

CHAPTER 16

THE FOURTH REPUBLIC (1999 – 2010)

Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- discuss the role of the mass media in democratic transition;
- discuss the relevance of 1999 constitution of the fourth republic;
- discuss the era of Olusegun Obasanjo regime and short-comings;
- discuss the era of the Yar' Adua regime, his achievements and short comings.

Introduction

General Abdulsalami Abubakar kept to his “political” promise of handing over in 1999, through a democratic process. In spite of other lingering socio-economic challenges faced by his regime like the Niger Delta crisis, the burden of stabilizing the political tension in the country, the menace of corruption and other pressing issues, on May 29, 1999, he successfully handed over the realms of government to President Olusegun Obasanjo, in the fourth Republic. Hence, the new president did not only inherit the fulfilled political promise, but was later to be faced by so many intractable problems. He adopted and promulgated some institutional reforms and frameworks to address the issues. However, in 2001, he successfully handed over to president Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, whose tenure ended shortly due to his sudden death. This chapter will show how this Regions fared.

The new leader showed his seriousness by appointing the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to register and conduct a general election for smooth democratic transition. With the success of the presidential election, General Abubakar kept to his political promise, handing over to a new democratic president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29, 1999 and the promulgation of the 1999 constitution into law. It is however, observed that the 1999 constitution did not depart much from the 1979 constitution but was a transfer of the 1995 draft constitution which was not promulgated into law before the sudden death of General Abacha. Hence with minor change, it transmuted into 1999 constitution.

16.1 The Role of the Mass Media in Democratic Transition

The importance of the mass media towards the successful democratic transition cannot be overemphasized. Nigerians today are enjoying a peaceful transited democratic regime due to public enlightenment, effective and efficient dissemination of information on democratic values as well as the need to play active roles in periods of elections through mass media. Therefore, the roles performed by the mass media include the following:

- (i) **Public enlightenment:** The mass media has played a prominent role by making Nigerians know the importance of coming out to vote and being voted for. Past experience has shown that very many Nigerians are no longer interested in election because, they have come to believe that their votes don't count any longer. That Nigerians still turn-out to vote or be voted for is as a result of mass media.
- (ii) **Political consciousness:** The mass media has continued to be used in sensitizing the public and awakening their consciousness towards electoral involvement and participation. Nigerians are now very conscious of political happenings around them. Nigerians are increasingly aware that their vote could count for them when they use their vote wisely.
- (iii) **Formation of political parties with good ideologies that enhances nation building:** The mass media help in the formation of political parties whose manifestoes cut across ethnic lines. Nigerians are now free to join parties that will protect the national interest. Sectional and segregative parties are now out of fashion. There are reasons why mass media is important but this few should suffice.

16.2 The 1999 Constitution

Although, there was no clear difference between the 1999 constitution and the 1979 constitution. However, it is important to note, in the 1999 constitution, the following were obtained: executive presidency, the fundamental objectives, citizenships, directive principles of state policy, the federal capital territory, the functions of local government council, the thirty-six (36) state structure etc. The new constitution has no provision or function for the traditional rulers in the country. However, recent events have shown that Nigerians are yet to have a more reliable and dependable constitution they will be proud to call their own, as agitations for a constitutional conference is currently on, even as the national assembly are looking into it in order to make the necessary amendments.

Therefore, it will not be out of place to say that the fourth republic owed its legitimacy, legal backing, acceptability through and by the promulgation of the 1999 constitution into law. The 1999 constitution was the legal vehicle that brought this dispensation to reality. It is based on the constitution that Nigerians are assured that their rights shall be protected.

16.3 The Era of the Olusegun Obasanjo Regime, Achievements and Short-Comings (1999 – 2007)

The re-emergence of President Olusegun Obasanjo as the Head of State is replete with historical strange. Despite the electoral imperfection that brought him to power, his second coming to governance is very significant because as at 1999, there was the need to end military incursion in politics. The political environment he inherited had been also disorganized structurally by previous military regimes. The president, back from prison had much that he bargained for given the numerous and accumulated problems facing the country. The issues at stake included the following: political

instability, the Niger delta crisis that is crippling the economy, the menace of corruption and the human right abuses etc.

However, given the background of his second coming, he made both local and international contact, in a bid to find solutions to the Nigerian economic ill health. To revive the economy, he made and adopted many reforms upon which he intended to change the direction of the economy. His regimes policy trust are encapsulated under his regimes economic blueprint.

1. Obasanjo's Economic Direction: 1999 – 2003
2. The Memorandum on Economic and Financial Policies

Achievements of Obasanjo's Regime

1. **Political Achievements:** Chief Obasanjo's greatest achievement was his strength and growing ability to ensure the cooperate existence of Nigeria as one united country, despite the lingering political crisis that tended toward disintegrating Nigeria. For instance, the adoption of the Sharia penal code in states like Zamfara, Bauchi, Kano, Katsina and others were contained.

In the West and Eastern Regions, we have the Odua People's Congress (OPC) led by Dr Fedrick Fashonu and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB) led by Chiefl Ralph Uwazuruike, while in the Southern Region, we have the Niger Delta crisis led by dreaded groups like Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) and Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

In spite of these challenges and problems, Obasanjo was able to conduct election and hand over power to Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 2007 when it became clear that his third-term bid had failed.

2. **Health and Education Sector Reforms:** Olusegun Obasanjo made some social reforms bordering on the health and education sector. The inauguration of the Universal Basic Education for primary, secondary and tertiary education. In the health sector, he ensured his administration implemented the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) which is meant for eradication of diseases such as polio, tuberculosis and other dreaded diseases etc.
3. **Economic Achievements:** Chief Obasanjo's economic reforms are anchored on his economic blueprint – Obasanjo's Economic Direction (1999 – 2003) and Memorandum on Economic and Financial Policies.

He initiated the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEED's) for the federal level, SEED's for the state and LEED's for the local government areas. Olusegun Obasanjo economic hench men – Dr Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Prof Charles Soludo, Obo Ezekwesili, worked seriously to ensure the economy did not collapse. The banking sector consolidation is also an aspect of his economic reforms programme which cuts across all sectors.

4. **Telecommunication Sector Reforms:** The growth in the sector is as a result of his reforms in the sector. The sector today attracts more foreign direct investment through foreign partnership. More telecommunication companies are now interested in the sector. The improvement of the sector has helped in making communications more effective and efficient. Telecom companies such as MTN, Glo, Airtel etc are helping to grow the economy of Nigeria.
5. **Achievement from the Social Sector Reforms:** Since his assumption to power, his regime took the issue of corruption very seriously. Nigeria has lost billions of dollars since independence because of corruption.

In 2002, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, instituted the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). In 2004, the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) 2002.

These anti-corruption agencies had among other things been able to recover Nigerian stolen billions from corrupt leaders across the country.

6. **Poverty Alleviation Programme:** The regime of Chief Obasanjo concerns itself on how to end the excruciating poverty in Nigeria. His regime formed NAPEP – The National Poverty Eradicating Programme on assumption. The agency provided both short-term loans and creation of necessary facilities that was geared towards training for manpower development as well as on women empowerment and development.

The importance of this programme to human capacity development cannot be over emphasized. His regime ensured that women were supported through financial assistance and training in skill acquisition. These programmes has endeared his administration to many Nigerians despite other challenges which his administration couldn't solve due to shortage of funds.

The Obasanjo administration carried out far reaching reforms which were meant to restructure the backward moving economy he inherited from past administration. However, in spite of his regimes efforts, situations on ground still show that very many Nigerians are wallowing in abject poverty in the midst of plenty, until, a holistic overhauling of structures inimical to the growth of the nations economy is totally removed, Nigerian may still have to remain where it is today.

16.4 The Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Regime: 2007 – 2010



Fig 16.1: Umaru Yar'Adua-Third Executive President of Nigeria

President Umaru Musa Yar'adua's regime was short-lived. He came to power through a democratic transition process that was criticized as controversial, especially from his stronger opponents, Muhammadu Buhari of the ANPP and Atiku Abubakar of the AC. Despite the controversies, it seemed that President Olusegun Obasanjo successfully handed power to another civilian government. He kept the promise! However, the political future of Nigeria was still uncertain owing to several socio-political challenges the country was going through which were highly volatile. President Yar'adua promised to stem the tides by providing Nigerians with good governance.

Therefore, it may be difficult to judge or compare his administration to another because one, he was not in good health and most of the times he was out of the country receiving treatment. Two, the political tension in the country was high couple with his health as well as the legal distraction, assessing his regime now may really not provide what is needed. And finally, very many Nigerians did not see him as very capable to lead the country owing to the above points.

However, as short-lived as the regime was, President Yar'adua was able to package an economic programme with which to move Nigeria and Nigerians forward. To Restructure and Resuscitate the ailing economy, he ensured he brought the right people in his government to help him realize his vision. He presented an economic reform blue print with which to achieve his vision, which he christened as the Seven-Point Agenda and another two special areas of interest in order to tackle the various problems facing the country.

It is indeed sad to mention, that Mr president took ill inbetween his regime's tenure and was flown to an undisclosed hospital after some month in Saudi Arabia. In a very critical condition under

life support machine, he was brought back to Aso Rock villa and on the 5th of May, 2010, Yar'adua died.

Hence, it will be apt that we assess his short lived regime by his economic reform programme which his then vice-president and now the president promised to continue with in order to know how the programme fared whether it achieved its aim or not.,

Achievements of Yar'adua's Regime

1. **Power and Energy:** His regime aimed at power sector development in order to provide sufficient and adequate power supply to ensure Nigeria's ability to compete as a modern economy and achieve full industrialization by 2015. The ongoing reforms in the power sector was initiated by him before his demise. More contracts were awarded for the construction of dams through Public Private Initiatives (PPI). The plan is to ensure that power supply in Nigeria is increased to 10 megawatts (mw) in 2011 and 50,000 mw by 2015.
2. **Infrastructure:** In order to move the extractive industry forward to a more productive sector economy. His regime went into swift action by having the right people to manage the sector. The policy is intended to free resource and make it available for development purposes in the social sector. It will end the lack of transparencies in the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC). The on-going reforms today in the oil sector attest to it.
3. **Food Security:** His regimes reform is agro-based, with the desire to create wealth in order to move out from over dependence on the oil sector. It is known that the advent of oil exploration and extraction relegated the agricultural sector. His regimes desire is to revive agriculture back to its prideful place, through the development of modern technology, which is expected to change and transform the sector for better productivity.
4. **Wealth Creation:** This is to ensure that the country diverts his revenue source from non-oil sector. The reform is focused on the creation of wealth through the sole diversification of production capacity, for instance, in the agricultural and solid mineral sector.
5. **Transport Sector:** This sector in the past is characterized by poor road network. The importance of good road network to the economic development of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. This is because the regime hinged the socio-political development of the country through the provision of an effective and efficient road network. The reform will improve road and rail development. The objective of this reform is to improve the sector to international standard. His regime embarked on rehabilitation and construction of roads and rails across the country.
6. **Land Reforms:** The main objective behind this reform is to change the existing land laws through legislative processes. This is to ensure land is made available for optimal productivity. Although, since his demise, one cannot really say the extent this reform has gone.
7. **Security:** The promise to ensure stability and security of lives and property is to ensure development and a cordial atmosphere upon which his programmes can be achieved. Niger

Delta crisis has been a burden to the economic development of Nigeria. His regime reformed and restructured the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to accommodate the target people. He initiated the Ledum Mittee led Technical Committee to help access the level of damage and provide solution to the lingering crisis in the area. His regime provided amnesty programme for the Niger Delta militant to lure them out from the creeks where they operate from and to surrender their arms. The programme indeed achieved a lot through this area. He created the ministry of the Niger Delta.

8. **Education:** The reform in this sector aimed at providing the minimum acceptable international standard of education for all. This will be achieved through massive injection of funds in the sector. Nigerians are indeed waiting to reap from this reform as the sector is gradually dying.

President Yar'adua indeed had good intentions for Nigeria. But he did not live to ensure that these laudable reform programmes were fully implemented. Hence, assessing how these seven-point agenda did reflect on Nigeria will be a wild goose chase. However, should these programmes be followed, it is my belief Nigeria and Nigerians shall be better for it.

Limitations

President Yar'adua regimes limitation cannot be any other thing but death. Not up to two years in office, yet he laid the foundation for a better Nigeria. His public declaration of his asset proved we missed an honest and humble leader.

Summary

- The 1999 constitution laid the foundation upon which the Nigerian democracy stands. Hence, its relevance to the cooperative existence of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized despite the limitations inherent in it.
- The Chief Olusegun Obasanjo regime has come and gone. The regime managed to hold the country together yet, those socio-cultural and political changes in the country still persisted.
- Mass media played a vital role towards the democratic transition through provision of the necessary information needed to sustain our nascent democracy despite the challenges it faced in a democratic Nigeria.
- Despite the controversial nature of this regime, Yar'adua was able to lay and enunciate policies to drive the country forward but could not due to unforeseen challenges.

Revision Questions

Objectives

1. Who handed power to Olusegun Obasanjo?
 - A. Gen Abacha
 - B. Gen Babangida

- C. Gen Abdulrasaq Adisa
 - D. Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar
2. What is the function of the EFCC?
- A. To sell properties
 - B. To creat funds
 - C. To fight crime
 - D. To build markets
3. Who is Nigerian president in the Fourth Republic?
- A. Shehu Shagari
 - B. Alhaji Ribadu
 - C. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar
 - D. Olusegun Obasanjo
4. When did Alhaji Musa Yar'adua die?
- A. 24 February, 2010
 - B. 29 May, 2010
 - C. 5 May, 2010
 - D. 9 February, 2010
5. What is the full meaning of O.P.C?
- A. Odua People's Congress
 - B. Organization of People's Congress
 - C. Odua's Party Convention
 - D. Odua's People's Convention
6. What is the full meaning of PPI?
- A. Peoples Party Initiative
 - B. Party Policy Initiative
 - C. Police Policy Initiative
 - D. Public Private Initiative
7. What is the function of the mass media?
- A. To give information
 - B. To construct road
 - C. To conduct election
 - D. To print money
8. How many years did Obasanjo's regime last?
- A. 5 years
 - B. 7 years
 - C. 10years
 - D. 8 years
9. Which of the following is not part of the 7-point agenda?

- A. Infrastructure reform
 - B. Power
 - C. Education
 - D. Land pollution
10. When did Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar hand over power?
- A. 27 May, 1999
 - B. 29 May, 1999
 - C. 29 April, 1999
 - D. 30 June, 2004

Essay Questions

- 1. Assess the roles of the mass media in Nigeria.
- 2. How relevant is the amnesty programme to the Niger Deltans.
- 3. Assess the impact of Obasanjo's reforms in the banking sector development.
- 4. Assess the role of the seven-point agenda reform in the development of the educational sector.
- 5. How can corruption be stemmed in Nigeria's socio-political development?