

President Buhari as I think of Him

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Over time, I have learnt that it is best to focus more on what people do than what they say. That does not mean not to pay attention to what people say because there are people who say it as they see it. What they say, you can literally take to the bank. There are others who say the opposite of what they intend to do and as soon as they speak, you know you have to do a lot of analysis to arrive at what they are likely going to do. Then there are those who keep extremely mum as the dust swirls around them. They possibly can see trends and want to avoid being pigeonholed. They either expect the dice to fall in their favour to subsequently rejoice. If the dice doesn't fall as preferred or even as discretely engineered, they would find it easy to beat a retreat without losing anything. Of course, we can build several personality types along the continuum of those who say what they mean and those who say the exact opposite as well as those who claim to be diplomatic as if diplomacy is the art of lying.

My beef is with President Muhammadu Buhari coming out clearly a second time to state that he has no third term agenda, hence he can afford to be reckless during this term in office. I don't want to bother my reader about his being reckless, so far, over corruption. I had written on that earlier and at different opportunities.

So, since President Buhari has reportedly indicated that he doesn't want a third term, should we go to sleep and be rest assured that he would keep his word and not change his mind?

President Buhari was forced into retirement from the Nigerian army as a Major-General by General Ibrahim Babangida. He was fully socialized into the fighting of wars. Surprise is one of the elements in fighting battles. With a strategy in place, there is nothing wrong with tactical withdrawals to confuse your adversary and then spring up an attack when your enemy least expects it.

More importantly, President Buhari as an aspirant informed us all on February 6, 2011 in an interview with Teophilus Abba that was reported in Sunday Trust newspaper of that date, as recently recalled by Premium Times, that he would only serve as a one term President of Nigeria if ever elected. In office and while seeking a second term, he boldly stated that he had said so. I guess, President Buhari agrees with Bhutros Ghali, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, that "only a fool does not change his mind".

If he changed his mind on one major position before, why can he not change it again?

So, let us be focused:

President Buhari should not wait for the "hate speech" bill to pass before making his position as a Nigerian known. Focussing on what he does, he should make a speech on why we do not need such a law, not only because so many similar laws are in the books, but express outrage that a Nigerian could want another to face death penalty under this law. He has reasonable control over the Nigerian legislature. But he can pretend that the legislature is independent and with all seriousness persuade, lobby and do all sorts to avoid the passage of a bill only for him to veto. Even though I would not bet that he would veto such a bill if it passes, the time is now to avoid waste of time/money/energy of all of us on a divisive bill.

If the President were to actively lobby for the stoppage of those getting ready to appear to be pressuring him for a 3rd term agenda, through a bill to silence all of those against such constitutional change, then we can start to take him serious that he really does not want a third term.

I do not feel comfortable to ask President Buhari to seek a law in defence of our constitution that makes seeking a 3rd term in office a crime. That in itself would, like the "hate speech bill", interfere with the freedom of speech. But then, maybe he can submit such a bill with the intention of clearly stopping all the shenanigans of politicians and hangers-on around him. After all, canvassing a 3rd term contravenes the spirit and letters of the grund norm - our constitution as it stands today.

Nigeria's President should not, as usual, be quiet on the social media bill that's meant to silence opposition to among other things, demands for his running for a 3rd term in office.