

Nigeria's Struggle for Development: A Reflection on the Muhammadu Buhari Administration (2015-2023)

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Abstract

This study delves into the issue of development which Nigeria has been grappling with in its efforts at enhancing the welfare and wellbeing of its citizens and taking its rightful place in the comity of nations. It particularly analyzes the eight-year administration of President Muhammadu Buhari vis-à-vis its struggle for development in order to fulfill its campaign promises, satisfy the hopes and yearnings of Nigerians, fix the already badly-damaged economy and set the country on the path of greatness. The paper infers that the Buhari administration fell short of people's expectations, as it was marred by poverty, corruption, nepotism, insecurity of monumental dimension, social injustice and economic stagnation, with development at its lowest ebb. Consequently, the paper notes that Nigeria requires a president with sound intellect, leadership acumen and strong commitment to achieve the desired development.

Key words: Development; Economy; Expectations; Insecurity; Leadership

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1. INTRODUCTION

Judging by virtually all indicators of development, Nigeria is today grappling with a myriad of challenges in

its quest to attain some level of growth and attain greater heights in the comity of states. It has been observed that the developmental trajectory of the country has been a mixed bag, with some progress appearing to have been made in certain areas while in others, it has been a gross deficit. Scholars are, however, of the opinions that when interrogated from the prism of economic, social and political progress as well as the expected improvement in both material and non-material indicators such as economic growth, access to education and healthcare and the general wellbeing and happiness of the citizenry, Nigeria still has a long way to go. Putting it succinctly, Jinadu (1985) says that Nigeria is plagued by a social poverty that continues to escalate dramatically, pointing out that efforts to check this deterioration and ensure development are hindered by the lack of culturally-rooted structural and conceptual supports in the social development sector. These support components, Jinadu maintains, have been, and still are, absent and until they are established, economic growth and ideological choices will be irrelevant to any rational effort to halt the escalation of social poverty and enhance the quality of life enjoyed by Nigerians. With an unenviable reputation as the world's new poverty capital, about 40 per cent (82 million people) of Nigeria's population are said to be living on less than one US dollar per day, according to National Bureau of Statistics (in: Igwe (2020)). This unfortunate typecast has further worsened the living conditions of Nigerians, such that Onyekwere (2016) asserts that the country is threatened by economic decline, economic stagnation, stunted economic development and economic recession. He states further that all these economic challenges happen, at times, simultaneously.

It should be stated that Nigeria has, in the last four decades, adopted development plans as appropriate strategy to address development challenges in the country. To Tordoff (1993), the development plans are the instrument of both diagnosis and remedy to development,

while Adedeji (1989) opines that the economic aspirations of the country since independence are perhaps best exemplified by its various development plans. Since the past four decades, Nigeria has embarked on series of development plans to fasten the rate of economic growth and improve the standard of living of the people. It is noteworthy that Nigeria has gone through four national development plans in its post-independence history (the fifth National Development Plan did not materialize). They were: the First National Development Plan (1962), the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), the Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) and the Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985). Aside the five-year National Development Plans, the Federal Government also embarked on three-year rolling plans between 1990 and 1998 and long term perspective planning in its endless efforts to search for appropriate developmental strategy. The federal government introduced another ambitious programme between 2003 and 2007, known as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which was a medium term planning focusing on wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value orientation. The programme was even, at some point, cascaded to the state and local government levels, with the one for states christened State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and the local governments Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS). It is, however, worrisome that these development plans and visions have failed to achieve their expected objectives, as virtually all economic and social indicators have shown that Nigeria's economy is in doldrums. This, Iheanacho, 2014, says is evident in the acute unemployment, widespread poverty, illiteracy, decayed social and physical infrastructure, technological backwardness, urban congestion, excessive debt burden, poor growth of agricultural production and high incidence of diseases that have become common features in of the country's economy, all of which are further compounded by the worsening security situation. This situation has, no doubt, posed serious challenges to Nigeria's development in all its ramifications, thus threatening its leading position as Africa's largest economy. The paper, therefore, seeks to examine the country's struggle for development in view of the devastating effects its current situation is having on the average Nigerian who, by all indices, is living below the poverty level. The paper is particularly concerned with issues of development during the President Muhammadu Buhari-administration and its struggle to wriggle out of the quagmire.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING DEVELOPMENT

'Development', which connotes progress, modernity and democratic values, is a somewhat complicated word in

the English Language. It is a word that carries at once the aspirations of the poor and the designs of corporate elites (Salami, Tilakasiri and Ahamed, 2017). As Adams (2007, in: Salami, Tilakasiri and Ahamed, 2017) notes, the word 'development' is used both descriptively, to explain economic, socio-cultural and environmental transformation, and normatively, as a prescription for how economies, societies and environments should be transformed. These distinct meanings are often conflated, thus contributing to the conceptual confusion and analytical complexity of the concept. Development is also a broad concept whose definition is dependent on each scholar's perspective and understanding, thus attesting to the fact that it is a subject of contestation, both practically and conceptually. Generally speaking however, development refers to the process of positive change and improvement in the quality of life of a society or community. It involves economic, social and political progress as well as improvements in health, education and other social indicators. Development can be measured in terms of both material and non-material indicators, such as economic growth, access to education and healthcare and overall happiness and wellbeing. Development, in the words of Todaro (1977) is "a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty, while Sapru (1994) views it as a process of societal transformation from a traditional to a modern society, with such transformation also known as modernization. To Hahn-Been (1970), development is a process of acquiring a sustained growth of a system's capacity to cope with new continuous changes towards the achievement of progressive political, economic and societal objectives. Therefore, development is nothing but improving the welfare of individuals, which is usually measured in terms of providing infrastructural facilities that could afford them a chance for better life. Improving the standard of living, education, health and opening out new and equal opportunities for richer and varied life are all important ingredient of development. The primary goal of development is to improve man and his environment (Iheanacho, 2012).

Scholars are, however, of consensus of opinions that what constitutes development varies from one region to another and from one country to another, while also agreeing that an uneven distribution of economic activities can make geography contribute to development. Development is generally viewed as attempts to reduce poverty and inequalities in an effort to guide the world to a situation of betterment and improvement over time (Potter, Binns, Elliott & Smith, 2008). It has been observed that development is something that does – or does not – happen over time and across territories, thus prompting scholars to find methods of measuring its

progress. The approaches used to measure development are called indicators and indices, which include measuring development as economic growth; measuring development as poverty; measuring development as human development; measuring development as collective happiness in a nation; measuring sustainable development and measuring development in wider terms, including human rights and freedoms (Salami, Tilakasiri and Ahamed, 2017). According to Islam (2018), development, as an ideology and practice, has been a matter of much contestation since its inception at the enlightened period. He posits that the way development has been understood, explained and practised has undergone various experiments and directions over time, though what it is theoretically and what it should be in practice remain as contested and vague. While many scholars believe that development is a positive progress, to others, it patriarchal, hegemonic, devastating and a failure which needs to be abandoned altogether (Nustad, 2001; Jones, 2004; Everett, 1997; Escobar, 1995). On the other hand, development is very much part of our everyday life as well as a matter of politics, intricately connected with the state and bureaucratic institutions. Thus, reiterating the concept of development allows us to revisit the ways it has been understood, practiced and challenged. Islam (2018) argues that the way development has been propagated by the modernists as economic growth and positive change has been vehemently challenged by the post-modernists on the ground that development is not only hegemonic, authoritative and dependency-creating mechanism that routinely fails and but also produces unintended consequences on the lives of the people. Thus, there has been a growing realization that development needs to be rethought in a way that would promote an alternative development or even an alternative to development. Such a shift in perspectives and continuing deliberations on development has given rise to the question of whether development has reached an impasse which needs to be pushed forward.

The concept of 'development' has a long and complex history, dating back to the history of human civilization itself. The idea of the state and development emerged during the settled agricultural period when specialized labour and the state apparatus were required for protecting agricultural lands from the outsiders. The emergence of the state bodies was also required for controlling the increasingly complex social, economic and political relations that were instigated by the settled agriculture and surplus production. The subsequent advent of industrialization, capitalism and modernization in Europe greatly accelerated the process of socio-economic and political advancements as well as the rise of slums, pollution, diseases and inequality (Polanyi, 1944). It was at this particular historical juncture that social theorists like Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx thought

about development theory to explain economic growth, inequality and the evolution of human life as a whole (Islam, 2018). The idea of development has since grown in complexity and diffused globally to penetrate every aspect of human life. Escobar, in his book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, however, considers development as a "historical construct that provides a space in which poor countries are known, specified and intervened upon. (Escobar, 1995). By disapproving contemporary development practices, he argues that it is largely the North or the industrialized world that creates the Third World to win the markets and raw materials from them. According to Escobar, Development was - and continues to be for the most part - a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of progress. Continuing, he says that development was conceived, not as a cultural process (culture was a residual variable, to disappear with the advance of modernization) but instead, as a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some 'badly needed' goods to a 'target' population, arguing that development had become a force so destructive to Third World countries, all in the name of people's interest (Escobar, 1995). Notwithstanding, Development can be viewed from different perspectives, that is, as a state or condition-static; as a process or course of change-dynamic; as fundamental or structural change – for example, increase in income; as intervention and action aimed at enhancing improvement, regardless of whether betterment is actually achieved; as improvement, with good as the outcome; and as a platform for improvement – encompassing changes that will facilitate development in the future (google.com). Development is popularly conceived as an event expressed in three interrelated components: human development, economic development and socio-political development (Twinning, 2009, p.323; Ibe-Ojiludu, 2018, p.131 and Baderin, 2010, pp.22-28, in: Ibe-Ojiludu, 2022). Although in general term, development enhances economic growth and overall national progress, improves provision of basic needs and creates sustainable growth, it has also been argued that it is a process of creating and widening spatial inequalities.

To the developing nations, development remains vital, and most government policies are geared towards improving the development level (Attairat, 2020). However, development, in Nigeria's context, has been a mixed-bag. Since independence, the country has embarked on series of national development plans and visions in its endless search for an appropriate development strategy. Tordoff (1993) observes that there is a general consensus that the instrument of both diagnosis and remedy to development is the "development plan." Adedeji (1989) seems to corroborate Tordoff when he opines that the

economic aspirations of Nigeria since independence are perhaps best exemplified by its various development plans. The country has gone through four different national development plans in its post-independence history, while the fifth National Development Plan did not materialize. They include: First National Development Plan (1962), Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) and Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985). Aside the five-year national development plans, Nigerian government also embarked on three-year rolling plans between 1990 and 1998, and long term perspective planning, all in a bid to fashion out an appropriate developmental strategy. The federal government also went further by introducing another ambitious programme between 2003 and 2007, known as National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), a medium term planning which focused on wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value orientation, while it was replicated in the states with State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and local governments with Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS). This was aside the launching of Vision 20:2020 as a perspective plan aimed at making Nigeria a fully developed economy by 2020. It is, however, worrisome that all these development plans and visions have failed to achieve their expected objectives. This, Iheanacho (2014) says, is evident from widespread poverty, dilapidated infrastructural facilities, massive unemployment, low capacity utilization, technological backwardness, short-life expectancy, urban congestion, excessive debt burden, environmental degradation and high incidence of diseases which has beset the country. In view of all these, he asserts that Nigeria is an underdeveloped country and occupies very low position among the poorest countries of the world in spite of its huge potential in natural and human resources. In their own opinion, Obikeze and Obi (2004) point out that “a review of the various plans clearly shows that the country is still very far from where it was envisaged it will be today. This is simply as a result of either faulty implementation of the plan, distortions or even non-implementation”.

Nigeria, Africa's biggest economy, was, in 2022, ranked 163rd in the United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (HDI) for the second consecutive year. The HDI, published annually by the UNDP since 1990, measures the long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living of 191 countries. A new report by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) shows that in terms of the HDI score, Nigeria remained unchanged, with 0.535. Its life expectancy reached 52.7 years in 2021, the expected years of schooling was 10.1, the mean years of schooling was 7.2 while the country's income per capita hit \$4,790 in 2021 (Bailey, , Lagos,

September 8, 2022). Iheanacho is, therefore, of the opinion that the failure of National Development Plans in Nigeria is manifested in the crisis that besets its economy. According to him, all economic and social indicators have shown that the country's economy is in doldrums. He says: “acute unemployment, widespread poverty, illiteracy, decayed social and physical infrastructure, technological backwardness, urban congestion, excessive debt burden, poor growth of agricultural production and high incidence of diseases are common features of Nigerian economy.” As succinctly put by Onyekwere (2016), Nigeria is threatened by economic decline, economic stagnation, stunted economic development and economic recession. Interestingly, he says that all these economic challenges happen, at times, simultaneously. However, since development is a conscious effort, it is important for it to be properly conceived in Nigeria so as to know the developmental goals and how to deploy all the necessary intellectual, practical and material resources towards achieving them. Hence the submission by Nwosu (2017) that there is a substantial nexus between good governance and sustainable development, even as he sees development as attainable only if leaders strictly adhere to transparency, rule of law, full respect for human rights and political empowerment of people irrespective of ethnicity and sex. And in all honesty, this is the only way development, in its true sense, can be said to have taken place within a polity.

3. EXAMINING UNDERDEVELOPMENT

The concept of ‘underdevelopment’ is generally agreed to be a complex phenomenon, especially when viewed alongside its antonym – development. It is also not given to any particular definition by scholars, as each of them approaches the concept based on his/her own understanding and/or perspective. To Oduwole (2013, p.332), underdevelopment is, simply put, a country that is not developed, pointing out that there are several markers to determine whether a country is underdeveloped or not. With Oduwole's view of underdevelopment, it can be safely inferred that when a society or country continues to suffer from poverty, unemployment and inequality, it can be classified as underdeveloped. This then implies that the issue of underdevelopment can be viewed as the inverse of development since the latter indicates that the economy is developing or moving forward. Hence underdevelopment may not only be an indicator that represents lack of development but in certain areas, there may be a stagnation or regression in solving some identified economic ailments (Yunusa, 2008). Hence the submission by Abubakar (2002) that underdevelopment is not synonymous with absence of development but that it is merely a means of comparing levels of development. One cannot but agree with this assertion as it is in tandem

with one of the basic assumptions of underdevelopment theories which states that development and underdevelopment are two aspects of a universal historical process through which the underdeveloped countries are integrated into the international capital system. In a nutshell, there exists a dialectical relationship between development and underdevelopment in the sense that the Western capitalist countries developed in the process of underdeveloping the present day underdeveloped countries (Abubakar, 2002). Conceptions of development and underdevelopment vary over time and space, and the explanations for differences in development are similarly diverse. Geographers have considered 'development' in two different ways: first as a term encompassing ideas of economic, political, and social progress and second, as referring specifically to intentional interventions aimed at achieving such progress. The latter became much more common in the post-World War II period when international attention turned to the situation in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, especially in the context of decolonization and the Cold War (Willis, 2009).

The above explanation seeks to suggest that although a country may have been underdeveloped, no country is ever in an original state of underdevelopment. This thus makes Effiong (in: Abubakar, 2002) to make an assertion that underdevelopment is characterized by illiteracy, poverty, over-population and diseases. Furthermore, a prolific writer, Charles Anderson, in his work "The Sociology of Survival", notes that in a situation of underdevelopment, *the elite mass gap widens, rural-urban inequalities increases, city slums grow, unemployment increases, illiteracy abounds, agricultural production stagnates, malnutrition spreads, diseases debilitate millions, birth rates remain high, death rates begin to high in some areas, imported luxuries drain foreign exchange, foreign debt and balance of payments deficit mount, inflation runs rampant, military spending and police repression increases, foreign corporations drain huge amounts of raw materials and profits from the country. These, Anderson said, are the hallmarks of an underdeveloped society (in: Yunusa, 2008). Perhaps* added to these are other features such as corruption, bad governance, low level of infrastructural facilities, armed banditry, insurgency, cultism, political hooliganism, arson, breakdown of law and order, prostitution (at both national and international levels) as well as election rigging and manipulation.

According to David-West (2003), the difference between Africa and the developed countries is that while the leaders in developed countries are literally, with every tickling of the clock, seriously addressing the problem and concern of the moment and finding solutions to them, in Africa, leaders and followers expand their energies more in devising more and more sophisticated machinery for subverting the system, economically

or electorally. Continuing, he posits that while in the developed economies, fraudsters are apprehended and clamped within the jaws of the law, in Africa, big fraudsters and thieves are decorated with accolades or spangled with confetti and then chieftaincy titles, all in celebration of big thieving, stressing: "we destroyed agriculture; we destroyed the economy; we destroyed politics; we destroyed or prostituted religions; we destroyed all infrastructures needed for development. We are master destroyers; yet, we have the audacity to expect development. But this can never come by juju or voodoo of 'fellowship'. Corroborating David-West, Yunusa (2008) notes that African leaders incessantly mount their high horses to the international community to save the continent trotting with a bowl in their hands, begging for aids, while they (developed countries) see that Africa's begging bowl is punched with holes, with foreign aids and investments ultimately leaking away. This could be said to have accounted for why many post-colonial African states have experienced poverty, unemployment, and other economic ailments, all of which have been detrimental to their development.

Situating Nigeria within the context of the foregoing submissions, there is no doubting the fact that there is a considerable level of economic, social and political underdevelopment in the country. Nigeria, with a population of 216.747 million (IMF, 2022), is the most populated country and largest economy on the African continent, with humongous resources. However, the abundant resources and access to cheap labour seem not to have translated into development; instead, the vast oil reserves in Nigeria have been a curse for the country (Akinola, 2018a, in: Akinola, 2020:489; Lashitew and Werker, 2020:1; Taylor, 2006:634). No doubt, Nigeria is bedevilled with a myriad of problems that are undermining its developmental prospects. According to the World Bank (2021), nearly half of the population is living below the poverty line, while the country grapples with lack of economic diversification, insufficient infrastructure, high inflation, weak and inefficient institutions, high levels of poverty and unemployment, stressing that these have hampered the poverty reduction efforts within the country. Nigeria has thus seen underdevelopment through rising unemployment rates and stagnation of the poverty reduction programmes (IMF, 2022 and World Bank, 2022b, pp.14-15). Worst still, the country has been described as the leading debtor to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) in Africa and ranks third globally, as per the bank's financial statement. By June 30, 2024, Nigeria's debt to the IDA had risen by 14.4 per cent from \$14.3 billion in 2023 to \$16.5 billion in 2024 (Business Day, September 5, 2024). This large amount, according to the World Bank, is a reflection of Nigeria's significant borrowing needs, particularly in critical sectors like infrastructure, health,

and education. While Nigeria is often seen as a resource-rich nation due to its oil reserves, challenges such as population growth, insecurity, and underinvestment in essential services have created gaps that external loans have sought to address. However, the weight of this debt raises concerns about the long-term impact on Nigeria's economy, especially with increased oil prices and slow diversification efforts (*Business Day, Lagos, September 5, 2024*). What's more, Nigeria is unarguably under a heavy debt burden and gasping for survival!

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on Developmental State Theory which delves into the role of the state in driving economic growth and development, emphasizing government intervention and policy-making. The theory was primarily articulated by Chalmers Johnson, particularly in his work "MITI and the Japanese Miracle", where he analyzed Japan's post-war economic policies. According to him, 'it is a shorthand for the seamless web of political, bureaucratic, and moneyed influences that structures economic life in capitalist Northeast Asia' (Johnson, 1982). Meredith Woo-Cumings (1999, p.1) also describes the theory of developmental state as the explanation for the East Asian industrialization. Johnson (1999, p.32) admits that 'one of [his] main purposes in introducing the idea of capitalist developmental state ... was to go beyond the contrast between the American and Soviet economies.' Its roots are drawn from the theory of mercantilism advocating intervention of the state in the economy. It is often conceptually positioned between a free market capitalist economic system and centrally-planned economic system, thus making Woo-Cumings to call it a plan-rational capitalist system, 'conjoining private ownership with state guidance' (Cummings, 1999). To Loriaux (in: Woo-Cumings, 1999, p.24), the developmental state is an embodiment of a normative or moral ambition to use the interventionist power of the state to guide investment in a way that promotes a certain solidaristic vision of national economy. This is corroborated by Ha-Joon Chang (1999, p.183) who says that economic development requires a state which can create and regulate the economic and political relationships that can support sustained industrialisation – or in short, a developmental state. Consequently, a developmental state seems to be an interventionist state. Another issue refers to the question of political systems of developmental states. Due to its alleged sensitivity as well as, in a way, doctrinarian character, there seems to be very little research conducted on the political environment necessary for a developmental state to thrive. Although there does not seem to be a direct link between a developmental state theory applied and the genus of political system existing in a particular country, the possibility of such

a correlation should not be easily dismissed. Perhaps that is why, in the case of Nigeria, the statement of development may be closely tied to the political system or political environment existing at any particular point in time. Although there was a military interregnum at a particular point in time in the history of the country, the general belief is that the twenty-five years of unbroken democratic practice between 1999 and 2024 should be enough period for development in all its ramifications to be feasible, even for the blind to see. Yet, another school of thought would argue that the kind of development that will be recorded at a given time will be dependent on the kind of leaders thrown up through an electoral recruitment process. For instance, part of the argument for the deficit of development during the Buhari administration is that he was only gunning for the office of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria without any concrete developmental agenda other than the corruption fight kite being flown and which was able to jell owing to the fact that corruption had eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society and the general belief that Buhari, with his toga of incorruptibility, would be able to fight the scourge to a standstill. While the president might not be corrupt in the true sense of the world, watchers of his administration are of the opinion that his inability to tame some of his lieutenants and associates made previous cases of corruption a child's play, with development at its worst during his administration.

5. BUHARI'S CONTRACT WITH NIGERIANS

During the electioneering campaign heralding the 2015 general elections, General Muhammadu Buhari (as he was being addressed then) and other top members of his party, All Progressives Congress (APC) made lots of promises to Nigerians, upon which they rode to power. Below are the highlights of the promises *from the APC policy document and manifesto, Buhari's 100 days covenant, speeches at campaign rallies and town hall meetings nationwide*, as collated by *TheCable* (Lagos, May 29, 2015), which eventually formed the basis for scoring the administration upon the completion of its tenure in 2023.

- Public declaration of assets and liabilities
- State and community policing
- Ban on all government officials from seeking medical care abroad
- Implementation of the National Gender Policy, including 35% of appointive positions for women
- Revival of Ajaokuta steel company
- Generation, transmission and distribution of at least 20,000 MW of electricity within four years and increasing to 50,000 MW with a view to achieving 24/7 uninterrupted power supply within 10 years.
- Empowerment scheme to employ 740,000 graduates

across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory.

- Establishment of a free-tuition and scholarship scheme for pupils who have shown exceptional aptitude in science subjects at O/Levels to study ICT-related courses

- 720,000 jobs by the 36 states in the federation per annum (20,000 per state)

- Three million Jobs per year

- [In another policy document by the APC] We will embark on vocational training, entrepreneurial and skills acquisition schemes for graduates along with the creation of a Small Business Loan Guarantee Scheme to create at least 5 million new jobs by 2019.

- Churches and Mosques would not pay taxes under national laws, but if they engage in businesses, the businesses would pay tax.

- Provision of allowances to the discharged but unemployed Youth Corps members for Twelve (12) months while in the skills and entrepreneurial development programme

- Making our economy one of the fastest-growing emerging economies in the world with a real GDP growth averaging 10% annually. [In another instance, the APC promised 10-12% annual GDP growth]

- Creation of a Social Welfare Programme of at least Five Thousand Naira (N5000) that will cater for the 25 million poorest and most vulnerable citizens upon the demonstration of children's enrollment in school and evidence of immunisation to help promote family stability

- Recruitment and training of at least 100,000 officers into the Nigerian police force and establish a Federal anti-terrorism agency.

- One free meal (to include fruits) daily, for public primary school pupils

- Building an airport in Ekiti state

- Eradication of state of origin, replacing that with state of residence to ensure Nigerians are Nigerians first, before anything else.

- Establishment of Crime Squad to combat terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, militants, ethno-religious and communal clashes nationwide

- Working with the National Assembly towards the immediate enactment of a Whistle Blower Act

- Economic stability for the ECOWAS nations and maintaining a strong, close and frank relationship with West Africa, South Africa, UK, USA, Canada, and other African countries

- Establishing a conflict resolution commission to help prevent, mitigate and resolve civil conflicts within the polity.

- All political officer holders earn only the salaries and emoluments determined and approved by the Revenue Mobilization and Fiscal Commission RMFAC.

- Permanent peace in the Niger Delta and other conflict prone areas such as Plateau, Taraba, Bauchi, Borno and Abia.

- As against fears in some quarters, Buhari while speaking with catholic bishops in Abuja back in February, promised not to Islamise Nigeria.

- Nationwide sanitation plans to keep Nigeria clean

- Preserving the independence of the Central Bank

- Simplifying immigration process to foster faster visa processing at points of entry.

- Special incentives to facilitate the education of the girl child

- Full implementation of the National Identification Scheme to generate the relevant data.

- Making Information Technology, Manufacturing, Agriculture and Entertainment key drivers of our economy

- Balancing the economy across regions by the creation of 6 new Regional Economic Development Agencies (REDAs) to act as champions of sub-regional competitiveness

- Putting in place a N300bn regional growth fund (average of N50bn in each geo-political region) to be managed by the REDAs.

- Amending the Constitution and the Land Use Act to create freehold/leasehold interests in land along with matching grants for states to create a nationwide electronic land title register on a state by state basis

- Reviving and reactivating our minimally performing Refineries to optimum capacity

- Creating additional middle-class of at least 2 million new home owners in our first year in government and 1 million annually thereafter.

- [In another policy document] Creating an additional middle class of at least 4 million new home owners by 2019 by enacting national mortgage single digit interest rates for purchase of owner occupier houses as well as reviewing the collateral qualification to make funding for home ownership easier, with 15 to 30 year mortgage terms.

- Enacting a national mortgage system that will lend at single digit interest rates for purchase of owner occupier houses.

- Injecting extra N30bn to the Agricultural sector to create more agro-allied jobs by way of loans at nominal interest rates for capital investment on medium and commercial scale cash crops.

- You farm, government buys, guaranteeing a minimum price for selected crops and facilitate storage of agricultural products as and when necessary.

- Creating a national infrastructural development bank to provide loans at nominal interest rates exclusively for this sector.

- Construction of 3,000km of Superhighway including service trunks

- Building of up to 4,800km of modern railway lines – one third to be completed by 2019

- At least one functioning airport is available in each of the 36 states.

- Ending gas flaring and ensuring sales of at least half of gas produce, within Nigeria
- Speedily passing the much-delayed Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) and ensuring that local content issues are fully addressed.
- Establishing at least six new universities of science and technology with satellite campuses in various states.
- Establishing six centres of excellence to address the needs of special education
- Prioritizing the reduction of the infant mortality rate by 2019 to 3%
- Reducing maternal mortality by more than 70%
- Reducing HIV/AIDs infection rate by 50% and other infectious diseases by 75%
- Improving life expectancy by additional 10 years on average.
- Increasing the number of physicians from 19 per 1000 population to 50 per 1000
- Increasing national health expenditure per person per annum to about N50,000 (from less than N10,000 currently)
- Increasing the quality of all federal government-owned hospitals to world class standard within five years
- Ensuring timely payment of retirement benefits for all pensioned senior citizens and creating a poverty safety net for all aged citizens above the age of 65.
- Amending the Constitution to require Local Governments to publish their meeting minutes, service performance data, and items of spending over N10M.
- Requiring full disclosure in media outlets, of all government contracts over N100m prior to award and during implementation at regular interval
- Amending the Constitution to remove immunity from prosecution for elected officers in criminal case
- Initiating action to amend the Nigerian Constitution with a view to devolving powers, duties, and responsibilities to states in order to entrench true Federalism and the Federal spirit
- Reforming and Strengthening the Justice System for efficient administration and dispensation of justice with the creation of special courts for accelerated hearing of corruption, drug trafficking, terrorism and similar cases of national importance
- Establishing world-class sports academy and training institutes and ensure that Nigeria occupies a place of pride in global sports and athletics
- Reviving the Nigerian football league and putting incentives in place to make it as competitive as other national leagues.
- Putting in place measures to identify talents early and ensuring their participation in local and international games to enable them become professionals
- Assisting Nollywood to fully develop into world class movie industry that can compete effectively with Hollywood and Bollywood in due course.

- Ensuring the rights of women are protected as enshrined in our Constitution
- Guaranteeing that women are adequately represented in government appointments and providing greater opportunities in education, job creation and economic empowerment
- Promoting the concept of reserving a minimum number of seats in the National Assembly for women.
- Free maternal and children healthcare services
- Stabilizing the naira
- Targeting up to 20% of our annual budget for this critical sector whilst making substantial investments in training quality teachers at all levels of the educational system (Some other APC policy documents had 15%)
- Ensuring compliance with policies and measures to halt the pollution of rivers and waterways in the Niger Delta and other parts of the country
- Adopting a holistic approach to erosion and shoreline protection across the country
- ECOWAS currency by 2020 under Nigeria's guidance and leadership
- Maintaining strong, close and frank relationships within the Gulf of Guinea, the Commonwealth, South Africa and the rest of the world
- Establishing a new special relationship with the leading emerging markets like Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) and other strategic partners around the world.
- [On Boko Haram] 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.
- Strengthening INEC to reduce, if possible, eliminate electoral malpractices in Nigerian's political life
- Improving operational and legal mechanisms so that disciplinary steps are taken against proven human rights violations by the Armed Forces.
- Free Education at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Education.

How far was Buhari, nay his political party, able to go in keeping to the spirit and letters of his contract with Nigerians at the end of his tenure on May 29, 2023? Or did his administration end up like the quote of a Greek author, Aesop, who said: "When all is said and done, more is said than done"? The next section of the study will weigh this, particularly on the scale of development.

6. BUHARI ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

The curtain drew on the eight-year administration of President Muhammadu Buhari on May 29, 2023. However, many watchers of the administration between

2015 and 2023 are quick to pass a below average score on the administration on issues of development in virtually all ramifications. Buhari, during his campaign, had emphasised three key promises, that is, to tackle insecurity, stem corruption and fix economic troubles. But, at the completion of his two terms, not many rated his scorecard as being better than the man he succeeded despite embarking on a vast infrastructure drive (Egbejule, Adetayo and Olurounbi, 2023).

Even though Buhari had, on several occasions while still in the saddle, beaten his chest and awarded his administration a laurel for 'a brilliant performance', scholars, opinion moulders and other stakeholders had, in loud voices, described him as a president who lacked the necessary capacity to make things happen and who was hardly in charge of his own government. While Egbejule, Adetayo and Olurounbi (2023) tag this 'a false sense of success', Uche Igwe, a Senior Political Economy Analyst and Visiting Fellow at the LSE Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa and Visiting Fellow at International Centre for Policing and Security at the University of South Wales, says Buhari, in spite of Buhari's claim that he had improved the economy and citizens' lives by lifting millions out of poverty, Nigeria's new and unenviable reputation as the world's 'poverty capital' had triggered questions about his commitments, with the national insecurity among the factors affecting the country's economic direction. He recalls that riding on the crest of 'change' and 'next level' mantras into his first and second administrations, Buhari had made significant promises to Nigerians, presenting the benefits the country stands to gain through his leadership. He, however, said that Buhari's positive assessment of his own performance at a ministerial retreat showed that the president believed he had not reneged on his promises on security, the economy and improving the overall quality of citizens' lives by lifting millions out of poverty. Igwe (2020) says such self-assessment begs certain questions: could this stance be a political pretence or stem from a genuine insensitivity to the pulse of the street? With half a decade gone under his administration (in 2020), are things really getting better for Nigerians under his administration? Are these promises mere platitudes and general statements to which political office aspirants and their parties are often held unaccountable? In its 2021 report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Nigeria, Africa's biggest economy, 163rd in the Human Development Index (HDI) for the second consecutive year. The HDI, published annually by UNDP since 1990, measures the long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living of 191 countries. In terms of the HDI score, Nigeria remained unchanged with 0.535; its life expectancy reached 52.7 years in 2021, the expected years of schooling was 10.1, the mean years of schooling was 7.2 and the country's income per capita hit \$4,790 in 2021 (Bailey, Lagos, September 8, 2022).

Quoting the National Bureau of Statistics, Igwe (2020) says with an unenviable reputation as the world's new poverty capital, about 40 per cent (82 million people) of Nigeria's population were living on less than \$1US per day, stressing that amidst repeated claims by the Buhari government of undertaking measures to alleviate poverty, the increase in fuel pump prices and electricity tariffs, which he describes as generally an act in bad-timing, had triggered questions about the president's commitments and priorities. The situation was further exacerbated by the economic downturn experienced by many Nigerians in a period marked by remarkable job losses, owing to the severity of the global COVID-19 pandemic. "Considering the increasing prices of food commodities, Nigeria's decision to close its borders, despite being a signatory to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), may have been considered as something done in the country's best interest, with the intent of improving local production and agriculture. But even with the continued closure of the border and huge investments in domestic agricultural production, nothing seems to have changed substantially," Igwe declares.

The Buhari administration was also bedevilled with enormous security challenges which almost brought the country to its knees. It would be recalled that Buhari, while addressing some All Progressives Congress (APC) members at the Adokiye Amasiemeka Stadium in Port Harcourt, capital of Rivers State in 2021, had pledged that he would pick competent hands to run the nation's economy, which he said was then in poor shape. While admitting that the fundamental issues facing Nigeria were insecurity and the problem of economy, both of which were being made worse by corruption, he assured that he would assemble a competent team of Nigerians to efficiently manage the country. However, from Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East through banditry and kidnappings and farmer-herders' clashes in the North-West to militancy in the South-South, secessionist agitations in the South-East as well as kidnappings for ransom in the South-West, insecurity appeared to have defied solutions in Nigeria during the period under review. Perhaps it should be stated that Boko Haram, in particular, has been regarded as one of the deadliest groups in the world, with its operations in Nigeria since 2009 contributing to thousands of deaths and displacement of people, both in Nigeria and other neighbouring countries. Nosiri and Ibekwe (2021) note that despite the fact that Buhari's government had achieved some degree of success in combating Boko Haram insurgency (in terms of reduction of incidence of attacks and number of casualties; and recapture of territories), the success was not significant or effective in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgents. This, according to them, was because they were still carrying out successful operations or attacks, while the use of unconventional warfare by the terrorists, issues of globalization, poor border security, Boko Haram's

network with international terrorist groups, corruption, etc. are some of the factors that posed challenge to Buhari's administration towards combating the insurgency.

The Table 1 shows the incidence of attack and casualties caused by Boko Haram in Nigeria from June 2015 to July 2020.

Table 1
Casualties and Attack Incidents by Boko Haram in Nigeria (June 2015–July 2020)

Year	No. of Casualties	Incidents of attacks
2015 from June-Dec.	2,224 casualties (2,016 people killed, 208 injured)	88
2015	871 casualties (477 killed and 394 injured)	33
2017	901 casualties (590 killed and 311 injured)	65
2018	985 casualties (460 killed and 525 injured)	49
2019	292 casualties (238 killed and 54 injured)	21
2020	724 casualties (564 killed and 160 wounded)	19

Source: Nosiri and Ibekwe (2021)

The Table 1 shows that a total of 5,997 casualties were recorded between June 2015 (as Muhammadu Buhari assumed office on May 29, 2015) and 2020, with 4,345 killed and 1,652 others injured from a total of 275 attacks from the North-East zone being ravaged by the Boko Haram insurgency. This is nothing short of a confirmation of the enormity of the deadly activities of the insurgency and the high level of insecurity in that zone. In essence, the Boko Haram insurgency had led to devastating effects on the mental wellbeing and human development of the residents of the North-East zone. In the 2021 report, UNDP corroborates the above assertion that the insurgency had contributed to major mental distress, including severe emotional disorders, psychological distress, psychotic disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression," it stated, adding that "apart from the threat to physical integrity, armed conflicts can expose people to displacement, destroy critical infrastructure, disrupt supply chains, hinder investment and thus undermine economic growth and development, possibly resulting in massive unemployment—all adding to mental distress of large parts of the population." (Bailey, Lagos, September 8, 2022). Experts are also of the opinion that insecurity not only impedes education when it shuts down schools and keeps children and teachers home, it also portends a long term danger to the quality of labour force and human capital needed to drive a sustainable economy. Indeed, Buhari came to power on the promise of reversing Boko Haram's gains, relying on his experience as a civil war veteran and general in the Nigerian army, long respected for its strength in peacekeeping operations across Africa. Soon after he was sworn in, he issued a deadline of December 31, 2015 for defeating the rebels. When the deadline expired, the then Information Minister, Lai Mohammed, declared that the group had been

"technically defeated" even though it was still carrying out attacks (Egbejule, Adetayo and Olurounbi, 2023). Happenings after his declaration, however, showed that the insurgents were still having their field day.

Data from Nigeria's Debt Management Office put Nigeria's debt profile at a record of about \$150 billion, a situation said to have forced Africa's largest economy to use 96 per cent of its revenue to service the ballooning obligations. Also, in 2019, the then president ordered the closure of land borders to restrict imports, end smuggling and boost local production. Instead, inflation spiked as food costs soared and relations with neighbouring and dependent economies like Benin Republic, Ghana and Niger were strained (Aljazeera, Doha, May 29, 2023). Wilson Erumebor, a senior economist with the Nigerian Economic Summit Group and doctoral researcher at SOAS University of London, notes that the country's economy never recovered from this. Since the border closure, he says, quarterly trade data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the value of non-oil exports had never attained its peak of 1.08 trillion naira (\$2.34bn) in the third quarter of 2019 over three years after the border closure was introduced (Quoted from Aljazeera, Doha, May 29, 2023). BudgIT, in its 'semi-chronological' assessment of the Buhari administration, tracing the high and low points of his dual term, observes that growth slowed down to 2.35 per cent in the second quarter of 2015 (from 6.54 per cent in the second quarter of 2014) and that oil prices sunk lower, reaching \$40 per barrel in December 2015. According to it, disruptions started to emerge from the Niger Delta pipeline bombings by militants that led to production shut-ins of over 600,000 barrels, creating twin challenges of price and quantity deliveries. BudgIT goes on to say that while it was expected that the Buhari administration would rally quickly to stem the weakening economy, it did not apply urgency, ascribing it to the appointment of ministers and key cabinet officials six months after assuming office (BudgIT, 2023). According to the Budget Office, between 2016 and 2022, the Buhari government raised total revenues of N26.67 trillion and expended N60.64 trillion, leaving a deficit of N33.97 trillion. The gaping hole was financed with the federal government's domestic debt, which rose from N8.84 trillion as of December 2015 to N44.91 trillion as of June 2023, while external debt rose from \$7.35 billion in December 2015 to \$37.2 billion in June 2023. This excludes support provided by the Central Bank amounting to N25 trillion. Ultimately, Buhari moved Nigeria's debt profile from N42 trillion to N77 trillion, with its attendant effects on debt servicing, which rose from N1.06 trillion in 2015 to N5.24 trillion in 2022, while the debt-service-to-revenue ratio grew from 29 per cent to 96 per cent. This did not taper the inflation rate which rose to 22.5 per cent, while food inflation galloped to 24 per cent as of April 2023. Buhari was also

said to have prevaricated on the subsidy removal, which his administration spent at least N10 trillion to service and that while his administration planned to have the subsidy removed as the price of crude rose, it failed to act and continued a 'wasteful venture' that only required firm commitment to implement (BudgIT, 2023).

Perhaps another move by the Buhari government to redeem an already battered economy was the bailouts it granted states, most of which were not able to meet their salary and pension obligations owing to the dwindling oil revenues. A fact sheet released by the Presidential Communications Team, highlighting the achievements of Buhari's government in different sectors between 2015 and 2023 highlights the packages to state governments to have included N614 billion Budget Support Facility; \$5.4 billion Paris Club Refunds; N700 billion Infrastructure Loans and Refunds as well as reduction in debt service burden amounting to N575.5 billion. Aside stating that the anti-corruption drive of the Buhari administration had yielded more than N210 billion in recoveries from inflated, misappropriated, misapplied personnel budgets and capital expenditures by various government agencies, the Presidential Communications Team pointed out that in the area of infrastructure, more than N600 billion worth of Sukuk bonds had been raised since 2017 for more than 40 critical road projects across all six geo-political zones of the country, while about N3 trillion had been mobilised or committed through Executive Order 7 for road projects across all six geopolitical zones by Dangote Group, MTN, BUA, NLNG and NNPC Limited. Perhaps it should be stated that the Order, issued by the president on January 25, 2019 allowed companies 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 (*Daily Trust*, Lagos, May 1, 2023). Part of the achievements which the Buhari government could also lay claim to as justifying its huge spending were the Warri-Itakpe, Abuja Light, Abuja-Kaduna, Lagos-Ibadan rail projects and the Kaduna-Kano, Lagos-Ibadan, Enugu-Port Harcourt, Bodo-Bonny, Apapa-Oshodi-Oworonshoki-Ojota road projects as well as the Ajaokuta-Kano-Kaduna rail line, an important act to bring gas to the industrial heartland of Northern Nigeria. How all these were able to impact positively on the quality of life of the ordinary Nigerian was, however, another kettle of fish, as rising inflation and weakened exchange rates were still the order of the day. In the words of BudgIT, Buhari, at the end of his administration, left a legacy of debt which almost doubled from 18 per cent to 35 per cent of GDP, with inflation at 22.4 per cent, thus leaving no fewer than 133 million Nigerians in poverty. It also notes that the failed attempt to execute the currency redesign in time exacerbated the crisis in the final days of his administration, showing that while it spent more resources, its incoherent efforts still reek of not doing enough to lift

the standard of living of the average Nigerian. In fact, the value of Nigerians' savings got eroded and their quality of life diminished, underscoring the fact that irrespective of the need to spend, sustainable growth requires a solid macro-economic framework. This is a mission that President Buhari and the institutions he spearheaded failed woefully at (BudgIT, 2023). The nation's GDP growth rate for 2019, according to Rufai (2020), was a meagre 2.1 per cent, a rate below those of Uganda, Benin and even war-torn Syria, with the country's inflation rate remaining high at over 12 per cent, concluding that President Buhari's management of the Nigerian economy was been nothing but abysmal.

Adducing reasons for the retrogressed economy under the Buhari administration, Adonri (2023) says even though Nigeria is blessed with abundant resources, it continues to lack capable entrepreneurial leadership competent enough to convert resources into modern products. He particularly says that eight years of Buhari's rule demonstrated how an un-enterprising and incapable leadership could damage the prospects of a resource-rich developing economy, stressing that all macroeconomic indicators deteriorated during the period. "President Buhari's macroeconomic policies added little or no value to the economy. His fiscal policy was unduly expansionary even when the economy did not have the income base to withstand the financial risk of excessive debt. As a result of his rapacious appetite for spending, he callously depleted the Excess Crude Account, ECA, which was created to serve as a fiscal buffer. Failure of President Buhari to secure the upstream sector of the petroleum industry, which is the main foreign income earner, robbed the nation of substantial hard currency while at the same time, fuel subsidy at downstream sucked the national treasury dry. Although the Petroleum Industry Act, PIA, came at the tail end of his administration, he did not capitalise on it to fully deregulate and privatise the industry," Adonri, the Vice-Chairman of *Highcap Securities*, opines. His view is corroborated by a former Director-General, Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and Chief Executive Officer, Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), Muda Yusuf, as he says that Buhari's government spent far beyond its revenue, while its budgetary process was not transparent enough when it comes to transparency in the procurement processes. Continuing, he asserts that the government "did not manage the cost of governance well and while we are grappling with the revenue problem, the cost of governance was increasing. And there were no deliberate efforts to cut down on the cost of governance. So we have unhealthy bureaucracies and political appointees that are unworthy. And there were so many political offices and parastatal agencies created with no well-crafted purposes. The government has just been spending money. And once there is no more money to spend in the main revenue

stream, the Federal Government will run to the CBN, which is why the ways and means finances roll up to N23 trillion". All of these were not without their monumental adverse effects on the level of development recorded during the eight-year rule of President Buhari (*Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan, May 21, 2023). For Nigeria's economy to be made self-reliant, strong and built to last, Adonri states that a president with entrepreneurial acumen and indefatigable intellect should always be chosen, devoid of sentiments, by the electorate to steer the ship of state in the right direction.

7. THE BUHARI ADMINISTRATION IN THE EYES OF NIGERIANS

As President Buhari wound up his eight-year administration on May 29, 2023, reactions from different parts of the country, as recorded by the media, showed that it might not have been the type of governance Nigerians had envisaged when he took over power. While some Nigerians were quick to knock the president in some sectors, others, however, applauded him, maintaining Nigeria made significant progress and urging their fellow compatriots not to rule out some of the achievements recorded by the administration. For instance, while the latter scored the Buhari-led government high in infrastructural development, the former faulted the scorecard, choosing instead to mark it down in some critical areas like energy, health, education, security and other critical infrastructure that could have galvanised economic development during his administration. They went ahead to say that the government indeed added to the myriad of problems confronting the country, especially insecurity and economic depression, both of which, they said, were degenerating on daily basis, thus leaving the country comatose. In his own view, Leader of Pan-Yoruba socio-political group, Afenifere, Ayo Adebajo, says Buhari's performance was nothing but abysmal, adding that the state of the country left behind by Buhari showed that he had not been working for the betterment of Nigeria but for the entrenchment of the Fulani and their expansion. Speaking further, he says that Buhari further demonstrated his lack of concern for Nigeria through his outburst at the twilight of his administration that he would relocate to Niger Republic after leaving office if Nigerians decided to give him trouble in his Daura country home in Katsina State (*Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan, May 21, 2023). Rumours were even rife then that the president made sure that he approved the construction of a railway line from Abuja to the Niger Republic to allow him easy passage to the neighbouring after leaving office.

In his own assessment, a former Zonal Publicity Secretary, South-West, of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Ayo Fadaka, says Nigeria went through an unmitigated depreciation under President Buhari,

saying that no institution or segment of the country was spared, while a public affairs analyst, Zadok Akintoye, contends that: "It seems like yesterday when the outgoing president was being sworn-in, with promises of making Nigeria a better place. It saddens me that the last eight years have proven to be probably the worst since the return to democracy in 1999. I remember sadly the hope Nigerians reposed in Buhari by believing that with him as president, Nigeria could somehow find its way out of bad governance. The president is leaving Nigeria more divided and disunited than he met it, with citizens poorer." On his part, a former Nigerian envoy to the Philippines, Yemi Farounmbi, asserts that: "the eight years of Buhari's administration were filled with hopes and failed expectations, pointing out that a lot of people had so much faith in 2015 that he was the one who would create a new country, where corruption would have been completely defeated, where insecurity would become history but it has become difficult after eight years to say categorically that he has achieved any of his promises. On the contrary, it appears as if corruption had exploded under his watch. We also cannot say he has succeeded even though he claimed to have tactically defeated Boko Haram. Beyond Boko Haram, we now have the Islamic State of the Sahara and the Islamic State in West Africa Province. Insecurity has become a national issue. It is no longer restricted to seven local governments as it was in 2015 (*Vanguard*, Lagos, May 21, 2023).

However, a former Secretary-General of Yoruba Council of Elders, Kunle Olajide appeared to be satisfied with Buhari's performance, saying that he was able to stabilise the country and contain terrorists invading the country in the North. To him, Buhari made a promise and to the best of his knowledge, he kept the promise. "I think he needs to be given credit for that. To the best of my knowledge, he didn't appear to intervene in the electoral process that elected the incoming president," Olajide said. Corroborating Olajide, a chieftain of All Progressives Congress, APC, Esemeyi, described Buhari as a 'balanced diet in governance', regardless of various self-inflicted distractions occasioned by poor leadership recruitment policy, adding: "he was unable to inform as much as he performed, particularly in infrastructure. Corruption received sufficient oxygen because of the unnecessary overstay of cabinet members. As president, he was moderate and disciplined." But, the senator representing Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District, Christopher Ekpenyong, expresses the regret that Buhari didn't accomplish or fulfil any of his campaigns promises to Nigerians. He says: "He inherited insecurity and he is also leaving behind insecurity. People cannot travel without being afraid that they may be waylaid on the road. And if you use the train, you are not safe. The violent attacks by Boko Haram insurgents are still prevalent. That is his legacy." (*Vanguard*, Lagos, May

21, 2023). Even though a former Secretary-General of Afenifere, Sehinde Arogbofa, appreciated the fact that in spite of all the problems Nigeria went through during Buhari's administration, democracy was not allowed to be truncated, he nevertheless observed that Nigeria took two steps forward and three steps backward during the period under review, stressing that the promises made by the administration were not matched with actions. For instance, he said that Nigerians were very optimistic about the promise of tackling corruption, but added that with indices available, it appeared that corruption more prevalent in Nigeria more than what it was before Buhari took over. "He promised to fight corruption but where is the corruption he fought? He keeps saying he is not corrupt but as a leader, when you're surrounded with corrupt people, what can we call that? In the area of security, he came in making Nigerians to believe that he would tackle insecurity. Beginning with the Chibok girls, we were all ecstatic that within four weeks of his assumption of office, all these girls would be brought back. But it was so painful, very painful and I can understand the trauma Nigerian women are going through after which they found most of the Chibok girls are now mothers with two or three children," he said. Arogbofa also frowns at Buhari's failure to tackle the marauders who kidnap people on daily basis demanding ransom, while also declaring that in the area of provision of social welfare such as education, health and employment, Buhari did not do well (*Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan, May 21, 2023). To the President of Arewa Youth Consultative Forum, Yerima Shetimma, Buhari scores low in his fight against corruption, insecurity and on revamping the economy. He said: "In 2015, during the first term of President Muhammadu Buhari, the expectations of Nigerians were very high but he has not met these expectations. He campaigned, promising to tackle corruption, insecurity and to revamp the country's economy. But as I speak today, we cannot pinpoint his major achievements in all these areas I have listed that we can all be proud of as Nigerians. In terms of fighting corruption, the anti-graft institutions that were established to fight corruption are enmeshed in corruption and are considered the most corrupt institutions. The EFCC has become a dog that can only bark and one cannot vouch for its integrity and the sincerity of the purpose of its leadership. If the head is rotten, then you should expect the body to be worse. That is the situation we have found ourselves in today. On youth employment, we only see his achievements through rhetoric, analysis and data before the public but in reality, we cannot say he has truly created employment for the teeming youth population of the country. In the North-East, in 2014, all we saw were issues of bandits and other minor security challenges but today, in the North-East, North-West, the North-Central and South-East, there are loads of security challenges (*Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan,

May 21, 2023). As far as Rufai (2020) is concerned, that the Buhari administration fell short of expectations vis-à-vis his electoral promises will be an understatement, as poverty, corruption and social injustice remained the characteristics of the Nigerian state. Five years into the Buhari administration, the state of poverty in Nigeria attained multidimensional levels, as the country overtook India to claim the ignoble position of being home to the highest number of poor people globally. Unemployment also attained unprecedented level, with the unemployment rate in Africa's largest economy rising from 8.2 per cent in 2015 to 23.1 per cent in the third quarter of 2018. While stating that the president made significant progress in some areas such as the implementation of Treasury Single Account (TSA) and increased budgetary allocations for capital expenditure, he, however, says that these smatterings of progress are insufficient to compensate for the self-inflicted damages his administration did to the economy arising from its woeful economic policies.

A former Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Kano State chapter, Bishop Ransome Bello, bases his own assessment of Buhari's administration on three areas, namely: insecurity, corruption and economy. Although he hails the president for doing his best, he however, maintains, that he did not succeed in those areas as he had promised. He says: "We must be very frank, it is not possible for a person to be in power for eight years and not do anything. He has done something in the area of transportation, infrastructure and security in the North-East. But the security has become worse across the whole country. Although he has done something, the question is whether that something is enough to give him a pass mark. If one checks our lifestyle, the economic benefits of where we are right now compared to 2015 when he took over, everybody can attest to the fact that things have become worse. Should we talk about the value of the naira which has crumbled, or the value of commodities? Insecurity? Comparing the security issues we have now with how it was in 2015, are we safer now? The answer is no! Are we better off now economically compared to 2015? The answer is no!" (*Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan, May 21, 2023).

A public affair analyst, Niyi Egbe, in his own scorecard lists what he calls other bright sparks of Buhari's administration to include: construction of several rail lines, one of which was Lagos-Ibadan standard gauge, reforms in the energy sector, culminating in the privatization of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and parliamentary endorsement of the Petroleum Act, addressing the huge challenge of taming the COVID-19 pandemic which shut down the entire world and plummeted oil prices as well as the concrete paving of Apapa-Oshodi-Lagos-Ibadan tollgate expressway which was fortified with massive iron network. He also credits the president with bringing the

country back from recession twice, adding: “The Lagos–Ibadan expressway which he inherited as the graveyard of several lives, unattended to by the Obasanjo regime, feebly attended to by the Jonathan regime, was virtually completed by his regime.” thus reducing travel time on the road by over half. However, he says that two issues, namely: insecurity and corruption dogged the Buhari regime, with the former involving bombings, murder of untold number of citizens and kidnaps, infiltration of the ranks of Buhari’s herder-kinsmen by criminal elements, rising cases of invasion of places of worship and countless incidences of kidnapping, while Islamic fundamentalists in the names of Boko Haram and Islamic State of West Africa terrorized the citizenry (Egbe, 2023). The closure of border in 2019 aimed at restricting import, ending smuggling and boosting local production was another policy considered to be a sore point in the Buhari administration, as it was seen to be counter-productive. Rather than achieving its aim, Wilson Erumebor, senior economist at the Nigerian Economic Summit Group and doctoral researcher at SOAS University of London, opines that the policy sparked inflation as food costs soared while relations with neighbouring and dependent economies – like Benin, Ghana and Niger – were strained. According to Erumebor, since the border closure, quarterly trade data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that the value of non-oil exports never attained its peak of 1.08 trillion naira (\$2.34bn) in the third quarter of 2019, over three years after the border closure was introduced. Continuing, he says that the move also undermined Nigeria’s commitment to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, the continent-wide free trade area, and freedom of movement in the 15-nation Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) countries. This, says Remi Ajibewa, Director of Political Affairs at ECOWAS Commission at the time, was not in tandem with Nigeria’s foreign policy, declaring that ECOWAS was not too happy. “Why would the big brother who calls himself the giant of Africa be closing its border against them, given the fact that there is a large market in Nigeria and they see Nigeria as one of the countries they could rely on?” he queries (Aljazeera. May 29, 2023). An Associate Professor with the Federal University, Kebbi State, Dr Victoria Faleke, in her thoughts on the administration, says she does not share the ‘saviour sentiments’ that Nigerians had about Buhari in 2015 because she witnessed his rule as Head of State in 1983. For her, the Buhari administration was a flop and one of the worst administrations in the history of Nigeria. “The Buhari-led administration, as far as I am concerned, is a flop, one of the worst administrations in the history of our dear country. His administration is an insensitive one that popularized crime, all forms of vices, economic turndown, insecurity, sectarian crisis, tribal sentiments, nepotism, bad roads and incessant industrial actions, especially in our

education and health sectors, if not all the sectors. What’s more? It is an administration that recorded a high rate of death, the exodus of many Nigerian youths, one can go on and on,” she says. Her sentiments are also shared by a consultant orthopaedic surgeon at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, Kwara State, ‘Kunle Olawepo, who observes that Buhari inherited a myriad of problems from the previous administration and got an overwhelming endorsement based on its campaign promises. He says: “In my view, insurgency in the North-Eastern part of the country reduced significantly but this was replaced by the spread of same to other parts of the country, especially North-West, North-Central and South-East, kidnapping for ransom became the order of the day and ethnic militia, at some point, almost became the authorities in some parts of the country, with numerous killings in a manner that was not previously known or experienced. Corruption also thrived unabatedly, especially in government circles and the paramilitary/security organizations. He, however, commends the Buhari administration for recording ‘a few infrastructural achievements,’ the most notable ones being the completion of the Second Niger Bridge and the rice production ‘revolution’ which helped significantly in cushioning the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (Nigerian Tribune, Ibadan, May 21, 2023).

To Jare Ajayi, the National Secretary of the Reuben Fasoranti faction of Afenifere, a pan-Yoruba socio-cultural organisation, the Buhari administration made virtually all ethnic nationalities in the country to desire an exit from a country called Federal Republic but which, in practical terms, was ran like a country under a Unitary System of Government. This, he says, naturally engendered tension and exacerbated mutual distrust among the country’s region and nationalities, stressing that the flagrant invasion of farmlands by Fulani herders, alleged nepotistic style of Buhari administration and recorded partiality in the dispensation of justice heightened the sense of alienation by many sub-groups in the country, thus leading to agitations by many ethnic nationalists wanting to have their own nations independent of the Nigerian nation (in: Owolabi, 2023). A cleric, Tamaraebi Siloko of the New Life Baptist Church, Abuja, corroborates the claims of many Nigerians that the administration did not deliver as promised. “They have done a little work on infrastructure, but mostly uncompleted. The only one that we can say they have done well is the Second Niger Bridge which the previous administration started before they came on board. In the area of education, our educational system is worse than ever. Our health system is going down every day. I was at the hospital where someone I know was rushed and the hospital rejected the patient because they have limited bed space. The hospitals are not well equipped,” he asserts, while Segun Ajibola, a former President and Chairman of Council of Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), says that Buhari’s administration did its

bit in improving the status quo but was confronted with several problems that were global in nature, including the challenges from the global environment and the crisis in the global oil market which affected foreign exchange earnings (Nigerian Tribune, Ibadan, May 21, 2023).

Such were the diverse opinions expressed by a cross section of Nigerians on the high and the low sides of former President Muhammadu Buhari during his eight-year rule. It was generally believed that the regime was characterized by policy summersault, policy inconsistency, slow and/or outright no response to burning national issues and deficit of ideas in tackling the country's economic challenges.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In as much as government is widely believed to be indispensable in the affairs of the citizens, as it has become the hub around which almost every meaningful activity in form of governance revolves, it must ensure that it puts in place policies and programmes that will ensure the all-round development of the generality of the people. Indeed, governance, a good one at that, brings a balance between the citizens and the government as it enhances trust and confidence. According to Onyekwere (2016), it also promotes good laws, security of investments, civilized and workable citizen-oriented economic policies, protection of investments from foreign competitors, encourages investments, formulating investment friendly monetary and fiscal policies as well as provision of infrastructure, such as roads, rails and energy. To him, however, the state cannot achieve its economic and social goals without government adopting civilized, populist, citizen-friendly economic, monetary and fiscal policies and, of course, socio-political policies, all of which ginger economy and bring out the creative best and entrepreneurial spirit in the citizens. This is where the concept of good governance makes rational and informed meaning. The principles of good governance take cognizance of the fact that government ought to have a clear commitment to the programmes and policies directed towards the wellbeing, freedom and happiness of all the citizens. And as succinctly put by Sewell (1998), that in any strategy for development that reduces poverty, growth is important, for its own sake and for reducing poverty but not sufficient; that measures targeted at directly addressing poverty are also important for their own sake but must be done rightly to enhance economic growth; that good governance and democracy are important for growth and also desirable goals in their own right, while investment in poor people by providing them increased access to education and health, as well as by redistribution of productive assets are critical. These are critical issues that should have formed the guiding principles of the administration of President Muhammadu

Buhari, a retired army general, who was reputed for living a Spartan life, presumably with zero tolerance for official corruption and larceny. Indeed, Buhari whose success at the polls came after three consecutive failed attempts, rode on his acceptance as the answer to the country's problem then to clinch the presidency. He was sworn-in amid great hope, monumental goodwill and high-level optimism that his administration would not only revive an already badly damaged economy, but would also lay the foundation for the much-expected implementation of fiscal federal and see the country's diversified, in line with his party, All Progressives Congress's manifesto. He had, in his winning campaign, emphasised three key promises: to tackle insecurity, stem corruption and fix economic troubles. But, as at the time of leaving office in 2023 after his constitutionally-allowed two terms, not many Nigerians rated his scorecard as being better than the man he succeeded, Goodluck Jonathan. Even though his administration was said to have embarked on a vast infrastructural drive, development could not be said to have taken place, as Nigeria, under his watch, became the world's poverty capital, with no fewer than 133 million of his compatriots living in abject poverty as at the end of his tenure. Buhari fell short of people's expectation, as his administration was marred by poverty, corruption, nepotism, insecurity of monumental dimension, social injustice, economic stagnation and development at its lowest ebb.

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