

TEXT OF SPEECH BY PASTOR ‘TUNDE BAKARE
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THEME: THE CONSPICUOUS HANDWRITING ON THE
WALL

SCRIPTURAL TEXT: DANIEL 5:1-6; 13-29.

Introduction

Fellow Nigerians at home and abroad, good morning and a very happy Easter to you all. Our theme for today’s State of the Nation Broadcast is “The Conspicuous Handwriting on the Wall,” inspired by the account in **Daniel 5** verses **1-6** and **13-29**. It reads, and I quote:

Daniel 5:1-6 (NKJV):

¹ Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. ² While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from

them. ³Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. ⁵In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. ⁶Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.

Daniel 5:13-29 (NKJV):

¹³Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?" ¹⁴I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. ¹⁵Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. ¹⁶And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck,

and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.”¹⁷ Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.¹⁸ O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor.¹⁹ And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down.²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.²¹ Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.²² “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.²³ And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and

owns all your ways, you have not glorified. ²⁴ Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

²⁵ “And this is the inscription that was written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

²⁶ This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; ²⁷ TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; ²⁸ PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” ²⁹ Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Down Memory Lane

As you may recall, on January 15, 2011, I was invited by the then General Muhammadu Buhari to run with him on the platform of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) in the 2011 presidential election. After initial hesitation, and upon much consultation, I eventually accepted the invitation on the last day for submission of the nomination form. My eventual acceptance was upon the assurance that, should we be elected, amongst other deliverables, our administration would commit to re-engineering Nigeria’s governmental structure with a view to guaranteeing the security and prosperity of our nation and her people.

After a vigorous campaign, as the presidential election drew near and political intrigues stared us in the face, General Muhammadu Buhari gave a deeply emotional public statement at a press conference on Wednesday, April 13, 2011, at the International Conference Centre, Abuja. He said:

“After being head of state, I am sure I could easily have retired into a life of comfort and ease as an elder statesman, as a contractor or as a beneficiary of any one of the nation’s many generous prebendal offerings. But that is not what I wish to do with my life. And so, if I don’t take any of these alternative courses of action, it should be clear that I am not in this for the love of office or for pursuit after personal glory or in order to achieve some personal goal. Far be it from me that this should be. I need nothing and I have nothing more to prove. I am in this solely for the love of my country and concern for its destiny and the fate of its people. And that is why, despite the many disappointments along the way, I am still in the struggle and will remain in it to the end. I have decided to dedicate the remainder of my life to fighting for the people of this country — until their right is restored to them.”¹

At some point while delivering his speech, General Muhammadu Buhari broke down in tears as he wept for our nation. Deeply moved,

several of us who were with him in the hall also wept. General Muhammadu Buhari then made a solemn statement:

“...this campaign is the third and last one for me; since, after it, I will not present myself again for election into the office of the president.”²

After the controversial and divisive 2011 elections, as Nigeria drifted along sectional undercurrents and the nation sought a unifying force, some of us prevailed on General Muhammadu Buhari not to quit the stage, but to take back his words and form a coalition of the best of the North and the best of the South to salvage our nation. I must admit that I played a critical role in that mission. God had shown me in a vision that General Muhammadu Buhari still had a role to play in stabilising Nigeria. I, therefore, facilitated a meeting in the United Kingdom between him and some of our CPC leaders with a view to forming a coalition between CPC and Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) that could save Nigeria from impending disaster. Subsequently, it was my privilege to move the historic motion at Eagle Square, Abuja on February 6, 2013 for the merger of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP). That step, together with the efforts of other progressive Nigerians, led to the eventual formation of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

However, in 2015, as our nation prepared for general elections, the interplay of social, economic, political and military headwinds came

crashing on our national foundations and exposed the fault lines in our nationhood. As the two major political parties, APC and PDP, and their candidates locked horns, our nation was deeply divided along ethnic, partisan, religious and sociocultural lines. Furthermore, oil prices plummeted across the globe, an economic recession loomed, and severe hardships lay in wait for the Nigerian people. As drum beats of war reverberated across the landscape with threats to national stability coming from various political interest groups, Boko Haram terrorists held sway over vast swathes of territory, and two hundred and seventy-six girls from Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok were abducted and held in captivity.

In the midst of that chaotic climate, the 2015 general election was the preoccupation of the political class. Many stakeholders were convinced that a change of government was what Nigeria needed at that time and the “Change” mantra was chanted across the nation. However, I sounded the alarm in a State of the Nation Broadcast on Sunday, January 4, 2015, titled “The Gathering Storm and Avoidable Shipwreck: How To Avoid Catastrophic Euroclydon.” I warned that our myriad challenges, including violent sectional agitations, terrorism, socio-economic deprivation, and political violence were merely symptoms of more fundamental problems.³ I identified some of these foundational problems to include our faulty and lopsided governmental structure, unresolved historical grievances, unreconciled historical differences, fierce disagreements around identity and population

dynamics with a census in view, gaps in the structure of our economy, and the many aberrations in our constitution.

Furthermore, I warned that a mere change of government without the definite resolution of these foundational questions of nationhood would amount to putting the cart before the horse and could lead the nation to a catastrophe. I then advocated pausing the elections within the confines of the Constitution so as to resolve these issues and stabilise our nation before proceeding to the polls.

However, when the nation disregarded wise counsel and insisted on building on faulty foundations, I stepped into the terrain as a nation builder. I worked behind the scenes in close collaboration with the two leading candidates, President Goodluck Jonathan of PDP and General Muhammadu Buhari of APC, to ensure that our nation was not swept away by the floods of disintegration. On past occasions, I have told the story of how my efforts at mediation earned the commendation of Dr. Andrew Pocock, now Sir Pocock, then British High Commissioner to Nigeria.

Upon the commencement of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, on various platforms, from the pulpit to the podium, from State of the Nation addresses such as this, to lectures at various fora, I pointed out to Nigeria the way out of the dire situation we are in as a nation. Furthermore, I engaged the government on several occasions, including direct engagements with the president, because of my desire to see President Muhammadu Buhari actualise the dreams of

a great Nigeria we had committed to. As I told the president in some of those engagements, his success is my success, and his failure is my failure. It is why I remain committed to seeing him succeed.

Nevertheless, I have laid a historical background as an introduction to this address because it is time to speak out. I am compelled to speak out because this is not the Nigeria General Muhammadu Buhari and I had dreams to create when he invited me to be his running mate in 2011. I am compelled to speak out because the state of the nation does not represent the Buhari I knew when we took that solemn journey towards rebuilding Nigeria. I am compelled to cry out because of the intent of the president as contained in his tribute dated October 14, 2019 in honour of my 65th birthday. He wrote: “We have shared ideas on how to engender a better country and formed a tag team for political power. May the ideas germinate fully, proliferate and give us the country of our dreams.” I am compelled to speak out at this point because, given the state of the nation, the legacy of President Muhammadu Buhari is in grave danger of being confined to an unsavoury side of history. I am indeed compelled to speak out because Nigeria is in a state of emergency.

Nigeria in a State of Emergency

In medicine, an emergency is defined as “an acute injury or illness that poses an immediate risk to a person’s life or long-term health, sometimes referred to as a situation risking ‘life or limb.’”⁴ For many years, Nigeria was in the intensive care unit of the universe. However,

six years ago, against timely warnings⁵ not to overlook fundamental and underlying conditions as the country prepared for the 2015 elections, her “caregivers” certified her fit and discharged her. Those underlying conditions have resurfaced and our nation is now in a critical state. Her survival is hanging in the balance and she has been rushed to the emergency room. The diagnosis indicates that a surgical procedure is unavoidable; the longer it is postponed, the more she stands to lose and the longer it will take for her to recover. The purpose of this address is to present the facts of this diagnosis and point a way out of our current crisis even as we approach a critical juncture in the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

The Second Term: A Curse or a Cause?

Fellow Nigerians, before I present this diagnosis, I would like to state that this evaluation has become all the more necessary as the year 2021 ushers in the second half of the second term of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. In conducting this assessment, therefore, I am reminded of the prayer of Moses, the foundational leader of the nation of Israel. When Moses saw the calamities that befell his people as he led them through the wilderness towards the Promised Land, he prayed a critical prayer:

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”⁶

This assessment is, therefore, imperative because it aims to bring to the consciousness of the present occupants of the seat of power the

transient nature of political power, so that they may become circumspect and commit to redeeming the time they have left in office.⁷ Indeed, my aim in highlighting these issues is to ensure that the government of President Muhammadu Buhari does not fall victim to what is historically described, especially in American politics, as the “Second-Term Curse.”

Political analysts describe the second-term curse as “the perceived tendency of second terms of U.S. presidents to be less successful than their first terms.”⁸ According to the literature, historical evidence shows that “the second terms of U.S. presidents have usually been plagued by a major scandal, policy inertia, some sort of catastrophe, or other problems.”⁹ For instance, *The Wall Street Journal* cites historical examples to show the failures of otherwise successful presidents in their second terms. “Is there a second-term curse on presidents?” *The Wall Street Journal* asks and follows with a response:

It’s widely believed that the answer is yes. Look at Richard Nixon: re-elected with 61% of the vote in 1972, forced to resign under threat of impeachment. Ronald Reagan: re-elected in 1984, then hobbled by the Iran-Contra scandal two years later. Bill Clinton: re-elected in 1996 promising to build a bridge to the 21st century, then impeached by the House of Representatives for lying under oath. George W. Bush: re-elected in 2004, only to see his job-approval rating plummet amid scenes of

violence in the streets of New Orleans and Baghdad in 2005 and a financial crisis in the fall of 2008.¹⁰

Although some analysts question the notion of a second-term curse, the historical facts speak for themselves. History suggests that the so-called curse is due to overconfidence and loss of focus by leaders during their second terms in office. According to *The Wall Street Journal*:

There is a classic explanation for this supposed curse, summed up in a single word: hubris. The re-elected president overestimates his mandate. He ignores opposition and pursues goals that prove to be beyond reach. Freed of the need to seek re-election, isolated by the perquisites of office, he plunges ahead—only to fall off a cliff.¹¹

In support of this position, *The New York Times* argues that:

Overwhelming victory can often lead to second-term hubris, persuading a president that the country thinks he can do no wrong.¹²

It may interest you to know that this phenomenon has proved historically relevant in the Nigerian context. The First Republic was toppled during what was more or less the second term of the Tafawa Balewa administration, following allegations of corruption, patronage politics, the overbearing reach of the centre, the draconian incursion by the central government into regional governance, and the resulting political instability.

In like manner, the Second Republic ended abruptly during the second term of President Shehu Shagari. Addressing the nation as the Shagari administration was overthrown, his successor, the then General Muhammadu Buhari, made the following statement as military head of state:

...It is true that there is a worldwide economic recession. However, in the case of Nigeria, its impact was aggravated by mismanagement. We believe the appropriate government agencies have good advice but the leadership disregarded their advice. The situation could have been avoided if the legislators were alive to their constitutional responsibilities. Instead, the legislators were preoccupied with determining their salary scales, fringe benefit and unnecessary foreign travels, et al, which took no account of the state of the economy and the welfare of the people they represented.

As a result of our inability to cultivate financial discipline and prudent management of the economy, we have come to depend largely on internal and external borrowing to execute government projects with attendant domestic pressure and soaring external debts, thus aggravating the propensity of the outgoing civilian administration to mismanage our financial resources.¹³

These excerpts of the December 31, 1983 speech by the then General Muhammadu Buhari told the unfortunate story of how the administration of President Shehu Shagari had succumbed to the so-called second-term curse. Some would even argue that, in an ironic turn of events, the reflections of General Muhammadu Buhari on the Shagari administration succinctly describe Nigeria's current realities under the civilian administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

Nevertheless, no other administration in Nigeria's recent history has fallen victim to the jinx of the second term as that of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Re-elected in 2003, President Obasanjo began his second term as civilian president on a high note by appointing some of Nigeria's most competent technocrats into his cabinet. President Obasanjo's team included the likes of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, Mr. Frank Nweke Jnr., and a host of others.

Bolstered by high oil prices and an unprecedented growth rate, the economic team of President Obasanjo developed and drove one of the most promising reform experiences in Nigeria's governance history under the umbrella of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The efforts of that administration led to a historic debt relief package for Nigeria as well as the institutionalisation of budgetary due process. The Obasanjo administration also midwived the growth of the liberalised telecommunication sector, the development of a framework for power sector reforms, the launch of a set of education reform policies, the

institution of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), among others. To provide a stable political framework for this socioeconomic momentum, the Obasanjo administration proceeded to convene the National Political Reform Conference in 2005. As these reforms began to energise the polity and Nigerians began to talk of the emergence of a “modern Nigeria,” the second-term curse reared its ugly head in the form of a Third-Term Agenda which would mar President Obasanjo’s legacy. Jinxed by this phenomenon, President Obasanjo then bequeathed to the nation a shaky succession through an election process even the winner, President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, admitted was flawed.¹⁴

Thus, in spite of his successes, President Obasanjo failed to address the fundamental issues of nationhood in his second term in office due to the usurpation of his political reform programme by a tenure elongation plan. As a result, not only did the former president deny Nigeria the opportunity of stable and guaranteed reforms, he also denied himself the benefit of a well-deserved and uninterrupted retirement after decades of commendable service to the nation. This might explain why the former president has become, according to some, “The Letter-Writer-General of the Federation,”¹⁵ constantly interrupting his retirement to write thought-provoking open letters to successive presidents. Going by the weighty and wisdom-laden contents of these letters, it is as though the former president, observing affairs with hindsight, is compelled to redeem his legacy and to right the wrongs he ostensibly created by his actions and inactions during his second term

in office. It was British statesman, Winston Churchill, who once said, “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.”¹⁶ The purpose of this address is to ensure that the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari finishes strong and breaks the jinx of the second-term curse.

Successes and Failures: An Assessment of the State of the Nation Under President Muhammadu Buhari

Fellow Nigerians, you may recall that as President Muhammadu Buhari took the oath of office during his first term in office, he summed up his election campaign promises in three pivotal agendas, namely: Security, Anti-Corruption and Economic Diversification with a focus on job creation. I applauded this three-point agenda because the focal areas should have provided an opportunity for the president to address Nigeria’s fundamental issues given that they point to the foundational deficits in our polity, namely:

1. The deficit of an appropriate governmental structure that can guarantee the security of lives and property;
2. The deficit of a moral compass and national value system that can eliminate corruption from our national psyche;
3. The deficit of an economic structure that can unleash the potential of Nigeria’s diverse geo-economic zones.

However, the first term saw the Buhari administration grapple with the collapse in oil prices and Nigeria’s first recession in about twenty-five

years.¹⁷ But, despite the false starts, the administration succeeded in bringing Nigeria out of recession and made some gains in security, anti-corruption and job creation.

On security, the administration of President Buhari continued the military assault on Boko Haram that had commenced at the end of the term of his predecessor. We recall the president's first bold move when he ordered the relocation of the Command Control Centre from Abuja to Borno, the epicentre of the war against Boko Haram. By December 2015, the government declared Boko Haram "technically defeated" and unable to mount conventional attacks against hard or soft targets.¹⁸

On anti-corruption, the president took certain commendable steps in the fight against corruption at the beginning of his administration, including the attempt to plug the loopholes in the system through the Treasury Single Account (TSA) intervention. As a result of these efforts, in 2016, Nigeria received its highest scorecard so far in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.¹⁹

On job creation, at the beginning of his administration, President Muhammadu Buhari embarked on large-scale skill development through the N-Power programme. Under this scheme, hundreds of thousands were empowered.²⁰ In addition, the government's reform policies significantly moved Nigeria up from the 170th position in 2015 to the 131st position in 2019 on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index.²¹ Through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), a number of programmes were further put in place to provide take-off

grants for small and medium-scale enterprises. As part of its efforts to combat poverty, the administration deployed such programmes as the Conditional Cash Transfer scheme, the TraderMoni initiative, the school feeding programme, among others. These successes, alongside visible investments in rail and road infrastructure, and such initiatives as the Anchor Borrowers' Programme which boosted rice production, played a role in giving President Muhammadu Buhari a second term.

However, laudable as these achievements are, the current state of the nation is a clear indication that these efforts have been insufficient in dealing with our national problems; they have been unable to address the underlying problems of the Nigerian nation. At best, these efforts bought the administration some time to stabilise the nation's condition from a volatile state, as pain relievers can help stabilise a patient in critical condition so that the underlying condition can be treated. The major limitation of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has been the failure to appreciate the fact that the problems of Nigeria are more deeply rooted than these honest efforts can reach, and that what is required is a holistic and systematic approach to governance.

Unfortunately, after winning re-election in 2019, rather than do a deep dive to address the fundamental causes of our national malady by dealing with the root causes of insecurity, corruption and joblessness, the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari decided to treat more symptoms by broadening its agenda. The president's Next Level Agenda widened the focus from a three-point to a nine-point agenda. I

am reminded of the logic put forward by the *Wall Street Journal* to explain the so-called second-term curse:

The re-elected president overestimates his mandate. He ignores opposition and pursues goals that prove to be beyond reach.”²²

Hear me clearly: I am not saying that the thematic areas of the government’s Next Level Agenda are not important. They are important. Make no mistake, it is important to “build a thriving and sustainable economy; enhance social inclusion and reduce poverty; enlarge agricultural output for food security and export, attain energy sufficiency in power and petroleum products and expand transport and other infrastructural development; expand business growth, entrepreneurship and industrialization; expand access to quality education, affordable healthcare and productivity of Nigerians; build a system to fight corruption, improve governance and create social cohesion; and improve security for all.”²³ These nine objectives are commendable. However, if the government had recognised that these objectives would have been the natural outcomes of getting the fundamentals of our nationhood right, it would have framed all its objectives in the context of the foundational pillars upon which the survival of our nation should rest. Instead, we have spent time papering over cracks and dressing windows while the weak foundational structures are crumbling under the weight of neglect.

To paraphrase the words of W. B. Yeats popularised by Chinua Achebe, “things are falling apart; the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon our land.”²⁴ Let me now highlight instances that clearly show that the efforts of the last six years, however honest, have been inadequate in dealing with the root causes of our national challenges:

1. Years after the government assured Nigerians that Boko Haram had been “technically defeated,”²⁵ we are once again confronted with entire villages being overrun by terrorists.²⁶ We are inundated with report after report of soldiers being ambushed and killed²⁷ and hostages being beheaded and kidnapped.²⁸ While I commend the bravery of our armed forces, the worsening security situation is an indication that our approach to security governance is simply superficial and inadequate to deal with the root causes of the problem;
2. Nearly seven years after the shocking kidnap of the Chibok Girls, one hundred and twelve of them are yet to be rescued, while Leah Sharibu, kidnapped in Dapchi in 2018, remains in captivity and is now reportedly a mother of two.²⁹ The start-up kidnap industry has secured funding and has now scaled; from Dapchi to Kankara and from Kagara to Jangebe and elsewhere, we have experienced the cycle of abduction of school children, alleged ransom payments³⁰ sometimes in the hundreds of millions of naira, the release of the abducted school children, the denial by the government of any ransom payment,³¹ followed by the next cycle of abduction. Nigerians are then left wondering which school will

be next. If our schools degenerate into kidnap hotbeds on this administration's watch, not even the school feeding programme can encourage over 10 million³² out-of-school children to enrol in a school. In fact, the number of out-of-school children can be expected to rise with the swelling ranks of pupils whose parents are scared to return them to their schools for fear of abduction by terrorists and bandits;

3. From Owo-Ikare Road to Akure-Owo Road,³³ from Sapele-Oghara Road³⁴ to Benin-Ore Road,³⁵ from Enugu-Ugwogo-Nsukka Road³⁶ to Nsukka-Adani-Onitsha Road,³⁷ from Abuja-Kaduna Road³⁸ to Lokoja-Okene Road,³⁹ the reports of bandits establishing their dens on the highways suggest that infrastructure without solid governance substructures will eventually rupture.

Now, the federal government's railway modernisation projects across the country are highly commendable. The Abuja-Kaduna Rail Line in particular is a relief for travellers because it has provided an alternative to the Abuja-Kaduna Road which has become notorious for kidnapping and banditry. However, the fact remains that the railways are not accessible or affordable to most Nigerians. We are behind schedule in rail infrastructure not just because of the failure to modernise the railway system over the years, but also because the federal government has monopolised the sector and weakened the ability of the federating units to participate competitively and collaboratively. If we fail to address this fundamental challenge of inclusive development, if we fail to

enable subnational governments to harness their resources towards empowering their respective zones, states and local government areas, if we fail to expand opportunities for the teeming population of the unemployed and underemployed, even the rail lines will not be safe for travel in the near future because the rage of the poor will overwhelm our infrastructural development. Furthermore, aggrieved Nigerian youth may someday rise to question this government for the Chinese loans being piled up for future generations, while the reports of hoodlums repeatedly attacking trains on the Abuja-Kaduna Rail Line⁴⁰ would seem like child's play in comparison if the hens of unrest fully come home to roost;

4. Our agriculture and food sufficiency policies have also borne the brunt of the state of the nation. While bandits and cattle rustlers have continued to terrorise farmers and cattle owners in the North, the activities of criminal herdsmen have destabilised farming in southern Nigeria. Not even the president's controversial shoot-on-sight order for illegal bearers of AK-47 guns has proved sufficient to abate these attacks. Worse still, the recent eviction of herdsmen from some states in the South and the retaliatory embargo on food supply from the North to the South of Nigeria are clear indicators that failure to solve foundational problems of nationhood can destabilise shallow policies, no matter how brilliant such policies appear to be on the surface.

The massacre of dozens of rice farmers in Garin Kwashebe⁴¹ was one clear indicator of the limitation of window dressing in governance intervention. It clearly reminded us that if farmlands remain unsafe for farmers, our brilliant agricultural intervention policies will suffer in the long run because they do not address the root problems. If farmers who are beneficiaries of the Anchor Borrowers' Programme risk kidnap on their farmlands, then we can expect low productivity and loan defaults at the end of the farming season;

5. After the president's first term gains in the battle against corruption, not only have we plunged to the worst performance scorecard since 2013⁴² in the Corruption Perceptions Index,⁴³ we are still dealing with some of the same issues that this government promised to change when it ran against the Goodluck Jonathan administration; from the opaqueness of the fuel subsidy regime⁴⁴ that has turned the fuel pricing system into a curious case of the more you look, the less you see,⁴⁵ to allegations⁴⁶ and "recanting"⁴⁷ over missing funds earmarked for arms and ammunition by the National Security Adviser (NSA), as well as the alarming remarks of the former Chief of Army Staff (COAS) who recently declared that "there is [a] likelihood of terrorism persisting in Nigeria for another 20 years."⁴⁸

The Conspicuous Handwriting on the Wall

The state of the nation has spurred outcries from stakeholders across the country. We have heard from the Emir of Daura, Alhaji Faruk Umar Faruk, who lamented that “what Nigeria is experiencing now is worse than civil war.”⁴⁹ We have heard from the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Sa’ad Abubakar III, CFR, who declared that the North is, in his words, the “worst place to be in this country because bandits go around in the villages, households, and markets with their AK 47 and nobody is challenging them.”⁵⁰ We have also heard from the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, who, speaking on behalf of other Yoruba traditional rulers, including the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi, and the Awujale, Oba Sikiru Kayode Adetona, cried out to the president over the state of insecurity in the South West.⁵¹

The lamentations of the royal fathers have been echoed by sociocultural groups across the country, including Ohanaeze Ndigbo, the Arewa Consultative Forum, and Afenifere.⁵² The Northern Elders Forum has gone as far as calling for the resignation of the president.⁵³ Even governors and lawmakers have joined the lamentations. From one declaration to another, and from one resolution to another, the consensus amongst these stakeholders is that Nigeria is in a state of emergency. Consequently, if urgent, decisive action is not taken, insecurity may be the second-term curse of the current administration.

THIS IS THE CONSPICUOUS HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.

The Foundational Gaps

Nigeria has two fundamental problems: one at the level of nationhood, and the other at the level of statehood. The first fundamental problem of the Nigerian nation is the absence of such unifying leadership that can redeem Nigerians from our diverse ethnic and religious identities and integrate us into a common national identity. The second fundamental problem of the Nigerian state is our inability to manage a sustainable and balanced relationship between the centre and the federating units.

We have failed to realise that a strong federal government working with strong federating units can guarantee the security and prosperity of the Nigerian people. We have failed to appreciate the fact that coordinated governance by the different states in each of the geopolitical zones will enhance the security of Nigerians and bring our people out of poverty. This is the heart and soul of restructuring. Restructuring does not mean the dismemberment of the Nigerian state. It is not an attack on Nigerian unity. It does not mean disadvantaging any section of the country. It means empowering the North West, the North Central, the North East, the South West, the South South and the South East, so that every part of our country will be safe and prosperous. Show me one person who does not want this for our country, and I will show you an enemy of Nigeria.

Unfortunately, the insecurity and instability now raging across the nation are the results of our national failure to act on this truth over the

years. Because we have failed to guarantee effective regional governance, a regional governance vacuum has been created. The insecurity in our country is the attempt by regional non-state actors to fill that regional vacuum. Our nation is unstable across the geopolitical zones because, in the absence of legitimate regional governance structures, we are confronted with illegitimate regional actors seeking to hijack governance and control the political economy of the regions; from the Boko Haram terrorists in the North East, to the bandits in the North West, to the criminal herdsmen in the North Central, to regional militias in the South West, to the militants in the South South, and to the secessionists in the South East. The greatest demand on the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari is to facilitate the emergence of legitimate regional governance frameworks that can fill the vacuum and flush out the illegitimate structures.

What the President Can Do to Leave a Lasting Legacy

In the two years left of this administration, the president needs to make an executive decision to approach the restructuring question from a three-pronged perspective targeted at his administration's three-point agenda, namely: Security, Economy and Anti-Corruption.

1. On Security: The president must intensify the clampdown on terrorism and banditry by expanding support to the armed forces in terms of technology, armoury, logistics, prompt action on military intelligence, as well as inspirational leadership to sustain the morale of the newly appointed service chiefs. Beyond these, the devolution of policing powers to the subnational governments

must be prioritised. State governments must be empowered to form local police forces and to provide cutting edge training and equipment for these forces. The states may be further empowered for zonal coordination of such state policing systems where necessary. The president may delegate the responsibility of designing and executing this security governance transition to the National Security Council, with the National Security Adviser and the Attorney General of the Federation driving the process. In this regard, the National Security Council may refer to the national security audit titled “Resetting Nigeria on the Path of Predictable Progress,”⁵⁴ which I presented to the nation on October 7, 2019.

2. On the Economy: The president must prioritise the devolution of the governance of key geo-economic sectors to the sub-nationals towards geo-economic diversification. The states may then be supported to form zonal economic blocs. In this regard, the president may delegate the detailed policy and legislative agenda to the National Economic Council (NEC) chaired by the vice president. The resulting president-sponsored bill may then be sent to the National and State Assemblies in line with the provisions of the Constitution. In this regard, the National Economic Council may refer to the “Pragmatic Steps Towards Restructuring Nigeria”⁵⁵ which I have presented to the nation on various occasions.

3. On Anti-Corruption: The president may be guided by the understanding that the anti-corruption war will truly be won, not merely by the force of prosecution, but, more fundamentally, by a national moral compass and the deliberate and strategic integration of the Nigerian people into true nationhood. If citizens have a definite stake in their nation, not only will they not steal from the national purse, they will also do everything legal and legitimate to rid the nation of those elements who seek to sabotage the common good through corruption. This is why we need to bring the Nigerian people together into one unifying national agenda. To this end, the president may institute, by an executive order, a vehicle in the form of a Presidential Commission for National Reconciliation, Reintegration and Restructuring or Rebirth, however so named, the details of which I have presented to him since the commencement of his first term in office.

Conclusion

In his acceptance speech after his nomination as the flagbearer of the APC at the party's convention in December 2014, then presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, said:

“Just as APC stands as a new party for a new Nigeria, our government will institute new policies to realise the new Nigeria...I pledge to do my utmost to make this happen but cannot do it alone. I need your support. I need your help to become President of Nigeria so that government

may come to serve you, so that it may bring relief to the broken and weary among us and so that it may usher in a new Nigeria meant for us all...”⁵⁶

Taking the would-be president at his words, Nigerians went out in unprecedented numbers to vote at the 2015 polls. In areas where election materials arrived late or where card readers failed to function, Nigerians were undeterred. They were so invested in the candidacy of General Muhammadu Buhari that they remained on voting lines at great personal costs until they voted. Even after casting their votes, some waited till late in the night for their votes to be counted. When the polling centres were overtaken by darkness, some lit their kerosene lamps, while others put on their car headlamps as they waited to make their voices heard and their votes count for a man they believed they could trust. I appeal to Mr. President not to discountenance such tremendous goodwill. If he does, his legacy will be undermined.

The propositions highlighted here will ensure that, instead of a second-term curse, the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari will be set on a course towards the rebuilding of the foundations of the Nigerian nation. These steps will secure for the president a lasting legacy as the president who midwived the emergence of the New Nigeria, a secure and truly prosperous nation that every Nigerian will be proud to call home. I pray earnestly that God will enable the president to take the necessary action that will redeem our nation and set her on the path of predictable progress. And the people say, “AMEN!”

Thank you for listening; God bless you, God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and God bless the continent of Africa.

Pastor ‘Tunde Bakare

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Convener, Save Nigeria Group (SNG).

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