

**MILITARY AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA, THE BUHARI  
ADMINISTRATION IN PERSPECTIVE 31ST DECEMBER 1983 TO  
27TH AUGUST 1985. Pgs 65-84**

**Ani, Uchenna S. Ph.D., MHSN**

Department of History and Strategic Studies,  
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Nigeria  
[uchennaani05@yahoo.com](mailto:uchennaani05@yahoo.com)

**and**

**Ezeonwuka Innocent-Franklyn O. Ph.D., MHSN**

Department of History International Studies and Diplomacy  
Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria  
egbuacho@gmail.com , +2348033096134

**ABSTRACT**

This paper accessed the efforts at nation building in Nigeria in the period between 31<sup>st</sup> December 1983 and 27<sup>th</sup> August 1985. It advanced that the principles of nation building revolves around national ideas and desires that will manifest in sentiments, programs and activities that will secure and maintain the prosperity welfare and integrity of a nation. In Africa, colonial inheritance made the task of nation building difficult as groups who are not meant to be were lumped together into an artificial state. Also, colonial liabilities of economic dependence of African states to western countries extensively hindered every effort at building African nations into greatness. In Nigeria, high level corruption and gross economic mismanagement deepened underdevelopment to a point that led to military intervention on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1983. Within the twenty month stewardship of the military regime, Nigeria was picked up from the shambles and laudable policies were designed to place her among the emerging nations of the world. The leaders drove these policies amidst criticisms of high handedness, repression and adamancy. Though the regime was overthrown, it was among the best Nigeria experienced in terms of fight against corrupt practices and sincerity in the implementation of policies. All these will be historicized using qualitative research methodology.

**Key Words:** Nationhood, Nation-Building, Policies

### **Introduction:**

The area that is today known as Nigeria exists as multiplicity of diverse ethnic nations that varied in its sizes. Each ethnic group occupies a distinct and continuous territory. Most of the smaller groups had very little contact with other groups before the spread of Islam and subsequent imposition of Colonial rule<sup>1</sup>. The first step towards the unification of these ethnic nations into a single political entity started in 1851 when Lord Palmerston the British secretary of states in the period appointed Mr. John Beecroft as the British Consul in charge of Bight of Benin and Biafra.<sup>2</sup> In 1861 Lagos became a British colony; this invariably gave rise to the influx of numerous British multi-national companies which aided British expansionism. George Tubman Goldie's Royal Niger Company was prominent in the period of which with their possession of the Royal charter, they were able to strip the hitherto independent ethnic nations of their independence. This necessitated the arrival of the British Crown and the hoisting of the Union Jack declaring the area that is today known as Nigeria both Colonies and protectorates under the British crown.

This paper will not necessarily concern itself either with the British Colonialism or nationalist activities in Nigeria; it will only make an assessment of the extent at which Nigerian Statesmen used the power and resources within their disposal to build Nigeria into a better nation. The major focus of this work is General Buhari's regime which lasted between December 31<sup>st</sup> 1983 and August 27<sup>th</sup> 1985. In doing this, the concept of nation will be examined likewise the theories of nation building this will provide a vent that will enable us make an assessment of nation building in Nigeria in the period under review, then comes the conclusion.

### **The Concept of Nation.**

Every human being whether Finn or French, Semite or Aryan, Slav or Slovak, Berber or Bantu belong to some groups with a collective name which can all be seen as nations. The concept and understanding of "nation" has evoked a lot of mixed interest among scholars; this of course made it mean different thing to different people. K.R. Minogue postulated that by the seventeenth even up to the nineteenth century especially in France and Germany "nation" was coming to

stand for a political people of a society. Hence some people will define nation as the king and the nobility<sup>3</sup>. The French nobility had long regarded themselves as racially and morally distinct from the rest of the French population. During the empire years of West Africa, the *Sonninke*, *Malinke*, *Sunni*, *Mai* and other ruling families were regarded as the nation. The *Ashentehene* of Ashantiland within the first half of the eighteenth century, especially during the reign of Osei Tutu, saw themselves as possessing divine right and occupying a special place in the relationship with the Omnipotent<sup>4</sup>. They alone were the nation. This exclusiveness meant that the term “nation” signifies a club which everyone was anxious to join. No wonder, Mohammed Toure perpetuated himself by all means into the fold of rulers and nobility by assassinating Sunni Baru to become the emperor of the Songhai empire<sup>5</sup>.

In the nineteenth century, the connotation of a nation took a new turn when Jean Jacques Rousseau rejected the embodiment of nation in the personal sovereignty of the ruling class and boldly identified “nation” as “people”,<sup>6</sup> therefore making the nation not a responsibility of the king and the nobility but that of the generality of the people. This leads us to a dimension of asking, which people has a responsibility to the nation? Ramsey Muir defined it as people who feel themselves to be naturally linked together by certain affinities, which is so strong and real for them that they can happily live together, and as well dissatisfied when disunited and cannot tolerate subjection of people who do not share these ties.<sup>7</sup> Minouge in quoting Pace defined nation as a group of people who claim some kind of common descent<sup>8</sup>, it was therefore appropriate for any self conscious group of people for instance the Ijae, Ijebu, Ibadan etc to choose to belong to the Yourba nation. This position therefore suggests that a nation must not be enclosed in a particular geographical location under a government but should be a consciousness in the mind of people that they belong to a particular nation. To Benedict Anderson, nations are imagined communities.<sup>9</sup> He posited that all communities larger than the primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined. Communities are therefore distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined. This position also favoured the Jews in the period before 1948 when their state was established.

Before 1948, they perceived themselves as belonging to the Jewish nation inspite of the fact that they were scattered around the world.

But, is merely imagining belonging to a nation strong enough to sustain nationhood? Rupert Emerson came up with a different idea when he defined a nation as a community of people who feel that they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant element of common heritage and as well have common destiny for the future.<sup>10</sup> Emerson's view of a nation makes some condition for the connotation of a nation very clear, firstly, nation is made up of people who are driven by a natural (and not political) consent. People who are not coerced to coming together but people driven by "will" giving up their individualism for collectivism. "will" is a natural attribute that is rooted in the hearts of people. It goes beyond mere consciousness of belonging to a group but to a commitment that makes nationals highly responsible for the well being of their nation. Secondly, nation is made up of a people who do not only share a common heritage but people who believe in common destiny for the future. Such people identifies not only with what satisfies their immediate need as a nation but also with that which will secure a glorious future for their generation even if they will not directly participate in it. People of such natural communities intensely and unequivocally identify themselves to their nation even to the extent of laying down their lives for it inspite of however they may differ among themselves on other issues.

However great its importance, it is clear that the nation is the only one of many communities in which men have intensely lived their lives through the ages. Though such interests as the family, locality, religious group, conscience and even economic interest have risen at particular times to prevail over national allegiance for particular individuals or groups, it is evident that for most men, the national allegiance takes precedence over all other claims.<sup>11</sup> Such claims have also yielded the pride of place to the nation after harsh struggles with it (nation) competing for people's allegiance.

**Nation Building.**

Nation-building according to Bingham et al, is the process whereby people transfer the commitment and loyalty from smaller ethnic group, villages or petty principalities to a larger central political unit.<sup>12</sup> They posited that it is basically a process of socio-political development which allows loosely knitted communities to become a common society with a nation state corresponding to it.<sup>13</sup> To Rotgak Gofwen, nation-building deals with the dynamic transmission to meet up with the responsibility of providing for the citizenry the basic resources for existential survival.<sup>14</sup> He advanced that the task is dependent on the statesmen who have prepared their minds towards undertaking a common goal of securing and sustaining the greatness of their nation to mobilize the economic and socio-political forces of the society to the benefit of their nation. Nation-building therefore, being a deeper level of national identity, deliberately constructed by statesmen in molding different groups into a nation must center itself within the confines of national ideas and desires that will manifest in sentiments, programmes and activities that will secure and maintain the prosperity, welfare, security and integrity of a nation.

Europe took a center stage in the crystallization of the activities that gave rise to the theories and practice of nation –building. The Eighteenth century Europe was characterized by profound effects like social stratification which placed the king and the nobility who are few in number over the masses. Autocratic monarchs who are related either by blood or marriage ruled all the states in Europe. The aristocrats lived in luxury while their subjects worked so hard and lived miserably.<sup>15</sup> The rulers conducted the affairs of their nations un-hindered and as well took decisions without recourse to the interest of the people.<sup>16</sup> A major turn came in the affairs of Europe when France recorded a pyrrhic victory over Britain in North America in 1783. The war which hindered democratic reform and escalated government dept with huge budget deficit led to the imposition of new taxes upon the poor masses by King Louis XVI for the dept services. This led to crisis that emptied itself into a revolution that did not only transform the French politics and society,<sup>17</sup> but triggered ideas that strengthened nation-building across the world.

Rousseau in the period opened indignant protest against the tyranny meted upon the people by the privileged that controlled the state in a triple watch word of *liberty, equity* and *fraternity*.<sup>18</sup> This of course formed the basis of the French Revolution of 1789. The unification of Germany and Italy in the mid nineteenth century and the dismantling of the Ottoman, Russia and Austria-Hungarian Empire in the twentieth century saw nation building in Europe revolve around the fight against tyranny and exploitation of the masses.<sup>19</sup> It also brought nation building to the point of repositioning the economic and socio-political structures of Europe by way of laying strong foundation for the distribution of wealth, power and influence among statesmen of nations.

As nation states were being built in Europe, empires were built in the wider world. The industrial revolution in Europe greatly expanded the industrializing state's demand for raw materials, labour and markets. In the minds of many European leaders, the only way to secure access to it was to establish political control of the territories in which they were located (raw materials, labour and markets),<sup>20</sup> – hence colonialism in Africa. Political boundaries were draw up by European statesmen; boundaries that cut across nations that existed independent of the other with fine disregard to its ethnic nationals.<sup>21</sup> This great liability made nation building in Africa entirely different from what is obtainable in Europe. For instance the Yoruba people were split between Nigeria and Benin Republic, the Bakongo split between Gabon, Belgian and French Congo; the Somali splited between Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya and Ethopia<sup>22</sup>. This, like many others across the continent were merged with unfamiliar groups thereby making affinity to the ethnic nation more than that of the nation state as created by the Europeans.

In this regard, nation building in Africa therefore becomes such an effort by statesmen to construct institutions of national government in an artificial and multi-national environment, according to a model that will promote peaceful co-existence, safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state and as well distribute wealth and influence among the people to an extent commensurate for each citizen to lead a good life. To achieve this standard in the independent

African states led to so many concepts and perceptions to nation building as postulated by African statesmen.

Nnamdi Azikiwe for instance noted that most of the nations that were artificially merged into political entities by the Europeans were not supposed to be under a nation state. For instance in Nigeria where a multiplicity of diverse ethnic nations and languages exists to an extent numbering 400.<sup>23</sup> But, having circumstantially come together into single political entities, that the first task of nation building in Africa is for African nations to grow above ethnic nationalistic leanings. He therefore propounded the theory of regeneration (the concept of the New Africa) which according to him is

... a state of a society where the mind is brought in harmony with matter... a psychological conception deeply rooted in a material environment .... The regeneration of Africa calls for mental freedom and the transcendence of racial and tribal barriers.<sup>24</sup>

This means that the old Africa where materialism and ethnic-nationalistic chauvinism which breeds hatred, unfair competition and dis-unity be destroyed while a new Africa based on the principles of

- a. **Spiritual Balance:** which involves the spirit of tolerance and respect for other's right to their own opinion.
- b. **Social Regeneration:** which is the transcendence over social barriers and prejudices
- c. **Economic Determinism:** This revolves around economic stability and self-sufficiency that will sustain the African society.
- d. **Mental Freedom:** which is the destruction of the already implanted inferiority of the African race in the mind of Africans and the appreciation of African's glorious past and prospects (mental emancipation)
- e. **Political Resurgence:** which secures the social good and right of all people in Africa.<sup>25</sup>

The realization of the New Africa must not be dependent on bloodshed and disorder but through the spirit of love, respect, selflessness and cooperation.

To Kwame Nkrumah, the main task of nation building in Africa is to ensure that the independent African States secure real freedom which according to him, goes beyond obtaining political independence. He believes that any country that controls some other countries economic infrastructure indirectly controls that countries political super structure. This implies that there is no real freedom without having a firm grip on the economy. He predicted that imperialism will not end in Africa with political independence as what he called neo-colonialism (the last stage of imperialism) raises its ugly head in the independent states of Africa. In an address at the opening ceremony of the bank of Ghana in July 1957, he posited thus: “Our political independence will be meaningless to us unless we use it to obtain economic and financial self government”.<sup>26</sup>

He believes that, if African leaders will improve the personality of their citizens by mass and quality education, provision of good health care delivery systems and water supply which will boost life expectancy; provision of electricity in the towns and villages and other infrastructures that will boost food production<sup>27</sup>, building industries (processing, manufacturing and ancillary) which will not only create employment but boost the economy, the people will be happy, especially when they are managing their own affairs. In his words, Africans value their freedom to workout their destiny their own way and not in the ways imposed on them by either malign or even well-meaning outsiders.<sup>28</sup>

In his theory of liberation, he believes that the condition that will give impetus to total liberation in multi-ethnic African states and build it to the extent that will distribute wealth and influence and as well sustain development across African states; is for statesmen to build new economic and political structures according to African ideas – such that will be strong enough to dismantle the exploitative colonial structures and as well stabilize the domestic African economy.<sup>29</sup> There must be a departure from the imperial economic and political structures that does not reflect African ideas to a purely African economic and political structure – a structure that responds to the African environment which alone guarantees total liberation.



Making a shift from an already existing system to a new one requires sacrifice and patience for the new system to stay. In most cases, the use of stringent measures is necessary to check the mixed feelings that might erupt as a result of the new system and as well bring people to the place of compliance. In spite of its numerous challenges, it is a necessary hurdle to cross as it will not only bring lasting and sustained development; it will secure the future of the nation and the generation of its citizens. Writing in this autobiography titled *Ghana*, he states that:

capitalism is too complicated a system for newly independent (and multi ethnic) nations ...even a system based on social justice and democratic constitution may need backing up... by emergency measures of a totalitarian kind (that will instill discipline). Without discipline, freedom cannot survive.<sup>30</sup>

He postulated that the leadership of the nation-states in Africa and members of the party must be the first to set examples of all the highest qualities in a nation. This will in turn set precedence for a sustained nation building programmes that will run through the ages. In his words,

African leaders must produce unimpeachable Evidence of integrity, honesty, selflessness and faithfulness in the position in which they are placed by the constitution in the service of the nation. They must abandon ridiculous ostentation and vanity when the party has charged them with eminent offices in the state. They should remember constantly that they hold offices not on their own right but in the right of ... the masses of the people...<sup>31</sup>

The total liberation of Africa from the shekels of neo-colonialism into a strong self-sustained nation based on African ideas and values with an economy highly capable to compete in the world market place, finds impetus on how good we were able to conduct ourselves in the offices we occupy.

### **Nation Building in Nigeria from December 31st, 1983 to August 27th, 1985: An Assessment.**

How far have Nigerian statesmen really conducted themselves in the offices they occupied? But before we make an assessment of the stewardship of Gen. Buhari and his comrades on nation building in Nigeria in the period under review, a brief survey of the situation that brought them into the Nigerian political scene is apt here. Adamolekun noted that from the second half of 1983 the nations attention was focused on the series of legislative and executive elections scheduled for August and September of that same year; and judging by the electoral fraud that was prevalent during the primary elections, it was obvious that the general election will be marred with violence and massive rigging, and it was so.<sup>32</sup> Law and order broke down, virtually in all the states, most especially in Ondo and Oyo states. The pre-occupation of politics and election resulted in serious deterioration and economic paralysis that gripped the nation as early as April 1982; with significant proportions of available funds at all levels of government devoted to election campaigns. Almost in all states, workers were either being owed salary arrears of between eight an twelve months or their salaries cut, yet the political leaders revel in squandermania, corruption and indiscipline which continued to proliferate public appointments.<sup>33</sup>

The problem of moral decadence was worsened by the plight of the vast majority of the people who were facing increased hardship of maintaining a decent standard of living.<sup>34</sup> The prevailing condition was therefore highly unbearable for Nigerians and when the military struck on the 31st of December 1983, it did not surprise most opinion leaders in the country.<sup>35</sup> The average citizen felt a great sense of relief at the overthrow of the civilian regime. Two reasons were clear why the military regime was accepted; first it was seen as a regime that will maintain law and order to such extent that will guarantee the security of lives and properties. Secondly, it is believed that the steep deterioration in the standard of living could be arrested. General Buhari (the new head of state) in an address to the nation tagged *Why the Change was Necessary* published in the *National Observer* of Monday 2nd January 1984, was quick to affirm his commitment in responding positively to the yearnings of Nigerians<sup>36</sup>.

Having suspended the National Assembly (the highest law making body in the land) for the Supreme Military Council, he appointed and swore in Military Administrators and other officials; he was set for the task of nation building. In a world press conference on Thursday January 5th 1984, he defined his policy line which of course formed the objective of his administration. He emphasized that the basic pre-occupation of his administration is to revive the national economy by effectively exploiting and harnessing all available human and material resources so as to improve the quality of life of all Nigerians<sup>37</sup>. He posited that the administration will also strive to:

- a) Maintain national unity and stability
- b) Give the nation a better and more purposeful sense of direction.
- c) Embark on prudent management of the available resources and diversification of the economy.
- d) Achieve self sufficiency in the production of major staple food commodities and essential raw materials within the targeted period.
- e) Encourage labour intensive projects with a view to creating more job opportunities.
- f) Re-phase development projects involving large foreign exchange commitments.
- g) Clean the society of the cankerworm of pervasive corruption.
- h) Maintain law and order and ensure the security of lives and properties.
- i) Uphold the principles of public accountability and encourage the development work ethics among Nigerian workers.
- j) Check the activities of hoarders, smugglers and all social and economic saboteurs.<sup>38</sup>

Gen. Buhari, in his commitment to fulfill his promise to the nation embarked on the policy of zero tolerance for corruption. He vowed to bring all the corrupt politicians to book believing that it will not only bring sanity to the polity but chart the course of accountability for future public office holders. On the 9th of January 1984, he ordered all the ex-politicians and public office holders to report to the Police station within 48 hours, he as well restricted the movement of persons so as to ensure that the politicians that defrauded the country did not

escape. On Wednesday 11th of January 1984, all the bank accounts belonging to the politicians especially office holders between 1979 and 1983 were frozen,<sup>39</sup> the government enacted the State Security Decree No 2 which empowered the Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters to detain any body concerned with acts that is prejudicial to the security or to have contributed to the economic adversity of Nigeria or to have been involved in its perpetuation or instigation.<sup>40</sup> The decree was made retroactive to the 31st of December 1983 probably to validate the detention of corrupt politicians who were already remanded in the police custody. About 10,000 politicians were detained across the country it was only Alh. Umaru Dikko (Former minister for transport), Dr. Joseph Wayas (former president of the senate) and Chief Adisa Akinloye (Former NPN National Chairman) who escaped. Others except Alh Shehu Shagari, (former President) and Dr. Alex Ekwueme (former Vice President) were tried in special tribunal set up by the Supreme Military Council (SMC) and sentenced to jail, in terms not less than 20 years imprisonment especially for the former Governors and some Ministers.<sup>41</sup>

Buhari's anti-corruption crusade stood out as one of the best Nigeria experienced up to the time of this writing. They produced evidence of integrity, honesty, selflessness and faithfulness in carrying out the responsibility conferred on them by the law. Their action conforms to the saying that *he that goes to equity must possess a clean hand*. The zero tolerance for corruption and the cultivation of diligence, hard work, integrity and excellence in the discharge of their duties went across the length and breadth of the body polity from the military and Para-military to civil and public service, schools, private and corporate organizations. The seed of respect to law and order was sown in the heart of Nigerians. Good work ethics was evident in the character of Nigerians in every sector.

Public accountability exercise also touched different spheres of the polity. All public servants were requested to declare their assets those that have bank account overseas were directed to close it.<sup>42</sup> His government probed the activities of different parastatals, organizations and Universities. The people that could not operate within the extent of ethical standards that will influence high level productivity were dismissed by the administration; others were dismissed also as a

result of old age.<sup>43</sup> This exercise did not only reduce government spending but built efficiency and productivity on the part Nigerian workers.

General Buhari manifested a strong determination and zeal to turn the economy around for good. He had a clear sense of direction in revamping the economic woes of Nigeria. In the period, they identified that the debt toll of the country was estimated between 15 and 16 billion US Dollars arising mostly from non-existent transactions by which millions of dollars were illegally siphoned.<sup>44</sup> Those involved in the foreign exchange transactions were directed to prepare copious information relating to those transactions. If any information was missing, the transaction was queried and if unsatisfactory answer was received, the government will reject the payment.<sup>45</sup> This actually helped to determine Nigeria's actual debt in genuine transaction.

Subsidies were cut off, including those for education and health services, new taxes were introduced to improve government finances. This measure came as a result of IMF's insistence on the devaluation of the naira which the government found politically unpalatable, therefore preferring recourse to belt-tightening and other measures within the country for revitalizing the economy.<sup>46</sup> The government also adopted the policy of counter trade for more foreign revenue and rationing of essential commodities. Emphasis was also laid on reviving the economy through increased local production and encouragement and protection of indigenous industries.<sup>47</sup> The government decreed a freeze on wage increase and fringe benefit both to public and private sector.<sup>48</sup> Part of this policy caused a wrought between the government and the Nigerian Labour Congress, Nigerian Medical Association, Academic Staff Union of Universities, National Association of Nigerian Students and other organizations. The government, with the revocation of its supreme and enforcement of powers banned those unions. There was also the prohibition of the increase in the price of commodities in the excess of 5 percent without permission from the government.<sup>49</sup>

In order to check the activities of hoarders, smugglers and the socio-economic saboteurs; on the 23rd of April 1984, the chief of staff at the Supreme

headquarters, Major General Tunde Idiagbon announced the closure of Nigerian's land borders and the change and withdrawal of the old currency for a new one.<sup>50</sup> It was hoped by the administration that the change of the naira will stem the tide of the illegal traffic of the naira and as well render valueless the vast sums of the national currency that had been smuggled out of the country.

In view of the government's search for new social order and the re-establishment of discipline in the country, in March 1984, the government launched the War Against Indiscipline (WAI).<sup>51</sup> The Chief of Staff, enumerated its objectives as to instill in the mind of Nigerians the noble ideas of national consciousness, mobilize their mind and gear it towards the sense of nationhood, patriotism and above all discipline.<sup>52</sup> The three phases of WAI – the queue culture phase – the work ethics phase and – the patriotism and nationalism phase brought to bear a sense of national consciousness and highly promoted the new Nigerian personality in the mind of nationals. Through this, love and respect for the country was re-awakened and spread across the polity. The national anthem and national pledge was seriously chanted in schools and other public places with people standing in respect for the country. The monthly environmental sanitation was also introduced by the Buhari administration – an exercise that is carried out across the country up to the time of this writing. The WAI brigade was setup and launched in every sector of the polity to monitor and enforce compliance of people to the polices of government and punish people that offended to it. This was the first time in many years that the sense of national consciousness was re-born in the minds of Nigerians of all spheres.

A cross section of Nigerians criticized his polices and the nature of its implementation as negative to the reason for the military intervention on the civilian regime. Brigadier Joshua Dogonyaro for instance posited that though the Shagari regime left enormity of burden to the administration, that was not the reason for the slow pace of development.<sup>53</sup> He noted that there was a clear absence of commitment of purpose among the ruling group which subjected government business to ill motivated power play and considerations.<sup>54</sup> The Supreme Military

Council was made redundant by the actions of the selected few members charged with the implementation of policies and decisions.

To General Ibrahim Babangida, the government distanced itself from the people it came to salvage and kept a deaf ear to the constant yearnings and aspirations of the people as reflected in the media.<sup>55</sup> He posited that both General Buhari and Idiagbon were too rigid and uncompromising in their attitude to issues of national significance; and efforts to make them understand that a diverse polity like Nigeria requires recognition and appreciation of differences in both cultural and individual perception only serve to aggravate their attitude.<sup>56</sup>

They arrogated to themselves absolute knowledge and solution to all problems and acted in accordance to what was convenient to them using the machinery of government as their tool. This reflected in the protection of public officers against public accusation Decree No.4 of 1984 which kept people under the perpetual fear of expressing how government policies were affecting them. The decree effectively put under check, journalists who publish what they considered not in the best interest of the nation. Many of them were incarcerated for offending against the decree. There was spate of protests against the activities of the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) Brigade who treated human beings in an undignified manner. There were also protests by student's group over the nature of purge in the public service. They posited that the purge at some point is not based on the inefficiency of affected people but on animosity and mood of the handlers.<sup>57</sup> As noted by Wole Soyinka, the regime offended not only Nigerians but as well their comrades in arms – an act which turned it against every section of the country.<sup>58</sup>

There is no doubt, the Buhari administration has been widely criticized by nationals of high handedness, insensitivity to public opinion, generation of terror in domestic and external environment, absence of a programme of transition to civil rule, promulgation of draconian decrees, detention without trial and the use of Nigerian Security Organization to harass citizens and create a culture of silence in the country.<sup>59</sup> The understanding derived from Nkrumah's theory of liberation made it clear that making a shift from already existing system to an entirely new

one required sacrifice and patience on the part of the governed; then diligence and excellent patriotism on the part of the rulers for the new system to stay. It was clear that most Nigerians were not ready to contribute their own quota of patiently crossing the necessary hurdle that leads to greatness. Corruption saturated the polity, dotted by slim work ethics— people reaping where they did not sow. But Gen. Buhari confronted the prevailing situation with diligence and hard work, —a situation where people will only reap where they have diligently sown. The administration also planted a seed of accountability in a society where people were hitherto not accountable.

The economy was re-positioned, where the internal energies will be harnessed for a high level production; and patronage to the indigenous products will be higher than that of the foreign products. This was about entering into a stage of stability when the administration was overthrown. It will be important to understand that the only year, starting from the first republic to the period under review, when Nigeria paid promptly all imports with foreign exchange earned by the nation and not borrowed from any international organization outside Nigeria was in 1984.<sup>60</sup> Throughout his stewardship, Nigeria never borrowed from any organization, he refuse to devalue the Nigerian currency, this re-established her image in the international market.

As postulated by Kwame Nkrumah, that before nation building programmes will be sustained, that African leaders must produce unimpeachable evidence of integrity, honesty, selflessness and faithfulness in the position in which they are placed by the constitution<sup>61</sup>. Buhari and his comrades ton an extent displayed these attributes as enumerated. Never enriching themselves, never defrauding the country, but busy recovering all that Nigeria have lost in the hands of un-patriotic statesmen. The consciousness of belonging to a country was re-established in the minds of countrymen who have previously lost hope and interest in Nigeria.

The extent at which he authoritatively drove his policies, to many Nigerians, might not be the best; for instance the banning of Nigerian Medical Association and sacking of its members from public quarters for protesting against the deplorable



condition in teaching hospitals and poor conditions of service. The sacking of the Nigerian airline pilots for demanding a review in their salaries and improvement of their working condition;<sup>62</sup> the list goes on. But that should not dismiss the fact that the period was not a time when Nigerians should place so much demand on the government having understood that the administration had not yet stabilized in the new course she was charting for the sustenance of the country. Having refused to devalue the naira so as to borrow money from foreign banks, but opted to run the country including paying her backlog of dept with internally generated revenue. Over the period, he was particular about inculcating and developing the best ethical standard that will drive the country into self sufficiency and total liberation.

### **Conclusion.**

The Buhari administration which lasted between December 31<sup>st</sup> 1983 and August 27<sup>th</sup> 1985 was an administration saddled with lots of criticisms; such criticisms following the enactment of the State Security Decree Degree No 2 of 1984, which empowered the Chief of Staff supreme headquarters (Major General Tunde Idiagbon) to arrest and detain persons offending against issues bordering on national security. Decree No 3 of 1984, which empowered the military tribunals, seen by many citizens saw as Kangaroo courts, to try and jail people either for life or 21 years if they are found to have enriched themselves up to the tune of one million naira.<sup>63</sup> Decree 4 that made it an offence to publish any information or news that could be interpreted as embarrassing to any public official whether such published news or information was truthful or not.<sup>64</sup> Many innocent citizens were believed to have, out of these decrease punished unjustly and deliberately. It also made independent journalism difficult in the Nigeria of the period.

But making a change from an existing system into a new one requires a relative level of force which will guarantee the enforcement of compliance of people into the system. To Kwame Nkrumah, even a system based on social justice and a democratic constitution requires an emergency system that will ensure discipline which, without it, freedom (and a total change) cannot survive. No doubt, all his decrees were geared towards building a new Nigeria where corruption,

unproductivity, nepotism and mediocrity will be abhorred; while patriotism, diligence, excellence and love for Nigeria be extolled.

#### END NOTES

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