigned supreme in every corner of the country, as both the leaders and the led comported themselves to avoid becoming scapegoats in the new dispensation. There was no room for godfatherism, drug peddling or other activities that are injurious to national life. The Federal Government forcibly opened thousands of warehouses where essential commodities were hoarded and distributed their contents to people free of charge or at very low prices. Top government officials in the deposed Shagari government were generally found to be the culprits. One well-known case was that of Dr Umaru Dikko, Shehu Shagari's minister of transportation. It was alleged that he hoarded goods worth hundreds of millions of naira. Such high-profile cases of corruption were decisively handled during Buhari's military administration.

Buhari's firmness, frugality, and discipline did not stop at ensuring a clean and orderly society. It also created a sane economic atmosphere by scrutinising the needless financial leakages and recklessness of government officials. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, in 2002, aptly described Buhari-Idiagbon economic policies as 'a progressive move away from a political economy dominated by parasitic and subservient elite to one in which a nationalist and productive class gains ascendancy' (Sanusi, 2002). Buhari's nationalist spirit could not overlook the senseless plundering of the country's wealth, especially by those who should have protected its wealth and inheritance. This is perhaps one of the latest and most precise assessments of his economic integrity as a military head of state. He was more concerned about Nigerians' welfare than the economic projections of foreign experts. Like Sanusi, Bukola Oyeniyi described his administration's economic policies as a war against local and foreign capitalism in his 2015 paper, 'General Muhammadu Buhari and Nigerian Politics'. In his words:

*It can be argued that Buhari's economic policy was both an internal and external struggle against global capitalism, as represented by the IMF, World Bank, multilateral trade organizations and the internal (Nigerian) agents in the garbs of class contractors, commission agents, and public officers who became parasitic and unpatriotic agents and spokespersons of global capitalism.*

Before Buhari's administration, Nigerian government officials, business moguls and international financial bodies had collaborated in several ways to exploit Nigeria. He saw through their schemes and decided to sever the bonds between these actors. He focused on the development of the domestic economy without neglecting Nigeria's international obligations, particularly its creditors. The endemic corruption of the Shehu Shagari administration threatened to sink the nation's economy, and he was

determined to reverse the country's economic fortunes, regardless of the cost. Government officials of the Shagari administration siphoned public funds through illicit schemes and inflated contracts. At the end of Shagari's government, Nigeria owed 21.991 billion naira in domestic debt and 11.100 billion naira in foreign debt.

Nigeria's tremendous balance of payments deficit impeded its ability to make certain imports. Local production firms and their foreign allies could no longer make foreign exchanges to import germane raw materials for the production of goods. Unscrupulous people used import licensing deals to create artificial scarcity that positioned them to accumulate sordid wealth. The global pandemonium created by falling oil prices and the Shagari administration's debauchery did not help matters. Petroleum was the lifeblood of Nigeria's economy and any reduction in price spelt economic doom. Nigeria's international revenues crumbled steadily in the years leading to Buhari's takeover from President Shehu Shagari. Oil production fell from 2.56 million barrels per day to 1.44 million barrels per day.

Consequently, earnings from oil also plummeted to unbelievable figures. The manufacturing industry felt the effects in no small way. In 1983, about one-fifth of Nigeria's private sector, an estimated 107 companies, either completely closed down or suspended production for at least a month or two. Companies that stayed active downsized, and the retained employees suffered deep salary reductions. Many other companies lacked the financial means to pay their workers at all.

These factors meant that Buhari's military government struggled with economic instability due to corruption in high and low places. This infuriated Buhari and made him wonder how effectively he could apply the vast wisdom of his training to salvage the economic situation of the country he loved so dearly. He reasoned that the orderliness that he encountered when he first arrived in Britain could not have been possible without a level of economic stability. He knew that this was his opportunity to enact all his dreams for his beloved Nigeria. Although he quickly found

that this task would be difficult, he was ready to surmount any obstacle to create national prosperity. He was convinced that despite the gusto with which most Nigerians pursued personal prosperity, they failed to realise that without national prosperity, no true economic liberation could exist.

In a bid to help Nigeria fix her dire economic issues, the Bretton Woods institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, mounted enormous pressure on the Buhari administration to devalue the naira. The currency devaluation scheme was a component of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) prescribed by these institutions for the Buhari administration, as for other Third World countries groaning under the global economic downturn. Neoclassical economic theory maintains that a country can reconfigure its balance of payments deficit through currency devaluation and that there are conditions that can make such devaluation beneficial. Such conditions were not present in Nigeria at the time. Nigeria's exports to foreign countries were not denominated in naira. Devaluing the naira would have been practical if Nigeria's exports were priced in naira and its imports were priced in the currency of the countries from which Nigeria purchased.

In addition, Nigeria did not seem to need this solution, as its imports far outweighed exports. A significant decrease in imports and the prices of imported goods or products would also have created good conditions for the proposal. Buhari's economic team, led by Dr. Onaolapo Soley, saw through the intent of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). They rejected the proposal, as the SAP would further worsen Nigeria's already strained economic state. Nigeria's exports would never be able to counterpoise the loss that devaluation would enact. The Buhari-Idiagbon administration reasoned with the team and refused the SAP in favour of more autochthonous ways to repair the economy. Instead, they selected a compact fiscal policy that exuded Buhari's character as an individual and anticipated the end of the global oil crisis. His government adopted some of the prescriptions of the IFIs'



recommendations for economic asceticism, widely known as economic austerity measures. It was a radical programme that elicited complaints from the public, but the rationale soon became apparent. Imports that led to debt accumulation were halted to prevent the accumulation of arrears from foreign payments. Foreign exchange revenues soared as Nigeria's debts received a financial injection. By 1985, inflation fell to 5%.

Overall, the Buhari-Idiagbon regime was characterised by the need to bring economic despoilers to book, cut the labour force down to a reasonable number of committed and patriotic workers, make the best of petroleum products and instil financial discipline in many Nigerians.

### **The Road to the Presidency**

Buhari undertook a long and arduous road back to power after a 30-year political hiatus. He had tasted a thousand bitter pills, just as he had enjoyed the marrow of power in different capacities as a military man. His roles in coups and counter coups would never be unnoticed in the annals of Nigeria's history. His ousting was an interesting episode in his life as he brushed with death. He could have been killed during the Ibrahim Babangida-led coup that ousted him. Instead, he was confined to life in detention in a bungalow in Benin. For a man of his vitality, life in that bungalow was harrowing, despite the privilege of his family having access to him. Freedom meant everything to a man who had always sought to free his country from a thousand vices. His relatives cared for his Daura farm while he was detained.

In 1988, when his mother died, he regained freedom, divorced his first wife, and married Miss Aisha Halilu. As he went about his quiet home life, it was clear that life in detention had not broken his spirit. His willingness to participate in the socioeconomic matters of his surroundings was evident in all that he did. He became the inaugural chairman of the Katsina Foundation, established to stimulate and sustain socioeconomic change in Katsina State. He later served as the Chairman of the Petroleum

Trust Fund (PTF) during General Sani Abacha's regime. The Abacha government instituted the body to direct the revenue generated from petroleum products into developmental projects all around Nigeria. The government could not think of a worthier chairman to steer the affairs of this body than General Buhari. He rewarded the confidence reposed in him by performing so excellently that *New African*, a London-based magazine, described the PTF under Buhari's supervision as an exceptional 'success story' for its financial discipline and procedural transparency.

Buhari never forgot his earliest visit to Britain, when he won the holiday scholarship as a boy, and the order he saw in a sane society. He continued to yearn for that order for his dear country. He felt that his 20-month reign between 1983 and 1985 was a dream aborted. He wanted power, not for himself, but for his country. He realised that power should be freely conferred by the people for the government to have legitimacy. He envisioned the beauty and order he could achieve for his country. The desire for order, discipline and an end to political corruption never let him abandon the dream to once again lead Nigeria. In his first attempt at the presidency through the ballot box in 2003, the then-incumbent president, Olusegun Obasanjo, himself a retired general and former military head of state, defeated him with over eleven million votes; Buhari ran on the platform of the major opposition party at the time, the All Nigeria Progressive Party (ANPP). Obasanjo's was a landslide victory by all standards, but Buhari remained undeterred.

In the build-up to the 2007 general election, the ANPP adopted Buhari for the second time as its consensus presidential candidate on 18 December 2006. The major challenger for the presidency was Umaru Yar'adua of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). Yar'adua was also from Katsina State, Buhari's state of origin. Yar'adua won the 2007 presidential elections with a tremendous 70% of the votes, while Buhari earned only 18%. Buhari believed that these figures only reflected the ruling party's dubious activities. He disputed the electoral results and refused to accept Yar'adua's idea of inclusivity in government. The 2007

election was adjudged by both domestic and international observers as the worst election ever witnessed in the country.

The British Department for International Development (DFID) summarised it thus: 'The Nigerian elections of April 2007 were judged by most observers to fall a long way short of the standards for credible, free and fair elections and to be the worst in Nigeria's post-independence, electoral history' (DFID, 2007). Yar'adua himself admitted that the process that empowered him was not transparent and, therefore, committed to electoral reforms by installing an Electoral Reforms Committee.

In 2010, Buhari founded a new political party, the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). He explained that he founded the party 'as a solution to the debilitating, ethical, and ideological conflicts in my former party, the ANPP'. He wanted a party that understood his leadership ideology and thought his new party would help give him the political leverage he so desired. He believed in his dream for Nigeria. He would seek the presidency again on the platform of his new party in the 2011 presidential race when the CPC presented him as its consensus presidential candidate. This time, he opposed the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, who assumed office after Yar'adua's death in 2010. There were 20 presidential candidates in all, but the most formidable of them were President Jonathan (PDP), Ibrahim Shekarau (ANPP), Malam Nuhu Ribadu (Action Congress of Nigeria; ACN) and, of course, Buhari (CPC).

During the campaign, Buhari promised to support Sharia or Islamic laws in the northern states and to remove the power of immunity from government officials so that they could be tried if they were found wanting while in office. This augured poorly with members of the ruling class, who sought to hinder him from wielding power. Although Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP won the 2011 presidential elections with 22,495,187 votes, Buhari made a crucial statement of intent with 12,214,853 votes, placing second. This was perhaps the tonic he needed to keep his hope alive for the 2015 election.

His continuous effort at the polls was more than a desire for power; it was an expression of love for the country he refused to abandon. His greatest dream was to see a new country where everything worked. This passion to see things done right blinded him to the dangers along the path to power. He knew he would return to the campaign field in 2014 and did everything he could to be ready again. Many amazing events occurred that favoured the dogged man who loved his country too much to give up. Political shuffles collapsed some parties into the All Progressives Congress (APC), which was founded on 6 February 2013. The APC was the product of a merger of Nigeria's three strongest opposition parties: the ANPP, the CPC and the ACN. Factions from the PDP and the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) also found a home in the APC in the bid to democratically remove the PDP from power.

At the merger event, the parties were represented by active members: Ibrahim Shekarau, the chairman of the ANPP's merger committee; Tom Ikimi of the ACN; Senator Annie Okonkwo of the APGA; and Garba Shehu, who was chairman of the CPC's merger committee. After signing the resolution, they looked forward to formal approval from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The electoral body sent approval of the merger to the new APC party on 31 July 2013 and revoked the licences of the ACN, the CPC and the APGA, meaning that they could no longer operate as separate political parties.

The coalition was good news for Nigeria's democratic system and, especially, for Buhari, who saw the merger as a coalescence of all of his political might and an avenue for the expression of his dream. He had run under two of the parties that came together. This time around, he hoped that he would give the PDP a run for its money. However, before such hopes could be tested, a primary election had to be held within the party. The question then was: would the APC agree on Buhari's candidacy for the forthcoming presidential elections?

On 10 December 2014, the APC held its national convention to elect a presidential candidate. The conclusion of the exercise saw

Buhari win by a wide margin. This again affirmed that even the political class at the time had strong faith in Buhari's character. The campaign for the 2015 presidential elections began. The party structured the campaign around Buhari's character as an earnest reformer, a disciplinarian and an honest public servant. His reputation from his days in the military, especially his stint as a military head of state, echoed. He was a titanic figure who was strong enough to support the party's campaign claims. Many PDP members who were in power feared that if Buhari became president, he would target them. They did everything to kill his ambition. President Jonathan asked for him to be eliminated from the presidential race as he failed to produce evidence of his education, claiming that his certificates were lost in the 1985 invasion of his house when he was ousted.

During the campaign, Buhari condemned the Boko Haram insurgency that raged in Nigeria's northeast and promised to end it once he was elected into office. This caused his popularity to soar and had Nigerians yearning for his presidency even before the election. President Jonathan had not been able to control the insurgency and a host of other security issues besieging the country. Understandably, people were tired of not being able to sleep in their houses or know if their children would come home from school in one piece or at all. Buhari further exhorted Nigerians to shun religious violence and all forms of division that undermined national cohesion. In 2014, he also escaped a bomb attack on his life in Kaduna. Many people died in the attack, but it did not dampen the patriotic zeal in his heart. He had his eyes fixed on the goal of becoming the president and fixing Nigeria and would not allow distractions in any form.

Buhari and his campaign group seemed to be pressing all the right buttons. The digital arm of the campaign was polished, with several tactics intended to drive the coming election towards him. Lai Mohammed worked tirelessly, as Bola Tinubu, Rotimi Amaechi and Adams Oshiomhole, among many others, sought to ensure victory for the retired general. Buhari promised to end the troubles

arising from militant groups while strengthening the domestic protection of citizens' lives and property. Endorsements started pouring in for him as the campaign continued. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) adopted him as its candidate in January 2015. Before the elections in February 2015, ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo tore up his PDP membership card and announced his support for him.

The presidential elections of 2015 were dramatic and tense as the votes tilted in Buhari's favour. The PDP fought furiously to achieve victory again, but Nigerians had had too much of a government that appeared to misapprehend the science of governance. During the trial, he kept calm to see how the INEC would fare. While the drama continued, everything came to a crescendo when President Goodluck Jonathan called him to congratulate him on winning the election. The APC achieved 15,424,921 votes and the PDP earned 12,853,162; Buhari won by a margin of more than 2.5 million votes. This was more than a victory for the APC; it was a victory for democracy and the rule of law. The maturity of the two candidates helped avoid what could have been a national bloodbath. It was a victory for Buhari, his reputation and character and his dreams. The BBC News stated: 'Gen Buhari's victory is a hugely significant moment in Nigeria's turbulent history. Never before has a sitting president been defeated in an election.'

Buhari's victory was a lesson in resilience, discipline, goodwill and patriotism. He overcame every obstacle on his way to the presidency. After a close shave with death in the 1985 coup, a coward would have fled and never dreamt of power again. After failing three times at the polls, a man without a powerful will and heart would not dare the ballot box again. After the assassination attempt in Kaduna, a lesser man would have probably forgotten his dreams of orderliness for his country. Buhari, however, was built for these dangerous and spirit-killing moments. He knew that the greater the adversity, the sweeter the victory. Encomiums poured in for him from every part of Nigeria and the world, and even his fiercest critics recognised his resilience and calibre.

He saw his victory as a vindication of the electoral process and the willing embrace of democracy. 'We have proven to the world that we are people who have embraced democracy. We have put the one-party state behind us.' He de-emphasised his victory by noting that it was the people's victory: 'You, Nigerians, have won. The people have shown their love for this nation and their belief in democracy.' That is the statement of a patriotic soul who sees the country as an edifice beyond the purview of one man.

'I promised the country free and fair elections. I have kept my word,' President Goodluck Jonathan said after conceding defeat. A spokesperson for the APC praised Goodluck Jonathan for his move, saying, 'He will remain a hero for this move. The tension will go down dramatically.' The APC indicated that supporters should maintain a peaceful disposition and desist from violence. Buhari was quoted as saying, 'He or she is not with me, whoever does that [violence].' This shows that he is a man of peace even as he is a man of might. The Christian Association of Nigeria praised him as 'a man of peace' and 'a man of integrity and decency'. In his victory speech, Buhari stated, 'I assure you that our government is one that will listen to and embrace all. There shall be no bias against or favouritism for any Nigerian based on ethnicity, religion, region, gender or social status.' This is the character of a man who truly loves his country and wants to continuously give his best to build the nation.

### **Leadership Style in a Democracy**

Eight years soon passed after President Muhammadu Buhari achieved power as a democratically-elected civilian president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. His journey to power was as incredible as it could be. He made history as the first man to shatter the power of the incumbency in an election in Nigeria. He is also the second army general who reigned both as a military head of state and a civilian president in Nigeria's history. He achieved power the second time, 30 years after he was ousted in a coup, on the back of the reputation he built during his years as a military man who served

Nigeria in different capacities. He was a rock-solid patriotic man of steely discipline who never tolerated moral or financial decadence. This ruthless proponent of a saner Nigeria had unfinished business with the Nigerian project. People feared that his leadership approach would be too similar to his rigid handling of Nigeria as a military head of state. Some political experts worried about how he would administer Nigeria, having set aside the uniform of a military officer. Civilian rule does not support the use of force, and some experts prophesied a total failure. The antithetical natures of military and civilian rule drew concerns about his success in a democratic government where he would need the upper and lower chambers to act.

Buhari's first tenure as a civilian president was slow to begin. He delayed for six months before unveiling the members of his cabinet. Forming a democratic government must have been arduous for him, unlike acting as a military dictator.

Within his first three months in office, Nigerians, haunted by the memory of his military rule, started to discipline themselves. The fear of Buhari was the beginning of wisdom. Government officials watched the president's body language closely. The fear of the president was even said to affect the prices of goods. This was a short-lived ripple effect; the real business of civilian governance began, and while Buhari's intolerance for financial indiscipline had not changed, he was dubbed 'Baba go slow' because he was initially slow to make major policy decisions. He could not go after corrupt officials as he had as a military head of state because of the rule of law. This meant that he had to apply substantial wisdom and self-control to handle his officials and Nigerians overall.

The most aspirational legislative programmes were instated during President Buhari's administration. Several life-advancing bills were passed and amended. One of the major laws enacted was the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, which prohibits anybody from carrying huge amounts of cash. It invalidates the 2011 Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act. The bill creates an actual legal framework to nullify and interdict money



laundering in Nigeria. The bill also invests the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) with the constitutional standing of the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering. This bill is emblematic of Buhari's desire to fight corruption in the political class, whose members move staggering sums while perpetrating unsavoury deals.

Another bill that is of utmost significance to Buhari's administration is the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill, 2022. The bill rescinds the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011, as amended in 2013. The bill enables the adept implementation of standard transcontinental mechanisms to combat terrorism. The Buhari administration has endeavoured to control terrorism and its financing. The state of security in Nigeria was appalling when Buhari was inaugurated. In a virtual meeting with members of the interim National Working Committee of the APC in 2020, President Buhari was commended for his effective efforts against terrorism after a careful assessment of the security issues bedevilling specific northern states between 2015 and 2020. Senator Atiku Bagudu, Chairman of the Progressives Governors Forum and Governor of Kebbi State, who spoke on his colleagues' behalf, praised the president for restoring the reign of peace and order in the northeastern states through practical policies and measures.

The safety of life and property was degraded in the years leading to 2015. Boko Haram sacked towns and villages and compelled the sudden closure of schools while increasing the alarming number of out-of-school children in the northeast (1.8 million). The northeast of Nigeria was a shadow. Inhabitants of the states became refugees elsewhere as they abandoned their homes for fear of being killed. Telecommunication facilities were destroyed to prevent instant communication and calls for rescue. Boko Haram destroyed bridges, roads and means of transportation to strand and kill people. Even the children of powerful northern families did not dare to travel home by road. The economic implications for the northeastern states were devastating. President Buhari's timely and passionate intervention has restored peace in places such as

Gashua, Ashaka, Potiskum, Damaturu, Biu, Geidam, Mubi, Gombe, Yola, etc.

Buhari's administration also looked deeply into the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Establishment Act, 2018. The centre had been set up before the coming of the administration, but without any enabling law. The value and wisdom of properly and legally establishing the NCDC was demonstrated during the Coronavirus pandemic that struck between 2019 and 2021. The administration also instated the Police Trust Fund Act to upgrade efficient funding for the Nigeria Police Force (2019). This was followed in 2020 by the first extensive correction of Nigeria's police legislation since the 1943 Police Act.

Every achievement of the Buhari administration cannot be specified within the limited space of this piece, but we cannot forget the many notable executive orders, the completion of railway projects, roads and the housing system, the development of Nigeria's digital economy, the special grid interventions, the 4,000MW+ of power-generating assets, the innovative transformation of the oil and gas sector, the financing and investment in life-changing long-term projects, the inward look into Nigeria mineral resources, the agriculture for food and jobs programme, the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP); etc. President Buhari's non-interference approach to delegating official powers and duties to cabinet members is worthy of note. This is a crucial democratic trait as he allowed each arm of government to function without undue pressure and interference from the presidency. When a case lands in court, Buhari trusts the law to act appropriately. The courts failed him on several occasions. That was a burdensome encumbrance of the democratic system.

During the president's 80th birthday celebration, the former governor of Ogun State, Senator Ibikunle Amosun, expressed his gratitude while noting a few of the president's interesting traits. He mentioned the non-interference policy, saying, 'President Muhammadu Buhari is somebody that has a good heart. He mirrors others in his image. When he gives you any assignment, he would

believe you. He would just assume that you would do the right thing.' Senator Amosun sees this trait as a strength and states that it is a strength many people take for granted. President Buhari believed in the redemption of humanity via government institutions. That was why when he assigned a task, he refrained from listening to those who might have told him it was being mismanaged. He believed that a person who had given him their word would deliver.

In the case of the Department of State Services (DSS) versus the Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Godwin Emefiele, President Buhari did not utter a word. The DSS mounted pressure on the Federal High Court to issue a warrant of arrest, accusing the CBN governor of sabotaging the Nigerian economy and financing terrorism. Justice John Tsoho, who handled the matter, said there was no plausible reason to issue a warrant of arrest. He instead stated that the applicant seemed to intend to use the court as cover for an irregular procedure, which is unacceptable. DSS officials were said to be on the heels of the CBN governor, who left the country in December of 2022. The president was silent on the matter, although he appointed the CBN governor. Buhari's strong belief in the independence of governmental institutions helped him set a good example of how to handle anti-corruption bodies as he did not meddle in their matters except in crucial circumstances that demanded his attention.

His approach reflected his detached temperament; he often relied on Femi Adesina (Special Adviser on Media and Publicity) and Shehu Garba (Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media & Publicity) for correspondence. He preferred to speak to the media only when necessary. People thought the president ought to have waded into some issues during his administration. When the acting chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Ibrahim Magu, was accused of several crimes, the president kept mute, expecting the parties involved to act well as he had armed them with the power to perform their duties. President Buhari had sometimes taken his silence too far for a democratic setting. When the ENDSARS protest started, for instance, the president addressed

the nation and ordered immediate steps to be taken to resolve all the issues raised. He spoke to assuage the angry youths and the nation over issues of police brutality. He made two national broadcasts within a month. But many young people in the country seemed to have expected more. President Buhari believed that when he put people in positions, they ought to prove their capacity and worthiness through responsive and responsible actions. While President Buhari's approach to governance allowed people in power to function independently, it also aided him to handle the opposition, propaganda and strident criticisms of his government without bitterness. Sometimes, it was as though the president did not hear – but in truth, he always heard loud and clear.

Buhari is a patriot, not a politician. In April 2022, he noticed the political games political party members were playing in preparation for the 2023 presidential election. He called upon political party members across the board to set politics aside and focus on the crucial business of steering Nigeria to safety. While highlighting the ongoing war the government waged against banditry and insurgency, he urged party members to join his government to ensure victory in the area of security. He said he looked forward to seeing the reflection of this spirit in the relationship between the parties and the government, especially as the electioneering season would soon commence. John Mayaki, an APC chieftain in Edo State, specifically and angrily denounced President Buhari for his non-interference and negligence towards party matters, claiming that the president's attitude towards party matters caused the APC to lose the governorship elections in Edo and Osun States.

President Buhari also came under some criticism for what was not more than his calm approach to controlling the Covid-19 pandemic. Many Nigerians with access to media platforms often thought that the president should share the podium with them. But that was not his style. In a nationwide broadcast on 29 March 2020, he outlined the steps the government had adopted to combat the virus and limit its spread. To ease Nigerians' minds, he stressed that

neither overreaction nor underreaction existed in Nigeria's fight against Covid-19. For him, achieving the right actions by the appropriate agencies and experts was essential. Buhari's administration effectively used the expertise of Nigerian medical professionals while cushioning the effect of the pandemic on average Nigerians through palliatives. Nigeria's management of the Covid-19 pandemic turned out to be more successful than what obtained in most parts of the world, and for her large population, she suffered some of the lowest number of deaths across the world.

President Buhari was bent on leaving the electoral process better than he found it in 2015. He had delayed signing the Electoral Act amendment because he felt that certain sections were unconstitutional, especially Section 84 (12). He believed that the Electoral Act (Amendment) Law 2022 would create a better future for the electoral process in Nigeria by introducing new and effective technology and increasing the desire to achieve transparency. Before the 2019 presidential elections, he promised his supporters that he would reward their loyalty. This was not an empty promise.

At the 78th birthday celebration of Ibrahim Gambari, President Buhari's foreign minister during his military regime and his chief of staff in his second coming, Gambari expressed his respect for the president, who often rewarded loyalty and never forgot good deeds. Gambari explained that when he was offered the job of the Chief of Staff by the president, Buhari brought out a picture that was taken in June 1985 at an OAU summit, in which Buhari was sitting in the middle and his chief press secretary at the time, Wada Maida, was to his right. Buhari asked Gambari whether he remembered the picture and Gambari responded that he remembered the occasion but not the picture. Buhari reminded him that Gambari, as his foreign minister back in 1985, was being brought back 35 years later when he as president found an opportunity to do. He emphatically stated that they were interrupted then and he was bringing Gambari back so that they could continue where they stopped. When Gambari politely requested to take the picture to make a copy for himself, Buhari

declined, saying, 'No, I kept mine; go and find yours.' Reflecting on that incident, Gambari stated:

*There are reasons why I put that picture in front of my office. First, to return to the important point of departure; second, to show the kind of person our president is. He doesn't forget those who have worked with him, who have served him loyally and in whom he has confidence. Some other people use and dump, not him (Gambari, 2022).*

Gambari's case is just one of many. Buhari is a man of loyalty and patriotism. How he drove with Senator Ibikunle Amosun through the dangers of the road despite the senator asking him to go back because the situation looked hazardous made Amosun wonder at the manner of man Buhari was. At that point, the president earned the loyalty of the Ogun State ex-governor.

President Buhari brooked no malice in governance. This is exemplified in his relationships with officials who served administrations before his. Whenever they came to him for help, he never shut the door on them. He listened to them patiently and helped however he could. He maintained a good relationship with Olusegun Obasanjo, Goodluck Jonathan, and a host of other ex-presidents and heads of state. In his quest to advance the course of humanity, he lent aid to the likes of Amina Mohammed, Akinwunmi Adesina, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, etc., who all rose to international prominence. He accommodated these others because he understood that the human project is greater than any specific individual and their ego.

Buhari believed in the right process for political succession because success without a successor is a failure at best. He did not struggle to submit his will to the will of the party majority, as he was himself a beneficiary of consensus on his road to power. However, whoever would be the beneficiary must merit it so as not to tarnish the legacy of past administrations.

President Buhari's foreign policy was inward-looking; it focused on Nigeria's domestic economy, then its nearest neighbours, West Africa, Africa and, finally, the world. His Chief of Staff stated this when he explained how the president thinks about Nigeria and the world:

*In his [Buhari's] earlier incarnation, as Head of State, the defining feature of his policies was concentric circle of Nigerian foreign policy. That our interests, our efforts, will be concentrated on promoting Nigeria's interests in concentric circles at the epicentre; the defence of Nigeria's integrity, the prosperity, the welfare of its people. But next is the neighbouring countries, then West Africa, then Africa, and then the rest of the world. And he has proved the continuity of Nigeria's foreign policy in this sense by the fact that the first countries he visited after being sworn-in, were the neighbouring countries (Gambari, 2022).*

At the president's 80th birthday, citing two examples, Buhari's Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, revealed that the president's sense of humour was undervalued. The first was the president beckoning to him to tell him that Rotimi Amaechi was one of the people who usually finished the groundnuts and other foods at the lounge before other people arrived. He said this because, during the meeting, Rotimi Amaechi seized his documents and went into the lounge as if he were going for something important, only to be seen snacking! The second example was when the president travelled to England for a medical check-up and the doctor asked him not to fast. He told the vice president that he almost hugged the doctor for saying so. Piety does indeed come at a cost!

### **Conclusion**

During his service, Buhari achieved several awards: Grand Commander of the Federal Republic (GCFR), Commander of the Federal Republic (CFR), the Defence Service Medal (DSM), the National Service Medal (NSM), the General Service Medal (GSM), Loyal Service and Good Conduct (LSGCM), Forces Service Staff (FSS), and the Congo Medal Global Seal of Integrity (GSOI), among others. History is unequivocally on the side of President Muhammadu Buhari, the great icon of discipline and patriotism whose great impact on Nigeria's development would remain indelible.

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# 3

## **Muhammadu Buhari: The Man and the Myths**

**Alexander Essien Timothy**

### **Introduction**

Muhammadu Buhari is among a very short list of leaders privileged to preside over the affairs of their country in their lifetime. Buhari has been at Nigeria's helm, first as a military Head of State (31 December 1983–27 August 1985), and then as a democratically-elected president (29 May 2015–29 May 2023). Naturally, this has made him a fitting subject for several treatises and biographies. There is no gainsaying that President Buhari is a great man, even if only by virtue of having led the greatest black nation on earth at two different critical periods during the country's political life. The heights he has reached has inevitably caused Muhammadu Buhari to be inescapably enmeshed in an assortment of myths, so intricately woven into his public image that it is nigh impossible to separate the man from the myth. Here, we use the term 'myth' as in the non-technical conceptualisation by Cohen (1969, p. 337):

*In popular usage, the term 'myth' is almost always intended pejoratively: here, my beliefs are a strong conviction, yours a dogma, his a myth. Myths, on this view, are erroneous beliefs clung to against all evidence. The term is then synonymous with fallacy*

*and old wives' tale, and its usage conveys the implication that the believer lives, at best, in cloud--cuckoo land and, at worst, in a state of savage perdition.*

A myth, therefore, is not the opposite of truth. In other words, it is not necessarily false. Rather, a myth might be an exaggerated truth. Sometimes, simple embellishments can add up to form a thick maze, or a dense web, around truth – so much so that untangling the real from the imagined might become impossible. According to Smith and Buxton (2022), myths are ‘capable of describing what people can never ‘see for themselves’ however rational and observant they are’. That said, this chapter examines the myths that have evolved around Muhammadu Buhari, how these myths have developed, and the methods by which they have been spread and sustained. The chapter attempts to drill through the mythic layers to uncover the man behind the mythic figure. The study draws upon data obtained from published articles, online news outlets, and personal interviews.

### **Muhammadu Buhari in the Public Psyche**

Public knowledge and evaluation of Muhammadu Buhari became prominent in 1983, when he came to power via a military coup that overthrew the democratically elected administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. This marked the beginning of the myth that today surrounds the man. Buhari’s short-lived regime presented him as reticent and laconic, while his unsmiling deputy, Tunde Idiagbon, served as the public face of the administration (Ibrahim, 2022). A significant feature of the regime was the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) campaign. Overnight, the culture of queuing up to be attended to in public places became a new national norm. Prior to the emergence of the Buhari-Idiagbon administration, Nigerians had gained notoriety for always rushing to be attended to at public places, rather than taking turns. All that changed when the administration launched, and vigorously enforced, the WAI

programme. People who formerly would jump queues began to wait for their turn instead. In the university refectories, students queued in an orderly manner for their meals, queued to take buses, and queued to fetch water. At petrol stations, where drivers used to jostle one another, they queued for fuel, and drivers imbibed the culture of orderliness in traffic. WAI became a social movement that significantly affected how Nigerians comported themselves in both their private and public lives. At offices, workers arrived promptly. Many politicians were jailed on charges of corruption. The influence was pervasive and far-reaching.

Although the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* described the War Against Indiscipline as a programme that sought to inculcate positive societal values in Nigerian society, the reference work's entry nonetheless derided the regime as totalitarian and repressive. This evaluation was validated by the brutal execution of Lawal Ojuolape, Bernard Ogedengbe and Bartholomew Owoh through a retroactive decree for trafficking in psychedelic drugs (Soyomo, 2014). The execution of the trio was condemned locally and internationally. In 2015, shortly before he was elected as civilian president of Nigeria, President Buhari explained in an interview with Al Jazeera why he had to execute the drug traffickers:

*The question of executing people was about people dealing in drugs. We said cocaine and associated drugs were not developed or produced in Nigeria. People who want to make money at the expense of health, lives of people, go to the countries that produce these substances and make Nigeria a transit camp for drugs, destroying Nigerian communities ... (Urhobo Today, Feb 10, 2015)*

Arguably, beyond General Buhari's concerns about the health of Nigerians, the executions also functioned as demonstrations of the regime's unequivocal zero tolerance for criminality. Moreover, the regime intended them to serve as deterrents to other citizens

who might have been nursing criminal intents. Such events as the execution of the drug traffickers and imprisonment of currency traffickers helped build the narrative of Buhari as an anti-corruption czar. This narrative would play a significant role in shaping his future political trajectory.

### **The Anti-Corruption Champion**

Due to the erroneous perception by many of his military regime as draconian and brutal, during his unsuccessful attempts for the presidency in 2003, 2007 and 2011, Buhari's opponents routinely brought up his past performance during his military days in the 1980s to discredit him. However, in 2015, the precarious security situation in the nation, and the deep-seated corruption that characterised the Jonathan administration, positioned Buhari as perhaps the only person capable of saving Nigeria from imminent collapse. Based mainly on his larger-than-life image as a firm campaigner against corruption, Muhammadu Buhari went on to defeat an incumbent president, a feat that had never before been achieved in the history of the country. Some commentators have even suggested that his return to power was based more on the strength of a faulty myth rather than a record of demonstrable achievements (Amuta, 2021).

Indeed, the myth of Buhari's 'irrevocable incorruptibility' (Umar Bello, 2012), including his image as a rigorous opponent of corruption, has fossilised. One of Buhari's biographers attested thus: 'I make bold to say that many Nigerians see in him an avatar of integrity or barometer for probity' (Anokwute, n.d.). Amuta (2021) concurred that 'somehow, a Buhari myth had accumulated in our public consciousness. It was a myth of honesty, personal discipline, considerable integrity, Spartan lifestyle, patriotic commitment, fidelity to transparent and effective governance with minimal tolerance for corruption'. However, if Buhari's incorruptibility had been solely a myth, then, as Bola Ahmed Tinubu stated, 'history has a way of clearing the myths so that things can be said clearly and

objectively' (Premium Times, 2022). We, therefore, commit the myth of the man, Muhammadu Buhari, to the scrutiny of history.

How has the myth of Buhari's incorruptibility fared during the current democratic dispensation? Udumaga et al (2018) sought to investigate whether there were 'more credible and observable effectiveness of the fight against corruption', and whether the regime truly maintained zero tolerance for corruption. Their study found that although there was more credible, observable evidence of the fight against corruption, the regime did not consistently maintain zero tolerance. In a similar vein, Thompson (2020), in an assessment of the Buhari administration's anti-corruption campaign from 2015 to 2019, acknowledged that the regime had waged a war against corruption. However, he noted that there were insinuations in some quarters that said war had not yielded the desired result of curbing corruption, because it had been waged along seemingly political lines.

President Buhari himself has no illusions about corruption in Nigeria, either before or during his time as president. Chukwuemeka (2020) reported that President Buhari had, on two occasions, confessed before foreign media that corruption was rife in Nigeria. This accords with the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) (2021), which ranked Nigeria 154 out of 180 countries, with a score of 24 over 100, or 2.4 of 10. Does the perceived slow pace of Buhari's war against corruption, though, make it a failure? Of course, not. Such an assumption would be fundamentally wrong, as appreciable gains have been recorded in the onerous task of resolving corruption in Nigeria. In part, the slow pace of the war is attributable to the bureaucratic bottlenecks associated with decision-making in a democratic setting. President Buhari alluded to this when asked why his government was slow to prosecute corrupt individuals. He averred that 'this is a democratic government and everything has to follow due process; the Judiciary is tasked with making convictions and there is nothing we can do without waiting for the legal process to run its course'. He confessed that while he would have loved the conviction process to be faster,

the judicial process inevitably dawdles in most cases, and that there was nothing he could do to fast-track the operations of the Judiciary, which is an independent arm of the government.

In contrast to the slow pace of the Judiciary, it was no coincidence that Buhari's re-emergence in 2015 led to the immediate rejuvenation of the nation's anti-graft agencies, whose members were injected with a renewed sense of service in the fight against corruption. During the Jonathan administration, the anti-graft agencies had been accused of being on permanent hibernation; they looked on while politicians swam in the cesspool of sleaze with impunity. Massive corruption was the order of the day and it was an open secret that many high-profile cases of misappropriation of large amounts of public funds had been perpetrated by top government officials, including those considered to be the president's friends and close confidants.

Within the first few months of Buhari's administration, the mind-boggling disclosure of high-profile fund diversion cases – such as the \$2.1 billion that had been earmarked for the war against insurgency through the Office of the National Security Advisor, but was channelled instead into the political activities of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in preparation for the 2015 elections – validated many Nigerians' suspicions regarding deep financial mismanagement under Jonathan's government. Other startling revelations that emerged, such as the discovery of vast amounts of both local and foreign currencies quarantined in several private and public places without any credible explanation as to their sources, only served to further expose the depth of the financial rot and reinforce public confidence in Buhari as a champion of zero tolerance for corruption.

More players than those in the political opposition felt the poignant lash of Buhari's anti-corruption whip. When the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir David Lawal, an associate and long-time political ally of President Buhari, was found culpable in the diversion of funds meant to provide relief for displaced persons in the northeast, the president did not attempt to

cover up or sweep the incident under the carpet. The swift manner in which Lawal was promptly suspended from office, once he was found guilty of the allegations by a panel of investigation, was a symbolic move that sounded warning bells to all government officials that there would be no sacred cow in Buhari's fight against graft. The court, however, later dismissed the charges against Lawal, and declared him innocent of the allegations.

Many other high-profile cases of corruption, some predating the Buhari administration, received needed scrutiny under his government. Notably, these included the monumental sleaze uncovered in the dealings of the Petroleum Ministry under Diezani Allison Madueke, and included miscellaneous abuses of privilege by the former First Lady, Patience Jonathan, who was found culpable in several cases bordering on gross misappropriation of state assets and was required to forfeit large amounts of diverted assets to the government. The difference between the strict intolerance of Buhari's government towards corruption contrasted sharply with the indifference or laissez-faire attitude of his predecessor. This further boosted the positive public image of President Buhari, and heightened expectations of transparency and accountability in public financial transactions during his administration.

The figurative garb of an ardent anti-corruption fighter that had adorned Buhari since his military days thus was not a myth after all, but an inseparable trait deeply embedded in his persona.

### **The Myth of Jubril of Sudan**

One storyline that defied conventional wisdom, propagated with fervour and alacrity by certain groups with ulterior agendas, was the myth of a Sudanese impostor, a Buhari look-alike by the name Jubril, who allegedly was foisted on Nigeria by some mystical if not mythical members of Buhari's inner circle along with a powerful cabal, as a replacement for the "real" Buhari, who was rumoured to have died after a long illness. The myth itself was predicated and anchored on an earlier myth surrounding Buhari's alleged death in

London and a purported connivance of the British government to perpetuate a grand deception on Nigerians and indeed the world.

Let us first examine the myth of Buhari's death in a London hospital. How did this myth develop, and how was it sustained and embellished? According to Campbell (2017), soon after President Buhari's second medical trip to London on 7 May 2017, rumours of his death began to trend on social media – so much so that on 14 May presidential spokesman, Garba Shehu, described them in a Tweet as 'baseless rumours'. Bolder claims of the President's demise resurfaced on 15 May, just one day after Shehu's Tweet. According to Campbell, one blogger claimed that the president was dead and had been buried in Saudi Arabia. Another blogger claimed the body had been flown to Abuja.

It is common knowledge that social media plays an enormous role in myth propagation. The ease with which information or misinformation is conveyed from one source to another is a fitting testimony to the power of social media in its capacity to provide buoyancy and acceleration, irrespective of a claim's source, credibility, or credulity. After all, did a prank text not drive millions of Nigerians to take saline baths as an alleged antidote to the dreaded Ebola disease? (See *Premium Times*, 8 August 2014).

Sometimes, notwithstanding a myth's lack of credibility, such a rumour may actually foreshadow or underlie some people's subterranean or subconscious wishes. Is it improbable to assume there may have been elements in certain quarters who might have nursed the treasonous wish that the president's medical conditions be terminal? In contrast, is it not, then, improbable that the spread of the myth of the president's demise was a mere vocalisation of the wishes of some disgruntled mischief makers, that he should encounter his maker and retire to *Jaana* instead of Daura? Of course, one cannot pretend that Buhari was everyone's darling. He alluded to this in his inaugural speech, when he made the somewhat enigmatic statement, 'I belong to everyone and belong to no one!' It is not as though not being universally loved would be a malady for the president. There has never been anyone in history, whether king



or pauper, noble or plebeian, saint or devil, who was the darling of everyone. However, wishing the president dead went a little beyond speaking ill of him. One Festus Ogun, writing in the *Tribune Online* (14 February 2017), alleged that many people were even praying for the president's death:

*The rate at which some people are moving from mountains to campgrounds, wishing for their president's urgent death is very shocking and disappointing. Truly, President Muhammadu Buhari is ill and he is receiving treatments abroad. But the question that has been troubling my mind is this: when one's relative is not feeling too well, does one pray he dies, for whatsoever reason?*  
(<https://tribuneonlineng.com/wish-buhari-dead/>)

Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State found it necessary to rebuke those who wished President Buhari dead: '...Those that are wishing Mr President dead should go and confront God who brought Mr President to be President of Nigeria. It wasn't his making' (*Vanguard*, 31 January 2017).

That was in 2017 – but the death wishes did not abate. In 2019, a columnist even rumoured that the vice president, Yemi Osinbajo, had held a secret prayer for the death of the president. Of course, that allegation was quickly rebutted by the VP's spokesperson, for lacking either substance or any iota of evidence. Then, in December 2021, *The Vanguard* reported that a former presidential candidate had alleged that many people were still praying for the death of President Buhari. Naturally, members of the president's cabinet did not take kindly to such ominous wishes. The then Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal, responded that the President would outlive those who wished he would die. Lawal described as 'shameless' those who nursed such ill-will. The death rumours spread as quickly as wildfire; they also seemed highly probable to many people because

of Buhari's several protracted health challenges and his prolonged absences from Nigeria on medical vacations.

It was Buhari's alleged death that foreshadowed the myth of Jubril from Sudan. This secondary myth alleged that President Buhari had died while undergoing medical treatment in the UK, and had been replaced with a Sudanese look-alike whose original name was Jubril. This myth was concocted and disseminated principally by Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of a separatist group named IPOB – a group that had been locked in a hostile confrontation and running battle with the Nigerian state based on alleged marginalisation of Nigeria's southeast region. Transcripts of Nnamdi Kanu's broadcasts indicated that the narrative about Jubril was a propaganda strategy designed to de-market the president.

What made this rumour somehow plausible is that history is replete with political leaders who were rumoured to have used doubles. In the 16th century, during the outbreak of the devastating Black Plague, Queen Elizabeth was removed from London to the countryside to escape the pandemic. Unfortunately, as the legend goes, she died. Her guardians searched desperately for a ginger-haired girl to impersonate her. Failing to find one, they stumbled on a boy with the desired features and persuaded him to impersonate the queen. The fact that the queen never married nor had any children and the several historical comments about her masculinity, all aided the perpetuation of the myth. Wikipedia (2022) lists other historical figures widely claimed to have used body doubles or decoys:

1. Bernard Montgomery/Clifton James and 'Tex' Banwell (1944)
2. Heinrich Himmler/unknown (?–1945)
3. Joseph Stalin/'Rashid'/Felix Dadaev (1940s–50s)
4. Sukarno/unknown (1950s)
5. Henry Kissinger/unknown (1971)
6. Boris Yeltsin/unknown (1996–2000)
7. Saddam Hussein/several unknowns (1990s–2003)

Thus, it was remotely plausible for Buhari to have had a political decoy. Wikipedia (2022) describes a political decoy as a person who, because of their striking resemblance to a political leader, is hired to impersonate them and divert attention from the real person. The decoy is usually trained to act and talk like the person impersonated. Sometimes plastic surgery is done to enhance the resemblance. Thus, the legend about Buhari's double is not that of a decoy; a decoy is assumed to act on behalf of a living person. Because the rumour rested on Buhari being dead, the alleged Jubril of Sudan would be less a decoy and more an impersonator. The impostor story was boosted by the president not returning immediately to his main office in the Presidential Villa after his extended medical trip, which was already enmeshed in his rumoured death. Instead, as reported by the *Premium Times* (23 August 2017), Buhari operated temporarily from some other office still within the Villa. The rumour mills and conspiracy theorists hypothesised that the impostor could not access the main Aso Rock Villa office because it used biometric locks. Since the lock allegedly required the fingerprints of the "dead" Buhari, the fingerprints of the impostor could not match Buhari's, and the impostor, went the rumour, therefore could not open the door.

The *Premium Times* had alleged that Buhari's long absence had allowed rodents to invade the Villa and destroy some furniture. The public expressed disgust, and several satirical clips emerged on social media that revealed how Nigerians felt about the rodent story. For example, Oby Ezekwesili tweeted: "I have done a systematic examination of this Rat story from the Presidency. I found no redeeming prospect" (23 August 2017). On Facebook, users posted satirical videos about the rodent saga, including memes of rats tied to stakes for invading the Presidential Villa.

Abimbola Adedokun, writing in *The Punch* of 15 September 2022, noted that even though the stories about Buhari's double might not have been true, they were symptomatic of the distance some people felt between their president and themselves. Adedokun (2022) observed:

*Stories do not always need to be logical before they can be considered reasonable. Sometimes, what it illuminates despite its incoherence is some deeper truth about people's situations. While no actual Jibril was impersonating Buhari, the Jibrilisation and Sudanisation of the president illustrated alienation. Considering how alienated he was from [some of] the people he supposedly rules, the theory of an impersonator having replaced Buhari is reasonable. Both "Jibril" and "Sudan" were metaphors of foreignisation to describe a man no longer recognisable.*

In other words, the evolving narratives about 'Jubril' were subconscious efforts by opposition partisans and their supporters to assuage their feelings of alienation. Ironically, there has hardly been a politician or public figure in Nigeria's history that has had so much public support as Buhari. Perhaps, this sense of alienation in part grew out of what Ata et al (2021) described as the 'strategic silence' of Buhari's administration. Strategic silence is a form of deliberate communication contrived to deny another a privilege or advantage that an expressive communication would have conveyed. According to Dimitrov (2019, p.2): 'We publicly ignore those who try to engage us to prevent them from using the leverage of our publicity to promote their agenda'. Sometimes, political elites use strategic silence as a shield against being misconstrued.

Unfortunately, often, such silences are themselves misconstrued as being ill-intended or maliciously motivated. Ata et al (2021) argue that President Buhari's seeming silence on key national issues, especially the farmers-herders crisis, constituted insensitivity. Commenting on the president's first-anniversary broadcast in a *Vanguard* opinion piece, Godwin Etakibuebu queried whether the president's loyalty resided with Nigeria or with the Fulani herdsmen, because 'the President was silent about the most notorious Fulani herdsmen's activities, in a broadcast that went for

almost an hour'. Even regarding the president's ill-health, Nigerians were left in the dark; where communication is lacking, rumours often sprout.

The 'Jubril from Sudan' myth was swiftly consigned to the bin of untruths where it rightly belonged once the president returned from the lengthy medical trip he had embarked on from May–August 2017. He returned revitalised, reinvigorated, and ready to fully face the task of governing Nigeria. In retrospect, it can be argued that the Jubril myth only gained a footing because of the secretiveness with which the president's handlers went about matters related to his health. Shrouding in mystery the real health status of the number one citizen of the largest black nation on earth provided ample opportunity for fifth columnists and detractors like IPOB to peddle idle stories and baseless rumours.

In a presidential documentary released in December 2022 to celebrate his 80th birthday, Buhari finally addressed the 'Jubril of Sudan' matter. He described the claim that he had died and been replaced with a clone called Jubril Aminu from Sudan as a humorous lark taken too far. In the documentary, Buhari discussed that some Nigerians have a way of creating humour to cope with something they do not understand, adding that the development was the handiwork of some mischief makers to demonstrate their cheekiness. He stated that the rumour was capable of diverting attention from the main issues of the day (*The Guardian*, 25 December 2022).

### **The Myth of a Resilient Character Forged by a Dream**

During Buhari's third attempt to become Nigeria's civilian president, his running mate was Tunde Bakare, a Christian lawyer and cleric. Their shot at the presidency fell short as Buhari garnered just 31.98% of the total votes cast and lost to President Goodluck Jonathan. After this third failed attempt, the retired General Buhari, in an emotion-laden speech, publicly told the world he was done with politics. What, then, later took the General back into the political landscape and eventually to a resounding victory? Pastor

Barrister Tunde Bakare, Buhari's running mate during his third shot at democratically elected power, his avowed friend, and recently one of the most vociferous critics of the president, claimed at the time that Buhari's re-entry into active politics was driven by a dream.

Pastor Bakare narrated that in the dream, he was on an old bus driven by General Buhari. Other passengers on the bus included Nasir el-Rufai and Yinka Odumakin. In Bakare's dream, the four men were on a journey to the southwest of Nigeria for consultations with some political bigwigs. As they were descending a steep slope, General Buhari sought leave to go and use the restroom. He parked the bus on the slope and proceeded to where he would answer the call of nature. While the trio waited for General Buhari to return, Bakare expressed fear that the place where the bus was parked was not safe; he contemplated moving the vehicle from the precarious spot and parking at a safer place. But to his alarm and consternation, the General had removed the steering wheel, ignition key, gearbox, throttle pedal, brake pedal, and hand-brake lever. The bus was virtually just an empty cask, immovable.

Motivated by this dream, or what he called a 'vision', Bakare traversed the oceans to the UK to persuade General Buhari that he was destined by God to rule Nigeria. In Bakare's account, he was able to convince the hitherto reluctant General to renounce his earlier vow to not venture into the presidential race again. Buhari heeded this counsel, and returned to the race with gusto, consequently winning the presidency. This change of mind by General Buhari, allegedly motivated by Bakare's dream, has probably also contributed to the myth of Buhari as a cat with nine lives, whose fortitude, resilience, unstoppable nature, and unquenchable perseverance propelled him into power after three failed attempts.

### **The Myth of a Partisan Leader**

No president in the history of Nigeria has faced such intense criticism for claims of being a partisan leader as Buhari has.

Granted, he allowed such claims to fester by certain actions he took and utterances that he made in the course of his long public career. A critical look into the tribalism claims, however, does not reveal the horrid kind of picture most traducers painted. The claims that Buhari was a tribalist had been used against him by the opposition, especially during the build-up to the 2015 elections when his chances looked the brightest. His opponents described him as a dyed-in-the-wool nepotist and tribalist who must not be allowed into office because he had a 'Fulani Agenda' which he would unveil and execute once he was sworn in.

Then, after his victory, Buhari did himself no favours; he inflamed these claims via his assertion in a July 2015 interview that the southeast region, which gave him 5% of the votes during the 2015 elections, should not expect the same level of government patronage and attention as the other regions (ThisDay, 4 November 2017; The Guardian , 23 May 2019). All the same, the southeast got four senior ministers in the cabinet, in addition to others from the region who were ministers of state. Despite several subsequent attempts to moderate the statement and present it in a more benign form, it remained unsettling for many people in the southeast region who then became more entrenched in their opposition to the president's administration.

Naturally, an individual might be expected to employ as colleagues people they are most comfortable with, especially if the roles are close ones that require a high degree of trust. This understanding perhaps informed some of the appointments made by the president into sensitive positions, especially in top security and important Aso Rock roles. Importantly, most of the top economic positions were given to people from the south.

However, in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria, where ethnic distrust is high and cracks are easily created along tribal fault lines, misgivings and criticisms will always trail some appointments. In the early days of his administration, some analysts refused to accept as mere coincidence the waves of attacks by Fulani herders against farmers in some parts of the country, and the absence of what could

be considered as adequate state response against the attackers. Such analysts believed that the supposedly soft attitude of Buhari's government towards the herders had the effect of emboldening them and making them more ruthless. However, when the victims of the attacks began to include residents of the president's hometown, and other northerners who were his kith and kin, it became apparent that the situation had been wrongly diagnosed. A more cogent explanation would be that climate change, shrinkage of the Lake Chad basin, and an intense struggle for land and water resources had led to incursions by pastoralists from the neighbouring countries, thereby adding to Nigeria's security challenges. Even Buhari himself admitted that the enemies were from outside the country's borders. Even at that, however, there remained those who insisted it was the president's responsibility to protect citizens from both internal and external aggression.

Another area where Buhari was scrutinised for alleged tribalism involved the people he appointed to key positions. Buhari was, not infrequently, accused of favouring Northerners or even Muslims in his appointments, in violation of the country's Federal Character. The Federal Character is a principle established in Nigeria as a result of the country's plurality of tribes and ethnic origins. The principle was implemented to guarantee the inclusion of every state in Federal appointments, especially at the cabinet level, where each state is mandated to produce at least one minister. The protestations from a segment of society reached such a high level that on 4 November 2017, the presidency found it necessary to publicly release a comprehensive list of all Buhari appointees since he had assumed office, in a bid to demonstrate their balance.

In a move designed to end insinuations that a majority of President Muhammadu Buhari's appointments largely hailed from the north, his administration, through Media Adviser Femi Adesina, released documents showing the state and geographical spread of presidential appointments. In a graphical presentation of appointments according to states, the southern state of Ogun topped the list with 21 slots, followed by Imo and Kano with 15 each. These



were closely trailed by Edo and the president's home state, Katsina, with 14 appointments each. A graph titled 'Agency appointments by states', attached to a statement from the Special Adviser to the President on Media, Femi Adesina, showed that the top five beneficiaries of agency appointments by the president comprised three southern and two northern states. On the lower rung of the graph sat Ebonyi (2), Abia (2), Kebbi (3), Zamfara (4), Sokoto (4), and Oyo (4), while the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, had yet to secure any agency appointment at the time. Other states followed in this order: Anambra (13), Kogi (13), Kwara (13), Kaduna (12), Adamawa (11), Bauchi (11), Borno (10), Lagos (10), Benue (9), Delta (9), Niger (9), Osun (9), Gombe (8), Jigawa (8), Rivers (7), Bayelsa (6), Ondo (6), Cross River (5), Nasarawa (5), Plateau (5), Taraba (5), Yobe (5), Akwa Ibom (4), Ekiti (4), and Enugu(4). In all, 299 agency appointments were shared among the states.

A second document released by the presidency contained a table of 157 agency and board appointments, including presidential aides, on the basis of geopolitical distribution. Although the tabulated list of appointments might not have been exhaustive, the zonal distribution of the listed beneficiaries showed that the southwest region provided the largest share of appointees. Of the 157 appointments on the table, the southwest had 40, followed by the northwest with 30. The northeast secured 24, while the north central had 21. The table also showed that the southeast had 22 while the south-south had 20. The administration's release of the list of state and geopolitical distribution of presidential agency appointments was in reaction to widespread media reports which erroneously claimed that out of 100 appointments made by the president, 81 were from the north, his region of origin. But that was sheer mischief by a section of the media that sought to deepen the perception that the president was favouring a section of the country.

Describing the media report as biased and incorrect, spokesman Adesina said the media had selected 100 appointees of their own choice and classified those appointments on the basis of ethnicity, 'to mislead the public and portray the Buhari

administration in bad light'. The president's spokesman, who further dismissed as uncharitable reporters' decision to insinuate that Buhari's appointments favoured the north, added that the media report was not only full of errors, but also that it even ascribed non-existent appointments to the president, simply to incite the public against him. While identifying the appointments Adesina described as non-existent, as well as naming the actual appointees of the president who currently occupied positions, he maintained that no fewer than 50 of Buhari's appointees were left out of the media report, and revealed further that other appointments mentioned in it had not been made by President Buhari, but by the previous administration.

Adesina maintained that the president remained committed to providing leadership devoid of ethnic, tribal, and religious favouritism in expression of his commitment to the unity of Nigeria. He said:

*President Muhammadu Buhari remains committed to serving all Nigerians, no matter the tribe, ethnicity or region, and he is also determined to ensure that Nigeria remains strong and united. He has, and will continue to keep faith with one Nigeria and has shown this with the administration's diverse projects in different parts of the country's geopolitical zones (This Day Newspapers, 4 November 2017).*

Notably, upon the release of these facts and figures by the president's administration, there was a noticeable reduction in the allegations of tribalism against Buhari, which had begun to form yet another myth – one that was allowed to flourish until the administration spoke out, because it had not yet been properly and swiftly addressed. However, once the administration prepared the response and presented strong factual evidence, the myth dispelled and its propagators held their peace.

**The Myth of a Vengeful Leader**

Another myth that has trailed Buhari since his first foray into national affairs in 1984 involves a perception of him as a vengeful fellow who does not forgive or forget. Proponents allude to several instances to back up their claims, but a deep assessment immediately uncovers the claims' inanity. One such popular instance, frequently cited, was that upon assumption of office in 2015, Buhari went after Colonel Sambo Dasuki, who was the National Security Advisor under the Jonathan administration. Detractors perceived this to occur not because of alleged funds diversion, but instead as an attempt by Buhari to take back his pound of flesh from Dasuki, who was alleged to be among the military officers that arrested him during the 1985 coup that toppled the Buhari military administration.

However, Abdulmumini Aminu, who had served as leader of the team of soldiers who arrested Buhari in 1985, eventually came forward to declare the claim was false. Aminu explained that he had led the three-man team that arrested Buhari, with the other two members being Lawan Gwadabe and John Madaki (*The Cable*, 9 August 2015). Indeed, when this reality unfolded, and when startling revelations – coupled with incontrovertible evidence – emerged of how Dasuki had used his office to funnel a staggering \$2.1 billion meant to fight insurgency and other related security challenges into the partisan political activities of the PDP, the propagators of the revenge scenario were embarrassed at the apparent absurdity of their initial claims.

Simply put, President Buhari pursued charges against him not because he was Sambo Dasuki, but because Dasuki was the occupant of an exalted and sensitive public office who had failed to carry out his duty with utmost sense of diligence and responsibility. Dasuki had allowed his high office to be used by unconscionable politicians for the brazen and reckless diversion of funds in the face of severe security challenges that had ravaged the nation.

In an article published on 16 December 2022 on several news media platforms in commemoration of President Buhari's

80th birthday, Femi Adesina succinctly outlined several high-profile cases to illustrate the large heart and accommodating nature of the president in his dealings with people. The piece, titled 'Buhari at 80 – No Malicious Bone in his Body', demonstrated that the president had indeed been unfairly portrayed as a vengeful man, for no apparent or verifiable reason, when he had comported himself in the exact opposite way on many occasions. Excerpts from that article stated:

*Perhaps the Governor who has excoriated the President the most is Nyesom Wike of Rivers State. Until very recently, when he showed some conciliation, he had accused Buhari of everything under the sun, including attempted murder. If they were rival wives sharing a husband, it couldn't have been worse. But there was the President, simply minding his business, and ignoring the much younger man in Rivers State. He still gave the State everything that was its due.*

*In late 2022, the President was invited to commission the newly built ultra-modern complex of the Body of Benchers in Abuja. As a member of the organisation, Governor Wike was on the receiving line. Face to face with one of his harshest critics, the audience were curious to see what the President would do. To their relief, Buhari shook the governor's hand warmly. Someone once wrote that "When two enemies shake hands, a suffering soul shoots out of Purgatory". But for President Buhari, this man simply was no enemy. Wike was simply a Governor of one of the federating units in the country and deserved his respect. Amazing!*

*How about Ayo Fayose, the Irumole (ethereal spirit) that eats jollof rice. The former Ekiti State Governor had taken a stand against Buhari since*

2014, during the campaigns. There was that infamous advertisement he placed in newspapers, displaying a coffin, and insinuating that if Buhari was elected, he (Buhari) would not last the distance. Fayose's party, the PDP, was beaten black and blue when Buhari won the presidential election the following year. What would have an average vengeful person done under the circumstance? Buhari could have instigated the Ekiti State House of Assembly, which was dominated by members of his party, the APC, to make life difficult if not outrightly impeach Fayose who was the state governor then. Because he has no malicious bone in his body, Fayose served out his term, and I recall the President giving him a warm handshake during a Council of State meeting at the Presidential Villa.

Matthew Hassan Kukah, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, has been very harsh in his criticism of President Buhari. Sometimes he employed words that could be considered strong given his ecclesiastical position. He did not also spare even the president's spokesmen. On some occasions, he had opened fire on me and my colleague, Malam Garba Shehu. Trust us, we returned fire for fire, till we decided to ignore him. And there came Bishop Kukah to the Villa some weeks ago, with the Peace Committee headed by former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar. What would the President's reception be like? Perhaps, the Bishop would not get a handshake from him. But alas, he exchanged banters with Kukah, and they were caught on camera, laughing together.

Femi Fani-Kayode. My friend, brother and kinsman. What has the President not suffered in his hands? Tons of abuses, malediction, ill-will. But when

*the latter had his Damascus Road experience, and found his way back to the APC, who received him at the Presidential Villa? Buhari. Truly, this man has no malicious bone in his body. How about Governor Samuel Ortom, and many others? Perhaps, these should form the story for another day.*

*It has sometimes happened that I see some people on television in the morning abusing both the father and mother of the president only to see them in his residence for dinner. How large-hearted can a person be? One can say without fear of contradiction that God probably considered all the virtues Muhammadu Buhari has and thus decided to spare him. He that has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger, says the Good Book. (Job 17:9). This Buhari not only has clean hands, he also has a clean heart. Imagine, in the year 2017, when the president had severe health challenges. Between January and August of that year, he was in and out of the country many times, attending to his health. He could have been a goner, but God said no. And God has the final say, no matter what man may wish or desire. And same Buhari is now 80 and counting. Simply amazing! Glory be to God!*

What could be added? No one could put it better than Femi Adesina, who spent eight years working closely with Buhari the man. The myth of Buhari's ill nature has indeed proven to be false and highly misleading. The man Buhari is neither vengeful nor malicious, but the exact opposite: forgiving, accommodating, and large-hearted.

### **An Open Book**

How can one accurately construct a valid and reliable composite picture of a human being that is not only true to the object, but also

recognisable? Sometimes, praise singers might describe an important guest seated at the high table, with that same person all the while looking around wondering who is being described. Is it possible that readers would be confronted on these pages by a Buhari in agreement with what the protagonist thinks of himself and what his close associates know of him? Seeking to paint, on a textual canvas, a historically and diametrically accurate portrait of Muhammadu Buhari, is a rather ambitious project. However, even if one might not sculpt a three-dimensional image, one can at least provide a silhouette of our protagonist.

After his third bid for the office of the president failed, Buhari addressed his party stalwarts. At that forum, he made some profound statements defining his philosophy and life mission. Whether he lived true to those ideals is for history to judge:

*After being head of state, I am sure I could easily have retired into a life of comfort and ease as an elder statesman, as a contractor or as a beneficiary of any one of the nation's many generous prebendal offerings. But that is not what I wish to do with my life. And so, if I don't take any of these alternative courses of action, it should be clear that I am not in this for the love of office or for pursuit after personal glory or in order to achieve some personal goal. Far be it from me that this should be. I need nothing and I have nothing more to prove. I am in this solely for the love of my country and concern for its destiny and the fate of its people (The Vanguard, 13 May 2011).*

On that occasion, the humanity of Muhammadu Buhari emerged. In Africa, men are expected to avoid crying. In fact, parents caution their male children not to cry 'like girls' (no chauvinism intended on the part of the author). Therefore, for a man, a gallant soldier, and an elder, to shed tears in public is often considered a

grave and solemn situation, if not a dangerous one. Little wonder that others present could not hold back their tears. This is the man, Buhari: a father of eight children, who has known the pains of a divorce and the sorrow of losing children; a leader who has known the betrayal of friends like those who overthrew him in a palace coup and gaoled him; and a man who has felt the stubborn loyalty of others like Tunde Idiagbon, who despite imminent threat of incarceration, rejected the asylum offered by the Saudi king and returned to Nigeria to share the same fate as his deposed Commander-in-Chief.

Buhari has suffered frustrations, especially regarding his vows to fight corruption. He has suffered ill-health, as have most mortals, and has been reported to have spent about 225 days on medical trips (*Punch*, 4 December 2022). He has been both hated and loved, both vilified and eulogised. He even endured the public criticism of his wife, Aisha. He was alleged to be dead and therefore a clone? He is not. Even his avowed critics acknowledge that much. President Obasanjo, who is his military chief and has known him more closely than most Nigerians, calls such rumours “ridiculous”. The President himself has publicly denied such claims, asserting that he is the real Buhari (*CNN*, 3 December 2018).

He has enjoyed moments of laughter, even of laughing at himself (*The Guardian*, 23 May 2019). He has shown the humility to concede that his age was taking a toll on him, and that he was looking forward to the end of his tenure when he would retire (*Peoples' Gazette*, 7 January 2022) to his country home – which Femi Adesina is quoted as describing as neither palatial nor flamboyant, agreeing with the acclaimed Spartan lifestyle of the man, Buhari.

### **Conclusion**

The man, Buhari, is a senior citizen, an uncommon statesman, who came to power as a septuagenarian and deserves a peaceful retirement at his home now that his public service as president has ended. He has reached a point in his life where, as Africans say, an elder should neither be afraid to tell the truth, nor be told the truth.



The General's second coming has been textured by myths, most of which are ludicrous.

The personality and character of the man, Buhari, has been subject to inaccurate profiling and misinterpretations over the years. This chapter has established that when critically examined, most of the myths that have surrounded him are nothing but, simply, myths: widely held but false beliefs or ideas. They are neither empirical truths, nor verifiable assertions. The informed conclusion, therefore, is that Muhammadu Buhari is not an inscrutable mystery or an enigmatic character too difficult to fathom. He is indeed an open book, comprehensible to all diligent readers.

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## 4

### **Leadership and National Development: Muhammadu Buhari's First Adventure in Power**

**Ene Alice Ochoga**

#### **Introduction**

The concept of leadership has generated a variety of scholarly discussion, but its importance to nation building and development is widely acknowledged. It is a truism that the extent of any country's development relies on the nature and character of the leadership culture internalised and institutionalised in that country's general political culture. Nigeria has remained enmeshed in development quagmire due mainly to her inability to sort out her leadership issues. The Nigerian literary icon, Chinua Achebe, amply captured this in his 1983 book, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, when he stated:

*... The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmarks of true leadership (Achebe (1983:1).*

Leadership is about leading a group of people, society, nation, or country to achieve common aims and aspirations. Those who lead based on the wishes and preferences of the led are often regarded as

good leaders, while those who do otherwise are dubbed bad leaders. According to Adamu and Rasheed (2018), leadership is all about the harmonisation of a nation's organisational behaviour. These scholars believe that appointing and/or electing the right people into positions of authority will invariably address national development challenges. Adamu and Rasheed's notion of leadership is premised on the maxim, 'putting the right pegs in the right hole'. Sometimes, persons with the requisite technical and professional competence, who are endowed with a responsibility of public trust, may not possess the necessary personal disposition, such as character, moral virtue, personality, and attitude towards common wealth. These characteristics go a long way towards determining performance in public office.

In this regard, Millet (1954) has argued that personal character is the recipe for good leadership. In other words, an individual's ideological inclination determines their personal disposition, which in turn defines their leadership quality. Deducible from Millet's viewpoint is that leadership is driven by and predicated upon personality; those without the inherent virtues of people-oriented leadership most often turn out to be poor leaders. Ochoga and Zhema (2018) has added that leadership is primarily concerned with governance, and governance may have little or no impact on the governed unless it exemplifies the virtues of good governance in the political system. This implies that a sustainable and sustained leadership culture is an integral part of good governance. As such, a political system with an institutionalised progressive culture of good governance is likely to have good leaders to chart the course of national development.

To this end, leadership entails the use of the instrumentality of governance to address issues of poverty; unemployment; illiteracy; access to education; access to quality healthcare services; life expectancy (mortality and morbidity); access to portable water; provision of electricity and good roads, in the case of Nigeria; and tackling other challenges that negatively affect humanity. In this chapter, we explore the nexus between leadership and national

development in the context of General Buhari's military regime, 1983–1985.

### **Conceptual Trajectories**

The concept of leadership is somewhat slippery and complex in nature. This is partly because scholars conceptualise it through their various disciplinary lenses. Major General Muhammadu Buhari was among the principal actors of the 31 December 1983 military coup that overthrew the Shehu Shagari administration. Just before the coup, he was the General Officer Commanding (GOC), Third Armoured Division of the Nigerian Army in Jos, Plateau State. Following the successful execution of the coup, which Brigadier Sani Abacha broadcasted, he was appointed the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, while Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon became the Chief of General Staff to the Federal Military Government. Many, however, perceived Idiagbon as the face of the administration, due to his stern look in contrast to the comparatively calm disposition of Buhari, his boss. The coup ended Nigeria's Second Republic, which was inaugurated barely four years earlier on 1 October 1979, after 13 years of military rule.

Following the coup, the public presidential image underwent a sudden transmogrification from the amiable ambience and free-flowing *babariga* of Shehu Shagari to the intimidating pale-green *khaki* of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari. At the time of the military overthrow, brazen corruption, economic mismanagement, and a purported need for systemic overhaul of civilian administration provided the grounds for military intervention. The officers who seized power stated that 'a flawed democracy was worse than no democracy at all'. Buhari in particular justified the military's return to power by condemning the Shagari administration as irredeemably corrupt. The Constitution was immediately suspended. Another reason given for the coup was the need to stop Nigeria's economic decline. In announcing the coup, Sani Abacha cited the inept and corrupt leadership of the civilian administration and the resultant general economic decline in the

country as the reasons for the overthrow. Then, in Buhari's 1984 New Year's Day speech, he again condemned the corrupt politicians of the Second Republic and held them responsible for the decline in public morality.

Indeed, conditions had worsened so significantly during the Second Republic that when the coup came, it was widely celebrated. Major General Muhammadu Buhari, a northerner from Katsina State and a former member of the Supreme Military Council (SMC) in the Muhammed/Obasanjo government, became the new head of state. Because of the great powers his second-in-command, Major General Tunde Idiagbon, was believed to wield, many commentators have referred to the 1983–1985 government as the Buhari-Idiagbon regime. In broad outline, the structure of government remained basically the same as it had been under Muhammed and Obasanjo. At the top sat the Supreme Military Council (SMC), and the subordinate bodies were the Federal Executive Council and the National Council of States ([www.bored.com](http://www.bored.com)).

The urgent task before the government was to salvage Nigeria's economy, which had suffered under the mismanagement of the Second Republic and had keenly felt the rapid drop in the price of crude oil. Nigeria had become profoundly obligated to several foreign monetary agencies, and the price of crude oil had begun to slide. Buhari believed that urgent economic problems required equally urgent solutions (Ochoga, 2021; [www.bored.com](http://www.bored.com)). He also thought that the return of the country to a democratically-elected civilian government was not particularly urgent, because the citizens needed to internalise basic democratic tenets.

The Buhari government probed and detained top political leaders of the Second Republic, holding them responsible for the Shagari administration's excesses and failures. The government also seriously constrained the activities of civil society groups in the country, including the Nigerian Medical Association (which was outlawed), and the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). The regime passed two decrees that limited the freedom the press had and repressed criticism of the government. Decree No.

4 forbade any journalist from reporting information considered embarrassing to any government official. Two journalists, Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor, were convicted under this decree. Decree No. 2 gave the Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters the power to detain anyone considered a security risk for up to six months without trial. Special military tribunals increasingly replaced legal courts, while the state security agency, the National Security Organisation (NSO), was given increased powers.

Buhari's government also extended his efforts to deal with the problems of 'indiscipline' in the areas of environmental sanitation, public decorum, fraud, smuggling, and disloyalty to such national symbols as the flag and the anthem. It declared a War Against Indiscipline (WAI), and specified acceptable forms of public behaviour, such as a requirement to queue up at bus stops and other public places (Ochoga, 2021; [www.bored.com](http://www.bored.com)).

His main concern, however, remained the economy. The government introduced an all-inclusive package of austerity measures. It closed the country's land borders for a period to identify and expel illegal foreign workers; it also placed severe restrictions on imports, and heavy penalties on smuggling and foreign exchange offences. The austerity measures made it difficult for local industries to procure essential imported raw materials, leading many to close or to operate at greatly reduced capacities. Many workers were laid off, and the government itself retrenched many workers to increase its' cost effectiveness. All of these policy measures combined to heighten inflationary trends in the country ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com); [www.mbsg.com.ng](http://www.mbsg.com.ng)). The prices of basic food items were on the rise, and life became tougher even for the wealthy. Despite the efficacy with which Buhari and his associates tackled the multilayered national crisis, the regime was lacking in pragmatism, and that caused discontent ([www.bored.com](http://www.bored.com)). The latter provided the main justification for the overthrow of Buhari by General Babangida in a palace coup on 27 August, 1985, although it swiftly became obvious that Babangida's personal ambition was an important contributing factor.

Notably, the civil-military balance that is typically assumed in liberal democracies is not maintained in the majority of developing nations. The military is kept out of politics and under the control of civil authorities in the liberal tradition. In many developing nations, in any case, the military has frequently intervened in the political cycle and assumed the roles of regular civil authority. Indeed, even in those nations where the military has become very nearly an extremely lasting element of governance, military rule is still viewed as an anomaly.

In Nigeria, for instance, military rule was normally viewed as a 'salvage' operation important to save the country from the excesses and failure of 'seeming' democratic governance. It was anticipated that such military rule would not last long. The military was expected to quickly return to its proper residence, the barracks, following the completion of its rescue operation, delegating governance to civilian politicians. Despite their apparent acceptance of this argument, military rule frequently became self-perpetuating, which was the issue. This issue was common to almost all Nigerian military regimes ([www.bored.com](http://www.bored.com)).

From the time of Nigeria's independence in 1960 until the end of the 1990s, the military had ruled the country for 21 years. Altogether, Nigeria saw five coups d'état involving changes of government: 15 January 1966; 29 July, 1966; 29 July 1975; 31 December 1983; and 27 August 1985. There was also an unsuccessful coup in February 1976, in which the head of state, General Murtala Muhammed, was killed. Another coup was reportedly nipped in the bud in December 1985, and an alleged attempt to depose General Ibrahim Babangida was made in April 1990. Of all these coups, only those of January 1966 and December 1983 were against civilian governments. Several justifications for military intervention have been added to those provided by the coup plotters and leaders themselves. Whereas the latter have cited corruption and the mismanagement of the economy, other explanations have ranged from the continuation of ethno-regional politics by military means, to the personal ambitions of officers.

Regionalism has threatened national cohesion even within Nigeria's military. Therefore, the military, unlike those in southeast Asia, for example, was less concerned with laying sustainable foundations for national development.

The Buhari government's re-launch of a national re-orientation campaign, otherwise known as WAI, expectedly elicited mixed feelings within the polity ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)) It was viewed as an admission that over the previous three decades, Nigeria had not made significant progress in the area of mass mobilisation towards the establishment of a national culture of discipline. In any case, response to the tactical strategy of forcing people to behave in particular ways indicated the lack of creative imagination in public governance. The majority of Nigerians did not change their ways in spite of the famous Buhari-led campaign to instil discipline in the populace more than three decades ago. This could possibly be attributed to the short duration of the programme, which was limited because of Babangida's coup of 27 August 1985. On several occasions, democratisation campaigns and sloganeering in various forms had been executed, but all to little or no effect. Immediately after the Buhari regime (1983–1985) that launched the WAI campaign and brigade, General Ibrahim Babangida's regime (1985–1993) instituted its own variant, called Mass Mobilisation for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)).

The office was later renamed the National Orientation Agency (NOA) by a successor administration; since then, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the NOA is a Director-General. However, it is regrettable that the orientation agency, with offices in all the states of the federation to support its core mandate of building a national culture of discipline and decency, has made no remarkable achievement in the fight against indiscipline. Buhari's war was a watershed in the history of social change in the country. In recent years, NOA has tried to mobilise Nigerians to internalise some ethical values, including discipline. What is more, the new deal from the same NOA does not seem to be a derivation from the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of



Olusegun Obasanjo's administration (1999–2007), which recommended that 'value re-orientation' should be a core part of Nigeria's socio-economic development strategy. There has been no reference to the NEED implementation strategy developed by the then-Office of the Chief Economic Adviser to the President, and if this new plan is rooted in it, the contents are shallow ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com); Ochoga, 2021).

This is curious at a time when governments all over the world are mobilising their citizens to compete in space science and other technologies that enhance human advancement. These accomplishments begin with deliberate and serious investment in education. Nigerians were well aware of the country's culture of indifference and impunity at several levels of society. Indiscipline, parochial interest, and other forms of corruption effectively became the nation's foremost public enemy such that not many Nigerians practically supported the campaign against them. However, as in other parts of the world, the strategies for such campaigns should be embedded in core governance systems. They are not impromptu or improvised plans that are promoted occasionally by the civil authority ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com); [www.mbsg.com.ng](http://www.mbsg.com.ng)).

In a visionary move, the Buhari-Idiagbon regime introduced the WAI on 20 March 1984. The then Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters, Major-General Babatunde Idiagbon, launched a campaign on 'National Consciousness and Enlightenment' at the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos ([www.mbsg.com.ng](http://www.mbsg.com.ng)). This lifted the nation into a new sphere of national awareness, in line with the clarion call by then Head of State and Commander-in-Chief, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, for all Nigerians to shun indiscipline. This formed the basis for the nationalism and patriotism campaign – the third phase of National Consciousness and Enlightenment, the WAI vision – which was launched in Jos, Plateau State, on 27 August 1984, with emphasis on respect for the national symbols: The National Flag; the National Anthem; the Pledge; and the Coat-of-Arms.

The WAI Brigade was established to provide practical assistance to the anti-corruption campaign. 'This brigade was a uniformed voluntary association of able-bodied young men and women trained and expected to instil, inculcate, and promote discipline in the Nigerian society, at all times and in all areas of human endeavour' ([www.mbsg.com.ng](http://www.mbsg.com.ng)). The WAI policy and programme served as the basis upon which the regime derived mass support. This effort to deal with indiscipline in every sphere of Nigerian society was seen as a commendable, timely intervention by the Nigerian masses.

The Buhari regime was completely committed to fighting indiscipline. Later, with the merger in 1993 of the Department of Public Enlightenment, WAI/NOM Division of the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture with MAMSER, to form the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the management, supervision, and operation of the WAI Brigade automatically became part of the NOA's responsibilities. The government empowered the NOA, with the approval of the Minister of Information and Culture, to establish National Orientation Camps as social instruction sites for orientating and indoctrinating Nigerians towards developing socially desirable attitudes, behaviours, values, and culture. The aims and objectives of the WAI Brigade were to restore discipline to our national life. Using revered traditions and cultures like respect for elders and constitutional authority, being our brothers' keepers, community service, and so on to ensure a positive relationship between the citizenry and the nation, with particular emphasis on duties and responsibilities, the primary objective was to instil a spirit of nationalism and patriotism in all Nigerians ([www.mbsg.com.ng](http://www.mbsg.com.ng)).

On assuming the mantle of leadership, Buhari made no mention of restoring the country to civil democratic rule within the shortest possible time; instead, he embarked on a policy of sanitising the Nigerian society. Furthermore, he embarked on an aggressive campaign against drug traffickers that included a maximum punishment of the death penalty, which, although it was

effective in curtailing the scourge of drug abuse, was seen as extreme in some quarters. Alongside this came flagrant disobedience of court orders and the enactment of some draconian decrees that resulted in the arrest, detention, and gaoling of a number of politicians and public officials. The infamous Dikko saga was a prominent scandal for the government. The SSS, known then as the National Security Organisation (NSO), was established by the Obasanjo military administration in 1976, but during his first regime, Buhari gave it unprecedented powers to arrest and detain suspected offenders, as part of his anti-corruption war.

The NSO turned out to be so powerful under Buhari that its Chief Executive, Lawal Rafindadi, 'involved the organisation in activities that had far-reaching implications and scandalous consequences for Nigeria – like the infamous case of the 53 suitcases that were allowed to pass through the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, without the required customs check, and the failed 1984 attempt to kidnap and repatriate a runaway Nigerian politician, Umaru Dikko, in London. The plan, which nearly succeeded, was to sedate Dikko, a former Minister of Transport in the ousted civilian administration of Shehu Shagari, and move him in a diplomatic bag to Nigeria, to prosecute him for corruption. The failed operation, jointly carried out by Nigerian and Israeli secret service departments, led to a diplomatic row between the Nigerian and British governments' ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)).

When the WAI was extended to journalists, the media pushed back and the government's popularity was badly ruffled. Public opinion concerning how government was being run became hostile, setting the stage for the palpable discontent that ultimately led to the ouster of Buhari's regime (Ikelegbe, 2001).

In an uncanny twist of fate, Buhari's reign in office was prematurely terminated in a military coup on 27 August 1985 when a faction of senior officers, led by the Chief of Army Staff, Major-General Ibrahim Babangida, overthrew the government. Major-General Muhammadu Buhari was then detained in Benin City until 1988. Babangida justified the coup by stating that Buhari had failed

to deal with the country's economic problems. He promised 'to rejuvenate the economy ravaged by decades of government mismanagement and corruption'. He then replaced the ruling Supreme Military Council (SMC) with a new Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), which lasted until 1993 ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)).

### **Impact of Buhari's Military Rule on National Development**

Despite the well-publicised shortfalls of the botched Buhari regime, a holistic assessment of his government reveals certain key policies of national relevance that endured for several years after his ouster. In light of the background that Buhari's military government terminated the fledgling democracy of the Second Republic, it remains easy to conclude that Buhari's coming was inimical and deleterious, setting the country backward in its democratic pursuits. However, a critical evaluation of events that preceded the overthrow clearly showed that Shagari's position as civilian president was no longer tenable at that point due to several extenuating factors and that, sooner or later, made the return of the military in Nigeria's political space practically inevitable.

During his brief first stay as Head of State, Buhari was able to leave his mark as a tireless anti-corruption champion – one of the many traits that facilitated his re-emergence as civilian president more than 30 years later. The institutional corruption and acts of economic sabotage that had permeated government activities under Shagari were well-exposed and declared intolerable under Buhari. This set the standard for the subsequent military regimes that succeeded him in power, as public accountability and citizens' demands for probity in governance grew increasingly prominent.

President Muhammadu Buhari himself stirred the hornet's nest when, in a July 2016 interview, he declared he had been removed from office because he had been planning to purge the military hierarchy of corruption. In that article, published in *The Interview Magazine*, Buhari challenged the coupists to tell the truth as to why they carried out the coup against him. He specifically pointed the finger at two of his former top subordinates in the army:

former Chief of Army Staff, General Ibrahim Babangida, and two-time National Security Adviser (NSA), General Aliyu Gusau, as having cut short his military government to save themselves from his wrath (*The Guardian*, 25 July 2016).

In addition to awaking citizens to serious financial malfeasance by government functionaries, Buhari also sought to address Nigeria's societal decadence and widespread public indiscipline. Although the implementation of these policies was extreme and in retrospect could have been better handled, the message was clear to all Nigerians that indiscipline was no longer tolerable, and that citizens have a duty to be responsible, law-abiding, and obedient to the rules and regulations governing their society.

### **Lessons Learnt**

After his 1985 ejection from power, Buhari maintained a relatively private lifestyle away from the public gaze, avoiding the attention usually associated with former Heads of State. This was in place until he was invited to serve as Chairman of the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) – a body that was created to pursue developmental projects around the country by the government of General Sani Abacha, funded from the revenue generated by price increases of petroleum products ([www.mbsg.com.ng](http://www.mbsg.com.ng)). Afterwards, Abacha's regime ended with his sudden demise in 1998, and military rule became anathema in Nigeria, in line with the global wave of democratisation, also known as the Third Wave. Abacha's death was followed by the emergence of a brief government under General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who eventually concluded the protracted transition programme which the Babangida regime had begun, returning the country to democratic governance on 29 May 1999. Interestingly, a former military ruler, in the person of Olusegun Obasanjo, was the first civilian president who emerged, in 1999. Probably motivated by this development and other related personal ambitions, Buhari saw fit to also attempt to lead Nigeria as a civilian president. This informed his decision to contest the 2003 elections

on the platform of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP). He lost that particular election to the then incumbent president – Olusegun Obasanjo – by more than 11 million votes. Undeterred, he ran for the office again in 2007 and 2011, but was similarly unsuccessful on both occasions.

Throughout Buhari's failed presidential bids, public discourse on his democratic credentials was intense. A man who had previously toppled a democratic government coming back to seek votes to be elected into the same office elicited substantial public fireworks. Buhari further offended the sensibilities of some hardcore critics in December 2012, when he stated that he did not regret the actions he had taken while he was a military dictator, including the suppression of the media through Decree 4 of 1984. He insisted that his government had shielded civil servants from undue embarrassment, and asserted that if anyone had evidence that somebody was corrupt, the courts existed to listen to such complaints, rather than journalists writing articles that would embarrass and ridicule the suspected offenders. He admitted that his government had jailed some editors and reporters who had flouted the decree, but asserted that they had not closed an entire institution, as some other military regimes had, which would have resulted in job losses.

The debate on the propriety of Buhari aspiring to become president via the democratic process, given his anti-democratic credentials, reached febrile levels in 2014 when he emerged as a strong contender under the auspices of a vibrant coalition of the APC – a newly formed congregation of opposition parties in Nigeria, sharing the common interest of unseating the dominant PDP at the federal level. Buhari at some point acknowledged the keen sensitivity of Nigerians to his democratic pursuits and their scepticism about the purity of his ambitions. As the 2015 elections drew closer, the strong possibility of his triumph invoked bitter memories of his military days and their intense clampdown on the press, hard-line military stance, and anti-liberal postures that had bordered on infringing citizens' fundamental human rights.

What did he do? Buhari and his party handlers adopted a strategy of 'time evolution'. They made spirited attempts to rebrand him in the eyes of the public, away from the 1984 repressive jackboot personality of the 'Militarist Buhari' to a 2014 'New Democrat'. He himself sought the pardon of Nigerians regarding some of his prior undemocratic moves as Head of State, seeking to establish trust and confidence that he would correct the wrongs of the past and gingerly toe the path of democracy, rule of law, and respect for basic human rights if given the chance to lead a civilian government. Unarguably, this appeal played a major role in his eventual triumph.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has established the nexus between leadership and national development. It has revealed the ways in which national development is dependent on the quality of leadership, and the significance of leadership as an independent variable in every aspect of a country's existence. The chapter has also shown that democratic or civilian rule is not necessarily a recipe for development, as the southeast Asian countries laid the foundation for their present thriving development during authoritative regimes. However, critics of the Buhari regimes point to the fact that in all the battles against indiscipline during the last four decades, the leadership of the country itself has not been sufficiently disciplined to lead by example (Ochoga, 2021; Uba, 2019). These critics argue that only a disciplined leadership can inspire or mobilise a disciplined followership and nurture desirable values in any nation ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)).

Despite the challenges of finding adequate leadership among members of the military in politics, the picture of Nigeria's nation-building process would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution of the military, particularly the WAI of General Buhari's regime. But in the case of his administration, faith resided more or less in the rationality of individual actors. This model describes a strong central state utilising a range of political tools to aggressively

pursue development, even against the wishes of the people. The reliance on economic development for legitimacy could have allowed the nation to maximally reap the benefits of WAI. But the life of Buhari's military administration was cut short, and it could not adequately squeeze out such gains from its policies.

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# 5

## **Unfinished Business: Muhammadu Buhari and Failed Quests for Power**

**Al Chukwuma Okoli**

### **Introduction**

Muhammadu Buhari, the fifth democratically elected president of Nigeria, had served as a military Head of State (December 1983 – August 1985) before later being inaugurated as a civilian, elected president of Nigeria on 29 May 2015, making him only the second person to lead Nigeria in both a military and a civilian government (Mathews, 2002; Alapiki, 2005; Falola & Heaton, 2008). Buhari's emergence as an elected president in 2015 was remarkable; he defeated an incumbent president in a keenly contested election that was described by many as reasonably free and fair (Paden, 2016). This marked the first time in Nigeria's democratic history when an incumbent president would be defeated in a general election. The historical significance of Buhari's presidential career, however, goes beyond his remarkable defeat of an incumbent president; its antecedents are as historic as the occurrence itself.

Buhari's shot at the presidency was not an instant success. Instead, it was a case of serial setbacks that metamorphosed into an uncommon success, in what could aptly be described as 'one last trial'. However, this chapter's objective is less concerned with Buhari's eventual electoral victory than with his tortuous journey thereto. In 2003, 2007, and 2011, Buhari ran for Nigerian president

without success. In spite of his cult and populist following, especially among the civil populace of northern Nigeria (Usman, 2021), Buhari failed on those three occasions to make good his presidential aspirations via the ballot. After his third consecutive run for office in 2011, Buhari announced his resolve to withdraw from active politics, apparently out of frustration. How his resolve was overturned by history's fate is instructive, but is certainly beyond this chapter's immediate purview.

Essentially, the success story of Buhari's presidential aspirations would be grossly incomplete without accounting for his electoral misfortunes prior to the 2015 victory. By way of a historical narrative, anchored on secondary research, this chapter seeks to chronicle Muhammadu Buhari's journey to the presidency by focusing on how he navigated the distressing memories of defeat in three successive presidential electoral contests. The chapter posits that the Buhari story demonstrates a dogged and long-suffering determination, undeterred by the tumultuous electioneering of nearly a decade. Considering the historical significance and lessons of such an experience, this chapter observes that it adumbrates the dialectics of hope as well as perseverance in a statesman's calling.

Buhari was one of the leaders of the military junta that overthrew Nigeria's Second Republic regime in a coup d'état on 31 December 1983. After successful execution of the coup, Buhari assumed the position of the Military Head of State, while Tunde Idiagbon was appointed Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters. The coup brought Nigeria's then nascent multi-party democratic experiment to an abrupt end (Nwabueze, 1983; Okoli & Okpareke, 2013). The coup leaders justified it as being a corrective intervention geared towards ridding the country of corruption, immorality, and misrule by self-serving political elites, among other reasons (Nzekwe, 2003).

As Head of State, Buhari's reign (1983–1985) was short but eventful. In a bid to promote civil order and sanity in the country, Buhari's government promulgated some radical decrees, including:

- The Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree for the prosecution of armed robbery cases;
- The State Security (Detention of Person) Decree, which gave powers to the military to detain individuals suspected of jeopardizing state security or causing economic adversity;
- Civil Service Commission and Public Offenders Decree, which constituted the legal and administrative basis to conduct a purge in the civil service; and
- The Protection Against False Accusations Decree (Agbese, 2012; Usman, 2021).

Although these decrees might have been benevolently motivated and intentioned, some of them functioned as alibis for political repression and human rights abuses. A case in point was Decree Number 4 of 1984, which gave the government unlimited powers to suppress all forms of opposition, including actions by the free press and civilians (Obotetukudo, 1991). The government capitalised on this law to clamp down on civil dissent, limiting human rights and civil liberties (Ogbonda, 2010). Some of the moves taken in this respect were, however, rationalised and justified in terms of the national security imperative.

In terms of economic governance, Buhari's regime embraced some radical homegrown policies aimed at reform. A series of austerity measures were introduced to rebuild and revamp the national economic system (Sanusi, 2002). This included streamlining the excesses in national expenditures, fighting corruption in public dealings, promoting private employment and self-employment, implementing import policies aimed at encouraging local industrialisation (Usman, 2021), and so on. Buhari's government also severed relations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), over the Fund's insistence on naira devaluation and allied structural conditionalities (Vreeland, 2006).

In addition to its austere anti-corruption posture, Buhari's regime pursued a rigorous campaign for mass ethical re-orientation. Through the War Against Indiscipline (WAI), which was launched

on 20 March 1984, the government sought to address the perceived lack of public morality and civic responsibility in Nigeria. This policy targeted offences such as examination malpractices, drug abuse, absenteeism, and all forms of breaches of public order and etiquette (Siollun, 2003).

Buhari's regime came to an abrupt end in August 1985, after a coup led by General Ibrahim Babangida and some members of the ruling Supreme Military Council (SMC) (Nzekwe, 2003). Subsequent to this military takeover, Buhari was arrested and detained in Benin City until December 1988, when he was released and retired to his residence in Daura, Katsina State. While in Katsina, Buhari founded and chaired the Katsina Foundation, a non-governmental organisation established to promote social and economic development in the state.

During the regime of Sani Abacha (1993–1998), Buhari served as Chairman of the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF). PTF was a development-focused interventionist agency funded via the revenue generated by surplus petroleum products sales. A report published by *New African* in 1998 eulogised the performance of the PTF under Buhari for its rare transparency and 'success story' (Paden, 2016).

### **The Unsuccessful Quests**

Nigeria's current democratic dispensation originated in 1999, when the General Abdulsalami-led military government conducted a general election to return the country to democratic governance. Due to political expediencies arising from the annulled 12 June 1993 presidential election, the two major candidates in that election came from the southwest of Nigeria, and were prominent figures in the body politic. The elections, which held on 27 February 1999, were the first since the 1993 military coup, and also the first of the Fourth Republic. The results produced a victory for Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Obasanjo defeated Olu Falae, who was running on a joint Alliance for Democracy – All People's Party ticket (Paden, 2016). Olusegun Obasanjo had previously served as Head of State between 1976 and 1979, before a new

democratic government had been ushered in by Shehu Shagari. It was, therefore, poetic that when democracy eventually returned, some 20 years later, the same Obasanjo was the beneficiary that time around.

At the time Obasanjo was settling down in his new presidential seat, Muhammadu Buhari had been largely out of the national scene. Therefore, many had not expected him to become involved in partisan politics again, let alone be a constant name on the presidential ballot for every election after that particular 1999 contest. After all, this is a man reputed for his austerity, modesty, and non-flamboyant lifestyle, and his lack of any undue cravings for political attention. Since his removal from office in the 1985 coup, Buhari had maintained a relatively low profile, until he was invited by General Sani Abacha to serve in some capacity under his government. After Abacha's death, he promptly returned to his private cocoon once more.

However, that purported departure from the political spotlight was not to be permanent; Buhari swung back into the political mix, kick-starting his quest for civilian leadership in the 2003 election. In addition to his personal leadership convictions and a feeling that he had unfinished business regarding governing Nigeria, the major reason for his renewed vigour in entering another political foray was perhaps that he had witnessed President Obasanjo, a fellow military member, being well accepted and succeeding as a civilian leader. In the 2003 elections, Buhari ran for President (Table 1) on the platform of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), against incumbent Obasanjo of the ruling PDP. Also in the electoral contest was an additional challenger, Odumegwu Ojukwu, who, decades after leading a civil war to split the southeast region from Nigeria, looked to the ballot as a path to leading the country, as the candidate of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). Although Buhari was roundly defeated by incumbent Obasanjo, who won by a significant margin of more than 11 million votes, Buhari made an impactful outing by garnering a chunk of northern votes

that would later expand and be referred to as his famous 12 million guaranteed vote bank.

Because the 2003 election was the first in about two decades to be held by a civilian government, it had symbolic weight. 'Incumbent President Olusegun Obasanjo and the PDP were the clear favourites. However, he was widely accused of manipulating the ballot. Thousands of people voted several times, and the police in Lagos uncovered an electoral fraud, finding plenty of false ballots. International observers, including the European Union, observed various electoral irregularities in 11 of Nigeria's 36 states. In many cases, votes were pre-filled, or results were later amended. Some states thus did not fulfil minimum standards for democratic elections. Nearly all opposition parties refused to recognise the results, citing alleged thuggery, political violence and electoral irregularities' (Nwachukwu & Uzoigwe, 2014).

Buhari attempted to seek legal redress, but on 20 December 2004, the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal, sitting in Abuja, dismissed his petition. Dissatisfied with this judgment, Buhari approached the Supreme Court. On 1 July 2005, that court delivered judgement validating the Tribunal's ruling, and maintained that Olusegun Obasanjo had won the election (*The Guardian*, 31 October 2019).

Then, in the 2007 general election, Buhari again ran for president as the candidate of the ANPP. His main contender was Umaru Yar'adua, the candidate of the ruling PDP. The outcome of the election placed Buhari a distant second with 18% of the vote, while Yar'adua garnered 70%. Although Buhari decried and rejected the results of the election as fraudulent – as the triumphant Yar'adua admitted – Buhari's party, the ANPP, was placated into joining Yar'adua's government, in the spirit of national unity (Nwachukwu & Uzoigwe, 2014). Notably, Buhari himself opted out of the "government of national unity" agreement, out of personal conviction that the processes and outcome of the election were flawed (Fisayo, 2014).

Many people believed that Muhammadu Buhari controlled the electorate in the north of Nigeria almost completely, especially in the northwestern region that includes the states of Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Jigawa, Sokoto, and Zamfara. He consistently received between 11 and 12 million votes from the north in the three elections he lost. Only in 2007 when he ran against Umaru Musa Yar'adua were the results significantly different. Because both men are Fulani Muslims who hail from the same Katsina State, Buhari's widely acknowledged dominance of the northern electorate was nearly broken in the middle. Notably, however, Yar'adua's exemplary performance against him was not all due to his political attributes as the former Governor of Katsina State. Two factors were at play, the more important being that Yar'adua ran against Buhari with the solid, strong backing of an influential sitting president, Olusegun Obasanjo (Fisayo, 2014).

Obasanjo had a firm hold on government's machinery and had attempted to continue in office through a failed third-term agenda and. 'Considering the political culture in Africa, this might not have been too difficult to accomplish on a typical day. Nonetheless, the arrangement flopped tremendously, and the northern response, at both the elite and the grassroots levels, was of gratitude and relief that Obasanjo was at last exiting office and allowing the north an opportunity to regain power. This was made easier because the new candidate, Yar'adua, was a Muslim aristocrat from the north. When compared to the predominant collective interest in the north and the intense desire to regain power, Buhari had some real competition to contend with. In that specific political context, head and tail, the north made certain to win (Fisayo, 2014).

The 2007 election results were also disputed through the courts; on 1 November 2009, the Supreme Court adjourned without ruling on a challenge to the validity of the election that had brought Yar'adua to power, while Nigerians waited expectantly for the Court's decision (PBS Newshour, 29 May 2017). Both local and international observers had described the election held in April 2007 as flawed and failing to meet international standards. Chief

Justice Idris Kutigi, after listening to arguments from lawyers, reserved ruling for a later date – meaning the court would deliver its judgement on a date yet to be announced, and adjourned without setting a specific timeline for the decision.

The challenge was brought by two opposition candidates, Buhari and former vice president, Atiku Abubakar. Both men sought to nullify the vote. Local and international observers had at the time described the election as deeply flawed because of widespread intimidation, disorganisation, and fraud. At his inauguration, President Yar'adua acknowledged there were “lapses and shortcomings” in the elections, and promised to address the controversy (PBS *Newshour*, 29 May 2007).

In March 2010, Buhari exited the ANPP and helped found the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). As a founding member, Buhari believed the CPC offered an alternative to the debilitating ethical and ideological conflicts of his former party, the ANPP (Mamah, 2010; Usman, 2021). Buhari ran in the 2011 presidential election as the CPC candidate, with incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP as the other major contender. Jonathan, who had served as vice president to Yar'adua, had succeeded to the presidency following the latter's demise in 2010. In the campaign that ensued, Buhari canvassed for support by emphasising anti-corruption and restoration of moral rectitude in governance. He also supported enforcement of Sharia law in northern Nigeria (Nura, 2010).

The 2011 presidential election was marred by widespread post-election violence. In the orgy of violence that greeted the announcement of the election results, many deaths were recorded in different parts of the country. The violence was widely believed to have been instigated by the perception that the election was flawed (Ndujihe & Idonor, October 2011). This was despite assurances by leading election observers that the 2011 polls were among the fairest in Nigeria's history (Paden, 2016).

In that election, many voters saw Buhari as a viable alternative to the PDP-led government, which was fast drifting into



crass malfeasance and perfidy. With his vocal anti-corruption rhetoric, Buhari remained a bastion of hope for a new Nigeria bereft of corruption and misrule (Kperogi & Siollun, 2003). The outcome of the election placed him second with 12,214,853 votes, behind the incumbent, Goodluck Jonathan, who garnered 22,495,187 votes, and was declared the winner (Table 1). As he had in the two prior contests, Buhari disputed the 2011 results all the way to the Supreme Court, which, on 28 December 2011, upheld the Jonathan victory.

The court ruled unanimously that Muhammadu Buhari and the CPC failed to demonstrate their claim that the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) had not carried out the election in accordance with the law. The court decided that the CPC's claim of non-compliance was unproven and that neither the electoral body nor any of the respondents had to prove that the claim was sufficient to have affected the outcome of the election.

General Muhammadu Buhari publicly criticised the electoral body for denying his party access to materials used by INEC in the conduct of the election in order to enable them to prove their allegation of malpractices during the election. He was flustered after losing three attempts to overturn the vote through the Supreme Court. He blamed the violence which broke out in some states after the presidential election on such electoral malpractices and maintained that the Supreme Court, which ought to use its powers to address such, had chosen to look the other way in returning a verdict upholding the results of such a marred election (PBS *Newshour*, 29 May 2007).

From the foregoing, it is evident that Muhammadu Buhari was the most outstanding opposition figure in Nigeria's party politics from 2002–2015. His partisan activism, anchored on a sort of populist progressivism, endeared him to the mass populace of voters. This was especially true in northern Nigeria, where voters believed he possessed the credentials to redeem the country from the doldrums of corruption and misrule. Although his presidential ambition was not readily realised, despite his incremental efforts for

nearly 10 years, his endeavours as an opposition actor stand under history's reckoning as among the most enduring and impactful in the annals of Nigeria's democratic experience. Upon the strength and merit of these endeavours coalesced the anti-regime movement that galvanised to oust the PDP-led dominant-party system in 2015.

**Table 1: Buhari's Comparative Performance at the Polls (2003–2011)**

<b>2003</b>		
Candidate	Olusegun Obasanjo	Muhammadu Buhari
Party	PDP	ANPP
Running mate	Atiku Abubakar	Chuba Okadigbo
Number of states won	25 plus Federal Capital Territory (FCT)	5
Popular vote	24,456,140	12,710,022
Percentage of lead	61.94	32.19
<b>2007</b>		
Candidate	Umaru Yar'adua	Muhammadu Buhari
Party	PDP	ANPP
Running mate	Goodluck Jonathan	Edwin Ume-Ezeoke
Popular vote	24,630,063	6,605,299
Percentage of lead	69.60	18.66
<b>2011</b>		
Candidate	Goodluck Jonathan	Muhammadu Buhari
Party	PDP	CPC
Running mate	Namadi Sambo	Tunde Bakare
Number of states won	22 plus FCT	13
Popular vote	22,495,187	12,214,853
Percentage of lead	58.87	31.97

Source: Compiled by the author from INEC records (2003–2011).

Part of the reason Buhari-led opposition did not materialise into the much-needed acquisition of power was its regionalised or sectionalist character. His popularity and acceptability were, in fact, north-centric. In the 2011 polls, for instance, he won in the northern states of Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi,

Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, Zamfara, and Borno (Nura, 2010). He commanded immense followings among the voting populace of northern Nigeria, some of whom saw in him the only hope for restoring the country's political fortunes. Beyond northern Nigeria, some segments of southern Nigerian populations saw Buhari as an ethno-religious bigot who was after some parochial northern agenda (Ndujihe & Idonor, 2011). This is dangerous, considering the historical sensitivity of identity politics in Nigeria (Okoli, 2003; Ngare, 2012). His open support for Sharia was one factor that reinforced this perception. Such anti-Buhari sentiments subsisted until the 2015 grand alliance between Buhari's support groups in the north, and several anti-regime politicians in southern Nigeria (Vanguard, 21 November 2016).

### **Quest for Electoral Power: Echoes, Facts and Historical Implications**

Buhari's tireless hunt for electoral power between 2003 and 2011 showed the element of determination. He demonstrated personal and patriotic dedication to the noble calling of national leadership. His resolve was instructive and exemplary, in that he persevered through the precariousness of opposition politics for nearly a decade, surviving electoral humiliation but nonetheless galvanising a democratic vanguard that contributed to the deepening of multi-party democracy in Nigeria. He led one of the most impactful partisan oppositions in Nigeria's electoral democracy since the First Republic. Notably, he remained steadfast in his ambition, committing to the platform of mainstream opposition even amid the misfortunes of electoral defeat. Herein lies a lesson for Nigeria's half-hearted opposition politicians, who often readily defect from the opposition to the ruling party in self-rewarding desperation for power.

Buhari's steadfastness as an opposition activist and candidate was not a wasted effort; it paid off over time. He made significant incremental progress in terms of electoral acceptability and gains, rising from the abysmal five-state lead in 2003 to a 13-

state lead in 2011. This is remarkable, considering that he had different running mates from different regions in each election. These figures must also necessarily be viewed from the accepted fact that the elections of 2003, 2007 and 2011 were massively rigged.

Although his regional partisanship was pragmatically effective, it evoked an attitude that politicking is obviously detrimental in a typically pluralist polity like Nigeria (Okoli, 2003; Ngare, 2012). His tendency to contest results in the courts showed a seeming sense of entitlement towards election outcomes. Whilst this is a legitimate pursuit in a democratic electoral campaign, it was also among the elements that precipitated the post-election crises in parts of northern Nigeria. Perhaps, the image of a victim he invoked also helped sustain his cult following among a large percentage of northern voters.

In addition, Buhari's partisan activism was associated with a large, populist following, sectionalist in its orientation. A radicalised arm of the movement, identified as 'Buharists', were known for partisan extremism in parts of Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, and Katsina States. Some Buharists engaged in thuggery and other forms of electoral violence during and after the various elections from 2003–2011 (Owete, 2011). Although it remains unclear whether these elements acted based on direct partisan incitements, their activities appear to have been motivated by their principal's refusal to acknowledge and accept an unfavourable electoral outcome.

In a documentary on the president, 'Essential Muhammadu Buhari', narrating Buhari's political journey, his nephew and close confidante, Malam Mamman Daura, claimed that the PDP had massively rigged the presidential elections in 2003, 2007, and 2011. Daura cited the consistent rigging and lack of trust in the electoral system as among the reasons Buhari 'broke down' during his presidential campaign in 2011. During one of his campaign meetings in 2011, Buhari had said this would be his third and last attempt at the presidency. 'I will not present myself again for election into the office of the president', he said, wiping tears from his eyes. However,

in the documentary, Daura said Buhari did not break down in tears because he was worried about defeat; instead, 'he broke down in pity for the [electoral] system in the country (*Premium Times*, 2 January 2023). Daura also said he was convinced that all three elections had been rigged because he had approached Buhari's lawyer after the 2007 election to demand the results of some states, and made the following discovery:

*... He gave me the one for Imo State. I went over the result carefully and I saw PDP, Yar'adua-25,000 votes and Buhari-5,000, and so on. All round figures throughout. Even the winner of the election, Yar'adua, had said the election was faulty.*

Daura said that knowing all three elections were rigged prompted Buhari to enter a merger with other political parties in 2013. Buhari corroborated this commentary in another part of the documentary, in which he said the PDP 'were so confident that nobody could remove them and they were also not careful.' He described how his former party, CPC, had convinced political players – like Bola Tinubu of the then Action Congress of Nigeria, Rochas Okorocha from a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance, and the PDP dissidents – to form a merger that resulted in the All Progressives Congress (APC), which eventually delivered victory for him in the 2015 general elections (*Premium Times*, 2 January 2023).

Muhammadu Buhari's tenacity in pursuit of the presidency has become a reference point in political folklore for many Nigerians. It was, however, not as though the pertinacious leader felt no weariness after three electoral failures in a row. Just before the 2011 presidential election, he had declared he would not run again. 'This campaign is the third and last one for me since after it, I will not present myself again for election into the office of the president', he said at the time. Buba Galadima, Alhaji Sule Hamman, and a couple of other members of the Northern Intelligentsia, were

at the heart of his campaigns of 2003–2011 that failed to propel him to victory. Though the campaigns were mounted through two different political parties, the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP, 2003 and 2007) and the Congress for Progressives Change (2011), the Buharist elements, which grouped around a tightly controlled The Buhari Organisation (TBO), nearly always dictated the pace and pattern of his political philosophy. The TBO had Galadima and Hamman as their central drivers (*Vanguard*, 12 December 2016).

The story of the defeats Buhari suffered in 2003, 2007, and 2011 was, however, shaped by different strokes, as evidenced by a verbal exchange between Garba Shehu, Buhari's media aide, and Alhaji Buba Galadima, Buhari's long-time but estranged associate, in November 2016, after Buhari had been elected President. Galadima said Buhari might be alone if he decided to seek a second term in 2019. In a lengthy tirade, he declared that Buhari's lack of interest in party politics, especially in resolving the APC crisis, might lead to its disintegration, thereby leaving Buhari with no political platform on which to run for a second term in 2019 if he decided to seek re-election (*Daily Trust*, 20 November 2016).

In a swift reaction however, the presidency dismissed suggestions that the people would desert Buhari in 2019, saying they were unfounded and ridiculous. Presidential spokesperson, Garba Shehu, reacting to Galadima's suppositions, asserted that: 'ordinary Nigerians are the backbone of his (Buhari's) mandate and the only reason he ran for the office is to protect them against the rapacious merchants of corruption, who have held Nigeria back for decades' (*Vanguard*, 21 November 2016). Garba Shehu said Galadima's calculation and prediction were utterly confused and misleading. The statement said:

*[the] masses are solidly behind Buhari because he is not stealing their money and their future, that the President's enormous goodwill remains ever strong because the people are convinced the President is acting in their best interest, despite the temporary*

*unintended consequences of reforms. President Muhammadu Buhari is far from isolation. He enjoys a very strategic relationship with ordinary Nigerians. This relationship is as solid as the proverbial rock. If Buba Galadima thinks that because he has no role and no job in this government that means president is isolated he is putting himself up to ridicule. Galadima cannot speak for the masses as far as their steadfast loyalty to Buhari is concerned.*

While acknowledging that Galadima was entitled to advance his own political agenda, Garba Shehu said Galadima did not have the right to decide for ordinary voters. Instructively, Garba Shehu recalled that Galadima's disagreement with Buhari was based on principles. He explained that President Buhari was committed to a level playing field, and would not want anyone to link his name to injustice. The presidential media aide further said Galadima's disagreement with Buhari had begun in 2011, when a faction within the party orchestrated an organisational mess, by which the CPC embarked on the imposition and substitution of candidates in exchange for cash payments at the expense of those duly and democratically-elected. He said Buhari was embarrassed by these incidents and related complaints, adding that 'he, as a democrat, would not suppress the will of the people to please selfish interests. Consequently, he dispensed with the service of such associates as Buba Galadima, ran and won the 2015 elections without them. Let Buba Galadima go to his constituency, stand for election, and see what will happen to him' (*Vanguard*, 21 November 2016).

Galadima had often, throughout Buhari's time in office, made spirited attempts at every available opportunity to accuse the president of abandoning and badly treating those (including Galadima) who had fervently stood by him during his failed political quests of 2003–2011; the president and his handlers have consistently refuted this claim as baseless.

In 2003, when Buhari made his initial political foray, he may have been least sabotaged by his political associates. At that time, he had Chuba Okadigbo as his running mate, and a number of rooted politicians from different geopolitical zones, were almost consciously supportive of his bid. In 2007, the internal fractures within the ANPP had become so obvious that some of the second-term governors in the party were openly contradicting themselves over the direction of the party. A number of the outgoing governors, perhaps out of jealousy, worked at cross purposes to the extent that the only thing they agreed on was that Buhari should get on the presidential ticket, but should not win the main election. It was thus not surprising that the party foisted its national chairman, Chief Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, on him as running mate, perhaps to keep watch over him. Not many were shocked when Ume-Ezeoke swiftly distanced himself from Buhari's challenge to the official election results. Even the victorious PDP candidate, Yar'adua, was sufficiently convinced his victory was bloated, and agreed to implement systems to repair the electoral system (*Vanguard*, 21 November 2016).

Buhari was so provoked by the ANPP officials' conduct that he apparently vowed not to use the party's platform for any more elections. Whatever the root reason, Buhari opted to leave the ANPP, and the fuss with Chief John Odigie-Oyegun – who became the deputy national chairman of the party – was not made public. However, it was no secret that core Buhari loyalists in the party remained uncomfortable with Odigie-Oyegun, who had initially come into the national limelight during Buhari's stint as military head of state, when he served as a Federal Permanent Secretary. Others have claimed that Buhari felt Odigie-Oyegun betrayed him by aligning with Malam Ibrahim Shekarau in the 2011 presidential election as running mate just as Buhari moved out to form the CPC. Even in the CPC, the political demons that followed him seemed not to have given up. The internal crisis in the CPC, as demonstrated in the repeated changes of the party's 2011 National Assembly candidates for Katsina State, underlined the challenges set against



Buhari (*Vanguard*, 21 November 2016; *Daily Trust*, 20 November 2016).

A further opinion held that prior to the blockbuster coalition of 2013 that led to the APC, Buhari's core supporters were more mindful of their own interests than of actualising his presidential bid, perhaps a major reason he had laboured unsuccessfully on each occasion. In summary, Buhari's failed but undaunted quest for electoral power from 2003–2011 holds some vital lessons for politicians and the citizenry in Nigeria. The key lessons include:

- i. All political power belongs to God, who entrusts it to whosoever he pleases at his time.
- ii. Political power in a democracy is not an exclusive entitlement of any political party or politician.
- iii. Elective power belongs to the people, and the electorate determines who wields it.
- iv. Attainment of an elective position in a democracy requires a great deal of patience and incremental electoral investment.
- v. Sectionalist populism in a plural polity such as Nigeria cannot confer electoral victory on a politician no matter how popular they might be within their regional bloc.
- vi. The politics of brinkmanship in an electoral context are not healthy for democratic stability and sustainability.
- vii. Electoral power is not taken by violence, but by calculated politicking and strategic alignments.
- viii. Serial electoral failure or defeat for a politician or a political party does not vitiate the possibility of a grand victory in future.
- ix. Statesmanship requires a great deal of sportsmanship and instrumental alliance.
- x. Electoral politics does not confer eternal victory or defeat on any persons or parties.

**Conclusion**

Muhammadu Buhari's presidential ambition was a laborious quest that traversed the vicissitudes of time. From 2003–2011, he made three consecutive unsuccessful attempts to lead Nigeria as democratically elected president. Within those years, he moved parties, from ANPP to CPC, in an effort to find a platform that would enable him to realise his presidential ambition. Although all three of his campaigns within the period did not end in victory, none was in itself a total failure. An optimistic statesman who probably believed in the determinism of fate, Buhari also learned through his setbacks, in an apparent desire to make history in an uncommon way. His story demonstrates tenacity and dedication; he was undeterred by the relentless campaign journeys of nearly a decade. Although this narrative highlights a few learning points regarding some of his shortcomings as a statesman, it also illustrates not only the audacity of sustained hope but also the agony of defeat – the dialectics of expectancy and perseverance in a statesman's legitimate calling.

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## 6

### **Never Say Die: The Winning Strategy of a General in Politics**

**Ene Alice Ochoga**

#### **Introduction**

Following a prolonged period of military rule that spanned over a decade and a half, Nigerians clamoured for democratic dispensation, lamenting that military rule was an aberration. With the eventual return to democratic rule on 29 May 1999, after 17 years of military dictatorship, the agitation and public discourse systematically shifted to entrenching sustainable democracy. Such agitation for democracy is desirable because it is believed that democratic governance has the potential and characteristics to enhance Nigeria's development. Democratic systems have the following distinguishing characteristics: (i) there is more than one political party and the parties can compete freely with one other for political power; (ii) the composition of power is open, not secretive, and based on established and accepted forms of procedure; (iii) entry and recruitment to positions of political power are relatively open; and (iv) there are periodic elections based on a wide franchise (Johari, 2003).

The features of democratic rule have been abundantly highlighted in political discourses in Nigeria. However, what is lacking is the institutionalisation of its basic tenets in the country, as obtained in developed and advanced democracies. The poor

management and administration of elections have been identified as foundational problems in the Nigerian democratic experiment. Critics were optimistic, suggesting that if Nigeria gets its electioneering process and elections right, all other benefits associated with democratic rule would follow suit (Ochoga, 2013). However, this optimism remained largely unfulfilled in the build-up to the 2015 general election. The four previous general elections since Nigeria's return to democratic rule had done little to suggest a positive outcome.

Thus, having identified the poor management of elections as the root cause of the country's wobbling democracy and development quagmires, before the 2015 general elections, Nigerians — and even the international community — warned that the Nigerian state must create an enabling political environment to meet international best practices in the conduct of elections. Ultimately, the 2015 election turned out to be a watershed moment in Nigeria's political history since the main opposition candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, defeated the then-incumbent president and candidate of the ruling party.

Against this backdrop, the present chapter examines the interplay of forces that enabled the achievement of that feat by Buhari after three previous unsuccessful attempts on the platforms of two different political parties in 2003, 2007 and 2011. It analyses the nature and character of the realignment of interests and the coalition of political forces, as well as the events leading up to the formation of the All Progressive Congress (APC), on whose platform victory was ultimately achieved. The chapter is structured as follows: conceptual issues; exploring the 'power belongs to the people' strategy of the APC; the rise of the APC, including its formation and formative challenges; the APC and the 2015 presidential election, including the outcome of the winning strategy; a discussion of the findings; a conclusion.

### **Conceptual Issues**

An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century (Encyclopedia Britannica Online). The centrality of elections to the practice of representative democracy was poignantly captured by Spanish liberal philosopher, Jose Ortegay Gasset, as follows:

*The health of democracies, of whatever type and range, depends on a wretched technical detail — electoral procedure. All the rest is secondary. If the regime of the elections is successful, if it is in accordance with reality, all goes well; if not, though the rest progresses beautifully, all goes wrong.*  
(Ortegay Gasset, 1930: 114 cited in Ngwu & Idama, 2018: 330)

However, Pomper (1967) observed that while popular elections are generally assumed to be a crucial element of democratic governments, the significance of elections is so widely assumed that it is rarely examined. On this note, Ejumudo (2013) conceptualised elections as the technical means or instruments of ensuring popular participation in governance by citizens who chose their representatives in conformity with the dictates of modern democracies and the hallmark of legitimacy. Here, the central message is that the principles of democracy advocate for adult citizens to be given a free and enabling environment to choose whom they want. Any outcome of an election contrary to the wishes of the majority and preferences of the people amounts to a violation of the people's sovereign power and legitimacy.

In the same vein, Aderonmu (2013) defined an election as a procedure of aggregating preferences of a particular kind. Thus, this aggregation of preference could be a procedure used to fill existing vacancies in the executive or legislative arm, which applies to every

tier of government. Since different politicians may develop an interest in occupying the same elective position, the electorate also tends to establish a preferred candidate among the contesting candidates. With this type of contestable political environment, an election remains the only accepted way to aggregate the divergent preferences of the electorate. This premise has further reaffirmed the general global consensus that an election is consequently fundamental to the theory and practice of democracy. Thus, as a central tenet of democracy, elections have imperatively solved the problem associated with who governs whom, as well as when and how.

Egwemi (2013) viewed elections as a means by which popular commitment to the regime may be mobilised, noting that they are at the very heart of democracy. Deductively, there would be no democracy without an election since it galvanises the popular support and commitment of the citizenry to the regime. The propelling of allegiance and commitment of the people to the legitimacy of constituted authority remains one of the cardinal functions of elections.

Therefore, the main functions of elections are as follows:

- Recruiting politicians and public decision-makers
- Making governments
- Providing representation
- Influencing policy decisions
- Building legitimacy
- Strengthening elites
- Providing succession in leadership
- Extension of participation to many people.

(Anifowose, 2013, cited in Ejumudo)

It is the participation of eligible adults in the electoral process that gives credence to a particular regime building legitimacy. When the electoral body ensures that the outcome of the electoral exercise is not manipulated by the system against the

popular wishes and preferences of the voters, then the elected leaders or constituted government would enjoy the desired legitimate support of the citizenry. Apart from the aforementioned functions, another objective of an election is that it precisely and accurately aggregates voters' choices among the competing candidates, as branded and presented by political parties. This is why Egwemi (2013) reiterated that any flaws in election rules and administration prevent the full achievement of this objective and constitute a matter of great concern to democracy.

In this context, the present chapter has defined elections as the 'authoritative collection of the desires of citizens through the ballot while aiming to determine those to represent them in government, in which the procedure and its results should be clearly and accurately obtained for universal acceptance' (Egwemi, 2013; Ngwu & Idama, 2018). Our definition would also highlight issues around participation and turn-out of voters for legitimacy and credibility. Any attempt to undermine the sanctity of the rules of engagement would defeat the essence of the election and thereby bastardise the will and sovereign power of the people. Thus, the importance of an election to the democratic process lies in its ability to help produce legitimate and democratic rule by ensuring that those in government are not merely representatives of the governed, but are also answerable to them. If an election lays the foundation for civil rule, then politics is associated with the struggle for power and influence within a political system.

### **Power Belongs to the People**

It is pertinent to situate the argument of this chapter within a theoretical base. Thus, the present chapter considered the relevance of adopting the social contract theory. Hence, the entire notion of an election is the aggregation of the general will of the people, which is translated into popular sovereignty and aims to be transferred and vested in the elected representatives due to public trust. The idea that men initially created the state through a social contract to which everyone had agreed laid the groundwork for the theory of

sovereignty. Although there are several versions of the social contract theory, its assumptions depend on the perspective of the proponent. Overall, the social contract theory is associated with the foundational works of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke in the 17th century and of Jean Jacques Rousseau in the 18th century.

A state is created by a group of people who voluntarily enter into a contract that stipulates the exercise of political authority, according to the social contract theory. However, as a voluntary association, it differs from other associations because it provides for the exercise of sovereignty, the supreme power to control the conduct of its members. The political obligation to submit to that authority is binding upon the individuals precisely because they voluntarily accepted it (Anifowose, 1999).

Rousseau held that in forming this association, everyone surrendered to it all rights. He endowed the state with a 'general will' that has absolute authority over the behaviour of individuals and groups. Unlike Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau insisted on the right of all the people to participate in the affairs of the government and viewed direct democracy as the ideal political method. Rousseau also contended that political authority is not legitimate unless it is exercised by the people (Anifowose, 1999).

The philosophical utility of Rousseau's perspective of social contract theory is rooted in his advocacy for the rights of all people to establish the state and form the government, as well as people's participation in all affairs of the state and its government. Rousseau's philosophical advocacy for the citizenry's involvement in democracy in the 18th century has further contributed to laying the theoretical foundation of democratic governance. Hence, his perspective of the social contract theory viewed democracy as the ideal political method for forming government, upon which government could be constituted through an election. As epitomised by the theory, the state was created by the decision of the people to surrender their rights. Consequently, as an instrument of the state, the government was constituted by the same will that the people surrendered to the state.



Rousseau's variant of the theory served as the foundation for democratic rule and the notion of the general participation of the citizenry in government affairs. In other words, any government formed without the consent of the people is not only arbitrary but illegitimate since Rousseau believed that sovereignty resides with the people and is only exercised on their behalf by their elected representatives. The entire essence of elections as a tenet of democracy is to seek the consent of the governed to form the government of their choice. Consequently, any government established outside the popular will of the people would be considered illegitimate and an assault on the people's general will.

Be that as it may, the relevance of this theory is that Rousseau recognised the involvement of the people in the formation of the state and its government. By extension, through the formation of the APC, President Buhari was able to obtain the consent of the people to exercise sovereignty on their behalf through a transparent election.

### **The Rise of the APC: Formation and Formative Challenges**

At the end of 2013, a rash of defections to the opposition APC from the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) implied a realigning of political forces in Nigeria. The APC was only recently formed in February 2013 from a merger of Nigeria's four largest opposition parties; however, it soon represented the greatest threat to the PDP since the return to civilian rule in 1999. By 26 November 2014, five state governors and 37 members of Nigeria's House of Representatives had defected to the APC from the PDP. This made the APC the largest party in the House of Representatives, with 174 of the 360 seats, compared to the PDP's 171 (Ochoga & Shishi, 2016). Moreover, several senators soon followed suit.

The attempt to mould disparate members into a coherent single party initially caused friction within the APC at both the national and state levels. In at least 9 of the 16 states that had an APC governor, divisions had emerged within the party. Examples abound. The five governors who defected to the APC claimed

automatic leadership of their local APC chapters, which brought them into conflict with older APC structures. In Sokoto State, this led to two separate state interim executive committees being named. Similar issues emerged in states where the APC had existed for much longer. In Ogun State, there were violent clashes between APC factions. In Oyo State, leaders of the opposition parties who had come together to form the APC — the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) — considered leaving the APC for the Labour Party. In Imo State, former ACN leaders contemplated moving to the PDP.

At that point, the APC had no clear presidential candidate. A previous attempt to form an opposition alliance between the CPC and the ACN in the build-up to the 2011 election largely failed because the parties' presidential hopefuls were unable to agree on a single candidate (Ejumudo, 2013).

Although there was an initial understanding that the two political heavyweights of the two major parties in the coalition — Muhammadu Buhari (former military ruler and CPC leader) and Bola Tinubu (a former ACN governor of Lagos State) — would not run for president to give the APC the impression of a fresh start, General Buhari was quick to indicate his intention to run for the highest office. Then-Governor of Kano State, Rabi'u Kwankwaso, who had also defected to the APC, as well as the governor of Imo, Rochas Okorocha, and the former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Nuhu Ribadu, all indicated their interest in running for office. Other prominent candidates thought to have been interested included Aminu Tambuwal (the then-incumbent speaker of the House of Representatives) and Atiku Abubakar (a former vice president), despite neither of them having formally joined the APC at that point.

Notably, many critics believed that General Buhari was the key to northern votes but not popular in the south. Nigeria is commonly divided into six geopolitical zones. The southeast and south-south zones are strongholds of the PDP, while the APC

claimed the majority of their support from the three zones of northern Nigeria. However, their ability to achieve the constitutional requirement of 25% of votes in 24 of the country's 36 states for a single-round victory depended on the six states of the southwest zone, which form the traditional power base of the ACN.

Therefore, General Buhari's candidacy was opposed by many who believed his unpopularity in Nigeria's south would reduce any chance of an APC victory. In the 2011 elections, Buhari won more than 1% of the vote in just seven of the 17 southern states, and over 10% in only one. Although all the early frontrunners in the race for the APC's nomination were from northern Nigeria, it seemed likely that a younger figure from outside the party could attract more support from the southwest zone's former ACN voters than the former leader of their main opposition rival, General Buhari. For example, Senator Bola Tinubu was reportedly supporting Tambuwal (Ochoga & Shishi, 2016). However, it was feared that if Buhari failed to clinch the ticket, he could decide to run anyway, thereby splitting the northern vote that the APC was counting on.

Setting the agenda for the APC needs to be explained beyond unseating the PDP since a central element of the defections from the PDP to the APC had been opposition to the continued rule of the president, Goodluck Jonathan, beyond 2015. The lines of political division reflected the ethnic and regional differences that have dogged Nigeria since independence. Politicians in the mainly Muslim north of Nigeria were opposed to another term in office for Dr Jonathan, a southern Christian. Many in the PDP — including a former president, Olusegun Obasanjo — called on Dr Jonathan not to seek re-election, believing that this would violate the PDP's charter requirement that the presidency shifts between the north and the south every two terms. Nonetheless, the presence of posters in the capital Abuja promoting Dr Jonathan's re-election, which appeared on New Year's Day, was clear signal that the advice would be ignored.

One interesting aspect of the list of defecting PDP governors was who it did not include, rather than who it did. The PDP governor of the northern state of Jigawa, Alhaji Sule Lamido, had previously rebelled against the leadership of Dr Jonathan but chose not to follow other rebel members to the APC. It seemed likely that Sule Lamido, who was understood to harbour presidential ambitions, believed his chances were better within the PDP than outside of it. With many of his rivals leaving the party, he could well have been correct. Even if Dr Jonathan did secure the PDP presidential candidacy and the APC could unite behind a single candidate, an opposition victory was still considered unlikely. The power of incumbency has remained a major factor in Nigeria's electoral outcomes.

Moreover, the PDP also enjoyed an election purse that the APC could not hope to match. Nonetheless, it was generally believed that the APC would offer the PDP the greatest challenge in its 15 years in power. However, to do that, it had to hold together a coalition that was defined more by its opposition to the PDP than by any unique vision. After all the intrigue, General Buhari eventually emerged as the APC candidate in the 2015 presidential election.

### **Outcome of the Winning Strategy**

After a few months of political campaigns and soul-touching debates, the presidential candidate of the APC, General Muhammadu Buhari, defeated his main rival and PDP candidate, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, with over 2.5 million votes (*Daily Sun*, 1 April 2015) (see Table 1.0).

**Table 1.0: Official Result of the 2015 Presidential Election**

S/No.	State	PDP (Jonathan)	APC (Buhari)	Winner
1	Ekiti	176,466	120,331	PDP
2	Ogun	207,950	308,290	APC
3	Enugu	553,003	14,157	PDP
4	Kogi	149,987	264,851	APC
5	Osun	249,929	383,603	APC

6	Ondo	251,368	299,889	APC
7	FCT	157,195	146,399	PDP
8	Oyo	303,376	528,620	APC
9	Nasarawa	273,460	236,838	PDP
10	Kano	215,779	1,903,999	APC
11	Jigawa	142,904	885,988	APC
12	Katsina	98,937	1,345,441	APC
13	Kwara	132,602	302,146	APC
14	Kaduna	484,085	1,127,760	APC
15	Anambra	660,762	17,926	PDP
16	Abia	368,303	13,394	PDP
17	Akwa Ibom	953,304	58,411	PDP
18	Imo	559,185	133,253	PDP
19	Plateau	549,615	429,140	PDP
20	Ebonyi	323,653	19,518	PDP
21	Niger	149,222	657,678	APC
22	Lagos	632,327	792,460	APC
23	Bayelsa	361,209	5,194	PDP
24	Gombe	96,873	361,245	APC
25	Cross Rivers	414,863	28,368	PDP
26	Rivers	1,487,075	69,238	PDP
27	Adamawa	251,664	374,701	APC
28	Zamfara	144,833	612,202	APC
29	Kebbi	100,972	567,783	APC
30	Benue	303,737	373,961	APC
31	Bauchi	86,085	931,598	APC
32	Yobe	25,526	446,265	APC
33	Edo	286,869	208,469	PDP
34	Taraba	310,800	261,326	PDP
35	Sokoto	152,1999	671,926	APC
36	Delta	1,215,405	48,910	PDP
37	Borno	25,640	473,543	APC

Source: *Daily Sun*, 1 April 2015.

With the results released by the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof Attahiru Jega, the long-drawn battle finally ended with President Jonathan calling Buhari and conceding defeat to him (*Daily Sun*, 1 April 2015).

Despite the anxiety and tension generated in the country by the presidential election, this congratulatory telephone call and a prompt nationwide presidential broadcast not only calmed the tense atmosphere, but also proved the various prophecies and predictions of Nigeria's disintegration wrong. The then-president's nationwide broadcast, which was tagged as 'I have kept my word on free and fair polls', reads in part as follows:

*Fellow Nigerians, I thank you all for turning out en masse for the March 28<sup>th</sup> General Elections. I promised the country free and fair elections. I have kept my word. I have also expanded the space for Nigerians to participate in the democratic process. That is one legacy that I will like to see endure. Although some people have expressed mixed feelings about the results announced by the INEC, I urge those who may feel aggrieved to follow due process based on our constitution and our electoral laws in seeking redress. As I have always affirmed, nobody's ambition is worth the blood of any Nigerian. The unity, stability and progress of our dear country is more important than anything else. I congratulate all Nigerians for successfully going through the process of the March 28<sup>th</sup> General Elections with the commendable enthusiasm and commitment that was demonstrated nationwide. I also commend the security services for their role in ensuring that the elections were mostly peaceful and violence-free. (Daily Sun, 1 April 2015)*

The statement further reads:

*To my colleagues in the PDP, I thank you for your support. Today, the PDP should be celebrating rather than mourning. We have established a legacy of*

*democratic freedom, transparency, economic growth and free and fair elections. For the past 16 years, we have steered the country away from ethnic and regional politics, we created a pan-Nigerian political party and brought home to our people the realities of economic development and social development and social transformation. I thank all Nigerians once again for the great opportunity I was given to lead this country and assure you that I will continue to do my best at the helm of national affairs until the end of my tenure. I have conveyed my personal best wishes to General Muhammadu Buhari. May God Almighty continue to bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I thank you all. (Daily Sun, 1 April 2015)*

Although the general elections had come and gone, Nigeria remained strongly united despite the interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces threatening the peace and progress of the nation. While the outcome of the elections marked an excellent milestone in the nation's democratisation process, there were some fundamental lessons to learn from the electioneering process that would aid the consolidation of Nigeria's nascent democracy. This forms the focus of the next section.

### **Critical Variables**

Amid fear and uncertainty, the INEC braved all odds and conducted what was adjudged by local and foreign observers as a free, fair and credible presidential election. The outcome of the election significantly altered the political equation in the country. For the first time in the history of Nigeria, the main opposition party defeated the ruling party. The PDP had been in power since 1999 but became an opposition party on 29 May 2015, following the inauguration of President Muhammadu Buhari of the APC (*The Nation*, 24 April 2015).

Apart from winning the presidential election, the APC had the majority in the Senate, with 60 senators, while the PDP had 49 out of the 109 members of the Upper Chamber of the National Assembly. Thus, the composition of political parties in the Senate was very healthy, thereby facilitating the constructive scrutiny of law-making and other statutory functions of the Upper Chamber for the benefit of Nigerians. The past experience, where one political party absolutely dominated the Senate, was by no means a healthy trend. Similarly, the configuration of the House of Representatives also changed in favour of the APC. Out of 360 members, the APC had 214. Based on its numerical strength, the APC had to produce 6 out of the 10 principal officers in each of the Chambers. Yet, the Senate President was selected by a minority caucus of PDP members in the absence of the APC majority. That absence also helped the opposition PDP to clinch the position of Deputy Senate President.

The major fallout of the election was the waning popularity of the PDP in states where it had consistently held sway. Apart from losing the presidential election in many of its erstwhile strongholds, the party also lost governorship seats in many of them. It failed to win the majority of senatorial seats and members of the House of Representatives, while also failing to produce a majority in the House of Assembly. For instance, APC won all senatorial, House of Representatives and House of Assembly seats in Kano State, where the PDP had held sway since 1999 — except in 2007 when it lost the governorship to the defunct All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) (*The Nation*, 24 April 2015). Thus, there are some lessons to learn from the fall of the PDP in particular and the entire election in general. These lessons are presented as follows:

### **The Smart Card Reader**

To a large extent, the introduction of the Permanent Voter Card (PVC) and card reader technology into the electoral system by the INEC contributed to the success of the elections. In previous elections, the snatching of ballot boxes and the massive theft of ballot papers were common trends. However, the innovation of card



readers, which primarily authenticate the genuineness of each PVC and simultaneously register (accredit) the voter electronically, reduced the undemocratic acts of snatching ballot boxes and stealing ballot papers, as hitherto orchestrated by many Nigerian political parties and their politicians. In other words, the card reader was not only a means to an end, but an end in itself. With the card reader, the power now resides with the people.

### **Sovereign Power**

One of the lessons of the 2015 election is that sovereign power belongs to the people. The era of political parties taking people for granted is gone. Nigerians are now conscious of their rights; they know that with their votes, they can install or remove a government that failed to perform. The turnout of voters in the 28 March presidential election bore testimony to this. Despite the shift in the election date by the INEC from 14 February to 28 March, people still clamoured for a change of leadership. This impression is an indication that they were tired of the PDP-led government at the national level, which had been in power for 16 years without making a positive impact on their lives. Voter turn-out was 43.7% in 2015, down from 53.7% in 2011, but better than 34.8% in 2019 and 27% in 2023.

If the election was shifted to December, it still would not have prevented the people from voting President Jonathan out of office. Nigerians had made up their minds about a government that failed in its primary responsibility of securing lives and properties and providing a stable power supply while promoting corruption and the mismanagement of the economy (*The Nation*, 24 April 2015).

In other words, the outcome of the presidential election reflected the strong will of the people, coupled with the commitment and determination to effect a change. The people had tolerated the PDP for the last 16 years. As it were, they squandered the good will invested in them. They dashed the hope of the average Nigerian. It seemed that the PDP had forgotten that the day of

reckoning would come. They had forgotten that the electorate would hold them accountable for everything they did with the power of their PVCs.

### **Religious and Ethnic Sentiments**

The issue of ethnic and religious differences became pronounced prior to the general election. In the build-up to the election, politicians polarised the country into a north-south dichotomy, finding cleavages around geographical and socio-political organisations such as the Southern Assembly, South-South People's Assembly, Afenifere, Oduduwa People's Congress, Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, and the Arewa Consultative Forum. Manipulating the Nigerian electorate through their affiliated socio-cultural and religious organisations principally remained the strategy of some politicians and political parties. To this end, Salaudeen (2015) argued that in preparation for the 2015 presidential election, Chief Edwin Clark formed the Southern Assembly, comprising handpicked leaders from the 17 states in the South. The Assembly's objective was to prepare the ground for Jonathan's 2015 re-election.

Salaudeen (2015) further argued that Chief Clark also infiltrated the north by wooing some leaders of the Middle Belt, who were mainly Christians (Salaudeen, 2015).

A few months before the presidential election, some politicians were hopping from one church to the other, canvassing for support. However, attempts to use religious sentiments to gain an electoral advantage did not work out in some states (*Saturday Mirror*, 30 May 2015). The socio-economic realities in the country made many Nigerians so aware that nobody could use religion to pressure them about whom to vote for. Poverty, unemployment, injustice and insecurity affect people of all tribes and religions. What Nigerians voted for on 28 March 2015 was a leader that they believed had the integrity and passion to restore the glory of the country, irrespective of tribe or religion.

**Spendthrift**

The power of incumbency and the coercive instruments of the state at the disposal of the PDP could not save then-President Jonathan from losing the election. The two months preceding the election showed how President Jonathan turned the electioneering campaign into a 'cash and carry' matter. He relocated to the southwest with a view to winning over the voters of the region. It was alleged that individuals and groups visited by President Jonathan came out with broad smiles after being enriched with dollars and naira (*Daily Sun*, 1 April 2015). If money was used to influence the electorate, then the question that comes to mind is: why couldn't the same money have been used to fix dilapidated roads, provide electricity and equip schools and hospitals? Unfortunately for him, the money allegedly spent on wooing voters did not change the minds of much of the electorate since they mostly based their votes on the integrity and performance of the candidates rather than selling their votes for peanuts.

**Corruption**

Many Nigerians believe that corruption is the root cause of the country's many woes. In the build-up to the 2015 election, a greater proportion of Nigerians seemed unimpressed with the strategic posture of the President Jonathan-led government towards the series of allegations levelled against some public office holders over corruption. One allegation was against then-Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal, who publicly alleged that the body language of President Jonathan appeared to be encouraging corruption. Others included a pension funds scam, the allegation by the former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, that a sum of \$20 billion was missing from the central bank, the N10 billion allegedly spent on jet maintenance by the former Petroleum Minister, Diezani Allison-Madueke, the bullet-proof cars scandal involving the ex-minister of Aviation, Mrs Stella Oduah, and many other allegations levelled against the administration (*Daily Sun*, 1 April 2015).

The lukewarm attitude of the PDP-led federal government towards corruption provided a strong basis for the opposition to mount scathing criticisms against President Jonathan's administration and eventually defeat him in the election. This apparently permissive disposition of the government towards corruption gave the regime a very poor public image before the electorate and the international community due to the failure of the government to wage a spirited war against corruption and leakages in the oil industry.

### **Economic Management**

There were ominous signs that the country was broken under the Jonathan's administration due to the reduction in states' monthly allocations from the Federation Account. As a result, many states owed workers' salaries, while also failing to complete development projects. Yet, the Jonathan administration frequently claimed in both local and international media that with the rebased gross domestic product (GDP), Nigeria's economy had overtaken that of South Africa to become the strongest and largest economy in Africa. However, Nigerians were not impressed with these statistics since the rating did not reflect an improvement in their situation. Consequently, this deceptive economic growth media jamboree counted against the PDP in the presidential election, in which a lot of Nigerians described the GDP rebasing as an ego trip. In other words, the era of the government deceiving Nigerians using neo-liberal economic grandstanding without a corresponding positive impact on the masses is gone.

### **Democracy and Intra-Party Crises**

In the years leading up to the 2015 election, the PDP was embroiled in an internal crisis. The crisis emerged when some party chieftains and seven governors pulled out and formed a splinter group called the New PDP (N-PDP). Their major complaint was what they described as a lack of internal democracy within the party (*Daily Sun*, 1 April 2015). The inability to resolve the internal contention,

which festered until mid-2014, eventually prompted five PDP governors and other party chieftains to defect to the APC. The internal squabble that affected the PDP's strength was connected to the imposition of anointed candidates against the party rules and guidelines, among other impunities.

As part of the lamentation over the poor performance of the PDP in elections, the Acting Chairman of the party's Board of Trustees, Dr Haliru Bello, lamented that Jonathan's emergence as the party's standard bearer in 2011 was a clear breach of its zoning principles and was responsible for a rapid decline in the fortune of the party. Jonathan's imposition as the consensus standard bearer further robbed the PDP of victory (Bello, 2015). The problem with the consensus or imposition of candidates is that it marks the beginning of a do-or-die disposition to politics that is likely to trigger electoral apathy. In other words, intra-party politics can temper or increase electoral apathy. This failure of the PDP leadership to uphold the principles of internal democracy was reflected in its results in the north-west and north-central regions, which used to be party strongholds and were taken over by the APC.

### **Issue-based versus Non-issue-based Campaign**

A political campaign should market a party's ideology, manifesto and programmes to the electorate through public rallies or the media. However, hate campaigns characterised by direct attacks on opponents' personalities and other party chieftains were what principally dominated the electioneering campaign. The good news was that the avalanche of the hate campaign did not yield a significant impact by substantially convincing the electorate to vote otherwise, which was the goal of the non-issue-based campaigners.

For the Buhari campaign team, the problems of insurgency in the northeast and the management of petrol subsidy were consistently kept on the front burner. Beyond those issues were the question of integrity and the capacity to fight corruption. Buhari's legendary integrity and his anti-corruption record were critical selling points.

**Conclusion**

This chapter analysed the nature and character of the realignment of interests, the coalition of political forces and the events leading up to the formation of the APC in 2013. It examined the nature, structure and dynamics of the alliance and how — in addition to winning the APC ticket — General Buhari went on to upset the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, in the presidential election of 28 March 2015. This chapter discussed elections as the foundation of democratic rule and their proper management being capable of determining the nature and character of the dividends of democracy that the electorate may benefit from.

This chapter has critically examined the basic issues that were notably associated with the INEC's preparation for and management of the 2015 election, the political parties' preparations and conduct in the election, and the participation of the electorate in the entire process. The problem of internal democracy, non-issue-based campaigns, cash and carry campaigns, the near absence of party ideology, the electorate's dissatisfaction with the unimpressive performance of certain elected public officeholders, and other issues, were identified and expounded.

The successful and unprecedented outcome of the general elections was enough reason to pour encomiums on the leadership of the election management body for their proven integrity, innovation with improved technology and general strategy. Thus, the elections that both local and foreign observers referred to as a litmus test for Nigeria's continued existence eventually turned out to prove every dire prophecy wrong. Another milestone of the election was that it marked a significant step towards returning power to the people, who are the original and eternal owners of the state, according to Rousseau's perspective, as set out in the social contract theory.

Once 'power' resides with the electorate, they can periodically decide who governs them, as well as when and how. Elected public office holders would be compelled to see their offices as an offer of public trust that demands unflinching accountability to

the people. The impressive performance of the INEC and the enthusiastic involvement of the people in the electoral process restored faith in elections as the foundation of Nigeria's democratic rule, as is the case in advanced democracies.

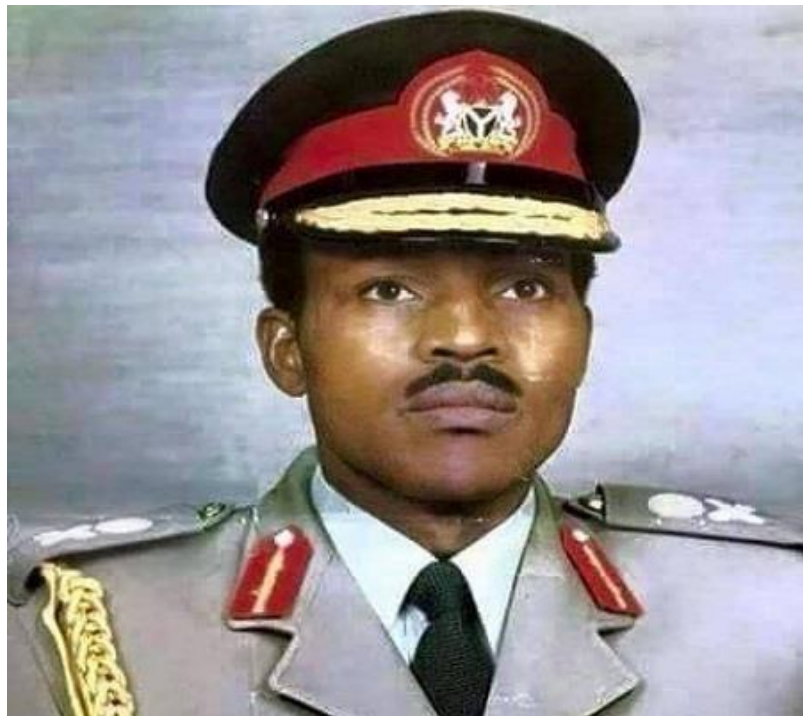
Although every election comes with certain challenges, the onus lies on the INEC to consolidate its performance in each election to improve the conduct of future elections in the country. To quote the celebrated inaugural speech of President Buhari, 'I belong to everybody, and I belong to nobody'. Among other things, this was seen as a promise to allow an enabling environment to thrive for the conduct of free, fair and credible elections by a truly independent election management body, the INEC. To a large extent, this optimism was not disappointed in the 2019 and 2023 general elections.

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Top: Young Muhammadu Buhari as a cadet in the Nigerian Army.  
Bottom: Major Buhari during the civil war.





Top: Young Major Buhari (L) with Col. D. Bamigboye (M) during the civil war in 1969. Bottom: Buhari as Military Governor of Borno State in 1976.



Top: Buhari as a young family man, flanked by his former wife (deceased), Safinatu Buhari (middle), and children, Musa, Lami, Safinatu, Magajiya-Fatima, Hadizatu-Nana, and Zulaihatu. Bottom: President Buhari flanked by his wife and first lady of Nigeria, Aisha Buhari (left), his son, Yusuf Buhari, and other members of his nuclear and extended family.





Top: Buhari (L) as Federal Commissioner for Petroleum, and Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, former Military Head of State. Bottom: R-L: Buhari on National assignment as the Federal Commissioner of Petroleum and Natural Resources, together with Saudi Ahmed Zaki Yamani, former Saudi Arabian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources; and King of Sweden, Carl XVI Gustaf during the 49<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OPEC Conference in Stockholm, Sweden on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1977.



Top: A portrait of Major General Muhammadu Buhari as military Head of State. Bottom: Major General Buhari addressing the nation on assumption of duty as Head of State.



Top: Major General Muhammadu Buhari (Right) on a parade ceremony as military Head of State in 1983. Bottom: Major General Buhari in a handshake with his Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters, Brigadier General Tunde Idiagbon.





Top: Buhari (L), with his running mate and former Senate President, Dr Chuba Okadigbo (R), during his first attempt to contest for President in 2003. Bottom: Buhari at a campaign rally, during his second attempt to contest for President in 2007.



Top: Buhari as Presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), with his running mate, Pastor Tunde Bakare during a campaign rally in Owerri, Imo State on 8th March 2011. Bottom: Buhari (first middle), flanked by his running mate, Prof Yemi Osinbajo (second left), and some of the founding fathers and chieftains of the All Progressive Congress (APC), during their visit to former President Olusegun Obasanjo before the 2015 general elections.





Buhari unveiling Professor Yemi Osinbajo as his running mate for the 2015 Presidential election

Top: Buhari unveiling Professor Yemi Osinbajo as his running mate for the 2015 Presidential election. Bottom: Buhari (M), flanked by former President Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (L), and former Acting Head of State, Abdulsalami Abubakar, during the renewal of a peace deal in March 2015. Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar, the 20th Sultan of Sokoto looks on.





Top: Buhari casts his ballot in March 2015. Bottom: Buhari receives a congratulatory call from rival and former President Goodluck Jonathan on his victory at the 2015 Presidential election.



Top: President Buhari greeting the crowd during his swearing in ceremony as the 15 President of Nigeria at the Eagles Square on May 29th 2015. Bottom: Buhari taking the oath of office during the swearing-in ceremony at the Eagles Square on May 29 2015.





Top: President Buhari acknowledging cheers from members of the joint sitting of the National Assembly, after presenting the 2019 budget on 18 December 2018 in Abuja. Bottom: President Buhari presenting the 2019 budget to the joint sitting of the National Assembly on 18 December 2018 in Abuja, as former Senate President Bukola Saraki, and former Speaker of House of Reps, RT. Hon. Yakubu Dogara.



Top: President Buhari (3<sup>rd</sup> left) in full military attire, flanked by his first set of service chiefs during his visit to troops in Dansadau, Zamfara State. Bottom: President Buhari (R) presides over a closed-door meeting with his security chiefs at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, in February 2020.





Top: Buhari, flanked by Vice-President Prof. Yemi Osinbajo with 82 of the 103 rescued Chibok girls at the Presidential Villa, Abuja. Bottom: Buhari being welcomed by a women group at the Presidential Villa in March 2017.





Top: President Buhari presenting the 2016 budget to the National Assembly on 2 December 2015, becoming the first President in Nigeria's history to personally submit a National budget to the National Assembly. Bottom: President Muhammadu Buhari with members of civil society organisations during the historic signing of the Not-To-Young-To-Run Bill at the State House, Abuja on 31st May 2018.



Top: President Buhari and his running mate, Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo during a campaign rally in the run up to the 2019 Presidential election.  
Bottom: President Buhari takes the oath of office, flanked by wife, Aisha Buhari



# 7

## The Context of Change

Obinna Ukaeje

### Introduction

In his epic work titled ‘Hope and the Inevitability of Change’, Srikant Manas Kala asserted that ‘human nature appears to me as one that is delusionally in love with the “status-quo”’. Unfortunately, he wrote, ‘our habits and predictable behaviours are often unsuitable for growth —individual and collective’. Kala contended that evolution requires that something must change, and perhaps even demands it. This is because ‘if nothing changes, then literally — nothing changes’ and, ‘if something changes, then eventually, everything changes’ (Kala, 2019). Kala insists that ‘going by our collective evolutionary history, there is only one overarching and all-encompassing inference that can be made: change is inevitable, imminent, and necessary’ (Kala, 2019). This contention depicts evolution as the very purpose of collective human existence and change as the catalyst that validates, facilitates and catalyses it — without which the direction would remain vague.

That said, the pre-eminence, inevitability and necessity of change in human development cannot be fully appreciated without consideration of the context within which the change occurs, including the direction, dimension, scope, and even the very nature of the change. Right from independence, Nigeria’s political development has witnessed many transformations, from the



nascent political developments that characterised the First Republic, to the military interregnum that ended it, culminating in the outbreak of a brutal civil war that lasted for 30 months (1967–1970), which was followed by the eventual restoration of civilian rule in 1979. Then came another forceful change of government following the dismantling of the democratic process by the military on 31 December 1983. Invariably, corruption in public administration and electoral abuses also undermined the democratic order. This resulted in a long period of military rule characterised by coups and countercoups that ultimately ushered in the Third Republic in 1992. However, that republic was a stillbirth. It was aborted by the military with the annulment of the 1993 presidential election.

Then, the inability of the military to hand power over to a democratically-elected president after a successful and internationally acclaimed free, fair and credible election on 12 June 1993, set in motion prolonged political instability that threatened to tear the nation to shreds. The political upheavals arising from the 12 June imbroglio, combined with international pressure for a democratic government and the death of General Sani Abacha, compelled the military to relinquish power to civilians on 29 May 1999. This event marked the commencement of the Fourth Republic, which has lasted to date. The Fourth Republic commenced with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) at the helm of affairs. The party produced the President, General Olusegun Obasanjo, as well as the majority of State Governors and members of the two-chamber National Assembly.

Remarkably, the commencement of the Fourth Republic was greeted with high hopes and expectations across the geopolitical divides, with echoes of political liberation reverberating across Nigeria's entire political firmament. However, after the first four years of President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, the political developments and events that unfolded dimmed the hopes and expectations of the people (Nweje, 2014; Sanusi, 3 February 2014). This created the demand for another change. Notably, this period

was marked by agitations by different ethnic groups pressing for the full political and economic representation of their respective geopolitical zones.

In the southwest, there was the clamour for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to redefine and restructure the Nigerian Federal System. This occurred alongside agitations for the independence and establishment of an independent Yoruba Nation by the Odu'a Peoples' Congress (OPC). In the southeast, there was the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), which demanded a separate state of Biafra for the Igbo nation based on the ideals of those who fought in Nigeria's bloody civil war (1967–1970). In the south, there was the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), which demanded the cleaning up and rehabilitation of Ogoniland by Shell and other multinational oil companies operating in the zone, as well as the Nigerian government. This agitation resulted from the unconscionable despoliation of their environment by the activities of oil companies, with no tangible benefits in return for the enormous oil revenues extracted from their lands (Human Rights Watch, 1995). They further demanded control over the resources extracted from their land.

In the north, there were upheavals regarding the introduction of Sharia in Zamfara State, followed by 11 northern states — Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto and Yobe (Human Rights Watch, September 2004) — with its associated contradictions in the polity. With agitations across the country and the 2007 general elections approaching, the political atmosphere was tense, since the opposition parties saw it as an opportunity to wrestle power from the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). Moreover, the demands from the south-south became militarised following the crisis in Ogoniland. Ken Saro Wiwa and his fellow agitators were filmed gloating and dancing over the dead bodies of four local chiefs whom they murdered because they did not share their political ideology. The federal military government had to take action in the

circumstances. The execution of MOSOP leader, Ken Saro Wiwa, and eight of his compatriots by the federal military government in 1995, had assumed even more aggressive dimensions, with the emergence of the Niger Delta militants fighting for the control of oil resources from the region.

However, the push by the opposition to upstage the ruling PDP was unsuccessful since the ruling party elevated the election to a 'do or die' affair. Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua of the ruling PDP emerged as the winner of the 2007 presidential election and the party also managed to retain control of most other political offices, from the state assemblies to the National Assembly and governorship seats.

The 2007 general election was historic as it was the first time in the nation's 47-year existence that power would pass from one civilian administration to another. Paradoxically, the 2007 general election was also historic for the wrong reason. It was adjudged as one of the worst in Nigeria's electoral history. Indeed, the scale of political violence, manipulation, irregularities, corruption, and intimidation of voters and opposition groups recorded before, during and after the election was unprecedented. The European Union Election Observers Monitoring (EU-EOM) Group summed up the position of both local and international observers when they concluded in their report that the elections were marred by very poor organisation, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularities, substantial evidence of fraud, widespread voter disenfranchisement, lack of equal conditions for political parties and candidates, and numerous incidents of violence (EU-EOM, 2007).

Even Yar'adua, who emerged as the president, admitted that the election was not entirely free and fair. He commenced the process of far-reaching electoral reforms by setting up an Electoral Reforms Committee. Sadly, he did not live long enough to see the process through since he died on 5 May 2010 at the Aso Rock Presidential Villa after a protracted illness.

The death of President Umaru Yar'adua culminated in the emergence of the vice president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, as President in 2010. Although President Jonathan's succession was constitutionally correct, it was perceived by the northern political elites as a truncation of the power-sharing formula defined by the PDP to maintain power equilibrium in the country's leadership. The PDP through its internal mechanism, was able to manage the acrimony and ensure that Jonathan won the 2011 presidential election, but his succession left a bitter taste in the mouths of many political gladiators of northern extraction both within and outside the party. This, combined with the country's economic downturn and spiralling security challenges, created a situation that was hostile to his ambition for a second term after his first four year term.

At the time of the 2015 general elections, this combination of factors created a scenario where most Nigerians desired a change from the PDP-dominated rule, and a very critical segment of the political class considered such change inevitable. Therefore, it was within this context that the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) of General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd) entered a coalition with other opposition parties, notably the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), which gave birth to the All Progressives Congress (APC). The APC stepped up with its change mantra and upstaged the then-incumbent president and ended the 16-year dominance of the PDP in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Against this backdrop, the present chapter explores in detail the dynamics of the Nigerian Fourth Republic's politics, which led to the emergence of President Buhari and the APC at the helm of affairs in Nigerian politics and government in 2015.

### **A Nation's Hunger for Political and Economic Change**

The vociferous demand and hunger for political and economic change in the Nigerian polity in the build-up to the 2015 general election were not accidental — nor were they instigated. This was a spontaneous reaction that resulted from accumulated grievances

arising from the inadequacies and ineptitude of the PDP. The PDP had been the ruling party since the return to democracy in 1999 at the presidential and majority of governorship positions. This was a testament to its broad support across Nigeria's regional, religious and ethnic divides, as well as its deep national networks. The PDP provided the platform on which the Fourth Republic democracy in Nigeria was built and the organisational basis for its competing and cooperating elites. The party uninterruptedly held on to power for 16 years of Nigeria's democracy, which gave it the strength to outlive its rivals - e.g., the largely northern-based All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), the southwest's Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the southeast's All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)), some of which merged with other parties, collapsed completely or faded into the obscurity of regional politics (*Premium Times*, 28 May 2015; Owen & Usman, 2015).

However, the PDP's ability to accommodate interests, settle internal disputes and come out stronger in their usual style was severely degraded after the emergence of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2010, which was partly due to the dispute over the power-sharing formula and his subsequent decision to run for office in 2011 (World Bank, 2014; Owen & Usman, 2015). With the death of a Muslim northerner, President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, during his time in office, as well as the subsequent emergence of Jonathan (a Christian from the south) in the power equation, the power rotation system designed by the PDP to ensure power equilibrium between the north and south — and to overcome the perennial fear of domination between the dominant Muslim north and the dominant Christian south — was altered. This singular act reawakened the fear of the northern political class to a real or perceived domination by the south, thereby setting the tone for the internal crises that rocked the party.

The emergence of President Jonathan in the political and power equation was rightly or wrongly perceived by the northern political class as a plan to short-change the north, deny them of their rightful chance to complete their turn in the presidency, and weaken

them in the Nigerian political power equation. As such, President Jonathan's emergence as the presidential flagbearer of the PDP after a keenly contested primary against former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, as well as his subsequent victory in the 2011 presidential election, reinforced tension and division between the north and the south regarding issues of the economic marginalisation and political exclusion of the north. This dominated discourses among members of the northern political elite and led to the gradual but steady polarisation of the country along geopolitical and religious fault lines.

Subsequently, President Jonathan's insistence on running for a second term in office in the 2015 elections, despite an alleged gentleman's agreement with the party chieftains that he would serve for only one term, further strained the party's cohesion and generated significant internal dissent. Simultaneously, President Jonathan's lack of political sagacity, limited experience and the perceived provincial orientation of his administration (which relied on an inner core from the Niger Delta) alienated him from powerful party members (Owen & Usman, 2015). Consequently, an internal crisis occurred within the party between members opposed to the ambition of the president to run for the 2015 general elections and those in support of this ambition.

This internal wrangling resulted in the emergence of a splinter group from the party, known as the New PDP (N-PDP). The N-PDP members were led by Abubakar Kawu Baraje (the factional Chairman of PDP and the Chairman of the N-PDP) and seven PDP governors: Rotimi Amaechi (Rivers State), Babangida Aliyu (Niger State), Rabi'u Kwankwaso (Kano State), Murtala Nyako (Adamawa State), Abdulfatai Ahmed (Kwara State), Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko (Sokoto State), and Sule Lamido (Jigawa State), as well as former vice president, Atiku Abubakar.

It was within this context that the APC emerged out of the merger of different opposition parties. These included Muhammadu Buhari's Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the leadership of the All

Nigeria People's Party (ANPP; a faction of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) led by Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo State, and other opposition interests outside of these parties. Drawing strength from the fractured PDP, the APC coalition became cohesive — unlike previous attempts to unite the opposition. Owen and Usman succinctly captured this situation as follows:

*As the PDP increasingly lost the ability to manage its internal squabbles, the APC became stronger, coalescing around a core of south-western veterans of the Action Congress of Nigeria Party, northern oppositionists close to Buhari, and ex-PDP dissidents, especially from the Middle Belt and Niger Delta regions. (Owen & Usman, 2015: 458)*

Shortly after breaking away from the PDP, the N-PDP joined the APC. This merger effectively changed the political landscape of Nigeria, especially with the exit of seven governors out of the ruling PDP's 23 governors. This reduced the party's overwhelming electoral influence, which was cut from 23 states of the federation to only 16, thus tilting the advantage in favour of the APC as the 2015 election approached.

The differences were obvious in the December 2014 presidential primaries of the two parties, where the two presidential flagbearers of the parties emerged. While President Jonathan was unilaterally endorsed in a tightly controlled PDP convention championed by outgoing state governors of the party, the APC elected its presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, through a credible, transparent and competitive primary contested by four candidates that was broadcast live on national television networks. This effectively cemented an alliance between the southwest and the north, which they had been unable to achieve in previous coalition talks before the 2011 general polls. The divergence in party behaviour in the primaries consolidated the APC's popularity among its support base in the north and the

southwest and expanded new frontiers of support in the traditional strongholds of President Jonathan and the PDP (Owen & Usman, 2015; Okeke, 2017).

General Muhammadu Buhari's charismatic personality, his strong followership in the north, the overwhelming support from the progressives in the southwest, and 'the deep-rooted Nigerian political establishment — which has a strong tendency to conservatism — thus shifted towards considering the APC as a possible party in government.' In addition, the public rejection of the PDP by former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who publicly tore his PDP membership card in front of journalists at his Ota home just two weeks before the polls had already expressed a loss of confidence in President Jonathan's government through public letter-writings in 2013, contributed to further weakening the PDP and Jonathan's government while galvanising support for the APC. In some circles, this was equated to the act of a father publicly disowning his son. Moreover, some of President Jonathan's closest associates had long quietly or publicly defected to the APC.

Internationally, the equally cautious global centres of power also began to shift from their usual 'continuity equals stability' approach to Nigeria towards a greater disposition for regime change. One notable event occurred on 7 January 2015, when a statement was made in Abuja by Jim O'Neill, former Chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management: 'If Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan doesn't get re-elected, it is because of Nigerian people wanting something different and something better... and the market would be happy if Jonathan lost to a credible alternative' (Sweet Crude Report, 10 January 2015). This unequivocal declaration was an indication not only of the APC's perceived global acceptability, but also of the perceived failure of Jonathan's administration shared by most of Nigeria's international partners, which were seemingly exasperated by the administration's failure to deal with heightening insecurity caused by insurgency in the northeast, as well as basic governance issues.



This point was further buttressed by former President Jonathan himself, as well as the Former Governor of Niger State, Dr Muazu Babangida Aliyu, in the book, *Against the Run of Play: How an Incumbent President was Defeated in Nigeria*, written by former presidential spokesman, Segun Adeniyi. Both men revealed that the United States, Britain and France supported the APC towards unseating President Jonathan in the 2015 general elections. In Jonathan's words: 'President Barack Obama and his officials made it clear to me by their actions that they wanted a change of government in Nigeria and were ready to do anything to achieve that purpose. And as if to make good their threat, they even brought some naval ships into the Gulf of Guinea in the days preceding the election' (Adeniyi, 2017). Presumably, they would have said that they wanted a free and fair election over any one particular electoral outcome!

### **The State of the Nation, 2015**

Undoubtedly, the state of affairs in Nigeria before 2015 was far from normal. Aside from the much-touted milestone of becoming the largest economy in Africa with a GDP of over half a trillion dollars, attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) that maintained single-digit inflationary pressure during the early period of Jonathan's administration, and the usual accompanying political rhetoric and promises common among Nigerian political elites in power, governance became a monumental failure as the country gradually nosedived into a severe socio-economic, political and security disaster. Corruption became the order of the day. Several allegations of monumental corruption against serving ministers in the administration and close associates of Jonathan made headlines in the media (Ndibe, 2015; Kala, 2019).

The security of the lives and properties of citizens, as well as their welfare, could no longer be guaranteed by the government. The economy was rapidly nosediving, while foreign investors and international partners backed out of the country for fear of insecurity and deadly attacks by Boko Haram insurgents. Basic

governance issues were deteriorating, and Jonathan's administration seemed not to have any clue as to how to rescue the country from imminent collapse.

Perhaps more significant was the polarisation of the country along ethno-religious fault lines. Jonathan's administration was termed 'clueless' due to its inability to come up with the right strategies and measures to tame increasing attacks from Boko Haram and rescue over 200 schoolgirls who were abducted from their dormitory at a school in Chibok, Borno State, northeast Nigeria. The abduction attracted international attention and condemnation. It also fed into other governance issues that threatened overall national security, thereby further eroding confidence in the continued ability of President Jonathan to hold the country together for another 4 years. A sectoral presentation of the state of the nation during the period preceding the 2015 general election is presented as follows.

### **The Economy**

Prior to the 2015 elections, Nigeria's economic performance plummeted under the Jonathan administration. The inability of his administration to sustain the modest economic growth recorded in its early period created serious problems for the economy and raised concerns among both Nigerian and global experts. The nation's economic fortunes under Jonathan were largely a function of international energy markets. At the beginning of his presidency, the country achieved the enviable status of Africa's largest economy and the 26th largest in the world, with a GDP of over \$500 billion. Accordingly, Nigeria's GDP per capita almost doubled from \$1,437 to \$2,688 (African Development Bank, 2014). This attracted FDI, which maintained single-digit inflationary pressure (AFDB, 2014).

However, this economic fortune suddenly became a mirage since the administration could no longer sustain the economy in the face of fluctuations in the price of crude in the international market, which depleted Nigeria's foreign reserves and incurred a huge debt profile on the economy. As of June 2014, the country's external debt

rose by 40% to \$9.377 billion and its domestic debt rose to \$47.653 billion (Ibekwe, 2015).

The Nigerian economy, which experienced consistently high annual growth rates — averaging 7% from the mid-2000s until 2014 — saw growth fall to 2.7% in 2015 (World Bank Report, 2015). The country's human socio-economic development index tumbled, which had a serious effect on the cost of living for low-income households (World Bank Report, 2014). The subsidies meant to cushion international oil prices for domestic consumers disproportionately benefited a powerful cartel of politically-connected importers who mapped loosely onto the PDP's wider networks and structures (Owen & Usman, 2015).

Several parliamentary investigative reports revealed that fuel subsidies rose from N346.7 billion in 2008 to N1.7 trillion in 2011 — a nearly 400% increase (CBN Report, 2014). However, the sudden removal of the subsidy at the most critical period of the administration, an increasingly high exchange rate, rising inflation, the depletion of the foreign reserves, high levels of unemployment, and a stock market crash created hardship for citizens and plunged the economy into a precarious condition. According to UNESCO (2013) and the World Bank (2013), 6 out of every 10 Nigerians lived under the poverty line, up from 5 out of 10 in 2004, and the country was certain to fail to achieve many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

### **Corruption**

Unarguably, corruption reigned supreme across nearly every sector in the Jonathan administration, from the oil sector to the security sector, aviation sector and many other revenue-generating agencies of government. However, this was more pronounced in the oil sector and among top aides of Jonathan's administration—especially his close allies. Even when this was self-evident, the administration failed to address it decisively. Aides and ministers accused of corruption were either shielded or allowed to remain in their positions.

Notable cases that infuriated Nigerians and the international community included the granting of a presidential pardon to former Governor of Bayelsa State, Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, who jumped bail in the United Kingdom on money laundering charges; the shielding of former Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah, accused of misappropriating N255 million; and the unceremonious removal of the then-governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, for raising concerns over a \$20 billion crude oil earning unremitted by the Ministry of Petroleum Resources and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Regarding the latter example, Sanusi was removed from office by the Jonathan government rather than having a thorough investigation conducted into the allegation.

Corruption was also rampant in the security sector, which made it difficult for government security forces to contain the rising insurgency and other security challenges afflicting the entire country, despite billions of dollars being expended from the defence and security budget (*Vanguard*, 20 November 2015). The colossal corruption allegedly carried out by Jonathan's close aides, as well as his inability to bring the perpetrators to justice, significantly contributed to fuelling public resentment against Jonathan and the PDP.

### **Security**

Chapter 2, Section 14(b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, states that 'the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government...'. This is an indication that the primary responsibility of the Nigerian state is to see to the protection of its citizens and their welfare. However, the citizens were denied this constitutional entitlement by the state, despite a massive annual defence budget that utilised \$6 billion since 2012 (Owen & Usman, 2015). Insecurity, fear and terror reigned supreme across the country. Clashes between herders and farmers became recurrent and more destructive. From the northern states, where such events were previously

concentrated, such incidents spread rapidly towards the south, without any spirited attempt by the administration to contain them.

Boko Haram insurgents rapidly became more sophisticated, brazen and lethal in the scale of their attacks and ambitions, and were on the rampage, killing thousands and capturing territories in the northeast states, in a bid to create an Islamic caliphate. Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, became a nightmare to live in due to the sporadic detonation of explosives on soft targets and government security institutions, as well as the continuous threat of attacks on embassies and other diplomatic targets. In 2014 alone, over 13,000 people were killed, hundreds of women and children were abducted, and the insurgents occupied nearly 30 towns and villages in the northeast (Owen & Usman, 2015). Perhaps the most nightmarish scenario was the 2014 kidnapping of over 200 girls from a government secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, which yielded little government response.

Perhaps the only notable sustained attempt by the government came in February 2015 when it became clear that insurgency could cost Jonathan votes during the presidential election. The offensives mounted by government security forces and the hired South African mercenaries recorded significant success in the build-up to the elections. Within 6 weeks, most of the territories previously captured by the insurgents were retaken, and the insurgents were weakened (Ibekwe, 2015; Owen & Usman, 2015). Jonathan's administration had already come to be regarded as clueless, insensitive and incapable of protecting the lives and property of the citizens from both internal and external aggression.

Moreover, the insincere, belated and defensive handling of the abduction of the 279 schoolgirls from Chibok not only put Nigeria's security challenges on the global map, but also convinced many citizens that Nigeria was no longer safe in the hands of Jonathan; therefore, there was a need to replace Jonathan with an experienced leader. The Global Terrorism Index of 2015 placed Nigeria among the most terrorised countries on earth, alongside Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria. Under the Jonathan

administration, Nigeria became one of the most dangerous places in the world to live (Ibekwe, 2015).

### **Power Generation**

One of the major promises of President Jonathan's transformation agenda after the 2011 election was to improve electricity and create a suitable business environment for productive activities to flourish and stimulate the economy, which is predominantly driven by the informal sector. Apart from his promise of a constant power supply for Nigerians in his inaugural speech in 2011, while speaking to diplomats of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union (AU) to seek their support in Addis Ababa on 31 January 2011, Jonathan declared that four years was enough time to solve the endemic power generation problem in Nigeria. He emphatically stated, 'If I'm voted into power, within the next 4 years, the issue of power will become a thing of the past. Four years is enough for anyone in power to make significant improvement; if I can't improve on power within this period, it means I cannot do anything' (Ibekwe, 2015).

However, after several interventions — including the privatisation of the power sector and several billions of naira spent on power reforms — power generation dropped to less than 2,000 megawatts from the 3,000 megawatts he inherited from his predecessor. Upon leaving power, only five megawatts were available to the country's capital, Abuja, and only five out of the country's 23 power plants were functional (Ibekwe, 2015). This indicated a failure in the administration's power sector transformation mantra, despite massive investments.

### **Crude Oil Theft**

Under the Jonathan administration, there was widespread theft of crude oil, the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. Industrial-scale crude oil theft in the Niger Delta, opaque crude oil swap deals and questionable partnership agreements with third-party entities provided the conduits for the massive leakage in the oil sector

(Owen & Usman, 2015). The oil sector, which generates over 90% of Nigeria's export earnings and up to 70% of fiscal revenue, became the locus of fraud, corruption and mismanagement involving high-profile policymakers in the oil sector and politically-connected business interests.

In addition, pirates and crude oil thieves were living like kings. Pirates surrounded Nigerian waterways, stealing crude oil from the country's pipelines, with little or no hindrance in the face of the Nigerian Navy, which proved to be grossly incapable of arresting the situation. According to the then-Chief of Naval Staff, Usman Jibrin, the country lost a volume of crude oil valued at more than N1.18 billion daily (or N433.62 billion annually) to oil thieves (Ibekwe, 2015).

### **Foreign Relations**

The failure of governance under Jonathan's administration strained Nigeria's relations with the international community, especially some of the country's most important partners such as the United States of America, Britain, and France, as well as sister African countries such as South Africa, Chad and Morocco. Nigeria's foreign relations became blurred, with no clear direction, as the country gradually lost its clout in the international community. Nigeria was embarrassed internationally after the South African government seized \$15 million in arms money illegally brought into South Africa from Nigeria as cash (*Daily Independent*, 7 October 2014).

During the twilight of Jonathan's administration, the South African government also ridiculed Nigeria's shoddy recall of their ambassador to South Africa following xenophobic violence in South Africa (*Daily Independent*, 7 October 2014; *Premium Times*, 15 October 2014). The Moroccan government also recalled its ambassador to Nigeria after officials of the Nigerian Foreign Ministry lied about a telephone conversation between Jonathan and King Mohammed VI of Morocco. It was claimed that President Jonathan was trying to use the King of Morocco to win over Muslim voters before Nigeria's election (*Reuters*, 11 March 2015).

**Factors that worked against the Jonathan Administration**

Based on the information presented, certain identifiable factors fundamentally sabotaged President Jonathan's ambition of being re-elected in the 2015 general elections. These include, but not limited to, a severe economic downturn, insecurity caused by Boko Haram and the Chibok girls scandal, the monumental corruption recorded among his close aides and kinsmen without due prosecution, the failed power generation promises and the consistent crude oil theft by Niger Delta militants without any serious effort being made at containing it.

Although the aforementioned issues laid the foundation for his exit from government, the major factors that facilitated his exit from power were his inability to make the right decision at the right time, which made him appear clueless in the face of serious socio-economic and security challenges. Secondly, his inability to deliver on the promises he made to Nigerians before the 2011 elections, which were obvious to a large segment of the populace, contributed to undermining his chances of re-election. For instance, Jonathan promised to solve youth unemployment, generate more electricity, change the way of doing the business of governance, promote transparency and redress inequality. These promises were mostly unfulfilled. By the time of the election, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) ranked Nigeria as one of the top three most unsafe places to live in the world. Incidentally, elections are won based on the track record of achievements and milestones recorded by an incumbent administration and by trust in the promises of performance in the case of opposition parties or candidates.

Other factors that contributed to weakening Jonathan's support from the political elites and the masses, which resulted in his subsequent loss at the polls, are listed as follows: his insistence on allowing the INEC to conduct the election in the freest and fairest manner without interference from the presidency; the excesses of the First Lady, Mrs Patience Jonathan, and her meddling in party affairs; his inability to win the support of the southwest zone.



**Conclusion**

In addition to the personal charisma and strong followership of General Muhammadu Buhari (which guaranteed him over 10 million votes in each of the two previous elections he contested), the factors discussed helped to pave the way for Jonathan's defeat. Buhari's reputation for having zero-tolerance for corruption stood out from the crowd, making him appear as the most suitable man for the task of pulling Nigeria back from the precipice. The deciding factor was the ingenuity with which the opposition political parties organised to form a formidable coalition that could match the PDP grit for grit and upstage Jonathan in the election. The final factor was an internal rivalry within the PDP that led to the decamping of many of its chieftains to the opposition. This made the work of the opposition much easier.

That said, it could be argued that after three previous unsuccessful attempts at the presidency, Providence eventually smiled on Buhari and granted him the opportunity to fulfil his dream of leading Nigeria as a democratically-elected president after being overthrown as a military head of state 30 years earlier.

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## 8

### **The Vision of Change**

**Obinna Ukaeje**

#### **Introduction**

Without question, the All Progressives Congress (APC), which was the main opposition facing the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), achieved its victory in the 2015 general election by effectively communicating its mantra of change. In many ways, the APC's change mantra derived from General Muhammadu Buhari's vision of change, which he enunciated in 2011 when, under the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), he made his second run for the presidency during the Fourth Republic. The change mantra had a specific goal, which was to democratically remove the government of then-incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, and the ruling PDP, replacing it with a government under Buhari's leadership.

The slogan of change was adopted after the merger of Buhari's CPC and other opposition political parties, namely, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN); the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP); a faction of the Democratic People's Party (DPP); and a faction of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), which eventually included a faction of the PDP; and the genesis of the APC. Upon its adoption, however, the change slogan was transformed from a mere political catchword into a socio-economic and political tool for the APC, and this later became the party's vision and mission, as encapsulated in the APC Manifesto.

The APC's change mantra aimed to tactically and strategically ensure the displacement and replacement of the ruling PDP, which dominated Nigeria's political landscape. This was inspired by the fact that the PDP governments, which had bestrode Nigeria's political firmament like a colossus for 16 years (1999-2015), and which had boasted that it would rule for a thousand years, were characterised by public corruption and cronyism. There was a felt need for a new government, which would be built around the integrity of the APC's presidential flag bearer, General Buhari, and aimed at Nigerians' social welfare. The government would be free of the ineptitude, inequity, and inequalities of the past 16 years. The change envisioned would deliver a new Nigeria, in which the progressive ideals of good governance were wholeheartedly embraced and applied for the betterment of Nigeria (APC 'Road Map to a New Nigeria', 2014). In this chapter, we explore the vision that inspired the change mantra that successfully guided the APC campaign, enabling the party to displace an incumbent president and his party, the PDP.

### **The Party Manifesto and the Campaign for Change**

On 6 March 2014, the APC unveiled its manifesto and the Code of Ethics of the party for the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The unveiling took place at a well-attended national summit of the party, held at the Congress Hall of the Transcorp Hilton, Abuja (*Premium Times*, 6 March 2014). The Manifesto, which was tagged 'Road Map to a New Nigeria', outlined the APC's vision, mission and strategy for achieving victory at the polls in 2015. The party explicitly stated its commitment to a Nigeria that achieves its full potential and promises 'to work towards a nation that is economically and socially vibrant, peaceful, just and secure' (*Premium Times*, 6 March 2014). Its philosophy emphasised the welfare of the common people, a bright future for the nation's youth, and a decent quality of life for all. It also provided a strategy for realising the party's vision and mission. Highlights of the APC Party Manifesto are provided below (APC 'Manifesto', 2014).

Alongside the mission statement were ten principles that encapsulated the Code of Ethics that would govern the party's activities. Signed by the party's leaders, including 16 governors, the document expressed the party's commitment to achieving its objective of an economically and socially vibrant nation that was peaceful, just and secure (*Premium Times*, 6 March 2014). The commitments included preserving the nation's greatest asset, the Nigerian people themselves, pledging to do everything possible to protect and preserve human life and dignity. The party was also committed to upholding a Nigeria bound by the principles of freedom, justice, peace, unity, and the rule of law. It promised to strive to promote social welfare and progress and increase economic opportunity for all citizens through an economy that combined government-led initiatives with those from the private sector (APC 'The Code of Ethics', 2014).

### **Strategies for Displacing an Incumbent President**

As noted above, the Roadmap to a New Nigeria and the APC Code of Ethics provided a blueprint for the conduct of party members as they worked to realise their manifesto's vision of a new Nigeria after the 2015 general elections. That would become possible, however, only if the party won the election. To work towards that goal, the APC campaign strategists adopted certain measures that would help it displace the ruling PDP and the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan. Below, we present some of the APC campaign strategies that helped it overwhelm the ruling party and its candidate to emerge victorious.

### **Social Media Strategy**

Recognising the PDP administration's influence over the traditional media, such as the television, radio, and newspapers, the APC strategically utilised social media in its campaign. Thus, in addition to the traditional campaign rallies and town hall meetings, newspapers and other printed publications, and television documentaries and advertisements, the campaign utilised Facebook,

Twitter, blogs, and other social media sites to engage with the younger voters who dominated social media. Through those sites, the APC was able to launch media attacks on Jonathan's administration, while avoiding sanctions from governmental security agencies, which are commonly used for traditional media.

Moreover, because Nigeria's demography is changing rapidly and more than 70 percent of the population under the age of 30 regularly use the internet, social media provided highly effective venues for unleashing the APC's media campaigns against Jonathan's incumbent government. To win the media war against Jonathan and the PDP, the APC relied on a broad spectrum of young people who worked largely on a volunteer basis, running social media campaigns, websites, blogs, and television and radio debates, also contacting voters by telephone and in person, and running a situation room to monitor the election and tally results. It also engaged a UK based company, Cambridge Analytica, for strategic research and critical data deployment. This strategy helped the APC to dominate social media, significantly destabilising the ruling PDP's strategies, weakening Jonathan's candidature, and culminating in his defeat as the APC emerged from the 2015 polls victorious.

### **Counter-government Policy Strategy**

Understanding the PDP administration's weakness in confronting the insecurity and socio-economic challenges bedeviling the nation, the APC campaign strategists launched an aggressive and strategic campaign. Exposing the incumbent administration's weak policies and failure to find effective solutions, the APC eroded the people's confidence in the administration's ability to effectively address the problems. The APC discredited the Jonathan government's major policies, including its counter-insurgency measures, economic policies, and job-creation strategies, also destroying its claim to have made Nigeria the largest economy in Africa. In the face of this onslaught, Jonathan's administration appeared insensitive and confused in handling the nation's challenges.

### **Exposing the Incumbent President's Weaknesses**

Although the APC ran a comparatively responsible campaign, focusing primarily on policy messages, it nonetheless capitalised on Jonathan's personal weaknesses as well as those of his party members (Owen & Usman, 2015) and his wife. With the use of a broad spectrum of social media handles, the APC carried out strategic personal attacks that exposed Jonathan's inability to handle the deteriorating security situation, rescue the 200-plus schoolgirls who had been abducted by Boko Haram insurgents, or revive the dwindling socio-economic system. His wife, Patience Jonathan, was continually ridiculed on social media for various faux pas.

At a PDP rally in Calabar, Cross River State, on 2 March 2015, for example, she had told the audience to stone anybody who mentioned the change mantra, and the APC repeatedly used the remarks against her. She was accused of employing divisive rhetoric and hate speech and even threatened with being brought before the International Criminal Court (ICC). Her opponents – mostly though not exclusively APC members – compared her to Cote d'Ivoire's former First Lady, Simone Gbagbo, who was being prosecuted for similar incitements (Owen & Usman, 2015). Thus, Jonathan and the first family generally were brought into disrepute in the eyes of the voting public, which turned against him and his administration. As a result of these attacks, many Nigerians, especially those who had initially supported Jonathan as the man who had no shoes from Otuoke and supported him in overwhelming numbers in 2011, now turned against him.

### **#Bring Back Our Girls Strategy**

The Hashtag *Bring Back Our Girls* (BBOG) strategy was a major initiative that dealt a powerful blow to Jonathan's credibility as a leader and chances for re-election. Though the APC campaign did not invent the BBOG hashtag, the BBOG activists used the hashtag campaign in ways that served the party's purposes. The BBOG Hashtag movement, which demanded the rescue of the abducted

Chibok school girls, discredited Jonathan's administration and presented him as an inhuman, insensitive, and oblivious leader who was unable to protect his people's lives or property and was unworthy of being returned to power. The movement attracted international attention, even compelling President Barack Obama of the United States and his wife, Michelle, to join the BBOG Hashtag campaign against Jonathan's administration. This contributed to thwarting his ambitions at the polls in 2015.

### **Effective Image Management Strategy**

One of the strategies that displaced the incumbent, President Jonathan, and the PDP was the effective management of the image of the APC flag bearer, General Muhammadu Buhari, which subsequently overwhelmed Jonathan's 'Goodluck'. The APC employed the external expertise of the United States Democratic Party strategist, David Axelrod, to promote Buhari's credibility to Nigerians and fend off the PDP's numerous personal attacks on his educational qualifications, health, chances of dying in office, and relatives, all of which the AIT news channel broadcast repeatedly in a highly controversial documentary (Owen & Usman, 2015). As noted earlier, Buhari's image was promoted in large part through the work of young volunteers.

As the campaign progressed, Buhari overtook Jonathan's campaign by gaining credibility as a 'no-nonsense, de-tribalised, and incorruptible army general' as well as a former military general with the capacity to crush the Boko Haram insurgency, restore security in Nigeria, and fight corruption. Buhari's reputation neutralised the PDP's attacks on his personality, securing his status as a national leader able to restore sanity in the country, while reducing Jonathan's image to that of lacklustre, oblivious incumbent with nothing more to offer the country.

### **Strategic Civil Society Organisations' Relations Approach**

One of the major elements that contributed to the ousting of incumbent President Jonathan and the PDP was the Civil Society

Organisations (CSOs). Recognising the critical role of CSOs in the electoral process and their impact on the credibility of Nigeria's electoral outcomes, the APC strategically engaged the CSOs in the 2015 elections by drawing their stakeholders' attention to the failures of Jonathan's administration, especially in the areas of security, corruption and unemployment, while also promising a free, fair, and credible election.

The CSOs were persuaded. They mobilised their members and rallied rural citizens and other grassroots support by emphasising the need for accountability, good governance, and sustainable development. Some of the CSOs, especially groups in the political vanguard, made alliances with the APC because they saw its party manifesto as reflecting their own belief in transparency, good governance, and zero tolerance for corruption (*Premium Times*, 27 February 2013).

### **The Coalition Cohesion Strategy**

Among the factors that contributed to displacing President Jonathan's administration was the APC's cohesiveness before and during the 2015 elections. During various phases of its political history, Nigeria has witnessed several coalitions attempting to unseat a ruling party or incumbent perceived to have governed poorly. The APC, in contrast to previous coalitions, remained cohesive, gaining strength and membership from a divided PDP. Crucially, former vice president, Atiku Abubakar, and seven governors of the PDP, including Rotimi Amaechi of an oil-rich River state, walked out of a PDP convention in August 2013 (Owen & Usman, 2015, p. 458).

While the PDP became fragmented and began losing its grip on members, the APC was supported by one of the PDP's factions, which later joined it. The PDP's fragmentation and the influx of some members into the APC further shifted the balance of power towards the APC, thereby increasing its spread and influence in the areas of the country that had been strongholds for Jonathan and the PDP, including the South-South and the Middle Belt regions.



**Ensuring the Integrity of the Election**

The APC also benefitted from its relationships with CSOs by influencing their critical stakeholders to ensure that the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman, Professor Attahiru Jega, would enhance the integrity of the electoral process in 2015 by improving the voter registers and introducing a biometric identification system to reduce fraud. This process helped prevent election rigging, which had been the norm in Nigeria, ensuring a level playing field for the political parties. The introduction of the Electronic Smart Card Readers at the polling stations for voter verification was highly significant because it eliminated the possibility of wholesale padding of figures. Thus, barring some fraud coordinated from a much higher level, only the voter cards of voters who had actually registered could be used.

In addition, the INEC Chairman appointed his own collation officers, mostly colleagues from the academia, to act as a second filter over the government-appointed resident electoral commissioners, who had a reputation for being prone to compromise. This was another breakthrough that helped ensure the election's integrity. Finally, the APC's well-organised, parallel vote counts, through its broad spectrum of social media handlers, scrupulously monitored and recorded results; this would help in the event of a need to prove election rigging, though the collation process had made rigging more difficult. This went a long way towards ensuring a free and fair election and, consequently, ensuring the credibility of the APC's victory at the polls. While this is not to deny that electoral irregularities were recorded, they were reduced to the barest minimum. Unlike previous elections, this election made the people's votes count.

**The APC Campaign Train and Tour across the Nation**

Since 1999, the People's Democratic Party had controlled Nigeria's presidency and the National Assembly. That changed in the 2015 election for the presidency and National Assembly seats when General Muhammadu Buhari won on the APC's platform. The victory

was neither magic nor luck but rather the outcome of a well-planned and coordinated campaign strategy built by a strong team, the APC Presidential Campaign Committee. One of the major campaign strategies deployed by the APC was a nationwide presidential campaign. The nationwide campaign tour was coordinated by the APC Presidential Campaign Train, officially known as the APC Presidential Campaign Council, which was led by Buhari himself. Table 8.1 shows the list of the APC Presidential Campaign Council's members, as released by the Director General of the Council and Governor of Rivers State, Honourable Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi (*Premium Times*, 7 January 2015).

**Table 8.1: Full List of Members of APC's Presidential Campaign Council 2014**

S/N	Name	Role	Remarks
1.	General Muhammadu Buhari	Chairman, Council Member	Presidential Candidate
2.	Professor Yemi Osinbajo	Alternate Chairman, Council Member	Vice-Presidential Candidate
3.	Alh. Atiku Abubakar	Vice Chairman North, Council Member	Presidential Candidate
4.	Sen. Bola Ahmed Tinubu	Vice Chairman South	Party Leader
5.	Gov. Chibuike Amaechi	Secretary/ Director General, Council Member	Governor, Rivers State
6.	Dr. S. Jaja	Council Member	
7.	Mr. S.N. Isaiah	Council Member	
8.	Prince Tony Momoh	Council Member	
9.	Alh. B. Gwagwarwa	Council Member	
10.	Sen. Osita Izunaso	Council Member	
11.	Sen. L. Shuaibu	Council Member	
12.	Chief S. Oni	Council Member	
13.	Gov. R. Kwankwaso	Council Member	Governor, Kano State and Presidential Aspirant

14.	Chief B. Akande	Council Member	
15.	Chief O. Onu	Council Member	
16.	Chief A. Ogbegie	Council Member	
17.	Chief John Oyegun	Deputy Chairman, Council Member	Chairman, APC
18.	Alh. M. Buni	Council Member	
19.	Gov. Rauf Aregbesola	Council Member, Zonal Coordinator – South West	Governor, Osun State
20.	Gov. Babatunde Fashola	Council Member, Director, Fund Raising	Governor, Lagos State
21.	Gov. Tanko Al Makura	Council Member, Zonal Coordinator	Governor, Nasarawa State
22.	Sen. A. Adamu	Council Member	
23.	Gov. I. Geidam	Council Member	
24.	Gov. A. Oshiomole	Zonal Coordinator – South South	Governor, Edo State
25.	Gov. K. Shettima	Council Member	
26.	Gov. A. Ahmed	Council Member	Governor, Kwara State
27.	Gov. A. Ajimobi	Council Member	Governor, Oyo State
28.	Gov. I. Amosun	Council Member	Governor, Ogun State
29.	Gov. R. Okorocha	Council Member	Governor, Imo State, Presidential Aspirant
30.	Gov. A. Yari	Council Member	
31.	Dr. Kayode Fayemi	Council Member	Former Governor, Ekiti State
32.	Chief O. Oyo Kola	Council Member	
33.	Sen. Chris Ngige	Council Member	Senator
34.	Sen. A. Ibrahim	Council Member	Senator
35.	Sen. K. Gaya	Council Member	Senator
36.	Sen. George Akume	Council Member	Senator, Former Governor, Benue State
37.	Sen. Bukola Saraki	Council Member	Senator, Former Governor, Kwara State

38.	Prince A. Audi	Council Member	
39.	Sen. D. Goje	Council Member	
40.	Sen. A. Yerima	Council Member	
41.	Alh. K. Baraje	Council Member	
42.	Hajia Ramatu Tijjani	Council Member, Director, Women Mobilisation	
43.	Jasper Azutalam	Council Member	
44.	Sharon Ikeazor	Council Member	
45.	Hon. A. Dabiri Eruwa	Council Member	
46.	Rt. Hon. A. Tambuwal	Council Member	Speaker, House of Representatives
47.	Hon. F. Gbajabiamiala	Council Member	
48.	Hon. Temi Harriman	Council Member	
49.	Sen. O. Mamora	Deputy Director Operations	Former Speaker, Lagos State House of Assembly
50.	Chief Audu Ogbe	Deputy Director Coordination	
51.	Senator Chris Ngige	Zonal Coordinator – South East	
52.	Alh. Kashim Shettima	Zonal Coordinator – North East	Governor, Borno State
53.	Gov. Aliyu Wamakko	Council Member, Zonal Coordinator – North West	Governor, Sokoto State
54.	Garba Shehu	Director, Media and Publicity	
55.	Hon. Sokonte Davies	Director, Admin & Finance	
56.	Boss Mustapha	Director, Contact & Mobilisation	
57.	T.O.E. Ekechi	Director, Election Planning & Monitoring	
58.	H.E Dr. John Fayemi	Director, Policy Research & Strategy	
59.	General Abdulrahman Dambazau	Director, Security	

60.	Chukwuma Ume	Director, Legal	
61.	Dasuki Jalo	Director, Youth Mobilisation	

*Source: Premium Times, 7 January 2015*

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is important to note that the formal inauguration of the APC Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) by the APC presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, took place in Abuja alongside the commissioning of the APC Campaign Headquarters (i.e. the General Buhari Presidential Campaign Organization Building, Abuja) on Monday, 12 January 2015 (*Vanguard*, 13 January 2015). Meanwhile, the APC Presidential Campaign Council kicked off its nationwide campaign on 6 January 2015 at the Adokiye Amasiemaka Stadium in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Following the commencement of the campaign, the APC's train traversed all of the country's 36 states as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), as part of the well-coordinated nationwide campaign that would displace Jonathan and the PDP on 28 March 2015 by propelling Buhari and the APC to victory.

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## 9

### **Election Demographics and the Dynamics of Electoral Change in Nigeria**

**Obinna Ukaeje**

#### **Introduction**

The 2015 presidential election brought many changes to the political landscape of Nigeria. Aside from the defeat of the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and the displacement of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) that had been in power since the return of democracy in 1999, the opportunity to consolidate democracy that the election offered propelled the reawakening of hitherto weakened political equations of the past across regional fault lines. Political parties in the preceding republics functioned along the lines of the regional divide, with ethnic or regional connotations. For instance, the Action Group (AG), the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) were clearly region-based (the AG for Western Nigeria, the NCNC for Eastern Nigeria and the NPC for Northern Nigeria). However, the NCNC was more of a national party before degenerating into a regional party because of the political orientation and participation that dominated the era.

The new political alignment that heralded the 2015 general elections recharged political engagements and modes of participation along ethno-regional lines, thus culminating in the northern and southwestern political realignment. The result was the

emergence of a new political coalition — the All Progressives Congress (APC) — and the election and selection of General Muhammadu Buhari and Professor Yemi Osinbajo as the presidential and vice-presidential candidates of the new coalition party, respectively, in the 2015 general elections. While General Buhari represented the Muslim-dominated conservative north of the old NPC, Professor Osinbajo represented the southwestern progressives of the old AG. Thus, a reinvention of some of the core components of Nigeria's old political relics occurred (*Business Day*, 19 May 2015).

As presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Buhari and Osinbajo became the new face of political change under the 'change' mantra of the APC for a new Nigeria. This arrangement set in motion the political intrigue and dynamics of engagements with political allies across the geopolitical divides that altered the existing political arrangement that sustained the PDP since it came into power in 1999, and shaped the modes of political participation across the country. As a result, the impact was felt through voting behaviour across the geopolitical divides and the subsequent defeat of then-incumbent President Jonathan and the ruling PDP in the March 2015 presidential and national assembly election polls. Therefore, the present chapter explores in detail the engagement strategies, modes of participation and the implications of the displacement of an incumbent president and dominant political party from power.

### **The 2015 Election Polls: Engagement Strategies and Modes of Electoral Participation**

The 2015 general election held in Nigeria marked the fifth quadrennial election to be held since the end of military rule in 1999 (International Foundation for Electoral System, 2015). The president and members of the Senate and House of Representatives were elected by voters in a race where the then-incumbent President Jonathan sought re-election for his second and final term in office. In addition to being the most competitive election in

Nigeria since the Fourth Republic, the election was held amid rising tensions in the country due to terror attacks by the Boko Haram insurgency. Furthermore, there was increasing tension between the north and the south due to what northerners considered a 'lost turn' for the presidency and the continued economic marginalisation of their region (Kimenyi, 2015). All these factors exacerbated the traditional ethnic, regional and religious fractures that have defined Nigerian politics since independence. In the run-up to the election, there were widespread fears that the election would be marred by violence.

Consequently, a few weeks before the general election, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) postponed the elections. Initially, the elections were scheduled to be held on 14 February 2015, but were postponed by 6 weeks to 28 March 2015. The postponement was attributed to the poor distribution of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and the need to contain the escalating Boko Haram insurgency in the majority of the northeastern states (Independent, 7 February 2015). The election was later delayed to 29 March to accommodate areas that encountered delays and technical problems with the newly introduced Biometric Card Readers (BCD).

Reportedly, the National Security Adviser to President Jonathan, Colonel Sambo Dasuki, told the electoral commission that operations against Boko Haram militants meant the military would be unable to provide adequate security for the 14 February vote (*Premium Times*, 7 February 2015). Overall, 17 of the 28 registered political parties supported postponing the elections, while the remaining 11 parties—including the APC—opposed the postponement (*Premium Times*, 7 February 2015). Notably, as of 30 January 2015, Boko Haram held total occupation and complete control of 13 local governments (and other swathes of land) in Borno State and two each in Yobe and Adamawa States (Hassan, 2015). Meanwhile, the federal government, in order to achieve a free and fair election, had announced the closure of its international land and sea borders from midnight on 25 March until the end of the



polling date, to ensure a proper mop-up of the insurgency by the Nigerian counterinsurgency security forces and the non-interference of neighbouring communities.

However, critics of the postponement saw it as a political move on behalf of President Jonathan and the ruling PDP rather than one made in consideration of national security since the party was losing traction due to its handling of the insurgency and the economic downturn caused by a drop in the global oil price. Critics also noted that even with the postponement, the Nigerian government was unlikely to re-establish control in all insurgency-affected areas by the date of the election. Incidentally, the federal government was able to walk its talk by repelling the Boko Haram insurgents, recapturing the affected areas and regaining control of the territories before the election (Reuters, 17 March 2015). The distribution of the PVCs resumed in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the three affected states. The estimated number of IDPs that were to participate in the election ranged from 868,235 to 1.5 million (Hassan, 2015).

The success of the military operation in the final minutes of the Jonathan administration was meant to ensure that the conflict zone was not disenfranchised and garner support for the administration in the election. Unsurprisingly, it did not achieve the latter. The voters had already made up their minds to vote against the incumbent due to the failure of the government to contain the conflict and restore peace to the region, as it had promised.

Notably, the postponement of the 2015 general election fell within the constitutionally stipulated period in which the Nigerian presidential election should be held. The 2011 general elections were also postponed back then. According to the Nigerian Constitution (1999, as amended), the presidential election must be held by 28 April, as stipulated in Section 25 of the 2010 Electoral Act. The Act states that the date is to be no later than 30 days before the expiration of the previous officeholder's term of office (Timetable and Schedule of Activities for General Elections, 2015).

The 2015 general election brought changes in the political engagements and mode of participation in elections in Nigeria after a long period of PDP-dominant voting patterns that kept the party in power for 16 years since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999. Unsurprisingly, there was a definite shift in the voting pattern from what it had traditionally been since 1999 to an ethno-regional pattern reminiscent of what was obtained in the First, Second and Third Republics. According to Ibrahim, Liman and Mato (2015), it was a sharp deviation from the traditional monetised voting behaviour that had shaped voting patterns in Nigeria since its return to democracy in 1999, when the bulk of the votes went to the highest bidder. They further observed that behavioural patterns resulted from poverty and a lack of democratic consciousness since 1999. Additionally, preparations for the 2015 polls brought about certain modes of political engagements that were not very popular or highly utilised in previous elections. The major modes are reviewed as follows.

### **Social Media Engagement**

One dominant feature that the 2015 elections added to the Nigerian political arena was a clear exhibition of the power of social media in influencing and swaying voters towards particular candidates. Even before the 2015 elections, Nigerians — especially the younger generation — have embraced various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp, among others, as new and faster modes of obtaining information and sharing information.

The term "social media" refers to the methods by which individuals interact with one another to create, share, and/or exchange ideas and information in online communities and networks. Conversations, community, connecting with the audience, and building relationships are all part of using social media (de Hoog et al, 2005; Peters et al, 2014). The build-up to the 2015 elections saw the unprecedented deployment of social media handles in campaigns and voter mobilisation. The main opposition

party, the APC, was likely the greatest beneficiary of the value that social media brought to the political table. Long before the party was formed in February 2013, young Nigerians used to congregate on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to express their disaffection against the government. That rage has since been sustained and indeed spread to other young people who would ordinarily not be interested in politics. All the APC did was capitalise on the anger of these young people. Although the PDP tried to play catch-up, it was too feeble to make much impact. The PDP failed to sustain the momentum of President Jonathan's unprecedented move of declaring his intention to run for the 2011 elections on his Facebook page first before anywhere else. Although the administration began to influence the social media space through Jonathan's Facebook account, it is safe to say that they were ultimately outperformed in the social media game (*Vanguard Newspaper*, 2 November 2014; Owete, 2015).

In 2013, the APC embraced the various social media channels as a veritable platform to endear itself to the young population. The party presented its candidates in the same social light, with Buhari and Osinbajo opening and actively running Twitter and Facebook accounts, gaining followers organically and regurgitating their political activities tirelessly on the platforms with campaign quotes, promises, glittering photographs, video reels, etc. Lobbying activities of Cambridge Analytica were also helpful. Many other critical stakeholders in the APC, including support groups, party stalwarts and general supporters, actively maximised these channels to gain traction and become the subject of trendy hashtags.

Not to be left behind, the PDP similarly unleashed a host of social media influencers and trend-shapers to share some of the limelight with their APC counterparts. Like never before, the impact of social media as a potent political tool was significant to the point of playing a major part in who the eventual winner would be. It also reduced the pressure on traditional media channels as a source of information, with updates on results and other election-related developments being shared widely in real time for the whole world

to see on the platforms almost as instantly as they were being collated at the polling units.

As part of its social media strategy, a group within the APC inaugurated a social media website known as 'The Broom' in November 2014 to echo the campaign of the party ahead of the elections. According to Dr Tom Ohikere, the group's team leader, the platform was created to complement and consolidate the APC's 2015 campaign efforts (*Vanguard Newspaper*, 2 November 2014).

A special report by *Business Day* after the elections confirmed that social media played a significant role in the success of the APC in the 2015 elections, since the party dominated social media space between January and March of that year — a factor that must have greatly influenced the electorate. A similar report conducted by the International Press Centre (IPC) and the Nigeria Press Council (NPC) on monitoring the reportage of the 2015 elections by 12 national newspapers, seven regional newspapers, four online news media and three social media platforms showed that the APC enjoyed the most media visibility.

For instance, in January, out of a total number of 1,226 political parties' sources mentioned in all the national dailies reviewed, the following results were obtained: the APC had the greatest coverage, having been mentioned 580 times (47.3% of the coverage); the PDP was mentioned 464 times (37.8%); the APGA came up 47 times (4%); the LP, 46 times (3.7%); the UPN, 29 times (2.3%); the AP and PPA were each mentioned seven times (0.5%); the ADC came up four times (0.3%); the AA, HDP and KOWA parties were each mentioned twice (0.1%); the PPN was mentioned once. This was no different in February, since 15 political parties were used as sources 929 times. Overall, the two largest political parties continued to enjoy greater media visibility.

Additional findings from the research showed the following: the APC was used as a source 477 times (representing 51.35%); the PDP followed at 335 times (36.06%); the APGA, 37 (4%); the LP, 29 (3.12%); the UPN, 10 (1.07%); the SDP, 9 (0.96%); each of the PPA

and KOWA were used 8 times (0.86%); each of the AA, AD and UPP were used 4 times (0.43%); Accord, 3 (0.32); the HDP, 1 (0.1%).

On 1 March, 213 sources generated from political parties showed the following: the APC was projected in the media more than other political parties (701 times, 51.44%); the PDP followed (506 times, 35.61%); each of the LP and SDP were used 33 times (2.72%); the APGA, 29 (2.391%); the AP, 14 (1.154%); the PPA, six (0.5%); the AD, five (0.824%); each of the UPN and UPP, four (0.326%); the KOWA, three (1.49%); the AA, two (0.164%); the PPN, one (0.082%).

Regarding the use of under-represented groups such as women, youths, persons living with disabilities and rural dwellers as sources in the coverage of the election according to the electoral code, the research also revealed that out of the total 7,018 sources used by all national dailies reviewed in January, 95 (1.3%) were female politicians, while male politicians represented 42.4% (i.e., 2,979). Youth were used 72 times, while people living with disabilities were used 15 times. In February, out of a total of 2,657 male and female politicians used as sources in the month, 2,524 were male and 133 were female. The same picture was observed in March, when, out of a total of 3,066 politician sources, 2,827 were male and 239 were female. Youth voices were projected 61 times, while people living with disabilities were projected 7 times (*Business Day*, May 2015). The 12 newspapers used for the research included Daily Sun, The Nation, National Mirror, Vanguard, The Punch, This Day, Daily Independent, The Guardian, Nigerian Tribune, Daily Champion, Leadership and Daily Trust (*Business Day*, May 2015).

There is no denying the fact that the influence of social and new media only increased from that point, with many major political actors in the ruling party and opposition parties ensuring they had an active online presence. There was also the devotion of significant human and financial resources to man the social media units of their administrations as an avenue to regularly connect with citizens and flaunt their political achievements.

### **The Chatham House Engagement**

The Royal Institute of International Affairs — popularly known as Chatham House — is an independent British policy institute headquartered in London. Its stated mission is to provide commentary on world events and offer solutions to global challenges (IDEA, 2015; *The Guardian*, 26 February 2015). It is a think-tank on international affairs and a world-leading policy institute, with a mission to help governments and societies build a sustainably secure, prosperous and just world. Visiting Chatham House to unveil a candidate's and/or party's plans to a global audience was a trend popularised by Buhari in his preparation for the 2015 elections that many other Nigerian politicians would later adopt in subsequent elections. As part of his campaign activities, Buhari honoured an invitation from Chatham House in February 2015 to unveil the strategies he would deploy if elected president, which aimed to reposition the country on the path of national growth and development.

During his address at Chatham House, Buhari used the opportunity to pitch his famed political objectives to a broad audience, assuring that his administration would have zero tolerance for corruption. He promised to lead the way with the force of personal example. He insisted that there would be no confusion as to where he stood, that corruption would have no place and that the corrupt would not be appointed to his administration. He promised to plug the holes in the budgetary process and ensure that the institutions of state dedicated to fighting corruption would be granted independence and prosecutorial authority without political interference. He cautioned that any war waged on corruption should not be misconstrued as settling old scores or a witch-hunt. He promised that he would lead Nigeria to prosperity and not adversity (*The Guardian*, 26 February 2015).

In his speech entitled 'Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in Africa: Nigeria's Transition', Buhari further promised that he would open up the economy through the effective utilisation of the country's resources. Dressed in a dark *kaftan* and

cap to match, Buhari described the election as a defining moment that had great implications beyond the nation's borders. He reiterated his stance that any form of extension under whatever guise would be unconstitutional and would not be tolerated. He insisted that the postponed elections must not only keep to the rescheduled dates, but should be free and fair. On refocusing the economy, Buhari contended that in the face of dwindling revenues, a good place to start the repositioning of Nigeria's economy was to swiftly tackle two ills that had ballooned under the present administration: waste and corruption.

He explained that doing so would help reform the economy and use savings that arise from blocking these leakages, with the proceeds recovered from corruption funding his party's social investment programmes in education, health and safety nets such as free school meals for children, emergency public works for unemployed youth, and pensions for the elderly. He described claims of economic prosperity and growth under the President Jonathan-led administration as 'paper growth', adding that it was a growth on account of mismanagement, profligacy and corruption that had not translated into human development or shared prosperity.

On the Boko Haram insurgency, Buhari said that it was unfortunate that the menace had put Nigeria on the terrorism map due to the untimely deaths of more than 13,000 Nigerians. Claiming that the President Jonathan-led administration did little to contain the group, he stated that under his presidency, Nigeria would not only be a secure place but would regain its stabilising role in Africa.

The ruling PDP was quick to berate Buhari for his postulations in London after refusing to participate in a presidential debate in Nigeria. In a statement issued by the PDP Presidential Campaign Organisation media director, Femi Fani Kayode, it was pointed out that 'It is amazing that a man that refuses to participate in a debate in his own country is so ready to go to a foreign country to sell his message in a desperate attempt to curry favour with the people of that country.' In another statement, the PDP said Buhari's

appearance at Chatham House was targeted to secure a desperately needed endorsement of the international community, stressing that 'the world is hardly fooled by the theatrics of desperation' (*The Guardian*, Feb. 2015).

Despite the PDP's deliberate attempt to discredit the event, the Chatham House address proved to be a major plus for Buhari and the APC heading into the election, since it further boosted confidence in the retired general at home in Nigeria and additionally enhanced Buhari's global credentials as a quintessential statesman and noble man of few but sound words. He quashed all speculations about his ability to address critical issues or engage a formal audience articulately and coherently. Unsurprisingly, from that time on, visiting Chatham House to air political plans and objectives became a prominent global engagement strategy for prospective presidential candidates in Nigeria.

### **Town Hall Meetings**

While not entirely new in the context of Nigerian politics, the APC significantly accentuated town hall meetings as a potent political campaign tool. Against the backdrop of its decision to stay out of presidential debates, the Presidential Campaign Organisation of the APC announced the commencement of town hall meetings as a deliberate strategy of the campaign during which Buhari and his running mate, Yemi Osinbajo, would interact and explain directly to citizens the policy thrust of their envisaged administration and how the set objectives would be achieved. A statement signed by Garba Shehu, Director of Media and Publicity of the Campaign, stated that the party decided to chart this course due to the compelling need to have person-to-person interactive sessions during which pertinent questions would be posed to the candidates, with responses provided (*The Guardian*, 26 February 2015; *Premium Times*, February 2015). Furthermore, it stated the following:

*Our campaign decided to chart this path because we cannot afford to shy away from the more pressing*



*urgency to have one-on-one interactions with Nigerians through town hall meetings... ahead of the February 14 presidential election. Due to the more pressing urgency to have an open interaction with Nigerians, the campaign will be organising town hall meetings in different parts of the country. (Premium Times, Feb. 2015)*

The town hall meetings were a strategic campaign tool deployed by the APC that involved nationwide interactions with representatives of the organised private sector, traders, market associations, labour, civil society leaders, students, youth groups, etc. In the run-up to Election Day, the campaign decided to hold as many person-to-person interactive sessions as possible so that Nigerians could hear directly from the presidential candidate and his running mate.

### **Regional Politicking**

Furthermore, Nigerians were made to shift from 'monetised voting behaviour' to ethno-regional voting behaviour by a new political arrangement that evolved following the emergence of the APC. The subsequent fractionalisation of the PDP helped to strengthen it further. In the build-up to the elections, a segment of the PDP left to form the new PDP, which later merged with the APC. These events more or less polarised the entire country along ethnic and regional lines, thus affecting the mode of political participation and engagements, which subsequently affected the voting behaviour of Nigerians during the election.

Moreover, General Muhammadu Buhari (or GMB, as he was fondly called) was seen as a better alternative to rescue the country from the challenges of the time because of his personality traits as a no-nonsense military general and former head of state, a man of impeccable character and unflinching integrity and, above all, his charisma. Together, these characteristics presented the APC as the best alternative that would satisfy the yearnings of the people.

Incidentally, ethno-regional sentiments that dominated political participation and voting behaviour in the first and second republics were reinvented for the 2015 general election processes. The new voting behaviour involved consciously voting for leaders that can truly represent the electorate and change their socio-economic and political status-quo based on ethnic and regional considerations. During this period, Nigerians refused to vote for money but rather preferred clinging to their regional political blocs. This was manifested in the voting behaviour across the six geopolitical zones in the 2015 presidential election polls. For instance, across the six geopolitical zones, General Muhammadu Buhari/the APC won in the north-central, northeast, northwest and southwest, while incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan won in the southeast and south (INEC 2015 Election Result, 2015). Table 1.1 presents the statistics of the 2015 presidential election results across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

**Table 1.1: Demography of the 2015 Elections**

S/N	Geopolitical Zone	No. of Votes Polled by the APC (Buhari)	No. of Votes Polled by the PDP (Jonathan)
1	North-central	2,411,013	1,715,818
2	North-east	2,848,678	796,588
3	North-west	7,115,199	1,339,709
4	South-east	198,248	2,464,906
5	South	418,590	4,714,725
6	South-west	2,433,193	1,821,416
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15,424,921</b>	<b>12,853,162</b>

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, 2015.

Despite the 14 presidential candidates and political parties in the presidential election, the focus was on the two major political parties: the ruling PDP and the opposition APC. The 2015 presidential election results, as published by the INEC, have been presented elsewhere in this volume. The results showed that the election was between the two major political parties: the ruling PDP and the opposition APC. The opposition APC displaced the ruling

PDP with a margin of 2,571,758 votes, indicating a hard-fought victory against the incumbent President Jonathan and the PDP.

**Table 1.2: Voter Turnout in Presidential Elections, 1979–2015**

Year	Voter Turn-out	Total Vote	Registration	VAP Turn-out	Age Population	Population	Invalid Votes	Compulsory Voting
2015	43.65 %	29,432,983	67,422,005	32.11 %	91,669,312	181,562,056	2.8%	No
2011	53.68 %	39,469,484	73,528,040	48.32 %	81,691,751	155,215,573	3.19%	No
2007	57.49 %	35,397,517	61,567,036	49.85 %	71,004,507	131,859,731		No
2003	69.08 %	42,018,735	60,823,022	65.33 %	64,319,246	129,934,911	6%	No
1999	52.26 %	30,280,052	57,938,945	57.36 %	52,792,781	108,258,359	.40%	No
1993		14,039,486		27.79 %	50,526,720	105,264,000		No
1979	35.25 %	17,098,267	48,499,091	44.83 %	38,142,090	77,841,000	2%	No

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 2015

However, even with the changes in voting behaviour, other intervening variables shaped non-conventional political participation. These included the issues of insecurity and a high level of tension and suspicion within the polity (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2015). These engendered low voter turnout in the 2015 general elections, which was the lowest experienced since the 1979 presidential elections. (*Premium Times*, February 2015). Table 1.2 represents the voter turnout, total votes and registered voters in Nigeria's presidential elections from 1979 to 2015.

Table 1.2 indicates that the 2015 general elections had the lowest voter turnout (43.65%) after the 1979 presidential election, which recorded a total voter turnout of 35.25%. In the 2011 general election, the voter turnout was greater, with 53.68% of the total registered voters in participation. Similarly, the voter turnout values

for the 2007, 2003 and 1999 presidential elections were 57.49, 69.08 and 52.2%, respectively, which were still higher than that of the 2015 presidential election. In the same vein, one remarkable observation that can be made from Table 1.2 is that the total votes cast in the presidential elections from 2003 (42,018,735), 2007 (35,397,517) and 2011 (39,469,484) were all greater than that of the 2015 presidential election (29,232,083 million). Although it was greater than that of 1993 (14,039,486) and 1979 (17,098,267) elections, considering the voting age population of the country in the various election years, the 2015 presidential election turnout and the number of votes cast should be considered abysmally low when compared to other elections. However, it was much better than subsequent elections.

In terms of political participation, the results presented in Table 1.2 indicate that the Voting Age Population (VAP) increased in 2015 (91,669,312) when compared to 2011 (81,691,751), 2007 (71,004,507), 2003 (64,319,246) and 1999 (52,792,781). The VAP turnout dropped in 2015 (32.11%) to a value lower than the 48.32% observed in 2011, 49.85% in 2007, 65.33% in 2003 and 57.36% in 1999. Due to the low voter turnout in the 2015 general election, there is a need to examine certain fundamental factors that determined this trend, especially with voter turnout falling below 50% (43.65%) in the 2015 presidential election. It is also important to determine why voting behaviour favoured the opposition APC against the ruling PDP in the same election.

### **Factors that Influenced Voting Behaviour**

Certain factors significantly influenced the voting pattern of Nigerians in the 2015 elections, some of which are discussed below.

#### *President Jonathan's 2015 Presidential Ambition*

The presidential ambition of President Jonathan in the 2015 election spurred a shift in the mode of political participation and voting behaviour of Nigerians in the election. First, it altered its own unwritten understanding on rotational presidency that was to

ensure the equitable distribution of power between the north and the south. It had the opportunity to put in place a system as to how the party selected candidates; but it did not. As a government, it also did not stipulate any law as to the rotation of the presidency. Thus, the alleged usurpation of the north's opportunity to present itself for the presidency in the ruling PDP triggered other issues that contributed to the shift in the voting behaviour of Nigerians and the subsequent defeat of the ruling PDP in the election. This, among other party issues, fractured the party and created a splinter group (the New PDP), which merged with the opposition APC to displace the incumbent President Jonathan and the ruling PDP in the general election. The PDP lost key party chieftains and seven serving governors (Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State, Babangida Aliyu of Niger State, Rabi'u Kwankwaso of Kano State, Murtala Nyako of Adamawa State, Abdulfatai Ahmed of Kwara State, Aliyu Wamakko of Sokoto State and Sule Lamido of Jigawa State) — tantamount to seven states — to the opposition APC, which further strengthened the APC in the election.

#### *Fear Factor*

Psychological studies, such as those of Maddux and Rogers (1983) and de Hoog, Stroebe and John (2005), have been emphatic to the conceptualisation of fear as 'a persuasive message that attempts to arouse fear to divert behaviour through the threat of impending danger or harm'. In this context, the danger is what Nigerians experienced in the previous government and what the expectation appeared to be in subsequent governments if they succeeded in holding power after the election. Ruiter and Abraham (2005), Walkters (2000) and Peters, Ruiter and Kok (2014) provided intellectual arguments that supported the relationship between fear and voting behaviour. They argued that people change behaviourally as a result of risk and vulnerability against a particular action. For example, if Nigerians were defenseless under the former regime, their lives were then at risk and vulnerable. By inference, this would definitely affect their voting behaviour at the

polls since it will serve as their protective action (Witte & Allen, 2000; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the shift or change in voting behaviour and patterns witnessed in the 2015 general election could be described as a reflection of fear, which could serve as a protective action to save their lives.

This argument has been further buttressed by Ibrahim *et al.* (2015), who contended that the fear of Nigerians goes back to yesteryears of unemployment, armed robbery, kidnapping, economic difficulty and educational collapse, which made them change their voting behaviour. Ibrahim *et al.* (2015) further explained that the economic theory of democracy indicates that voters and politicians are rational players and that each will maintain his interests based on the profit he is likely to maximise. For voters, political utility in employment opportunities, economic growth and development, increases in per capita income, social welfare and infrastructure are basic needs (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2015: 12). Therefore, they concluded that Nigerians changed their voting behaviour and pattern in the 2015 general election because they did not want to experience the same treatment they received from the PDP government.

Unlike previous elections that recorded higher voter turnout amid allegations of rigging, ballot-stuffing, etc., the low voter turnout recorded in the 2015 general election polls could also be explained within the context of fear. For instance, the level of tension associated with the election dissuaded some voters since many people fled with their voter cards at the slightest provocations without voting due to the fear of post-election violence.

### *Insecurity*

Insecurity remains a sensitive issue in every socio-economic formation because it affects the generality of human security. Therefore, a situation where people do not feel secure makes them lose their sense of belonging, thus affecting their behaviour. In a democratic system, it is easier for people to express this disgust in the pattern and behaviour of their voting in elections. The insecurity

in the northern part of the country, particularly in the northeastern part, was accompanied by socio-economic and physical consequences such as the displacement of people from their ancestral homes and the unavailability of food, water and medical facilities as a result of the insurgency, which stripped them of their dignity as humans and made them lose their sense of belonging. This psychological trauma was instrumental to the change in voting behaviour and pattern in the north. In their quest for a better country, Nigerians were forced to shift their voting behaviour from the hitherto dominated voting pattern by abandoning the ruling PDP and embracing the APC, from which they expected a noticeable change from an insecure nation to a secure one. The people saw the opposition APC as having a better chance at making a systemic transformation — hence the change in voting behaviour.

#### *Value Expectations*

The idea that unfulfilled rising expectations create unstable political situations has a long tradition in political and social analysis (*The Guardian*, 26 February 2015; *Premium Times*, February 2015). Relative deprivation theorists have equated it to the cause-effect of revolutions, insurgencies and civil unrest throughout the world, as well as the urban riots of the 1960s in the United States. However, it could also be used to explain voting behaviours and patterns in democratic settings in Africa since it reflects a protest to change the status quo. This is because the essential doctrinal kernel of relative deprivation is the perceived discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they actually believe they can get; that is, the disparity between aspirations and achievements. Given the quantum of votes cast for the opposition APC and General Buhari as opposed to the ruling PDP and incumbent President Jonathan, the pattern and behaviour of voting in the 2015 general election were tantamount to an electoral revolution by the electorate.

It was a protest against the failure of the incumbent government to discharge its functions as they relate to its primary responsibility of protecting lives and property, among other

responsibilities to the people, such as education, the defence of territorial integrity, defence against external aggression, provision of basic amenities (power, water, roads and hospitals) and social welfare. It was evident that the previous government failed to meet general expectations as promised during the electioneering campaign; hence, the people saw the 2015 general election as 'payback time' to reciprocate in the same manner. Therefore, the change in the voting behaviour and pattern witnessed in the 2015 general election was a result of the inability of the government to meet the expectations of Nigerians.

#### *Political Socialisation*

Political socialisation entails a process by which individuals learn and frequently internalise a political lens framing their perceptions of how power is arranged and how political events around them are (and should be) organised. In turn, these perceptions shape and define their definitions of who they are and how they should behave in the political and economic system in which they live (Clause, 1968; Macioni, 2010). Clause defines political socialisation as a lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs and ideologies that provide an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within their own society. Macioni (2010) viewed this as how social and cultural continuity are attained. This suggests that the socialisation or re-socialisation of voting behaviour in a population can be performed by families, peer groups, religious institutions, schools, the mass media, political parties and other interest groups.

All these agents played significant roles in influencing and changing political participation and voting behaviour in the 2015 general elections. For instance, the 'Change Slogan' reverberated throughout the political environment during the election period. In all the northern states, younger children were clamouring '*Sai Baba Buhari*' as a mantra. When people are preconditioned, prepared or even taught how to vote, whom to vote for and what symbol of a



political party they should accept, they rapidly adapt to changes (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2015: 13).

### *Economic Conditions*

Writing on the impact of economic conditions on the voting behaviour of Blacks in the United States in the 1980s, Welch and Foster (1992) contended that there is a strong connection between the economic fortunes of a group of people and their voting behaviour in an election. They showed that in the 1984 presidential election, Blacks were influenced by their perceptions of the economic fortunes of their racial group and the nation as a whole. Based on a series of relevant studies, this theory has persisted in many contexts worldwide, thus establishing the correlation between the economic conditions and voting behaviour of a population. The socioeconomic challenges that befell many Nigerian families during the Jonathan era — particularly in the northern states, where existing poverty was exacerbated by the scourge of conflict and insecurity — greatly contributed to determining who they voted for in the 2015 general election. Yet, ethnic and regional sentiments cannot be underplayed in accounting for how people voted.

### **Conclusion**

Given the advantages of incumbency that President Jonathan and the PDP enjoyed, the victory of General Muhammadu Buhari in the 2015 election reflected the widespread frustration among Nigerians with Jonathan's administration — especially his government's failure to contain Boko Haram and the increasing desperation by youths due to high joblessness (Kimenyi, 2015). The high turnout in northern states also reflected the general feeling by northerners that it should be their turn to rule, which also underscores the ethno-regional voting behaviour of the time.

In addition, the important win by General Muhammadu Buhari and the APC in the 2015 election impacted democratic consolidation — especially due to the humility with which then-

incumbent President Jonathan accepted defeat and congratulated General Buhari amid the controversies that were gradually building at the time. Apart from strengthening democracy in Nigeria, it also strengthened democratic consolidation in Africa. However, although the victory presented positive perceptions of democracy in Nigeria and Africa, it also presented its own challenges to the country, given the massive expectations of the Nigerians from their new president and his party and the socio-economic, political and security challenges that lay ahead for the new government.

As observed, Nigeria was fractured along ethno-regional and religious fault lines. These fractures have been a major hindrance in Nigeria since independence, and the new government had to prioritise tackling the sources of these fractures. In particular, the real and perceived marginalisation of the north had to be addressed through the fair allocation of resources and targeted investments to promote economic activities in the region. The government was expected to deal with Boko Haram activity in the northeast and prevent it from escalating further (Kimenyi, 2015).

Finally, the new government was also tasked with addressing existing socioeconomic challenges by implementing far-reaching economic reforms that were necessary to sustain the high rates of economic growth necessary to create jobs for the millions of unemployed youths, reduce poverty and put an end to the endemic corruption that had plundered public finances in recent times. The implication was that the new government was confronted with the crisis of rising expectations from its inception.

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# 10

## **Forming a Government: The Imperative of Unifying the Nation**

**Ugonna Obi-Emeruwa**

### **Introduction**

The 2015 election was a significant milestone in the nation's democratic history. It was the first election in which an opposition party not only defeated an incumbent president, but also won enough seats to gain majority control in both chambers of the National Assembly. The fallout of such an unprecedented electoral outcome was bound to be trying, since incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which had hitherto ruled, had no option but to make way for the enthronement of Nigeria's new political leadership. That leadership would be formed by the victorious All Progressives Congress (APC) – an amalgam of major opposition parties and a former faction of the ruling PDP.

Since the advent of organised society, the concept and forms of leadership have sparked numerous debates. Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Locke, Marx, Engels, and Heidegger, amongst others, have examined the notion of leadership and its importance in nation-building and development. Although these thinkers adopted a variety of approaches, they shared fundamental concerns about who governs, who should govern, what constitutes political authority in a community, and what role and influence is exerted by other political

actors (Ologbenla, 2007). While Plato's and Aristotle's analyses of leadership were considered idealist in nature, Locke's and Rousseau's analyses were woven within the matrix of prescriptive methods for generalising the nature of mankind, society, and authority. The work of Marx and Engels, meanwhile, was based on historical materialist theory. The concept of leadership is primarily formulated from the perspective of personality, implying, for example, that leadership is a combination of special traits or characteristics that individuals must possess to persuade others to complete tasks through effective governance practices (Northouse, 2000; De Vries, 2008).

In other words, leadership is the process of directing, energising, and convincing other people to voluntarily commit to the leader's vision. As a result, the leader develops a vision and goals and persuades others to share that vision and work towards the goal (Wendy, Cook & Hunsaker, 2003). Okadigbo (1987) conceived of leadership as the process by which one individual consistently exerts greater influence than others over group behaviour. Seteolu (2004) defines leadership as a combination of strategy and personality. But according to Yakub, leadership is 'weak, competent, foolish, stupid, corrupt, and hedonistic, such that many are frolicking while Rome is burning' (Audu, 2010). In the context of politics, however, leadership is defined as partisan representatives making decisions about social policy and allocating resources. Thus, a political leader is a ruler who guides the people towards the achievement of developmental visions or goals. Good leadership, then, is critical to a country's development (Eneh, 2007).

The interdependence of leadership and development is demonstrated by societies that have risen above their natural limitations to achieve sustainable development under transformative and visionary leadership, Japan being a prime example. By contrast, some societies are endowed with abundant natural resources but have failed to achieve a level of development commensurate with those resources due to poor leadership, which is characterised by self-centredness, corruption, and short-

sightedness (Bammeke, 2005). Good leadership, therefore, is a catalyst for development. Kouzes and Posner (2007) have emphasised that leadership is the art of motivating others to fight for common goals. According to this viewpoint, leadership is about inspiring and guiding the efforts of others by creating an environment that motivates them. Concomitantly, good leadership is founded upon the ability to understand what motivates people and appeal to those motivational factors.

Effective leadership facilitates higher-quality governance, production, and development with more efficient service delivery in organisations, states, and societies. It provides a sense of cohesiveness and inclusiveness, while fostering personal development and higher levels of satisfaction among citizens and leaders alike. It provides an overarching sense of direction and vision, an alignment with the environment, a healthy mechanism for innovation and creativity, all of which constitute a resource base for citizens (Tshiyoyo, 2012).

In the context of those observations, Buhari's rise to power was a momentous occasion in Nigeria's history. His victory in the 2015 presidential election signalled a shift in the nation's political landscape, marking a new era of hope and progress. On 29 May 2015, Buhari was inaugurated as the fourth democratically-elected Nigerian president, replacing the outgoing president, Goodluck Jonathan. A celebration of national unity, Buhari's inauguration ceremony was attended by both domestic and foreign dignitaries as well as supporters from across the nation. Afterwards, Buhari set about forming his government, bringing together a team of qualified professionals from all walks of life who shared his vision for a better future for Nigeria.

As president, Buhari articulated the mission of uniting Nigerians who had been divided by years of political turmoil and cleavages. His priority was to forge a brighter and more prosperous future for Nigeria through public sector reforms, infrastructure development, and social welfare policies. He established a culture of national reconciliation, encouraging citizens to work together to

create a prosperous, healthy, and tolerant nation. He made efforts to ensure that all citizens had a voice in the nation's political process, and to bridge the gap between the nation's various ethnic and religious communities. With his commitment to national unity and the implementation of short, medium and long-term development policies, he created a more inclusive, equitable nation for Nigerians of diverse backgrounds (*Premium Times*, 29 April 2015).

Before his 2015 victory, Buhari had made unsuccessful bids for the presidency. In 2003, he was defeated by the incumbent, Olusegun Obasanjo, of the PDP. He ran again in 2007, but in an election strongly criticised by international observers as being marred by voting irregularities, he was defeated by the PDP's candidate, Umaru Yar'adua. Buhari also stood in the 2011 presidential election, which was praised for being largely transparent, free, and fair, but he again lost to the PDP's candidate, incumbent Goodluck Jonathan. In 2014, however, the APC nominated Buhari to stand as its candidate in the 2015 presidential election. His military background and his reputation for being incorruptible made his candidature appealing to many Nigerians, who believed that he would be able to tackle effectively the threat posed by the Islamic militant group, Boko Haram, whose violent acts had terrorised parts of the country for a number of years.

Although there were 14 candidates on the ballot in the presidential election of 28 March 2015, the real contest was between Buhari and the incumbent, President Jonathan, who was the PDP's candidate. In what was Nigeria's most closely fought election to date, Buhari garnered the most votes, gaining approximately 2.5 million more than Jonathan, his closest competitor, to become Nigeria's next president.

In the remaining sections, we examine the Buhari administration's post-inauguration efforts to unite a highly fragmented nation. The study is based on historical research using secondary data sources, including historical documents, observations, textbooks, journals, internet venues, and newspapers, among others.

**Political Transition**

The political sportsmanship displayed by Goodluck Jonathan with his timely concession of defeat and hearty felicitations to president-elect, Buhari, set the tone for a smooth transition of power from the incumbent administration to the incoming one. It was a remarkable display of political courage by Jonathan, whose exemplary statesmanship disappointed the traducers within his party who expected him to offer stiff resistance or contest the election results, which would have caused a rough and chaotic transition process. However, as someone who had had the privilege of rising through the political ranks to attain his country's highest political office, Jonathan did not yield to such unpatriotic pressures. He was applauded by democrats worldwide for his dignity in handling defeat and for respecting the principles of democracy, which fundamentally requires yielding to the will of the voters.

As part of the efforts to ensure a smooth and orderly transition, Buhari appointed a 19-member Transition Committee on 29 April 2015. The committee was tasked with developing a clear framework for liaison with the outgoing administration about details of the transition; among other things, it would receive documents from Ministries, Departments and Agencies that itemised the most important or urgent issues confronting the incoming government. The committee was also given responsibility for making a preliminary assessment of the government's balance sheet. It would pay particular attention to the status of governmental assets and liabilities, the status of cash flow, the size of the government's public domestic and external debts together with their deployment, the government's outstanding contractual obligations and its ability to meet them, and the status of the capital projects it was implementing.

The committee was also expected to undertake a preliminary assessment of the security challenges facing the country, the counter-insurgency measures undertaken thus far, and the counter-militancy measures being implemented in the Niger Delta to address unrest and major economic crimes in the area. In particular, the

committee was to assess the status of the Amnesty Programme, evaluate the readiness of the police force and other national security and intelligence agencies in addressing threats to law and order, and provide a brief overview of CBN, NNPC, NCC, Customs and FIRS. The committee's other responsibilities included suggesting quick fixes that could produce tangible, visible and practical results, so that the promise of change would be realised at intervals, becoming evident after 30 days, 100 days, and then, six months after the administration had taken office. The committee was also to report any other observations it thought could be helpful in the transition and launch of the new administration. The committee was given two weeks to conclude its work.

Speaking at the committee's inauguration, Buhari charged committee members with assessing the information provided to them and advising him on its quality and accuracy. It is a simple fact that formulating appropriate policy decisions requires accurate information. Buhari hailed the calibre of the committee's membership, saying they represented some of the best minds that Nigeria could offer. He described the committee chairman, Ahmed Joda, as one of the few surviving links between First Republic's civil service and that of the present day; as a man whose versatility spanned farming, industry, and 21st century information technology, he was one of Nigeria's most precious assets.

The committee, which was often referred to as the 'Joda Transition Committee', had the seasoned public service administrator and experienced transition expert, Ahmed Joda, as Chairman, while renowned economist, Doyin Salami, served as Vice Chairman. Other members included Boss Mustapha, Mohammed Hayatudeen, Abubakar Malami, Lawal Jafaru Isa, Hadi Sirika, Audu Ogbeh, Solomon Dalung, Bola Adesola, Wale Edun, Nike Aboderin, Ogbonnaya Onu, Festus Odimegwu, John Oyegun, Rotimi Amaechi, Tam David West, Lai Mohammed and Adamu Adamu, who served as Secretary (*Premium Times*, 29 April 2015).

In June 2015, several days after Buhari's inauguration and following some five weeks of transition efforts, the Joda Transition



Committee submitted an 800-page final report of its findings to President Muhammadu Buhari. The event, which took place at the Defence House in Abuja, saw the committee submitting the report it had compressed from more than 18,000 pages received from the Jonathan administration. Briefing State House correspondents, Joda explained that the committee's delay in submitting the report had been caused by the time needed to assess the Jonathan administration's handover notes and produce the necessary recommendations. Joda expressed confidence that the delay in the report's submission had not delayed presidential actions in administration and appointments.

Highlighting the peculiarity of the assignment, Joda emphasised that the occasion was unique, since the country had never witnessed the victory of an opposition political party over a ruling one. Joda further explained that Nigeria had seen governments change in various ways, witnessing both a civilised transition from one civilian government to another and violent transitions effected by military coup d'états; yet, law, order and due process must be respected and sustained in the country. Given the evolution of democracy, Nigeria's citizens would need to be patient, since democracy cannot be established instantaneously (*Vanguard*, 12 June 2015).

In a subsequent interview he granted to the newspaper, *The Daily Times*, a few weeks after submitting the report to Buhari, Ahmed Joda stated that the former president, Jonathan, had left behind N7 trillion debt liabilities. That figure, however, contradicted claims by officials of the Jonathan administration that the country's debt profile stood at N1.3 trillion. Shortly before the handover of power, Buhari's vice president, Yemi Osinbajo, had stated that the new government would inherit a debt of \$63.7 billion. However, Jonathan's Minister of Finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, promptly rose to the defence of his administration, saying that it had incurred only \$21.8 billion of the \$63.7 billion debt. She added that the \$63.7 billion cited by Osinbajo included multilateral and domestic loans taken by successive federal and state governments since 1960.

In the interview he granted, Joda said that though they were told at the beginning of the exercise that the government's deficit was at least N1.3 trillion, his committee found that it was about N7 trillion, suggesting that the country was in a state of collapse. Joda further stated that the civil service was bloated and that the military and police were in a deplorable condition. Given the parlous state of affairs, Joda wondered what the country's fate would have been had Jonathan and the PDP retained power. According to him, it would have been more difficult for them to face the challenge because they had been deceiving people by claiming the country was doing well. How would they have been able to wake up in the morning to admit to the Nigerian people, 'We can't pay salaries... or even pay contractors and might even not be able to pay pensions and gratuities or finance any of our operations' (*Premium Times*, 22 June 2015).

These revelations from Joda detailing information obtained during the transition team's fact-finding mission exposed the tremendous workload that awaited the Buhari administration across almost all sectors of the Nigerian state. It also revealed the pressing need to act swiftly to address the many challenges left behind by the Jonathan administration. In a sense, President Buhari's ascension to power coincided with a period of both political and economic transition, and since assuming office, the president has launched several initiatives aimed at promoting political transition and economic stability in the country. He has worked to strengthen the economy through reforms and diversification, while also implementing anti-corruption measures to ensure transparency and accountability.

He also worked hard to strengthen ties with other countries in the region, which has resulted in increased cooperation on security and economic issues. President Buhari has also prioritised improving access to healthcare, education, and social security for the most vulnerable members of Nigerian society. He has taken steps to reduce poverty and inequality, most notably by establishing a National Social Investment Programme to assist vulnerable

households. He has also prioritised education, enacting reforms to increase access to high-quality education and provide more equal opportunities for women and girls. He similarly devoted energy and resources towards combating corruption and reducing inequality.

Similar economic problems as had existed during the Shagari administration would also plague the Jonathan administration some 30 years later. The Buhari administration then took decisive steps that would enable the country to recover from the 2016 oil revenue slump, which was the cause of Nigeria's first recession in close to three decades. Despite visible progress, by 2018, many Nigerians remained impoverished, and that year, the country earned the unenviable distinction of having the most people living in extreme poverty in the world. Furthermore, many questioned Buhari's fitness to serve as president, citing his repeated absences from the country for medical treatment of an unspecified ailment; he was absent for several months in 2017. Progress was made in the fight against corruption, but was met with criticism that efforts were focused on opposition members while ignoring the corrupt activities of APC allies.

Meanwhile, in early March 2015, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), adopting the name, Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP); later, it was commonly referred to as the Islamic State in West Africa, or ISWA. The group split the following year, with one faction retaining the name and the other reverting to the original moniker. Despite the military's progress against Boko Haram and ISWA, by late 2016 attacks resumed, thereby snuffing out hopes that the insurgents would soon be defeated. Other sources of insecurity included the recurring violent clashes in central Nigeria between herders and farmers, as well as unrest in the south-south and southeast, provoked by militants and organised criminal networks disrupting oil production and separatist agitators who demanded a sovereign state of Biafra.

Despite these challenges, Buhari worked assiduously to bring about positive change and improve the country's socioeconomic and

political landscape. His administration prioritised fighting corruption, strengthening democratic structures, and stimulating economic growth. The impetus given to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) had been one of the most significant contributions of President Buhari's administration towards combating corruption. Stricter financial regulations were implemented and more was done to combat economic and financial crimes. Buhari also used e-governance to streamline government processes and encouraged investment in the country's north-eastern states to rebuild the damage done by the Boko Haram insurgents.

Furthermore, the president used elections, governmental transparency, and civil society engagement to strengthen the country's democratic institutions and processes. He also sought to counter the influence of terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram and develop social programmes, improving healthcare and education for the country's citizens. Overall, President Buhari's administration addressed a range of social and economic issues, resulting in positive change. While the full impacts of his policies are yet to be felt, it is important to note that he made big strides towards bettering the state of Nigeria and its people.

### **Forming a Government**

Fully conscious of the heated and bitter ethno-religious politics of calumny that preceded the 2015 elections, President Buhari was determined once he assumed office to build a stronger and more united Nigeria. He began by forming a government that would reflect Nigeria's values and constituents, also addressing corruption and other issues confronting the country. President Buhari encouraged Nigerians to come together with a common purpose and move forward in this effort. With elections behind them, it was critical that Nigerians understand what President Buhari hoped to achieve through the formation of his government.

Therefore, he made it a priority to form a government that was representative of all segments of Nigerian society. During his

inaugural address, President Buhari pledged to unite the country and urged all Nigerians to work together to build a prosperous future. He reiterated that since Nigeria is a country of over 250 ethnic groups, all Nigerians must feel represented and included in the government in order for the country to make progress. Therefore, he took definite steps to ensure that his administration reflected the country's diversity. He appointed ministers from various parts of the country and ethnic groups as the constitution demands. To achieve consensus and unity, the president also reached out to various interest groups and critical stakeholders.

As a result of these initial, deliberate efforts to build cohesion, President Buhari presided over a period of slow but steady growth and development in the country. One of his greatest achievements was his commitment to uniting a nation that was once divided by regional, political, and religious differences. Through multiple initiatives, he worked to promote peace and stability in Nigeria. He also worked to combat corruption, alleviate poverty, strengthen democratic institutions, and expand access to basic services. Furthermore, his efforts contributed to greater economic cooperation among Nigeria's states and regions.

Perhaps the most significant challenge that confronted Buhari's administration was the Boko Haram insurgency, which displaced over two million people and killed 20,000 more. Furthermore, the economy moved slowly, with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth averaging less than two percent annually since 2015. Moreover, the rising unemployment rate and rapid inflation posed major challenges. These economic difficulties disproportionately impacted the poorer sectors of society, exacerbating social tensions. Despite these challenges, President Buhari made some strides towards unifying the country. He increased military spending and authorised a more aggressive campaign against Boko Haram.

Under Buhari's leadership, Nigeria made significant progress in combating corruption, improving infrastructure, and boosting the economy. Indeed, it is well on its way to becoming a leading African

nation. Although Buhari's policies are beginning to bear fruit, much more remains to be done to fully address Nigeria's challenges. This is the task before the country's next administration.

### **Conclusion**

The election of President Buhari was a watershed in Nigeria's political history. Conscious of the historical nature of his ascension to power, the president and his team worked hard to build an inclusive and successful government and unite a divided nation. His inauguration signalled the beginning of a new era in Nigerian politics and the formation of a government that put aside narrow personal interests, instead prioritising the needs of citizens. President Buhari faced enormous challenges, but his ability to unite the nation and develop the country is undeniable. In line with his exemplary commitment, we must all work together to build a prosperous and united Nigeria for both the present and future generations.

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# 11

## New Government, New Challenges

Faith Nkechi Eborka

### Introduction

Notably, 29 May 2015 marked a historic moment in the annals of Nigeria's political development as it witnessed the successful handing over of power to an opposition party from a ruling party. Indeed, it was a remarkable moment for Nigerians to witness the second ascendancy to power of General Muhammadu Buhari, a former Military Head of State, after three failed attempts at the presidency following the return to democracy in 1999. His emergence was heralded with great pomp and celebration, especially in northern Nigeria, where he commands popular following due to his unique traits as 'a no-nonsense', incorruptible military leader and a leader for the *talakawas* (poor).

He was perceived as the 'solution' to Nigeria's woes, especially the vicious scourge of the Boko Haram insurgency, the high rate of poverty, unemployment and the monumental corruption that characterised the outgoing PDP government. Quite expectedly, the president made bold proclamations reiterating his promise to solve the problem of hydra-headed corruption, eradicate poverty, create jobs and obliterate the dreaded Boko Haram group.

Of course, the expectations of Nigerians were high, given the track record of the president during his military reign, which lasted from 1983 to 1985. It was natural that he would have the formula to

defeat the 'monsters' that had hampered the growth and development of the Nigerian state. What Nigerians failed to realise at the time was the depth of rot that the new president had inherited and that it was going to take a lot more than tough rhetoric to surmount these deep-seated issues. Sadly, the president's ill-health a few months after coming into office exacerbated the situation. As a BBC reporter rightly put it, 'the president has the formula to bring his people out of this malaise; unfortunately, his illness has hampered some of the good thoughts the president had towards Nigerians'. Incidentally, the president confirmed it when he stated that he had never been 'so sick' in his life (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa>).

Nevertheless, the president made frantic efforts to address some of the major concerns of Nigerians, such as reducing the menace of Boko Haram, addressing the socio-economic challenges that characterised the country, tackling the high rate of corruption by bringing the perpetrators to book and introducing workable fiscal and monetary policies to address Nigeria's growing economic challenges. This chapter examines the government of President Muhammadu Buhari at its inception in his first term while considering the troubles the new government faced, the high national expectations, the depth of the inherited problems and challenges, as well as the president's illness, related troubles and his ability to manoeuvre these challenges.

### **New Government, New Troubles**

The Nigerian state has been bedevilled with many challenges, including its inability to foster unity among the various ethnic groups that inhabit the area, among others. This has almost always resulted in one conflict situation or another. It has also resulted in a situation where governance and the allocation of resources have always been marred by corruption, tribalism and nepotism. The ripple effect of this is that it has hampered the growth, development and peace of the country.



Prior to 2015, these issues had taken new and threatening dimensions. The security of Nigeria was on the brink of collapse, food shortages and endemic poverty were at an all-time high, and the government's economic policies were unable to salvage the dwindling economy as the masses continued to languish in poverty. As of 2015, Nigeria's poverty rate stood at 89.50%. This was brought about by multiple factors, such as its low level of education, high rate of unemployment and underemployment, security issues and poor health facilities, among others. At that juncture, Nigeria required sound policies that would bring about an urgent turnaround.

Given this context, the Nigeria that President Buhari inherited in 2015 was in dire need of a visionary leader who would lead it out of the doldrums. There was hope in the new dispensation that kept the nation and its citizens going in the face of daunting challenges. With this state of affairs, the newly inaugurated Buhari government had no honeymoon period since the general situation before the election had been clearly defined as critically dire and in need of urgent remediation. However, the realities that followed could be likened to a sweltering baptism of fire; a simmering induction into the halls of civilian leadership for the Daura-born president.

Troubles began for the new administration with wild political fireworks that ignited in the battle for the National Assembly leadership, just a few days after Buhari's swearing-in as president. The legislature, which is an institution tasked with various key responsibilities and a core component of democratic governance, witnessed an intense struggle for control by political actors. The internal wrangling within the ruling APC was so intense and bitter that it nearly bifurcated the party irreparably. The opposition PDP gleefully relished the crisis eating deep into the APC and fanned the embers of discord by colluding with certain renegade legislators in the APC to undermine the authority and good standing of the ruling party. It took a display of great political maturity from the president to prevent the total implosion of this

delicate situation into an unsalvageable crisis. Even after the dust finally settled and the leadership positions were taken up, the reverberations and ugly echoes of that chaotic leadership tug reverberated throughout Buhari's first term.

The negative effects of the previous administration's poor economic mismanagement soon manifested in the first few weeks of Buhari's government, as many states were engulfed in a fiscal crisis and the federal government had to intervene with financial bail-out packages to prevent states from total economic collapse. Additionally, the over-reliance of the government on oil revenue came back to haunt federal finances, which took a major hit after the global crash in the price of crude oil. Coupled with a rising wave of deadly militancy in the Niger Delta that significantly reduced Nigeria's oil export capabilities, the resources available to the Buhari government paled in comparison to what was obtainable by his predecessor. Similarly, security challenges also took on new dimensions with the continued deadly Boko Haram attacks, the emergence of more terrorist groups and recurring herder-farmer clashes. Though not entirely novel in the history of security challenges in Nigeria, banditry later took on renewed prominence with a high frequency of occurrence.

The administration's failure to hit the ground running was also an added setback since it took six months to constitute a cabinet. Many people wondered why it took so long for Buhari to assemble his cabinet, considering he had been competing for the presidency since 2003 and had over 90 days to prepare for it between the day he was elected and the day he was sworn-in. When probed as to why he was delaying the appointment of ministers in an interview with French journalists, Buhari averred that 'civil servants carry out the main work, ministers are mostly noise makers'. Public discontent was intensified with every passing day from 29 May until he swore-in the ministers in November 2015, and more disillusionment followed when the ministers were finally unveiled. They mainly consisted of familiar figures who had held a political position at one time or the other in the past. Some analysts

attributed some of the initial economic challenges witnessed in Buhari's first year to a seeming executive laxity vis-à-vis a lack of clarity on the policy blueprint due to the prolonged unavailability of ministers in key sectors of the economy.

As an agglomeration of different ethnic groups with divergent values, religions and cultures, Nigeria had been highly susceptible to ethno-religious schisms. The country's underlying distrust soon emerged again after certain utterances by Buhari about compensating regions based on the percentage of votes he got from them. Thus, wrong as they turned out to be, ethnic sentiments were read into the initial key appointments of the Buhari administration. Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a pro-Biafra secessionist group led by Nnamdi Kanu — who had hitherto been a relatively unknown tribal provocateur operating from the fringes of the United Kingdom — soon gained notorious prominence for his constant attacks on the president in his broadcasts on Radio Biafra.

His instigation tactics found a disoriented audience in southeast Nigeria, where droves of misguided youths followed his destructive directives and carried out his anti-state activities while he was safely ensconced in London. He would later be apprehended by the government and released on bail, then arrested again for breaching bail conditions and kept in custody. The activities of the secessionist IPOB would have far-reaching and unsettling effects on the Buhari presidency. Although Buhari's first tenure witnessed a litany of challenges requiring solutions, there was little time and a lot of work to do in rebuilding the nation and repositioning it on the path of change.

### **Great National Expectations**

Prior to Buhari's declaration of intent to run for the presidency, lethargy had set in among Nigeria's voting public since they perceived the word 'politics' to connote deceit, graft, double talk and all that is evil (Okolie, 1990; Obaro, 2018). For them, the term was devoid of honour and respectability. This misconception was due to the antics of many unscrupulous politicians that the nation had

witnessed and whose activities had Nigerians wishing the country had continued with military rule. They treated the national call as an avenue to enrich themselves and their families, with a total disregard for the welfare of those that gave them power. With every broken promise and unfulfilled manifesto, most of the populace sunk deeper into despair and anguish.

The period of the political campaign before the 2015 polls witnessed a series of promises and pledges from the incumbent PDP and the opposition APC, who both made extensive declarations of intent as to what they would do if elected to office. The opposition sensed palpable citizen weariness and discontent with the Jonathan administration in certain key areas and capitalised on notable gaps and cracks in his government to make passionate appeals for *change*, which endeared it to a significant section of the electorate. The Buhari campaign was framed around three cardinal issues: fighting corruption; improving the state of the economy; combating insecurity. These issues were timely and resonated with the electorate across various divides.

Therefore, it was unsurprising that upon his eventual victory, there were high expectations of how he was going to implement his lofty campaign promises. The popular axiom that great positions come with greater responsibilities is very apt in describing the expectations of citizens from the newly inaugurated administration. Citizens' expectations were indeed high regarding the rapid execution and swift fulfilment of Buhari's campaign promises. Thus, citizens were impatient and restless in their craving for instant results. As such, the government — through its official spokespersons — had to issue several statements appealing for patience on the part of the citizens since it would not be possible to transform Nigeria overnight with the 'wave of a mystical magic wand'. According to them, since 16 years of PDP rule had wrought great havoc on all critical facets of national life, it would require a significant period of time before remarkable and measurable progress could be made. Such pleas fell on deaf ears as citizen

unrest and the desire for rapid transformation increased at times in the face of worsening economic and security circumstances.

### **Inherited Problems and Challenges**

If making promises during the campaign felt like testing the depth of a river by sticking only a leg in, taking on the mantle of power amounted to submerging one's entire body in the river. The APC might have under-estimated the severity of the various challenges requiring instant attention and solutions during the electioneering period. However, that was immaterial to the impatient populace that expected the newly elected government to find lasting solutions to whatever problems it inherited from the displaced PDP. After all, to whom much is given, much is expected.

In the words of former President Jonathan, 'Nigeria is a complex society that requires profound knowledge for one to be able to clearly understand its nuanced reality' (Jonathan, 2018.15). Before the Buhari administration came into power on 29 May 2015, the entire country was 'on its knees', begging for help.

Apart from the Boko Haram insecurity that was ravaging the country, there was economic fragility — as outlined by various appointees of Jonathan during the course of his government — occasioned by low accountability, reckless spending, poor savings culture and the diversion of funds into private pockets. Nigeria's outward appearance as a fast-growing economy papered over the cracks of a mono-cultural economy characterised by institutional weaknesses and the domineering power of very few privileged individuals who have personalised critical national assets and resources. According to the president, he inherited a nearly 'empty treasury' from the Jonathan government due to economic mismanagement and the failure to properly utilise the massive proceeds from the oil boom under his administration. A crisis in the educational sector also eroded the strength and long-term viability of the nation's educational system, especially at the tertiary level. A brief analysis of some of the challenges the Buhari administration inherited is presented as follows.

### **Inflation**

As defined by Teriba (1976: 132), inflation is ‘the continuous upward movement in the general price level of goods and services’. Inflation is a monster that has rocked the Nigerian economy back and forth. In May 2015, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures inflation, rose by 9.0% (year-on-year) — 0.3 percentage points from the 8.7% rate recorded in April. The food sub-index rose by 9.8% (year-on-year) in May, up by 0.3 percentage points from 9.5% in April. Overall, the inflation rate in Nigeria in the second half of 2015 hovered above 9%. The high inflation rate had a very negative impact on the country. For one, it made it impossible for citizens to save and hampered the effective allocation of resources in the state, thereby bringing about untold hardship and suffering to most of the populace.

### **Internal Crisis**

Conflict is unavoidable in any society. It shows in individual and group reactions to situations of scarce resources, the division of functions within society, and the differentiation of power and resultant competition for limited supplies of goods, status, valued roles and power-as-an-end in itself (Mitchell, 1989). Moreover, incessant cases of conflict have rocked the polity. A good example was the oil wars or militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, which the Yar’adua administration attempted to tackle through an amnesty programme (Adeniyi, 2011).

There had been a history of insurgency and religious wars in the northern part of Nigeria. Banditry and a wave of crime carried out by a group of people generally referred to as ‘herdsmen’ also occurred. Sometimes, the attacks were very intense (e.g., attacking, destroying and ransacking a whole village). In western Nigeria, there were sporadic agitations for an Oduduwa nation, while members of the IPOB and the Eastern Security Network (ESN)—officially founded in 2020 disrupted the working calendar of the region with their sit-at-home orders. Kidnappers also waylaid

travellers across the country, making the highways a 'death-trap' for travellers.

### **The Revenue Sharing Formula**

The bulk of federal government revenue is derived from the oil sector, with oil revenues originating from the petroleum profits tax, mining rents and royalties, and earnings from sales by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) (Adedotun, 1997). States' internal revenues are mainly derived from personal income tax on residents in the state, vehicle licencing and registration fees, and land-related charges. At the local government level, internal revenues are largely derived from property taxes, rates, and radio and television licences. There is currently an over-dependence of the states and local governments on the federal government for their revenue, which places a massive strain on the federal government. Most citizens are impoverished since the largesse from the federal government hardly gets to the masses at the local government level.

Meanwhile, some argue that, on the contrary, it is the federal government that is over-dependent on the states, local governments and resource-bearing communities. Those people argue that in true federalism, the lower levels of government control the resources in the areas, while paying royalties or taxes to the centre for the functioning of the central government. Be that as it may, revenue sharing among the three tiers of government in Nigeria has been very conflictual.

### **Public Debt**

Oil has remained the mainstay of the Nigerian economy since it was first discovered (Omorogbe, 2001). This discovery resulted in Nigeria experiencing an oil boom in the 1970s. Although this was a period of great oil wealth for the nation, sadly, it was not effectively utilised. Instead, the wealth was spent on frivolities and corrupt practices. As such, despite the revenue the country consistently makes from the sale of oil, it has always had the challenge of high

public debt. Right from the leadership of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, the public debt figure rose from N27.992 billion in 1985 to N261.094 billion in 1993, while the external debt rose from N17.3006 billion in 1985 to N633.1444 billion in 1993 (Oyovbaire, 2008). At the end of the Jonathan regime in 2015, the Nigerian foreign debt figure was \$7.3 billion, while the domestic debt figure was \$8.8 trillion when the Buhari administration assumed office (Yusuf, 2021), making Nigeria one of the most highly indebted countries in the world.

### **Corruption, Favouritism and Nepotism**

It can be said that corruption is the bane of the Nigerian state, while favouritism and nepotism rank next. Equal opportunity should be given to all in the state. According to Aristotle, 'Equals should be treated equally and unequal's unequally'. Prior to 2015, the word, 'connection', was very popular, since only those with access to top officials in government were able to get jobs, contracts, and other benefits of governance. On its own, this is one of the worst forms of corruption that the Buhari administration had to address. This is because, with nepotism, it becomes difficult to hold a public official accountable for his actions.

### **The President's Illness and Related Troubles**

Illness is an inevitable reality for humans — especially among older people. Notably, illness can seriously hinder a person from reaching their full potential. In the case of President Buhari, little was known about his health status while he campaigned. However, soon after his assumption of office, speculations about his health were rife because the president frequently travelled out of the country for medical checks. In 2016, the presidency informed Nigerians that the president had an ear infection and would be travelling to the UK for treatment. At other times, there was news of him travelling for check-ups — also in the UK. During this time, the country had to be administered by others who obviously lacked the will and knowledge of the president. This was exacerbated by the fact that



Buhari did not formally transmit power to Vice President Prof. Yemi Osinbajo during some of these medical trips (*Vanguard*, 5 November 2020).

President Buhari's foreign travels for medical check-ups always set many tongues wagging. Many Nigerians raised questions regarding the propriety of his medical tourism, with respect to the country's healthcare system. However, others thought otherwise, arguing that it was well within the rights of the president to travel for his medical needs. When opinions raged that the reason Buhari was always going abroad for medical treatment was a clear indication of his failure to upgrade Nigeria's healthcare system, his media aides always refuted such claims with assertions such as 'The President has been using those same set of London medical handlers for a long time before he came into power and physician consistency is vital in effective medical treatment, which is why he always goes to them each time' (*Vanguard*, 5 November 2020).

### **Timeline of Buhari's Medical Vacations**

According to documentation from *The Vanguard* and the *Premium Times*, the Nigerian leader took his first medical trip only eight months after entering office. He spent six days in London between 5 and 10 February 2016, saying that his doctors lived in England. His second medical trip came on 6 June 2016, when he travelled to England for 10 days to seek additional treatment for an ear infection. The president extended his trip by three days before coming back on 19 June 2016. By 19 January 2017, Buhari wrote to the Nigerian Senate, revealing his intention to travel abroad on a 10-day medical vacation and that he would hand over to Vice President Yemi Osinbajo. On 5 February 2017, Buhari wrote the National Assembly, seeking an extension of his London medical leave.

On 10 March 2017, exactly 50 days after his departure, Buhari returned but could not resume work immediately. The presidency said, 'he's working from home'. On 7 May 2017, the president embarked on another trip to London for another medical

check-up. Although his aides would not confirm what he was being treated for this time around, they urged Nigerians to pray for him. After 104 days, on 19 August 2017, Buhari returned to Nigeria amid scant information regarding the true state of his health, and it took him a while to resume work because rodents had reportedly damaged items in his office. Buhari admitted that he had never been so sick in his life. It was indeed a delicate period between life and death for him, and he enjoyed divine favour to emerge stronger and survive that harrowing experience.

On 8 May 2018 — a year after his longest trip yet — Buhari went to London for a 4-day ‘medical review’. Towards the end of March 2021, the president flew to London to take ‘a short rest’ — one that lasted for 15 days, which the president had earlier described as a ‘routine medical check-up’ (*Vanguard*, 5 November 2020; *Premium Times*, 4 August 2021). While in the UK in April of that year, resident doctors in Nigeria commenced an indefinite strike due to the non-payment of some allowances. For decades, Nigerians have suffered from a fragile health system, ill-equipped clinics and poorly paid and overworked healthcare workers, many of whom have moved abroad to seek greener pastures.

Overall, from his assumption of office on 29 May 2015 to August 2021, President Buhari embarked on medical trips abroad multiple times, covering a period of no less than 200 days (10%) of the 1,987 days he had been in power (*Vanguard*, 5 Nov 2020; *Premium Times*, 4 Aug 2021).

### **Myths on Buhari’s Health**

The apprehension and uncertainty among Nigerians reached peak levels during Buhari’s prolonged absence due to his health challenges, especially when he spent over 100 days in the UK. However, the importance of having a reliable and loyal deputy was highlighted by the responsible manner and professionalism with which Acting President Yemi Osinbajo steered the ship of the nation during this critical period (*The Guardian*, 25 December 2022). It was

on record that some Nigerians were deeply concerned about the true state of the president's health due to the secretive and opaque manner in which the Yar'adua episode played out in 2010.

Not unnaturally, the rumour mills went into hyperactive mode during this period, peddling false and unverified reports about Buhari's health status. The disruptive IPOB group also capitalised on the uncertainty of the situation by spreading the myth that the real Buhari was dead and that he had been replaced with a dummy clone from Sudan named Jubril. They insisted that his 100-day absence was for the cloning process to be perfected. Such was the communication gap between official sources that the 'Jubril of Sudan' claim festered deep and started sounding believable to high-standing members of society, including politicians, academics, clerics, professionals in different fields, students and a large swathe of the less literate population.

During an interview in December 2022, the president would later address the 'Jubril of Sudan' absurdity in a documentary celebrating his 80th birthday. He described the claim, which suggested that he was dead and reportedly a body double called 'Jubril Aminu from Sudan' that occupies the presidential villa in Abuja, as humour taken to the point of no longer being funny. According to him, some Nigerians have a way of creating humour to feast on something they do not understand, adding that the story was the handiwork of some troublemakers to demonstrate their cheekiness (*The Guardian*, 25 December 2022).

When asked whether he heard about the crazy rumour that he was not Buhari, he smiled and replied, 'Yes! People said I am somebody from Sudan. I didn't bother with the name. Nigerians have mischievous ways of explaining themselves.' When asked how he felt about such jokes being passed around, the president said, 'It is not funny because those who made those statements just want to be cheeky. They want to distract attention from the main issues' (*The Guardian*, 25 December 2022).

### **The President's Winning Formula**

Despite the many challenges the president had to confront, he braved all odds and did his best to give Nigerians the best. Quite understandably, there remain areas that need to be fixed. However, the president's performance in a number of sectors has been satisfactory. He had this to say:

*We leave Nigeria in a far better place than we found it. Corruption is less hidden, for Nigerians feel empowered to report it without fear, while money is returned; terrorists no longer hold any territory in Nigeria and their leaders are deceased, and vast infrastructure development sets the country on course.*

To achieve sustainable and equitable growth, the president had to tackle certain areas of the economy. Thus, it was not surprising that he was re-elected for a second term in office.

### **Anti-Corruption War**

A major aspect that the new president focused on was the war against corruption. The president's anti-corruption stance was perhaps what endeared him to many Nigerians. They vividly remembered his position on indiscipline and corruption as a military head of state in 1983–1985 under his War Against Indiscipline (WAI) programme (Izagbo, 2012). In his astute fight against corruption, the president explained the tools he deployed to tackle the menace of corruption as follows:

*Starting with our whistleblowing policy enacted in my first year in office, hundreds of millions in stolen funds have been returned within Nigeria. Working with our international partners, hundreds of millions in various currencies have been returned from abroad — primarily from the UK, US, and*

*Switzerland — and used as social and welfare funds distributed directly to the poorest during the COVID-19 pandemic and the provision of long-delayed infrastructure: roads, bridges, rail and power. As an illustration, monetary recoveries from (January–December 2021) show that more than N152 billion has been recovered. Dollar recoveries for the year amount to over \$386 million; more than GBP 1.1 million; Euro, about 157,000; Saudi Riyals, about 1.7 million; some more in digital and other currencies. (Komolafe, 2022)*

### **Infrastructure Development**

Through various agencies, the president took bold steps to ameliorate the suffering of the masses through the provision of critical infrastructure. In an interview with *Bloomberg*, the president enumerated the steps his administration undertook to curb the growing trend of poverty that rocked the nation. He stated that Nigeria would have been worse off in terms of food inflation if not for the timely intervention of programmes such as the Anchor Borrowers Programme, which he said had helped to boost agricultural production (Komolafe, 2022).

In 2020, the president approved the establishment of InfraCo Plc, a world-class infrastructure development vehicle. Through the president's astuteness, the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) witnessed total inflows from the government of around \$2 billion, since the original \$1 billion that the fund began with in 2012. The president also launched the Nigerian Innovation Fund (via the NSIA) to address investment opportunities in the domestic technology sector. A few of the rail projects undertaken by the Buhari administration included the 156-km Lagos-Ibadan standard gauge rail. Moreover, the Abuja light rail network was already completed in 2018. Additionally, a revamp of the Port Harcourt-Maiduguri narrow gauge rail was conducted, among other projects.

The Buhari administration carried out some massive road projects, investing billions of naira in these projects. One example was the development and maintenance of 12 roads, with their combined lengths reaching a whopping 1,963 km. Other examples include the development of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, the Second Niger Bridge, the Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano Expressway, amongst others (Press Release, 2021). As such, it is evident that in the two terms he spent in office, he invested heavily in national road, rail and transport infrastructure, with over 800 federal roads constructed or rehabilitated, and 650 km of rail line having been laid. Notably, this has helped to alleviate food inflation pressures, since most of the food produced in Nigeria is grown in the north. These infrastructure projects are capable of unleashing growth, connecting communities and reducing inequality. Though this transformation may not manifest immediately, over time, the effects of these investments will begin to yield fruits that will be evident both locally and internationally.

The president also completed new terminals for international airports in Lagos, Abuja, Kano and Port Harcourt. Quite notably, in December 2017, Calabar Port commenced the export of cement in bulk to Tema Port in Ghana. The dredging of Warri Port (Escravos Bar-Warri Port channel) was also completed in 2018.

### **Security**

Recent developments in Nigeria's security situation are worth commending. In 2015, Boko Haram held territories totaling the size of Belgium within the borders of Nigeria. Today, they are close to extinction as a military force. The elimination of the leader of ISWAP by a Nigerian Air Force airstrike in March 2021, as well as the arrest of many key members, greatly weakened the terrorist group. The jets acquired from the US and intelligence shared by the UK were not provided to previous administrations, which stands as a testament to trust being re-established between Nigeria and its

traditional Western allies under the Buhari administration (Komolafe, 2022).

As part of the president's success story, it is worth mentioning that on 13 September 2022, the UK discontinued a policy that allowed membership of Nnamdi Kanu's Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as valid ground for seeking asylum in the UK (*Sahara Reporters*, 2022). It is also on record that the IPOB was registered as a corporation in the UK.

It is a truism that this administration is the only one in the history of Nigeria to implement a solution to decades-long herder-farmer conflicts, which were exacerbated by desertification and demographic growth. It introduced the National Livestock Transformation Plan, which placed ranching at its core.

The president's economic policies are worth commending due to their ability to boost economic production, among other reasons. The administration pursued a policy of Nigerianisation, which is the organised and systematic substitution of Nigerians for expatriates in positions within organisations operating in Nigeria. For this reason, the international news media, including the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*, criticised the government for its insistence on de-globalisation and the localisation of food production and local manufacturing. But with the war in Ukraine, which disrupted global food supply chains, the wisdom in this policy began to come to the forefront.

### **Numerous Relief Schemes**

Initiatives such as the Nigeria Anchor Borrower's Programme (ABP), launched by the Buhari administration, helped farmers compete against artificially lowered imports and boosted rice production to 10 million metric tonnes in 2021, from around 5.4 million metric tonnes in 2015. Even in years of drought, rice production outstripped pre-2015 levels and imports fell to nearly zero. The President's Fertiliser Initiative, a combined partnership of the governments of Nigeria and Morocco, was launched in 2016 and produced over 30 million 50-kg bags of fertilizer (Komolafe &

Johnbosco, 2022). This study would not be complete without mentioning the National Social Investment Programme launched in 2016, which was described as being the largest such initiative in Africa. The poorest of Nigerian society benefit from the government's Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme. The beneficiaries were paid a bimonthly stipend of N10, 000. In 2019, the president launched Nigeria's Micro-Pension Scheme, which allowed non-government workers to save towards earning a pension, even if they were self-employed or run a small organisation with less than three persons. Out of the N300 billion Targeted Credit Facility (TCF), more than N150 billion was disbursed to various individuals. The president also established a Survival Trust Fund that provided grants to artisans, the transport sector and the general public.

### **Giant Strides in the Energy Sector**

Regarding Nigeria's energy crisis, President Buhari was quick to identify and explain that more inputs were needed. He also stated that Nigeria's legislative framework had been troublesome. He expressed confidence that the landmark electricity bill would bolster input, raise capital and bring transparency to the system. He further discussed grid modernisation, explaining that there were hundreds of ongoing projects and initiatives attracting funding from investors. He cited the example of the Presidential Power Initiative (PPI), a government-to-government initiative between the governments of Nigeria and Germany with Siemens AG, to upgrade the electricity grid via a \$2 billion investment (Komolafe, 2022).

The president assured that once signed into law, the constitutional amendment bill that was voted through parliament would allow state governments to generate and transmit their own electricity, further facilitating investor participation in Nigerian markets and enabling states and local businesses to transmit excess supply to the grid. He eventually signed the bill into law in March 2023.



**Payment of Oil Subsidies**

Despite the dwindling revenue generated from oil worldwide, the president continued to pay petroleum subsidies to avoid bringing additional hardship to citizens. It was widely believed that its removal would lead to a massive increase in the price of this product. The president defended his stance on the continued payment of fuel subsidies by stating that Western countries were still paying subsidies and that it would not be a wise move for Nigeria to remove theirs. However, he acknowledged that the internal production of refined products would help in boosting the economy, adding that his administration worked to restore domestic fuel production.

**Massive Strides in the Oil Industry/Transitioning of the NNPC**

The president made massive strides in the petroleum industry. Nigeria was predominantly an agrarian economy before oil was discovered in 1956. Thereafter, oil exerted a tremendous impact on the economy (Oriakhi, 2003). By 1971, Nigeria had joined the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). In 2016, the Buhari-led administration began creating plans to produce a new pipeline connecting Nigeria to Morocco. The Federal Executive Council authorised the NNPC to enter into an agreement with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the construction of the new pipeline, which would be 7,000 km in length. This move would reduce cases of oil theft and gas flaring, among others, in some areas of the country, while simultaneously reducing poverty through the creation of more jobs in the country (Izuaka, 2022).

Indeed, it was a moment of joy for Nigerians when, on 20 July 2022, the NNPC became a full limited liability company (Onwuamaeze, 2022). It was believed that this would make it more profitable, and subject to more robust auditing and commercial disclosure obligations.

### **Tough Stance against Criminality and Terrorism**

To its credit, the Buhari administration invested heavily in the country's security sector. Records indicate that it spent \$1 billion on a military deal with the United States for the acquisition of A-29 Super Tucano aircraft (Komolafe, 2022). The president also approved N134 billion in security allowance for military veterans. Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine imbroglio in early 2022, the president — through the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Zubairu Dada — approved the sum of \$8.5 million for the evacuation of Nigerians from Ukraine and Russia. It was projected that this amount would aid at least 5000 Nigerians who needed to return home, or get refuge in neighbouring countries (Terhemba Daka *et al.*, 2022).

It is also on record that the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), established in July 2016, removed all the bureaucratic constraints to doing business in Nigeria, making Nigeria an easy place to start and grow businesses. This would also help to integrate the informal sector of the economy.

### **Conclusion**

There is no gainsaying that President Buhari has made giant strides in every area of the economy. Despite the many drawbacks he has faced throughout his eventful eight years in office, a close look at his achievements attests to this fact. The various infrastructure development projects of the administration, relief programmes, the revamping of the oil sector, improved healthcare, a strong anti-corruption stance, and improved foreign relations and human development, all attest to a legacy that Nigerians and posterity would be proud of. Yes, there are areas or sectors yet to experience the desired transformation, and critics cite what has not been achieved to illustrate shortcomings of the administration. But on the whole, the president has fought a good fight, against all odds.

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# 12

## **Drama in the National Assembly: Coming to Terms with Opposition Politics**

**Gbenga Adeosun**

### **Introduction**

A key component of democracy is the division of power among the three arms of government, each providing checks and balances on the activities of the others to serve the national interest. Before the Buhari administration acceded to power, the return of democracy to Nigeria had been stained by several episodes of executive tampering with legislative affairs. The National Assembly under President Olusegun Obasanjo was tempestuous in nature; its executive committee was overtly meddlesome and several intra-party wrangling within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) led to tumult, with the Senate's presidency changing hands an astounding five times within eight years (1999-2007). Allegations of financial misconduct and forged educational credentials similarly led to the ignominious downfall of several speakers of the House of Representatives during the period. A series of bitter spats between the Obasanjo administration and the House of Representatives under Ghali Umar Na'Abba also led to a frosty relationship between the two arms of government.

Most remarkably, the twilight of Obasanjo's administration was blighted by the now infamous third-term scandal. In exchange for monetary compensation, some members of the National

Assembly were allegedly ready to collude with Obasanjo to amend the constitution, creating a route for him to seek re-election to a third term. This was not within the constitutional provision on the tenure of the president. Even though the plot collapsed in a dramatic episode, its hideous vestiges remained permanently etched in Obasanjo's presidential record.

Umar Musa Yar'adua succeeded Obasanjo in May 2007. Until his prolonged absence due to ill health and his eventual demise in 2010, Yar'adua was able to maintain a cordial relationship with the National Assembly under the leadership of Senator David Mark and Representative Dimeji Bankole. They worked with him in driving the administration's seven-point agenda and the amnesty programme designed to restore peace and stability in the Niger Delta. Two years into his administration, however, Yar'adua became ill. His prolonged public absence created a power vacuum, triggering the novel Doctrine of Necessity. Enforced by the National Assembly, this empowered Vice President Goodluck Jonathan as Acting President, a title he held until May 2010, when Yar'adua died and Jonathan was sworn into the presidency.

When Jonathan won the 2011 presidential election, Senate President David Mark and Deputy Ike Ekweremadu retained their respective offices, but the contest for leadership of the House of Representatives sparked political fireworks. The ruling PDP zoned the House's speakership to the southwest, and Oyo State lawmaker, Mulikat Adeola Akande, seemed positioned to clinch the spot. However, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), a regional opposition party led by former Lagos governor, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, threw a spanner into the works, changing the course of events. The party colluded with a renegade PDP faction that paraded Sokoto lawmaker, Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, to halt Akande's ascension to the speakership. Tambuwal eventually clinched the speakership position, much to the embarrassment and chagrin of the PDP-led government. Tambuwal would later abandon the PDP, joining the All Progressives Congress (APC), a coalition of opposition parties that included the ACN as a key building block.

Although the Tambuwal episode had been a bitter pill to swallow, the Jonathan administration enjoyed a relatively good relationship with the Seventh National Assembly until Tambuwal defected to the opposition APC during the run-up to the 2015 general elections. Thereafter, Jonathan's relationship with the House leadership rapidly deteriorated. The situation reached a tipping point in November 2014, when a violent scuffle occurred within the premises of the National Assembly. Security forces prevented Speaker Tambuwal and his House allies from entering the National Assembly to preside over a session scheduled for deliberating Jonathan's request to extend emergency rule in the three northeastern states of Yobe, Adamawa, and Borno. Chaotic scenes of legislators scaling over gates and forcefully breaking down physical barriers were a low point in Nigeria's legislative history. Lawmakers debased themselves by exchanging blows in a violent episode that unfortunately had several precedents in the chambers.

This summary of events highlights the nature of the relationship between the executive and legislative branches since 1999, which was often volatile. Persisting as the new Buhari administration assumed office, that volatility threatened the administration's first interface with the National Assembly just days after the inauguration. Against that backdrop, this chapter focuses on the political intrigues that played out in the leadership tussle of Nigeria's Eighth National Assembly, examining how the newly inaugurated Buhari administration handled the politically delicate situation.

### **APC'S First Encounter with an Internal Crisis**

After Muhammadu Buhari emerged victorious from the keenly contested 2015 election, the full results of the National Assembly polls indicated that the APC had gained enough seats to claim the majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This end of the PDP's dominance marked the first time since 1999 that an opposition party had unseated the ruling party in both the executive office and the legislature. Revelling in its dual victory, the APC would

have been forgiven for its overweening confidence in managing to install its designated lawmakers as principal officers of both chambers. Presented by influential members of the APC, Yobe senator, Ahmad Lawan, and Lagos lawmaker, Femi Gbajabiamila, emerged as frontline candidates for the offices of the Senate's president and the House's speaker, respectively. APC leader, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in particular, was instrumental in promoting them, throwing his full weight behind the duo.

As a hybrid of different political parties, the APC soon experienced its first major fracture. The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) bloc took the position of vice president after the Congress for Progressives Change (CPC) bloc produced President Muhammadu Buhari, while the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) bloc took the party's chairmanship. The New People's Democratic Party (N-PDP) bloc, comprising prominent politicians that had defected from the PDP to join the APC before the 2015 general election, were left with no major position and consequently, began to fear marginalisation. The N-PDP bloc's subsequent actions left the APC battling a political rebellion that threatened an otherwise routine exercise. Orchestrated by Senator Bukola Saraki, the rebellion disrupted the APC's grand concert. Saraki understood early that key members of his party, the APC, did not fully support his candidature and therefore, he implemented a bi-partisan campaign strategy. As a member of the self-styled New PDP, it was easy for him to reach out to his former colleagues to neutralise the APC members who opposed him.

The build-up to the inauguration of the Eighth Assembly produced two factions within the APC Senate Caucus; the Unity Forum, led by Barnabas Gemade, a senator from Benue State, and like-minded senators led by Dino Melaye, a senator from Kogi State. The APC in the Senate became divided, and the party had its first experience of a serious internal crisis. The Gemade camp supported Ahmed Lawan, while the Melaye camp supported the influential former Governor of Kwara State, Bukola Saraki. Both groups engaged in serious political manoeuvring to outwit each other, and

the situation became more precarious when the APC officially endorsed Lawan and Gbajabiamila as the preferred candidates for the Senate's presidency and the House's speakership, directing all APC members in the National Assembly to support their candidatures. However, Saraki refused to jettison his ambitions in deference to his party's instructions. With the staunch backing of the supporters, he forged ahead with his agenda, even making overtures to the Senate's PDP members to support him in exchange for certain appointments.

The PDP gladly encouraged its lawmakers to vote for Saraki and Dogara in the leadership contest in the two chambers. Meanwhile, the APC continued its furtive attempts at reconciliation, presenting a united front. A desperate move by Lawan to reach out to Saraki was frustrated by the latter, who had been emboldened by the outpour of PDP support and Buhari's apparent non-interference.

As the political melodrama played out, the APC's leadership periodically urged its members to adhere strictly to guidelines rather than following Bukola Saraki's rebellious path. However, the PDP was happy to play the spoiler. Viewing Saraki as more pliant and favourable to its interests than the alternative, Lawan, the main opposition quickly collaborated with Saraki's machinations against the APC.

President Buhari, meanwhile, remained largely detached from the raging intra- and inter-party squabbles. Recognising the importance of repairing public trust in the independence of government institutions, he watched from the sidelines and publicly declared that he would work with whoever emerged as the president of the Senate and speaker of the House, as long as they followed the constitutional process. Buhari's pronouncement was a clear and distinct departure from the old order, in which the executive branch had continually interfered, influencing the National Assembly's choices of leaders so strongly that it nearly amounted to direct imposition.

Given that this was a defining moment for his new administration, Buhari's stance of non-interference was a testament

to his character. It was also an expression of his unique governance style and sacred commitment to oversee a democratic process through which the National Assembly would be accountable to the populace. He allowed APC members of both chambers latitude in choosing their desired leaders, refraining from undue pressure, coercion or intimidation. Since the return to democracy in 1999, it was unprecedented for a president to give the party leadership a free hand in nominating its preferred candidates. The Daura-born politician's approach, so foreign to political actors within both parties, was designed to deepen democratic values in the chambers of the National Assembly.

Bukola Saraki and other 'dissident' party members no doubt imagined that at some point before the election, Buhari would probably enter the leadership tussle, ordering party members to obey the party's directive or face dire consequences. Contrary to such expectations, however, the new president saw the legislative body's elections as an early opportunity to begin making his mark, launching his leadership with the blueprint of belonging to nobody and belonging to everybody, as expressed in his inaugural speech. It presented him with a golden opportunity to effect a key aspect of the change he had promised Nigerians during electioneering campaigns. Improving the way things are done throughout the country was central to his personal presidential goals. President Buhari diligently guarded his principles, without wavering when party leaders and others pressured him to engage in the undemocratic meddling that had characterised previous administrations.

As embarrassment for the APC loomed large, the party leadership made a bid to salvage its public standing, enlisting the president to broker a truce among the contenders for the National Assembly's leadership positions. To discerning observers, however, it was obvious that the arrangement was not initiated or proposed by the president. It was rather a late attempt by the APC to take matters into their own hands and clip Saraki's wings. According to the arrangement, Buhari was scheduled to address all APC senators



and members of the House of Representatives, just an hour before the legislators convened for the elections. A short statement issued by the party's National Publicity Secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, invited journalists to the event: 'The President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, will address all Senators and House of Representatives-elect of the APC at 9 am on the morning of Tuesday, 9 June, at the International Conference Centre (ICC) in Abuja' (*This Day*, 9 June 2015). Apart from the legislators from the two chambers, those called to the meeting included top party members, such as Bola Tinubu, Bisi Akande, the party's national chairman, John Oyegun, and other members of the APC's National Working Committee.

The APC, apparently aiming to undercut the agreement reached between the Saraki and Dogara groups and the PDP, summoned the meeting with all senators-elect and members-elect in the name of the president, who had just returned from the G7 summit in Germany. To lend legitimacy to the meeting, security was tightened around the National Assembly complex, and senators and representatives-elect were initially refused entry. Supporters of Saraki and Dogara were soon dismissive of the meeting's authenticity, alleging that the president had not been the one to arrange it and accusing the party leadership of dubious motives. They wondered why the president, who had personally allowed the contest to take a 'free' course throughout the politicking phase, would suddenly summon party members, attempting to impose his will on the morning of Election Day (*Daily Post*, 9 June 2015, *Premium Times*, 9 June 2015).

On the day set for the inauguration of the Eighth National Assembly, Saraki and his loyalists in the APC and the PDP arrived at the National Assembly complex and shortly before 10 am, when the inauguration was expected to begin, they were all seated in the chambers. Lawan and his group, however, were conspicuously absent, having gone for the meeting at the ICC in Abuja. Apparently, Saraki had not planned to attend the meeting and instead spent the

early hours of the day holding marathon meetings with PDP members to cement their support. The APC's Ahmed Lawan camp awoke to news of the PDP's endorsement of Saraki, but still headed for the meeting purportedly called by Buhari. They were waiting for the presidential parley when Saraki and some of his supporters moved inside the National Assembly chambers, where the police had thrown a cordon to prevent workers and reporters from entering. Soon afterwards, they proceeded with the inauguration, despite the absence of the main APC NASS caucus.

### **Inauguration of the Eighth National Assembly and its Bitter Political Fallout**

The Eighth Assembly was inaugurated on 9 June 2015, at approximately 10 am, following the reading of the proclamation letter by President Buhari, who had ordered the inauguration of the Assembly. The letter was read by Salisu Maikasuwa, the clerk of the National Assembly. Of all the senators-elect, only 57 were in attendance, the others being at the ICC. Senator Bukola Saraki was nominated as a candidate for the presidency of the Senate by Ahmad Sani Yerima, who represented Zamfara Central, and his nomination was seconded by Dino Melaye, who represented Kogi West. No response came when the clerk called for further nominations since the other aspirant for the office, Ahmed Lawan, was absent.

When the clerk received no response to his second call for additional nominations, he drew the curtain, declaring Bukola Saraki victorious as the Senate's new president-elect of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Saraki was led to the platform to take the oath of office and swear his allegiance and he assumed office immediately, taking his seat as the Senate's president while the Assembly proceedings continued. PDP Senator Ike Ekweremadu, the deputy president of the Senate during the Sixth and Seventh National Assemblies, was re-elected, following his nomination by George Sekibo. Ekweremadu polled a total of 54 votes, defeating Ali Ndume, who had garnered only 20 votes (*Premium Times*, 9 June 2015).

As part of the *quid pro quo* from the PDP, the Saraki camp fully backed the return of Senator Ike Ekweremadu of the minority PDP as deputy president of the Senate; this was the first time a bipartisan leadership was enthroned in the Senate. The turn of events deepened the embarrassment of the APC's leadership, which eventually had to accept an opposition lawmaker as the Senate's second most powerful member.

Meanwhile, while the lawmakers loyal to Lawan and Gbajabiamila waited impatiently for Buhari to arrive at the ICC, news filtered in that Saraki had been pronounced Senate president. Dazed and discombobulated, they all dashed to the National Assembly, hoping to move to the National Assembly to hold a real election. Arriving towards the end of Saraki's inauguration, the lawmakers trudged in, dismayed and deflated upon seeing that Saraki, who flashed them a smile, had already been sworn-in. They thronged inside the chambers in a mixture of bewilderment and indignation at the election that had occurred in their absence.

The PDP members of the House followed suit, throwing their block votes behind Yakubu Dogara of the PDP, electing him as speaker over the APC-endorsed Gbajabiamila in a tight battle of wills. The election of the leadership of the House of Representatives was also conducted by the clerk, and after two hours of tenuous voting, Dogara emerged as speaker by a margin of eight votes. Having garnered 182 votes, he had received one vote more than the simple majority stipulated by the amended 1999 Constitution, whereas Gbajabiamila had received 174 votes (*Vanguard*, 9 June 2015). Dogara was sworn-in and assumed office as speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives.

Commenting on the events, APC Chairman, John Oyegun, insisted that the party would examine the situation and react in due course: 'We just watched it on television too, but we will address the press when the total situation has been re-examined by the party'. (*Business Day*, 10 June 2015) At the scheduled meeting between the president and the legislators elected under the platform of the APC, Oyegun remarked, 'The meeting obviously could no longer hold as

the event at the National Assembly has overtaken it' (*Business Day*, 10 June 2015). The agony of losing was manifestly clear in Oyegun's submission. It reflected the mood of APC's entire leadership apparatus, which saw Saraki's victory as a severe blow, one that undermined their superiority and authority as the ruling party. It was impossible for most party chieftains to assess the matter objectively, as the president had, and they had to lick their wounds in the full glare of the Nigerian public. Many of them partly blamed the president for the way the situation had degenerated, suggesting that direct intervention or a hard-line stance by Buhari would likely have undermined Saraki's support structure and prevented his coup.

However, the indisputable fact was that the APC's leadership had been outwitted by its own party members in a scheme renowned as one of the most daring moves in Nigerian National Assembly politics. This unsavoury experience left the APC seething with rage. The party endured mockery by the opposition PDP, whose members had contributed in no small measure to Saraki and Dogara's victories.

As his own contribution, a former acting National Chairman of the PDP and chieftain of the APC, Abubakar Kawu Baraje, warned aggrieved leaders of the APC against challenging Bukola Saraki in his new role as the Senate president. Such actions would have consequences for the party, he said. Speaking with news reporters in Ilorin following Saraki's triumph, Baraje noted that his warning was necessary because Saraki's victory had occurred through due process. According to Baraje, 'the process was legal; there was no breach of any rule of the National Assembly. NASS and the NASS leadership is not dependent on government'. (*Vanguard*, 16 June 2015)

Public opinion about the events of 9 June was mixed and inconclusive. Many neutral observers, political analysts, and commentators hailed Buhari's unwavering stance of refusing to interfere as the National Assembly chose its leaders. It was described in many quarters as a fresh injection of hope into the

Nigerian political system, which aimed to respect the voters' will in every electoral setting. Other observers lashed out at Saraki for precipitating needless controversies and conspiring with the opposition PDP to short change the ruling APC. Having worked hard to win a majority in both chambers, the party was entitled to the leadership it desired.

In debating the process that gave Saraki the Senate's presidency, some commentators described it as a coup of sorts, since voting had been conducted when the main body of APC legislators was away at the ICC, waiting to be addressed by President Buhari. Others said that the intrigues that had characterised the PDP's outgone administration were being replayed.

Because the duo's emergence revealed the PDP's political acuity, springing surprises when all hope seemed lost, some analysts concluded that the development might provide a launch pad for the PDP. Particularly because Saraki had once been a PDP member and had attained the Senate's presidency with his former party's assistance, the PDP seemed poised to recover some of its earlier strength. Meanwhile, the APC's division and critical failure to present a united front revealed the party's fissures, which could impede its ability to implement its campaign promises. That was all the more true with a PDP legislature wearing APC clothes.

Thus, the election's conduct was redolent of the PDP's ruling days, a reminder of the political theatrics that had led to the election of Aminu Tambuwal, the former speaker of the House. At that time, some legislators had ignored their party's directives and colluded with opposition members to elect their preferred candidate. This time, however, the difference in the president's response to the political drama could not have been starker.

The way the contest played out was seen by some others as foreshadowing the ways Nigerian politics might play out before the 2019 polls. In theory, the legislature and executive arms of government should be independent. In practice, however, the situation is somewhat different. Every president wants a friendly

parliament that will support his policies, grant resources for projects, and, if need be, pass legislation that provides legal support to programme priorities. Therefore, it was perhaps not entirely improper that President Buhari had his preferences for the presidency of the Senate and speakership of the House. What was probably wrong was the method his foot soldiers took to support those preferences.

While the president insisted that he had no candidate, some people were said to be acting on his behalf when they unsuccessfully tried to deploy the old tactics of coercion and imposition. For example, debates raged about the propriety of delegating the National Leader of the APC, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, to arrange matters pertaining to the National Assembly leadership elections. While some concurred, others disagreed. It would be difficult to overlook the contributions of the former Lagos State governor to the victory of the APC in 2015; many people consider him unduly overbearing, even meddlesome. Tinubu's explicit support for the duo, as contrasted with Buhari's reluctance to openly endorse them, was perceived in some quarters as an impediment that significantly diminished the candidatures of Lawan and Gbajabiamila. While it was whispered that Lawan was the president's preferred candidate, those claims gained little traction given Tinubu's apparently domineering and bumptious politics. Also, a sharp reproof was directed towards the APC hierarchy for failing effectively and promptly to rein in Saraki, either through negotiation or concessions. For, as the outcome proved, underrating his abilities and clout was a fatal error by the ruling party.

As expected, the APC was quick to reject the outcome of the National Assembly elections, describing it as the height of treachery and promising to sanction those who had betrayed the party's will. In a statement by its Publicity Secretary, Lai Mohammed, the APC said:

*Senator Bukola and Hon. Dogara are not the candidates of the APC and a majority of its National*

*Assembly members-elect for the positions of Senate President and House Speaker. The party duly met and conducted a straw poll and clear candidates emerged for the posts of Senate President, Deputy Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives, supported by a majority of all Senators-elect and Members-elect of the House of Representatives. All National Assembly members-elect who emerged on the platform of the party are bound by that decision. The party is supreme and its interest is superior to that of its individual members (Business Day, 10 June 2015).*

In a further attempt to save face, the APC said it would use all constitutional and legal means available to reverse the situation, including going to court. The party vowed 'to mete out the necessary sanctions to all those involved in what is nothing but a monumental act of indiscipline and betrayal to subject the party to ridicule and create obstacles for the new administration. There could be no higher level of treachery, disloyalty and insincerity within any party', the party stated. Meanwhile, the statement concluded by asking all its loyal lawmakers to report to the National Assembly to discharge their constitutional duties (*Business Day*, 10 June 2015).

There were also signs that some of the leaders of APC tried to invoke Article 9.1, Subsection 2 of the party's constitution, which addresses the rules and obligations of party members when responding to rebellious members. The section of the APC Constitution recommends punishments ranging from reprimand, censure, fines, debarment from party office, suspension, or expulsion on the grounds that those members who refuse to comply with the party's aims and objectives subject the party to public odium and disrepute (*APC Constitution*). This could have led to the suspension or outright expulsion of the two leaders of the National Assembly from APC. Apart from its potential to backfire and cause further damage and embarrassment to the party, such drastic action

might not have received the support of other key members outside of the NWC. Indeed, the party's first member, President Buhari, would have opposed such a vindictive move, since he had personally staked his integrity on ensuring a democratic process in that particular election. The president played a key part in quashing all such extreme considerations of the ruling APC, which was desperate to redeem its image in the eyes of Nigerians. According to Buhari, consolidating the values of voter choice, democracy, and non-interference was more important than mere party pride at this stage of the nation's democratic journey. Thus, despite widespread party disaffection among members desperate to mete out punitive measures to Saraki and Dogara, the president took a brave stance.

In gleefully welcoming the election results, the PDP announced that no region of the country would be neglected in national issues. In a statement issued by Publicity Secretary, Olisa Metuh, the PDP described the developments in both chambers of the National Assembly as a 'victory for democracy and triumph of the time-honoured value of the PDP that every zone and segment of the country must at all times be given a sense of belonging in governance'. The PDP assured the populace that it would continue to partner with like minds in other political parties and groups to ensure that the nation's democracy, which it has nurtured over the past 16 years, promotes the interests of the Nigerian people (*ThisDay*, 9 June 2015; *The Cable*, 29 June 2015).

The statement also commended PDP acting National Chairman, Prince Uche Secondus, for having successfully galvanised PDP members in both chambers of the National Assembly, which contributed to a peaceful electoral process. The party urged its members in the National Assembly to continue to uphold the tenets of democracy and enforce the constitutionally vested parliamentary role of checks and balances to ensure accountability and probity. Finally, it urged the APC to cease its complaints and respect the independence of the legislature, since the PDP was not responsible for their naivety and inexperience (*Business Day*, 10 June 2015).



**Buhari's Rescue of the Eighth National Assembly**

Officially, President Buhari expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the National Assembly's election of leaders. A statement issued by his media aide, Femi Adesina, stated the president would rather have preferred that the process of electing the leaders as initiated and concluded by the APC had been followed. Nonetheless, the president took the view that the process had been constitutionally valid, and the validity of the process took precedence over the will of the party. According to Adesina,

*President Buhari had said in an earlier statement that he did not have any preferred candidate for the leadership of the Senate and the House of Representatives and that he was willing to work with whomever the lawmakers elected. That sentiment still stands supreme, though he would have preferred the new leaders to have emerged through the process established by the party (Daily Post, 9 June 2015).*

Instructively, the president's immediate reaction to the emergence of the two National Assembly leaders betrayed his wish that those chosen by the party had been elected. However, he welcomed Saraki and Dogara as critical partners in the implementation of his administration's goals and objectives. He prioritised finding a way for all to work together, considering the identity of the leaders secondary. Again, what was paramount was that the leaders of the National Assembly had been elected without any interference, which was the key requirement for a free and fair process. He urged all the elected representatives of the people to focus on bringing enduring, positive change to the lives of Nigerians. He further declared that in considering the National Assembly election, it was the stability of the constitutional order and the overall interest of the common people that were uppermost on his mind.

As the crisis simmered, political spectators had a number of questions on their lips. How will President Buhari and the APC navigate a bitterly divided National Assembly whose leaders enthroned themselves by defying party supremacy and colluding with opposition members? What is the game plan of the PDP beyond fracturing the APC and installing the deputy president of the Senate? Did the main opposition party forge any deals with Saraki in exchange for supporting him? Will Saraki do their bidding? How careless was the APC to have allowed this to happen? Were the political machinations of June 2015 the harbinger of what could be expected in 2019 and 2023?

In setting up the principal officers in the Senate, Saraki further stirred the hornet's nest. The APC leadership had written to the Senate's president to nominate Ahmad Lawan as majority leader, George Akume as deputy majority leader, Olusola Adeyeye as Chief Whip and Abu Ibrahim as Deputy Chief Whip. On D-day, however, Saraki announced Ali Ndume as majority leader, Bala Na'Allah as deputy majority leader and Francis Alimikhena as deputy chief whip, explaining that their appointments were the result of their nominations by the various APC zonal caucuses. Recognising the prospect of a fresh backlash, he categorically claimed his hands were tied and there was nothing he could do to change the situation. This was not well received by the party leadership, which accused Saraki of lying about the matter (*The Cable*, 29 June 2015). This only inflamed an already tense situation, increasing the risk of a disorderly Senate that could significantly impede Buhari's government.

After Saraki challenged his party and successfully strode to his so-called treacherous victory, the Senate was thrown into a whirligig of political conflicts. Lawan and his allies formed a band of opposition against the Saraki-led Senate. Charges of forgery emerged against Saraki and his deputy, Ekweremadu, accusing them of altering the Senate rule book to legitimise their election. Subsequent events were not without negative impacts on the Senate's activities and operations, or its relationship with the

executive branch. Some senators felt aggrieved, not only by the outside attacks, but also by the political losses they had incurred from the power play that gave Saraki the Senate's presidency and as a result, they rebelled both openly and in secret.

For instance, most of the Unity Forum members who had supported Ahmed Lawan against Saraki now tried to provoke the Senate leadership, eventually causing a shake-up in the committee chairmanship arrangements that the Senate leadership used in conciliatory gestures towards members. Ahmed Marafa, a senator from Zamfara and a strong ally of Lawan, began frequently disrupting the Saraki Senate. He challenged every action taken by the leadership and often instigated verbal brawls with colleagues who were Saraki's loyalists. Remi Tinubu, the wife of the APC's national leader, was also a strong voice of opposition against Saraki, to the point that she once publicly declined to shake hands with him. The APC's leaders were also reluctant to recognise the Senate leadership during this period.

The Senate resumed its plenary after a short break on 28 July 2015. Following a motion of Vote of Confidence on Principal Officers of the Senate by Senator Samuel Anyanwu (PDP Imo East) in Pursuit of Orders 42 and 52 of the Senate Standing Orders 2015 as Amended, 35 senators elected on the platform of the APC and 46 senators elected on the platform of the PDP passed a vote of confidence on Senate President Bukola Saraki, Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu, and the entire leadership of the Senate. The Senate also called on the Nigerian Police, the Department of State Security Services, DSS and other security agencies to refuse to be used by anyone attempting to harass, intimidate or blackmail senators or their spouses (*Vanguard*, 28 July 2015).

The forgery furore soon ebbed away and the Senate departed for a six-week recess. On 11 September 2015, which was roughly two weeks before the Senate was scheduled to resume its sessions, Saraki was indicted by the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) on a 13-count charge of false asset declaration, alleged to have occurred when he was governor. The PDP alleged that the charges were in bad

faith, a malicious and vengeful attempt by the APC to chastise Saraki for his defiance of party instructions about the inauguration of the Eighth Assembly. Upon resumption of the plenary, a motion under matters of urgent importance was sponsored by David Umaru (APC-Niger East), who led 82 other senators in both parties to pass a vote of confidence on Saraki, a stamp of approval communicating that the leadership of the Senate should not be 'intimidated and harassed' (*Premium Times*, 29 September 2015). It was perhaps at this point that lawmakers finally began to accept President Buhari's message that they had not been elected to turn the National Assembly into a theatre for melodrama. The business of governance must take precedence over partisan considerations.

The long CCB trial was an arduous experience for Saraki, who was frequently called by the Code of Conduct Tribunal for interrogation. The trial also disrupted the plenary session, and Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu frequently had to lead the proceedings due to Saraki's absences.

Despite the early political storms that threatened to derail the Eighth Assembly, conciliatory gestures by President Buhari played a significant role in quenching the flames of discord and persuading his party members and entire administration to cooperate fully with the legislature's leaders to achieve national objectives. Recognising the importance of setting aside political infightings and working together to achieve stated objectives, the president refrained from choosing sides or suggesting that he held grudges because of the furore. To further promote a robust relationship with the elected National Assembly, Buhari appointed two experienced former lawmakers, Senator Ita Enang as Special Adviser for Senate Matters and Hon. Kawu Sumaila as Special Adviser for House Matters. Their experience would help the president in stabilising the relationship between the two arms of government.

Without heeding the political hostilities on both sides, Buhari and his National Assembly liaison team worked towards achieving the critical alignment and repositioning needed to ensure a

smoothly running government. They regularly consulted, negotiated and engaged the Saraki-Dogara leadership on key issues, such as budgetary preparations, screening of executive nominees, consideration of executive requests, and the needed cooperation between both arms of government in making and implementing the law. Setting a conciliatory tone, the president ensured that Saraki and Dogara had free access to the Presidential Villa at all hours, to secure the assistance needed to conduct government businesses. There were no grudges or misgivings from his end (*Premium Times*, 7 October 2015).

Using his charismatic appeal, the president also took every opportunity to encourage disgruntled party members to move past the events of 9 June 2015 and begin cooperating with the Saraki-Dogara leadership. Time was passing quickly, and in his view, the APC government needed to accomplish its mission. It could not afford to fail simply because it had not managed to elevate its preferred legislators to the desired positions.

The first public sign of improved relations between the arms of government was seen on 1 October 2015, during celebrations marking the 55th anniversary of Nigeria's Independence. Despite widespread expectations of awkward moments and an uneasy atmosphere, President Buhari, Vice President Osinbajo, Senate President Saraki, and Speaker Dogara all heartily exchanged pleasantries with affection, laughter, and smiles. The day's activities, which included the signing of the independence register, the presentation of an anniversary card, military parades, and the taking of photographs, all took place in an ambience of mutual respect. President Buhari, who sat between Osinbajo and Saraki at the event, was occasionally seen exchanging jokes and whispering in Saraki's ear as the event unfolded. It was a chance for a strategic public demonstration of acceptance and synergy between both men.

These improvements were further cemented a week later. On 7 October, the first official meeting between President Buhari and the leaders of both houses of the National Assembly was held at the Aso Rock Presidential Villa. Saraki led the 20 principal officers of the

Senate and House of Representatives to the meeting with Buhari, who had two important impending engagements with the National Assembly. Firstly, he needed the approval of the Senate for the ministers that would form his cabinet. Secondly, a 2015 supplementary budget was underway. His media aide, Femi Adesina, stated that the meeting was held simply to familiarise the president with the lawmakers (*Premium Times*, 7 October 2015). There had not been any formal opportunity earlier, he continued, because of the leadership tussle in the National Assembly. Dubbed a 'peace meeting', the parley had been arranged at the behest of the president, who wanted to heal existing wounds and forge a way forward in the interest of the nation.

That meeting proved to be the start of a relatively smooth relationship between the Buhari-led executive and the Saraki-led National Assembly, as political brinkmanship gave way to harmonious cooperation by both arms in the undertaking of government business.

### **Conclusion**

Despite party divisions and deep fractures triggered by the chaotic events of 9 June, the Buhari administration managed to salvage the executive-legislative relationship without undue delay. This was achieved with the aid of the president's personal adroitness, political maturity, leadership persona, belief in the supremacy of democratic values, and commitment to conciliatory advocacy. The efforts saved the nation from a breakdown of communication between the executive and legislative arms of government. By persuading resentful party members to refocus on the national agenda, President Buhari helped prevent the National Assembly's leadership from becoming ineffectual and enabled his administration to hit the ground running.

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# 13

## War against Insurgency and Corruption

Abba A. Abba

### Introduction

This chapter aims to examine the efforts made by the Muhammadu Buhari administration in achieving its goals in the wars against insurgency and corruption. This is important given that, to a large extent, the success or failure of any regime is measured by its achievements or failures in these areas, as security and the economy constitute critical areas of national development. However, no administration can be adequately evaluated until many years after it leaves office; otherwise, the populace may hastily conclude that the recently departed administration is better than the current one. Indeed, it takes many years of critical assessment of any government to determine its success or failure. As Wale Oloko (in *The Punch*) has opined, although history can sometimes be cruel to history-makers, there is no doubt that participants, in whatever form or shape, in any government, are history-makers and therefore ought to be concerned about their place in history and how history will remember them. In essence, the present government will be defined by the policies it enabled and the decisions it made between 2015 and 2023.

While seeking the highest office in the country in 2014, the president vowed to fight insurgency and curb corruption. In his response to questions posed by *Bloomberg News*, President Buhari

noted that his administration has largely delivered on its campaign promises to Nigerians. He said:

*We leave Nigeria in a far better place than we found it. Corruption is less hidden, for Nigerians feel empowered to report it without fear, while money is returned; terrorists no longer hold any territory in Nigeria, and their leaders are deceased; and vast infrastructure development sets the country on course for sustainable and equitable growth. In 2015, Boko Haram held territory the size of Belgium within the borders of Nigeria. Today, they are close to extinct as a military force. The leader of ISWAP was eliminated by a Nigerian Airforce airstrike in March....My administration is the only one in Nigeria's history to implement a solution to decades-long herder-farmer conflicts, exacerbated by desertification and demographic growth. The National Livestock Transformation Plan, putting ranching at its core, is the only way to deplete the competition for resources at the core of the clashes (Thisday, 14 March 2023).*

The president accurately noted that security, especially the menace of the terrorist organisation Boko Haram, had been Nigeria's biggest concern since 2009. Therefore, he promised not only to confront it but also to wage an onslaught against corruption. Resolving these challenges would be a sure way to improve the economy. This meant activating a number of policies and programmes that would enhance productivity, diversify the economy and attract more direct foreign investment (*The Punch*, 17 July 2021).

At a ministerial performance review retreat organised to evaluate the progress made in the implementation of his administration's nine-priority agenda, President Buhari pointed out



that new aircraft had been acquired for the Nigerian Air Force to help the fight against insurgency. The president's government recognized the importance of critical infrastructure in economic development and was determined to leave a lasting legacy across the country that would meet Nigerians' aspirations (*The Cable*, 23 November 2022). Against the background of these bold claims, this chapter evaluates how well Buhari's administration has delivered on its promise to address security and enhance economic development in Nigeria.

### **Confronting Insurgency**

In the 2015 elections, many Nigerians looked forward to an administration that could address certain key issues that confronted the country. While Nigeria's security situation was extremely poor, the corruption index was sky-high. For instance, the endless stories of kidnapping, banditry and other forms of violent extremism and evidence of a shrinking economy caused by corruption in the public and private sectors were indicative of how desperately the nation needed a saviour, a president who could put an end to the misery and myriad challenges bedevilling the nation.

Before Buhari assumed office, Nigeria had become a theatre of assorted crimes, as each of the six geopolitical zones in the country grappled with a particular security issue. For many, terrorism, banditry and abductions had become attractive means to amassing huge wealth. Huge sums of money in foreign currencies had been paid as ransom and there had been many murders (Enakirerhi & Temile, 2017).

The previous government was overwhelmed by the agitations for the State of Biafra. Its efforts to tackle the crises yielded only minimal success. Before the Buhari administration took office, the Biafran agitation festered and inspired dangerous sentiments in other parts of the country, including the southwest. This complicated problems for the incoming Buhari administration. Indeed, it was the main issue that made the masses clamour for a change in the government (Enakirerhi & Temile, 2017).

In Sunday Nwafor's article titled 'Buhari's 1,321 Legacy Projects: It's Time to Tell the Truth', the author debunked critics' claims that the administration had done nothing since assuming office in 2015. The president's media assistant, Femi Adesina, stated that the administration had indeed accomplished about 1,321 legacy projects across 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, including the 774 Local Government Areas, 8,809 wards and over 44,045 villages and communities across the country. He further commended the president's demonstrable courage in handling the insurgency and corruption crises that had plagued the country.

### **Fighting Insurgency through Security and Justice Reforms**

The Buhari administration initiated, amended and championed landmark reform policies that yielded substantial gains in its war against insurgency. The reforms led to changes in the modus operandi in the war against insurgencies. The first was the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill 2022, which repealed the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011, as amended in 2013, and provided for the effective implementation of international instruments to prevent and combat terrorism and its financing. The Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Bill 2022 provided for the seizure, confiscation, forfeiture and management of properties obtained from illegal activity. To a large extent, these two bills discouraged terrorist activities and crippled the businesses of those who engage in 'terror-preneurship' – business engagement involving the use of terror as capital (*ThisDay*, May 2022).

The Buhari administration produced the Nigerian Correctional Services Bill of 2019, which remains the first comprehensive reform of prison legislation in close to five decades. The reform was part of the strategies needed to safeguard human rights during reforming processes. It had a direct impact on insurgency as it helped to directly and indirectly eradicate, or at least decrease, the potential for criminally mediated insurgent activities. The Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences Bill of 2019, which is considered the first anti-piracy legislation in

West Africa, was part of the programme adopted by the administration to fight insurgency and yielded much success.

However, the administration understood that education is one of the most potent tools for addressing insurgency in Nigeria. Starting with the Niger Delta Region, Buhari approved the foundation of the Nigerian Maritime University in Okerenkoko, Delta State. The institution was granted approval in January 2018 by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and on April 12, 2018, commenced undergraduate degree programmes. President Buhari approved an initial 5 billion naira grant for the university.

The successes enabled by these reforms cannot be over emphasised. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2022, deaths caused by Boko Haram dropped from 2,131 in 2015 to 178 in 2021, a difference of 92%. The report acknowledged Nigeria's 'successful counter-insurgency operations targeting Boko Haram' as a leading cause in the reduction in terrorism deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa. When the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, visited the northeast in May 2022, he testified, 'Now, the Borno State I have heard about... was a Borno State of terrorism, of violence, of displacement, of despair. This is not the Borno that I found today. The Borno I found today is a Borno of hope. It's a Borno with a future' (*ThisDay*, May 2022).

Similarly, the International Maritime Bureau gave a positive report stating that in 2021, Nigeria saw the lowest number of piracy attacks in its waters in 27 years (Presidential Communication Team, 2022). President Buhari's administration showed a strong commitment to its fight against insurgency by empowering the Nigerian Air Force to acquire 38 new aircrafts (10 Super Mushshaks; 5 Mi-35M helicopters; 2 Bell 412 helicopters; 4 Agusta 109 helicopters; 2 Mi-171E helicopters; 12 x A-29 Super Tucanos; and 3 JF-17 Thunders). Additional 312 new AH-1Z attack helicopters and 24 M-346 fighter attack aircrafts were subsequently delivered. The Nigerian Navy acquired more than 400 new platforms between 2015 and 2022, including 172 Riverine Patrol Boats (RPBs), 114 Rigid-Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs), 2 Seaward

Defence Boats (SDBs), 12 Manta Class/Inshore Patrol Craft (IPC), 3 Whaler Boats, 4 Barges/Tugboats, 22 Fast Attack Boats, 14 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), 4 Helicopters, 14 River Town Class, 14 House Boats and 4 Capital Ships(Presidential Communication Team 2022).

In line with the president's directive, the Nigerian Navy also established a naval base in Lake Chad in Baga, Borno State, and received presidential approval for new naval bases in Lekki, Lagos; Oguta, Imo State; and Kano, Kano State.

The role of drugs in the terrorism and insurgency discourse cannot be overemphasised. In its bid to curb insurgency, in 2021, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) convicted 1,400 offenders; arrested 12,300 suspects; seized more than 3.4 million kilograms of assorted illicit drugs and more than N130 billion worth of drugs and cash; and destroyed 406 hectares of Cannabis farms (*ThisDay*, May 2022). The arrest and prosecution of drug suspects helped to reduce the expansion and sophistication of drugs-related insurgent activities. However, as part of Criminal Justice Reforms, in 2020, President Buhari granted amnesty to 2,600 prisoners nationwide, representing about 3.5% of all inmates. This was in an effort to decongest Nigeria's prison population. The beneficiaries were those 60 years of age and older, who were suffering from ill-health that might lead to death; convicts serving three years or more who had less than six months to serve; inmates with mental-health issues; and inmates with pending fines not exceeding N50,000 and no pending cases (*ThisDay*, May 2022). This helped to create and sustain faith in the government, which also reduced insurgent feelings in society.

The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) was empowered to deploy a Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) at five international airports. 'MIDAS is a global real-time border management system developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and is linked to Interpol and other watchlists. The implementation of MIDAS at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja was described by the IOM as "the largest

deployment of MIDAS at any airport globally, to date.” This again helped to eliminate the activities of insurgents who calibrate international networks for corruption and insurgent activities’ (Presidential Communications Team - PCT, 2022; see also, Nwafor, 2022).

### **Major Security Operation Strategies Nationwide**

As part of its strategies to confront insurgency, terrorism and other forms of crime, the Nigerian Armed Forces, with the support of the Buhari administration, adopted security operation strategies aimed at maintaining a secure and crime-free social space across the country. Among the operation strategies were:

Operation Hadin Kai (North-east)  
 Operation Lake Sanity (North-east)  
 Operation Desert Sanity (North-east)  
 Operation Hadarin Daji (North-west)  
 Operation Safe Haven (North-Central)  
 Operation Whirl Stroke (North-Central)  
 Operation Delta Safe (South)  
 Operation Python Dance (South-east)  
 Operation Dakatar Da Barawo (South)  
 (PCT, 2022).

### **The Presidential Police Reform Programmes**

As part of its strategy to maintain a viable police force that contributes to the war against insurgency nationwide, President Buhari signed the Nigeria Police Trust Fund Bill, 2019, into law and established the Nigeria Police Trust Fund to mobilise financial and other resources to equip and support the police. On September 16, 2020, he signed the Nigeria Police Bill, 2020, which is the first fundamental reform of police legislation since the colonial Police Act of 1943 (PCT 2022: 61). President Buhari established a Presidential Police Reform Technical Team in the office of the Chief of Staff (COS) to the President to coordinate police reforms. This team developed a

Presidential Roadmap on Police Reforms, which captured the president's vision for legitimate, accountable and community-focused policing in Nigeria.

The Buhari administration also rolled out the Police Specialised Services Automation Project (Po-SSAP) to block financial leakages and deepen fiscal accountability within the Force. The presidency approved the nationwide commencement of the Community Policing Initiative and released initial funding. The Community Policing Initiative became enshrined in the Police Act 2 of 2020. As at 2022, over 25,000 Community Policing Officers ('Constabularies') had been trained in Police Colleges across the country and were serving as liaisons between the police and their local communities, as well as assisting in intelligence-gathering (PCT 2022: 62). President Buhari approved massive recruitments into the police. The recruitment exercise, which was organised in tranches of 10,000 recruits, was completed in July 2022. In its sustained effort at combating insurgency, the Nigeria Police Force had launched a new National Command and Control Centre in Abuja in 2019 (PCT, 2022).

'The Buhari administration mobilised international support for the war against the Boko Haram insurgency, forging strong partnerships with key countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the AU, the UN and others. After years of stalemate with the previous administration, the Buhari administration succeeded in securing the United States' approval for the sale of weapons to Nigeria. The US government approved the sale of 12 new Super Tucano Aircraft and 12 new AH-1Z Attack Helicopters to Nigeria, as well as the repatriation of recovered looted monies and assets held in the US' (PCT, 2022). In addition, in April 2018, the Nigerian and US militaries collaborated to host the 2018 African Land Forces Summit, the largest gathering of African Army chiefs in Abuja, to discuss security cooperation on the continent (Nwafor, 2022; PCT, 2022). The fighter jets and attack helicopters were supplied and deployed, and these yielded

significant results in the theatre of war against insurgency. Many strongholds of the deadly insurgent groups were destroyed and the insurgent elements neutralised and/or dislodged (*ThisDay*, 14 July 2022).

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising troops from Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin was revamped and gradually restored peace in those countries. President Buhari's interventions also helped to restore and strengthen democracy in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau by authorising the deployment of troops, fighter jets and warships to The Gambia during the impasse that followed the December 2016 presidential elections (*ThisDay*, 14 July 2022). MNJTF successfully evacuated and repatriated more than 10,000 Nigerian migrants from Libya, with IOM's support and partnership.

### **Renewed Cooperation in Security and Anti-Corruption**

In 2018, the Buhari administration organised the launch of a UK-government-funded £13 million education programme to provide teacher training, school equipment and school security for 100,000 children living in parts of the northeast affected by Boko Haram. In 2021, the Royal Navy Ship HMST visited Nigeria to assist in maritime security operations in the Gulf of Guinea. It was the first Royal Navy vessel to operate in the region in three years. The administration made arms deals, including the purchase of a new warship for the Nigerian Navy (constructed in Sharjah, UAE), and 100 new Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles for the Nigerian Army (Nwafor, S. 2022). Under the Buhari administration, Nigeria signed and ratified an extradition treaty with the United Arab Emirates that allows the extradition of Nigerians who flee to the UAE after committing crimes in Nigeria. One of the outcomes of the Saudi visit was the two governments' agreement to set up a joint Saudi-Nigeria Strategic Council, comprising government officials and businessmen from both countries, which will focus on economic growth and development, investments in the oil and non-oil sectors and security cooperation (*ThisDay*, 14 July 2022).

### **Understanding Corruption**

Apart from insurgency, another pervasive problem that had become Nigeria's albatross was corruption. Although it seems to have easily become the most challenging attribute of global culture, corruption destroyed the Nigerian economy. Corruption refers to unethical behaviour characterised by misuse of public or organisational power (Anand et al., 2004), causing harm to both organisations and society. Corruption, according to Transparency International (TI, 2011), is the misuse of entrusted power for private gain or the use of public office for private gain. The use of entrusted power may include the exploitation of an official position, rank or status by an office holder for personal aggrandisement. Thus, corrupt practices may include bribery, fraud, stealing public resources, partiality, favouritism and seizure of public assets for private use.

The result is that corruption and dishonesty in public and private institutions eroded citizens' confidence in public representatives and officials. The result was apathy towards democratic activities and stunted economic performance (Ani et al., 2014; Davis, 2009). All these are evident in the deplorable state of the roads, the poor power supply, the low standard of education, the proliferation of churches and military insurgency.

According to Ani et al. (2014), 'Nigerian people have since lost trust and confidence in the public sector. The high levels of corruption in Nigeria can be attributed to the whittling down or non-existence or non-adherence to ethical codes in the public service. There are so many institutions in Nigeria, such as codes of conduct bureau, EFCC, ICPC, courts etc., that should be enforcing ethical codes. However, and paradoxically, the more these institutions are established the more the growth of unethical behaviours'.

Ani et al. (2014) examined the imperatives of good ethical behaviour in the conduct of governance in Nigeria and found that as governance grows in complexity with the adoption of technological innovations in government, governance in Nigeria's public sector becomes more problematic and ethically tasking as a result of



endemic corruption. There is evidence of the collapse of institutional measures and codes of conduct put in place to ensure high standards of behaviour arising from the ever-deepening moral contradictions in institutional behavioural expectations from the public. Indeed, the perceived lack of an effective ethical organisational framework for coordinating the activities of various institutions worsened unethical practices including corruption in the Nigerian public service.

Thus, Ani (2009) advocated a more realistic traditional African approach, which could restrain public servants from indulging in corrupt behaviour. According to him, this approach involved subjecting public servants to customary oath-taking based upon the theistic values of fear of sin against Mother Earth. This would mark a departure from the Western style, which sees public service as nobody's personal business (Ekene, 2012). They further recommended that these core African values that emanate from theistic humanism should also permeate the various anti-corruption organisational frameworks in Nigeria to coordinate the national fight against corruption in the public sector. The departure of civil servants and Nigeria's public service from the core human values that ensure individuals' transparent private and public conduct resulted in underperformance and underdevelopment.

Before the Buhari administration, there was an astronomical increase in corruption in the public sector, as the government created and sustained an atmosphere that not only fertilised it but also looked the other way while it thrived (Ani et al, 2014). During that period, courts in Nigeria discharged a former governor of Delta State on corruption charges only for him to be convicted and jailed in the United Kingdom on the same offence. Worse still, a former governor of Enugu State buried a large sum of public money in his father's grave in 1992. Unfortunately, the legislature, which should have monitored the executive arm, had itself been enmeshed in corrupt practices ranging from oversight committees demanding bribes, to the house leadership borrowing an unprecedented 40

billion naira on behalf of Nigeria's lower House of Representatives from a bank, without collateral, under Dimeji Bankole's leadership.

The former speaker was later investigated by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), but the matter was dropped in part because of the low ethical foundation of that administration. The Buhari administration recognised the damaging impact of these unethical and corrupt practices on the government's image and set for itself a mandate to change the narrative. As President Buhari would always say, 'If we do not destroy corruption in this country, corruption would destroy us'. Armed with this vision, the Buhari administration went to work (Enakirerhi & Temile, 2017).

### **Instruments of War Against Corruption**

In 2018, President Buhari was designated the African Union (AU) Anti-Corruption Champion. This is not without good reason. The award came after a thorough evaluation of his tenacity in the fight against the menace of corruption, which had been avoided by past administrations. Indeed, given the calibre of individuals involved in corrupt practices, fighting this scourge required exceptional energy and courage. It required potent political will, which President Buhari had proven he possessed. His administration acknowledged that a negative image of a country wracked by corruption affects all its citizens, whether at home or abroad. In line with the vision of international organisations such as the World Bank, President Buhari, who is noted for his integrity in sustaining ethics in the public sector, did not hesitate to take strong measures to combat material corruption when he assumed power.

Ethics in the public sector had become the concern of governments all over the world who recognise that they were not only an issue for others, but a necessity for all 'to clean up their own doorstep, often in the aftermath of revelations about the alleged unethical behaviour of both civil servants and politicians' (Davis, 2009).

The Buhari administration deployed various strategies in its war against corruption. These included the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill, 2022, which repeals the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2011, as amended. This bill provides a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the prevention and prohibition of money laundering in Nigeria. It also conferred on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) the legal status of the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering in Nigeria. This instrument had yielded appreciable results, as many corrupt individuals were arrested, prosecuted, forced to refund stolen funds and sent to jail.

There is also the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON) (Amendment) Acts of 2019 and 2021, and the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) bill aimed to curb anti-competition practices, and the establishment of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, to protect national assets as well as the rights of consumers against corrupt practices. It is no longer possible for corrupt public officeholders to steal or convert public assets to private use without being apprehended. Again, the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Bill, an Executive Bill that was signed into law in 2019, the Credit Reporting Act (CRA) 2017 and the Secured Transactions in Movable Assets Act (STMAA) 2017 facilitate the identification, tracing, freezing, restraining, recovery, forfeiture and confiscation of proceeds, property and other elements of crime. The bills serve as instruments used in the prosecution of offenders in criminal cases anywhere in the world.

As part of the strategy to ensure transparency and curtail corrupt practices in the discharge of government business, President Buhari introduced the use of Executive Orders for the first time in Nigerian history.

The following are some of these landmark Executive Orders, which are meant to enhance transparency in the public sector (culled from Federal Government Policy Documents, 2022).

**1. Executive Order on Promotion of Transparency and Efficiency in the Business Environment (2017):** This Executive Order signed by the Acting President, Yemi Osinbajo, on 18 May 2017, directs all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of the Federal Government to publish a complete list of requirements or conditions for obtaining products and services within the MDAs' scope of responsibility (including permits, licences, waivers, tax related processes, filings and approvals) on the websites within 21 days of the issuance of the Order. It also places responsibility on Heads of MDAs to ensure that the list is verified and kept up-to-date at all times. In the published list, MDAs must state the stipulated time in getting an approval and all applications for permits, registration or licences not approved or rejected within the stipulated time are deemed approved.

**2. Executive Order on Promoting Local Procurement by Government Agencies (2017):** This Executive Order directs all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of the FGN to grant preference to local manufacturers of goods and service providers in their procurement of goods and services. Any document issued by any MDA of the FGN for the solicitation of offers, bids, proposals or quotations for the supply or provision of goods and services (Solicitation Document), in accordance with (1) above, shall expressly indicate the preference to be granted to domestic manufacturers, contractors and service providers and the information required to establish the eligibility of a bid for such preference. All Solicitation Documents shall require bidders or potential manufacturers, suppliers, contractors and consultants to provide a verifiable statement on the local content of the goods or services to be provided. It further provides that Made-in-Nigeria products shall be given preference in the procurement of the following items and at least 40% of the procurement expenditure on these items in all MDAs of the FGN shall be locally manufactured goods or local service providers: Uniforms and Footwear; Food and Beverages; Furniture & Fittings; Stationery; Motor Vehicles;

Pharmaceuticals; Construction Materials; and Information and Communication Technology. The EO seeks to ensure that the Federal Government's procurement of goods and services maximises the use of goods manufactured in Nigeria and services provided by Nigerian citizens doing business as sole proprietors, firms, or companies held wholly by them or in the majority.

**3. Order on Submission of Annual Budgetary Estimates by all Statutory and non-Statutory Agencies, including Incorporated Companies wholly owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2017):**

This EO directs all Agencies, whether or not listed in the Fiscal Responsibility Act, to cause to be prepared and submitted to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Budget and National Planning their schedule of revenue and expenditure estimates for the next three financial years on or before the end of May every year; and All Agencies to cause to be prepared and submitted to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Budget and National Planning their annual budget estimates, which shall be derived from the estimates of revenue and expenditure as projected in their three-year schedule on or before the end of July every year. It directs a joint committee of the Ministries of Finance, and the Budget and National Planning to review such estimates and ensure their conformity with the national plan and the financial and budgetary regulations before processing them for approval and early transmission to the National Assembly. It further directs Supervising Ministers and Heads of Agencies as well as the Chief Executive Officers of Government owned companies to verify that the process of preparation, harmonisation and collation of budget estimates are as stipulated in relevant laws and guidelines as well as ensure strict compliance with this Executive Order. Except with the express consent of the President, no payment shall be made in respect of any capital or recurrent liability of an Agency, other than payment of due salaries and allowances, unless the Agency has an approved budget and the payment is in conformity with the approval. It directs Heads of Agencies and Chief Executive Officers of

Government owned companies to take personal responsibility and be subject to appropriate sanctions for any failure to comply with this Order. It stipulates that any revenue or other funds of an Agency in excess of the amounts budgeted and duly expended shall accrue to the consolidated revenue fund of the Federal Government.

**4. Executive Order on the Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (2017):** This Executive Order directs the Federal Ministry of Finance to set up a Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration for all categories of taxpayers who have defaulted in payment of taxes due and collectible. It requires the Scheme to provide a nine (9) month period for taxpayers who are in default of their tax liabilities to declare their assets and income from sources within and outside Nigeria relating to the preceding six (6) years of assessment. It requests the Scheme to encourage and provide an opportunity for eligible taxpayers to:

- a. regularise their tax status for all the relevant years;
- b. pay all outstanding taxes;
- c. prevent and stop tax evasion; and
- d. ensure full tax compliance.

**5. Executive Order on Planning and Execution of Projects, Promotion of Nigerian Content in Contracts, Science, Engineering and Technology (2018):** This Executive Order directs that indigenous companies and content are to be preferred over their foreign counterparts. With the order, procuring entities are to give preference to Nigerian companies and firms in the planning, design and execution of national security projects and award of contract, in line with the Public Procurement Act 2007. It is only in areas in which Nigerian companies lack the expertise, that procuring entities can give preference to foreign companies or firms and in doing so, and only firms who have demonstrable and verifiable plan for indigenous capacity development will be considered. Where Nigerian companies or firms with valid practicing license enters into a Joint Venture relationships or

agreements for any consultancy services relating to law, Engineering, ICT, Architecture, Procurement, Quantity Surveying and so-on, such Nigerian Company will be lead in the consultancy services. The MDAs are directed to adopt local technology to replace foreign ones, where they meet set standards. Under *Accreditation and proper registration*, the MDAs are to ensure that all professionals practicing in Nigeria are duly registered with the appropriate regulatory body in Nigeria. Similarly, agreements involving any Joint Venture and Public Private Partnership (PPP) between a foreign firm and a Nigerian firm, pertaining to technology acquisition are to be registered with the National Office for Technology Acquisition (NOTAP) otherwise; such contracts will not be signed by any MDA. In award of contracts, Nigerian counterpart staff must be engaged from the conception stage to the end of the project. Solicitation of offers, bids, or quotations for the supply or provision of goods and works documents shall forthwith obligate bidders or potential manufacturers, suppliers, contractors and consultants to provide a verifiable statement on the local content of the goods or services to be provided.

**6. Executive Order (and Amendment) on the Voluntary Offshore Assets Regularization Scheme (VOARS) (2018):** Leveraging on Section 15 (5) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the President employed this order in his bid to abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power especially by people in government. This EO specifically provides that it shall read in conjunction with all extant Tax laws, Regulation and Guidelines as well as those that may be issued pursuant to the scheme. Under the Company Income Tax Act Section 23 (2), 89 – the President has the authority to remit wholly or in part, any tax payable by any company if satisfied that it is just and equitable, or even order the exemption of any company from any provision of CITA or payment of tax, if the circumstances so warrant.

The scheme is essentially a mechanism designed, to create opportunity for defaulting or reticent taxpayers with sizeable assets - fixed/liquid - in foreign countries to redeem themselves through an honest disclosure of such assets, in the manner and under the terms stipulated by the order. The Scheme largely minimises corruption-white collar crimes and illicit financial flows/money laundering and other variants of financial/economic crimes using the instrumentality of taxation. It seeks to instill the culture and discipline of tax compliance in Nigerians or Nigerian residents/entities through a more subtle manner by widening the tax net to capture the global targets - assets in the diaspora. The second objective of the order is to leverage on the trending fiscal tools to expand the revenue base and deepen the income generating capacity of the federal government.

As corruption also extends to the wrong and criminal use of data, the Buhari Administration established a new National Data Protection Bureau that would develop primary legislation for data protection and privacy. Project Lighthouse, a financial data collection, integration and analysis engine deployed by the Federal Government in 2018, had helped identify debts (unpaid taxes, loans, insurance funds, etc.) valued at more than 5 trillion naira, owed Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs); of which 1.5 trillion naira had been recovered (PCT, 2022: 55).

### **Transparency Expansion of TSA and IPPIS Coverage**

The Treasury Single Account (TSA) system is a public accounting system that enabled the federal government to manage its finances (revenues and payments) using a single, unified account, or a series of linked accounts domiciled at the Central Bank of Nigeria. On 7 August 2015, President Buhari issued a directive to all MDAs to close their accounts with Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) and transfer their balances to the Central Bank of Nigeria on or before 15 September 2015. The TSA system, which was launched in 2012, failed to gain traction until President Buhari's Executive Order in August 2015. The TSA system had been implemented in more than



90% of all federal MDAs. The decision to fully operationalise the TSA has resulted in the consolidation of more than 17,000 bank accounts previously spread across DMBs in the country, and in savings of an average of N4 billion in monthly banking charges (Enakirerhi & Temile, 2017).

**Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS):**

The IPPIS is an IT-enabled government payment system that was conceptualised in October 2006 by the federal government as one of its reform programmes to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of personnel records storage and the administration of the monthly payroll to enhance staff confidence. Many reforms have been carried out to revolutionise salary administration in the Nigerian public service since the return of civil rule in 1999. The salary administration reform was implemented with the introduction of an electronic payment system, which was designed to replace the previous cumbersome, obsolete process (Folorunso & Simeon, 2021). The federal government introduced IPPIS to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of public servants in Nigeria and to block leakages and corruption in the public service through the payroll system.

However, the introduction and implementation of IPPIS were faced with potent resistance from some segments of the federal government in MDA. Although IPPIS was introduced in 2006 with the core objectives of paying federal government employees accurately and on time, the full implementation of a centralised payroll system that met the needs of federal government employees and helped the government to plan and manage the payroll budget by ensuring proper control of personnel costs, could not be carried out until the Buhari administration assumed office.

The Buhari administration understood the need to develop and inspire the human resources sector, as the country could not cope with the effects of federal employees' low morale resulting from irregular salary payments, which demotivated workers from achieving optimal performance. Although IPPIS' implementation

was predictably riddled with many controversies, the administration saw enormous improvement since its full deployment in eliminating ghost workers and multiple payments to the same worker, which were common problems prior to its full deployment. Enakirerhi and Temile (2017) noted that IPPIS provides a reliable and comprehensive database for the public service, facilitates manpower planning, eliminates record and payroll fraud, facilitates easy storage, updates and retrieves personnel records for administrative and pension processes and handles staff payments with minimal waste and leakages. They observed that IPPIS had saved the federal government billions of naira by eliminating thousands of ghost workers using a personnel verification exercise and salary payment process.

Farajimakin and Anichebe (2019) explained that the IPPIS is a World Bank-assisted project under the Economic Reform and Government Project (ERGP), which aims to establish a reliable and comprehensive database for the public service, facilitate manpower planning, assist in providing information for decision making, eliminate double dipping and credentials falsification, facilitate easy storage, update and retrieve personnel record for administrative and pension process and facilitate staff payments. According to them, the IPPIS programme enables the MDAs to identify ghost workers and to attain public probity in governance.

These positions are corroborated by the position of the Office of Accountant-General of the Federation (2008), which describes IPPIS as a child of the federal government reform programme that was conceptualised at the Bureau of Public Service Reform (BPSR) to facilitate centralised payment of all civil servants employed by the federal government. The IPPIS project commenced with the enrolment of the seven pilot MDAs in 2007. It was financed through a World Bank grant of about \$4.9 million and transferred to the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation (OAGF) in 2008. The scheme was introduced to facilitate centralised payment of all civil servants in the federal government (Folorunso & Adeyemi, 2021).

Despite great opposition, the Buhari administration expanded IPPIS to the Armed Forces, federal universities and other academic institutions. Due to some identified challenges, the scheme was reviewed to address the complaints of various federal workers, especially its most potent antagonist, the Academic Union of Universities (ASUU). The union undertook a series of industrial actions to protest the scheme's deployment.

It is important to note that the scheme is responsible for significant accomplishments in the Buhari administration's war against corruption in the public sector. These accomplishments included prompt and regular payment of salaries of MDAs and prompt deductions and remittances to the accounts of all third-party stakeholders like the PFAs and NHIS. Additionally, over N361 billion in savings in personnel costs was recorded between 2017 and 2019, a positive trend in the accessibility and availability of financial and personnel variances; simplified planning and budgeting for personnel, because IPPIS is also a personnel management tool; and compliance enforcement with due process in employment. IPPIS big data in various organisations transformed into a rich source of information, which could be leveraged to make decisions about government operations. Between September 2011 and 2020, many Nigerians were employed in the MDAs, thereby reducing the unemployment rate in the country. MDAs adjusted to the IPPIS and many managed their payroll at their respective offices without recourse to the IPPIS Secretariat (Office of Accountant General of the Federation OAGF 2020; Folorunso & Adeyemi, 2021).

Other important gains included the easy retrieval of personnel information for all public servants under the scheme; reduction in personnel records falsification including age, length of service, etc. Salary and monthly emoluments were paid without delay to all public servants on the scheme on the same day, no matter their location within the country; actual personnel costs were paid monthly/annually and were easily accessible, with reason(s) for fluctuation easily given. The scheme programmed automatic stoppage of payment to personnel due for retirement

resulting from length of service, age and tenure, thus reducing waste or unauthorised payment; all third-party payments (cooperative deduction, tax, NHF and Union dues, etc.) were taken from the employee's salary and paid directly and promptly to the beneficiaries' accounts, on behalf of the payee, with the payment schedule made available to the beneficiaries. It also monitored unapplied/unused funds as well as budgets for training because IPPIS is also a personnel management tool (OAGF, 2020; Folorunso & Adeyemi, 2021).

### **The Bank Verification Number (BVN) and the Social Investment Programme**

In the bid to forestall all forms of corrupt practices in managing personnel costs, which are the federal government's largest expenditure, the Buhari administration gave priority to the deployment of the Bank Verification Number (BVN) for payroll and pension audits. The use of the BVN to verify payroll entries on the IPPIS platform led to the detection of more than 50,000 fraudulent payroll entries. The federal government also ensured the BVN system served as the verification basis for payments to beneficiaries and vendors in the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP), the N-Power Scheme and the Homegrown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) (*BusinessDay*, 17 June 2022).

### **Open Government Partnership (OGP)**

The Buhari administration understood that one of the challenges of effectively utilising national resources to support equitable economic growth, effective service delivery and social cohesion in Nigerian economic development is the lack of openness, transparency and accountability in governance. The government thus encouraged open government principles in tailored stakeholder engagement to deal with all obstacles to effective policy, budgeting and implementation. President Buhari's involvement with the Open Government Partnership is therefore a commendable

one, as it contributed to transparency and reduces corruption in government business.

The Open Government Partnership was launched on 20 September 2011, to provide an international platform for domestic reformers to make their governments more open, accountable and responsive to citizens. It makes information on government activities and decisions open, comprehensive, timely and freely available to the public. Precisely, it meets basic open data standards (Igbuzor, 2017). In May 2016, President Buhari attended and participated in the International Anti-Corruption Summit organised by the UK government. At the summit, he pledged that Nigeria would join the OGP, and in July 2016, Nigeria became its 70th member. Following this, Nigeria constituted an OGP National Steering Committee (NSC), which developed a National Action Plan (2017–2019) to deepen and mainstream transparency mechanisms and citizens' engagement in the management of public resources across all sectors. In 2018, Nigeria was elected to the OGP Government Steering Committee for a term of three years. It was re-elected to a second term in 2021 (*ThisDay*, February 2022).

### **National Identity Management (NIM)**

The Buhari administration recognised the national digital identity management system as a critical tool for the inclusion of citizens in the increasingly digitalised public services. Through the help of the World Bank, the administration built and promoted digital identification systems to improve development outcomes, as part of the Identity for Development Initiative (ID4D). Nigeria built a national ID management database for its over 100 million residents (Ekea et al., 2022). National Identity Management is part of its strategy to eliminate corrupt practices. The Buhari administration generated more than 80.7 million unique records in Nigeria's digital identity database (NIN), which made a prerequisite for applications for passports, driver's licences, JAMB and WAEC, to eradicate a number of corrupt practices.

### **Asset Recovery**

The Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC) also helped anti-corruption agencies devise clearer strategies for obtaining forfeited assets suspected to have been obtained fraudulently, mainly from state coffers, before prosecuting suspects. Part of this work involved a review of existing laws (such as the Money Laundering Act, 2004, the EFCC Act, 2004 and the ICPC Act, 2000), to identify sections that directly confer powers of forfeiture on Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies. This advocacy led to a meaningful increase in the use of Non-Conviction-Based Asset Forfeiture mechanisms by anti-corruption agencies (*The Tribune*, 14 July 2021).

In 2021, the United Kingdom repatriated to Nigeria GBP 4.2 million recovered from the James Ibori family. In May 2022, President Buhari signed into law the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Bill, 2022. This new Act established a Proceeds of Crime Management Directorate, which ensured the effective administration and accountability in the management of all properties and assets forfeited to the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) launched a Constituency & Executive Projects Tracking Exercise that tracked hundreds of federal-government-funded projects across the country to ensure delivery and value for money. ICPC's scrutiny of the practices, systems and procedures of MDAs' personnel costs from 2019 to 2021 facilitated the recovery of more than 210 billion naira from inflated, misappropriated and misapplied personnel budgets and capital expenditures. Importantly, the United States and the Bailiwick of Jersey repatriated \$311 million to Nigeria in 2020 (*ThisDay*, 5 March 2022).

### **Conclusion**

The Buhari administration demonstrated an appreciable ability to confront the challenges it inherited and discharge its duty in the face of obvious sabotage and threats posed by the large-scale corruption

and terrorism that affected Nigeria and her neighbours – Chad, Niger and Cameroon. It is clear that the Buhari administration did not meet a 'land flowing with milk and honey'; instead, it met insecurity, corruption and a nation crying for change. Inspired by the massive number of votes cast by the Nigerian people, it embarked on the change it promised, despite the huge challenges left by 16 years of corruption and financial recklessness, which led the country into the debt trap of the international financial oligarchy (*ThisDay*, 14 December 2021). Buhari invested more resources and political will than any previous administration in the war against insurgency. The administration thus boosted the morale of the Nigerian Armed Forces who were confronting terrorism on behalf of the Nigerian people.

Project Lighthouse, the compulsory application of the BVN, and the NIN, amongst others, were among the numerous development landmarks of the Buhari administration. The administration also encouraged the anti-corruption agencies to work freely, and this led to investigations of no fewer than 31 governors and the prosecution of 11. Although critics initially accused the administration of being selective in its fight against corruption, it demonstrated beyond doubt that there was no sacred cow in fighting corruption. There is, in fact, concrete evidence that the administration's achievements positively impacted all aspects of Nigerian citizens' lives. Yet, governance is a continuum and no single administration can fully address all of a country's problems. As a country grows, so does its challenges. The incoming administration will therefore do well to improve on the Buhari administration's performance to further improve Nigerians' lives.

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# 14

## **The Agenda for Economic Recovery and Global Partnership**

**Uguru W. Ibor**

### **Introduction**

Since Nigeria's independence and especially since its return to democratic governance in 1999, successive governments have commissioned economic renewal or recovery plans to boost the economy's growth. The country has witnessed various plans and programmes, including the Umar Musa Yar'adua administration's seven-point agenda (2007); Vision 20-20-2020 (2010); the National Industrial Plan (2014); the Goodluck Jonathan administration's Nigeria Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (2014); and the Muhammadu Buhari administration's Strategic Implementation Plan for the Budget of Change (2016) (Adekunle & Alokpa, 2018; Anzodo, et al., 2015). In July 2017, the National Economic Council (NEC) unanimously approved the replication of the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council's (PEBEC) intervention structure at the sub-national level, which was implemented through the PEBEC-NEC Technical Working Group. This mandate was later included in the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) of 2017-2020 and subsequently retained in the National Development Plan (NDP) of 2021-2025.

These initiatives have achieved varying degrees of success, and implementation across the board has always been challenging



(Adekunle & Alopa, 2018; Templers, 2017). In keeping with the tradition of rolling out economic plans, the Buhari administration launched the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP, also referred to as the Plan), which is a comprehensive economic intervention plan designed to reconceptualise the economy and pursue a clear agenda for economic recovery that will engender global partnerships and competitiveness.

The ERGP, launched in 2016, is a medium-term, all-around developmental initiative focused on *restoring growth, investing in people and building a globally competitive economy* (Kyarem & Ogwuche, 2017). The ERGP was commissioned when Nigeria slumped into recession for the first time in 25 years. That period also coincided with a sharp fall in oil prices – from highs of approximately \$112 per barrel in 2014 to below \$50 in 2016 (Templers, 2017). After the launch of the economic recovery plan in 2017, President Muhammadu Buhari undertook many international initiatives and visits to further improve the country's image, also seeking global partnerships to diversify the economy and increase the government's revenue base.

### **Understanding the Problem**

Known as 'The Giant of Africa' and endowed with considerable human and natural resources, Nigeria has the potential to become a major player in the global economy. After a shift from agriculture to crude oil and gas in the late 1960s, Nigeria's growth was driven by consumption and high oil prices. Previous economic policies left the country ill-prepared for the recent collapse of crude oil prices and production (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017; Anzodo, et al., 2015). The structure of the economy remained highly import-dependent, consumption-driven, and undiversified. The majority of Nigerians lived under the multiple burdens of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Furthermore, the country's general economic performance was seriously undermined by deplorable infrastructure, corruption, and mismanagement of public finances (United Nations, 2022; Anzodo, et al., 2015). Decades of

consumption dependence and oil-driven growth left the economy with a positive but jobless growth trajectory.

After more than a decade of economic growth, the sharp and continuous decline in oil prices since mid-2014, along with a failure to diversify the sources of revenue and foreign exchange in the economy, led to a recession in the second quarter of 2016. The economic recession experienced by Nigeria between 2016 and 2017 constrained the government's effort at generating revenue and implementing national development plans (Inoykwe, 2018; Anzodo, et al., 2015). The challenges in the oil sector, including sabotage of oil export terminals in the Niger Delta, negatively impacted the government's revenue and export earnings and the country lacked the fiscal capacity to prevent the economy from contracting. Government spending capacity was equally constrained by a lack of fiscal buffers to absorb the shock and by leakages of public resources, which were rooted in both corruption and inefficient spending in the recent past (Templers, 2017; Anzodo, et al., 2015).

In a 2022 combined report by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations, Nigeria was listed along with five other countries as a 'hotspot of global hunger', where people experienced catastrophic levels of hunger. In a separate report in April 2022, FAO noted that 19.4 million Nigerians were food insecure, and malnutrition rates in most northern states had more than doubled (*Business Day*, 2023; Anzodo, et al., 2015).

President Buhari's administration recognised that the economy was likely to remain on a path of steady and steep decline if nothing was done to change the situation (Ata-Agboni, 2019). It was in this context that the plans were formulated to reconceptualise the economy, pursue an agenda for economic recovery and increase global partnerships, in order to restore growth, invest in people, and build a globally competitive economy. The ERGP was designed to propel Nigeria back to sustainable, accelerated development while restoring economic growth in the medium term (2017 to 2020).

This chapter focuses on the ERGP formulated by the Buhari administration. It begins by outlining the ERGP's objectives and examining priority areas. It subsequently presents the achievements of President Buhari's administration on economic recovery. The chapter additionally offers insights into global partnerships that have engendered economic restoration and highlights the challenges to economic recovery. The chapter achieves its objectives through the methodology of a literature review and rapid online sourcing of qualitative data.

### **Objectives of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan**

The economic recovery and growth plan articulated by President Buhari's administration was specifically designed to achieve three major objectives. Firstly, the EGRP was designed to restore growth by achieving microeconomic stability and economic diversification. The Plan aimed to achieve this first objective by deriving fiscal stimulus through increased government spending, ensuring monetary stability, improving the balance of trade and focusing on key sectors driving and enabling growth. Those sectors included agriculture; energy; Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); and manufacturing and services (Ata-Agboni, 2019; Templers, 2017). Also, the Plan sought to leverage information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the ease of doing business (Templers, 2017).

Secondly, the ERGP aimed to invest in the Nigerian people through provisions that support the economically disadvantaged; create jobs; improve the accessibility, affordability, and quality of healthcare across the country; and guarantee improved human capital through access to basic quality education for all (Templers, 2017). Thirdly, the ERGP aimed to build a globally competitive economy, increase investment in infrastructure through robust private arrangements, simplify and improve the legal and regulatory framework for doing business in Nigeria, and promote digital-led growth through the expansion of broadband coverage (Ata-Agboni, 2019; Templers, 2017).

Unlike previous economic plans, the ERGP was anchored from the outset in focused implementation for the delivery of its provisions. More than ever before, there was a strong political determination, commitment and will at the highest level to re-invigorate the economy and invest in people. The Plan also outlined new initiatives for scaling up oil production to 2.5 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2020 and revamping local refineries to reduce petroleum product exports by 60 percent by 2018 (Templers, 2017). Other approaches adopted for achieving the EGRP included the privatisation of selected public enterprises and assets and environmental restoration in the Niger Delta, which demonstrated the federal government's commitment to environmental sustainability.

### **Execution Priorities of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan**

The ERGP focused on five priorities. These five priorities, which remained anchored in governance and delivery, and have been identified as critical to the successful implementation of the Plan, are described below.

*Macroeconomic Stability:* To achieve the desired growth and economic aspiration, the ERGP proposed that the prerequisite for economic recovery is a stable macroeconomic environment with low inflation, stable exchange rates and sustainable fiscal and external balances. Such an environment requires that money, trade and fiscal policies are well aligned to ensure coherence and effective coordination. This principle also provided for the acceleration of non-oil revenue through improved tax and customs administration, including the introduction of a tax on luxury items. This would help reduce the current dependence on crude oil and gas, ensuring a more diversified fiscal revenue base (Templers, 2017). In the Plan, the Central Bank of Nigeria proposed to work towards improving the operations of the foreign exchange market to enhance liquidity through an improved market, a determined exchange rate regime, and the provision of adequate credit to the private sector at low lending costs. In addition, the ERGP allowed for privatising selected

public enterprises and assets, especially in the oil and gas sector, in order to optimise their operational efficiency and reduce the fiscal burden on the government.

*Agriculture and Food Security:* The Plan proposed to prioritise food security as a critical national objective, with the goal of achieving self-sufficiency in rice and wheat by 2018 and 2019/2020 respectively. With the agricultural sector leading the way as the largest contributor to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016, the ERGP proposed to build on the SIP and similar former initiatives, encouraging private sector investment in agriculture (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017). According to the Plan's vision, investing in agriculture would guarantee food security and potentially drive job creation, which would save on the foreign exchange required for food imports. Successive harvests and value chains in agriculture should also help reduce inflation and promote economic diversification (Templers, 2017). Among the ERGP's expected beneficiaries was the mining sector, with the Plan proposing to establish an N200 billion solid minerals seed fund.

The establishment of that fund certainly offered renewed hope for improved access to finance for the industry's participants. In 2016 alone, over N55BN was disbursed by CBN to over 250,000 farmers under the Anchor Borrowers Scheme. About 80 percent of that disbursement went into rice production, further driving the nation's target of attaining self-sufficiency in that commodity by 2018 (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017). The number of the country's fertiliser-blending plants skyrocketed from 10 in 2015 to 142 in 2018, which had aided food sufficiency, as had the increase in the number of integrated rice mills, rising from 10 in 2015 to 80 a few years after (*The Guardian*, 2022).

*Ensure Energy (Power) and Petroleum Product Sufficiency:* The energy sector is fundamental to development across all other sectors of the economy. The ERGP addressed issues of energy from the perspective of electric power and the petroleum sector. The Plan

also articulated strategies to ensure stricter contract and regulatory compliance and overcome current challenges related to governance; funding; and the legal, regulatory, and pricing issues arising from generation, transmission and distribution. This principle aimed to optimise the delivery of at least 10 GW of operational capacity by 2020 and to improve the energy mix through greater use of renewable energy (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017; Templers, 2017). The ERGP also planned to increase power generation by optimising operational capacity, encouraging small-scale projects, building more capacity over the long term, and investing in transmission infrastructure.

*Transportation and Infrastructure:* The Plan focused on the provision of high-quality and sophisticated transport infrastructure through public-private partnerships with foreign investors. Given the scale of the investment required, working with the private sector would be critical and Nigeria's infrastructure could make a significant contribution towards building a competitive economy (Templers, 2017). Specifically, the Plan proposed establishing a road fund and leveraging an alternative mix of funding by issuing infrastructure and diaspora bonds (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017). This renewed drive of government towards investments in roads and railways demonstrated a strong determination to address Nigeria's transportation infrastructure deficit, which has long constrained both macro and micro businesses.

*Industrialisation Focusing on Small and Medium Scale Enterprises:* The strengthening of small-scale businesses and the promotion of industrialisation were priorities for economic recovery. The Plan proposed to generate 1.5 million jobs by 2020, promote exports, boost growth and upgrade the skills of MSMEs through unique innovations, whilst focusing on modern ICT products and services. One major strategy was to accelerate the implementation of the National Industrial Revolution Plan (NIRP) through economic zones. In the third quarter of 2016, the ICT sector grew by 9.26 percent. It

is expected that given investment in strengthening the sector, it offers enormous potential for further growth, especially from opportunities in the digital economy, including creative industries and their concomitant positive impact on the financial sector and tourism.

### **Achievements of the ERGP under President Muhammadu Buhari's Administration**

*Diversification of the Economy:* Under the ERGP, efforts were made to diversify the economy. Non-oil sectors contribute a significant share of the GDP of Nigeria. The biggest contributors are services (53.2 percent of the GDP, including retail and wholesale), agriculture (23.1 percent of GDP) and manufacturing (9.5 percent of GDP) (Deloitte Nigeria, 2018). Agricultural exports increased considerably. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2022), Nigeria exported agricultural goods worth over N84.21 billion in the third quarter of 2022. While that represents a 40.6 percent decline against the N41.77 billion generated in Q2 2022, it nevertheless marked a six percent increase compared to the N79.41 billion recorded for the corresponding period in 2021. Meanwhile, the crops that top the list of agricultural export in 2022 were cocoa, beans, sesame seeds and cashew nuts, which generated an aggregate sum of N262.99 billion, representing 0.8 percent of Nigeria's total exports.

Other non-oil sectors played significant roles in driving GDP growth, with agriculture and industry in the lead and services becoming increasingly important. This led to an expansion of sources of revenue and foreign exchange earnings.

*Increased Revenue Generation:* The economic recovery plan of President Buhari's administration generated an increase in non-oil revenue. Nigeria's third quarter 2022 figures showed that the non-oil sector dominated economic performance by contributing 94.34 percent to the nation's GDP (*This Day*, 12 December 2022).

Agriculture contributed 21.97 percent to nominal GDP. This figure is higher than the rates recorded for the fourth quarter of 2016 and lower than the third quarter of 2017 at 21.3 percent and 24.44 percent respectively. The annual growth rate recorded was 11.3 percent in 2017, as against 9.61 in 2016. In 2018, the N118.98 billion budgetary allocation was made to the agricultural sector (*This Day*, 12 December 2022). This value was N15 billion higher than N103 billion of the previous year. This development showed that the federal government's drive for economic diversification from oil to non-oil revenue yielded the desired results.

To stabilise the macroeconomic environment, the government introduced the Voluntary Asset and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS). Successful implementation of the VAIDS restored the efficiency of the country's tax system to some extent. For example, the chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service observed that a total of N20 billion (of a total of N305 billion) was realised from 62 corporate taxpayers whose assets came under the scheme within eight months of its implementation in 2018. There was also the introduction of the Importers and Exporters (I&E) FX window; this made Premia in the Foreign Exchange Market narrow in the post-I&E window era and though it was susceptible to intermittent FX demand, it remained relatively flat.

The country experienced sustained recovery from the recession, and as of Q4 of 2017, GDP growth was 1.9 percent. However, the Nigerian economy advanced 1.9 percent year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2017, accelerating from 1.4 percent growth in the prior period. That is the third consecutive quarter of expansion as well as the strongest since the fourth quarter of 2015. Also, headline inflation moderated with a downward trend for 14 consecutive months to 13.34 percent as of the first quarter of 2018, as compared with 18.33 percent in October 2016. Foreign reserves reached a five-year high of \$46 billion in Q1 2018, as stability was restored in oil-producing states through sustained dialogue with Niger Delta militants and rising crude oil prices (*Templars Law*, 2018).



*Sustained Crude Oil Production:* Crude oil production improved significantly. With a maximum production capacity of 2.5 million bpd in 2017, production increased from 1.4 million bpd in April to 1.7 million bpd and reached 1.8 million in 2018. The coronavirus pandemic reversed the gains in the sector in terms of production output and prices. But the situation soon began to change positively again. Crude oil prices increased from 2021 to 2022. Nigeria's crude oil production increased in December 2022 to an average of 1.23 million bpd from 1.18 million bpd in the previous months (*The Cable*, 2023). With the ERGP, the government worked to strengthen its position as a regional leader in the oil and gas sector. In an attempt to acknowledge the progress made in oil production, the Minister of State for Petroleum, Mr. Timipre Sylva, attributed the improvements in production in the last quarter of 2022 to collaborative efforts between security agencies and the government:

*We were here a few months ago with a charge and mandate from president Buhari to ensure [the] complete eradication of oil theft in the Niger Delta....We have seen a significant improvement, meaning that you [military and other security outfits] took the charge and mandate of the president seriously (6 January 2023, para. 4).*

Improvement in oil production in turn led to increased exports. In September 2022, Nigeria made the sum of NGN 1795 billion from export alone. Oil and gas are the chief export commodities driving Nigeria's growth and account for more than 91 percent of total exports.

*Improved Electricity Supply:* Since the launching of the ERGP, President Buhari's administration commissioned critical power projects under the Nigeria Electricity Grid Maintenance, Expansion, and Rehabilitation Programme. For example, the hydropower component of the Kashimbilla Multipurpose Dam was redesigned

and upgraded from six megawatts to 40 megawatts. Those figures pertained to phase one of the evacuation infrastructure, covering 245km of the 132kv transmission lines and three substations, connecting Takum, Wukarri, Rafin Kada, Douga and Yndev in Taraba and Benue States (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017). Some of these headline projects in the power sector were executed in partnership with the World Bank and African Development Bank (ADB) to boost the economy. The government implemented several power projects and programmes with facilities to eliminate the gap between transmission capacity and supplied energy. Between 2015 and 2022, a total of 105 power transformer projects were completed with a capacity of 6,216 Mega Volt Ampere (MVA) to the grid. Accordingly, power generation increased from 3,500MW to approximately 5,000MW, with an improved transmission and generation capacity of about 7,000. The highest peak generated came in 2017 with 5,222.3 MW. The country as at 2022 was generating 8,000 megawatts on-grid and above 3,000 megawatts of industrial captive off-grid (News Agency of Nigeria, 2022).

It is important to note here that the 700-megawatt Zungeru Hydro Power Plant, which was first envisioned as part of the plan to achieve 4000 additional megawatts by 2023, was completed. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that the power sector contributed 78 percent year-on-year growth to the Nigerian economy, stressing that with support from IAEA, the second quarter experienced a growth rate of five percent in 2021 (NBS, 2022). In recounting the landmark achievements of the Buhari administration in 2022, the Minister of Power, Mr. Abubakar Aliyu, noted:

*In the first half of 2022, NESI recorded its highest revenue in eight years at N393 billion. In the recent October billing cycle, the sector recorded a new milestone with the highest-ever collections in history at 74 billion. The ministry is not unmindful of the lower-income Nigerians....the ministry would continue to protect lower-income earners by*

*maintaining subsidies for lower tariff bands while allowing those with adequate power to pay relatively higher. President Buhari-led administration will bequeath about 22,000 megawatts [of] installed capacity of electricity by 2023 (Vanguard, 2022).*

Another milestone achievement, the Azikel Refinery in Bayelsa State was commissioned; the first modular refinery, with a production capacity of 12,000 bpd. Shell resumed operation of the 250,000bpd Forcados terminal. Also, the Power Sector Recovery Programme was launched, resulting in multiple power plant construction contracts.

*Increased Wealth Creation:* The EGRP of the Buhari administration provided substantial support to promote local manufacturing. The nation manufactured and exported finished products at an exponential rate. The government promoted the production and consumption of locally made goods and created 750,000 jobs for youths, helping to close the country's unemployment gap (News Agency of Nigeria, 2022). The specific objective of investing in people was achieved through increased job creation and youth empowerment. With its investments in people, SIP is the largest and most ambitious social safety net programme in the history of Nigeria, with 12 million direct beneficiaries and 540,000 N-Power beneficiaries having been deployed. A study by Nwokoma et al. (2021) indicates that 38 percent of Nigerians enjoyed social inclusion through the federal government Trader Moni programme in Lagos State alone.

*Strengthened Coordination of Monetary, Fiscal and Trade Policies:* Buhari's ERGP empowered monetary authorities to implement policies to ensure price stability and also strengthened the Central Bank's independence. Sustained implementation of good fiscal monetary policies enabled the country to exit the recession in the first quarter of 2021 (Vanguard, 2021). The tasks of budgeting and

policy coordination, which previous governments left in the hands of *ad hoc* economic management teams, are best undertaken by the president. With the 2020 budget, the federal budget was restored to the January-December cycle for the first time in 12 years. This enhanced the government's capacity to finance the budget and expand available sources of financing along with the cost of debt servicing. It also deepened collaboration between Federal and State Inland Revenue Services in financial management. One major milestone is the increase in Nigeria's Tax Net (i.e. the number of paying versus non-paying individuals and companies in the tax database) from 13 million as of 2015 to 35 million at the end of 2018, and 45 million by the end of 2019.

*Achievements in Global Partnerships for Economic Recovery*

Like its predecessors, the Buhari administration leveraged existing foreign policy and economic relations to attract investors and other international business and development partners to do business in the country (Saleh, 2019). For example, relations between Nigeria and the United States were rekindled and on 20 July 2016, a meeting that combined diplomatic objectives with economic ones took place between Presidents Obama and Buhari at the Oval Office in Washington DC. Also, barely one year after he assumed office, President Buhari visited China. The visit sought to improve trade, economic, and diplomatic relations between the two countries. The visit led to the signing of a framework to enhance infrastructural development and industrial activities in Nigeria between the National Development Reform Commission of China and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of Nigeria (Bello et al., 2017).

The result of a deepened global partnership led to the establishment of the Nigerian Office for Trade Negotiations by the Economic Management Team (EMT). The MOTN produced Nigeria's first Annual National Trade Report, which, for the first time in Nigerian history, compiled a comprehensive database of Nigerian Trade Deals and Agreements. Also, under the Renminbi-Naira Swap

Agreement between the People's Bank of China and the Central Bank of Nigeria, on 27 April 2018, the CBN signed a three-year bilateral currency-swap agreement with the People's Bank of China (PBoC) worth Chinese Yuan (CNY) 15 billion – equivalent to N720.00 billion or US\$2.5 billion (*This Day*, 16 March 2021).

### **Challenges to the Implementation of ERGP**

Many setbacks limited the effective implementation of the ERGP. For instance, in stabilising the microeconomic climate through market liquidity, it was unclear whether efforts to increase market liquidity could be sustained throughout the ERGP's lifespan. The Plan was based on the assumption that there might be renewed optimism and an increased likelihood of success if CBN continued its financial and monetary measures (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017). Also, some argue that the privatisation of public enterprises and assets had rarely benefitted Nigeria and her citizens. Previous governments privatised various power assets and significant stakes were purchased by private investors. Yet, despite some legitimate concerns about the privatisation process in the power sector, it may be unreasonable to see that process as yielding predictions about the chance that privatising selected oil and gas assets under the ERGP could succeed. There was some doubt as to whether the privatisation would involve a total sale of assets or a partial sale, with the government retaining a significant stake in the assets (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017). Consequently, investors may be concerned with the degree of government support during the privatisation period.

Although Nigeria's agricultural sector possesses enormous potential for increased revenue generation and wealth creation, it was uncertain whether the ERGP could achieve significant success in agriculture and food security, given the outcomes of similar agricultural programmes in the past. Past initiatives were largely plagued by improper implementation and lack of continuity. Also, the absence of any plan of action for implementing the ERGP constituted a serious setback to realising its second goal.

While the Plan's goals relating to the power sector were laudable, the last few years witnessed some challenges across the value chain, including funding and debt-driven liquidity concerns. The challenges included pricing, non-reflective electricity tariffs and an inadequate regulatory framework, as well as the lack of clear and simple legal regulations (Ministry of Budget and Planning, 2017). It was suggested that addressing these issues within the Plan's projected time frame might be unrealistic. There were also concerns about the effective administration of the road fund (if and when implemented). Other challenges included insecurity, funding, budget implementation, the fluctuation in global oil prices, and the increasing use of alternative energy sources (Deloitte Nigeria, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

The EGRP's objectives are laudable, as are the innovative and sustainable approaches adopted in implementing it. This study has shown that the Plan has yielded positive results for priority areas such as power sufficiency, agriculture, narrowing the foreign exchange gap, and GDP growth. The key drivers of the EGRP are oil prices, production volumes, political stability, and macroeconomic policies. While some of its targets appeared quite ambitious, as a work in progress the EGRP has been robust and impactful. Nevertheless, if the Plan is to be optimised, there are still challenges to confront. The tracking of goals, activities, and outcomes will ensure that the recovery plan translates into real growth of the economy and tangible benefits for citizens.

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# 15

## **Winning a Second Term: The Context and Dynamics of Re-Election**

**Gbenga Adeosun**

### **Introduction**

President Muhammadu Buhari fully exercised his constitutional right to seek a second term in office by embarking on a re-election bid to retain his office as President of Nigeria in the 2019 electoral cycle. As with every general election since 1999, the 2019 general elections had their own unique chronology of events and memorable moments. The campaign activities were competitive, closely comparable with the 2015 presidential elections, which hitherto was unarguably the most keenly contested election since the return of democratic governance.

It goes without saying that the epochal defeat of incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan in the 2015 elections was a landmark event in Nigeria's contemporary political history. Indeed, it established the belief that Nigerian democracy has matured, with citizens awake and ready to hold leaders accountable; actively ready to explore alternative options when dissatisfied with the performance of any incumbent government. Buhari, the victorious gladiator who delivered the fatal blow that ousted Jonathan in 2015, was poignantly aware of the fact that gone are the days when a sitting president was guaranteed a second term in office just by mere power of incumbency. Nowadays, winning re-election must be

earned as a result of positive perceptions of excellent service delivery among citizens during the first term in office. The second term chase was a quadrennial chance for the jury (citizens) to deliver a verdict on the first term performance of a sitting government.

This chapter highlights the order of events leading up to the 2019 elections, with a focus on the presidential contest. It provides a review of campaign activities, pre-election matters, the election itself, post-election events and the renewed service delivery drive of the Buhari administration in its quest to establish a lasting legacy in the annals of Nigerian politics.

### **Scorecard of Buhari's First Term in Office**

The Buhari administration rose to power in 2015 on the back of three cardinal campaign promises (to Nigerians), which effectively underscored how his government was expected to be appraised. These promises were economic revival and prosperity; fighting corruption to a standstill; and providing lasting solutions to widespread security challenges. In 2018, three years into the administration's first term — and the year that 2019 politicking was in full swing — public discourse centred on certain issues, including the fact that Nigeria had just exited an economic recession that plagued Buhari's first term in office. There was appreciable public opinion suggesting that some progress had been made in the fight against insurgency and graft. However, there were also feelings that security challenges had mutated from the Boko Haram insurgency to additional forms of herder-farmer conflicts, alongside a scourge of banditry, especially in the northwest region.

Despite some progress recorded in other areas, the Buhari administration had a mountain to climb in seeking to renew its mandate with Nigerians. Several mouthpieces of the administration and Buhari himself strived hard to focus on the positives and deflect the focus from perceived shortfalls across different areas.

There was wide acknowledgement that the economic recession that nearly brought Nigeria's economy to its knees in



2016 was triggered by the preceding years of economic mismanagement, a global fall in the price of crude oil and the renewed violent militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, which significantly reduced the volume of daily oil exports. The overall decline in oil receipts took a huge toll on government finances, which depended heavily on the oil industry. The resultant cash crunch and drop in FAAC allocations to the federal, state and local governments led to unfavourable multiplier effects that resulted in widespread economic hardships. There was also a rise in the prices of items such as rice, bread, tomato paste, spaghetti, beans and other staples, which was the result of certain government policies aimed at reducing reliance on imports. According to President Buhari, 'we must eat what we grow and grow what we eat'. The pains in the medium term were deemed necessary as a sacrifice for future food security and sustainability. Also, at the outset of the Buhari administration, the president embarked on a series of financial bail-out packages to state governments, to ameliorate the economic distress of citizens (*Premium Times*, 6 July 2015).

In June 2018, The World Poverty Clock showed that Nigeria had become the country with the highest number of poor people in the world, overtaking India, whose population is seven times larger than Nigeria's. The report stated that 86.9 million Nigerians were living in extreme poverty and that every six minutes one Nigerian would go into extreme poverty. Consequently, by the end of 2018, a total of 90.8 million Nigerians were in extreme poverty (*Vanguard*, 25 June 2018). This was a sobering moment for the Buhari government, which, despite its multi-billion social investment programmes and commitment to human capital development, had to witness more citizens falling into the poverty trap under its administration.

In the fight against corruption, the Buhari administration restored a general attitude of fiscal prudence and public accountability upon assuming office. The anti-graft agencies were rejigged for optimal performance, which stood in sharp contrast against the pedestrian and shadowy role they played under the

‘stealing is not corruption’ atmosphere of the previous government (*Premium Times*, 6 July 2015). Buhari had rightly observed that the slow-paced role of the judiciary and the protracted legal process were the reasons for the low conviction rate in the war against graft (*Daily Post*, 24 November 2015).

To mention a few individuals, Diezani Alison-Madueke, who was Minister of Petroleum Resources in the previous administration, was accused of bribery, fraud, misuse of public funds and money laundering cases in Nigeria, Britain, Italy and the United States, which involved billions of dollars being siphoned from oil deals and state accounts. There were other cases. The EFCC uncovered \$43 million in cash during an apartment raid in Lagos. After the discovery, Nigeria’s National Intelligence Agency (NIA) claimed that the money belonged to the organisation, prompting President Muhammadu Buhari to suspend its head, Ayodele Oke. Also suspended was Lawal Babachir, Secretary to the Federal Government, following his involvement in the diversion of funds meant to provide relief for internally displaced people in the northeast (*ThisDay*, 19 April 2017).

Furthermore, startling revelations trailed the unravelling of the arms scandal through which the Jonathan administration serially abused the Office of the National Security Adviser and its colluding occupant, Col. Sambo Dasuki, who helped divert a staggering sum of \$2.1 billion earmarked for the fight against insurgency into the 2015 pre-election activities of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (Ayitogo, 29 November 2018). The deep involvement of top-ranking state and non-state individuals in the arms scandal proved to be a validation for the majority of Nigerians who had voted in Buhari, the anti-corruption champion.

The security front was one where the Buhari administration faced some backlash. Although major gains were recorded from late 2016 to 2017, the nation suffered some reversals of its military victories. It was not for a lack of efforts on the part of the military or government, since the appearance of global terror groups such as ISWAP led to even more insurgents joining Boko Haram, which in

turn led to the resuscitation of insurgency in the north-eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.

The challenges of climate change and the shrinkage of the Lake Chad basin led to an influx of nomads from neighbouring countries moving into Nigeria, which caused frequent confrontations between these nomadic herders and indigenous land owners, particularly in the Middle Belt, where the rights of access to natural resources precipitated bloody conflicts. Herders encroached on farmlands; farmers encroached on traditional grazing routes; and conflicts were worsened. Banditry also reared its ugly head, wreaking ruinous havoc from Kaduna to Zamfara. Even the president's home state of Katsina was not spared from the poisonous fangs of kidnapping. Local and international merchants of war were also at hand to distort and magnify every conflict that unfolded. The new wave of insecurity seriously threatened to scupper Buhari's chance of re-election, bearing in mind that one of the major reasons he was elected in 2015 was due to his lofty promises to bring his military experience to bear in decisively dealing with the Boko Haram insurgency.

Despite the speed bumps that affected the smoothness of his first term in office, there was the general public belief that, based on the president's body language, and barring any major political upset in the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Buhari would definitely seek a second term in office. Considering that he thrice vied for the apex office unsuccessfully before eventually clinching it in 2015, expectations were rife that he would strive to consolidate his hard-earned presidency and also improve on his first term performance by seeking to serve another term.

### **Buhari's Unopposed Nomination**

In March 2017, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced dates for the 2019 general elections. In a statement posted on its website, the electoral commission said it was making the announcements well ahead to ensure certainty in the dates for elections, and to allow for proper planning by the

commission, political parties, security agencies, candidates and all stakeholders. To that extent, the Presidential and National Assembly elections were slated for Saturday, 16th February 2019, while the Governorship/State Assembly/Federal Capital Territory Area Council elections were fixed for Saturday 2 March 2019 (*inecnigeria.org*).

As of March 2018, the ruling APC had passed a vote of confidence in President Buhari. Whilst arrangements had started amongst politicians for the elections, all eyes remained on Buhari, who remained quiet about whether or not he would seek re-election. All such speculations were laid to rest on Monday, 9 April 2018 when Buhari officially declared that he was going to contest for a second term in office. He made the declaration at the National Executive Committee meeting of the APC. The meeting had Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, Senate President Bukola Saraki, Speaker Yakubu Dogara and 24 APC state governors in attendance. His loyalists, APC governors, as well as the chieftains of the ruling party all expressed their support for him to go for a second term in office (*ThisDay*, 9 April 2018).

At the NEC meeting, the president explained why he would seek re-election in 2019, saying he was responding to the clamour by Nigerians to re-contest in 2019, adding that he wanted to give the NEC members the honour of notifying them first.

As expected, reactions trailed the president's official declaration, and the main opposition PDP said the declaration by the president for a second term is an internal affair of his party, the APC. They stated that the declaration had only placed the president among the ranks of aspirants seeking to become president and that until Buhari became the candidate of the APC, the PDP would not spend precious time on a mere showing of interest (*The Punch*, 10 April 2018).

Furthermore, the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) said that Buhari had nothing to show Nigerians in terms of concrete achievements to make him seek re-election. In a statement, the CNPP maintained that Nigeria should be thinking of electing a

patriotic politician who understands economic dynamics and inclusive governance. Then Ekiti State Governor, Ayo Fayose, who was a vocal critic of Buhari during his first term in office, decried the announcement, saying Nigeria does not need Buhari as a leader in 2019, and that his declaration of second-term ambition was dead on arrival. Many other mixed reactions with varying opinions from socio-political groups, cultural organisations, and politicians followed in the days after (*Punchng*, 10 April 2018).

On 5 September 2018, a day after the APC made public the schedule and cost for its primary elections, President Buhari became the first aspirant to obtain the nomination form. The form, sold for N45 million, was purchased on his behalf by one of his support groups, the Nigerian Consolidation Ambassadors Network. The coordinator of the group, Sanusi Musa, who led group members to buy the form, said the president was not a multi-millionaire cash-wise, 'but has millions of supporters who are always ready to come together to pay for his nomination form' (*Vanguard*, 6 September 2018).

Although some party members, such as Dr S. K. C. Ogbonnia, Chief Charles Udeogaranya and Alhaji Mumakai-Unagha, tried to aspire for the office of the president under the APC in 2019, it was a normal routine for first-term presidents to emerge unopposed as party candidates, and results from the APC Convention held at Eagles Square in Abuja on October 6, 2018, emphatically revealed that approximately 7,000 delegates affirmed the president as the party's flagbearer. The move came eight days after the party held its presidential primary in the 36 states of the federation and the FCT. Unlike in 2014, when the APC used an indirect primary to choose its presidential candidate, the party settled for a direct primary this time around, allowing all members of the party to serve a role in choosing candidates. At the convention, it was affirmed that Buhari, who was the sole aspirant in the race, received 14,842,072 votes in the primaries.

Former Governor of Ekiti State, Dr Kayode Fayemi, who handled the task of confirming the votes, said 'as the results from

the various states were confirmed at the convention, in accordance with the Electoral Act 2010 as amended, President Muhammadu Buhari was thereby confirmed as the winner of the direct presidential primary of the APC'. He added that consequently, his name would be forwarded to the Independent National Electoral Commission as the candidate of the party in the 2019 presidential election. In his acceptance speech to be the party's flagbearer, President Buhari thanked all eligible candidates who decided not to challenge him in the primary. He also thanked members of the party for supporting him (*The Punch*, 7 October 2018).

### **A Charged Political Space**

After losing the presidential election in 2015, the PDP found itself in unfamiliar terrain as an opposition party, and the unwanted position shook it to its very core. In the early days of the Buhari administration, the PDP could not carry out the role of an opposition party effectively, leaving the likes of Ayo Fayose and other vitriolic mouthpieces taking on the role recklessly without compunction. In addition, the party faced a turbulent leadership tussle that threatened to obliterate it from existence. Ali Modu Sheriff's emergence as party chairman in February 2016 proved to be a Trojan horse since he nearly triggered the party into an implosion. Luckily for the party, judicial interventions terminated Sheriff's disruptive and crisis-ridden leadership period, and Ahmed Makarfi stepped in as interim chairman, ushering in a much-needed period of stability and direction within the party. Prince Uche Secondus later emerged as substantive party chairman in December 2017 and the PDP got back into full swing. Its rank was also bolstered with the return of defectors such as former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Senate President Bukola Saraki, Speaker Yakubu Dogara, former Speaker Aminu Tambuwal and others who had fallen out with the APC.

Unlike the APC, which had a pretty straightforward presidential primary, the PDP's primary was fiercely contested. The build-up to the event featured intense political horse-trading and

side negotiations by candidates and their backers to edge out the internal competition. The primary election was held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, between 6 and 7 October 2018, and the aspirants who took part were as follows: former Vice President Atiku Abubakar; Governor of Sokoto State, Aminu Tambuwal; Governor of Gombe State, Ibrahim Dankwambo; former governor of Kano State, Senator Rabiu Kwankwaso; former governor of Sokoto State, Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa; President of the Senate, Senator Bukola Saraki; former President of the Senate, David Mark; former Minister of Special Duties, Alhaji Tanimu Turaki (SAN); former governor of Plateau State, Jonah Jang; former governor of Kaduna State, Senator Ahmed Makarfi; former governor of Jigawa State, Alhaji Sule Lamido; Dr Datti Baba-Ahmed.

Atiku Abubakar ultimately emerged as the winner, with 1,532 votes. He was followed by Aminu Tambuwal with 693 votes, while Bukola Saraki took third position with 317 votes (*Daily Trust*, 7 October 2018). It was instructive that the top three contestants in the PDP primaries were in Buhari's camp for the 2015 elections, and all contributed in one way or the other to reducing the PDP's chance of victory in that particular election.

### **The 2019 Campaign Train and Thorny Issues**

As the campaign season for the 2019 elections officially began on 18 November 2018, the ruling APC released its campaign roadmap. The roadmap, themed *Next Level*, was geared toward seeking re-election for the Buhari/Osinbajo ticket across all 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory. The thrust of the Next Level campaign admitted that while the road may have been difficult over the last three and a half years, the Buhari administration had laid the foundation for a strong, stable and prosperous country for the majority of Nigerians, and had positioned the administration in a good stead for the next level of building a stronger nation.

The *Next Level* campaign offered a glowing appraisal of Buhari's efforts at engendering national development in his first term and gave more commitment to several key areas marked for

developmental strides, such as enhancing security, fighting graft, implementing agricultural reforms, entrenching economic prosperity, undertaking capital projects for infrastructure development, consolidating social investment programmes, leveraging ICT frontiers, boosting local production, and entrenching quality education, amongst others (*Daily Post*, 19 November 2018).

On 28 December 2018, the APC released its presidential campaign council, which was chaired by Buhari and co-chaired by Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Vice President Yemi Osinbajo and Comrade Adams Oshiomhole (APC national chairman) served as deputy chairmen, whilst Hon. Rotimi Amaechi was the director-general. Different names also headed the various campaign directorates (Legal, Field Operations, Communications, Mobilisation, Logistics, Research, Zonal Heads etc.). Business tycoons Aliko Dangote and Femi Otedola featured in the Special Advisory Committee to Buhari, which also included Yemi Osinbajo, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Senator Ahmed Lawan (Senate Leader), Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila (Leader of the House) and Comrade Adams Oshiomhole. Other prominent members were Chief Bisi Akande, Chief John Oyegun, Senator Ita Enang, all serving APC senators, all serving APC governors and former governors, all APC members of the House of Representatives and all members of the National Working Committee of the APC (*Daily Post*, 28 December 2018).

Earlier, in November 2018, the PDP inaugurated a 154-member presidential campaign council to steer the affairs of the PDP's nationwide campaigns. Bukola Saraki was the council's director-general. Speaking at the inauguration, PDP candidate Atiku Abubakar accused the ruling APC of resorting to personal attacks due to what he described as the failure of the Buhari administration. According to him, 'the APC government is resorting to a campaign of personal attacks because of their failure in 4 years'. (*Premium Times*, 29 November 2018).

On 12 October 2018, Atiku Abubakar of the PDP announced former Anambra State Governor, Peter Obi, as his running mate for the 2019 general election. The PDP announced its area of campaign



focus, affirmed that its campaign would be issue-based and promised not to allow itself to be dragged into dirty politics by the APC. It said the campaign would focus on issues that have a direct bearing on the welfare of Nigerians who, he said, had suffered enough hardship, pain and anguish under Buhari's first term. The party's campaign would thus be strategically centralised and streamlined to ensure effectiveness and responsibility in the content of messages, dissemination and general engagement with Nigerians at all levels. During the course of the electoral campaigns, the APC Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) Director of Strategic Communications, Festus Keyamo, and the rest of his team regularly featured on television and media programmes, exchanging verbal political arguments with their PDP counterparts, headed by Kola Ologbondiyan. The defence of the activities, agenda and programmes of their respective principals set the tone for another keenly contested political battle.

The APC later set out campaign plans that saw President Buhari visiting all 36 states of the federation, with a grand finale rally in the FCT. The rhetoric and political atmosphere in the days leading up to the elections were less hostile when compared to the 2015 elections, which were marred by heated campaigns of calumny of which both APC and PDP were guilty. This time, it was mutually respectful since Buhari, Atiku and their running mates attended a publicly televised interview session together where they were thoroughly grilled on issues, and both candidates laid out their respective programmes to be implemented when elected.

### **Furore Surrounding Buhari's Non-signing of the Amended Electoral Bill**

One major issue that dominated the political space a few months before the elections was the contentious Electoral Act Amendment Bill. In 2018 alone, Buhari rejected the proposed amendments to the Electoral Act four times. For the four times he withheld assent, the reasons he gave included irregularities in drafting issues, the sequence of elections and the phrasing of words in parts of the then-

proposed bill. Many politicians, especially leaders of the main opposition PDP, called on the president to assent to the bill before the 2019 polls. The fourth and final refusal before the election came in December 2018 via a letter to both chambers of the National Assembly in which Buhari stated that passing a new bill with elections so close could create doubts about the legislation used to govern the process.

Among other reasons, the letter stated that such a new act might pose a legislative encumbrance for the 2019 elections, which were less than two months away. He also highlighted some parts of the bill that he said needed more robust legislative actions. Noting that his decision was taken in the best interest of the country and her democracy, Buhari asked the National Assembly specifically to state in the bill that the Electoral Act would come into effect after the 2019 General Elections (*Premium Times*, 7 December 2018). Therefore, the bill was not passed into law before that election, drawing the condemnation and ire of opposition parties and other sections of the public who questioned the president's commitment to electoral reforms.

### **Justice Onnoghen's Sack and Subsequent Political Interpretations**

Another remarkable event that occurred very close to the election was the suspension of the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Walter Onnoghen, on 25 January 2019 by President Buhari. He suspended Onnoghen and swore-in an Acting Chief Justice of Nigeria, pending the completion of Onnoghen's trial at the Code of Conduct Tribunal. Onnoghen was facing trial over an alleged false asset declaration brought against him by the Code of Conduct Bureau. The Attorney General, Abubakar Malami, had demanded that Onnoghen should resign from office following the several accusations against him. Buhari said he removed Onnoghen based on an order of the Tribunal dated 23 January 2019. The new CJN sworn-in was Ibrahim Tanko Mohammed, who was the most senior Supreme Court Justice (*The Cable*, 25 January 2019). Earlier that day, Onnoghen had

announced plans to swear-in members of the various 2019 election petition tribunals the next day, 26 January.

According to the president, Onnoghen's own written admission to the charges that he indeed failed to follow the spirit and letter of the law in declaring his assets cited 'mistakes' and 'forgetfulness', which are unknown to Nigerian law as defences in the circumstances of his case. The president stated that one would have expected that with his moral authority so badly wounded by these serious charges of corruption — and more so by his own written admission — Justice Onnoghen would have acted quickly to spare the Judicial Arm further disrespect by removing himself from superintending over it while his trial lasted. According to President Buhari, 'Whether deliberately or inadvertently, we have all seen the full weight of the Chief Justice of Nigeria descend on the tender head of one of the organs of justice under his control. There is simply no way that the officers of that court, from the Chairman to the bailiffs, could have pretended to be unaffected by the influence of the leader of the Judiciary' (*Guardian*, 25 January 2019). For the president, unexplained and undeclared wealth in foreign bank accounts constituted a big issue.

However, Buhari's decision to suspend Onnoghen was in contravention of a court order restraining the President, the Code of Conduct Tribunal and the Attorney General of the Federation from removing Onnoghen. According to court documents, Justice I. E. Ekwo of a Federal High Court sitting in Abuja had restrained all parties from suspending or removing the CJN (*The Guardian*, 25 January 2019).

Critics were quick to conclude that the real reason Buhari could not wait for the court to determine the fate of the CJN had to do more with possible litigations arising from the 2019 election than the reasons stated by the government. They pointed to the fact that Onnoghen was billed to inaugurate judges that would have adjudicated over the conduct of the 2019 elections in the country as irrefutable evidence of this. The suspended judge had fixed the next day for the inauguration of the election petition panels. Election

panellists to be sworn-in at the Supreme Court included 250 judges who would sit on the election panels. The panels comprise National Assembly Election Petition Tribunals, Governorship Election Petition Tribunals and State Assembly Election Petition Tribunals. Onnoghen's sudden removal was seen as being aimed at either stopping the event or removing some judges from the list.

The polity was instantly awash with a barrage of reactions that trailed the suspension. Many legal experts maintained that despite the validity of Buhari's claims, the National Judicial Council remained the only body empowered by the Constitution to suspend the CJN since no individual, no matter how highly placed, can remove the Chief Justice of Nigeria. It re-echoed negative reactions from legal practitioners after President Buhari stated at a Nigerian Bar Association Conference in August 2018 that 'his administration would continue to place the nation's security and national interest above the rule of law' (*Vanguard*, 27 August 2018).

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) similarly demanded the immediate reversal of the suspension. The NBA described Buhari's action as a coup against the Nigerian judiciary and 'unequivocally rejected and condemned that action and the evident suspension of the Nigerian Constitution by the executive arm of the federal government'. It further said that the action of the executive portends a slide into anarchy and the complete deconstruction of the rule of law and due process, since it amounts to an absolute breach of the Constitution and the usurpation of the powers of the Senate and the National Judicial Council (*The Punch*, 26 January 2019).

Despite the widespread outcry that trailed the move, the suspension stood, and that marked the end of Onnoghen's sojourn as the Chief Justice of Nigeria. He reappeared sometime in March 2021 at a book launch and spoke publicly for the first time since his removal from office, giving his own account of events and attributing his suspension to deep political machinations. He stressed that Nigeria as a nation may not record any meaningful achievement until they can free the nation's judiciary from the stranglehold of politicians. Onnoghen revealed that prior to his

removal, he was accused by the presidency of having met with the PDP flagbearer, Atiku Abubakar, in Dubai to prepare for the 2019 elections and alluded that purported scheming between him and Atiku was the foundation of his ousting from office. According to Onnoghen, the rumour was thick and spread fast, but he decided not to react to it because he never travelled to Dubai or held any meeting with anybody — including Atiku. He said that he was surprised that despite the fact that the federal government had all the tools to investigate the allegation of the rumoured meeting with Atiku, it never did so, instead opting to go after him and his office (*This Daylive*, 19 March 2021).

### **The INEC's Late Postponement of the Elections**

A major disruption to the 2019 election occurred in the early hours of 16 February, which was the day the presidential and National Assembly elections were to be held, as INEC decided to postpone the elections. The shock announcement by INEC chairman, Mahmood Yakubu, at the commission's headquarters in Abuja came hours before Nigerians were slated to head to the polling units. It came moments after many media outfits reported that serious logistic challenges in some parts of the country may force the commission to delay the elections. The new dates given for the elections were 23 February for the presidential and National Assembly elections and 9 March for the governorship and State Assemblies elections (*Premium Times*, 16 February 2019).

As expected, many Nigerians were disappointed with the abrupt rescheduling and vociferously condemned the late postponement, accusing the commission of insensitivity and disruption and highlighting the widespread inconvenience its decision had caused millions of Nigerians. At a news conference later that day, Yakubu said the commission had been involved in large-scale operations in preparation for the polls and that it was thus not unexpected that such an incredible national mobilisation of men and materials could encounter operational challenges. He listed the key challenges as delays in delivering ballot papers and

result sheets, occasioned in part by flight challenges due to bad weather. He also pointed out that apart from the logistical challenges, there were attempts to sabotage the commission's preparations, listing fire outbreaks at INEC facilities that destroyed smart card readers and voters' cards. He, however, assured that that despite those hindrances, the commission rapidly recovered by arranging to transport available card readers from elsewhere. He finally stressed that if the polls had gone ahead, it would have meant some states starting well ahead of others, with the implication of the elections being staggered. Conclusively, Yakubu stated that the deferment would allow the INEC to address identified challenges for the successful delivery of free, fair and credible elections. (*Premium Times*, 16 February 2019).

### **Buhari's Electoral Triumph and Inauguration**

The presidential election eventually took place on 23 February 2019. However, in some places, voting was delayed until 24 February due to contingencies. The previous year, Buhari had proposed N242.45 billion to the National Assembly for the elections, making it the most expensive election in Nigeria's history. The money was shared between the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and five other security agencies that police elections. The electoral umpire received a total of N190 billion, representing 73.51% of the proposed amount, while the remaining N52.45 billion (26.49%) went to the security agencies that would police the voting process. The breakdown showed that the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) was allocated N4.28 billion, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) N3.57 billion, the Nigeria Police Force N30.54 billion, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) N2.63 billion, and the Directorate of State Security (DSS) N12.21 billion (*Daily Trust*, 3 August 2018).

A total of 73 political parties contested the presidential election and the total registered voters amounted to 82,344,107; however, the total number of votes obtained on election day was 28,614,190, equalling a 34.5% turnout rate. Of these votes,

27,324,583 were valid and 1,289,607 were invalid. Following the collation, the results of the presidential election were announced in the early hours of 27 February 2019 by the INEC, which positioned President Buhari of the APC as the winner. Buhari received a total of 15,191,847 votes, which was 55.6% of the total valid votes, and he won 19 states. Meanwhile, his main challenger, Atiku Abubakar of the PDP, received 11,262,978 votes (41.2% of total valid votes), winning 17 states and the FCT. Buhari thus satisfied the constitutional requirement of obtaining 25% of the total votes in 34 states and the FCT. He only missed the mark in two states: Enugu and Anambra (*inecnigeria.org*, 27 February 2019). Many local and international election observers said the elections were largely peaceful and conducive for the conduct of credible elections. The electoral commission also described the elections as mostly peaceful. On the contrary, US-based organisation, Freedom House, severely criticised the conduct, saying it was marred by irregularities and intimidation (*Albuquerque Journal, Freedomhouse.org*). There was no question though that Freedom House is a partisan agency.

On the same day (27 February) that results were announced, President Buhari and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo were presented with certificates of return by the INEC at the International Conference Centre (ICC) in Abuja. The certificate was presented to the President by the Returning Officer of the election, who was also the Chairman of INEC, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu.

Speaking at the event, the president assured Nigerians that they would soon see a country moving to the next level, as the APC-led administration consolidates its accomplishments. Buhari also pledged to continue to engage all parties, as his administration would be operating an open government for the general progress of the country. He vowed to continue the fight against corruption, saying that mismanagement and misappropriation of public wealth would not be tolerated. The president, who thanked God for the electoral victory, reiterated his call on all APC supporters not to

gloat or demean the opposition, saying that 'victory is enough reward for your efforts' (*Vanguard*, 27 February 2019).

In his reaction to the election results, Atiku Abubakar of the PDP rejected the outcome, saying there were manifest and premeditated malpractices in many states that negated the announced results. He made references to the statistical incredulity of states ravaged by insurgency generating much higher voter turnouts than peaceful states, while also alluding to militarisation and suppression of votes in PDP strongholds. Consequently, he declared that he would challenge the results in court. Regardless, President Buhari and his vice were sworn-in for a second four-year term on May 29, 2019 (*Premium Times*, 16 April 2019).

The second-term inauguration ceremony took place at Eagles Square in Abuja. In the presence of local and international dignitaries, Buhari and Osinbajo took the oath of allegiance and oath of office administered by the Chief Justice of Nigeria. Unlike in the 2015 inauguration ceremony where Buhari gave a rousing speech that featured the famous 'I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody' catchphrase, the 2019 second-term inauguration featured no speech. It was later revealed that no speech was rendered at the swearing-in ceremony because it was being reserved for the inaugural 2019 Democracy Day celebration, which Buhari had moved from 29 May to 12 June in commemoration of the struggles of pro-democracy forces following the annulment of 12 June 1993, elections won by M. K. O. Abiola.

Thus, Buhari used his speech at the inaugural Democracy Day ceremony held at Eagles Square on 12 June 2019, to praise the defenders of democracy post-1993, hailed Nigeria's commitment to the sustenance of democracy through the electoral process and highlighted the principal thrust of his second-term administration, which would be focused on consolidating the achievements of the last four years, correcting the lapses inevitable in all human endeavours and tackling the new challenges the country was faced with, while also charting a bold plan for transforming Nigeria.



The great difference between pre-2015 and post-2015 was that his administration met the challenges with much greater support to the security forces in terms of money, equipment and improved local intelligence. (*Vanguard*, 22 May 2016). The government had also deployed superior strategy, firepower and resolve in the face of those challenges. He assured that since re-election, they had mapping out policies, measures and laws to maintain Nigeria's unity and at the same time lift the bulk of the citizens out of poverty and onto the road to prosperity. He acknowledged that the task would by no means be easy, but that it was also not unattainable. He cited the examples of China, India, and Indonesia as comparator countries that have overcome similar challenges as Nigeria was going through.

Looking forward to his second term in office, the president declared that over the next four years, his government would commit to assembling a strong team of Nigerians, and allies, to implement its transformative plans and proposals.

### **Atiku's Legal Challenge of the 2019 Presidential Election**

True to his word, Atiku eventually challenged the results from the Election Petitions Tribunal all the way to the Supreme Court, which, on 30 October 2019, delivered a crushing blow to his legal entreaties by upholding Buhari's victory in a unanimous verdict. The seven-man panel of the Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Tanko Mohammed dismissed the appeal filed by the PDP for lack of merit. The apex court's verdict effectively ended the legal battle that trailed the election. In reaction to yet another defeat, Atiku said Nigeria's judiciary had been sabotaged and undermined, but also that his effort to fight the result in court had ended with the apex court's verdict. Meanwhile, President Buhari commended Atiku for using the lawful avenue of the judiciary to seek redress and declared that following this final seal of his victory's validation before the highest court, it is time the country is afforded the right to move on in the interest of all Nigerians regardless of how they voted (*Tribune Online*, 30 October 2019).

### **9th National Assembly Leadership and the Inauguration of Buhari's Second Term Cabinet**

The epic drama and intense politicking that rocked the national assembly in the election of its principal officers in 2015 severely undermined the leadership clout of the ruling APC. This time around, in 2019, there was to be no repeat of such an episode. The Majority Leader of the 8th Senate, Ahmed Lawan, and his counterpart in the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila, emerged as the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House respectively. Both Lawan and Gbajabiamila were anointed candidates for the positions and were also full members of the ruling APC.

In the Senate, Lawan received 79 votes to defeat ex-Senate Majority Leader, Ali Ndume, who received 28 votes. Also, the senator who represented Delta Central Senatorial District, Ovie Omo-Agege, was elected the Deputy Senate President with 68 votes, while his challenger who is the immediate occupant of the seat, Ike Ekweremadu of the PDP, received 37. In the House of Representatives, Gbajabiamila won the speakership seat (with 281 votes out of the 358 members-elect in attendance) and defeated Mohammed Bago from Niger State (also of the APC, who received 76 votes). The nomination of the APC's candidate for Deputy Speaker, Mr. Idris Wase, was unopposed. He was unanimously adopted by the lawmakers for the seat (*Punchng.com*, 12 June 2019).

Buhari warmly applauded Lawan and Gbajabiamila for emerging as the leaders of the 9th National Assembly. In a statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, the president described their emergence as 'a new dawn different from the duplicity and perfidy that characterised the 8th National Assembly' led by Bukola Saraki and Yakubu Dogara. The president also saluted all the national legislators and their political parties for their display of patriotism and non-partisanship before and during the election. He commended the transparent and fair nature of the voting process, adjudging it as a plus for democracy in the country.

Buhari advised the leadership to use their exalted positions to work for the interest of Nigerians. He also touched on the executive-legislature relationship, saying that the executive under his watch does not desire a rubber stamp legislature. While separation of powers is essential, partnership among all arms of government should be the name of the game. Opposition need not be virulent. The president added that stepping into the next level, the legislature had a big role to play for the goals of the administration, which was for the ultimate good of the nation, to be achieved. He also called on the contestants who lost the election to be gallant in defeat and join hands with the victors who should exhibit magnanimity and eschew vindictiveness (*Punchng.com*, 12 June 2019).

Buhari inaugurated his second-term cabinet on 21 August 2019, nearly three months after his swearing-in for another term in office. At the inauguration ceremony of the 43-man cabinet (seven more than the number of ministers onboarded in 2015), Buhari charged his team to be dedicated and committed to the economic expansion and transformation of Nigeria. He reminded the ministers that the core focus of the government was guaranteeing security, diversifying the economy to be inclusive and tackling corruption. He tasked the cabinet to be focused on the goals and policy direction of the administration to achieve sustainable economic growth. The president said that for the 2019–2023 period, key performance indicators (KPIs) would be set to assess the ministers (*Proshare.ng*, 21 August 2019).

With the added benefit of a 9th National Assembly that was elected with minimal complications, the road map towards the delivery of government priorities and the Next Level Agenda of the Buhari administration through robust cooperation between the legislature and the executive over the 2019–2023 period was injected with renewed energy and enhanced enthusiasm for implementing an efficient vision for service delivery.

### **Conclusion**

Despite significant economic and political challenges that put the prospect of a second-term victory for the Buhari administration in serious doubt, the president was able to inspire his base of ardent supporters and emerge victorious again with 15 million votes, similar to what he obtained in 2015. The INEC's abrupt postponement of the election by one week, the failure to achieve a timely enactment of the amended Electoral Act, and the political undertones that trailed the removal of Chief Justice Onnoghen from office were three major events that attempted to undermine the credibility of the election. However, overall, the conduct of the presidential election itself was generally adjudged as free and fair, with Buhari being handed another chance by the Nigerian public to make good on his promise to take the nation to the next level by instituting sustainable development in key areas of national life.

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**Inaugural Speech**  
**by**  
**President Muhammadu Buhari**  
**Delivered on Nigeria's Democracy Day**  
**12 June 2019**

All praise is due to God Almighty, who spared our lives to be present at this great occasion. We give thanks also that the democratic process has been further entrenched and strengthened. Twenty years ago, a democratically elected government took over from the military in a historic transfer of political power in our country. Today, we are privileged to mark the longest period of unbroken democratic leadership and fifth peaceful transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another in Nigeria.

Throughout the last four years, I respected the independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). I ensured that INEC got all the resources it needed for independent and impartial management of elections in the country. All interested parties are agreed that the recent elections, which except for pockets of unrest, were free, fair and peaceful.

I thank all the people who worked for our party, who campaigned and who voted for us. I thank my fellow Nigerians, who, since 2003, have consistently voted for me. Victory is your greatest reward; peace, unity and greater prosperity will be our collective legacy.

Your Excellencies, fellow Nigerians, I and Nigerians collectively must give adequate thanks to our Armed Forces, Police

and other law enforcement agencies for working round the clock to protect us by putting themselves in harm's way and defending our values and protecting our future. Terrorism and insecurity are worldwide phenomena and even the best policed countries are experiencing increasing incidents of unrest and are finding things hard to cope. The principal thrust of this new Administration is to consolidate on the achievements of the last four years, correct the lapses inevitable in all human endeavours and tackle the new challenges the country is faced with and chart a bold plan for transforming Nigeria.

Fellow Nigerians, I have had the privilege of free education from primary school to staff college to war college. I received my formative education in Katsina and Kaduna and my higher education in England, India and the United States. I have worked and served in Kaduna, Lagos, Abeokuta, Makurdi, Port Harcourt, Maiduguri, Ibadan, Jos and finally here in Abuja. Throughout my adult life, I have been a public servant. I have no other career but public service. I know no service but public service. I was involved at close quarters in the struggle to keep Nigeria one. I can therefore do no more than dedicate the rest of my life to work for the unity of Nigeria and upliftment of Nigerians.

In 2002-2003 campaigns and elections, I travelled by road to 34 of the 36 states of the Federation. This year, I travelled by air to all 36 states of the Federation. Before and during my time in the Armed Forces and in government, I have interacted with Nigerians of all ages and persuasions and different shades of opinion over a period of more than fifty years. And my firm belief is that our people, above all, want to live in peace and harmony with their fellow Nigerians. They desire opportunity to better themselves in a safe environment. Most of the instances of inter-communal and inter-religious strife and violence were and are still as a result of sponsorship or incitements by ethnic, political or religious leaders hoping to benefit by exploiting our divisions and fault lines, thereby weakening our country. And our country Nigeria is a great country.

According to the United Nations' estimates, our population will rise to 411 million by 2050, making us the third most populous nation on earth behind only China and India. We have water, arable land, forests, oil and gas and vast quantities of solid minerals. We are blessed with an equable climate. However, the bulk of our real wealth lies in agriculture, livestock, forestry and mining. We possess all the ingredients of a major economic power on the world stage. What we require is the will to get our acts together. And our strength is in our people – our youth, our culture, our resilience, our ability to succeed despite the odds.

A huge responsibility therefore rests on this and succeeding Administrations to develop, harness and fulfil our enormous potential into a force to be reckoned with globally. Thus far, we Nigerians can be proud of our history since Independence in 1960. We have contributed to UN peace-keeping responsibilities all over the world; we have stabilised Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and two years ago we prevented the Gambia from degenerating into anarchy. Without Nigerian influence and resources, the liberation of Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and ultimately South Africa would have come at greater cost. This fact had been attested to by none other than the late Nelson Mandela himself.

Elsewhere, Nigeria is the 'Big Brother' to our neighbours. We are the shock-absorber of the West African sub-region, the bulwark of ECOWAS and Lake Chad Basin Commission. We can therefore be proud to be Nigerians. We must continue to be good neighbours and good global citizens. At home, we have been successful in forging a nation from different ethnicities and language groups; our evolution and integration into one nation continues apace. When, therefore, we came to office in 2015, after a decade of struggle, we identified three cardinal and existential challenges our country faced and made them our campaign focus, namely security, economy and fighting corruption. None but the most partisan will dispute that in the last four years we have made solid progress in addressing these challenges.

When I took the oath of office on 29 May 2015, insecurity reigned. Apart from occupying 18 local governments in the North East, Boko Haram could at will attack any city including the Federal Capital, could threaten any institution including bombing the United Nations building and Police Headquarters in Abuja. Admittedly, some of the challenges still remain in kidnappings and banditry in some rural areas. The great difference between 2015 and today is that we are meeting these challenges with much greater support to the security forces in terms of money, equipment and improved local intelligence. We are meeting these challenges with superior strategy, firepower and resolve.

In the face of these challenges, our government, elected by the people in 2015 and re-elected in March, has been mapping out policies, measures and laws to maintain our unity and at the same time lift the bulk of our people out of poverty and onto the road to prosperity. This task is by no means unattainable. China has done it. India has done it. Indonesia has done it. Nigeria can do it. These are all countries characterised by huge burdens of population. China and Indonesia succeeded under authoritarian regimes. India succeeded in a democratic setting. We can do it.

With leadership and a sense of purpose, we can lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years. Following the 60 percent drop in oil prices between 2015 and 2016, through monetary and fiscal measures, we stimulated economic growth, curbed inflation and shored up our external reserves. We have now witnessed 8 quarters of positive growth in the economy and our GDP is expected to grow by 2.7 percent this year.

Furthermore, our external reserves have risen to \$45 billion, enough to finance over 9 months of current import commitments. This Administration is laying the foundation and taking bold steps in transforming our country and liberating our people from the shackles of poverty. First, we will take steps to integrate rural economies to the national economic 'grid' by extending access to small-scale credits and inputs to rural farmers, credit to rural micro-businesses and opening up many critical feeder roads. Secondly, for



small-scale enterprises in towns and cities, we shall expand facilities currently available so that we continue to encourage and support domestic production of basic goods and reduce our reliance on imported goods, as I will outline later.

For the next four years, we will remain committed to improving the lives of people by consolidating efforts to address these key issues as well as emerging challenges of climate change, resettling displaced communities and dealing decisively with the new flashes of insecurity across the country, and the impacts on food scarcity and regional stability.

We are not daunted by the enormity of the tasks ahead. Instead, we are revived by this new mandate to work collaboratively with state and local governments, legislators, the Diplomatic Corps and all Nigerians to rebuild and reposition our country as the heartbeat and reference point for our continent.

Fellow Nigerians, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, despite the enormous resources pledged to infrastructure development these past four years, there remains the urgent need to modernise our roads and bridges, electricity grid, ports and rail systems. Whilst agriculture and industrial output have recovered since the recession, we are more committed than ever to work with the private sector to improve productivity and accelerate economic growth. The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index, which is the gauge of manufacturing activity in the country, has also risen for 26 consecutive months since March 2017, indicating continuous growth and expansion in our manufacturing sector. It still takes too long for goods to clear at our seaports and the roads leading to them are congested. It still takes too long for routine and regulatory approvals to be secured. These issues affect our productivity and we are committed to addressing them permanently.

Our government will continue work to reduce social and economic inequality through targeted social investment programmes, education, technology and improved information. Our social intervention programmes are a model for other nations. Together with state governments, we provide millions of school

children with meals in primary schools, micro loans to traders and entrepreneurs, skills and knowledge acquisition support to graduates and of course, conditional cash transfers to the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. A database of poor and vulnerable households is being carefully built based on age, gender, disability, and educational levels for proper planning in this Administration's war against poverty. A database of unemployed but qualified youth has also been developed under the National Social Investment Programme which can be used by the public and private sectors for recruitment purposes. Cumulatively, nearly 2 million beneficiaries have received aid under this programme, apart from Anchors Borrowers Programme and School Feeding initiative, each reaching 2 million recipients. And we will do more; much more!

Fellow Nigerians, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we know that there exists a strong correlation between economic inequality and insecurity. When economic inequality rises, insecurity rises. But when we actively reduce inequality through investments in social and hard infrastructure, insecurity reduces. The disturbing increase in rates of kidnapping, banditry and other criminal activities can be attributed to the decades of neglect and corruption in social investment, infrastructure development, education and healthcare. This issue is further compounded by the impact of our changing climate and ecology.

The ECOWAS and Sahel regions, starting from Chad all the way to Mali, are also experiencing adverse impacts of drought and desertification, which have triggered waves of human displacement; conflicts between farmers and herdsmen; terrorism; and a fundamental socio-economic change to our way of life. These issues are regional and not unique to Nigeria alone. The problems call for increased regional and international cooperation in developing a sustainable solution. As Chairman of ECOWAS, I will be hosting a regional security summit of heads of state in the Sahel to develop a joint strategy to continue our efforts in addressing these issues.

Fellow Nigerians, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, at the heart of inequality and insecurity, is pervasive corruption. When we took office we realised that if you fight corruption, corruption will fight back – and we have seen this at all levels. For Nigeria to progress, a collective resolution to address corruption and foster broad-based prosperity is required to create a country that is not only for a few privileged, but for all Nigerians.

This charge is not only to civil servants, ministers, legislators and state government functionaries, but also to corporate leaders. We shall make greater investments in our rural economies. We shall aggressively source locally our raw materials. We have incentives for investments specifically made in rural communities. However, nationwide development cannot occur from Abuja alone; it must occur in states, and government cannot do it alone.

I, therefore, implore all state governments, especially those with large rural economies, to aggressively solicit investments in your states. Invest in developing human capital, reducing bureaucracy and corruption, hosting and attending investment summits and improving the ease of doing business.

At this point, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entrepreneurs, investors and venture capitalists that have built or are building agro-processing projects; petrochemical plants; crude oil and solid mineral refineries; energy exploration; software development projects; telecom infrastructure; health, education and manufacturing projects; and the like, across our country. I would like to make special mention to promoters of our small businesses that are proudly making goods and services for export and for local consumption. The Nigerian economy rises and falls on the strength of your investments and productivity. We will continue to listen to your ideas and plans, not just about how we can secure more investment, but how your plans can help create a more equitable economy.

I also thank the labour unions, farmer groups and associations, organised private sector and the civil society organisations for their support and cooperation with our

government these last four years. We will continue to count on your support, guidance and understanding during the next four years. I especially thank our traditional leaders and congratulate re-elected and newly elected state governors and members of the National Assembly. Our government will continue to count on your support so that we can together move our country forward.

Fellow Nigerians, Your Highnesses, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, despite the challenges over the last four years, my optimism about Nigeria's future is unshaken and Nigeria's role in the world as an emerging economic force is without a doubt. Over the next four years, we are committed to assembling a strong team of Nigerians, and allies, to implement our transformative plans and proposals. We will see significant focus, resource and, where necessary reform, in tertiary and technical education to reposition Nigeria's workforce for the modern technological age. We will accelerate investments in primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare programmes, interventions and infrastructure as well as in upgrading of our medical personnel to stem the flight of our best trained people. On food security, our farmers have made great strides in local production of rice, maize, cassava, poultry, fertilizer, fisheries and sesame. We remain resolute in supporting private sector in emphasising backward integration and export expansion plans. Felling of trees to provide energy for domestic use is taking its toll on our rain forests, our ecology and our climate.

Accordingly, we are taking steps to harness cleaner and more sustainable sources of electricity. We export over 2 million tons of cooking gas, yet we consume less than half a million tons. We will work to address this issue and support rural communities with challenges of safely switching from firewood to cooking gas. Dedicated agro-industrial processing zones will be developed on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) basis to increase farming yields, agricultural productivity and industrial output. Over 2,000 kilometres of ongoing federal road and bridge projects across the country will be completed to reduce journey times and the cost of doing business. As I mentioned earlier, critical feeder roads will be

built to facilitate easier transportation for people and goods from rural areas to major roads.

We are at advanced stages of securing investments to modernise and expand our transmission and distribution infrastructure, ensuring that electricity is available and affordable for all Nigerians. Several rail, seaport and airport projects are at various stages of completion. We will open the arteries of transportation nationwide. It is a fact that Nigeria has more gas reserves than it has oil. Over the last four years, we have become a net exporter of urea, which is made from natural gas. We invite investors to develop more natural gas-based petrochemical projects. Fellow Nigerians, this government will not tolerate actions by any individual or groups of individuals who seek to attack our way of life or those who seek to corruptly enrich themselves at the expense of the rest of us. We will crack down on those who incite ordinary innocent people to violence and unrest. We will ensure that such actions are met with the strong arm of the law. Nation building takes time. But we must take solace in the knowledge that this country, our country, has everything we require to make Nigeria prosper.

Fellow Nigerians, Your Highnesses, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to join me in this journey of rebuilding our nation. Our focus will not be to help the privileged few but to ensure that Nigeria works for Nigerians of all persuasions. That is a more just arrangement. As we all know, correcting injustice is a prerequisite for peace and unity. As part of the process of healing and reconciliation, I approved the recognition of June 12 as Democracy Day and invested the late Chief M.K.O. Abiola and Babagana Kingibe with national honours, as I did with the late Chief Gani Fawehinmi. The purpose was to partially atone for the previous damage done in annulling the presidential elections of that year.

Today, I propose the re-naming of the Abuja National Stadium. Henceforth, it will be called MOSHOOD ABIOLA NATIONAL STADIUM. In my first term, we put Nigeria back on its feet. We are working again, despite a difficult environment in oil on which we

depend too much for our exports. We encountered huge resistance from vested interests who do not want CHANGE, but CHANGE has come, we now must move to the NEXT LEVEL.

By the grace of God, I intend to keep the oath I have made today and to serve as President for all Nigerians. I thank you for attending this august occasion from far and near, and for all your best wishes to me, to our party and to Nigeria.

God bless us all, and God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

**Muhammadu Buhari**  
**President, Federal Republic of NIGERIA**  
**and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces**

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## **The Muhammadu Buhari Administration: Highlights of Achievements and Initiatives**

**Expanded, Annotated and Edited  
(Originally Compiled by the  
Presidential Communication Team)**

The President Muhammadu Buhari administration came into power in 2015 amid a keen yearning for national change that hinged on the demands of common citizens activated through the ballot. The perceived failings of previous governments across key sectors of the nation formed the basis of Buhari's strong campaign on a three-pronged promise of economic repositioning for optimal national development, fighting of corruption in all its ramifications and improved security throughout the nation.

While the story of his administration will naturally be viewed through the lens of his success on these three major fronts, the President also worked assiduously to leave lasting marks of success in other key areas that are important to the country. The initiatives and achievements of the Buhari administration across diverse sectors and sub-sectors of the nation are highlighted below.

### **LEGISLATIVE REFORMS**

Under the Buhari administration, Nigeria has seen the most ambitious legislative programme in its history. Several landmark bills have been passed or amended in the eight years of his administration. In March 2023, the President assented to 16 out of the 35 constitution amendment bills that were among other bills

forwarded to him for signature by the National Assembly in January 2023. The constitution amendment bills assented to by President Buhari include:



- a. Fifth Alteration (No. 6): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to provide for the financial independence of State Houses of Assembly and State Judiciary and for related matters. This will undoubtedly enhance the independence and credibility of these vital institutions of government that have suffered excessive executive interference in past years. With the governors effectively in control of the finances of these two arms of government at the state level, the executive arm had usurped the powers that ordinarily should reside in the legislature and the judiciary. This development will ensure the separation of powers at the state level.
- b. Fifth Alteration (No. 8): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to regulate the first session and inauguration of members-elect of the National and State Houses of Assembly and for related matters.



- c. Fifth Alteration (No. 9): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to delete the reference to the provisions of the Criminal Code, Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Act, Criminal Procedure Code or Evidence Act; and for related matters.
  
- d. Fifth Alteration (No. 10): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to exclude periods of intervening events in the calculation of time for determining pre-election petitions, election petitions and appeals, and for related matters. This will provide a logical timeframe for conclusion of election litigations and allow for focused and efficient governance without protracted election dispute distractions.
  
- e. Fifth Alteration (No. 15): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to delete the term, 'prisons', in the Exclusive Legislative List and redesignate it as 'Correctional Services' in the Concurrent Legislative List, and for related matters.
  
- f. Fifth Alteration (No. 16): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to move the item, 'railways', from the Exclusive Legislative List to the Concurrent Legislative List; and for related matters. By opening up these areas of economic activities to the states, this legislation provides opportunity for the states to participate actively in these sectors of the economy that have so much potential improve their economic standing. With the dearth of infrastructure and its visible impact on the economy, the states certainly are able to make reasonable returns from investments in these areas and augment their current low revenues.

- g. Fifth Alteration (No. 17): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to allow States to generate, transmit and distribute electricity in areas covered by the national grid; and for related matters. With this change, named the Devolution of Powers (National Grid System), all 36 states can join the electricity generation business and license the generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity. The policy change will improve the availability and reliability of electricity supply, attract more private investors, and provide financial independence to state governments.
- h. Fifth Alteration (No. 23): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to require the President and Governors to submit the names of persons nominated as Ministers or Commissioners within 60 days of taking the oath of office for confirmation by the Senate or State House of Assembly; and for related matters. This aims to facilitate the timely launch of government administration and the overall efficiency of governance.
- i. Fifth Alteration (No. 34): The Bill seeks to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to require the government to direct its policy towards ensuring the right to food and food security in Nigeria; and for related matters.
- Business Facilitation Bill: As part of efforts to ensure the ease of doing business in Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari, in February 2023, signed the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provision) Bill into law. Presented as an Executive Bill, the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provision) Act, 2023, was a legislative intervention by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) that amended 21 business-related laws, removing

bureaucratic constraints to doing business in Nigeria. The Business Facilitation Act, 2023 consolidated the previous seven years of PEBEC-led reforms and demonstrated the administration's sustained commitment towards making Nigeria a progressively friendlier place for starting and growing a business. The new law also codified the Executive Order 001 on Transparency and Efficiency in Public Service Delivery, the administration's first executive order, which was aimed at facilitating ease-of-doing-business reforms across the country.

- **Mental Health Bill, 2021:** This Bill was signed into law after two failed attempts at overhaul in 2003 and 2013. The bill, which was agreed upon by both the upper and lower chambers of the National Assembly in 2021, was the first legislative reform adopted in the field since the country's independence and replaced the Lunacy Act of 1958. The move was hailed by stakeholders in the sector, as the bill was a significant step toward improving psychosocial well-being support.
- **Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill, 2022:** This Bill provided a robust, comprehensive and effective governance policy for the conduction of elections in Nigeria, promoting electoral reforms and enhancing the credibility of the electoral process.
- **Health Insurance Bill:** In May 2022, as part of his administration's healthcare reforms, President Buhari signed into law the then-recent National Health Insurance Authority Bill 2022, which repealed the National Health Insurance Scheme Act with a promise to ensure the full implementation of the new Act to provide health insurance coverage for all Nigerians. Meanwhile, in a statement subsequently issued by presidential spokesperson, Garba Shehu, President Buhari

stated that a fund would be set up to ensure coverage of 83 million Nigerians who could not afford to pay premiums as recommended by the Lancet Nigeria Commission. He said the 'vulnerable group fund' would be financed through the basic health care provision fund, health insurance levy, special intervention fund, and any investment proceeds, donations, and gifts to the authority. He affirmed that this would cover the large number of vulnerable individuals who are not able to pay health insurance premiums.

- Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill, 2022: This Bill repealed the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2011, as amended, and provided a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the prevention and prohibition of money laundering in Nigeria, while also conferring on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) the legal status of the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering.
- Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill, 2022: This Bill repealed the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011, as amended in 2013, and provided for the effective implementation of international instruments on the prevention and combating of terrorism and suppression of the financing of terrorism.
- Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Bill, 2022: This Bill made comprehensive provisions for the seizure, confiscation, forfeiture, and management of properties derived from unlawful activity.
- Deep Offshore and Inland Basin Production Sharing Contracts Act, 1993 (Amendment) Act, 2019: This Bill was developed to deliver increased revenues to the Federation.
- Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria, AMCON (Amendment) Acts of 2019 and 2021: The aim of the

amendment to the Act is to strengthen the Corporation's powers to recover bad loans acquired from commercial banks.

- Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) Bill: The first legislation in Nigeria's history focused on curbing anti-competition practices; it also established the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission.
- Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Establishment Act, 2018.
- Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Bill: An Executive Bill, signed into law in 2019 that facilitates the identification, tracing, freezing, restraining, recovery, forfeiture and confiscation of proceeds, property, and other instruments of crime, as well as the prosecution of offenders in criminal cases regardless of where in the world they may be.
- Act establishing the Police Trust Fund, which significantly improved funding for the Nigeria Police Force (2019).
- Nigeria Police Act, 2020: The first comprehensive reform of Police legislation since the Police Act of 1943.
- Nigeria Police Academy (Establishment) Act, 2021: This Act established and provided legal framework for the Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil, Kano State, as a degree-awarding institution to provide academic and professional training.
- Nigeria Law Reform Commission Act, 2022: This Act repealed the Nigeria Law Reform Commission Act, Cap. N118, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 and Enact the Nigerian Law Reform Commission Act, 2022 to facilitate the effective implementation of the Commission's Law Reform

Proposals, enhance its performance and bring the Law in agreement with best practices.

- **Harmonised Retirement Age for Teachers in Nigeria Act, 2022:** This Act provided for the retirement age of teachers in Nigeria. Section 1 of the Act clearly states that Teachers in Nigeria shall compulsorily retire upon reaching 65 years of age or 40 years of pensionable service, whichever is earlier. The provision of Section 3 of the Act provides that the Public Service Rule or any Legislation that requires a person to retire from the Public Service at 60 years of age or after 35 years of Service shall not apply to teachers in Nigeria.
- **Repeal and Re-Enactment of the Companies & Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020:** This Act was first comprehensive reform since 1990.
- **Not Too Young to Run Bill, 2018:** This was a Constitution Amendment Bill aimed at reducing the age of eligibility for running for elective office in Nigeria.
- **Nigerian Correctional Services Bill, 2019:** This Bill was, at the time, the first comprehensive reform of prison legislation in nearly five decades.
- **Suppression of Piracy and other Maritime Offences Bill, 2019:** The first anti-piracy legislation in West Africa.
- **A Bill to grant financial autonomy to States' Houses of Assembly and States' Judiciary (2018).**
- **Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act (BOFIA), 2020 – Finance Act, 2019 and 2020.**

- The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018.
- Animal Diseases (Control) Act, 2022: This Act repealed the Animal Diseases (Control) Act, Cap. A17, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004, and enacted the Animal Diseases (Control) Act for the purpose of prevention, detection, control and eradication of infectious and contagious transboundary and zoonotic animal diseases, prevention of antimicrobial resistance through the control and regulation of the use and administration of veterinary biologics, veterinary medicinal products and chemicals in animals, animal products, medicated animal feeds, sales and distribution of pet foods, veterinary medical devices, other veterinary products; it also provided for the enhancement of animal welfare and food safety.
- Treasury Single Account (TSA): Started in 2012 and expanded across the entire government by President Buhari in 2015.
- The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 which provides legal, regulatory, governance and fiscal framework for the development of the Nigerian petroleum industry.
- More than 6 billion dollars of inherited Cash Call Arrears were cleared by the Buhari administration starting in 2016. More than 3 billion dollars of the arrears (payments due to International Oil Companies) were paid as of 2023.
- The Buhari administration has overseen the first successful Marginal Fields Bid Round in almost 20 years.

## **EXECUTIVE ORDERS**

The Buhari administration issued a number of landmark Executive Orders, including:

- Executive Order 1: While Buhari was on medical leave in London in 2017, his vice president, Yemi Osinbajo, signed the administration's first four executive orders as acting president. He signed the first three executive orders on 18 May 2017. Executive Order 1 addressed the promotion of transparency and efficiency in the Nigerian business sector and was designed to facilitate the ease of doing business in the country.
- Executive Order 2: This executive order mandated the timely submission of annual budgetary estimates by all government agencies.
- Executive Order 3: This executive order addressed support for local content in public procurement. All Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of the government were directed to grant preference to local manufacturers of goods and service providers.
- Executive Order 4: This executive order addressed the Federal Government's Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS), offering tax amnesty to taxpayers who had not been fulfilling their tax obligations. Defaulters were asked to regularise their tax affairs before March 2018. This was the fourth and final executive order signed by Osinbajo as acting president, on 29 June 2017.
- Executive Order 5: This order was Buhari's debut signed on 6 February 2018, through which President Buhari ordered government agencies to give preference to Nigerian companies and firms over foreigners when awarding contracts. The order also prevented the Ministry of Interior from giving visas to foreign workers whose skills were readily available in Nigeria.
- Executive Order 6: This executive order addressed the preservation of suspicious assets connected with corruption.



The order allowed the government to assume control of assets linked to ongoing criminal investigations and trials. President Buhari signed the order on 5 July 2018.

- Executive Order 7: the Road Infrastructure Development and Refurbishment Investment Tax Credit Scheme (2019). This executive order enabled private sector entities to construct and refurbish roads across Nigeria in exchange for tax benefits from the government. President Buhari signed the order on 25 January 2019.
- Executive Order 8: This executive order provided a 12-month period of grace for Nigerian taxpayers to voluntarily declare and pay tax on their offshore assets through the Voluntary Offshore Assets Regularisation Scheme (VOARS). In exchange, they would not be prosecuted for tax offences and offences related to offshore assets. President Buhari signed the order on 8 October 2018.
- Executive Order 9: Buhari used this order to mandate that Nigeria become open defecation-free by 2025. The order directed that all public places, including schools, fuel stations, places of worship, marketplaces and hospitals must have accessible toilets within their premises. President Buhari signed the order on 20 November 2019.
- Executive Order 10: With this order, Buhari ordered the financial independence of the state legislature and judiciary, whose salaries were controlled by their governors. The president signed the order on 22 May 2020, but the Supreme Court nullified it on 11 February 2022, ruling that the order violated the principles of the separation of powers set by the constitution.
- Executive Order 11: This order addressed the maintenance of national public buildings. President Buhari directed all Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government (MDAs) to establish maintenance departments and make them functional to preserve government assets, signing the order on 6 April 2022.

- Executive Order 12 improving Performance Management, Coordination & Implementation of Presidential Priorities of the Federal Government of Nigeria: The goal of this order was to institutionalize a culture of accountability and transparency in service delivery, seeking to improve performance management among others (2022).
- Executive Order for the establishment of a National Centre for the Coordination of Early Warning and Response Mechanism: This order, signed in June 2022, established the National Early Warning Centre pursuant to Article 58 of the Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Article 16 of the Protocol on the Mechanism related to Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. Under ECOWAS instruments, which included the 1993 Revised ECOWAS Treaty, each member state was ordered to establish a national early warning centre to address issues related to threats to human security as part of the regional security architecture.
- Executive Order 14 (2023): This order approved the establishment of a Presidential Transition Council (PTC) to facilitate and manage the 2023 transition programme. The Executive Order No. 14 of 2023 ensured the Facilitation and Management of Presidential Transitions.

## **INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Buhari administration placed infrastructure development high on its list of deliverables for the Nigerian people, with the results of their work including the following:

### **INFRACORP/NSIA**

- The Infrastructure Corporation of Nigeria (InfraCorp) was established by President Buhari in February 2021, with initial seed capital of ₦1 trillion provided by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) and the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC).

InfraCorp's goal was to 'to catalyse and accelerate investment into Nigeria's infrastructure sector by originating, structuring, executing and managing end-to-end bankable projects in that space'.

- In addition to the ₦1 trillion in equity seed capital, InfraCorp is predicted to mobilise up to an additional ₦14 trillion of debt capital. The establishment in 2020 of the Presidential Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) garnered more than US\$1 billion in funding.
- Establishment in 2020 of the Presidential Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF), with more than US\$1 billion in funding so far.
- The Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) has seen total additional inflows from the Government of around US\$2 billion under the Buhari administration since the original US\$1 billion which the Fund began with in 2012.
- Launch of the Nigeria Innovation Fund by the NSIA to address investment opportunities in the domestic technology sector, such as data networking, datacentres, software, Agri-tech, Bio-tech, etc.
- As with legislative reform, under President Buhari's watch, Nigeria also saw the biggest and most ambitious federal infrastructure programme since Nigeria's Independence.

## **RAIL SYSTEM**

- Completion of the Kaduna-Kano and Kano, the Maradi Segments of the Railway Modernisation Programme. Substantial work has been done on the Port Harcourt-to-Maiduguri rail line, which may likely be concluded by the next government.
- Completion of the 156-km Lagos-Ibadan Standard Gauge Rail.
- Completion of the Lagos-Kano Standard Gauge Rail.

- The 327-km Itakpe-Warri Standard Gauge Rail was completed and commissioned 33 years after construction began.
- The Abuja Light Rail was completed in 2018.
- Ground was broken for construction of the Kano-Maradi Standard Gauge Rail and the Port-Harcourt-Maiduguri Narrow Gauge Rail was renovated.
- The 156-km Lagos-Ibadan Standard Gauge Rail was completed and commissioned in a Nigerian-record period of four years (2017–2021).
- The 8.72-km extension of the Lagos-Ibadan Rail Line to Lagos Port Complex was completed in 2021.
- The 186-km Abuja-Kaduna Standard Gauge Rail Line was completed and commissioned in 2016.
- The 327 km Itakpe-Warri Standard Gauge Rail was completed and commissioned in 2020, 33 years after construction began.
- As part of the Itakpe-Warri rail project, the Railway Village in Agbor was fully renovated and construction of a Railway Ancillary Facilities Yard in Agbor was also completed. In 2021, the line commenced commercial freight haulage, transporting pipelines for the AKK Gas Pipeline project.
- Commencement of the E-Ticketing concession process for the Lagos-Ibadan and Warri-Itakpe Standard Gauge Rail Lines. The aim of the project was to design, finance, build, operate and manage secure ticketing solution systems (hardware and software) for the two lines.
- Completion of the E-Ticketing concession process on Abuja-Kaduna Route in 2021, which increased the monthly generated revenue from less than ₦200 million to ₦400 million.
- The Abuja Light Rail was completed in 2018.
- Construction of Kaduna-Kano Standard Gauge Rail Line, following ground-breaking by President Buhari in July 2021.

- Ground-breaking was done by President Buhari for construction of the 284-km Kano-Maradi Standard Gauge Rail (with branch line to Dutse), preliminary works started 2021.
- Ground-breaking was done by President Buhari for the complete rehaul of the Port Harcourt–Maiduguri Narrow Gauge Rail.
- Under President Buhari, 377 Wagons, 64 Coaches, and 21 Locomotives, including Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) were purchased for the Standard Gauge network between 2016 and 2021.
- Jobs, Training and Capacity Building: More than 11,000 new jobs were created from the ongoing rail modernisation projects in the country. More than 100 qualified young Nigerians were awarded full international scholarships for undergraduate/graduate courses in rail engineering and transport in China beginning in 2018. In addition, dozens of Nigerian engineers were trained as part of the railway modernisation projects.
- Establishment of a new Transportation University in Daura, Katsina State, and establishment of a new Rail Wagon Assembly Plant in Kajola, Ogun State; both are nearing completion of construction.
- Three thousand tons of cement have been transported monthly through the train freight service from Lagos to Kano.

#### **ROAD/BRIDGE DEVELOPMENT**

- The Presidential Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) invested over a billion dollars in three flagship projects: the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Second Niger Bridge and Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano Expressway.

**KEYNOTE:** Under President Buhari, the Second Niger Bridge was completed and opened for commercial use on 15 December 2022 to

ease movement during the yuletide period. Conclusion of this project represented a significant achievement for the Buhari administration, which squarely embraced the task, rather than merely using it for political patronage as some past administrations did.

The Second Niger Bridge, named after President Muhammadu Buhari by all the governors of the southeast states, was completed and fully inaugurated on 15 May 2023. Similarly, the Minister of Works and Housing, Babatunde Fashola, has said that the iconic Lagos-Ibadan Expressway would be completed by 30 April 2023. It was less than two weeks to completion, but that could not be done because it rained for most of the weeks that preceded the exit of the administration. The Abuja-Kano expressway was the largest of all the road projects in terms of scope and budget at 375 km in length and with 41 bridges of different sizes, and was completed by the administration. Additionally, the Kaduna–Zaria route, which is about 70 kilometres, was to be completed on the 30 April 2023 and fully open to traffic. Fashola, however, has said that the Abuja-Kaduna Road, which was one of the projects embarked upon by the Buhari administration, would not be finished in the life of the administration.

#### **ROAD TAX CREDIT SCHEME INITIATIVE**

- Executive Order #7. Issued by President Buhari on 25 January 2019, Executive Order #7 of 2019, on the Road Infrastructure Development and Refurbishment Investment Tax Credit Scheme, allowed companies that were willing and able to spend their own funds on constructing critical roads to recover their construction costs by paying reduced taxes over a period of time and in a transparent manner.
- With appreciable progress made in the First Phase, the implementation of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited and Federal Inland Revenue Service (NNPCL/FIRS) Second Phase for the rehabilitation and

construction of 44 critical roads across the country under the Tax Credit Scheme initiative of the Federal Government continued to gain momentum. The Minister of Works and Housing convened a meeting of the stakeholders in February 2023 and briefed the press while also unveiling the roads. In his remarks at the Meeting and Press Briefing, Fashola described the public-private sector agreement as a defining legacy for President Buhari, pointing out that the impact of the 'very innovative investment policy' would help Nigeria to do business both locally and internationally through a sound infrastructure-based investment policy. The Minister, who recalled that, at the beginning of the Buhari administration in 2015, contractors were owed two to three years' payment arrears as a result of the shutdown of many project sites and the laying off of construction workers by the companies, added that the Buhari administration halted the situation by budgetary expansion from ₦18 billion for the whole of Nigeria's road network by the previous administration to ₦260 billion in 2016.

- The selected roads, amounting to 4,554.19 kilometres, included those in the South-South zone, which were: the Completion of Benin-Warri Dual Carriageway, Edo/Delta States; the East-West Road, (Section I) Warri-Kaiama in Delta/Bayelsa States; the East-West Road (Section II –I) Port Harcourt-Ahoda in Rivers State; the East-West Road (Section II-II) Ahoda-Kaiama in Rivers/Bayelsa States; and the East-West Road (Section III) Onne Junction-Eket in Akwa Ibom State. Others included: dualisation of the East-West Road (Section IV) Eket-Oron in Akwa Ibom; upgrading of the 15-km Port Harcourt-Onne Junction (Section IIIA) in Rivers State; construction of the Eket Bypass (Dual Carriageway) in Akwa Ibom State; dualisation of Lokoja-Benin Road: Obajana Junction-Benin (Section II, Phase I): Okene-Auchi, Kogi/Edo States; dualisation of the Lokoja-Benin Road: Obajana

Junction-Benin, (Section III, Phase I): Auchi-Ehor, Kogi/Edo States; dualisation of the Lokoja-Benin Road: Obajana Junction-Benin Section (IV Phase I): Ehor-Benin City; and Nembe-Brass Road in Bayelsa State. All the roads amount to a total of 1,308.3 km in distance.

- The Northeast Zone saw a total of 1,054 km of roadwork, consisting of restoration of Yola-Mubi-Maiduguri Road in Adamawa/Borno States; restoration of Maiduguri – Monguno Road; restoration of Numan-Jalingo Road in Taraba/Adamawa States; restoration of Yola-Hong-Mubi Road in Adamawa State; reconstruction of Bali-Serti-(Gashaka)-Gembu Road in Taraba State; and restoration of Yashi – Deguri – Yalo Road in Bauchi State.
- The North Central zone saw 763.13 km of work, consisting of restoration of Minna-Zungeru-Tegina-Kontagora Road in Niger State (Section I): Minna-Tegina; restoration of Minna-Zungeru-Tegina-Kontagora Road in Niger State (Section II): Tegna-Kontagora; Shendam-Yelwa-Mato Junction-Taraba Border with Spurs in Plateau/Taraba States; dualisation of Suleija-Minna Road in Niger State; and dualisation of Lokoja-Benin Road: Obajana Junction-Benin (Section I, Phase I): Obajana-Okene, Kogi State. Others included the reconstruction of the existing pavement and completion of the additional pavement on the dualisation of the Abuja-Lokoja Highway (Section III): Abaji-Koton Karfe Road in Abuja/ Kogi State; construction of the Jarmai-Bashar-Zuruk-Andame-Karim Lamido Road in Plateau and Taraba States; reconstruction and expansion of Mararaba-Keffi Road in Nasarawa State.
- The Northwest Zone saw a total of 980 km of roads reconstructed, which included: dualisation of the Zaria-Funtua-Gusau-Sokoto Road in Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and



Sokoto States: Section I Zaria-Funtua-Gusau; dualization of Zaria-Funtua-Gusau-Sokoto Road in Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto States: Section II Gusau-Sokoto Road; dualization of Zaria-Funtua-Gusau-Sokoto Road in Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto States: Section II Gusau-Sokoto Road in Zamfara State; Dualization of Zaria-Funtua-Gusau-Sokoto Road in Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto States: Section III Gusau-Sokoto Road in Zamfara and Sokoto States; dualization and construction of Kano-Kwanar Dauja-Hadejia Road in Kano/Jigawa States, Section I: Tsalle-Hadejia; dualization and construction of Kano-Kwanar Dauja-Hadejia Road in Kano/Jigawa States, Section II: Kano-Tsalle; and restoration of Kaduna-Pambeguwa-Jos Road in Kaduna/Plateau States.

- The Southeast Zone saw 297.52 km of roadwork that consisted of: restoration of the Aba-Owerri Road NNPC Depot Expressway, Abia State; restoration of the Otuocha-Anam-Nzam-Innoma-Iheaka-Ibaji section of Otuocha-Ibaji-Odulu-Ajegwu in Anambra State; construction of the Ihiala-Orlu-Umuduru Road (Ihiala-Amaifeke Section) and completion of offshoots in Isseke Town-Amafuo-Uli in Imo/Anambra States. It also included restoration of Old Enugu-Onitsha Road (Opi Junction-Ukehe-Okpatu-Aboh-Udi-Oji to Anambra Border) in Enugu State; construction of Omor-Umulokpa Road in Anambra and Enugu States; rehabilitation of Ozalla-Akpugo-Amagunze-Ihuokpara-Nkomoro-Isu-Onicha (Enugu-Onicha) with a Spur to Onunweke in Enugu State; and Rehabilitation of the Old Enugu-Port Harcourt Road (Agbogugu-Abia Border Spur to Mmaku) in Enugu State.
- The Southwest Zone saw a total of 150.56 km of roadwork, consisting of restoration and expansion of Lagos-Badagry Expressway (Agbara Junction-Nigeria/Benin Border) in Lagos State; dualization of Akure-Ita-Ogbolu-Iju-Ado Ekiti

State Road, Section I: Akure -Ita-Ogbolu-Iju-Ekiti State Border in Ondo State; and dualisation of the Akure-Ita Ogbolu-Iju-Ado Ekiti State Road, Section II: Ita Ogbolu-Iju-Ado-Ekiti in Ekiti State.

- The completion of the Loko-Oweto Bridge in Nasarawa State was in view and was to be inaugurated in May 2023.
- Near completion of the Kano-Katsina 73.10-km dual carriage road project funded by Sukuk.
- Reconstruction of the Apapa-TinCan-Mile 2-Oshodi-Oworonshoki Expressway (commenced November 2018). This is the first full reconstruction of the road since its construction in the 1970s.
- The Federal Government had successfully delivered 64 internal road projects at various federal tertiary institutions and federal hospitals and also handed over a total of 46 internal roads as of March 2022. This was disclosed by the Minister of Works and Housing, Babatunde Fashola, while handing over a 300-m internal road at the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, southern Nigeria. He said another 18 internal roads were ready to be handed over, while the Ministry was attending to other 19 internal roads in similar institutions/federal hospitals across the country, making a total of 83 roads.
- Near-completion of the 38.7 km Yakasai- Badune-Damargu-Marken Zaklli Single Carriage Way in the Bichi Local Government Area of Kano State.
- Executive Order 7 mobilizing private investment into the development of key roads and bridges, such as Bodo-Bonny in Rivers and Apapa-Oshodi-Oworonshoki-Ojota in Lagos.

- The Highway Development and Management Initiative (HDMI), a public-private partnership programme to mobilise, in its First Phase, over a trillion naira in private investment in the development and maintenance of 12 roads, amounting to 1,963 km in length.
- More than ₦360 billion worth of Sukuk Bonds were raised after 2017 for dozens of critical road projects across all six geopolitical zones.
- Highway Development and Management Initiative (HDMI), a public-private partnership programme to mobilise, in its First Phase, over a trillion naira in private investment into the development and maintenance of 12 roads, amounting to 1,963 km in length.
- More than ₦600 billion worth of Sukuk Bonds raised since 2017 for more than 40 critical road projects across all six geopolitical zones. Between 25 November and 13 December 2021, the Federal Government handed over to benefiting communities 941 km of completed Sukuk road projects connecting 10 states in five geo-political zones of the country.
- Dualization of the Oyo-Ogbomosho Road. This project was awarded in 2010 but was not given proper attention by the previous administration. It is currently being funded by the ₦100 billion Sukuk Bond issued by the Federal Government in 2017.
- The Enugu-Onitsha Expressway: MTN Nigeria announced its intention to reconstruct the Enugu-Onitsha Expressway under President Buhari's Executive Order 7 (the Road Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme), signed in 2019. The MTN Board approved the company's participation in the scheme.

**AIR AND SEA PORTS**

- Completion of new terminals for international airports in Lagos, Abuja, Kano and Port Harcourt.
- Construction completed on new runways for the Abuja and Enugu International Airports. The Abuja International Airport Runway was reconstructed in 2017 for the first time since the airport was built in the early 1980s. In 2019, President Buhari approved a special fund of ₦10 billion for the reconstruction of the Enugu Airport Runway; it was completed and reopened in August 2020. Presidential approval was given for designation of four international airports as Special Economic Zones: Lagos, Kano, Abuja and Port Harcourt.
- Approval for new private-sector-funded deep water ports: Lekki Deep Sea Port (Construction already well underway, expected completion in 2022); Bonny Deep Sea Port (Ground-breaking done in March 2021); Ibom Deep Sea Port; and Warri Deep Sea Port.
- Development of capacity at the Eastern Ports.
- In December 2017, Calabar Port commenced exportation of bulk cement to Tema Port in Ghana.
- In 2019, three container ships berthed at Calabar Port, for the first time in 11 years.
- Dredging of Warri Port (Escravos Bar-Warri Port channel) was completed in 2018.
- On 30 October 2019, an LPG Tanker operated by NLNG berthed in Port Harcourt the first time an LPG ship ever berthed in any of the eastern ports.
- On 8 December 2019, Onne Port received the JPO VOLANS (owned by Maersk), the first gearless and largest container vessel (265.07 metres) to call at any eastern port in Nigeria.
- On 1 August 2019, Onne Port's Brawal Terminal received MSC GRACE, its first container vessel since 2012.
- President Buhari approved funds for the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) to build a world-class Flight

Safety Laboratory (FSL) in Abuja and train personnel to run it. As a result, Nigeria no longer has to send aircraft cockpit voice recorders and flight data recorders ('Black Boxes') abroad for downloading and analysis.

- The Nigeria College of Aviation Technology (NCAT) in Zaria underwent a transformation under President Buhari. A new Boeing 737 Full Flight Simulator was installed in the College, as well as a fully-automated Fire and Smoke Aircraft Training Simulator. Prior to the installation of the Fire and Smoke Simulator, Nigeria had to send personnel to Cameroon for the relevant training.
- NCAT has also acquired seven new training planes (one multi-engine and six single-engine) that use jet A1 fuel, replacing the old training planes that were expensive to maintain.
- The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET) in July 2017 received the ISO 9001:2015 certification (re-certified in August 2020) for aeronautical meteorological services delivery, making Nigeria the first-ever African country to achieve this feat.
- Significant infrastructural upgrades at various airports nationwide: Cat-3 ILS/DME (ILS = Instrument Landing System; DME = Distance Measuring Equipment) were installed in Lagos and Abuja Airports in 2019, allowing planes to land in zero visibility.
- Cat-2 ILS/DME systems were installed in ten airports around the country, with another four in progress. Doppler Omni-directional Range (DVOR) / DME systems were installed in eight airports and Air Traffic Control (ATC) Mobile Towers were installed in Lagos and Abuja Airports. Low-Level Windshear Alert Systems (LLWAS) were installed in more than a dozen airports.
- The procurement processes for the establishment of an aviation leasing company in Nigeria, a Maintenance, Repair

and Overhaul (MRO) Centre, and the development of Aerotropolises (Airport Cities) in Lagos and Abuja.

- Lekki Deep Sea Port, the first new Sea Port in Nigeria in decades, was completed and commissioned by President Buhari.
- Ground-breaking work was done for the Bonny Deep Sea Port in March 2021.
- The Kaduna Inland Dry Port was commissioned in 2018.
- Construction of Kano and Funtua Inland Dry Ports was completed in 2022.
- The 'Deep Blue' Maritime Security Project was commissioned in 2021. The project included 17 special mission vessels, two special mission aircraft, and three helicopters.
- Launch of a new Cabotage Compliance Strategy in 2019 by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) to enforce the implementation of the Cabotage Act.
- Introduction of an electronic call-up system by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) substantially to address the challenges of traffic gridlock caused by the Lagos Ports through modern technology.
- Designation of the Lilypond Container Terminal in Ijora, Lagos as a specialized processing and handling facility for the export of locally made agricultural and finished goods.
- Commencement of indigenous survey and charting of Nigeria's offshore waters by the Nigerian Navy's new Hydrographic Survey Vessel, NNS LANA.
- Cabinet approval was granted for the award of a 30-year Concession of Onitsha River Port under a Rehabilitate, Operate and Transfer (ROT) arrangement in February 2022.
- Reduction of tariffs (10% Rebate) on harbour dues for vessels calling at the Eastern Ports, as part of incentives to encourage vessel traffic to the Eastern Ports.
- In March 2021, 7,000 metric tonnes of cocoa was exported through Calabar Port to the United States for the first time in 14 years.

- The two largest containerships ever to berth at any Nigerian port were *Maersk Stadelhorn* (300-m long and 48-m wide) on 15 August 2020, and *Lady Jane* (294.5-m long and 32.3 m wide) on 13 April 2022.
- FG commissions on the erosion and flood control project in Abia. In the first quarter of 2017, President Buhari approved 26 Ecological Intervention Projects, with Abia State receiving two of them. The commissioning and handing-over ceremony of the erosion and flood control project was held at Oghighe Uruala Ohukabi in the Oguduasa Isukwuato local government area of Abia state.
- In 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari approved a ₦10 billion special intervention fund for the reconstruction of the runway of the Akanu Ibiam International Airport, Enugu. It was completed in August 2022.

## **POWER SECTOR**

- The Energizing Education Programme was established to bring clean and reliable energy (solar and gas) to federal universities and teaching hospitals across the country. Four universities were completed and commissioned: BUK (Kano), FUNAI (Ebonyi), ATBU (Bauchi) and FUPRE (Delta); others are ongoing. Completed projects include the Sabon-Gari Market in Kano, Ariaria Market in Aba, and Sura Shopping Complex in Lagos. Electrification of the Sura Shopping Complex (1,000 shops), Shomolu Printing Community (4,000 shops), Gbagi Market, Oyo (7,872 shops), Ita-Osun Market, Ogun (2,814 shops), Nnamdi Azikiwe Market, Lagos (3,091 shops), Balogun Market, Lagos (1,662 shops), Iponri Market, Lagos (1,305 shops), UMBC, Oyo (700 shops), Isikan Market, Ondo (277 shops), Bariga Market, Lagos (390 shops), Erinwe, Ogun (1,280 fish ponds).
- National Mass Metering Programme: Nationwide rollout of electricity meters to all on-grid consumers was launched in August 2020. The Central Bank of Nigeria provided ₦60

billion for the first phase, with a target of 1 million meter installations. As of 2022, more than 500,000 meters have been delivered to the Discos, with more than 280,000 installed.

- Solar Power Naija was launched in April 2021 to deliver 5 million off-grid solar connections to Nigerian households. The programme was predicted to generate an additional ₦7 billion increase in tax revenues per annum and US\$10 million in annual import substitution. In May 2021, the Rural Electrification Agency announced the planned deployment of solar-powered grids to 200 Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and 104 Unity Schools nationwide.
- The Presidential Power Initiative (PPI), (also known as the Siemens Power Program): A government-to-government initiative involving the governments of Nigeria and Germany and Siemens AG of Germany aimed at upgrading and modernizing Nigeria's electricity grid. The contract for the pre-engineering phase of the Presidential Power Initiative (PPI) was signed in February 2021, following the 2020 approval for the payment of FGN's counterpart funding for that phase.
- An incremental 4,000MW+ of power generating assets was completed during the course of the Buhari Administration, including the Zungeru Hydro, Kashimbila Hydro, Afam III Fast Power, Kudenda Kaduna Power Plant, the Okpai Phase 2 Plant, the Dangote Refinery Power Plant, and others.
- The Energizing Agriculture Programme was launched in May 2022 to catalyse economic development and improve rural livelihoods in Nigeria by exploring the nexus between mini-grids and agricultural productivity.
- Under Solar Power Naija and NDPHC's partnership, ASolar has been rolling out 100,000 Solar Home Systems across the country, while the NSIA (partnering under SPN) has announced a ₦10 billion NAIRA fund for developers, targeting more than 250,000 solar connections.



- A US\$21 million project was funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to stabilize power supply to more than 200,000 people in and around Apapa in Lagos State. The contract was signed between the Japanese and Nigerian Governments in November 2018.
- Financial Close for Azura Power Plant in Edo State: The necessary Federal Government approvals for this UD\$900 million private sector investment were given by President Buhari, paving the way for a financial close in December 2015 and the commencement of construction in January 2016. The 459MW project was completed in May 2018, seven months ahead of schedule.
- The Nigeria Electrification Project (NEP) is a US\$550 million programme that was implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria in partnership with the World Bank and African Development Bank. NEP consists of a combination of subsidies, direct contracts and technical assistance to support electrification across Nigeria. NEP has deployed more than 20,000 Standalone Solar Systems (SHS), as well as Solar Hybrid Mini-grids in more than 250 locations across the country. NEP has provided grants for the deployment of 200,000 Solar Home Systems, impacting one million Nigerians. The NEP is also delivering mini-grids across the country.
- FG's electric vehicle pilot: FG approved electric vehicle pilot programmes in three universities. The Federal Government's Electric Vehicle Pilot Project was spearheaded by the National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDCC) at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- The Rural Electrification Fund (REF), created by the Electricity Power Sector Reform Act of 2005, was operationalized by the Buhari Administration in 2016. Since 2016, the REF under REA has executed more than ₦4 billion in projects, with more than ₦5 billion of off-grid (mainly solar) projects executed across Nigeria in 2022.

- Installation and commissioning of 2Nos 132kV circuit breaker at Abakaliki.
- Transmission Substation (T/S) installation of 33kV Nnewi Industrial CB at Onitsha.
- T/S construction of a new 33kV IGI feeder at Aba 132KV.
- T/S energising of the 1X40MVA substation at Nsukka installation of a 60MVA transformer at GCM, Onitsha.
- 60MVA transformer in Aba.
- 2X60MVA transformers in New Haven, Enugu.
- Completion of installation and commissioning into service of a brand new 300MVA 330/132/33kV power transformer in the Alaoji Transmission Substation, increasing the station's installed capacity from 450MVA to 750MVA. The new transformer reportedly boosted supply to Enugu Distribution Company, benefiting Abia North (Ohafia, Arochukwu, Item, Abriba), Imo State (Okigwe, Arondi-izuogu), and parts of Ebonyi and Rivers States.
- Construction of 2x60MVA substation in Amasiri and a 150MVA 330/132kV substation in Abakaliki, both in Ebonyi State.
- Ongoing construction of a 2x60MVA transmission substation in Ogbunike/Ogidi communities of Anambra State.
- Completion in 2016 of a 330kV switching station (and associated double circuit lines) in Essien Udim/Ikot Ekpene local government areas (LGA) of Awka Ibom State to serve the Southeast and North Central Nigeria. The switching station directs power from four power plants into the national grid at Ugwuaji, in Enugu State, and onwards to other parts of the country.
- Completion of three inherited hydropower projects, accounting for more than 100MW of electricity in total: Gurara Hydropower Project, 30MW, Kaduna State (completed and concessioned in 2020); Kashimbila Hydropower Project, 40MW, Taraba, and Dadin-Kowa Hydropower Project, 40MW, Gombe. Additionally, the

Administration achieved completion of the Adada Dam in Enugu State and the Amauzari Earth Dam, Imo, completion of the Inyishi Regional Water Supply Project in Imo State, completion of the Ofeme Water Supply Project in Abia State, and completion of the Uburu Water Supply Scheme in Ebonyi State.

### **SPECIAL GRID INTERVENTIONS**

- The Federal Government had many key grid initiatives, with more than ₦125.2 billion budgeted between 2015 to 2021 for TCN, and Development Finance Funding through entities such as the World Bank, AFDB, AFD, JICA and others of up to US\$1.7 billion.
- The Central Bank of Nigeria also provided US\$250 million for the rehabilitation of critical interfaces between transmission and distribution to increase and stabilize power delivery.
- The contract for the pre-engineering phase of the Presidential Power Initiative (PPI) was signed in February 2021, following the 2020 approval for the payment of FGN's counterpart funding for that phase, while the first set of equipment contract awards were made in December 2021, consisting of 10 Mobitra transformers and 10 substations. In all, the PPI encompassed as many as 127 individual transmission and distribution projects (Brownfield and Greenfield).
- There were, as of Q1 2022, 135 ongoing projects for transmission lines, substations and other associated grid infrastructure. TCN had completed 30 key substation projects and 12 important transmission lines.
- Some of the critical grid interventions across the NESI included the resuscitation of the second Egbin-Ajah Transmission Line and the recently commissioned NDPHC Lafia 2X150 MVA and 2X60 /132/33/330 KV Transmission Substations (under NIPP). Other interventions included

330kV Quad Lines in Alaoji to Onitsha, Delta Power Station to Benin, as well as the Kano-Katsina 330kV lines.

- The US\$200 million Lagos/Ogun Transmission Infrastructure Project was financed by JICA. It entailed the construction of about 200 km of high-voltage transmission lines and a number of high voltage substations, benefiting several communities in the two states.
- Through a special CBN intervention for Transmission-Distribution interfaces, contracts were awarded for more than 30 substation rehabilitations and 1,570MVA transformer capacity upgrades, with 34 critical transformers to be installed or replaced.
- On the policy level, the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) rolled out various policies, ranging from a tariff-capping regulation for un-metered customers, to the eligible customer regulations, to the introduction of a service-based tariff regime and CBN oversight of discos.

## **HOUSING**

- The Family Homes Fund Limited (FHFL), incorporated by the Federal Government of Nigeria in September 2016, has been the implementing agency for the Buhari administration's National Social Housing scheme.
- More than 2,000 hectares of land with titled documents were provided by 24 states for the Buhari administration's social housing programme, with the capacity to accommodate about 65,000 new homes.
- Under the National Social Housing programme, Nigerians were given at least a 15-year period with a monthly payment at 6% interest rate to pay for each housing unit. The Central Bank of Nigeria provided a ₦200 billion financing facility with a guarantee by the FGN.
- The Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, completed or is completing housing projects in 34 states of Nigeria under the National Housing

Programme, with the support of the state governors who provided the land. As of 2022 than 5,000 houses are at various stages of completion, and thousands more are planned.

- The FHFL has now completed more than 13,000 homes across nine states, with another 20,000 commencing building works in 2022. In the process, these housing developments created more than 64,000 direct and indirect jobs.
- Zik Mausoleum, started in 1996, was completed and commissioned 2018.
- NDDC HQ Complex, started in the mid-1990s, was completed in 2021.
- EFCC HQ Complex, construction started in 2011, was completed in 2018.

## **OIL AND GAS**

- The Buhari administration declared the 2020s as the 'Decade of Gas'.
- North-East Oil Exploration Project: This project signalled the commencement of commercial production of crude oil and gas from the US\$3 billion Kolmani Integrated Development Project. Located along the fields of Gombe and Bauchi, the Kolmani project, with the Oil Prospecting Licences 809 and 810, are situated in the Gongola Basin of the Upper Benue Trough, straddling the two northern states. The field, according to its promoters, will produce about 50,000 barrels of crude oil per day and holds over one billion barrels of crude oil reserves, launching Nigeria's oil reserves to over 38 billion barrels. This news came as the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited revealed that it had identified several drillable prospects in the area, noting that it was also making an oil exploration re-entry into the Chad Basin.
- Ground-breaking on the 614-km Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano Gas Project, the largest domestic gas project in the country.

- Successful completion of Nigeria's first Marginal Field Bid Round in almost 20 years, which is expected to raise over half a billion dollars and open up a new landscape of investment in oil and gas.
- Launch of the National LPG Expansion Programme (including Removal of VAT from the domestic pricing of LPG).
- Financial closure and signing of a contract for the NLNG Train 7, which grew Nigeria's production capacity by about 35%.
- Nigeria and Morocco in 2021 signed an agreement to develop a US\$1.4 billion multipurpose industrial platform (Ammonia and Di-Ammonium Phosphate production plants) that would utilise Nigerian gas and Moroccan phosphate to produce 750,000 tons of ammonia and 1 million tons of phosphate fertilizers annually by 2025. It was proposed that it be located in Ikot-Abasi, Akwa-Ibom State.
- Commissioning, in December 2020, of the new NPDC Integrated Gas Handling Facility in Edo State, the largest onshore LPG plant in the country, with a processing capacity of 100 million standard cubic feet of gas daily, producing 330 tonnes of LPG, 345 tonnes of propane and 2,600 barrels of condensate daily.
- Establishment of a US\$350 million Nigerian Content Intervention Fund to finance manufacturing, contracts and assets in the oil and gas industry.
- Financial closure on the following NNPC-involved projects:
  - A 10,000 tonne-per-day methanol plant and a 500 million standard-cubic-metres t-per-day gas processing plant in Odeama, Brass, Bayelsa State.
  - The ANOH gas processing plant with a processing capacity of 300 million standard cubic feet of gas in Imo State was a joint venture between Seplat Petroleum Development Company and the Nigerian Gas Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). It also

has the potential to deliver 1,200MW of power when completed.

- Comprehensive Rehabilitation of the Port Harcourt Refinery (PHRC). The signing ceremony of the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Contract was held in April 2021, marking the commencement of site handover and full mobilisation to the site.
- Policy, Regulatory and Funding Support for the establishment of modular refineries across the Niger Delta. When the administration took office in 2015, Nigeria had only one functioning modular refinery. As of 2023, there are at least six ongoing brownfield and greenfield modular refinery projects across the Niger Delta. In 2020, President Buhari commissioned the first phase of the Waltersmith Modular Refinery in Imo State.
- Launch of the Nigerian Upstream Cost Optimisation Programme (NUCOP) to reduce operating expenses through process enhancement and industry collaboration.
- President Buhari's assent to the Petroleum Industry Act on 16 August 2021 broke a two-decade jinx and set the stage for the unprecedented transformation of Nigeria's oil and gas sector.
- Under the new Act, the NNPC was transformed into a Limited Liability Company, which was formally unveiled by the President in July 2022.
- The regulatory framework for the sector also changed, with the establishment of (a) the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), and (b) the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), which merged the then-existing Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA), Petroleum Equalization Fund (Management) Board (PEFMB), and the Midstream and Downstream Divisions of the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR).

- Historic Signing of the Execution of Oil Mining Lease (OML). In May 2021, 118 agreements between NNPC Limited and its contractor partners (Shell, Exxon Mobil, TOTAL and NAOC) were reached. These agreements settled long-standing disputes that stalled development, and unlocked more than \$10 billion of new deep-water investment in Nigeria.
- US\$45 million financing was secured from the Islamic Development Bank for the Front-End Engineering Design (FEED) study for the Nigeria–Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP) project. The agreement for the pipeline project was signed by the two countries during President Buhari’s state visit to Morocco in June 2018. (When completed, it will be the longest offshore pipeline in the world and the second longest pipeline in the world, running across 13 countries, 11 of them in West Africa).
- Launch of the National LPG Expansion Programme (including Removal of VAT from the domestic pricing of LPG).
- The NNPC Limited’s National Petroleum Investment Management Services (NAPIMS) became, in 2022, the first government organization in West or North Africa to receive the ISO 22301:2019 Certification for Business Continuity Management from RINA.
- Waltersmith Modular Refinery: Completion of a 5000 barrel-per-day modular refinery. The modular refinery was started in October 2018 and commenced operations on 14 October 2020. President Muhammadu Buhari, in 2020, commissioned the first phase of the Waltersmith Modular Refinery, with a production capacity of 270 million litres of petrol annually, in Imo state.

## **SOLID MINERALS**

- Approval in 2020 of a new national policy on local production of bitumen. In April 2022, the Federal Government announced the selection of PwC as Transaction Advisor for the concession process for Nigeria’s bitumen



blocks (Nigeria has one of the largest bitumen reserves in the world, mostly undeveloped).

- The Presidential Artisanal Gold Mining Development Initiative (PAGMI) is a Buhari Administration plan for enumerating (deploying BVN and NIN data), organising and formalising, skills, equipment, and financing (by guaranteeing off take—with fair pricing) of artisanal gold miners in Nigeria.
- Construction was completed on the first phase of the Segilola Gold Project, Nigeria's first large-scale commercial gold mine, and the most advanced gold exploration project (also currently the largest defined gold deposit in the country). The private sector project, built during the COVID-19 pandemic, began exporting gold in late 2021.
- In Kaduna, a \$600 million integrated iron ore mining, processing and steel production company is being completed in the Gujeni, Kagarko LGA of the state; this is a wholly private sector investment.
- Licensing by the Federal Government of three companies to build the first set of gold refineries in Nigeria.
- In 2020, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) added Nigerian gold to its reserves for the first time.
- The Ministry of Mines and Steel Development achieved:
  - The total automation and decentralisation of the operations of the Mining Cadastre Office (MCO).
  - Revitalisation the Presidential Joint Task Force on Mines Surveillance.
  - Enhancement of the operating capacity of the National Geosciences Research Laboratories (NGRL) in Kaduna, so that samples no longer need to be sent abroad for processing.
  - Operationalisation of the Solid Minerals Development Fund (SMDF)
  - Establishment, in 2018, of the National Council on Mining and Mineral Resources Development, bringing the Federal and State Governments together.

- Reactivation of the State Mineral Resources and Environmental Management Committees (MIREMCO).
- Development of the following mining-related clusters in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, as part of the Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel Development's Covid-19 economic intervention programme:
  - Gold Souk in Kano
  - Kaolin-processing plant in Bauchi
  - Gemstone market in Ibadan
  - Lead-smelting plant in Ebonyi
  - Barite-processing plant in Cross River
  - Gold-smelting plant in Kogi

## **AGRICULTURE**

- The Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) of the Central Bank of Nigeria was launched by President Buhari on 17 November 2015, and has brought more than ₦300 billion to more than 3.1 million smallholder farmers of 21 different commodities (including rice, wheat, maize, cotton, cassava, poultry, soy beans, groundnut, fish), cultivating over 3.8 million hectares of farmland.
- The Presidential Fertilizer Initiative was launched as a government-to-government partnership between the Nigerian and Moroccan Governments in December 2016. The Presidential Fertilizer Initiative (PFI) produced 12 million 50-kg bags of NPK 20:10:10 equivalent in 2020, bringing total production since inception to over 30 million 50-kg bags; the number of participating blending plants increased to 44 from the initial three.
- Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) Programme: This was a partnership between FGN, AfDB Group, and other stakeholders, including IFAD and BOI. Under the SAPZ programme, agro-processing centres were established across the country. The agro-processing centres

will be provided with basic infrastructure, such as water, electricity and roads, as well as facilities for skill training. Seven states and the FCT were selected for the pilot phase, which commenced in 2021: Ogun, Oyo, Imo, Cross River, Kano, Kaduna, Kwara.

- The Green Imperative: This was a Nigeria-Brazil Agricultural Mechanisation Programme aimed at boosting agricultural production in Nigeria. The National Assembly approved a loan for the financing of the programme, which involved the development of 632 privately-operated primary production (mechanisation) service centres, 142 agro-processing (value addition) service centres across the 774 LGAs, and the reactivation of six privately owned, partially-operational or moribund tractor assembly plants nationwide. It will also train 100,000 new extension workers.
- The completion of 12 inherited dam projects across the country since 2016: Kashimbila Multipurpose Dam, Taraba; Ogwashi-Uku Multipurpose Dam, Delta; Adada Dam, Enugu; Sulma Earth Dam, Katsina; Gimi Earth Dam, Kaduna; Amla-Otukpo Dam, Benue; Amauzari Earth Dam, Imo; Ibiono-Ibom Earth Dam, Akwa Ibom; Gadau/Lafia Zigau Dam, Bauchi; Alajue Small Earth Dam, Osun; Kampe Omi Dam, Kogi (restoration) and Kargo Dam, Kaduna (restoration).
- Completion, since 2016 of seven inherited irrigation projects and 30 water supply projects inherited by the Administration, including the Central Ogbia Regional Water Supply Project in Bayelsa State, the Northern Ishan Regional Water Supply Project and the Ojirami Dam Water Supply Scheme and Reticulation Network, both in Edo State, the Sabke, Dutsi and Mashi Water Supply Projects in Katsina State, the Vom Water Supply Project and Mangu Regional Water Supply Scheme in Plateau State, the Takum Water Supply Project in Taraba State, the Gambaki/Chinade/Hardawa/Bulkachuwa Water Supply Project in Bauchi State, the Inyishi Regional Water Supply

Project in Imo State, the Ilobu Water Supply Scheme and Osogbo Water Supply Scheme in Osun State, the Idanre Water Supply Project in Ondo State, the Ofeme Water Supply Project in Abia State, the Uburu Water Supply Scheme in Ebonyi State, the Gashua Water Supply Scheme in Yobe State, the Kwami Gadam and Bojude Water Supply Project in Gombe State, the Saki Town Water Supply Project in Oyo State, and the Zobe and Kazaure Water Supply Projects in Katsina and Jigawa States, respectively.

- The National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) established Integrated Farm Estates across Nigeria. As of 2019 new and revived farm estates were commissioned in Katsina, Yobe and Imo, and others are under development.
- President Buhari directed NALDA to establish these Integrated Farm Estates and settlements in each of the 109 Senatorial Districts in the country.
- NALDA was originally established in 1992, but had been dormant since around 2000, until President Buhari revived it by appointing a new Executive Secretary & CEO (June 2020) and directed that the Authority be domiciled in the Presidency for direct supervision by him.
- An Integrated Farm Estate was designed to fit the context of its host community (i.e., cultivated crops and/or livestock particular to the community).
- NALDA also launched the National Young Farmers Scheme (NYFS) to engage 1,000 youths in each of the 774 LGAs in mechanised agriculture.
- Additionally, under the NYFS, NALDA sent, in the first phase, 200 young Nigerian farmers from the 36 states to Israel and Morocco for training in greenhouse farming and animal husbandry. The beneficiaries will return to Nigeria upon completion of their training and be tasked with the training of other young people on NALDA's Integrated Farm Estates in their various areas.

**Agriculture for Food and Jobs Programme (AFAJ)**

- Under this programme, which was a component of the Economic Sustainability Plan (a stimulus response to the Covid-19 pandemic), the Federal Government trained and deployed over 34,000 young graduates across all 774 LGAs of the country. Each person was given a locally-developed app on smartphones or e-tablets, digitally to register farmers and map out their farm GIS coordinates.
- These people helped register and map about 6 million small-holder farmers to their farmlands. The database allowed the disbursement of cash grants to help over a million farmers purchase fertilizers in the 2021 wet season.
- Shortly after this small-holder farmers database, the Federal Government rolled out a financial inclusion scheme to provide bank accounts and BVNs to these farmers.

**National Livestock Transformation Programme (NLTP):**

- The National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) was an initiative of the Nigerian Government designed to modernise pastoral agriculture and livestock production in Nigeria through the establishment of ranches and to deliver a lasting solution to recurring clashes between pastoralists and crop farmers.
- By addressing the resource (land, water and pasture) constraints at the heart of the conflicts through this intervention, the Government expected to see a situation where both livestock pastoralists and crop farmers contribute amicably to the country's agriculture sector.
- NLTP created jobs, expanded domestic technical capacity, increased agricultural output (milk and meat yields of local cattle breeds) and, importantly, engendered peace and security across the country.
- In its pilot phase, NLTP involved the development of pilot model ranches across grazing reserves in interested states, where the deployment of requisite infrastructure (grazing

areas, pasture production, milk collection, admin area, water sources, etc) and the training of pastoralist and crop farmer households took place.

## **SOCIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMMES**

- In 2016, President Buhari launched the National Social Investment Programme, currently the largest such programme in Africa and one of the largest in the world. The National Social Register of poor and vulnerable Nigerians (NSR) contains 32.6 million persons from more than 7 million poor and vulnerable households, identified across 708 local government areas, 8,723 wards and 86,610 communities across the 36 states of the country and the FCT. From this number, 1.6 million poor and vulnerable households (consisting of more than 8 million individuals in 45,744 communities from 5,483 wards of 557 LGAs in 35 states and the FCT) are currently benefiting from the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme, which pays a bimonthly stipend of ₦10,000 per household.
- In January 2019, President Buhari launched Nigeria's Micro-Pension Scheme, which allowed self-employed persons and persons working in organisations with less than three employees to save for the provision of pension at retirement or incapacitation.
- Through the establishment of the Survival Fund, National Youth Investment Fund, and the National Special Public Works Programme (774,000 beneficiaries across 774 LGAs nationwide), and the Central Bank's Covid-19 ₦300-billion-Targeted Credit Facility (TCF), more than ₦150 billion were disbursed to support millions of small businesses, households and young people through federal grants, loans and stipends.
- The Buhari administration's Survival Fund provided its grants (Payroll Support, Artisan and Transport Sector grants, and General MSME grants) to more than 800,000

beneficiaries since the last quarter of 2020. It has also provided free business registration to more than 200,000 MSMEs across the country.

- Presidential approval for the establishment of the Nigeria Investment and Growth Fund (NIG-Fund) in 2021.
- As of the end of 2020, the Development Bank of Nigeria (which commenced operations in 2017) had disbursed ₦324 billion in loans to more than 136,000 MSMEs through 40 Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs) (57% of the beneficiaries were women-owned MSMEs, while 27% were youth-owned).
- The Bank of Industry disbursed more than ₦900 billion in loans to over 3 million large, medium, small and micro-enterprises since 2015.

## **EDUCATION AND HEALTH**

- From 2015 to 2022, the Buhari administration enacted more than ₦1.7 trillion of capital intervention to Nigeria's tertiary institutions through various means, including the TETFund, with the universities taking the lion's share of the total amount. Nigeria's Federal Government further approved the 2023 disbursement for the sum of ₦320,345,040,835 as intervention to public tertiary institutions across the country.
- The Federal Government disbursed more than ₦170 billion in UBE Matching Grants to States and the FCT since 2015, ₦8 billion in Special Education Grants to state and private providers of Special Education, and ₦34 billion in grants from the Teachers Professional Development Fund to states and the FCT.
- The launch of the Alternate School Programme (ASP), which was designed to ensure that every out-of-school child in Nigeria gained access to quality basic education, irrespective of social, cultural or economic circumstance, in line with the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4).

- Presidential approval for a new (extended) retirement age of 65 and length of service of 40 years for teachers in public basic and secondary schools in Nigeria (both effective 1 January 2021), as well as a new Special Teachers Salary Scale (effective 1 January 2022) and a new Special Teachers Pension Scheme.
- Reduction in the number of out-of-school children by 3,247,590 as of 31 December 2020, which was achieved through a World-Bank financed programme known as 'Better Education Service Delivery for All' (BESDA). Of that number, 1,792,833 were placed in formal schools while 1,454,757 went through non-formal interventions, such as Almajiri, Girl-Child, Nomadic/Migrant and IDPs Education.
- Under the World Bank-supported Innovation Development and Effectiveness in the Acquisition of Skills (IDEAS) Project, approved in 2020, US\$200 million was invested in six participating states (Abia, Benue, Ekiti, Gombe, Kano, Edo) as well as 20 Federal Science and Technical Colleges nationwide. Implementation was stepped-up in 2021 to afford millions of Nigerian youths the opportunity to acquire hands-on skills to effectively contribute to national development.
- The Buhari administration through the National Universities Commission (NUC) approved the establishment of 10 federal universities, 58 private universities, and 22 state universities.
- Presidential approval for the establishment of the following:
  - Six new Federal Colleges of Education (one per geopolitical zone: Odugbo, Benue State; Isu, Ebonyi State; Ekiadolor, Edo State; Gidan Madi, Sokoto State; Jama'are, Bauchi State; and Iwo, Osun State).
  - Six new Federal Polytechnics one each in Kaltungo, Gombe State; Ayede, Oyo State; Daura, Katsina State; Shendam, Plateau State, Ohodo, Enugu State; and Ugep, Cross River State.



- Under the phased implementation of the National Youth Policy, six Federal Science & Technical Colleges (FSTC) were established in 2020, as follows: FSTC Ogugu, Kogi State; FSTC Hadeija, Jigawa State; FSTC Umuaka, Imo State; FSTC Igangan, Oyo State; FSTC Ganduje, Kano State; FSTC, Amuzu, Ebonyi State. Five additional Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTC) came on-stream in 2021, and are located in Bauchi, Plateau, Sokoto, Enugu and Cross River States.
- Grants to State Governments: At least \$2.5 million was disbursed to each state of the Federation and the FCT under the Saving One Million Lives (SOML) initiative to improve health outcomes.
- The Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF): For the first time since the National Health Act was passed in 2014, the Federal Government in 2018 began including the 1% minimum portion of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (amounting to ₦55 billion in 2018) to fund the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF). The Fund was designed to deliver a guaranteed set of health services to all Nigerians through the national network of Primary Health Care Centres.
- Passage of legislation funding the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) for the first time since it was founded in 2011. President Buhari approved a grant of ₦5 billion for the NCDC in March 2020 as part of the response to the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Tertiary Healthcare Upgrade Programme: A number of key federal hospitals across the country were upgraded to effectively manage cancer and other major health challenges. Cancer Radiotherapy machines and other equipment are being provided to these hospitals. The National Hospital in Abuja has already received two LINAC (cancer treatment) machines.

- In March 2018, the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) invested US\$10 million to establish a world-class Cancer Treatment Centre at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), and US\$5 million each in the Aminu Kano University Teaching Hospital and the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, to establish modern diagnostic centres. These centres were all completed and are operational.
- Launch in 2019 of a Cancer Treatment Support Programme, 'Chemotherapy Access Partnership', as a public-private partnership between the Federal Government of Nigeria and a private sector coalition to grant Nigerians access to lower-cost, high-quality medications for the treatment of several types of cancer.

## **CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE**

In early- to mid-2020, the whole world witnessed a deadly pandemic that upended the normal course of life for an extended period of time. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human lives, economic activities and commercial events was too great to be quantified; it was a once-in-a-lifetime event that could define a generation. Despite early pessimism and scepticism, Nigeria was able to mount a commendable response apparatus to the unforeseen health crisis. This was largely due to the proactiveness and dedication of the President and his team, who put in remarkable efforts to reduce the adverse effects of the pandemic on Nigerians.

*In Nigeria, we are taking a two-step approach. First, to protect the lives of our fellow Nigerians and residents living here and second, to preserve the livelihoods of workers and business owners to ensure their families get through this very difficult time in dignity and with hope and peace of mind. – President Buhari, 29 March 2020.*

- In March 2020, the President set up an Economic Sustainability Committee (ESC), chaired by Vice President

Osinbajo, to develop a comprehensive economic plan in response to the disruptions and dislocations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The ESC produced an Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP) that was implemented and has been credited with helping Nigeria exit the Covid-induced recession faster than expected.
- In March 2020, the President set up a Presidential Task Force on Covid-19, chaired by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, to coordinate Nigeria's multi-sectoral inter-governmental approach to COVID-19. Since April 2021, the PTF has transitioned into a Presidential Steering Committee (PSC) on COVID-19
- President Buhari also approved the following, in 2020:
  - Establishment of a ₦500 billion COVID-19 Crisis Intervention Fund for the upgrading of health facilities nationwide and financing of a national Special Public Works Programme, as well as any other interventions that may be approved in the future.
  - Launch of the Export Expansion Facility Programme, which was designed to ameliorate the impact of the pandemic on exporting businesses. The goals for the programme were market development (22 identified export markets), capacity building, export aggregation and trade facilitation.
  - Release of special intervention grants of ₦10 billion and ₦5 billion to the Lagos State Government and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), respectively, to facilitate the COVID-19 response.
  - A three-month repayment moratorium for all Social Investment Programme microcredit loans (TraderMoni, MarketMoni and FarmerMoni).
  - A three-month moratorium for all Federal Government funded loans issued by the Bank of Industry, the Bank of Agriculture and the Nigeria Export Import Bank.

- Presidential approval for Expansion of the National Social Register (official database for implementation of the Conditional Cash Transfer programme) by 1 million additional households.

## **CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND SPORTS**

### **SPORTS**

- Renovation of the Lagos and Abuja National Stadiums commenced in 2020, ahead of concessioning for private management.
- Tobi Amusan broke the 16-year-old Commonwealth Games Record. On 7 August 2022, the world champion and record holder, Tobi Amusan, broke the Commonwealth Games record to set her own of 12.30s in the 100 m dash event at Alexander Stadium, Birmingham. Amusan, the Ogun State-born athlete, upset the world of athletics to achieve a second feat in the Commonwealth Games. The 25-year-old, who in the build-up to the final round had dominated her challengers, Jamaican silver medallist, Devynne Charlton, at 12.58 s and England's bronze medallist, Cindy Sember, at 12.59 s, to ignite the ecstatic crowd. Amusan had previously broken the Commonwealth Games record of 12.65 s set in 2006 by Jamaica's Brigitte Foster-Hylton also with her 12.40 s time attained in the semi-finals, but it was disqualified on account of a 2.4 m/s tailwind. Despite the setback, the undeterred Ijebu Ode-born sprint hurdler finally broke the 16-year-old record with a time of 12.30s. Amazingly, Amusan became the first Nigerian athlete to win gold at the African Championships, the Commonwealth Games and the World Championships in the same year.
- In 2018, the National Sports Festival was held for the first time since 2012.
- The Nigerian national U-17 football team, the Golden Eaglets, won the FIFA U-17 World Cup for the fifth time, in 2015.

Their first ever win was 30 years earlier, in 1985, when President Buhari was Military Head of State.

- Nigeria's participation at the 2016 Paralympic Games yielded the best gold medal results since Nigeria began taking part in the Games in 1992.
- D'Tigress, Nigeria's female national basketball team, won the 2017 FIBA Africa Women's Championship, the continental championship cup, for the first time in 12 years, and earned qualification for its first FIBA Women's World Cup appearance since 2006.
- In 2018, D'Tigress earned its first-ever win at the FIBA Women's World Cup and went on to advance to the quarterfinals. The team finished in 8th place -- the best ever performance by an African team.
- In 2019, D' Tigress successfully defended its 2017 Afro Basketball Women's Championship title.
- In 2020, D' Tigress became the only female African team to qualify for participation in the 2020 Summer Olympic Games.
- Nigeria's women's football team, the Super Falcons, won the African Women Cup of Nations (AWCON) in 2016 and 2018.
- In 2018, Nigeria hosted a FIFA Executive Football Summit, one of 12 worldwide.
- In 2019, the Super Falcons advanced to the group stage of the Women's World Cup for the first time in 20 years.
- In 2019, Nigeria won its first Athletics World Championship Medal in six years.

## **DIGITAL ECONOMY**

- The NIN-SIM Linkage Policy was established to deepen identity management in the country for easy data collection, tracing and planning purposes.
- Extension of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) 'Pioneer Status' to e-Commerce and software development companies.

- Stipulation of ₦145 per linear meter cap on the Highway Right of Way (RoW) for fibre optic cabling to incentivize investment in rollout.
- Launch of new national 5G policy in 2021 and successful licensing of two private companies to rollout 5G nationally in August 2022.
- Establishment of the new National Data Protection Bureau, which is expected to develop 'primary legislation for data protection and privacy'.
- Launch of the new 'National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy', by President Buhari in 2019.
- Drafting of the Nigeria Startup Bill (NSB) and submission of the draft Bill to the National Assembly for consideration and passage into law.
- Establishment in 2021 of a National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR).
- Implementation of the National Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure Backbone Phase 2 (NICTIB-2) Project in order to facilitate rollout of a nationwide fibre infrastructure network.
- Construction of a Tier-4 Datacentre in Kano to complement existing infrastructure in Abuja (Tier-3 Datacentre) and Enugu (A Disaster Recovery Site). The Kano Datacentre was completed in 2022.

#### **INVESTMENT AND FINANCING**

- Afreximbank announced in January 2022 that it would assist NNPC Limited to raise \$5 billion in financing to support investments in Nigeria's upstream industry and facilitate expanded energy supply. Afrexim also disclosed plans to underwrite US\$1 billion of the total planned debt.
- The Final Investment Decision in January 2021 on a 10,000-tonne-per-day methanol plant and a 500-million-standard-cubic-feet-per-day gas processing plant was promoted by the NNPC Limited and the Nigerian Content Development and

Monitoring Board (NCDMB) in partnership with the private sector. The plants were constructed in Odeama, Brass, Bayelsa State.

- The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), on 21 December 2021, handed over a cheque of ₦621.24 billion for the rehabilitation of 21 critical roads (totalling 1,800 km) across the country through the Road Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme under the Executive Order 7 signed by President Buhari in 2019. This does not mean that NNPC went into the business of constructing roads; rather, it financed the construction of roads through its tax liabilities.
- Launch of the Nigerian Upstream Cost Optimization Programme (NUCOP) to reduce operating expenses through process enhancement and industry collaboration. The overall target was to achieve a US\$10 or less per-barrel production cost.
- Revival of ANAMMCO Limited Factory: According to the presidency, the committed implementation of the automotive policy of the federal government helped to support the revival of the old Anambra Motor Manufacturing Company Limited (ANAMMCO Limited) factory in Enugu State. Since 2016, the revived factory has reportedly assembled more than 4,000 trucks, valued at tens of billions of naira.

#### **YOUTH AND CREATIVE INDUSTRY SUPPORT**

- Establishment of the 75 billion Naira National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF), approved by President Buhari in 2020.
- Establishment of the Creative Industry Financing Initiative (CIFI) by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in collaboration with the Bankers' Committee to provide single-digit financing to young Nigerians in the fields of fashion, film, music and information technology.

- In 2019, the Federal Government added creative industries to the list of qualifying sectors for 'Pioneer Status' Incentives, which granted relief from Corporate Income Tax for a specified period of time.
- Presidential Approval for the handover of the National Theatre, Lagos, to the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Bankers Committee for redevelopment into a world-class creative park serving the theatre, film, fashion, music, and ICT sectors. The handover was completed and redevelopment work (valued at about ₦20 billion ) had commenced.

#### **FISCAL, TRADE AND MONETARY REFORMS**

- In 2017, the Nigerian Investment Promotion Council (NIPC) completed a long-overdue revision of the list of activities that could benefit from Nigeria's Pioneer Status Incentive, which granted beneficiary companies a three-to-five year tax holiday. The revision, completed more than 10 ten years after the previous one, modernised the list, expanding tax holiday incentives to qualifying companies in E-commerce, software development, animation, music, film and TV.
- Restoration of federal budget to the January-December cycle with the 2020 Budget (for the first time in 12 years).
- Introduction, as of 2020, of annual Finance (Reform) Bills to accompany the annual Federal Appropriation Bill.
- Negotiation of the billions of dollars in arrears of Cash Calls that the administration inherited when it assumed office, resulting in an agreement for a significant discount of more than 1 billion dollars. The NNPC commenced payment of the arrears to the oil companies in 2017 and, as of Q4 2020, more than US\$3 billion of the approximately \$5 billion in arrears had been cleared.
- Launch of a Visa-on-Arrival Policy, as part of Ease of Doing Business Reforms. In addition to the comprehensive reform of the existing visa regime, leading to the rollout in 2020 of a



new and enhanced Visa Policy for Nigeria (including expansion from six visa categories to 79; each tailored to a specific type of traveller: 36 Temporary Residence Visas, 15 Permanent Residence Visas, 24 Short Visit Visas, etc.).

## **SUPPORT TO STATES**

- The Buhari administration extended more than ₦2 trillion in bailout packages to state governments to enable them to meet their salary and pension obligations, particularly in the face of dwindling oil revenues in the first three years of the administration. The support was provided in the following forms:
  - Budget Support Facility (Total of ₦614 billion extended to the states)
  - Paris Club Refunds (US\$5.4 billion)
  - Infrastructure Loans & Refunds: More than ₦700 billion in refunds for federal road projects embarked upon by state governments.
- In 2017, President Buhari paid the pension arrears to police officers who were granted presidential pardon in 2000 after serving in the former Biafran Police during the Nigerian Civil War. The officers and their next of kin allegedly waited for their pensions for 17 years after the presidential pardon before the backlog was cleared.
- Loan Restructuring for Facilities with Commercial Banks: In 2015, the DMO restructured commercial bank loans with a total value of ₦575.516 billion for 23 states to reduce the debt service burden on the states. In exchange for their loans to state governments, the banks were issued 20-year FGN bonds at a yield of 14.83% per annum. The Restructuring Exercise benefited the states through:
  - Reduction in the monthly debt service burden of states from between 55% to 97% for various states;

- Interest rate savings for the states ranging from 3% to 9% per annum;
- Longer repayment period for the loans converted into bonds; and,
- Freeing up of needed cash to run the Government.

#### **NIGER DELTA**

- Launching of the Nigerian Maritime University in Okerenkoko, Delta State. The University was granted approval in January 2018 by the National Universities Commission (NUC) to commence undergraduate degree programmes effective as of the 2017/18 session, commencing academic activities on 12 April 2018.
- Resumption of work on the 337-km East-West Road project, originally awarded in 2006. The Buhari administration completed the project in Q1 of 2022.
- President Buhari approved ₦5 billion in a launch grant for the Maritime University.
- Ogoni Clean-Up: US\$170 million seed funding was set aside for the Ogoni Clean-Up in an Escrow Account established for that purpose. The Escrow Agreement Signing Ceremony took place in April 2018. The Clean-Up commenced in January 2019, with the handover of the first batch of 21 sites to the selected remediation firms after a painstaking procurement process. As of March 2021, 16 of the first 21 sites had been certified cleaned.
- Approval of the establishment of private-sector-led modular refineries across the nine states of the Niger Delta; the first three refineries have been completed, while construction is ongoing on others.

## **ANTI-CORRUPTION AND TRANSPARENCY**

### **EXPANSION OF TSA AND IPPIS COVERAGE**

- On 7 August 2015, President Buhari issued a directive to all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to close their accounts with Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) and transfer their balances to the Central Bank of Nigeria on or before 15 September 2015.
- The TSA system was launched in 2012, but failed to gain traction until President Buhari's executive order in August 2015. The TSA system has now been implemented in more than 90 percent of all Federal MDAs.
- This decision to fully operationalise the Treasury Single Account (TSA) system — a public accounting system that enabled the government to manage its finances (revenues and payments) using a single, unified account, or series of linked accounts domiciled at the Central Bank of Nigeria, resulted in the consolidation of more than 17,000 bank accounts previously spread across DMBs in the country, and in savings of an average of ₦4 billion monthly in banking charges.
- Despite great opposition, the Buhari administration expanded IPPIS coverage to the Armed Forces as well as federal universities and other academic institutions.

### **BVN DEPLOYMENT FOR SOCIAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMMES AND OTHERS**

- Considering that personnel costs are the Federal Government's largest expenditure, the Federal Government gave priority to the deployment of the BVN for payroll and pension audits. The use of BVN to verify payroll entries on the Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPIS) platform has so far led to the detection of 54,000 fraudulent payroll entries.

- The Federal Government also ensured the deployment of the BVN system to serve as the verification basis for payments to beneficiaries and vendors in the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP), the N-Power Scheme and the Homegrown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP)

#### **OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP**

- In May 2016, President Buhari attended and participated in the International Anti-Corruption Summit organised by the UK government. At that summit, he pledged that Nigeria would join the OGP, an international transparency, accountability and citizen engagement initiative.
- In July 2016, Nigeria became the 70th country to join the OGP. Following this, Nigeria created an OGP National Steering Committee (NSC), which went on to develop a National Action Plan (2017-2019) that aimed to deepen and mainstream transparency mechanisms and citizen engagement in the management of public resources across all sectors.
- In 2018, Nigeria was elected to lead the OGP, alongside Argentina, France, and Romania. All four new members of the OGP Steering Committee served for three years starting on 1 October 2018.

#### **ASSET RECOVERY**

- The Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC) helped anti-corruption agencies devise clearer strategies for obtaining forfeiture of assets suspected to have been acquired fraudulently, mainly from state funds, before prosecuting suspected culprits. Part of this work involved painstakingly reviewing existing Laws (like the Money Laundering Act, 2004, the EFCC Act, 2004 and the ICPC Act, 2000), to identify and highlight sections directly conferring powers of forfeiture on Nigeria's anticorruption agencies. This advocacy led to a significant increase in the use of Non-

Conviction-Based Asset Forfeiture Mechanisms by anti-corruption agencies.

- ICPC scrutiny of practices, systems and procedures of MDAs' personnel costs from 2019 to 2020 yielded ₦189 billion in recoveries from inflated personnel budgets.
- In 2019 alone, the ICPC also recovered ₦32 billion worth of Land, Buildings and Vehicles.
- ICPC's audit of Constituency Projects from 2015 to 2018 helped recover ₦2 billion of diverted funds and assets.

## **SECURITY AND JUSTICE REFORM**

- The Nigerian Air Force has acquired 26 brand new aircraft since President Buhari assumed office in 2015, and attained another 12 Super Tucano Jets from the United States Government, which were delivered beginning in July 2021. The NAF also locally re-activated several previously unserviceable planes.
- The Nigerian Navy acquired close to 400 new platforms since 2015, including 172 Riverine Patrol Boats (RPBs), 114 Rigid-Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs), 2 Seaward Defence Boats (SDBs), 12 Manta Class/Inshore Patrol Craft (IPC), 3 Whaler Boats, 4 Barges/Tugboats, 22 Fast Attack Boats, 14 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), 4 Helicopters, 14 River Town Class, 14 House Boats and 4 Capital Ships.
- In line with the President's directive, the Nigerian Navy established a Naval Base on Lake Chad in Baga, Borno State, and also deployed 14 Naval Security Stations along the nation's coastline in areas prone to criminal activity.
- President Buhari signed into law, in 2019, the Bill establishing the Police Trust Fund, which significantly improved funding for the Nigeria Police Force.
- The Nigerian Police Force launched a new National Command and Control Centre in Abuja in 2019.
- As part of Criminal Justice Reforms, in 2020, President Buhari granted amnesty to 2,600 prisoners nationwide,

representing about 3.5 percent of all inmates, in a bid to decongest Nigeria's prison population. The beneficiaries were those 60 years and above, those suffering from ill-health that would likely lead to death, convicts serving three years and above and had less than six months left to serve; inmates with mental health defects; and inmates with a pending fine not exceeding ₦50,000 and with no pending cases.

- The Nigerian Army's partnership with Innoson Motors: In January 2018, the Nigerian Army partnered with Innoson Motors, for the local production, modification and repair of armoured fighting vehicles and other military hardware.
- Presidential approval for the commencement of Community Policing Programme nationwide, and release of take-off funding. The Community Policing Programme has now been enshrined into the Police Act, 2020.
- The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) deployed a Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) at five international airports. MIDAS is a global real-time border management system developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and is linked to INTERPOL and other watchlists. The implementation of MIDAS at the international airport in Abuja was described by the IOM as 'the largest deployment of MIDAS at any airport globally, to date'.

## **DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

- Re-establishment of Nigeria's position and influence in the regional and global arena. Fragile/broken relations with the United States, United Kingdom, South Africa, and with neighbouring countries (Chad, Niger, Cameroon) have been revived and strengthened since June 2015.
- Major outcomes, results and manifestations of Nigeria's renewed visibility and respect on the international stage include:

- The positions of Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Secretary-General of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the African Development Bank, and African Export-Import Bank are all currently held by Nigerians as of March 2023
- The signing, in August 2016, of an MoU with the UK Government on modalities for the return of Nigeria's stolen assets in the UK.
- The establishment of a Global Forum for Asset Recovery (GFAR), hosted by the governments of the US and UK in December 2017, to focus on assisting Nigeria and three other countries to reclaim their stolen assets.
- Nigeria joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2016 and developed a National Action Plan, which is already being implemented.
- In 2016, Nigeria signed an agreement on the identification and repatriation of illicit funds with the United Arab Emirates during President Buhari's visit there.
- The Federal Government under President Buhari successfully engaged the governments of Switzerland, Jersey Island, the United States, United Arab Emirates, and Liechtenstein, among others, in an effort to ensure the repatriation of Nigeria's stolen assets.
- A total of US\$622 million in looted Abacha funds was repatriated to Nigeria in two tranches in December 2017 and April 2020. The first tranche (US\$322 m) was disbursed as part of the Buhari administration's Social Investment Programme interventions, while the second tranche (US\$311 m) was invested in the Presidential Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF), managed by the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA).
- Under President Buhari's watch, Nigeria played an active and stabilising role in Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). In 2017, Nigeria was able to successfully

negotiate a vital exemption from production cuts agreed upon at the time, a move that helped shore up revenues and foreign reserves.

- The Buhari administration mobilised international support for the war against Boko Haram, forging strong partnerships with key countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany, as well as ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, and other entities. After years of stalemate, the United States finally agreed to sell weapons to Nigeria (12 Super Tucano Aircraft) and followed through on the arrangement.
- Overhaul of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), consisting of troops from Nigeria and Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin.
- The designation of President Buhari as the African Union (AU) Anti-Corruption Champion for 2018.
- The designation of President Buhari by ECOWAS Heads of State as West Africa's COVID-19 Champion in 2020.
- President Buhari's interventions helped restore and strengthen democracy in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau. He authorised the deployment of troops, fighter jets and warships to The Gambia during the impasse following the December 2016 presidential elections.
- Successful evacuation and repatriation of more than 10,000 Nigerian migrants from Libya, with the support and partnership of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

## **BILATERAL RELATIONS**

### **CHINA**

- Billions of dollars in concessional infrastructure funding for critical road and rail projects. President Buhari's April 2016 official visit to China unlocked billions of dollars in



infrastructure funding, primarily for road, rail and port projects.

- Implementation of a Chinese Yuan (CNY) 15 billion Currency Swap Agreement between the Peoples Bank of China and the Central Bank of Nigeria.

## **GERMANY**

- Support for the Presidential Power Initiative (PPI), a six-year programme to modernise Nigeria's electricity grid under a government-to-government framework between the Nigerian and German governments; to be managed and implemented by Siemens AG.
- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) and Petkus Technologie of Germany, aimed at significantly reducing the incidence/impact of post-harvest losses in Nigeria's Agriculture Value Chain.
- Signing of a MoU with Volkswagen of South Africa (VWSA) to develop a joint vision for an automotive hub in Nigeria.
- Recovery of Benin bronzes and other artefacts.

## **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)**

- Renewed cooperation in security and anti-corruption. The US government approved the sale of 12 Super Tucano Aircraft to Nigeria, as well as repatriation of recovered looted monies and assets stashed in the US. In 2020, the United States and the Bailiwick of Jersey repatriated \$311 million to Nigeria. These funds were also used in some of the bilateral interactions to solidify Nigeria's place as Africa's largest democracy and an alignment of shared democratic values of peace, liberty, freedom and human rights.
- In April 2018, the Nigerian and US militaries collaborated to host the 2018 African Land Forces Summit in Abuja, the largest gathering of African Army chiefs, to discuss cooperation aimed at improving security on the continent.

**UNITED KINGDOM (UK)**

- In 2018, Nigeria commenced the implementation of Automatic Exchange of Tax Information (AETI) protocol with the United Kingdom. This protocol provided the Nigerian Government with data on bank accounts, property and trusts held in the UK by Nigerian nationals, and supported the Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS) by allowing Nigerian tax authorities to check the accuracy of declarations received regarding overseas assets and income.
- In 2018, a UK-government funded £13 million education programme was launched that provided training for teachers, school equipment and security for schools for 100,000 children living in parts of the northeast affected by Boko Haram.
- In 2021, £4.2 million looted by the Ibori family was repatriated to Nigeria.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

- In 2019, the SA-Nigeria Bi-National Commission was elevated from Vice Presidential to Presidential Level as a symbol of a renewed commitment to cooperation between Africa's two largest economies.

**MOROCCO**

- The Presidential Fertilizer Initiative, PFI (which involved a partnership with the government of Morocco for the supply of phosphate and technical assistance) resulted in the revitalisation of more than 40 blending plants across Nigeria.
- As part of the PFI, in 2018, Nigeria and Morocco signed a Memorandum of Understanding (between OCP of Morocco and the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority) on the establishment of a Basic Chemicals Platform, specifically to develop a significant Ammonia Production Plant in the Niger Delta. In March 2021, contracts were signed by NSIA and OCP

for land acquisition, joint venture equity investment, and gas supply for the project.

## **RUSSIA**

- A government-to-government arms deal involving the supply of 12 attack helicopters to Nigeria was completed in October 2019.
- A Resuscitation Deal for the Ajaokuta Steel Rolling Mill was agreed upon by Presidents Buhari and Putin during the Russia Africa Summit in 2019. The Russian government agreed to support the completion and full operationalisation of the plant.

## **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)**

- Nigeria signed and ratified an Extradition Treaty with the United Arab Emirates that allowed extradition of Nigerians who fled to the UAE after committing crimes in Nigeria. They also used the bilateral meetings to highlight significant strides in the economy as a basis for making the country an important destination for foreign direct investment.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

- During the Future Investment Initiative (FII) in 2019, President Buhari met separately and held extensive talks with King Salman bin Abdulaziz and his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, MBS; as well as the leadership of ARAMCO and the Saudi Sovereign Wealth Fund.
- One of the outcomes of the Saudi visit was the agreement by the two governments to set up a joint Saudi-Nigeria Strategic Council, made up of government officials and businesspeople from both countries, and which would focus on economic growth and development, investments in oil and non-oil sectors, and security cooperation.

**INTERNATIONAL APPOINTMENTS HELD BY NIGERIANS**

- Designation of President Buhari as the African Union (AU) Anti-Corruption Champion for 2018, and by ECOWAS Heads of State as West Africa's Covid-19 Champion in 2020.
- Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), appointed in 2017.
- Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (first African and first woman to hold the position), elected in 2021.
- Akin Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, elected in 2015 and re-elected in 2020.
- Benedict Oramah, President of African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), re-elected for a second term in 2020.
- Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo, Secretary-General of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), elected in 2016 and re-elected in 2019.
- Chile Eboe-Osuji, President of the International Criminal Court (ICC), 2018–2021.
- Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2019–2020.
- Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner, African Union Commission's Department for Political Affairs & Peace and Security, elected in 2021.

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**Muhammadu Buhari: The Nigerian Legacy (2015-2023)** comprehensively and effectively captures the development-driven story of the President Muhammadu Buhari administration. Nigeria's democratic dispensation under Buhari was epochal in several regards, and defined by an outstanding vision of change and numerous unprecedented positive developments, reforms, growths, and challenges. The president himself embodied a nation's story of aspirations, reinventions, and progress, and was the foremost driver of national development within the period. The volumes represent the transformational dynamics of national development primarily defined and directed by the President through sheer political will and dexterity, and a reconceptualisation and consolidation of policies and practices that enhanced the strengths of the nation in various sectors of endeavour.

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