

# Nigerians Bemoaned Buhari's Eight Years of Suffering and Failure.



## Nigerians tell own stories: How we survived Buhari's eight years

**A**t the expiration of the Muhammadu Buhari's eight years in office, Nigerians rolled out the drums, not in celebration of any worthy legacy, but in praise of their Maker who graciously enabled them to weather all the storms. The last eight years, they noted, had been harrowing. They expressed joy however and the optimism that the country would not pass such route any more. Our correspondents spoke with citizens across the country who recounted their ugly experiences in the life of the expired regime. Graves of victims of the eight years' maladministration of the President Muhammadu Buhari regime are littered across the country. Majority of these graves contain the bones of Nigerians slaughtered in their own homes by invading and rampaging AK-47-bearing herdsmen. Some other graves are those of victims of kidnapping who were killed even after ransom had been paid to secure their release. Many forests across the country are filled with shallow graves of those who just "disappeared." There was a point in the life of the outgoing administration that people were killed on a daily basis;

school children, their teachers kidnapped and kidnappers were just taking hostages on the highways and interstate journeys were high risk. Abuja was always in the habit of condemning "in strong terms." Many families lost their means of livelihood. Farmers were chased away from their farms by herdsmen. Women and girls were assaulted at gun point, sometimes before their husbands and fathers as the case may be. Some citizens who visited the country from their base abroad tasted the bitter pill from the highway vampires.

The story of that woman who was kidnapped alongside her husband and daughter is still fresh in the memory of many Nigerians. The horror the woman went through was indescribable. Upon release, she reportedly vowed never to visit Nigeria again in her lifetime. She also warned that her remains at death must not be brought back to the country. Many Nigerians speak in tandem that the erstwhile administration negatively impacted their lives, contrary to the claim by the Presidency that all promises made had been kept and fulfilled. Nigerians, across the country, say it is only he or she that wears the shoe knows

where it pinches, not the cobbler. For many Nigerians, the last eight years can be best described in two words "frustration and hardship". 58-year old Beatrice Ezennaya, a petty trader residing in Bwari said the Buhari administration was perhaps, the worst she has experienced yet. She recounted how her business collapsed in the last six years, due to high operating cost. "I was compulsorily retired in 2017; with the money I was paid, I started a business, provision store. I rented a shop and stocked up the place. In the first year, it was going fine. But gradually, things started going, prices of goods started rising, every time you go to market, prices have gone up. On



top of that, the cost of running the business doubled, light bill and the rent spiked. "The landlady raised the rent by 50 percent, and in other locations it's the same. The house owners are complaining, we are also complaining. I could not cope, I started selling these provisions in front of my house. But low patronage, and the little profit I get I spend to buy foodstuff and essentials. But cost of living is rising, gas, light bill, transportation, everything is on the high side now. It is making living really difficult," she lamented. She decried that Buhari, who promised to lift millions of Nigerians out of poverty ended up pushing more into poverty, and his promise of a more secured Nigeria is yet to be seen. "In 2021, when my daughter was to serve in Bauchi, I had to pay for flight ticket because of how bad the road was," she said.

Clara Udom, a civil servant, also decried the high cost of living due to Buhari's failure to grow the economy. "When Buhari was campaigning, promises upon promises were just falling off his mouth. Things have gotten worse under him. I earn less than N70,000, but transport alone takes not less than N15,000, then you talk of food, rent. I had to look for a roommate because rent has risen to N120,000 from N80,000 where I live. Milk, rice and ordinary bread is out of reach," she said. Udom further said: "At my former work place, I was earning N35,000, that was about four years ago, but it had more value than now. When the job I was doing crashed, getting a new job was so difficult and frustrating. But even, with this job I do, I sell clothes to meet my needs."

A 2022 survey by Africa Polling Institute (API) has found that only 8 percent of Nigerians are happy with the current state of affairs under President Muhammadu Buhari. The result of the survey showed that as of January, about 78 percent of the citizens were not happy with the country's state of affairs; with almost half of that (37 percent) saying they felt 'extremely sad' about the state of the country. The remaining 14 percent of the citizens said they were indifferent to the state of affairs in the country. The API report also said 34 percent of Nigerians noted the inability to meet basic needs as part of their challenges. This may not be unconnected with the present economic realities in the country. About 38 percent mentioned

heightened insecurity as the biggest challenge facing them today, and about 20 percent of Nigerians consider unemployment as their biggest challenge. Other challenges the citizens identified were electricity outages and lack of basic infrastructure.

API, an independent research think-tank, said the survey was conducted to elicit citizens' perception and attitudes on topical issues and trends covering a potpourri of social, economic, political, governance and public-life issues. The project, API added, was part of a series of monthly nationwide public opinion polls, aimed at bridging the gap in primary data, by capturing public opinion and giving citizens an opportunity to lend their voice to public policy discourse, practice, and advocacy.

"To say the least, no government will be like Buhari's administration in terms of suffering the masses, nepotism and failure. Even during late General Sani Abacha's regime, we still had peace of mind, despite the draconian measures then,"

Chijioke Umelahi, a former Abia lawmaker, said. The Abuja-based lawyer is so disappointed with the manner Muhammadu Buhari handled the country, despite being sustained by the country's resources and living large at the expense of the suffering masses. "I was a teenager in the late 80s when people were checking out of the country because of hardship. *Today, and while Buhari is in charge, it has been an exodus, I mean unimaginable number running away for safety and from hunger. I have lost count of my family friends, relations and associates that have left the country in the last eight years of Buhari's administration. "The worst is that his people are suffering more than the rest of the country, with untold hardship, death in the hands of bandits and Boko Haram, yet a once-feared general is in power. "I am in pain. See where the economy is, worst exchange rate in history, worst unemployment, hyperinflation, worst insecurity with the number of deaths nearing the civil war number. We will not forget Buhari in a hurry," he said.*

For Bamidele Apampa, a lecturer at the University of Lagos, life has been hell under Buhari's eight years administration.

"We were happy with the growing middle-class, which was why global companies were coming to Nigeria to reap from their growing purchasing power, we had a growing pool of professionals and brains impacting the economy. *"Today, we have lost everything. The middle-class has vanished with the country now being regarded officially as the capital of poverty in the world. We have lost the good hands to brain-drain. I can count over 25 colleagues that have relocated since Buhari came to power. Our students are regularly being withdrawn by their parents to private schools here or overseas. The usual strike took a deadlier dimension under Buhari.*

"I had a thriving business centre and office solution firm I was running alongside my lecturing job, but all that collapsed during the strike. "I borrowed money from my younger brother who does timber milling business to sustain my family during the strike and many lecturers lost family members because there was no money to get them good treatment, some of their children were withdrawn from private schools because of no money to pay tuition fees," the aggrieved lecturer lamented.

medical treatment such as ear and teeth in another country. Who does that? What stops the government from revitalising its own health sector to attend to varieties of ailments? "Government goes and comes but the people are always there to make their choices. We made ours eight years ago, believing in the mantra of 'change'. *Today, where is the change? Where are the jobs they promised? What is the state of our naira as against the pledge they made to stable the currency? How is the education sector? What is the situation of our security?" Ogbemudia queried.* "We have become a laughing stock to global community. I really hope the new administration can redeem our image and put us on a successful path," he added.

*Ifeyinwa Ifediegwu, an Asaba resident and businesswoman, said: "The eight-year of Muhammadu Buhari's reign has taught me a harrowing experience and I thank God it 'is over now. It's happy survival to me and my family and to all Nigerians who are alive to see the end of Buhari administration. May we never experience an administration such as this again in the history of our nation!"*



Sylvanus Nwafor, a trader, congratulated Nigerians for patiently striving to survive the present administration, saying that Africa's most populous country has further taken a backward step. "Eight years ago, jubilation rocked the streets of Nigeria with high hopes that governance would take a new dimension in favour of the people. But nothing has changed for the better; instead our economy, health, security, among other key sectors have taken a worse dimension.

*"Surviving this eight-year administration is a no-small feat for anyone considering what we have been through all these years. We will never forget what this present government did to us, citizens, and the only thing I can say is that we have suffered and thank God we scaled through but this mark will remain indelible in our lives," Nwafor said.*

Joseph Ogbemudia, a medical doctor, said the Buhari-led administration did not live up to expectations, noting that no Nigerian can attest to any meaningful development done by the out-going administration. "Just imagine a president going outside the shores of the country he presides over to get

Speaking in an interview with BusinessDay, Sunday, Ifediegwu said: "Buhari made things extremely difficult for Nigerians. His ill-thought-out policies birthed many Yahoo-Yahoo and Yahoo plus boys, some are already dead, some imprisoned and some are walking corpses. They took to the crimes due to joblessness. The closure of borders made things worse for our people and as a result, they took to crimes. It bleeds the heart what transpired these past years." Ifediegwu further said: "Cost of foodstuff skyrocketed as a result of border closure and ban on several items. Buhari said the essence of such ban and closure was to encourage local producers amongst other things. But he forgot that Nigerians depend on foreign countries in terms of technology. For you to do commercial agriculture, you need modern farming implements and this equipment are not produced in Nigeria. Big-time farmers find it difficult to operate because of lack of equipment and necessary farm inputs. So, when you don't produce, how would you have food security as a nation not to talk of exporting? So, the aim of the ban and border closure was defeated and no sector of the economy was spared. "Personally, as an entrepreneur, I've experienced huge



setbacks in my business. I used to deal on just one item (Ghana Must Go bags) and make huge sums of money but Buhari's policies banned such. I had to become a general merchandise (varieties) entrepreneur in order to survive. Even landlords took advantage of the ugly situation in the increase their rents outrageously. You struggle to pay house rent and at the same time pay shop rent, school fees and other bills. Thank God that I'm still in business and my family survives on it. Indeed, we deserve certificate of survival for making it all through Buhari's harrowing eight years in office. "I advise the incoming president of Nigeria to review all the policies that do not have human face, which Buhari imposed on Nigerians."

Idi Shadrach, who lives in Yola, Adamawa State, *said that the past eight years have been a turbulent period in the history of Nigeria, especially for people who experienced different regimes from the 1990s. According to her, "this is so because life has been tough; there's nothing that actually works for the common man, ranging from the prices of food items, the cost of transportation, education and the list is endless." He further said that everything about Nigeria has been practically difficult. "Hardship has multiplied ten times; the policies of government have not favoured the common man on the street," he said. Buhari's government will go down into history as one government that has put Nigeria into a terrible hardship.*

Talking about policies that mortgaged the future of this nation, Shadrach mentioned the excessive borrowing that did not meet

with infrastructure or improve the standard of living of citizens. "As a matter of fact, I don't envy anyone that will take over this government because of the mess that's on ground," he said. He also described what has happened to Nigerians in the last eight years as scam.

*"The situation became so bad that you could hear people say 'bring back our corruption'. It sounds funny but it's the plain truth because if under a corrupt country I as a citizen could afford three square meals but under a supposedly honest government it became a war for me to eat once a day, then something is wrong; where's the justification for saying you are fighting corruption?"*

*"The change they kept chanting is just a mere propaganda; they want to shift their responsibility to the common man. When they were campaigning, they came as a solution but when they came on board, they pushed the responsibility on the common man and play the blame game on the past government. "If we happen to see another administration like that of the past eight years, am afraid this country will crumble," he said.*

Shem WoyoPwa, another Yola resident, said that surviving eight years of the Buhari administration was a miracle. "It was not easy at all because it was a survival of the fittest and a horrible voyage where getting basic needs such as food was a serious challenge. For me, this is the most horrible administration we have ever witnessed as a nation "For the past eight years, the common man in Nigeria has been in critical situation. For instance, the educational sector especially the universities were crippled, for almost eight years they were perpetually on strike," he said.

*He further said: "The health sector too has had its own share being in devastating state. It is nothing to write home about due to lack of standard health facilities. "The past eight years recorded an avalanche of scandals of high-level corruption that were jettisoned by the EFCC; in other words, nothing was done to revamp the economy, and there were political and social crises. It was a terrible mess that Nigerians found themselves."*

Victor Kutu, who lives in Ilorin, said: "The regime of President Buhari has been fire. It has not been easy for my family, my loved ones and me personally. I don't even know how my life is

up till now I am just coping. Police embarrassment, you have to pretend for what you are not just to survive. "If you are youth, you and having a hair style that is not appropriate you are a criminal. I am an artist but I can't feel free any more, I can't dress as real artist that I am, just to mingle with others. During former president Jonathan administration, although he did not do well but I never complained during, I was taking care of myself and didn't even have cause to ask my mama or papa for money but this time around, I even called my junior sister for help; you can imagine."

Also, Nwite Michael Izuchukwu, submitted that, 'Nigeria has never been the same. "I want to be sincere; the government's promise of change has been in negative way. The leadership under Mr. Muhammadu Buhari is not good. It is not favourable to me particularly and I believe some other people have similar feelings," he said.

Obinna Nwagbara, executive director, Youth and Students Advocates for Good Governance (YSAD), a civil society organisation (CSO), said that Buhari's eight years in office, as President of Nigeria, can best be described as an era of deceit, parochialism, waste and lack of patriotism and direction. According to him, "Buhari deceived most of us with his fake integrity posture; a no-nonsense retired army general who came to fight corruption, insecurity and build the economy "In his fight against corruption, I remember vividly how Buhari wanted the allegation of fraudulent activities brought against Babachir Lawal, his ally and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, to die a natural death. It took many months of Buhari keeping quiet over the revelation that Kemi Adeosun, former Minister of Finance, did not participate in the compulsory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC).

"Buhari spoilt his fight against corruption with the pardon he granted Joshua Dariye, former Governor of Plateau State and Jolly Nyame, former Taraba State Governor, the two convicted ex-governors. "Buhari promised to fix the power sector and

also the refineries and in 8 years, the problems are still there. It's not possible to address security challenges in the country without genuinely reforming the Nigeria Police, ENDSARS provided an opportunity for him to reform the police, but he failed to do so. "The senseless and cashless policy of Buhari and Godwin Emefiele, the country's Central Bank Governor, is a pointer to how nonchalant Buhari is as a President. "With that policy, he further destroyed the economy he promised to build. With what we passed through during the cash crunch." He continued, "Buhari was parochial in his appointments. For a heterogeneous society like ours, it's a no, no. Borrowing for consumption, thus leaving a huge debt burden for the country. It's not as though he didn't do anything right at all, but his failures will continue to overshadow whatever thing he did well."

Chijioke Ogbodo, a media consultant, described the eight years of Muhammadu Buhari's administration, as a monumental disaster in Nigeria's history of existence. "I thought that the regime that preceded his was corrupt, but I was totally wrong. 2015 to 2023 redefined corruption as never before witnessed in the country. Nepotism was at its highest, while debt profile of the country is at its highest ever," he said.

For Kingsley Umunna, a politician and businessman, the survival of an average Nigerian through the PMB administration may look as an act of God but I look at it as an act of readjustment- from a life of wasteful management to that of prudence. "In my personal capacity, the first adjustment was to reorder my priorities in terms of family consumption pattern to need not want in the family consumption pattern to cut waste. "As the economy continued to bite, consumption pattern changed from the costly foreign goods to local and cheaper goods; effort was made to consider price as a factor and goods were procured from areas of lower cost; a factor not considered in the past. "A more rational management of household economics was employed to reduce cost of



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#### h o u s e h o l d m a n a g e m e n t .

In all the harsh economic experience during the period under review was of great benefit because it helped to reset the mind set of many Nigerians for self-employment as a means of survival. The gains of unleashing the ingenuity of Nigerians was marked by insecurity and corruption of officials in charge of government empowerment programmes to help the masses. "Thinking outside the box on how to make a living was the plank of our survival and it is a positive thing for our economy as before these past few years, youths were not thinking of farming or any other trade other than white collar job as a means of survival," he said.

Yakubu Ibrahim, a graduate-turned Keke operator, disclosed that life at a stage became meaningless but he looked at himself and remembered that it was a fight he must fight to keep his family going. "I did many odd jobs to survive; I sold second hand clothes, opened Point of Sales (popularly known as PoS) shop to make sure there is bread on the table. "When the price of second hand clothes rose, I switched to Keke that am doing now, and then the price of repairing it is another big problem starting from the tyres to the parts; the levies both from federal, state, and local governments is another problem you can't sweep under the carpet. "In short, it is only the grace of God that is keeping Nigerians; Buhari has failed Nigerians and he pretended as if nothing has happened. The suffering the Buhari administration brought will not be forgotten in a hurry," Ibrahim said.

Abdulasheed Akintola, a business man, said he had to adjust to the economic realities and situation of the country in the last eight years. He said he could not secure new businesses to survive, and that at a point thing were though he couldn't eat three square meals with his family as well as not been able to pay school fees of his children. According to him, "The insecurity hampered food security which resulted in inflation. So, prices of things went up astronomically and continues to go up every day. So, we had to adjust at home, by taking two meals a day or less." He also said that the recent cash crunch and cashless policy dealt a big blow to Nigeria's economy with large, big, and small businesses counting their losses and this affected him and many Nigerians also. On his part, Babatunde Alao, an engineer, who described the outgoing government as worse, attributed his family's survival to the handiwork of

God. "It is during this government that many died as a result of Boko Haram attacks, kidnappings, armed robbery. There were always promises from the Federal Government to tackle them, but nothing tangible was done. You can see some committing suicide as a result of the situation in the country," Alao said.

Mercy Udo, a political economist and current affairs analyst, said despite the huge resources invested in agriculture, and the increase in revenue generation, the Muhammadu Buhari/Yemi Osinbajo administration could not salvage the state of the economy as many Nigerians had expected. Udo observed that many of the administration's economic policies were elite-oriented, not pro-poor economic development policy. She said the harsh economic situation affected her financially, stressing that cost of living is becoming unbearable. "Personally, I am disappointed in Muhammadu Buhari administration, just like many other Nigerians are. "But the toughest period for me was the naira redesign policy era, where cash was scarce. I have a friend whose business was affected. "The news was everywhere, where people's businesses slowed down or closed during those few months," she said.

Folarin Ogunwale, a banker, said Muhammadu Buhari's eight years in office was a waste for him and the country. He said the last eight years have been the most difficult part of his life so far, stressing that God should never give the country such administration again. "The last eight years has not been what I expected; I just think we could have done better but rather we retrogressed as a nation. "I spent three years at home after graduation before I could get something doing. "I finished NYSC during the recession period in 2016 and it was tough. I finally got a job through a friend's assistance, but the salary is small. "It was tough initially, but thank God. Cost of living is high, because of inflation; you spend most of the little salary on food and transport, with little left for saving. "I think just like most Nigerians; I thank God that we survive to tell the story of a wicked, heartless, clueless and insensitive administration of Buhari. It was indeed hell for some of us. My prayer to God is that may another Buhari never happen to Nigeria again.

***Obinna Emelike, Iniobong Ieok (Lagos); Churchill Okoro, (Benin); Mercy Enoch (Asaba); Happy Zarokada (Yola); Sikirat Shehu (Ilorin); Godsgift Onyedinefu (Abuja), Remi Feyisipo (Ibadan), and Victoria Nnakaike (Lokoja)***

# Buhari's Eight years of Governance Disaster

*By Kiikpoye K. Aaron*

With the exception of the first and last election cycles, President Buhari's name was a regular feature on Nigeria's presidential ballot in her current experiment with electoral democracy. Needless to add, he was a serial failure until 2015 when a convergence of forces, for all the wrong reasons, threw him up as Nigeria's President. His desire to be President was pursued with such consuming passion that his lacrimal glands broke loose when defeat was imminent in the 2011 election. Yes, a retired Army General openly and uncontrollably wept like a peevish schoolboy. He wept for a nation that could not see the messiah in him. Had Buhari died in 2011 or had he withdrawn from further participation in politics, the most predictable popular epithet about him in death would have been 'the best President Nigeria never had.' Fate, however, played a cruel trick on him by giving him a chance to be President. Today, with the exception of a few, related to him by blood, who benefit from his eight years of governance disaster, the popular opinion of Buhari is inescapably 'the worst President Nigeria ever had.'

There were two reasons why President Buhari would have had an undeserved favourable verdict of history had he not become Nigeria's president. First, his short-lived stint as Nigeria's Head of State in the dark days of military authoritarianism and the mantra of discipline and national rebirth that was both the symbol and touchstone of his regime left memories of a Spartan disciplinarian, whose avowed determination to restore badly needed discipline in national life was truncated. On further scrutiny, the real disciplinarian, and one committed to national rebirth was his deputy, Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon, whose no nonsense mien and forthrightness of character provided the convenient shadow that hid Mr Buhari's weaknesses.

Second, the prevailing national statistics in 2011 when he wept were less than salutary. A few, among a multitude of grim statistics would help make the point. The nation's debt profile was discomfiting: Gross External Debt stood at \$9.69 billion while Gross Domestic Debt was \$22.8 billion, up from \$13.6 billion in 2006. Public debt was 18.4 per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The country's foreign reserves, which stood at \$72 billion in 2007, had plummeted to \$33 billion. Excess Crude Oil Account, funds set aside for rainy days, valued at \$22 billion in 2007 was, by 2010 left with a paltry \$4 billion. On top of these, reports of corruption in high places were rife and President Jonathan's lackluster response to allegations of corruption did not help matters. Importantly, a better part of Borno State in the North East was under the control of Boko Haram, the Islamic terrorist group that had earlier taken hostage over 270 secondary school girls. Therefore, a disciplinarian, indeed a messiah was what was needed to save the country from further drift.



On assumption of duty as President in 2015, little had changed in the national statistics to inspire much hope. The exchange rate of the Naira averaged N199 to a U.S. dollar. Debt to GDP ratio was about 13.1 per cent and the corruption-ridden fuel subsidy was N316.70 billion (\$1.62 billion). Not only that, the four state-owned refineries were either producing far below installed capacity or in outright comatose state. Significantly, Nigeria was ranked the 136th most corrupt country with a score of 26 on the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. These facts gave Nigerians little comfort. They desired a change. Mr Buhari and his party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) interpreted the popular mood quite appropriately and opportunistically cashed in on the change mantra in its campaign. A sampler of his plethora of campaign promises will aid my analysis. On national security, he told Nigerians he was the solution. Given his pedigree as a retired Army General, the believability quotient of his promise to end insecurity in quick time was one only a few could doubt. On the dysfunctional national refineries, he offered the badly needed hope of revitalising and putting them on the path of optimal production. Importantly, he promised massive job creation and social welfare schemes, including feeding Nigeria's school children in public schools with one quality meal a day. The grossly devalued Naira would not only be stabilised but would be made to be as strong as the U.S. Dollar! Further, the fight against corruption would be executed with renewed

vigour and public officials would be banned from state-funded medical trips abroad. Importantly, he promised to make the electoral management body truly independent to ensure electoral integrity. Above all, Nigerians were told to expect an economic growth rate of between 10-12 per cent, making the country the fastest growing economy in the world.

Now that Mr Buhari's tenure has run full circle, it has become most appropriate to assess his performance. In doing so, a better way to proceed is to rely on some important national statistics from when he took the oath of office and now. Let me begin with what seems like an obsession for him: anti-corruption crusade. By the end of 2022, Nigeria was ranked 150th of the most corrupt nations on earth, away from 136th ranking that he inherited. At the beginning of his first term in office, there was the semblance of a re-invigorated anti-corruption crusade. On close scrutiny, underneath this veneer of anti-graft crusade was a one-sided fight, targeted at Mr Buhari's personal enemies and looters of the national treasury, who belong to the opposition party.

While Nigerians were beginning to suspect that the anti-corruption crusade was actuated by less noble values, every element of suspicion was laid to rest when the then national chairman of the ruling party, Adams Oshiomole, in a public forum, openly and unashamedly called on corrupt politicians to join the APC and have their 'sins forgiven.' So, in one-word, anti-corruption crusade was a byword for 'political soul-winning', of converting those who looted the national treasury under President Jonathan's Peoples Democratic Party to APC. The consequence is that corruption has metastasized under Buhari's watch.

I will mention a few, for the obvious reason that space would not allow any attempt at chronicling the unspeakable cases of malfeasance under President Buhari. First, during COVID-19, President Buhari curiously announced that the school Feeding Programme would continue in spite of the lockdown. The result was that N2.67 billion was stolen in the name of feeding children in Federal schools at a time when there was no school in the country. That apart, fuel subsidy bill, which Buhari condemned during campaign as a conduit for siphoning public money, has increased in volume. In the 2023 budget, a whopping sum of N3.36 trillion is allocated for fuel subsidy bills for the first six months of the year. Government functionaries, who have bled the public treasury in billions, pay paltry sums as plea bargain and walk free in the land. Certainly, corruption stinks in Buhari's Nigeria.

On the economic front, the verdict is no less damning. Though he made stabilisation of the Naira a campaign issue, the exchange rate of N199 to a Dollar when Mr Buhari took over from Dr Jonathan in 2015 is one Nigerians now look back with nostalgia as the naira has grossly devalued, exchanging between N735 to N800 to a dollar. If current trends are unchecked, Nigeria may be heading the way of Zimbabwe under Mugabe where a wheelbarrow load of the Zim dollar was required to buy a loaf of bread. The inflation rate has hit the roofs at 22.04 per cent, up from 9.01 per cent

when he assumed office. The Excess Crude Account is in tatters with a meagre \$473,754.57. A huge national debt burden, precipitously close to N77 trillion, is serviced with more than 80 per cent of the nation's income. At a debt to GDP ratio of 38 per cent as at the end of 2022, President Buhari has borrowed more than any former Nigerian President, living or dead. Painfully, the loans, taken in the name of revitalisation of critical national infrastructure, largely finances corruption, consumption, waste and little infrastructure. Most roads in Nigeria are hardly passable.

His management of the economy has been characterised by unpardonable missteps, resulting in unspeakable pain for citizens. Take the currency redesign for instance, an otherwise routine function of government. What was meant to be an exchange of the old notes with new ones amounted to naira 'confiscation' as the new notes were never available after depositing the old notes. In the circumstances, Nigerians had to buy the naira at prohibitively expensive rates. One wonders how many people may have been driven deeper into poverty for a country already rated under Buhari as the poverty capital of the world. Truly, in Buhari's Nigeria, everything is rocket science.

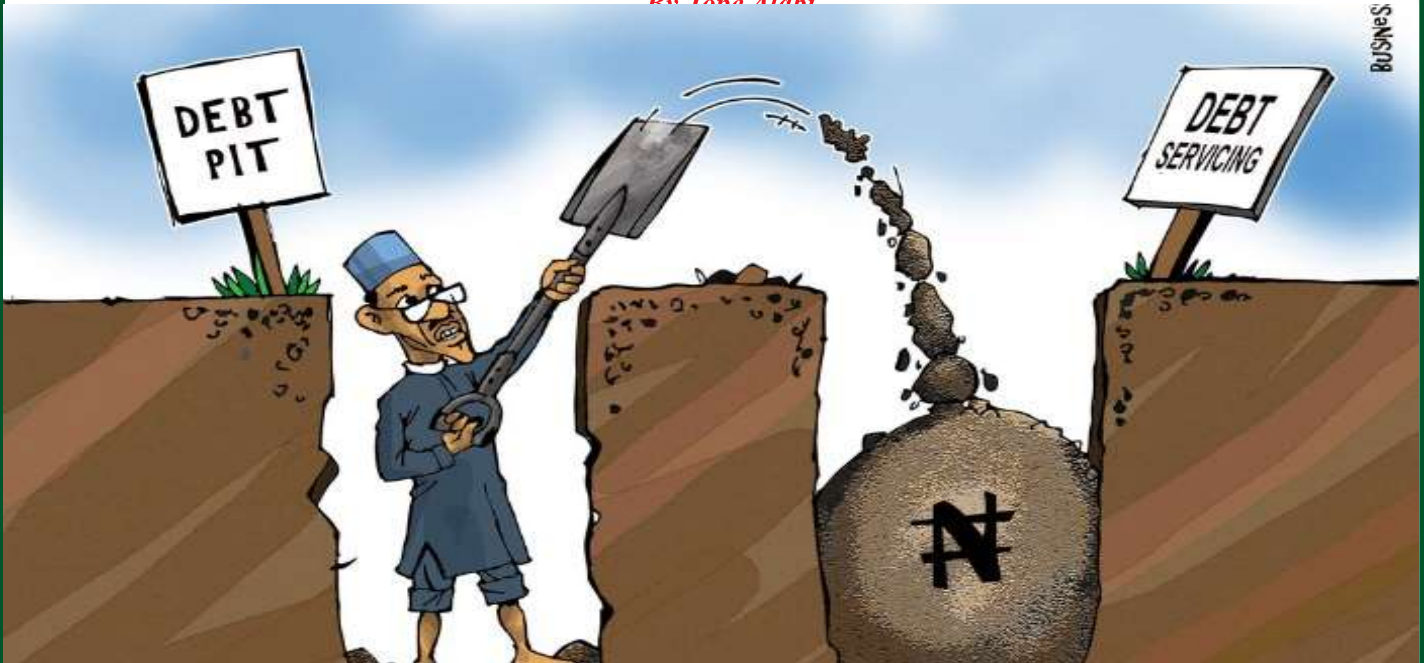
Away from poor handling of the economy, President Buhari's mismanagement of diversity is legendary. The Federal Character Principle, some sort of affirmative action policy enshrined in the Constitution to ensure that no ethnic group feels left behind, has been thrown overboard since Buhari became president. Important positions in government are filled by nephews, nieces, cousins and in-laws. With nepotism and cronyism elevated to a high art under President Buhari, it would take extreme measures of large-heartedness on the part of the next president to have respect for the Federal Character Principle anymore. This does not bode well for diversity management in a country that is deeply divided on a variety of fault lines.

Significantly, national security has become an even more daunting challenge than he met it. Today, it is not just Borno State that is home to Boko Haram; terrorists and bandits run riot in many parts of the country, rendering life more precarious than ever before. At some point, one wonders if anyone is in charge here.

In the face of the gross ineptitude that typifies this administration, it would appear that Nigerians decided to toe the line of enduring him out and invested their hopes in a post-Buhari era. His promise of credible election, the reform of the Electoral Act and assurances by the electoral umpire was enough fillip for hope. Painfully, under President Buhari's watch, this hope, too, has been betrayed, as the election is generally regarded as the worst the country has ever known. Clearly, Mr Buhari's Aso Rock odyssey would, for long, be remembered for what it is: eight years of governance disaster.

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*BUHARI'S 8 YEARS' REPORT***Huge Debt, High Inflation,  
Low Growth, By BudgIT***By Tony Akubi*

**B**udgIT, has bemoaned the outgoing President Muhammadu Buhari's eight-year rule, lamenting that his reign plunged the country into high debt, increasing inflation and low growth. In a report titled 'The Economic Legacy of the Buhari Administration' the organisation stated that the Buhari regime messed up the nation's economy. It said, "According to the Budget Office, between 2016 and 2022, the Buhari government raised total revenues of N26.67tn and expended N60.64tn, leaving a deficit of N33.97tn. "The gaping hole was financed with FG domestic debt, which rose from N8.84tn as of December 2015 to N44.91tn as of June 2023, while external debt rose from \$7.35bn in December 2015 to \$37.2bn in June 2023.

"It continued to apply blunt tools by raising the Monetary Policy Rate from 12.5% in 2015 to 18% in April 2023. This did not taper the inflation rate, which has risen to 22.5%, while food inflation galloped to 24% as of April 2023. "Food inflation has continued to rise despite over N800bn spent by the Central Bank on the Anchor Borrowers' Program, which has been touted to have repayment challenges."

On employment in the country, the group also said; "Unemployment rose from 10.4% in 2015 to 33.4% in 2020 under President Buhari's watch as the clumsy exchange rate management—with a wide difference between the official and parallel market rates—made it difficult for businesses to thrive."

"Buhari also prevaricated on the subsidy removal, which his administration spent at least N10tn to service. While Buhari's government 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.

"While his administration wound up, it had the chance to seize another round of oil windfall with skyrocketing oil prices reaching \$114 per barrel (April 2022) but with little incentive to do so, as CBN "printing presses" continued to flood the system with liquidity. "Nigeria's oil production slipped below one million barrels per day at a time when oil economies skyrocketed to an unprecedented fortune. The attendant effect is that the non-oil share of public revenues grew rapidly from 44.6% in 2015 to 59.4% in 2022. "However, Nigeria's spending was untargeted as several BudgIT analyses continued to show that the Nigerian budget performing below par, with agencies spending public funds without the mandate to do so, foreclosing any chances of fiscal consolidation."

"This excludes support provided by the Central Bank amounting to N25tn. Ultimately, President Buhari moved Nigeria's debt profile from N42tn to N77tn. This has had attendant effects on debt servicing, which rose from N1.06tn in 2015 to N5.24tn as of 2022. In fact, under President Buhari's administration, the debt-service-to-revenue ratio grew from 29% to 96%."

On the country's apex bank and its monetary policies which heightened people's hardship, the group said; "During the administration of President Buhari, the Central Bank extended beyond its monetary policy remit, having a firm grip on fiscal policy with its outsized role.

"CBN policies increased the money supply from N18tn in 2015 to N55tn in 2023. While it provided unrestrained liquidity to the Federal Government, the apex bank abandoned its primary mandate of price stability.

# Buhari's Unending Legacies of Killings, 85trillion Debt, 22% Inflation Rate, Etc

By Charles Kumolu

It may be wrong to assume President Muhammadu Buhari's legacy would be a subject of controversy. No, it won't be like the bequest of many leaders, who had superintended over the affairs of nations for years. That might be a break from tradition as the legacies of national leaders have always been subjects of critical argument for analysts and scholars. In Nigeria, to date, the Yakubu Gowon, Ibrahim Babangida, Olusegun Obasanjo, Umar Yar'Adua and even Murtala Mohammed years are often issues of robust debate, especially on national development, unity and growth. But it may not be so in the case of Buhari.

In matching his promise with performance, historians and analysts may have an easy consensus on many aspects of his scorecard. Put differently, it's unlikely the President's record would be open to more than one interpretation. Buhari, who, in his inaugural address in 2015, had said, "Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted national responsibility to us. We must not succumb to hopelessness and defeatism. We can fix our problems," is leaving behind an inheritance fraught with many puzzles.

As his tenure ends, the nation Buhari leaves behind is in sharp contrast with Nigeria he inherited from former President Goodluck Jonathan in 2015. Observers believe Buhari's is a more divided, unsettled and impoverished Nigeria. The President, who had premised his campaign on security, economy and anti-corruption, is believed to have failed on the promises eight years after. He didn't resolve Nigeria's age-long socio-economic challenges, but under his watch, the nation witnessed record-breaking retrogression on several Human Development Indices, HDI. His staunch supporters and the President himself had severally scored the administration high, but statistics say something different on the economy, security, anti-corruption, infrastructure and national unity among others.

**ECONOMY: From 9% inflation to 22%**  
At the time Buhari came to power on May 29, 2015, Nigeria's economy wasn't the best of it as crude oil earnings had

plummeted. A barrel of oil sold at \$65 against the \$100 it attained under the Jonathan administration. The country's GDP was \$493.3 billion but it declined to \$440.8 billion in 2021. Growth rate in 2022 stood at 3.10 per cent, from the 3.40 per cent recorded in 2021. On Foreign Direct Investment, FDI, at the time Buhari came to power, Nigeria had attracted \$98 billion in the previous administration, but got \$89.4 billion in Buhari's eight-year reign, according to data from Nairametrix. A breakdown showed that of the \$89.4 billion inflow, \$22.1 billion came from equity investments while \$67.3 billion was debt-linked securities and repayable loans. Before his election, the President had boasted that the Naira would have equal value with US dollar. But under his watch, the exchange rate rose from N197 at the official rate to N745 at the parallel market in 2023. Within the period under review, foreign reserves rose from \$29.59 billion in 2015 to \$35.31 billion as of April 20, 2023. The administration before Buhari had 6.07 per cent growth in four years, but the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, NBS, said the economy grew by an average of 1.40 per cent under this regime. When the President took over from Jonathan, Nigeria's had single-digit inflation, which stood at nine percent. But as of December 2022, the NBS put the rate at 21.34 per cent. Inflation, which led to daily increases in the prices of goods and services, resulted in the Naira losing more than half its value. In 2015, a bag of rice was sold at N8,000 while a litre of petrol was N87. As of May 22, 2023, a bag of rice sold for N40,000 while a litre of fuel is more than N200. A loaf of bread, which sold for N200, now goes for N1,000. As of April 2023, the country's Consumer Price



Index, CPI, for food stood at 640.0, compared to 176.3 points it was in May 2015. Specifically, the index gauges the average fluctuation in prices of major food items.

The World Bank, in its 2022 Nigeria public finance review report, titled, 'A Better Future for All Nigerians', said Nigeria's development stagnated since 2015. "Nigeria's development progress has stagnated. Between 2001 and 2014, Nigeria was a rising star in West Africa, with an average growth rate of seven per cent per year, and it ranked among the top 15 fastest-growing economies in the world", the Bank noted. "However, this trend ended abruptly in 2015, as oil prices fell, the security situation deteriorated, macroeconomic reforms were reversed, and economic policies became increasingly unpredictable".

On power generation, as of 2015, Nigeria was generating 4,949 megawatts, but at press time, it had dropped to 2,409.50 megawatts. According to the Association of Power Generation Companies, the national grid collapsed 98 times under Buhari's watch. It observed that total power generation capacity loss in the energy sector rose to N1.76tn, between 2015 and 2022. Upon assumption of office, Buhari inherited a debt profile of approximately \$10.32 billion in 2015, but he is leaving behind total debts of about N77 trillion. The administration of ex-President Obasanjo government inherited \$28 billion as foreign debt in 1999. When it left in 2007, it was \$2.11 billion after successfully securing a write-off by the London and Paris Club debts. The Yar'adua/Jonathan government added \$1.39 billion to what they inherited while the Jonathan government incurred an additional \$3.8 billion

As of May 29, 2015, Boko Haram terrorists posed a major security challenge to the nation. They held sway in some territories and at the same time could commit large-scale atrocities. The Buhari administration at some point succeeded in degrading the group's capacity to commit mass murder beyond Borno State. Sunday Vanguard recalls that upon assumption of office, the President had moved the military command centre to Maiduguri in Borno State, through the establishment of the Command and Control Centre, MCCC, in the state. The aim was to effectively fight the Boko Haram insurgency. Irrespective of the successes recorded, the sect remains a potent threat. However, just like the economy, security is one area many believe Buhari performed woefully. While Boko Haram was the only major threat at the time he came on board, Nigeria witnessed the birth of other terrorist groups. The activities of Ansaru terrorists, herdsmen, bandits, kidnappers and Unknown Gunmen, UGM, have led to the death of thousands under Buhari's watch. Majority are still unconvinced his handling of herdsmen and bandits' menace made the country more unsafe than he met it. In fact, several reports stated that Nigeria had more deaths under Buhari's administration than in previous civilian regimes since 1999. Data gleaned from Nigeria Security Tracker, NST, showed that no fewer than 54, 948,000 needless deaths were recorded as of May last year. A breakdown showed that an average of 21 people was killed daily as of 2022. In his first four years alone, 25,794 people were reportedly killed in various attacks, according

to another report by Premium Times. In the first quarter of this year alone, Nigeria Mourn, a violent incident tracking organization, reported that no fewer than 1,151 civilians and 79 security operatives were killed. The latest Global Terrorism Index, GTI, report showed that Nigeria moved to 8th position from fourth position in 2022.

One of the major factors that made Buhari's 2015 victory possible was the notion that he would be tough on corruption. This was largely informed by the incorruptible image people attributed to him given his record as military Head of State. Since the Jonathan administration was perceived as weak on anti-corruption, a lot was expected from Buhari in that space. Nigeria had ranked 136th out of 168 countries in the 2015 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index. Eight years later, analysts feel he hasn't delivered on his promise of fighting corruption. In his two terms, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, has yet to record high-profile convictions while many cases against former governors and ministers are pending before the commission.

In the 2022 annual Corruption Perception Index, Nigeria still ranked among the most corrupt nations. The nation ranked 150th out of 180 countries. Nonetheless, there have been a few bright spots in the anti-graft war as the EFCC had secured some forfeiture to the Federal Government. The nation has also witnessed the repatriation of money funds stashed overseas. Upon assumption of office, the President strengthened the Treasury Single Account and the IPPIS to ensure accountability in the remittance of public funds.

Buhari also spearheaded the amendment of the Asset Management Corporation Act in 2019 and 2021. The aim was to streamline asset recovery and disposal, leading to the Proceeds of Crime, Recovery and Management Act 2022. There were also Executive Orders to improve the ease of doing business at the nation's seaports.

In 2022, the EFCC said it recorded 3,785 convictions, describing it as the highest since its inception. The commission was said to have secured 103 in 2015, 195 in 2016, 312 in 2018 and 1,280 in 2019. In 2020, 976 were secured while it was 2,220 in 2021. The summary of the figure showed that 8,871 convictions were recorded under B u h a r i ' s w a t c h .

In 2015, EFCC recorded a total of 103 convictions, according to the EFCC. In 2016, the first full year of Buhari's government, 195 convictions were recorded. The number increased to 312 in 2018, and 1, 280 in 2019. The figure, however, decreased significantly to 976 convictions in 2020 and increased to 2, 220 in 2021. Irrespective of these, several events and actions haven't helped Buhari's anti-corruption record in eight years. Prominent among them is the fact that several public office holders, who have cases at the EFCC, saw their trials being discontinued or paused the moment they defect to the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC.

# President Buhari: The end of a disastrous eight years

*What evidence do we have that he will be a positive force for Nigeria?  
Many see only evidence to the contrary and an abundance of it*

*By Osita Chidoka*

In 2015, a day before the election that brought President Buhari to office, I made a last-ditch effort to warn Nigerians about the impending doom of electing a leader whose leadership credentials were uninspiring and riddled with evidence of failure. I published "The Disastrous African Big Man" on March 28, 2015, before the 2015 elections. The article generated virulent attacks from the All Progressives Congress (APC) mob, whose defining quality was an inability to reason. In the article, I argued that Gen. Buhari did not possess the intellect, energy, and managerial capacity to lead a modern, large, and complex enterprise that Nigeria had become. In the 2015 article, I wrote the following: "Dictators in general, and Buhari in particular, lack the economic acumen and qualities of leadership necessary for growth, development, and prosperity for the Nigerian people." "What evidence do we have that he will be a positive force for Nigeria? Many see only evidence to the contrary and an abundance of it."

"During the 16 years of military rule (from 1983 to 1999), Nigeria's GDP per capita actually dropped from \$444 to \$344. Under Buhari's disastrous economic management, in the first 18 months we saw it drop from \$444 to \$344 in 18 months. Under PDP's democratic rule, from 1999-2014, we've seen a GDP rise exponentially – from \$299, where the military left it, to \$3,005."

These words attracted umbrage from the APC mob, mobilised to hound President Jonathan out of office and enthrone Nigeria's most clueless and incompetent President. Most of my friends and benefactors rallied behind President Buhari; some reached out to me and argued that I should soft pedal and jump ship. Some others took offence and held grudges against me that have lasted to this day. The vicious and visceral attack on me after the article did not deter my conviction that Gen Buhari would be an unmitigated disaster for Nigeria. Even then, I could not imagine this proportion of failure. I am happy that my friends who supported President Buhari now hide their heads in shame or have become bitter critics. I was not here during the Nigeria–Biafra civil war, but discussions with those present and review of written accounts point to the glaring fact that Nigeria was safer, more united, and more prosperous than under President Buhari. Many on the Nigerian side travelled freely from Lagos to Kaduna by road and rail, schools were open, farmers cultivated their farms without fear, and the economy was stable without massive devaluation of currency or galloping inflation. Even in Biafra, where the war took its toll and created



unprecedented misery, the people were safe except for the ruthless air raids and the blockade-instigated starvation. They were safe from kidnapping and marauding invaders in their farmlands and spared the tragedy of an incompetent state. They refined their oil, maintained their currency, serviced their equipment, and built armaments that kept the war efforts alive for over three years. At that time, soldiers who surrendered were treated with dignity, and the war ended with a sense of brothers reunited. Compared to President Buhari's Nigeria, the gruesome war period was a safer and more united period.

As President Buhari leaves office tomorrow, he bequeaths to Nigerians a dysfunctional country. The civil service, security agencies, and the entire governance institutions are at their most incompetent and ethnically divided zenith. For a man with pro-people pretensions, it is scandalous that no merit-based recruitment took place in the past eight years. The Buhari government filled the key

***President Buhari would be remembered as the worst ruler Nigeria ever had. He is a man who represented nothing, inspired division, reversed Nigeria's march to progress and nationhood, destroyed our economic potential, oversaw the demise of our security architecture through unmasked ethnicity, worked hard to reduce Nigerians to their primordial ethnic instincts, and instilled a culture of mediocrity in our country. He squandered his charismatic appeal and national trust due to his inability to rise above his nativist instincts.***

and rich government parastatals with the sons and daughters of regime members and friends.

The National Assembly should conduct a hearing and release the names of recruits and state of origin in the past eight years across all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. Even an occupying enemy force would have dealt more mercifully with Nigerians.

President Buhari's nativist and corrupt government must be dismantled, and new laws passed to give teeth to the provisions of national agreements like the federal character principle and due process in government contracting. Under President Buhari, the Bureau for Public Procurement became a comatose and ineffectual organisation leading to massive looting of public funds through an opaque contracting process.

President Buhari destroyed every fibre of our national consensus, destroyed our pride of place in the comity of nations, damaged our collective desire to live in peace within our diversity, and reversed the economic progress of the democratic era. President Buhari was simply a disaster of unimaginable proportions.

In 2019, I published the sequel to the 2015 essay. The fifth paragraph of "The Death of the African Big Man II" read: "On the economy, only a liar would claim that Nigeria's economy has fared well under Buhari. His gross inability to understand basic economics is epic and uncommon. How can one explain that every time Buhari touches Nigeria's economy it turns to dust? This anti-Midas touch was in full effect from 1983 to 1985 and again from 2015 to date. The economy Buhari inherited in 2015 had been growing at an average of 7 percent for over a decade. It was globally acclaimed as part of the MINT countries, a club of emerging global economic giants. Yet, in less than one year, Buhari mismanaged the economy into a recession as he did in 1983."

President Buhari's anti-Midas touch is now in full effect. He touched Nigeria's economy and turned it to dust, just as he did as a Military Dictator. As of 2014, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita was \$3,021. Today, after a consistent decline over the past eight years, our GDP per capita stands at \$2,066 as of early 2022.

*President Buhari would be remembered as the worst ruler*

*Nigeria ever had. He is a man who represented nothing, inspired division, reversed Nigeria's march to progress and nationhood, destroyed our economic potential, oversaw the demise of our security architecture through unmasked ethnicity, worked hard to reduce Nigerians to their primordial ethnic instincts, and instilled a culture of mediocrity in our country. He squandered his charismatic appeal and national trust due to his inability to rise above his nativist instincts.*

Thankfully, his nativist Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) wing of the APC has gone down with him. His incompetence ensured that his cronies did not make it to Government Houses in the northern region and are not in the commanding height of the Party. The CPC wing leaves the government without footing in the Party or the new government. They left no legacy, or philosophical or moral precepts for which they will be remembered. They, like their leader, Buhari, will be soon forgotten. I hope they will, at the very least, remember to share with their deceived base some of the billions of Naira they are leaving office with.

As Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu takes the oath of office tomorrow, most Nigerians are worried about the prospects of a future with his unpopular mandate of 37 percent of the voters. To make Nigerians cut him some slack, he needs to repudiate the tragic government of President Buhari and begin the march to reunite Nigeria and turn the ship of the nation back to the path of modernity. Halting the "JAPA" movement and creating opportunities for Nigerian youths is a task the new administration must prioritise to reverse the damage to our national competitiveness that occurred in the past eight years due to a massive brain drain. I believe in Nigeria's ability to, like the Phoenix, rise from the ashes and soar. I am an Afro Optimist who believes that, although we faltered for a period, we can (and will) cover the lost ground under purposeful leadership.

We must make President Buhari a tiny footnote and an inconsequential part of our destiny as the home of the black race. As a nation, we must remind ourselves never to allow such a level of incompetence and nativist deviousness to get close to public office. Nigeria will rise again. We will rebuild what the cankerworm has destroyed. We will say a collective, "Never again."

*Chidoka, a is a former Minister of Aviation.*