

The Politics of Mass Mobilisation in Nigeria: An Appraisal of the Administration of President Muhammad Buhari

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Abstract

Governance is such a daunting task that requires reciprocal efforts of both the governors and the governed. This explains why governments in all political systems develop legitimisation strategies aimed at enlisting the support of the people for their 'developmental projects'. This study examines legitimisation efforts of successive administrations in post-colonial Nigeria through Mass Mobilization initiatives. The study, which adopts historical cum comparative methods of investigation and analysis, finds that while successive regimes in Nigeria have resorted to mobilization strategies including creation of agencies to earn legitimacy, certain regimes politicized their mobilization programmes turning them into instruments of political vendetta thereby negating the stated objectives of the mobilization efforts. The study concludes by proposing some measures capable of enhancing the integrity and effectiveness of mobilization strategies in Nigeria.

Keywords

Nigeria, politics, mass mobilisation, governing elites, anti-graft agencies

Introduction

Successive regimes in Nigeria over the years have had cause to resort to mass mobilisation programmes to ensure that Nigerians keyed into their policy actions. The strategy however became more pronounced during and after the Nigerian civil war between May 1967 and January 1970. During the war, the General Yakubu Gowon administration mobilised Nigerians to see reason with the Federal Government on why the unity of the country was non-negotiable. Hence, the slogan; 'To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done'. Ever since, Nigeria has witnessed series of mass mobilisation programmes each having different motive(s); the latest being the anti-corruption war of the current administration of President Muhammad Buhari.

Experiences have revealed that mass mobilisation programmes have become an instrument of 'dragging' an ordinary citizen into the main stream of governance. For instance, most of the newly independent African states in the

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late 1950s and early 1960s (Ghana, Guinea, Tanzania, to mention but a few) had to resort to the strategy to commission their citizens into the task of rebuilding the New states that had been battered by colonial policies. The foregoing explains why Rubin and Weinstein (1977: 184) while commenting on the problem of nation-building in Africa posit that “Many (states) think they have found an overall solution to problems of nation-building and development in the one-party state and the idea of socialism”.

The examples of African states cited above point to the fact that regimes always resort to mobilisation strategies to win the support of the citizenry in the quest to advance a course of action. This has been the case with successive governments in Nigeria till date. The main objective of this study is to examine why mobilisation strategy has become a recurring decimal in the body politic of Nigeria. Other objectives include (i) to give a historical account of mass mobilisation programmes in Nigeria, (ii) to explain why successive regimes in Nigeria, in particular the Buhari administration, have resorted to the use of mass mobilisation programmes to achieve their aims, and (iii) to examine the objectives of mass mobilisation programmes vis-à-vis how successive ruling classes (the Buhari administration in particular) in the country have exploited them for their whims and caprices. The study adopts historical cum comparative method as its research methodology. The study is divided into the following sections; introduction, conceptual clarifications, politics of mass mobilisation under the administration of President Muhammad Buhari in Nigeria and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

Politics

According to Anifowose (2015: 2) definitions of politics can be categorised into two types, namely, the classicalist/institutionalist or behaviouralist schools of thought. The classicalist/institutionalist approach identifies politics with “government”, “legal government” or the “state”, while the behaviouralist school revolves around the notions of “power”, “authority” and “conflict”. This study shall dwell more on classicalist/institutionalist school of thought. Although according to Charturvedi (2006: 244), defining what ‘politics is has been the object of much controversy’. For the purpose of this study, politics will be explained within the purview of what transpires between the political executives and the governed. That is, those actions of the ruling elites that has bearing with ‘good governance’ or ‘public interest’.

According to Appadorai (2004: 4), the term ‘politics’ is derived from the Greek word ‘polis’, a city –State. He therefore posits that “politics deals with the State or political society, meaning by the term a people organised for law within a definite territory” (Appadorai, 2004: 4). What this translates into is that in any State, the citizenry usually surrender their inalienable rights to an authority which they elect into office with the mandate of taking binding

decisions on them. Once legitimacy has been conferred on such institutional body, it becomes the 'superordinate' while the citizenry occupy the 'subordinate' position. During the course of the State's actions, a group will benefit while another category will lose out (Duverger, 1976: 17-18). This differential (benefit) syndrome often leads to conflicts among different groups in the society. This development perhaps explains why Roberts and Edwards posit that "Politics necessarily involves the existence of both conflict and consensus; without conflict, there would be no need for politics".

The above position shows that another aspect of politics is that it tries to ensure that people and/or organisations can settle their differences harmoniously (Harris, 1979: 13). It was from this perspective Lasswell (1930) explains politics as the study of 'who gets what, when and how?' In a similar vein, Easton (1957) explains it as the authoritative allocation of values for a society". Ayoade (1997: 2) also explains it as "the powers between individuals, communities and nations". He added that "any collectivity which is bound together must regulate its affairs, define its boundaries, and assign roles, rights and obligation. The dynamics of such decision-making is politics".

Charturvedi (2006: 244) in his own view defines politics as "the process by which groups of people, of whatever kind or size, make collective decisions". This position is in line with the Athenian model of democracy- direct democracy. He again defines politics as (i) activity related to the institution of the State, or 'polis' and the machinery of government, (ii) activity through which social conflict is expressed and attempts (not always successful) to resolve conflicts are made. While the first side of politics explains the concept from the purview of any of the actions of the government of a State to achieve a particular goal or ambition, the other side defines it from the perspective of conflict and conflict resolution strategies that can yield either positive or negative result. But the first side (of politics) is in tandem with the objective of this study. It associates politics with the activities of the ruling class of a society that have bearing with, for example, social, economic and the political lives of the citizenry. The foregoing therefore explains why Alfred de Grazie (cited in Anifowose, 2015: 2-3) posits that 'politics' or the 'political' includes "the events that happen around the decision-making centres of government". This position is also quite related to the thrust of this study, which is, the politicization of mass mobilisation programmes by successive regimes in Nigeria using President Buhari's administration as a case study. What informed this assertion is that mass mobilisation programme, as will be seen in this study, is a prerogative of political executives in the country.

Mass Mobilisation

Mass Mobilisation is a socio-political concept which has its meaning enriched by two separate words 'Mass' and 'Mobilisation'. Mass, means anything that is

all-involving, that is, without exclusion. Consequently, it can also be referred to as 'politics'. Mobilisation on the other hand can be regarded as the process of (re)awakening the consciousness of people in a society towards a particular governmental course. Therefore, when both are juxtaposed, the ordinary meaning of 'Mass Mobilisation' is the process of (re)awakening the consciousness of the people of a particular polity towards a particular course

Roberts and Edwards (1991: 72) view mobilisation from two perspectives. One, as a strategy used by a democrat to ensure that "members of a political community are brought into situations which involve them directly in political affairs". For example, voluntary participation in politics by means of membership of parties, of movements or of interest groups, by voting at elections, involvement in political discussion and similar activities. The implication of all these is that the support given to the government by the citizens is voluntary. Consequently, the ruler has minimal role to play in mobilising the people.

The other perspective on mobilisation advanced by scholars is that mobilisation can also serve the negative function of coercion. This is particularly true of totalitarian, modernising or non-democratic mass societies, where citizens are forced to identify themselves with the activities of governments in forms of coerced participation in demonstrations, rallies, political campaigns, etc.; attendance to vote in elections where choice is absent and compulsory turn out as well as forced membership of political organizations" (Roberts and Edwards, 1991: 82).

Most of the above features were true of Nazi Germany, while some of them were also the characteristic features of some despots world over, especially military dictators. However, it is noteworthy here that, coercion is usually resorted to by such rulers when it dawns on them that people have become disillusioned with their legitimation programmes.

In their own contribution to the understanding of the concept of "mobilisation", Hague and Harrop (1982: 254) view it as "the process by which groups or individuals are drawn into support for particular political objectives usually associated with the pursuit of directed social change".

The first part of Hague and Harrop's (1982) position sees mobilisation from ideological point of view and which can be utilised to the advantage of the ruling class. On the other hand, the second part of the definition views it as a mechanism of change. These were the strategies adopted by some African leaders earlier cited in this study in the 1950s and 1960s shortly after their countries became independent. In those States, mobilisation strategies were adopted to ensure cohesion of political objectives of the New States.

In his own contribution, Deutsch (1974: 544) argues that "Social Mobilisation makes people more available for change. It does so by inducing them or teaching them to change ... It gives rise to new needs, new aspirations, new demands and capabilities".

Like Hague and Harrop (1982), Deutsch's (1974) position is ideological in nature. What informs this position is that it sees mobilisation as a mechanism for manipulating human behaviour in line with the objectives of the ruling elites. Consequently, one will be right to describe his idea of mobilisation as a form of 'socialisation'. This is because it involves changing man's perception of events and issues. This was better exemplified in the "White Paper" on 'Political Bureau Report' of 1986 in Nigeria, which also describes mobilisation as the process of mobilising people to increase their level of awareness of certain set objectives with a view of achieving them (Political Bureau Report, 1986).

Summarily put, an examination of the various positions on the concept of Mass Mobilisation reviewed in this study has given insight into some commonalities. All the definitions reviewed agree that mobilisation is often associated with a period of change (for example, when a country is transforming from Military to Civil rule) or emergency (for example, war). But more importantly, all the perspectives agree that mobilisation serves as an instrument for igniting the interest of the populace in a tailored direction. This is where the interest of this study lies because efforts will be made to analyze how successive regimes in Nigeria using the Buhari administration as a case study have 'coerced' the citizenry into believing in their various legitimisation strategies or courses of actions.

Mass Mobilisation serves some useful purposes especially in the New States where interest groups have been shirking in their responsibility as 'interest aggregators' and where most governments have lost sense of direction. In a developing State like Nigeria, one of the useful purposes, which mass mobilisation serves, is that of diversionary measure. Rulers usually invoke this when they discover that they are losing control of governance as a result of their inability to halt the ever-increasing socio-economic malaise cum political corruption in the society. Their calculation is that, a newly introduced programme will pre-occupy the minds of the citizenry and make them think less of the problem(s) at hand.

In a plural State like Nigeria, Mass Mobilisation also serves as a tool of national integration. This position is better summarised in the words of Rubin and Weinstein (1977: 155) who posit that "Without mobilization, people remain divided." Towards this end, slogans reflecting the need for unity are coined and jingled in both print and electronic media. A good example of this was the one coined by the Gowon administration during the Nigerian civil war. It ran thus "To keep Nigeria One is a Task that must be Done". The message inherent in this slogan was to make Nigerians identify themselves with government's decision to prevent Biafran secession and ensure that the monolithic and corporate nature of the country remained intact. Furthermore, in 2016, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched a change mantra: "Change begins with me" to make every Nigerian believe in the Change

Project (especially the anti-corruption war) of the administration of President Muhammad Buhari.

Furthermore, members of a ruling class may also promote a mass mobilisation programme as a way of protecting their myopic interest. However, they will robe it in national interest. This is often the case when the economic interest of the ruling elites makes them drag the entire country into a war or diplomatic row with another nation. For instance, the United States/Iraq war which started in March 2003 and culminated in the overthrow of Sadam Hussein in 2006 had economic (oil) undertone.

Lastly, as earlier enunciated in this paper, mass mobilisation can also serve the negative function of destabilisation. This is when the masses are incited against the legally constituted authorities as witnessed in the apartheid South Africa or during the decolonization process in settler colonies like Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), Guinea under Sekou Toure, Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah and Mali under Modibo Keita. Thus, mass mobilisation also serves as a mechanism of fighting against injustice.

The Politics of Mass Mobilisation in Nigeria before the Administration of President Muhammad Buhari

What does politics of Mass Mobilisation in Nigeria connote? One of the sides of politics earlier presented in this work is the one which sees it from power configuration point of view. That is, a situation whereby efforts are made by a group of people to defeat the intentions of their fellow beings. Therefore, in this study, it can be posited that the politics of mass mobilisation in Nigeria is a situation whereby each successive administration in the country introduces a new mobilisation strategy as a way of actualising its ideological programmes or making the regime acceptable to the populace.

Mass mobilisation programmes in Nigeria date back to the earlier part of the post-independence period. The indigenous administrators inherited a country polarised on certain issues (for example, political, religious and economic). There was therefore every need to avert centrifugal forces by the government. A way out was to mobilise the citizenry.

All the regimes that preceded the civilian administration of President Muhammad Buhari had cause to introduce different mobilisation programmes to achieve different purposes. During the Nigerian Civil War, the administration of General Yakubu Gowon mobilised Nigerians (especially the people of the North and West) on why the rebellious 'Biafrans' should not be allowed to secede. Consequently, it coined a mantra 'To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done'. Another slogan was 'Go on with one Nigeria'. However, the political aspect of the slogans manifests in the fact that the 'good' intention of the Federal Military Government notwithstanding, this study is of the view that it was its mistake (promulgation of Decree No 31 known as the Unification Decree) which propelled crisis in the North that led

to the pogrom in the Region and subsequently made the East to demand for secession.

At the end of the Nigerian Civil War, the Gowon administration also launched the 'Three Rs' to mobilise Nigerians towards healing the wounds of the war. The philosophy underlying the 'Three Rs'- Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation- was reconciling Nigerians estranged by the war, reconstruction of the war- affected projects and Rehabilitation of Nigerians displaced or injured by the activities of the war. The mobilisation strategy of 'three Rs' did not however, achieve the desired results. In fact, it was a mere diversionary measure, because the Biafran force was not re-integrated into the Nigerian Army. Furthermore, there was no major re-organisation exercise carried out in the country's public service to take care of the unrepresentativeness of the Igbo-speaking group.

Another mobilisation strategy introduced by General Yakubu Gowon's regime was the launching of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme through the promulgation of Decree No. 24 of 1973. The scheme was "to develop common ties among our (Nigerian) youths and promote national unity (Handbook on NYSC Scheme, 1980: 3-4). The scheme was further designed to ensure that national integration was achieved through Nigerian graduates of tertiary institutions, especially Universities and Polytechnics. Under the scheme, graduates are made to go and serve their fatherland in a geopolitical zone other than theirs for twelve calendar months. This is in tune with Rubin and Weinstein's (1977: 155) position that "without mobilizing, people remain divided".

The regime of Murtala/Obasanjo (1975-1979) adopted education and agriculture as its mobilisation strategies. The regime launched the Universal Primary Education Programme in 1976 which brought about sporadic school enrolment in the country but it did not succeed in eradicating illiteracy. Writing on the importance of education as a mobilisation strategy, Deutsch (1974: 542-543) posits that:

The mobilisation into literacy is a more fundamental change since it opens so many different sources of stimulation information to people, and since it tends to support and enhance autonomous thought and activity, more than mere passive participation in the mass media audience could do.

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was another mobilisation strategy introduced by the military regime of Murtala/Obasanjo. It was launched in 1977. The programme was designed to address the 'food problem' which hit the country. It was also introduced to reduce excessive reliance on the oil sector and the re-structuring of the consumption habits of Nigerians towards a self-reliant economy (Ojiako, 1980). However, findings of this study reveal

that OFN did not achieve the desired results as the country continued to rely on food importation. What was responsible for its failure was that no agricultural revolution can succeed without mechanisation. This was lacking then.

Two mobilisation programmes were introduced by the regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983). They were 'The Green Revolution Programme and Ethical Revolution/Austerity measures Programme'. The Green Revolution Programme was an agricultural programme which the findings of this study reveal was a refinement of OFN. In fact, its objectives were not different from those of OFN. But the explanation that can be proffered to its introduction is that it was aimed at making the regime assert its importance and redeem its electioneering campaign promises. However, findings from this study reveal that the mobilisation strategy failed to mobilise Nigerian farmers because of its institutional flaws.

The Ethical Revolution/Austerity Measures strategy of the regime was introduced at the wake of pervasive corruption which engulfed the entire system. It was aimed at cutting down cost of governance, eradicating all forms of corruption and moral indiscipline and checking the increasing costs of living in Nigeria. Furthermore, it aimed at encouraging the people of the country to adapt to the economic hardship arising from the failure of the regime's Green Revolution Programme.

The regime of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari's (December 31, 1983-August 27, 1985) notable mobilisation programme was the War Against Indiscipline (WAI). The objectives of WAI, which was launched on March 19, 1984, were to "Instill in the minds of Nigerians the noble ideas of national consciousness, mobilise their minds and gear them up to a sense of nationhood, patriotism and above all, discipline" (The *Guardian*, March 21, 1984: 1-2).

To achieve the objectives of WAI, the programme was launched in stages, viz: the first phase which was launched on March 20, 1984, emphasized 'orderliness', the second phase of the programme that was launched on May 27, 1984 focused on the introduction of new 'work ethics' while the third phase launched in January 1985, waged war against economic sabotage, corruption, currency trafficking, illegal bunkering, drug trafficking and examination malpractice. The fourth and the last phase was the 'War Against Filth'. This was launched in Kano on July 27, 1985.

The findings of this study reveal that WAI achieved the desired result to a large extent. But the criticism of the scheme was seen in the fact that it adopted undemocratic methods in achieving its objectives. This was, however, not unusual because the country was then under Military rule.

The administration of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (August 27, 1985-August 26, 1983) attested to the success of WAI when in his maiden broadcast as the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Babangida said "The War Against Indiscipline shall continue but this time in the minds and conduct of Nigerians, and not by way of symbolism or money consuming campaigns" (Nigerian *Tribune*, August 28, 1985: 2).

Without prejudice to the above position, the study is of the view that a mobilisation campaign can hardly succeed without a huge amount of human and material resources committed to it. Despite the fact that General Babangida appreciated the success of WAI (at least indirectly), his administration modified the inherited 'National Orientation Movement' (NOM) and substituted it with Mass Mobilisation for Economic Recovery, Social Justice, Self-Reliance (MAMSER). The abandonment of NOM can be attributed to the usual tradition of a new government trying to discredit its predecessor.

The other notable mobilisation programme introduced by the administration of General Babangida was the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The economic programme, introduced in June 1986, was aimed at restructuring and diversifying the productive base of the economy in order to reduce the dependence on oil sector and on imports (Olaniyi, 2016). SAP however failed to achieve its objectives because while the regime of General Babangida lasted, the economy of the country remained a dependent one and the prices of commodities kept on rising (Olaniyi, 2016).

General Sani Abacha's regime (November 17, 1993-June 8, 1998) came on board when the wound created by the annulment of June 12, 1993 popularly won by Chief M.K.O Abiola had not been healed. This explained why his administration needed to placate the people of the country, especially those from the South-West. Towards this end, the regime established a mobilisation agency known as the National Orientation Agency (NOA). Like MAMSER, NOA performed the crucial function of political education. In fact there was hardly any difference between the organisational structure of NOA and MAMSER. This raises the question of the rationale behind its establishment but it boils down to the politics of mass mobilisation. However, this criticism notwithstanding, the success of the administration of General Abacha's mobilisation strategy was in the area of fighting corruption. Some tribunals (for example, 'Failed Banks Tribunal' and 'Failed Contracts Tribunal') were established by the regime to try some categories of former office holders who enriched themselves unlawfully while in positions of authority and contractors who after collecting mobilization fees deserted project sites.

The administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo (May 29, 1999-May 29, 2007) was reputable for maximising the benefits of mass mobilisation strategy in fighting corruption. This was achieved through the establishment of two anti-graft agencies. First to be established in the year 2000 was the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

The ICPC Act came into being on June 13, 2000. Section 6 of the Act gives the power of the Commission as that of investigating public officers who might have had corrupt allegations leveled against them (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2000: 15-16). The second anti-graft agency set up by the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo was the Economic and

Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Like ICPC, it was established to fight economic and financial crimes in the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2002). However, it was more empowered than ICPC because it has the mandate to co-ordinate the various institutions of government charged with the responsibility of combating money laundering and financial crimes in Nigeria.

The findings of this study reveal that the politics inherent in the establishment of both ICPC and EFCC was that President Olusegun Obasanjo wanted to use them to settle scores with some people who one way or the other had crossed his path during past military regimes in the country or his then political foes. This argument can be substantiated with the fact that there was no justification for the inclusion of some Decrees on money laundering promulgated during military regimes (especially Sani Abacha) as part of the powers of EFCC. When a law takes a retrospective effect, it raises suspicion because observers/analysts will be of the view that it has a punitive colouration. This position notwithstanding, the anti-corruption mobilisation programme of President Obasanjo made some exploits. Examples of those indicted for corrupt practices included Tafa Balogun, a former Inspector General of Police who was jailed for six months in October, 2005. He was found guilty of misappropriating money meant for the Police Force when he served as the head of the Security Agency (Amaraegebu, 2011). Other examples included a former Senate President, Adolphus Wabara, a former Governor of Bayelsa State, D.S.P Alamieyeseigha, a former Minister of Housing, Mobolaji Osomo, and a former Minister of Education, Professor Fabian Osuji.

Despite the exploits of ICPC and EFCC, in particular, under the administration of President Obasanjo, some cases initiated then remain inconclusive up till the time of this study. This was perhaps due to political reasons. Examples are seen in the corruption allegations of former Governor Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia State and a former Governor of Plateau State, Joshua Dariye. Both have been on trial since 2007. However, worthy of note is the fact that in the case of Orji Uzor Kalu, the findings of this study reveal that his ordeal was traceable to the altercations he had with President Obasanjo in 2005. In a letter to him (Obasanjo), he accused the President and some of his aides of 'massive corruption'. In particular, he accused President Obasanjo of operating foreign bank accounts including 'a platinum credit cards' which he was said to have recently obtained (Fabiye, 2005: 13).

The mobilisation programme introduced by the administration of President Umar Musa Yar' Adua (May 29, 2007-May 5, 2010) took the form of a 'Seven-Point Agenda'. The administration however, consolidated the anti-corruption drive of its predecessor in office (Obasanjo). Notably, some corruption cases were tackled by the two anti-graft agencies in the country then. Worthy of note was the successful prosecution and sentencing of Chief Bode George, who was a big wig in the ruling party then, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and who doubled as a former Chairman of the Board of Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA). He was sentenced to two years imprisonment on

October 26, 2009 along with five principal officers of the NPA having been found guilty of allegation of N85 billion fraud (The *Punch*, 27 October, 2009: 1-2). Although Chief Bode George was later granted 'State Pardon' by the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, and also had the sentence upturned by the Supreme Court which acquitted him on December 13, 2013, he actually served the prison term.

The 'Seven-Point Agenda' of the administration of President Umar Yar'Adua covered the following areas: Power and energy, food and security, wealth creation, transport sector, land reforms, security, education (Osundun, 2008: 5). Because the administration was short-lived and truncated by the ill-health of the President, not much success was recorded in all areas but it left an indelible mark in the area of security. Towards the tail end of the administration of President Obasanjo, the country witnessed incessant insurgent activities of the Niger-Delta militants. The Niger-Delta area is the main stay of the nation's economy but due to the activities of the militants in the area, the revenue which the Nigerian Government was getting from oil dwindled. The grouse of the people of Niger-Delta over the years was that the area has not been accorded the deserved developmental attention by successive regimes in Nigeria and the major oil companies operating in the area.

In order to douse the tension in the Niger-Delta area, the administration of Yar'Adua established the Federal Ministry of Niger-Delta Affairs on September 10, 2008 and appointed an indigene of the area, Ufot Ekacte, pioneer Minister. The Ministry has the mandate to oversee developmental efforts in the area. This gave the people of the area a sense of belonging. But the most striking aspect of the efforts of the regime in tackling the insecurity in the Niger-Delta area was the 'Amnesty programme' for the Niger-Delta militants introduced by the administration. Under the programme, warlords who renounced militancy and cult activities were pardoned. Furthermore, stipends were paid to ex-militants by the Federal Government while some of them were exposed to training in the areas of oil exploration and shipping. All these efforts calmed down the nerves of the agitated minds of the Niger Delta militants. Consequently, the area became the envy of other parts of the country especially Hydro-Electric Power producing states which also demanded similar attention from the government. Critics were also of the view that similar Amnesty programme should be extended to the Boko Haram insurgents who were then wreaking havoc in the North-East geo-political zone of the federation (Osundun, 2008). This was the political dimension of the Amnesty programme. In fact, up till the period of this study, the debates remain unabated.

The administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (May 5, 2010-May 29, 2015) was the regime that preceded the current administration of President Muhammad Buhari. While Dr. Jonathan served as the Acting President of the country, a group of 'eminent elders' whose spokesman was a

former Information Minister, Professor Jerry Gana, had called on him to prune down the 'Seven-Point Agenda' of the administration of the then ailing President (Yar'Adua) to a manageable number that can be effectively implemented with concrete results (Muogbo, 2010: 6). Although the then Acting President promised to convey the suggestion to the Federal Executive Council for consideration, he acted in a contrary way when he became the substantive President of the country upon the death of President Yar'Adua. He rolled out his own agenda that was not only higher in number than that of Yar'Adua but shared more similarities than differences. However, it is imperative to note that he did this to make his administration different from that of his predecessor in office. Worthy of note was the fact that this administration consolidated the Amnesty Programme of the administration of Yar'Adua, perhaps, due to the fact that Dr. Jonathan hails from the Niger-Delta.

After winning the Presidential election of 2011 in an atmosphere characterised by hostility in some parts of the country especially the North, President Jonathan embarked on some mend-fencing activities and policies. All these were imbedded in what his administration dubbed 'Transformation Agenda'. The 'Transformation Agenda', which from all intents and purposes was a refinement of the 'Seven-Point Agenda' of the administration of his predecessor, covered such issues as poverty, unemployment, insecurity, education and health sectors, public expenditure management, governance, agriculture, and industry, power, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), transportation, Niger-Delta, Labour and Productivity, Foreign Policy and Economic Diplomacy and most especially, the diversification of the national economy from total dependence on oil to a significant reliance on non-oil sectors (National Planning Commission, 2011). As earlier posited in this study, the administration succeeded in consolidating the Amnesty Programme of the regime of President Yar'Adua. It however, failed in stemming the menace of the Boko-Haram insurgents ravaging the Northern parts of the country, especially the North-East. This criticism notwithstanding, his regime succeeded in the area of education which benefitted the North more than other parts of the country. First, his regime established about 124 Almajir Schools across Northern states and between 2011 and 2012 established twelve Federal Universities, nine of which were located in the North. Those located in the North are sited in Lokoja, Gashua, Wukari, Kashere, Birnin-Kebbi, Dustin-Ma, Lafia, Gusau and Dutse. The remaining three are sited in the South not minding the fact that Jonathan hails from the area. The institutions are in Otuoke, Oye-Ekiti and Ndifu-Alike Ikwo. The question which the action of the administration of President Jonathan raised was why did it give the North more attention than the South? Everything boils down to the politics of mass mobilisation because his regime wanted to placate the North which did not have the opportunity of completing its representation arrangement due to the death of President Umar Yar'Adua.

The Administration of President Muhammad Buhari and the Politics of Mass Mobilisation

The administration of President Muhammad Buhari was inaugurated on 29th May, 2015 and it is the regime in power in Nigeria as at the time this study was carried out. It is however, imperative to state that this will be the second time Major-General Muhammad Buhari (rtd.) would have the opportunity of being the country's number one citizen. The first being December 31, 1983–August 27, 1985 as Military Head of State.

As tradition demands in any liberal democracy, 2015 was preceded by a period of electioneering campaigns. During the time the campaigns lasted, he left no one in doubt that if elected as the country's President he would fight corruption. His electioneering campaign speeches and jingles were punctuated by anti-corruption slogans. For instance, while addressing a campaign rally at Micheal Okpara Square, Enugu on January 10, 2015, Buhari was quoted to have said "If you make a mistake to allow Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to rule again for the next four years, we will all be in trouble". He stated further that "If Nigeria does not kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria". (*Punch*, January 11, 2015: 7).

At another campaign rally held at the Pantami International Stadium, Gombe, Gombe State, General Buhari again reiterated his would-be government's disgust for corruption. He was quoted thus.

We must do away with corruption as well as develop the Nigerian economy. If we are elected into office by the grace of God, any elected official that is elected or appointed to serve under me must be transparent, because if any of them embezzles public funds, he will face the consequences. (Idowu, 2015: 9)

The examples cited above give insight into what would be the mobilisation strategy of General Buhari if he won the election. Coincidentally, he won the election. As he posited at Chatam House, London on February 26, 2015 while addressing his supporters in the United Kingdom, he said, "I cannot change the past but I can change the present" (*Punch*, February 27, 2015: 3) Buhari, upon assumption of office as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, made every Nigerian to be aware of the fact that Nigeria cannot develop if corruption persists. In his inaugural speech when he was sworn-in as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on May 29, 2015, he promised that there would be no sacred cows in his anti-corruption crusade. He said among other things that "I thank all of you. Having just a few minutes ago sworn on the Holy Book, I intend to keep my oath and serve as President to all Nigerians. I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody" (*Saturday Punch*, May 30, 2015: 2). Later, after assuming office as the President of the country, he reiterated that his anti-

corruption war will not even spare his friends. While delivering a key note address at Osigwe Anyam-Osigwe Foundation lecture in Abuja, he said among other things that “Corrupt acts will always be punished, and there will be no friend no foe” (Usigbe, 2015: 3). This is a test case for his administration.

The above pledge made by President Buhari that there would be no sacred cows in his administration’s anti-graft war has since become a debate. What was responsible for this was that despite the fact that the EFCC has succeeded in prosecuting a good number of corruption cases and has been able to recover some looted public funds apart from Mr. David Babachir Lawal who was recently suspended from office as the Secretary to the Government of Federation (SGF) on the ground of alleged corruption, some loyalists of the administration of President Buhari who have corruption cases hanging on their necks remain uninvestigated. Examples include the current Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant –General Tukur Buratai who was alleged to have choice properties in Dubai. He was cleared of all accusations by the President in 2016 even with ‘convincing evidence’ of allegedly owning choice properties in Dubai beyond his income and ‘overwhelming evidence’ of misdeeds while serving as Director of Procurement, Nigerian Army during the regime of President Goodluck Jonathan. Also in the same shoe is the current Minister of Interior, General Abdulrahman Dambazzau (rtd.) for allegedly owning properties worth over N1.5 billion in the United States of America. Furthermore, Jafaru Isa, President Buhari’s friend and confidant was alleged to have taken millions of Naira from purported Arms money of which Colonel Sambo Dasuki is being tried but which has also gone underground.

Further cited by the critics of the anti-graft war of Buhari’s administration is the case of the serving Minister of Transportation, who was also a former Governor of Rivers State, indicted by an investigative panel constituted by the Rivers state government for corrupt practices. Also shielded is the Chief of Staff to President Buhari, Alhaji Abba Kyari, who also has corruption cases (the most recent being the sponsorship of his hospital bills while in London in December 2016 for treatment of an ailment by the Nigerian Embassy in the United Kingdom) around his neck but obviously cleared by President Buhari’s ‘Judicial clearing House’ (borrowing a leaf from PDP’s position).

The most disturbing aspect of the critics’ position was their disgust about the allegations of corrupt practices leveled against the helmsman of Nigeria’s foremost anti-graft agency, EFCC, Mr. Ibrahim Magu which remain uninvestigated by the Presidency as at the time of this study. Mr. Ibrahim Magu, the Acting Chairman of EFCC, was indicted by the report of Department of State Services (DSS) of corruption allegations but instead of ordering the investigation of Magu, President Buhari in January 2017 wrote the Senate a letter in which he absorbed him of corrupt charges or any wrong doing. Many critics of Buhari’s government viewed this as an aberration. Their position is hinged on the fact that such clean slate can only be given by a competent court of jurisdiction. It is noteworthy that he (President) did the

same thing in Buratai's case while despite the opposition of the Senators from Rivers State, Rotimi Amaechi's nomination was confirmed by the Senate on third attempt.

In its reaction to the 'executive clearance' originally given to Babachir and Magu, the National Caretaker Committee of the country's main opposition party, PDP, led by Senator Ahmed Makarfi, in a release by its Publicity Secretary, on January 25, 2017, said President Buhari had clearly shown that his anti-corruption crusade has collapsed. Besides, the group said that the war on corruption was merely targeted at the members of opposition alone. It added that it was evidently clear now that the President's anti-corruption war was merely a farce as those serving in his government, or close to him "can do no wrong" (Ejembi, 2017).

The Makarfi faction came to the conclusion that the anti-corruption war of Buhari's administration was a 'mechanism for a witch-hunt aimed at harassing PDP members and perceived enemies of the administration. It accused President Buhari of politicizing the anti-corruption crusade of his administration by positing that:

It is no longer news that all those who are serving in the government of President Buhari or who are members of his party, the APC, within the last two years of his administration have all been cleared of any wrong doing not withstanding documentary and other incontrovertible evidences to the contrary. (The *Punch* online, January 26, 2017)

Apart from criticisms on the anti-corruption war of the administration of President Buhari coming from his main political opponents, some members of civil society and religious organisations have also alleged that it has political undertone. A case in point was the Vice-President, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Bishop Simeon Okah who called for the trial of a former Governor of Rivers State and the current Minister of Transportation, Mr. Rotimi Amaechi for his alleged involvement in corruption while serving as governor in the state. According to Okah, the ongoing anti-corruption fight of the President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration would not be taken seriously if "the likes of Amaechi and other cabinet members alleged to have stolen billions of Naira belonging to their states for the 2015 general elections were not being tried" (Ibrahim, 2017, The *Punch* online, March 3). He went further to state that:

Nothing has changed in the anti-corruption fight since President Buhari took over. The system which the Federal Government is using to fight corruption is not thorough. If it was, Rotimi Amaechi would not be walking as a free man in the streets. He (Amaechi)

should be tried. He's from the South-South; I'm also from the South-South. He was a governor who operated Rivers State as if it was his father's personal business. He operated without a Chief Judge. He operated without the court for about two years. He is the one the All Progressive Congress is parading as a saint. Is this not one of the things that destroyed this country? (Ibrahim, 2017, The *Punch* online March 3)

The way the corruption allegation leveled against the suspended Secretary to the Government of the Federation, David Babachir Lawal and the suspended Director General of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Mr. Ayodele Oke was handled by the Buhari presidency is causing ripples in the country. Instead of directing the EFCC to investigate the matter, President Muhammad Buhari set up a Presidential Committee made up of the Vice-President, Yemi Osinbajo, the Attorney-General of the Federation and National Security Adviser to the President, General Babagana Monguno, to investigate the matter. Perhaps this was with the view of giving them a 'soft-landing'.

Despite the criticisms that characterised the anti-corruption war of the administration of Buhari, some observers have given him pass mark. One of such individuals was former President Olusegun Obasanjo who at a point in time applauded the efforts of Buhari. While reflecting on President Buhari's past since 2015, Obasanjo was quoted to have said, during an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that "Whatever anybody says, President Buhari has not disappointed me" (The *Punch*, online, February 27). According to him, President Buhari has delivered on his core areas of strength and ability, particularly in the anti-corruption crusade and war against insurgency. However, despite this accolade, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo few weeks later in a dramatic twist expressed disappointment at the anti-corruption war of the administration of President Buhari. At a lecture on the theme: "The role of the Church in the fight against corruption in Nigeria", at the convention of Victory Life Bible Church on April 4, 2017, Obasanjo had this to say on the efforts of successive governments to combat corruption in Nigeria:

Despite all these efforts, corruption is still thriving in our country. In fact from the revelations we are hearing, it seems the situation is worse than what I met on ground in 1999. The inference is that fighting corruption is not a one-off or one regime affair, it is an all-time and all-regime affair. If we relent it bounces back with vengeance. (Olaleye and Balogun, 2017, *This Day* Online, April, 9)

The foregoing cases and issues cited in this study have given insight into the fact that never in the history of mass mobilisation programmes in Nigeria

has any effort attracted criticisms more than the anti-corruption crusade of the administration of President Buhari. But this position notwithstanding, the anti-corruption efforts of the Buhari regime have yielded some dividends. Looted funds and properties have been recovered from some public servants and political office holders by the two anti-graft agencies (ICPC and EFCC) in the country. Similarly, the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT) has woken up to its responsibility because a number of former public office holders in the country are facing trial in the special court.

The war against corruption of the anti-graft agencies in the country has led to the investigation and prosecution of public office holders cutting across past political office holders, Armed Forces, public servants. Examples of those prosecuted by the anti-graft agencies include former Chief of Defence Staff, Air Marshall Alex Badeh, Former Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Olusola Amosu, Former Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Usman Jibrin, former Comptroller General of Nigerian Customs, Alhaji Abdullahi Dikko, Former Group Managing Director of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Mr. Andrew Yakubu, Former Chairman (Senator Adeseye Ogunnewe) Governing Council, Vice-Chancellor and Bursar of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and 23 Independent National Electoral Officers.

With regard to former political office holders, examples of those who have been investigated and prosecuted are endless. For example, most of the Governors who served between 1999 and 2015 have been investigated and prosecuted. Some of them have had their properties confiscated and monies forfeited to the Federal Government. Examples of former Governors in the various categories include Senator Godswill Akpabio of Akwa-Ibom State, Alhaji Babangida Aliyu of Niger State, Mr. Gabriel Suswan of Benue State, Senator Joshua Dariye of Plateau State, Senator Rashidi Ladoja of Oyo State, Mr. Gbenga Daniel of Ogun State, Sullivan Chime of Enugu State, Yisa Yuguda of Bauchi State, Senator Bukola Saraki of Kwara state, Bala James Ngilari of Adamawa State, Ibrahim Sema of Katsina State and a host of others. Other examples of political office holders undergoing investigation and prosecution include Former Minister of Aviation, Femi Fani-Kayode, and Former Minister of State for Finance, Mrs. Esther Nenadi Usman, former Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Bala Muhammed and Senator Iyiola Omisore. In addition to the list, the Former First Lady of the Federation, Mrs. Patience Jonathan has equally not escaped the 'eagle-eye' of the EFCC.

The DSS complemented the efforts of the anti-graft agencies in the country when it invaded the official residence of some serving judicial officials in the country on the 7th and 8th of October, 2016. Those whose houses were raided, according to DSS, were alleged to be corrupt. In the course of the exercise, the Department of State Services recovered over N360 million from three judges (*Sunday Vanguard*, 9 October, 2016: 1). The Judges affected in the raid were Justice Adeniyi Ademola of the Federal High Court, Abuja; Justice Nwali

Sylvester Ngwuta of the Supreme Court Bench and Justice John Okoro also of the Supreme Court Bench.

Justifying the action of the DSS because of the criticism that greeted it, the DSS Director-General, Musa Daura, says that the current operation shall continue “till sanity and sanctity are restored to the esteemed third arm of government and public confidence is regained” (*Sunday Punch*, October 9, 2016: 2). The argument of the critics of the action of DSS bordered on what they termed gross violation of the rule of law because their houses were invaded in the night.

There are conflicting reports on the exploits of the anti-graft agencies in the current dispensation. This has generated reactions from both the Presidency and legislature. For instance, on March 7, 2017, the House of Representatives demanded account of seized funds from EFCC when it directed its committee on Financial Crimes to conduct the audit within six weeks. This was in a bid to ascertain the “legality of their current values and make appropriate recommendations to the House” (Ameh, 2017, *The Punch* online, March 7). In a similar vein, President Buhari recently gave the same directive to the EFCC and ICPC. However, the mere fact that President Buhari urged both anti-graft agencies to brace up and stop losing corruption cases is a pointer to the fact that the anti-corruption war of his administration leaves much to be desired (Adetayo, 2017: 5). The failure of the agencies to win high profile cases of corruption may not be unconnected with the politics that underlines the effort. But these criticisms notwithstanding, the Buhari administration has succeeded in mobilising all and sundry in the country towards seeing corruption as the bane of Nigerian development.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to dissect the politics that coloured the major mobilisation strategies that have been introduced in the country by successive governments. The study finds, among others, that successive administrations in Nigeria, both military and civilian including the incumbent Buhari administration, resorted to mobilization strategies not only to make their regimes unique from the preceding regimes but also to earn the support of the citizenry for their defined courses of action irrespective of the political leanings of the citizens. The study also finds that some regimes introduced mobilization programmes as a diversionary strategy to sway the minds of the citizens away from the shortcomings of the regimes. It further finds that some regimes turned their mobilization programmes into a political vendetta to punish perceived or real enemies. This is the current criticism greeting the anti-corruption efforts of the administration of President Buhari. For instance, the Senate President, Bukola Saraki alluded to the fact that his ongoing Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT) trial is a mere political persecution and a fall-out of his emergence as the Senate President as opposed to the ruling party’s and Presidency’s choice of Senator Ahmed Lawan (Adeoye, 2016: 8).

Arising from these findings, the study offers the following recommendations to make mobilization programmes more effective:

- (i) In view of the economic wastages that usually greet the abandonment of inherited mass mobilisation programmes by new regimes as evident in the seven point Agenda of the administration of President Yar'Adua and the Transformation Programme of the regime of President Jonathan, political sentiments should not be introduced into mass mobilisation programmes. A programme introduced by a past regime which records impressive success(es) should be sustained and continued although with slight modifications, if necessary, by a new regime
- (ii) Regimes should stop using mobilisation programmes as a diversionary measure. They should rather be focused and appreciate the fact that governance is a continuum. In fact the repercussion of deceit in governance is electoral defeat. Therefore, regimes should introduce programmes that will help develop the Nigerian state instead of swaying the attention of people from good governance.
- (iii) Political elites should leave above board and shun sentiments by not having 'sacred cows' in their mobilisation crusade. The criticism against the anti-corruption drive of the administration of President Buhari is anchored on politics. Perhaps this explains why it has not achieved much as recently admitted by President Buhari himself. Therefore, for any mobilisation strategy to be effective, it must be devoid of political undertones.
- (iv) Mobilisation agencies should be granted autonomy and be free from the control and influence of political executives. For instance, both the ICPC and EFCC are attached to the executive arm of government. This exposes them to undue influence of the executive branch of government.

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