

# Is Buhari a Nigerian?

By **EBUN-OLU ADEGBORUWA, SAN.**

**T**he President of any country is the number one citizen of that nation, all things being equal. He is first amongst equals, being the one that all other citizens look up to for leadership and direction.

The President is the first ambassador of the nation and so the rest of the world views the country through the President. It is no wonder therefore that most laws defining the qualifications of those who aspire to the office of the President have a major requirement that the aspirant must be a citizen of the country; he must carry the life and blood of the nation, which would be the engine of the patriotism that he takes with him to that exalted office.

You can imagine the embarrassment it will cause any nation to discover that its President is a foreigner! In Nigeria, under and by virtue of section 131 (1) of the Constitution of the

his presidency can be queried. On the other hand, even if a citizen has acquired that status by birth, his actions may give him out as one who has not shown enough patriotism to merit that citizenship.

For instance, where the interest of Nigeria is secondary in the estimation of the President, in comparison with the interests of another nation, then there is no patriotism. This is why there is hue and cry about the true citizenship of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, to the extent that cases have been filed in court to determine it. This would not have mattered had he not indicated his interest in the presidency of Nigeria, on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party. And talking locally, there is still some unresolved controversy about the true identity of Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who is also aspiring to lead Nigeria on the platform of the All



**President Muhammadu Buhari**

Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), 'a person shall be qualified for election to the office of President if (a) he is a citizen of Nigeria by birth'. It is therefore an anathema for anyone to aspire to be elected as the President of Nigeria when he is not a Nigerian citizen through the bloodline.

The Constitution is deliberate in putting emphasis on the phrase 'a citizen of Nigeria by BIRTH'. In other words, Nigeria must run in the blood of the President and not just any type of citizenship. This is so because by virtue of section 26 of the Constitution, you can become a Nigerian citizen other than by birth, through registration or naturalization, but this category of citizens cannot aspire to lead Nigeria as its President.

So, if it can be proved that anyone occupying the position of President of Nigeria is not a citizen of Nigeria by birth, then



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Progressive Congress. Once you seek to be President of Nigeria, your citizenship automatically comes up for questioning.

At the beginning of his administration, President Muhammadu Buhari invested so much money conducting tests and surveys in the Lake Chad region, purportedly in search of crude oil, all of which amounted to nothing at the end of the day.

Also, he took interest in the training and equipment of the armed forces of our neighbouring countries, yet insurgency has not reduced. It is reported that Nigeria supplies uninterrupted electricity to Niger Republic and that the latter is even indebted to us for this cause, when the people of Nigeria experience multiple national grid collapses every

month. Charity must begin at home. There is no explanation that the President can offer, for seeking the welfare of the people of other nations over and above his own people, if he is truly a Nigerian. Let me share with you excerpts of a news report on this issue:

“Since his emergence as the President of Nigeria in 2015, President Buhari has overwhelmingly opened Nigeria's financial vault into providing strategic infrastructural development for the Nigerian neighbours, despite the nation's poor financial standing. The projects executed in the last seven years include a \$2billion standard gauge railway project the Nigerian government is constructing from Kano to Maradi in Niger Republic, a project President Muhammadu Buhari flagged off in February, 2021. The project, which was awarded to a Portuguese Construction Company, Mota-Engil, involved the construction of 284 kilometres standard-gauge line with 12 stations from Kano in northern Nigeria to Maradi in landlocked Niger Republic. The project was funded through an external loan of \$4.054b, approved by the National Assembly, in 2018.

In July 2018, Nigeria and Niger Republic agreed to collaborate to construct an oil pipeline and refinery. They agreed that while the proposed refinery will be located in Katsina State, northern Nigeria, crude supply will be through the pipeline from Niger Republic's oilfields in the Ténéré desert. The MoU for the two projects, which are expected to cost about \$2billion, was signed by the two countries' energy ministers and witnessed by Buhari and his counterpart from the Republic of Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou.

In November 2020, the Nigerian government, through the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, headed by President Buhari himself, signed a \$2b refinery project to import fuel from Niger Republic, a country that only joined the league of oil-producing countries in 2012.

On the 27th of February, 2020, the Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved N29.2 billion for the construction of two roads linking two Northern states to the border of Niger Republic. Minister of Works, Babatunde Fashola said he had presented memorandum of understanding (MoU) to FEC for approval to construct a 46 kilometre road from Balle in Sokoto State to Niger Republic border at the cost of N9.5 billion.

President Buhari recently was also reported to have directed the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed to release the sum of N1.14billion for the purchase of 10 Land Cruiser Jeeps, to the government of Niger Republic. The approval was based on the requests for supports by the government of Niger Republic.

The vehicles, it was gathered, would “assist the country in the transportation and movement of VIPs, high-ranking officials, top government functionaries and visitors scheduled for official visit to Niger at this time of its nascent democracy, with all its attendant consequences on their collective and individual security and safety of lives and property.”

The immediate issue arising from these 'philanthropic' gestures is whether there is any economic benefit for Nigeria from this self-serving largesse. Which item of value

is Nigeria producing for export to Niger? Or what is Nigeria importing from Niger that has warranted such humongous expenditure on infrastructure to that country? With the worsening situation of roads in Nigeria, farmers suffer untold hardships to move their farm produce from one region of Nigeria to the other. Some spend days upon days on the road in order to transport their goods from one State to another. And when the economic costs of diesel are added to this, plus insecurity and other criminalities, the prices of these goods go beyond reach. It will be right to opine that the main purpose of the rail line to Niger Republic is to assist in transporting citizens of both countries. Now, it has recently been established that many of the insurgents troubling our land are remnants of the rebels in Libya and they entered Nigeria through the land borders in the Northern part of the country. Since their dressing, language and outlook are similar to those of our brothers in those regions, it becomes very difficult to isolate them or even stop them.

What is certain is that the rail line will help the influx of insurgents into Nigeria, so that at the end of it all, we would have deployed our own resources against ourselves, leaving our farmers stranded and frustrated.

This is the basis of the title of this piece, to discover the motive of the President for some of these strange actions. What is so special about the Niger Republic that qualifies it to benefit from our scarce resources? How do you take oil revenue from the decrepit and abandoned Niger-Delta region, with all the people traumatized and dehydrated from the wicked effects of oil exploration and exploitation, from the flames of gas being flared in that region uncontrollably, to give to foreigners who turn around to kill and maim our people? How do we open up our borders to terrorists by way of an open invitation? Is President Buhari truly a Nigerian? What is his affinity with the Niger Republic?

The National Assembly has the onerous responsibility to call the President to order on these phantom projects that bear no direct economic value to us as a nation. A project such as a rail line from Nigeria to Niger Republic will surely involve crossing our territorial borders.

Who will save our land? Who is speaking for Nigeria? From the disclosures made by the former Minister of Transportation, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi, Nigeria took huge loans from China to be able to fund the Nigeria-Niger rail line. So, in point of fact, we do not even have the resources to feed the greed of the Niger Republic or the largesse of the Nigerian President.

You and I (and maybe our children) will have to pay back this loan one way or the other, since the rail line itself is not commercially viable to pay it. Meanwhile, Nigeria has shut down many of its rail lines due to threats from the same insurgents that the President has extended his good gestures to.

So, I ask the question again, is President Buhari a Nigerian by birth? Does he have Nigerian blood flowing in and through him? Does he feel what farmers in Nigeria feel? Is he aware of the hurdles that our people go through navigating on the road from one State to the other? If he has no direct plans to ameliorate these sufferings why add to them? Is Buhari a Nigerian or a Nigerien (from Niger Republic)?