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## John N. Paden. Muhammadu Buhari: The Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria. Zaria, Nigeria, Huda Huda Publishing Company, 2016.

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**John N. Paden. *Muhammadu Buhari: The Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria*. Zaria, Nigeria, Huda Huda Publishing Company, 2016.**

John Paden's *Buhari: The Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria* is an important contribution to works documenting Nigeria's political history. The author demonstrates a scholarly commitment to Nigerian affairs, having lived and worked in Nigeria for a considerable length of time. His most recent publication follows the publication of his *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* and an earlier biographical masterpiece on Ahmadu Bello, a major figure in Northern Nigeria's pre-independence politics and a dominant figure in Nigerian politics throughout the First Nigerian Republic. Paden's current work is a second biography, this time on Muhammadu Buhari, a retired major general in the Nigerian army and the country's sitting president.<sup>1</sup> To have written this book only six months after Buhari's residential victory in 2015, Paden must have been betting on Buhari's strength as a candidate, given Buhari's broad acceptance across many parts of the country. In the book's preface, Paden explains the rationale for undertaking this biographical treatise on the new Nigerian president, noting that he hoped such a work would enable the world to appreciate how Buhari emerged to become a national leader and that it would highlight the qualities Buhari brings to the challenges of leadership. Specifically, the author's aim is to examine the qualities of this determined leader, who, after three failed electoral attempts since 2003, demonstrated an unwavering desire to govern Nigeria and fix its several problems.

There are twenty four chapters in the book, along with a foreword by retired general Theophilus Y. Danjuma. The work is divided into three parts. The first part highlights the different stages of socialization and the challenges they posed to Buhari from the time of his birth in 1942 through to 2015. Paden describes Buhari's early life and his family networks and values, exposure to education, enlistment in the military, and experiences during the Civil War as foundational, preparatory phases that eventually led to the emergence of Buhari as a national leader and his contributions to Nigerian civil society (pp.3-72). In part two of the book, the author presents and examines the immediate challenges Buhari faced upon taking office, including quelling the Boko Haram insurgency, halting corruption, achieving religious balance while maintaining regional balance, as well as resolving the challenges of economics and politics. The challenges of implementing economic and political initiatives while fighting corruption, providing security by defeating the Boko Haram insurgency, and revitalizing the country's economy are examined against the backdrop of the resistance these initiatives spawned (pp. 73-152). The third part of the book captures in greater detail the challenges the Buhari administration faced pertaining to security, including ending the insurgency specifically the Shiite – military clash in Zaria); enhancing internal security; tackling corruption; and encouraging economic development and promoting political change. Some critical issues that engaged the author's attention in this part of the book include police and security reform, corruption and law, military procurement accountability (and the diversion of defense funds by the previous administration), the first Buhari budget, and the controversy over fuel subsidies and the structure of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). The reconstruction of the devastated Northeast, the introduction of constitutional federalism and accountability, and the challenges of attaining a balance between federal and state governance—while simultaneously attempting to legitimize local governance—all while attempting to achieve a balance between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government are analyzed and presented in detail (pp. 153-250).

The author concludes the book with an assessment of the administration of President Buhari on how well it has actualized its agenda. Regarding counterinsurgency in the Northeast, Paden believes that the Buhari strategy of engaging with the regional countries in the Lake Chad area (comprising Cameroon, Niger, and Chad) and working closely with the international community (including western powers and the United Nations) accounts for the recovery of all the territories that had been lost to Boko Haram. On the anticorruption campaign, Paden observes that the administration's reliance on international support led to the retrieval of Nigeria's looted funds banked and invested in Dubai, London, Switzerland, and the United States (p.259). The author observes that the ongoing trials of nine Nigerian senators—including the president of the Senate over alleged criminal offences—are a testament to the administration's commitment to the rule of law in conducting its fight against corruption. Regarding economic development, Paden opines that although the collapse of the price of oil below \$30 per barrel prevented the Buhari administration from introducing a reconstruction budget for the development of infrastructure, deficit spending and international assistance have enabled the administration to improve electricity infrastructure and provide help for the poor (p.260). The author is of the opinion that the Buhari administration has shown commitment to its stated priority of effecting political change through visible and demonstrable efforts that reflect the pursuit of three-tiered federalism (in which local governments are an official tier of government, alongside state and federal entities) and electoral reform (p.261).

This book has some weak points that may be addressed in subsequent editions. The first is that it does not give a detailed account of all the subjects it broaches, thereby leaving out some valuable information that could have helped in further validating the author's assessments and conclusions. The second weakness, which is related to the first, is that valid data on the achievements of the Buhari administration across sectors of the Nigerian economy are not included to substantiate the author's position. The rice revolution, which has been successfully carried out in the agricultural sector, and the efforts being made to revitalize the mining sector, both of which are consistent with the administration's objective of diversifying the country's revenue sources, are not mentioned in the book. Third, no reference is made to the need to reposition the Civil Service for improved service delivery despite the obvious fact that the success of the Buhari administration depends not solely on political reform but also on the implementation of the administration's policies by the Civil Service.

Despite these shortcomings, Paden has written a book which should be read by those with an interest in African studies, international relations, or political science because a biographical publication on Muhammadu Buhari, one of Africa's most disciplined, insightful, and committed leaders, should certainly command wide readership. The expanded version of this book should be published after President Buhari completes his presidency, as that will enable the author to examine Buhari's legacy and the Buhari administration's achievements in retrospect, which will undoubtedly cement Buhari as Nigeria's most transformative leader.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Buhari previously served as Nigeria's head of state from December 1983 to August 1985 after assuming power in a coup d'état. He subsequently ran for president in the country's 2003, 2007, and 2011 general elections but was unsuccessful until his most recent bid in the 2015 elections, during which he defeated incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, marking the first time in the country's history that an incumbent president has been ousted by an opposition candidate.