

**MUHAMMED BUHARI: MR. INTEGRITY?
A FIGURE IN NIGERIA'S HISTORY, 1967-2023**

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Abstract

Nigeria in the quest for true nationhood, nation building and nationalism have seen and engaged personalities who in one way or the other have contributed in national transformation or retrogression. This quest remains crucial and current in national discourse. The study in view is aimed at unearthing fundamental principles, personality traits, actions, policies and roles of Mohammed Buhari in Nigeria's quest for a true egalitarian state. Relying on secondary and electronic sources of information the study among other things, spin an interesting historical perspective in the person, Mohammed Buhari. Interrogating Buhari through the ambit of objective history, and not Historical Justice is the import of this study, with regards to the Muhammed Buhari identity. Nigeria's chequered history is inundated with variegated key players that operated from diverse fronts and dimensions, propelled by selfish desires and interests, unethically transformative and developmental. Quite aware of the cumulative attitudes that drive the evolution of humans' vis a vis enculturation and acculturation, and the part played by environmental influence, this piece is poised to analyse and evaluate Muhammed Buhari not only as a notable rational figure, but emphatically on the altar of integrity. This study succinctly recommends that individuals, especially those operating in leadership positions, should once in a while undergo proper mental assessment to evaluate their mental acuity within a given time.

Key words: Integrity, Policies, Administration, Corruption, Figure



Introduction

Nigeria since the dawn of colonial rule, have been in search of figure head personalities who among others things will spearhead a “new Nigeria” and forge a nation state that will be a force to reckon with in the annals of events globally. As a state devastated by the activities of colonialism, economically, socially, and politically, the need for rapid transformational growth was sought. This is truism owing to the fact that most prominent personalities who tried to preserve the natural and economic heritage of the country were subjugated, humiliated, killed, and exiled, some were negotiated into accepting terms unfavourable to the development and economic salvation of the country.²

Within the Nigerian project, ethnocentrically, most regions openly opposed British imperialism and manipulations, while some regions especially domiciled in the Northern parts, in the quest for political gains and dominations were rather liberal and accommodating to the imperial powers and their scheming. This point is evident in the independence struggle as most regions especially the Southern Protectorate in what is today called Nigeria, vigorously pushed for independence in 1957, showing readiness for decolonization. This southern move for independence was championed by late Michael Enahoro³. The Northern region which vociferously declared unprepared for self-rule, fancied further years of socio- economic *cum* political dominations.

This support for continued colonialism came with sweet reward, thereby solidifying the already existing social order and friendliness of the British and the Northern region. Suffice it to say that the political scheming of independence was such that was smoothened, fashioned and handed over to the ‘most democratic, liberal and compromised’ personalities.

The fact that most Nigerian’ constitutional conferences that laid the foundation for decolonization was orchestrated in London,



potentially instituted a dangerous genetic precedent which today is sustaining the deadly umbilical cord of Chatham house manipulation, portrayed clearer handwritings on the wall. This not only impacted greatly on Nigerian's DNA, but also in its emergent history. The hangover of this 'Britishised' independence began to ensue not too long after independence. The independence of Nigeria on 1st October, 1960 was more of a ceremonial event, and at the same time experimental.⁴ The declaration of republic in 1963 which transferred quasi power to Nigeria was short lived. This era of civil democratic experiment witnessed so many ups and downs which culminated in the first military coup in Nigeria on 15th January, 1966. From this period onwards, the political dynamics of Nigeria changed and remained fragile, more so after the 30 months Nigeria-Biafra debacle.

The fragility of the country means a continuous search for a political platform and a thorough breed of a politician or personality that will take the country through its destiny. Nigeria was in dire need of true nationhood and nation building especially as an entity that has been under colonial or imperial domination and exploitation for decades.⁵ This is true based on the fact that the military accused the civilian leaders of corruption and impunity. This case of corruption allegation could unarguably be traced back to lack of patriotism and nationalism, both of which coalesce as,

*".... a strong devotion to one's own country, patriotic feelings efforts, principlea consciousness on the part of individuals or groups of individual or liberty or prosperity membership in a nation, or a desire to forward the strength, of a nation"*⁶

Nigeria in this sorry state economically, politically and socially needed a 'saviour', a personality fully enmeshed with patriotism and nationalism. One individual who gradually emerged on the scene under the equation or mantra of integrity is no other person other than Mohammed Buhari.



This study is poised to make a historical critique, analysis and comparison as well as an assessment of the times and regime of Mohammed Buhari, his campaign slogans, and promises, personality and achievements as the case may be. Both as a Military and Civilian President, Buhari led Nigeria, hence, could be counted as being lucky and opportuned to showcase his signature in Nigeria's annals. A very wide chasm exists between leading and being led, suggestibility and actualization. In the real sense of facts, Buhari may not be 'tall as he looks' and may have not manifested exemplary leadership attributes, but fate appeared to have allowed him into Nigeria's story to punctuate the narrative.

In order to succinctly understand the import of Muhammed Buhari's integrity mantra on Nigeria's strides towards proper nationhood and growth, this study has found it worthy to divide this writeup into the following: Introduction, Conceptualizing Integrity, Nigeria at a Cross Road, 1966-1970, Buhari and Petroleum Trust Fund, Buhari in Governance, 1979-1985, 2015-2023, Scorecard and Conclusion.

Integrity: A Conceptual Discourse

Integrity is one of those concepts that attracts argumentative analysis. The argument arises from the widely claimed human imperfection and functional susceptibility. In discussing integrity, some common factors are factored or considered. First is the level of accountability both in public and private life. Secondly, is transparency. Transparency is actually the state of openness in handling deals or affairs, an act of accessibility devoid of secrecy in affairs that has to do with public business. Thirdly is the probity. Probity is complete and confirmed integrity and the art of having strong moral principle. Integrity remains an ideal, aspired to as a guiding paradigm dictating all human relations. Galvanized and streamlined by norms, etiquette and morality, but always strongly challenged by human excesses and desires within the societal realm, it remains a good chunk of individual identity.



The later can obviously be used interchangeably with integrity as it clearly defines or touches on strong moral principle. This principle reflects pattern of daily life style, the 'dos and don'ts', sympathy and apathy for certain character, course of action among others.

In Nigeria, the issue of integrity has remained a recurring debate. This debate is in view of the obvious consequences of its deficiency in a system that is Nigeria's politics. The profligate nature of Nigerian leadership over the years, leaves much to be desired. The level of corruption which has assumed endemic position and rudimental political psyche, calls for national concern.

Just as the years elapsed, the accruing need and hunger for a selfless leader, that could juxtapose the rule of law, patriotism and principled nationalism, steered by vision and mission, grew in strength. Unfortunately, inadequacies and human frivolities appear easily more when one is elevated into leadership position. Since integrity remains the positive component of; the integral part of a human person, which is grown and cultured overtime through primary and secondary exposure, it could either bequeath or deny hope.

Integrity turns to a construct the day character, choice, habit and morality are questioned; hence policy and definitiveness must always remain permanent partakers for accomplishment to be obtained. Honesty and fairness to all aggregates to living by example, helping others and taking responsibility of one's actions. An integral trust is built overtime, when truthfulness keeping to promises and apologies are promptly tendered when one is wrong, hence humility provides the transport through which integrity is manifest. Integrity does not grant a conduit through which one can be doubted.

The importance of integrity in all human endeavours notwithstanding, demanded from the pulpit of leadership, it not only confers, but imbues one with hard turns and curves on



the long slippery constructed road of belief, acceptance, performance, acceptability and fellowship. Shunning corruption, nepotism, fraud and autocratic tendencies, including containing and controlling all traits of religious fundamentalism and extremism, enables one to remain precise and calculated. When leadership is equipped with integrity, citizen compliance, supports and unalloyed abeyance automatically builds and sustains patriotism.

A seemingly single and simple word which connotes much, especially when tagged with human leadership in society within a given space and timeframe, integrity would always measure and showcase those frailties, unbecoming and shortcomings in human nature *vis a vis* idealistic perfection and physiognomical realities. Undoubtedly, a high hurdle, hence this piece is poised to objectively exhume and reproduce facts accordingly, while interrogating and analysing wholistically with sympathy, more so when the subject personality is Muhammed Buhari, a controversial figure under the divergent equation epitomized by a litany of complexities in governance.

Nigeria at a Cross Road, 1966 – 1970

The above caption is meant to illustrate the undeniable impact of Mohammed Buhari at a critical time in the history of Nigeria. The Nigeria – Biafra war was epochal and fundamental in the quest for true nationhood. Aggregational causes and consequences of that war on the Nigerian political space is realistically not the primary import of this study, however that does not in any way relegate the fact that the mere lack of patriotic leadership was pivotal to that war.

In the quest to keep Nigeria united, politically secured and indivisible, both domestic and external forces added in fuelling what would have been settled on the altar of integrity, if Aburi Accord was anything to go by. The Nigeria – Biafra war among other things was a war of personality deficiency and



institutional liability which was instrumental to the war, as various interest groups could not align.⁷

Born 17th December, 1942, Buhari spent most of his childhood life in the care of his mother, since his father died earlier. Muhammed Buhari, after completing his primary and secondary school career in Katsina State, enrolled in the Nigerian Military Training College (NMTC)⁸, in 1961, though the outfit got transformed and renamed as the Nigerian Defence Academy three years later. From here, officers were sent to Commonwealth military academies for officer cadet training.

He was later commissioned Officer Cadet and Platoon Commander. Buhari's service was greatly needed as the unity of the country remained sacrosanct. He was among the first of the junior officers to be sent into the battle. He served until the end of the war.⁹ Mohammed Buhari fought from the Awka front, and later commanded a brigade at Makurdi. He, equally at various times, also had to defend areas between Enugu and Abakaliki. Mohammed Buhari's mastery of weapons fired during the war by the sounds of the gunfire was of great resource and instrumental to his personal speedy rise within the ranks. He was able to distinguish the type of weapons being used from just the sound.

His military ingenuity was greatly felt as he was able to escape series of death threatening scenarios, by merely sustaining injury at his ear.

“On one occasion, while marching with his men toward Ogoja, He ran into a group of Biafra Soldiers, and the federal soldiers suffered serious casualties. On another occasion, a rebel sniper killed someone standing next to Him”¹⁰

John Paden, wrote about Buhari's heroism during the Nigerian mandate war. He noted how many in Buhari's battalion died from suspected typhoid as a result of lack of clean drinking



water coupled with the extreme difficulties of foraging through the difficult rainforest terrain of Biafra land. Several issues abound, relating to the personality of Muhammed Buhari, portraying tough resolves and compartments, acquired through formation and individual choice.

It may be recalled that at one occasion, during the war, Buhari was said to have compromised in his religious beliefs by failing to observe the Islamic fasting in the month of Ramadan, succumbing rather to the demands and distastes of the war. This is an act noteworthy as stated that Islam is notably tolerant and peaceful, but also capable of accommodating a variety of human circumstances.¹¹ As the unity of Nigeria was severely threatened, the art of ingenuity and military master class was needed to ensure a united and peaceful country. This task was well understood and undertaken by Mohammed Buhari. The doggedness and fearlessness of Buhari coupled with his sheer determination to contribute to nationhood and nation building was much felt during the 30 months war

“A man, who repeatedly tells us that for the 30 months the Nigerian civil war lasted, he was right there at the front, not even taking one day off.....”¹²

Commenting on the Civil war, Buhari noted that the war was a war of self-centeredness. The need by all politicians to uphold the ultimate objective of promoting the interest of the country by way of ensuring that Nigerians remains Nigerians, and Nigeria to remain Nigeria.

The self-centeredness that led to the loss of over a million lives between the years 1967 to 1970 must not be allowed to repeat. Apart from the lives that were lost, properties and infrastructures were utterly brought to a ruin. Farm lands, industries and markets were in desolation.¹³ Candidly, that Nigeria is still Nigeria, “united” gives credence to the individual personalities like Mohammed Buhari and as such should be given some sort of commendation.



Should one talk of commendation now? Perhaps, it's simply too early to adopt such stance, more so for a 'tall man' whose many controversial engagements have not only helped to ascribe a stunted frame for at the evening of his life, but one whose gallant strides have been mined in monumental controversies. Fully aware of what may be referred to as musings from the anthill or rather the clamour from the court of public opinion on Muhammed Buhari's figure, devoid of a biographical excursion, this study is apt to draw a conclusion based on the histrionics that made that figure:

- During his tenure as Federal Commissioner of Petroleum and Natural Resources, \$2.8 billion allegedly went missing from the accounts of the NNPC in Midland Bank in the United Kingdom. General Babangida later accused Buhari of being responsible of this fraud.
- His commandeering military overdrive in 1983 against the Chadian forces in Borno State, under President Shagari, which involved casualties and prisoners of war.
- The Umaru Dikko Affair: Accused of embezzling \$1 billion in oil profits, Buhari and Idiagbon regime attempted to smuggle him into Nigeria through a failed 'diplomatic baggage' from London.
- The 54 Suitcases Saga: Suitcases with unknown contents, transported by the Emir of Gwandu, whose son was Buhari's aide-de-camp, were cleared through customs on 10th June, 1984 without inspection during his return flight from Saudi Arabia, at the zenith of Buhari's war against indiscipline and corruption.
- PTF allocation to the military (20%) feared not accounted for as the chairman.
- 2012: Buhari is chosen representative of the Boko Haram in their mediation with the Nigerian government.
- In December 2014, claiming its unconstitutionality, Buhari promised to abolish the office of the First Lady if elected



president. Since assuming office on 29th May, 2015, he reneged in his promise.

- Plagiarism scandal on Obama's speech (September, 2016).
- Under Buhari, Twitter was banned in Nigeria in 2021.

For this research to have pencilled down all these aspects of controversial linkages in the life and times of Buhari is not propelled in any aspect by the premediated urge to either tarnish his image or to unnecessarily sensationalise his actions, rather the idea is to painstakingly go after the facts, trailing objective evidence. Be that as it may, it may be noted that for most of these controversies to have been seriously or not seriously handled, either through the apparatus of governance or the court of public opinion, whereby the central figure relatively or apparently got absolved or politically escaped unhurt, smacks of either the deliberate and selective indifference of the Nigerian State (institutions) or a clear-cut scot-free date with fate and destiny on the part of Buhari's person.

Buhari and Petroleum Trust Fund

In 1977, when the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation was created, Buhari was appointed as its chairman till 1978. During his tenure as the Federal Commissioner for Petroleum and National Resources, the government invested in pipelines and petroleum storage infrastructure development. With full optimism on the side of Nigerians, the image created was so positive, this puritan image being painted of Buhari may not be totally correct. This is because during this time, 70% to 100% of all the PTF projects were concentrated in Northern Nigeria, to the neglect of other regions especially the south. Secondly, the amount of corruption and fraud that went under his watch without any punitive measures were alarming. These cases of corruption and fraud were all in the public domain, with wide criticism. More so, an independent panel found out landslide nepotism choice consultants who through the channel siphoned the PTF funds.



Buhari, Integrity and Politics 1979 – 1985

The independence of Nigeria failed to offer seasoned personality that would steer the nation's affairs in a direction that would lead to transformational development and social order. The first republic was rather incapable of demonstrating leadership direction that was needed at such a critical time in the annals of Nigeria. Lack of leadership and personality point capable of forging a legitimate and an inclusive structure in the scheme of national life stared the nascent nation on the face. This was responsible for the inferno that swept Nigeria between years 1967 to 1970.

Not only did it introduce and usher in blood bath, it gave room for military participation and rulership in Nigeria. The republican government was accused of impunity,¹⁴ hence gave birth to the first coup by the military. As the military continued to hold sway till 1979, the need and urgency for a true marksman, an intelligentsia and a democrat was overwhelming. The election of 1979 produced Shehu Shagari as the President. The expectation from the presidency was long and voluminous in so many regards. This expectation was not met. The administration rather was a regrettable replication of the first republic under Tafawa Balewa¹⁵, if not worse.

This regrettable replication was on a scale that could only lead back again into the waiting hands of rapacious men in uniform who were itching to return to power. The regime witnessed wide spread corruption and resource mismanagement at an unequalled level. The profligate rule of Shagari left much to be desired. This was so given that nobody shaded tears when the second republic was sacked in 1983, if the euphoric national happiness and excitement stirred was anything to go by. The ouster which took place at the eve of "New Year" December 31, 1983 was greeted with loud ovation and convivial felicitation of "Happy New Year and Happy New Government".¹⁶

This gloomy scene of the government during the Shagari era was a “quick to forget” due the general perceived indiscipline, nepotism, and maladministration, heavy foreign and domestic debts, in fact, the economy was in shamble, calling for a “Savior” and a “Liberator”. Who could be the person? Nigeria needed a quick fix and a radical change of direction. The rain of impunity was much. The level of impunity exhibited by Umaru Dikko, a presidential aide to Shagari and also the minister of transportation in the regime was so blankly exhibited.

The search for a “Mr. Discipline” and “Mr. Integrity” continued. Desperate times needs desperate measures. The rain of impunity, corruption, get-rich-quick, greed, disorderliness were the order of the day. The second military takeover of governance was filled with enthusiasm and optimism, at least if corruption and indiscipline could be reduced, Nigerians could assiduously harbour a breathing space. Buhari began with aspect of repressive measures. So many personalities, including former state governors were sent to jail along with their commissioners.

Significant among the repressive activities was the scuttled plan of desperation to abduct Umaru Dikko from London on a forced repatriation. He was to be “crated” on a Lagos-bound cargo plane from Stanstead Airport to Nigeria to answer for many crimes and corruption allegations levelled against him. This case of ‘diplomatic bag or pouch’ was monumental diplomatically, as the Nigeria – British relation appeared challenged.

On the off side, the Mohammed Buhari’s regime exhibited opposition to Freedom of the press. Two journalists, Tunde Thompson a Lagos based Journalist with The Guardian Newspaper and Nduka Irabor were imprisoned for an offence allegedly committed under the spurious and retroactively enforced Decree Number 4. This decree largely utilized as a trap and a draconian piece of Legislation that allowed the



government to imprison any journalist who embarrassed the country's military dictators was unpopular. Nebulous charges were frequently invoked to muzzle the press and civil society. Buhari's regime was famous for this. The 18 months of the regime's rule systematically became venomous to the free press, who on one occasion published a report on diplomatic posting that involved the top military brass, and was deemed a felony against the regime leading to their arrest in 1984 and detention for eight months. This crack down on civil liberties and freedom of speech by the President remains a low-key point in the assessment of the personality of Mohammed Buhari.

Mr. Integrity and the War against Indiscipline

It does appear that the personality of Mohammed Buhari seems to re-echo on the choice leader at every given period of national leadership malfunction and maladministration. The administration of Shehu Shagari was characterized by gross indiscipline both in public and in private life, hence accompanied by many corruption cases and public profligation of the country's common wealth.

The war against indiscipline was a mobilization program of the Buhari administration with the aim of correcting social misgivings and mal functions. The program was conceived to attack social mal adjustment and wide spread corruption. The program fully acknowledged the fact that indiscipline and degeneracy within the political class had climbed unprecedented heights. The War Against Indiscipline was a comprehensive and controlled corrective measure. The aim was to strengthen national unity, promote economic self-sufficiency and instil cultural, personal, and moral discipline so as to control indolence, corruption, and criminal practices. The decree accompanying this project spelt out stiff or harsh punishments for crimes and vagrant violations. To ensure orderliness in public spaces, good work ethics, national unity and anti-corruption and crime free nation, this laudable program was bluntly disrupted by the overthrow of the



Mohamed Buhari's regime by Major General Ibrahim Babangida in 1985.

The personality of Mohammed Buhari through the program was presented as "a clean-up" agent. An agent focused on installing good morality and ethics in the system, one that was seriously lacking with negative and dubious consequences, socially and economically. The mandate though short-lived, yet somehow monumental and as such an act of reference going forward.

Mr. Integrity, Corruption and Personality Trait

One may be privy to conclude that the history of Mohammed Buhari, is the history of corruption crusade. A crusade that has become synonymous with his personality. Corruption in Nigeria has remained endemic and consequential, rooted basically on all facet of the national life and more prevalent among public servants and politicians.

Buhari's identity posture, hypothetically and symbolically embodied contentment, normalcy and optimal personage. These attributes obviously impacted significantly in his frontal-tagged policy formulation especially in the crusade for a transparent, accountable, credible and simplistic public life.

The crusade began first with the overthrow of the "corrupt administration" of Shehu Shagari in December, 1983. With the introduction of War Against Indiscipline (WAI) which among others was meant to instil discipline in public accountability and sincerity. Though short in duration, the crusade was personified by the crusader.

Nigeria's unity and socio-economic life was systematically put under threat by insurgency and corruption in the fourth republic. The activities of the Boko Haram were posing real threat as the level of blood bath, occasioned by sporadic bomb blasts led to the casualties unequalled since the Nigeria – Biafra war. The attacks on various public places including the United



Nations Building in Abuja, the Nigeria Force headquarters in Abuja and other notable places such as worship centres set a record yet to be rivalled in the nation's history. Nigerians became disenchanted with the Goodluck Jonathan's administration mainly because of insecurity.¹¹

With this, the need for yet another figure head whose personality and pedigree would be a master stroke in the stemming of the ugly situation, continued to nag on the door. The touch was on no other person but on Mohamed Buhari.¹² The campaign mantra was "Change Agenda". Indeed, Nigeria needed a change, a change from blood bath to safety, a change¹³ from kidnapping, internal displacement of persons and corruption to liberty, freedom and accountability. Even at this stage, Buhari's figure moved around with a veil that embodied trust, firmness and a tint of patriotism.

With the second "missionary journey" in 2015, Mr. Integrity – Mohammed Buhari, this time around as a civilian elected president, it was believed that the actual change sought for has been gotten. It was believed that as a retired General, and with the track record of fighting in the Biafra – Nigeria war and the progenitor of the war against indiscipline (WAI) in 1983, there will be sanity and sanctity in the political space especially in the area of security.¹⁴

First in 2015, Buhari vigorously handpicked Ibrahim Magu to head the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and a seven-man member Presidential Advisory Committee against corruption, headed by an eminent law professor of law, Itse Sagay.¹⁵

More so, the Treasury Single Account (TSA), and the IPSS were set up. The target was to ensure remittance of government revenues directly and in real-time, to digitize salary payment of public workers and to eliminate the scourge of "ghost workers".¹⁶ Other initiatives taken by Mr. President in fighting corruption were the amendment of the Asset Management



Corporation Act in 2019 and 2021. The Presidential Executive order to improve the ease of doing business at the ports and other trade facilities agencies.¹⁷

The government of Mohammed Buhari enthusiastically arrested, tried and convicted dozens of persons as well as seizures by the EFCC and ICPC. The EFCC secured about 3,785 convictions of fraudsters and treasury looters in 2020 alone, recovering over 121 million naira in 10 months in 2021 as stated by the Chairman of EFCC, Bawa Abdurashheed. The full recovering for the year 2021 were ₦152 billion and \$386 million and small on other currencies apart from fixed and movable properties seized in Nigeria and Abroad.¹⁸

Between 2019 to 2022, the ICPC said it “recovered, forfeited and restrained” assets worth or valued at ₦450.99 billion from corrupt persons. These were possible by the moral support given to these anti-corruption agencies on the fight against corruption. Many African leaders showered encomium on Buhari in 2018 for his laudable battle against corruption.

Ironically, this fight did not last long as corruption became synonymous with the Mohammed Buhari’s administration especially among top government officials. From his stated personal aversion for graft, speeches and the slowness of policies, and the evasive efforts of the anti-corruption agencies, the war fluttered, leading to the ascendancy of corruption as his tenure wound up. This was obvious as a report by Deutsche Welle in 2022 labelled the war as “hopeless”, insisting that his administration is truly in the mire of corruption.¹⁹

His lack of firmness in leadership was decisively exposed as the internal contradictions and self-subversion began to fight back. The administration began to show lack of coherent strategy, rather the disparate policies, measures, regulations, laws and agencies lacked cohesive co-ordination, a central effective command and control with these high profiled cases of corruption; the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)



noted that Buhari “consistently turned blind eye to malfeasance by some of his own appointees and resisted independent oversight of Nigeria’s most scandal-ridden agencies”.

Among the high-profile cases are those involving the former EFCC chairman, Ibrahim Magu, the Acting Accountant General of the Federation, Abdulrasheed Maina, who was accused in 2012 of diverting pension funds running into billions of naira; the budget padding of N300 billion, among others.

Finally, this institutional weakness played huge role in the ascendance of corruption to a great level unequalled in Nigeria’s history. The reasons are not farfetched as Mohammed Buhari failed to realize that a country so diverse, polarized like Nigeria, sectionalism in appointments and policies, nepotism, weak judiciary, lack of press freedom and exclusionary practices are also enablers of corruption that eventually made nonsense of the war against corruption, thereby leaving a question mark on Mr. Integrity and a figure head in Nigeria politics.

On Foreign Policy, Buhari through his Chief of Staff, Gambari Ibrahim, the mindset is to first focus on Nigeria then its immediate neighbours before paying attention to other West African countries, Africa and the rest of the world.

*“The defining feature of his policies was concentric circle of Nigeria Foreign Policy. That air 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, and welfare of its citizens”.*²⁰

Among all that is stated in relation to the concentric circle of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy, Mohammed Buhari clearly implemented the first circle in re-ordering concentric rotation. His administration’s executives’ controversial projects that appear to favour the neighbouring Niger republic such as the



Nigeria – funded rail line being constructed from Nigeria to Niger and recent donations of vehicles worth over a billion naira to Niger amidst Nigeria’s economic collapse and challenges.²¹ This is because this is coming at a time when there is infrastructural dilapidation and national economic comatose.

Could one refer to Buhari’s foreign policy during the military administration? Relations between Nigeria and ECOWAS was hostile which led to boarder closures; relations with Nigerian’s former colonial master, United Kingdom was also strained which resulted in diplomatic row between both countries. First reason was the regime’s overthrow of the civilian regime and his oppression and opposition against free press.

Buhari in 1983 after overthrowing the Shagari regime, announced his foreign policy style by first and foremost purging the external affairs ministry of dead-woods, replacing them with experts in the field of international relations. This led to the restructuring of the establishment in order to provide a robust and vigorous direction in Nigeria’s external relations.

In addition, more blood was injected into Nigeria’s committee against Apartheid at the U.N. The regime also came out in full support of Namibia’s independence. Thirdly, Buhari in a bid to secure the territorial integrity of Nigeria, openly opposed Foreign Military mission into Chad.²² The regime’s role in the Chadian crisis led to the withdrawal of the French and Libya forces. This was a foreign policy triumph for the regime.

Buhari in another triumph resisted pressure from Arab and Islamic world to upgrade Nigeria’s observer status at OIC to that of full membership, despite promises of juicy financial assistance. He maintained that Nigeria is a secular state.²³

Scorecard/Conclusion

As noted in the body of the study, the emergence of Mohammed Buhari in Nigeria’s political life represents a critical point in Nigeria’s political history. This is so because he has always been



an “interventionist”, coming to power at the very point of “need”. Need of a new direction, a sort of rescue mission.

The ‘Mr. Integrity’ and ‘Mr. Change’ mantra of Mohammed Buhari has been tested, assessed and over all can be deemed unsatisfactory with nothing to desire.

The war against indiscipline and the war against corruption were laudable with high hopes and expectation which unfortunately were not won or achieved.

Like a formidable milestone, Buhari’s figure continues to stand on Nigeria’s chequered road, emitting diverse rays and attracting and eliciting conflicting public discourses. He could have entered with a visionary bang while leaving with a regrettable lot. Several issues could have made this figure to have not only reneged so much, allowing his personality to be mired in extreme nepotism and religious fundamentalism. Without totally dismissing geriatric degenerative insufficiencies, this study cannot completely draw certain conclusions in the interim.

Operating under the integrity acronym can never be a task meant either for the fainthearted, the psychopathic many or the uncalculative or split personalities, rather it is for the cool, compact, fearless, considerate and neurotic few, whose meticulous acuity accompany as they weigh and accomplish their day-to-day engagements. Sustaining integrity demands its proper and timely management, more so, in the public domain, whereby equitable considerate equation dominates. Though, it takes a lifetime to build and sustain integrity, unfortunately, only but few deeds and actions would completely collapse it.

Regardless of one’s discreetness; regardless of the great efforts put in masking one’s disposition, character and psychosocial leanings; regardless of whatever efforts diverted towards invoking rationality, gentility, fairness and integrity; one final real factor remains – a big distance exists between the reality



and a mirage, a cloak or a make belief. Muhammed Buhari's date with the tag 'integrity' appears from all perspectives to be not only a 'make-belief' but a high sounding nothing, that has helped to dot the many pages of Nigeria's painful and controversial history.



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