The Federation of Nigeria was granted full independence on 1 October 1960 under a constitution that provided for a [parliamentary government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_government) and a substantial measure of self-government for the country's three regions. From 1959 to 1960, [Jaja Wachuku](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaja_Wachuku%22%20%5Co%20%22Jaja%20Wachuku) was the First Nigerian [Speaker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speaker_%28politics%29) of the Nigerian [Parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Assembly_of_Nigeria), also called the "House of Representatives." [Jaja Wachuku](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaja_Wachuku%22%20%5Co%20%22Jaja%20Wachuku) replaced Sir [Frederick Metcalfe](https://books.google.com/books?id=ESk7b8iKIU0C&pg=PA782) of Britain. Notably, as First Speaker of the House, Jaja Wachuku received Nigeria's Instrument of Independence, also known as Freedom Charter, on 1 October 1960, from [Princess Alexandra of Kent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Alexandra%2C_The_Honourable_Lady_Ogilvy), the Queen's representative at the Nigerian independence ceremonies. [Queen Elizabeth II was monarch of Nigeria and head of state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II), and Nigeria was a member of the British [Commonwealth of Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations). The Federal government was given exclusive powers in defence, foreign relations, and commercial and fiscal policy. The monarch of Nigeria was still head of state but legislative power was vested in a bicameral parliament, executive power in a prime minister and cabinet, and judicial authority in a Federal Supreme Court. Political parties, however, tended to reflect the makeup of the three main ethnic groups. The [Nigerian People's Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_People%27s_Congress) (NPC) represented conservative, Muslim, largely [Hausa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hausa_people) and [Fulani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fulani_people) interests that dominated the Northern Region. The northern region of the country, consisting of three-quarters of the land area and more than half the population of Nigeria. Thus the North dominated the federation government from the beginning of independence. In the 1959 elections held in preparation for independence, the NPC captured 134 seats in the 312-seat parliament

Capturing 89 seats in the federal parliament was the second-largest party in the newly independent country the [National Council of Nigerian Citizens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Council_of_Nigeria_and_the_Cameroons) (NCNC). The NCNC represented the interests of the [Igbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people)- and Christian-dominated people of the Eastern Region of Nigeria.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nigeria#cite_note-Martin_Meredith_p._195-55) and the [Action Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_Group_%28Nigeria%29) (AG) was a left-leaning party that represented the interests of the [Yoruba people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people) in the West. In the 1959 elections, the AG obtained 73 seats

The first post-independence national government was formed by a conservative alliance of the NCNC and the NPC. Upon independence, it was widely expected that [Ahmadu Bello](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmadu_Bello%22%20%5Co%20%22Commonwealth%20of%20Nations) the Sardauna of Sokoto, the undisputed strong man in Nigeria who controlled the North, would become Prime Minister of the new Federation Government. However, Bello chose to remain as premier of the North and as party boss of the NPC, selected Sir [Abubakar Tafawa Balewa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abubakar_Tafawa_Balewa%22%20%5Co%20%22Abubakar%20Tafawa%20Balewa), a Hausa, to become Nigeria's first Prime Minister.

The Yoruba-dominated AG became the opposition under its charismatic leader Chief [Obafemi Awolowo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obafemi_Awolowo%22%20%5Co%20%22). However, in 1962, a faction arose within the AG under the leadership of [Ladoke Akintola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Akintola%22%20%5Co%20%22Samuel%20Akintola) who had been selected as premier of the West. The [Akintola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Akintola%22%20%5Co%20%22) faction argued that the Yoruba peoples were losing their pre-eminent position in business in Nigeria to people of the Igbo tribe because the Igbo-dominated NCNC was part of the governing coalition and the AG was not. The federal government Prime Minister, Balewa agreed with the Akintola faction and sought to have the AG join the government. The party leadership under Awolowo disagreed and replaced Akintola as premier of the West with one of their own supporters. However, when the Western Region parliament met to approve this change, Akintola supporters in the parliament started a riot in the chambers of the parliament. Fighting between the members broke out. Chairs were thrown and one member grabbed the parliamentary Mace and wielded it like a weapon to attack the Speaker and other members. Eventually, the police with tear gas were required to quell the riot. In subsequent attempts to reconvene the Western parliament, similar disturbances broke out.[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nigeria#cite_note-Martin_Meredith_p._196-57) Unrest continued in the West and contributed to the Western Region's reputation for, violence, anarchy and rigged elections.[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nigeria#cite_note-58) Federal Government Prime Minister Balewa declared martial law in the Western Region and arrested Awolowo and other members of his faction charged them with treason. Akintola was appointed to head a coalition government in the Western Region. Thus, the AG was reduced to an opposition role in their own stronghold.

First Republic

In October 1963 Nigeria proclaimed itself the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and former Governor-General [Nnamdi Azikiwe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nnamdi_Azikiwe%22%20%5Co%20%22Nnamdi%20Azikiwe) became the country's first [President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Nigeria). From the outset, Nigeria's ethnic and religious tensions were magnified by the disparities in economic and educational development between the south and the north. The AG was manoeuvred out of control of the Western Region by the Federal Government and a new pro-government Yoruba party, the [Nigerian National Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_National_Democratic_Party) (NNDP), took over. Shortly afterwards the AG opposition leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was imprisoned to be without foundation. The 1965 national election produced a major realignment of politics and a disputed result that set the country on the path to civil war. The dominant northern NPC went into a conservative alliance with the new Yoruba NNDP, leaving the Igbo NCNC to coalesce with the remnants of the AG in a progressive alliance. In the vote, widespread electoral fraud was alleged and riots erupted in the Yoruba West where heartlands of the AG discovered they had apparently elected pro-government NNDP representatives.

**First period of military rule**

On 15 January 1966 a group of army officers (the Young Majors) mostly south-eastern Igbos, [overthrew the NPC-NNDP government and assassinated the prime minister and the premiers of the northern and western regions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966_Nigerian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat). However, the bloody nature of the Young Majors coup caused another coup to be carried out by General [Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnson_Aguiyi-Ironsi). The Young Majors went into hiding. Major [Emmanuel Ifeajuna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanuel_Ifeajuna) fled to Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana where he was welcomed as a hero. Some of the Young Majors were arrested and detained by the Ironsi government. Among the Igbo people of the Eastern Region, these detainees were heroes. In the Northern Region, however, the Hausa and Fulani people demanded that the detainees be placed on trial for murder.

The federal military government that assumed power under General [Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnson_Aguiyi-Ironsi) was unable to quiet ethnic tensions on the issue or other issues. Additionally, the Ironsi government was unable to produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of the country. Most fateful for the Ironsi government was the decision to issue Decree No. 34 which sought to unify the nation.Decree No. 34 sought to do away with the whole federal structure under which the Nigerian government had been organised since independence. Rioting broke out in the North. The Ironsi government's efforts to abolish the federal structure and the renaming the country the Republic of Nigeria on 24 May 1966 raised tensions and led to [another coup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966_Nigerian_counter-coup) by largely northern officers in July 1966, which established the leadership of Major General [Yakubu Gowon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakubu_Gowon%22%20%5Co%20%22Yakubu%20Gowon). The name Federal Republic of Nigeria was restored on 31 August 1966. However, the subsequent [massacre of thousands of Ibo in the north](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966_anti-Igbo_pogrom) prompted hundreds of thousands of them to return to the south-east where increasingly strong Igbo secessionist sentiment emerged. In a move towards greater autonomy to minority ethnic groups, the military divided the four regions into 12 states. However, the Igbo rejected attempts at constitutional revisions and insisted on full autonomy for the east.

The [Central Intelligence Agency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency) commented in October 1966 in a CIA Intelligence Memorandum that:

"Africa's most populous country (population estimated at 48 million) is in the throes of a highly complex internal crisis rooted in its artificial origin as a British dependency containing over 250 diverse and often antagonistic tribal groups. The present crisis started" with Nigerian independence in 1960, but the federated parliament hid "serious internal strains. It has been in an acute stage since last January when a military coup d'état destroyed the constitutional regime bequeathed by the British and upset the underlying tribal and regional power relationships. At stake now are the most fundamental questions which can be raised about a country, beginning with whether it will survive as a single viable entity.

The situation is uncertain, with Nigeria, ..is sliding downhill faster and faster, with less and less chance unity and stability. Unless present army leaders and contending tribal elements soon reach agreement on a new basis for the association and take some effective measures to halt a seriously deteriorating security situation, there will be increasing internal turmoil, possibly including civil war.

On 29 May 1967, Lt. Col. [Emeka Ojukwu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emeka_Ojukwu%22%20%5Co%20%22Emeka%20Ojukwu), the military governor of the eastern region who emerged as the leader of increasing Igbo secessionist sentiment, declared the independence of the eastern region as the [Republic of Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Biafra) on 30 May 1967. The ensuing [Nigerian Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Civil_War) resulted in an estimated 3.5 million deaths (mostly from starving children) before the war ended with Gowon's famous "No victor, no vanquished" speech in 1970.

Following the civil war, the country turned to the task of economic development. The U.S. intelligence community concluded in November 1970 that "...The Nigerian Civil War ended with relatively little rancour. The Igbos were accepted as fellow citizens in many parts of Nigeria, but not in some areas of former [Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biafra) where they were once dominant. Iboland is an overpopulated, economically depressed area where massive unemployment is likely to continue for many years.

The U.S. analysts said that "...Nigeria is still very much a tribal society..." where local and tribal alliances count more than "national attachment. General [Yakubu Gowon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakubu_Gowon%22%20%5Co%20%22Yakubu%20Gowon), head of the Federal Military Government (FMG) is the accepted national leader and his popularity has grown since the end of the war. The FMG is neither very efficient nor dynamic, but the recent announcement that it intends to retain power for six more years has generated little opposition so far. The [Nigerian Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Army), vastly expanded during the war, is both the main support to the FMG and the chief threat to it. The troops are poorly trained and disciplined and some of the officers are turning to conspiracies and plotting. We think Gowon will have great difficulty in staying in office through the period which he said is necessary before the turnover of power to civilians. His sudden removal would dim the prospects for Nigerian stability."

"Nigeria's economy came through the war in better shape than expected." Problems exist with inflation, internal debt, and a huge military budget, competing with popular demands for government services. "The petroleum industry is expanding faster than expected and oil revenues will help defray military and social service expenditures... "Nigeria emerged from the war with a heightened sense of national pride mixed with an anti-foreign sentiment, and an intention to play a larger role in African and world affairs." British cultural influence is strong but its political influence is declining. The Soviet Union benefits from Nigerian appreciation of its help during the war, but is not trying for control. Nigerian relations with the US, cool during the war, are improving, but France may be seen as the future patron. "Nigeria is likely to take a more active role in funding liberation movements in southern Africa." [Lagos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lagos), however, is not perceived as the "spiritual and bureaucratic capital of Africa"; [Addis Ababa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addis_Ababa) has that role...."

Foreign exchange earnings and government revenues increased spectacularly with the oil price rises of 1973–74. On July 29, 1975, Gen. [Murtala Mohammed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murtala_Mohammed%22%20%5Co%20%22Murtala%20Mohammed) and a group of officers staged a bloodless coup, accusing Gen. Yakubu Gowon of corruption and delaying the promised return to civilian rule. General Mohammed replaced thousands of civil servants and announced a timetable for the resumption of civilian rule by 1 October 1979. He was assassinated on 13 February 1976 in an [abortive coup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buka_Suka_Dimka) and his chief of staff Lt. Gen. [Olusegun Obasanjo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olusegun_Obasanjo%22%20%5Co%20%22Olusegun%20Obasanjo) became head of state.

Second Republic

A [constituent assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constituent_Assembly) was elected in 1977 to draft a new constitution, which was published on 21 September 1978, when the ban on political activity was lifted. In 1979, five political parties competed in a series of elections in which Alhaji [Shehu Shagari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shehu_Shagari%22%20%5Co%20%22Shehu%20Shagari) of the [National Party of Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Party_of_Nigeria) (NPN) was elected president.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nigeria#cite_note-Martin_Meredith_p._220-69) All five parties won representation in the National Assembly.

During the 1950s prior to independence, oil was discovered off the coast of Nigeria. Almost immediately, the revenues from oil began to make Nigeria a wealthy nation. However, the spike in oil prices from $3 per barrel to $12 per barrel, following the [Yom Kippur War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War) in 1973 brought a sudden rush of money to Nigeria. Another sudden rise in the price of oil in 1979 to $19 per barrel occurred as a result of the lead up to the [Iran–Iraq War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran%E2%80%93Iraq_War).[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nigeria#cite_note-Martin_Meredith_p._276-70) All of this meant that by 1979, Nigeria was the sixth largest producer of oil in the world with revenues from oil of $24 billion per year.

In 1982 the ruling National Party of Nigeria, a conservative alliance led by Shegu Shagari, had hoped to retain power through patronage and control over the Federal Election Commission. In August 1983, Shagari and the NPN were returned to power in a landslide with a majority of seats in the National Assembly and control of 12 state governments. But the elections were marred by violence and allegations of widespread voter fraud included missing returns, polling places failing to open, and obvious rigging of results. There was a fierce legal battle over the results, with the legitimacy of the victory at stake On December 31, 1983, the military overthrew the Second Republic. Major General [Muhammadu Buhari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammadu_Buhari%22%20%5Co%20%22Muhammadu%20Buhari) emerged as the leader of the [Supreme Military Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Military_Council_of_Nigeria_%281983%E2%80%931985%29) (SMC), the country's new ruling body. The Buhari government was peacefully overthrown by the SMC's third-ranking member General [Ibrahim Babangida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibrahim_Babangida) in August 1985. Babangida (IBB) cited the misuse of power, violations of human rights by key officers of the SMC, and the government's failure to deal with the country's deepening economic crisis as justifications for the takeover. During his first days in office, President Babangida moved to restore freedom of the press and to release political detainees being held without charge. As part of a 15-month economic emergency plan, he announced pay cuts for the military, police, civil servants and the private sector. President Babangida demonstrated his intent to encourage public participation in decision making by opening a national debate on proposed economic reform and recovery measures. The public response convinced Babangida of intense opposition to an economic recession.

The Abortive Third Republic

[*Nigerian Third Republic*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Third_Republic)

Head of State Babangida promised to return the country to civilian rule by 1990 which was later extended until January 1993. In early 1989 a constituent assembly completed a constitution and in the spring of 1989 political activity was again permitted. In October 1989 the government established two parties, the [National Republican Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Republican_Convention) (NRC) and the [Social Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_%28Nigeria%29) (SDP); other parties were not allowed to register.

In April 1990 mid-level officers attempted unsuccessfully to overthrow the government and 69 accused plotters were executed after [secret trials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secret_trial) before military tribunals. In December 1990 the first stage of partisan elections was held at the local government level. Despite the low turnout, there was no violence and both parties demonstrated strength in all regions of the country, with the SDP winning control of a majority of local government councils.

In December 1991 state legislative elections were held and Babangida decreed that previously banned politicians could contest in primaries scheduled for August. These were cancelled due to fraud and subsequent primaries scheduled for September also were cancelled. All announced candidates were disqualified from standing for president once a new election format was selected. The presidential election was finally held on 12 June 1993, with the inauguration of the new president scheduled to take place 27 August 1993, the eighth anniversary of President Babangida's coming to power.

In the historic 12 June 1993 presidential elections, which most observers deemed to be Nigeria's fairest, early returns indicated that wealthy Yoruba businessman [M. K. O. Abiola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M._K._O._Abiola) won a decisive victory. However, on 23 June, [Babangida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibrahim_Babangida%22%20%5Co%20%22Ibrahim%20Babangida), using several pending lawsuits as a pretence, annulled the election, throwing Nigeria into turmoil. More than 100 were killed in riots before Babangida agreed to hand power to an interim government on 27 August 1993. He later attempted to renege on this decision, but without popular and military support, he was forced to hand over to [Ernest Shonekan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Shonekan), a prominent nonpartisan businessman. Shonekan was to rule until elections scheduled for February 1994. Although he had led Babangida's Transitional Council since 1993, Shonekan was unable to reverse Nigeria's economic problems or to defuse lingering political tension.

**Sani Abacha**

With the country sliding into chaos Defense Minister [Sani Abacha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sani_Abacha%22%20%5Co%20%22Sani%20Abacha) assumed power and forced Shonekan's resignation on 17 November 1993  Abacha dissolved all democratic institutions and replaced elected governors with military officers. Although promising restoration of civilian rule he refused to announce a transitional timetable until 1995. Following the annulment of the June 12 election, the United States and others imposed sanctions on Nigeria including travel restrictions on government officials and suspension of arms sales and military assistance. Additional sanctions were imposed as a result of Nigeria's failure to gain full certification for its counter-[narcotics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narcotics) efforts.

Although Abacha was initially welcomed by many Nigerians, disenchantment grew rapidly. Opposition leaders formed the [National Democratic Coalition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Democratic_Coalition%2C_Nigeria) (NADECO), which campaigned to reconvene the Senate and other disbanded democratic institutions. On 11 June 1994 [Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshood_Kashimawo_Olawale_Abiola%22%20%5Co%20%22Moshood%20Kashimawo%20Olawale%20Abiola) declared himself president and went into hiding until his arrest on 23 June. In response, petroleum workers called a strike demanding that Abacha release Abiola and hand over power to him. Other unions joined the strike, bringing economic life around Lagos and the southwest to a standstill. After calling off a threatened strike in July the [Nigeria Labour Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria_Labour_Congress) (NLC) reconsidered a general strike in August after the government imposed conditions on Abiola's release. On 17 August 1994, the government dismissed the leadership of the NLC and the petroleum unions placed the unions under appointed administrators, and arrested Frank Kokori and other labor leaders.

The government alleged in early 1995 that military officers and civilians were engaged in a coup plot. Security officers rounded up the accused, including former Head of State Obasanjo and his deputy, retired General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua. After a secret tribunal, most of the accused were convicted and several death sentences were handed down. In 1994 the government set up the Ogoni Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal to try Ogoni activist [Ken Saro-Wiwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa) and others for their alleged roles in the killings of four Ogoni politicians. The tribunal sentenced Saro-Wiwa and eight others to death and they were executed on 10 November 1995.

On 1 October 1995 Abacha announced the timetable for a three-year transition to civilian rule. Only five political parties were approved by the regime and voter turnout for local elections in December 1997 was under 10%. On 20 December 1997, the government arrested General [Oladipo Diya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oladipo_Diya%22%20%5Co%20%22Oladipo%20Diya), ten officers, and eight civilians on charges of coup plotting. The accused were tried before a [Gen Victor Malu military tribunal](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gen_Victor_Malu_military_tribunal&action=edit&redlink=1) in which Diya and five others- Late Gen AK Adisa, Gen Tajudeen Olnrewaju, Late Col OO Akiyode, Major Seun Fadipe and a civilian Engr Bola Adebanjo were sentenced to death to die by firing squad. Abacha enforced authority through the federal security system which is accused of numerous human rights abuses, including infringements on freedom of speech, assembly, association, travel, and violence against women.

**Abubakar's transition to civilian rule**

Abacha died of heart failure on 8 June 1998 and was replaced by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. The military Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) under Abubakar commuted the sentences of those accused in the alleged coup during the Abacha regime and released almost all known civilian political detainees. Pending the promulgation of the constitution written in 1995, the government observed some provisions of the 1979 and 1989 constitutions. Neither Abacha nor Abubakar lifted the decree suspending the 1979 constitution, and the 1989 constitution was not implemented. The judiciary system continued to be hampered by corruption and lack of resources after Abacha's death. In an attempt to alleviate such problems Abubakar's government implemented a civil service pay raise and other reforms.

In August 1998 Abubakar appointed the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct elections for local government councils, state legislatures and governors, the national assembly, and president. The NEC successfully held elections on 5 December 1998, 9 January 1999, 20 February, and 27 February 1999, respectively. For local elections, nine parties were granted provisional registration with three fulfilling the requirements to contest the following elections. These parties were the [People's Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Democratic_Party_%28Nigeria%29) (PDP), the [All People's Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_People%27s_Party_%28Nigeria%29) (APP), and the predominantly [Yoruba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people) [Alliance for Democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance_for_Democracy_%28Nigeria%29) (AD). The former military head of state [Olusegun Obasanjo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olusegun_Obasanjo%22%20%5Co%20%22Olusegun%20Obasanjo), freed from prison by Abubakar, ran as a civilian candidate and won the presidential election. The PRC promulgated a new constitution based largely on the suspended 1979 constitution, before the 29 May 1999 inauguration of the new civilian president. The constitution includes provisions for a bicameral legislature, the National Assembly consisting of a 360-member House of Representatives and a 109-member Senate.

Fourth Republic

The emergence of democracy in Nigeria on May 1999 ended 16 years of consecutive military rule. [Olusegun Obasanjo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olusegun_Obasanjo%22%20%5Co%20%22Olusegun%20Obasanjo) inherited a country suffering economic stagnation and the deterioration of most democratic institutions. Obasanjo, a former general, was admired for his stand against the Abacha dictatorship, his record of returning the federal government to civilian rule in 1979, and his claim to represent all Nigerians regardless of religion

The new President took over a country that faced many problems, including a dysfunctional bureaucracy, collapsed [infrastructure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infrastructure), and a military that wanted a reward for returning quietly to the barracks. The President moved quickly and retired hundreds of military officers holding political positions, established a blue-ribbon panel to investigate human rights violations, released scores of persons held without charge, and rescinded numerous questionable licenses and contracts left by the previous regimes. The government also moved to recover millions of dollars in funds secreted to overseas accounts

Most civil society leaders and Nigerians witnessed marked improvements in human rights and freedom of the press under Obasanjo. As Nigeria works out representational democracy, conflicts persist between the Executive and Legislative branches over appropriations and other proposed legislation. A sign of federalism has been the growing visibility of state governors and the inherent friction between Abuja and the state capitals over resource allocation.

Communal violence has plagued the Obasanjo government since its inception. In May 1999 violence erupted in Kaduna State over the succession of an Emir resulting in more than 100 deaths. In November 1999, the army [destroyed the town of Odi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odi_massacre), [Bayelsa State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayelsa_State%22%20%5Co%20%22Bayelsa%20State) and killed scores of civilians in retaliation for the murder of 12 policemen by a local gang. In Kaduna in February–May 2000 over 1,000 people died in rioting over the introduction of criminal Shar'ia in the State. Hundreds of ethnic Hausa were killed in reprisal attacks in south-eastern Nigeria. In September 2001, over 2,000 people were killed in inter-religious rioting in Jos. In October 2001, hundreds were killed and thousands displaced in communal violence that spread across the states of Benue, Taraba, and Nasarawa. On 1 October 2001 Obasanjo announced the formation of a [National Security Commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Commission) to address the issue of communal violence. Obasanjo was reelected in 2003.

The new president faces the daunting task of rebuilding a petroleum-based economy, whose revenues have been squandered through corruption and mismanagement. Additionally, the Obasanjo administration must defuse longstanding ethnic and religious tensions if it hopes to build a foundation for economic growth and political stability. Currently, there is [conflict in the Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta) over the environmental destruction caused by oil drilling and the ongoing poverty in the oil-rich region

A further major problem created by the oil industry is the drilling of pipelines by the local population in an attempt to drain off the petroleum for personal use or as a source of income. This often leads to major explosions and high death tolls. Particularly notable disasters in this area have been: 1) October 1998, Jesse, 1100 deaths, 2) July 2000, Jesse, 250 deaths, 3) September 2004, near Lagos, 60 deaths, 4) May 2006, Ilado, approx. 150-200 deaths (current estimate).

Two militants of an unknown faction shot and killed Ustaz Ja'afar Adam, a northern Muslim religious leader and Kano State official, along with one of his disciples in a [mosque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosque) in [Kano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kano) during dawn prayers on 13 April 2007. Obasanjo had recently stated on national radio that he would "deal firmly" with election fraud and violence advocated by "highly placed individuals." His comments were interpreted by some analysts as a warning to his Vice President and 2007 presidential candidate [Atiku Abubakar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atiku_Abubakar%22%20%5Co%20%22Atiku%20Abubakar).[[77]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nigeria#cite_note-USTAZ-77)

In the [2007 general election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_general_election%2C_2007), [Umaru Yar'Adua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umaru_Yar%27Adua%22%20%5Co%20%22Umaru%20Yar%27Adua) and [Goodluck Jonathan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goodluck_Jonathan%22%20%5Co%20%22Goodluck%20Jonathan), both of the [People's Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Democratic_Party_%28Nigeria%29), were elected President and Vice President, respectively. The election was marred by electoral fraud, and denounced by other candidates and international observers.[[78]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nigeria#cite_note-SMH_April_24-78)[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nigeria#cite_note-Reuters,_Tom_Ashby_Apr_24-79)

Yar'Adua's sickness and Jonathan's successions

Yar'Adua's presidency was fraught with uncertainty as media reports said he suffered from kidney and heart disease. In November 2009, he fell ill and was flown out of the country to Saudi Arabia for medical attention. He remained incommunicado for 50 days, by which time rumours were rife that he had died. This continued until the BBC aired an interview that was allegedly done via telephone from the president's sick bed in Saudi Arabia. As of January 2010, he was still abroad.

In February 2010, [Goodluck Jonathan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goodluck_Jonathan%22%20%5Co%20%22Goodluck%20Jonathan) began serving as acting President in the absence of Yaradua. In May 2010, the Nigerian government learned of Yar'Adua's death after a long battle with existing health problems and an undisclosed illness. This lack of communication left the new acting President Jonathan with no knowledge of his predecessor's plans. Yar'Adua's Hausa-Fulani background gave him a political base in the northern regions of Nigeria, while Goodluck does not have the same ethnic and religious affiliations. This lack of primary ethnic support makes Jonathan a target for militaristic overthrow or regional uprisings in the area. With the increase of resource spending and oil exportation, Nigerian GDP and HDI (Human Development Index) have risen phenomenally since the economically stagnant rule of Sani Abacha, but the primary population still survives on less than US$2 per day. Goodluck Jonathan called for new elections and stood for re-election in April 2011, which he won However, his re-election bid in 2015 was truncated with the emergence of former military ruler General Muhammadu Buhari, mainly on his inability to quell the rising insecurity in the country. General Muhammadu Buhari was declared the winner of the 2015 presidential elections. General Muhammadu Buhari took over the helm of affairs in May 2015 after a [peaceful transfer of power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peaceful_transition_of_power) from the Jonathan led administration.

Democracy Day

Nigeria's Democracy day was originally celebrated on May 29, every year since General Olusegun Obasanjo emerged President in 1999. However, on June 12, 2018, General Muhammadu Buhari, as president, announced a shift in this date from May 29 to June 12, as from the year 2019. This was to commemorate the June 12th election of 1993, and the events that surrounded it.