

CHAPTER 14

THE RETURN OF MILITARY RULE IN NIGERIA (1983 – 1993)

Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- state the factors that led to the military coup d'état of 1983;
- discuss the structure and programme of the regime;
- discuss the achievements and failures of the regime;
- examine the reasons for the over throw of the regime by Ibrahim Babangida in 1985.

Introduction

After its first four year term in office, the second republic led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari started losing popularity among Nigerians because of so many short comings faced by his regime. These short comings include among others, constitutional, economic and social problems. In all, the rich were getting richer while the poor were getting poorer. There were also serious cases of insecurity of lives and property in Nigeria within this period.

In the face of all these problems, the Shagari led National Party of Nigeria, (NPN) was returned to power for another four year term, through an electoral process that was believed to be involved in election rigging, thuggery, snatching of ballot boxes and other forms of intimidation and harassment of electoral officers and political opponents.

These problems coupled with the dissatisfaction expressed by Nigerians forced the military under general Mohammadu Buhari, to sack the Shagari's civilian government of 31st December, 1983.

14.1 Factors that Led to the Emergence of Buhari's Administration

A lot of factors were responsible for the military take over of power from the civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari on 31st December, 1983. These factors include the followings:-

1. **Political Factors:** The administration of Shehu Shagari created so many political problems which include:
 - (a) **Constitutional crisis:** The regime started on a very bad note, with a violation of the constitution of 1979. For instance, the presidential election which produced Alhaji Shehu Shagari as the first executive president of Nigeria was inconclusive. From the on-set, the constitution stipulates that if an election becomes inconclusive on account of no clear-cut

winner emerging with a two – third majority (2/3) the National Assembly i.e. (the Senate and House of representatives) will be convened and turned into an electoral college, so as to choose between the front runner and the second best candidates. But in the 1979 presidential election, this constitutional provision was played down on as the front runner was declared the winner with the overwhelming legal support to an act that was suppose to be declared null and void brought the Shagari's regime to legitimacy problems

- (b) **Poor leadership:** The Shagari regime was accused of offering an irresponsible and purposeless leadership that forcefully denied citizens their fundamental rights. For instance, the NPN government in total disrespect for human rights and parliamentary immunities deported the one- time majority leader of the Borno house of assembly, Alhaji Shugaba Abdusalman to the Republic of Chad. The same NPN which controlled Kaduna state house of assembly abused legislative responsibilities and impeached the GNPR government Alhaji Balarabe Musa. President Shagari's government worked to undermine the institution of state governors, by creating presidential liaison officers who functioned as parallel governors in non-NPN state. The officers were funded, empowered and recognized to use the might and resources of the federal government to thwart, frustrate and challenge state government in their states.
- (c) **Breach of constitutional state security of state governors:** The leadership of the federal government in the second republic in Nigeria enacted a new public order law which required security directives of state government to be cleared first with the inspector general of police or the minister of police affairs before being acted upon. This was done with Shagari putting into consideration the fact that state government has constitutional responsibility for security within this states,. It should be noted here that this new law freed state police commissioners from taking directives on law and order matters from state governors as a matter of routine.
- (d) **Political intolerance:** The Shagari regime was also found wanting an changes of political intolerance. This opposition and people considered to be political opponents were at various times and at different places harassed constantly, and intermediated. Opposition group leaders were imprisoned on flimsy charges.

2. **Economic Problems:** The countries economic difficulties under the Shehu Shagari's regime were too pronounced. These economic problems were located in the recklessness with which corrupt politicians and officials of the regime were squandering public funds. Another economic problem resulted from the world oil glut that hit Nigeria and other Oil Producing Exporting Countries (OPEC) as well as the impact of a global economic recession, which brought about serious decline in the Nigerian economy. This world economic recession generated rapid decline in general commodity prices in the world market. In order to meet up with her external financial commitments, Nigeria was forced to borrow excessively from international capital market. Inspite of the economic stabilization act of 1982, the Nigerian

economy continued to record budget deficits which rose from N3,295.6 million in 1980 to N4,882.6 million in 1981 and N5,373.1 million in 1982. These budgetary deficits, financed by either internal or external borrowing or both, led to a rapid accumulation of public debt. The internal component of which increased from N4,635.9 to N15,010 million during periods 1977 – 1982 and N22,221.44 million in 1983.

3. **Social Problems:** Shagari's social disposition by all intents and purposes showed him as a weak leader. This weakness manifested itself in the social decadence which characterized the regime. Shagari's ethical revolution could not check the excess of his political aides and staff who were caught up in a whining vortex of corruption. To say the least, political and bureaucratic corruption to an unimaginable dimension under President Shehu Shagari's regime, as both politicians and corrupt public servants indulge in cases of arson to cover up their financial recklessness. There were cases of mysterious fire outbreaks almost in all Nigeria's ministries and parastatals. The post and telecommunication building in Lagos, the federal capital development authority accounts office in Abuja, the Nigeria External Telecommunication (NET) building, the Republic building in Lagos, the federal ministry of education, and Anambra state broadcasting corporation just to name a few.

The second republic politicians were so unpatriotic that Nigerians in all walks of life saw them as symbolizing immorality, bribery and corruption. They could not lead by exemplary conducts and were ready to demonstrate their selfish and corrupt tendencies. Some critics of the second republic have remarked that the regime produced nothing but black embezzlers and exploiters, who used the opportunity of being in government to squander the nation's scarce resources.

The regime institutionalized all forms of social ills such as armed robbery, graduate unemployment, high cost of living and shortage of essential commodities. The regime took no action, even when they discovered that most privileged Nigerian importers hoarded certain essential imported staple food items like rice, in order to hike the prices.

4. **Decays in both Health and Educational Facilities:** Health care delivery and educational facilities witnessed serious set backs under Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Nigerian hospitals were turned into mere consulting clinics, since there were basically no needed health facilities and absence of the much needed drugs. The same was the case with the Nigerian Universities, secondary schools and primary schools. No new facility was procured and the old ones were hardly maintained. Service deliveries were poor in both the health and educational industries. There was rampant cases of strikes as both health workers and lecturers wanted improved working conditions. It is important for us to note at this point that, the overthrow of the Shagari regime was definitely caused by genuine cases of corruption and bad government. It was the era of the Umaru Dikkos and the Akinloyes of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

14.2 Structure and Programmes of Buhari / Idiagbon Regimes

Following the military take over, Nigerians showed a sign of relief by accepting the new regime. The new military administration which was headed by Major – General Muhammadu Buhari, contained other distinguished soldiers such as brigadier Tunde Idiagbon who was made (the chief of staff supreme, headquarters), Brigadier Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, (chief of army staff) and general D. Bali. Buhari himself described the administration as a continuation of the Mohammed/Obasanjo regime. He, Buhari suspended the 1979 constitution, dissolved all political parties and banned all political activities.



Fig.14.1: General Muhammed Buhari-Fifth Nigerian Military Head of State

The supreme military council was constituted with Major – General Muhammed Buhari, CFR, as the head of state and commander-in-charge of the armed forces in line with the dictates of promulgated decree No 1 of 1984 (suspension and modification) decree, which says that “There shall be for Nigeria a supreme military council, a national council of state, and federal executive council”. The supreme military council became the highest organ of government. It was made up mainly of top officers of the armed forces including the inspector general of police, Mr Etim Inyang as a member. Military governors were appointed for the nineteen states one of whom was a commissioner of police, Mr Fidelis Oyakhilome and a military administrator for the federal capital territory, Abuja. Federal and state executive councils and national council of states were also set up. The inspector general of police became a member of the national council of states, while the state commissioners of police were made members of state executives councils. Each of the 19 states were represented at the national council of state, while the federal executive council was composed of the head of the federal military government, the chief of staff, supreme headquarters and the ministers.

The decree created for each state an executive council which, both in composition and formation was similar to the federal executive council. The state executive council consisted of the military governor, some members of the armed forces and the police commissioner.

(a) Duties and Responsibilities of the SMC under Buhari Regime

The Supreme Military Council was charged with the following duties

- (a) The determination of national policy on major issues.
- (b) Constitutional matters including amendments of the 1979 constitution
- (c) All national security matters, including the authority to declare war or proclaim a state of emergency or martial law.
- (d) Appointments of the head of the federal military government, the chief of staff, supreme headquarters, the service chiefs, the general officers command, the inspector general of police, the director general of the Nigerian security organization, the military, governors, members of the other two councils, namely the national council of state, and the federal executive council.
- (e) General supervision of the work of the national council of state and the federal executive council. It is important for us to note that the SMC responsibilities listed above showed at a glance that the SMC of the Buhari regime was charged with the powers of the legislature and those of the executive.

(b) Duties and Responsibilities of the National Council of States under the Buhari Regime

The national council of state was charged with the responsibility of:

- (a) Policy guidelines on financial and economic matters and social affairs in so far as they affect the states.
- (b) The formulation and general implementation of national development plans including state programmes.
- (c) Constitutional matters especially in so far as they affect the states and
- (d) Such other matters as the supreme military council may from time to time determine.

Also, the federal executive council was charged with the responsibility of determining and executing the general policy of the federal military government.

14.3 Achievements and Failures of the Buhari's Regime

The administration's many decrees and military tribunals and emphasis on discipline won for it the characterization as "The first true military dictatorship, albeit benevolent" that Nigeria ever experienced.

It has as its immediate tasks, to discipline corrupt politicians and public officers. To recover stolen, public funds and regenerate the damped nations moral tone and ailing economy. Later in 1984, Buhari stated his administration's priorities to agriculture, power supply and industrial revival. The regime, like in 1966, military takeover received considerable public supports, particularly following its interest in trial and punishing corrupt public servants who may be found wanting on any charge of mismanagement of public fund. In its bid to fulfill this promise, suspected politicians and senior civil servants were arrested and detained. One of them, Alhaji B. Zuro, former governor of Kano state, was reported to have had N3.4 million cash stacked in his house at the time of the coup.

By October, 1984, the tribunal had recovered government money to the tune of N112, 129, 482.57 and E1,688.185.80. Additional N348,644,849.90 and N48,073,077.44 were recovered from the defunct Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) and the National Assembly respectively.

14.4 Major Reforms Initiated by the Regime

The administration's zeal to restructure the Nigerian economy and put smiles back on the faces of Nigerians moved them to promulgate so many decree and reforms which include:

- (a) **Economic Reforms:** The regime's economic reforms were aimed at reviving the oil sectors, so that it could yield more revenue for the country. In doing this, the regime ensured active participation of the country in the bargaining politics of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to ensure that the oil glut was halted and reversed in the interest of oil exporting countries.

The regime also worked hard to boost the Nigerian economy through the following policies.

- (i) Ensure prudent management of the available scarce resources and the diversification of the economy for more foreign exchange earnings
- (ii) Ensure that agriculture is given a serious boost so as to ensure that major staple food commodities will be produced as well as other essential materials.
- (iii) To create employment opportunities through labour intensive progress.
- (iv) To seek to abandon most development projects that are capital intensive, for increased foreign exchange commitments.
- (v) To uphold the principle of probity, accountability and improved work ethics in all spheres of the country's public life.
- (vi) To checkmate the activities of economic saboteurs like hoarders, smugglers and oil bunkers.

- (b) **Social Reforms:** The Buhari/Idiagbon regime immediately instituted the War Against Indiscipline in March, 1984. The objective of the WAI, was basically to change and instill in the character of Nigerians, the ideals of National consciousness in order to make them patriotic citizens of their country. There were three main phases of WAI.

- (i) The queue culture phase
- (ii) The work ethics phase
- (iii) The patriotism and Nationalism phase

The regime also introduced a policy which aimed at inculcating habits of cleanliness among Nigerians. In its effort to actualize this lofty dream, the regime declared the last Saturday of every month as environmental sanitation day. It also mapped out a huge sum of money for any of the state that will emerge the cleanest state in the federation. The way and manner with which Buhari's WAI fought laziness, lateness, disorderliness, hoarding and examination malpractices, and by inculcating

habits of cleanliness, order, patriotism and nationalism to a considerable extent realized most of these objectives made WAI an important legacy of the Buhari's administration.

However, the need for the regime to achieve total sanity and order in Nigeria move it to promulgate new decrees which carried death penalty for “miscellaneous offences” or “economic sabotage” including examination malpractices, arson, counterfeiting, drugs and currency trafficking. This of course met with criticism in some quarters where it was described as being too drastic.

14.5 The Failure/Overthrow of Buhari/Idiagbon Regime

The Buhari/Idiagbon regime in its effect to resuscitate and revamp the Nigerian economy faced serious problems which made it unpopular both at the domestic and international scene. For instance, not only that the oil revenue continued to dwindle, but also payment of the nation’s mounting debts proved extremely burdensome.

The regimes economic recovery measures included currency change early in 1984, prolonged border closures, wage freezes out-break on government spending and other “tough medicine”.

Although, purposeful and well-intentioned, these measures achieved only moderate success. In October, 1984, General Buhari himself confessed that the government was “to all intents and purposes bankrupt: Meanwhile, the regimes apparently conceding to public opinion steadfastly refused to obtain an IMF Loan which would entail a declaration of the naira.

The stringent economic measures adopted by the regime led to the large-scale retrenchment of public servants, student’s unrest in higher institutions of learning against re-introduction of fees and withdrawal of food subsidy and increased unemployment. While the administration was trying hard to fight the economy to a stand still, it gradually wore an inhuman face and became insensitive to the plights of the common masses. A good demonstration of this situation showed clearly in the promulgation of a series of decrees which carried the death penalty. Three such decrees were promulgated in July 1984 which listed a host of offences that carried the death penalty. The offences included arson, damage of public property, tampering with oil pipelines or telephone wires, unlawful exportation of minerals or food stuffs, counterfeiting, selling prohibited goods and drugs, trafficking.

The Buhari Administration lastly ignited the wild fire that later consumed it, when it promulgated its Decree No 4, which sought to ensure that journalists reported truthfully and that public officers were not maligned by the press. The decrees eventually turnout to be seen by the Nigerian public as governments attempted to muzzle the press. The conviction and imprisonment of two journalists of the Guardian, Ndukka Iraboli and Tunde Thompson and the imposition of a N50,000.00 fine on the Guardian’s publishers under this Decree, increased fears over governments intention to gag the press.

Meanwhile, the activities of the Nigerian police and the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO) in harassing radical intellectuals and other opponents or critics of the government, side by side with the numerous decrees carrying death penalty further thwarted governments, human rights record so much so that the international community began to see Nigeria as a pariah state.

It is therefore not surprising with the way the administration was losing both domestic and international support, that on 27th August, 1985, while the strong man of the regime Tunde Idiagbon was on a religious visit to Mecca, Major General Babangida decided to overthrow the administration of Buhari/Idiagbon.

14.6 The Babangida Administration



Fig 14.2: General Ibrahim Babangida- First Nigerian Military President

The reasons which IBB gave for overthrowing an administration which he was wildly believed to past of was that he had come to restore the human rights records which Buhari and Idiagbon violated and to revamp the Nigerian economy which has continuously detorated under this predecessor. He also promised to review the various decrees promulgated by Buhari.

The promises made by IBB on the economy, his intention to restore the human rights records, coupled with his promise of reviewing the obnoxious decrees of Buhari and the high caliber of the civilian and military members of his administration convinced the Nigerian public that Nigeria had another opportunity to do it right this time around.

As soon as he settled down, he replaced the Buhari's SMC, with a new body which he called Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) and took to be addressed and known as the president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. His (AFRC) had the same duties and responsibilities with Buhari's SMC. But Babangida's AFRC was an all military personnel affairs, without any civilian as a member unlike the Buhari's SMC that had civilians as members.

Babangida realizing that he had rode to popularity because of Buhari's notorious appearance for flagrant human rights abuse. He immediately repealed Buhari's Decree No 4 on news paper censorship and freed all detained journalist. The new administration also curtailed some of the powers of the (NSO) which he replaced with a new body called the State Security Services (SSS). The administration in his bid to woo the international community set a date – 1990 for Nigeria's return to civilian rule, but he later changed the date to 1992. In order to start off his new orientation programmes for the Nigerian politicians, he created the political Bureau in January, 1986. The Bureau subsequently organized a nation-wide debate on the form of and the transition of the future civilian government.

With the formally inaugurated transition programme in July, 1987, Babangida's administration embarked on the most expensive political engineering programme which he told the nation was necessary in order to inculcate the right political values to the Nigerian politicians. In order to steer the ship of Nigeria's economic recovery alongside the required socio-political environment that could lead to a smooth transition to civil rule, Babangida created the mass mobilization for Economic Recovery, Self Reliance and Social Justice (MAMSER) in August 1987. He created two additional states, Akwa Ibom and Katsina on September 23, 1987. In his intention to further the causes of the Nigerian Federal System, he created the Constitution Review Committee (CRC) and the National Electoral Commission (NEC) in September 1987. We must note at this point that MAMSER was an organization, a movement and the avoided official philosophy of Babangida's administration. It therefore aimed to create a better Nigerian citizenry and Nigerian society geared towards improving the individual and natural ethos and a general well-being.

In April 1989, the constituent assembly met and submitted a report and a draft constitution. These were immediately considered by the AFRC, which later promulgated it the following month as Nigerian's new constitution. With this constitution on ground, the AFRC lifted the five year ban on political activities. The lift on political activities led to the founding of about forty political organizations in the country. These organizations were presented to NEC who in turn recommended thirteen of these organizations to the AFRC for registration. But even these were subsequently disqualified and dissolved by AFRC as unsuitable. The AFRC then proceeded to establish two new political parties for the nation namely; The Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC), on the principle that one was "a little to the left" and the other "a little to the right". To maintain an ideological balance, the two parties were to be specifically national in outbreak and organization, and the politicians were to imbibe the ethos which government sought to instill in the people. In the administration's bid not to have a derailed transition to civic rule, it decided to ban some classes of politicians for life or for specific periods of time, from participation in the unfolding politics for reasons which included previous criminal records, or their currently occupying sensitive public positions. It is important to note that in both theory and practice, the creation of these parties together with a party headquarters building for each party in all of Nigeria's local government headquarters was a brilliant act of political engineering but in the end the parties did not survive.

It was at this point of the transition, that an army major, Gideon Okar, and some soldiers attempted a military coup d'etat, but were quickly crushed.

By May 1990, the two political parties held their conventions so that by December, 1990, local government elections, followed by state assembly and governorship elections followed in December 1991. In January 1992, the elected civilian governors of the thirty states of the federation were sworn in. By this arrangement, where we have a combination of army and civilians in government at the same time, Nigeria became involved in a system of government called Diarchy.

By late October, 1992, the AFRC cancelled the presidential principles held by the two parties in August on grounds of gross election malpractices. The 23 presidential aspirants who had contested in the primaries were all disqualified and banned from further political participation. Some of the prominent Nigerian politicians banned include: Shehu Musa Yar' Adua (rtd), Olu Falae of SDP and Umaru Shinkafi and Mallam Adamu Ciroma of NRC. All these were front-line runners in the presidential primaries. This development cast serious doubts in the minds of Nigerians who started to express fears as to the truth in IBB'S transition. As usual, IBB again made his intention to go public and asked Nigerians to trust him.

The AFRC again undertook a review of the electoral process and regulation issued by AFRC. This led to the emergence of 250 new presidential aspirations by February 1993 including new political stalwarts like chief MKO Abiola, Alhaji Ali Monguno, Gowon (rtd), Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu and Alhaji Baba Gana Kingibe. NEC finally came out with schedule for June 12, 1993 having decided that the election will be conducted under 'Option A4' system. The final date for the military existence in power was also fixed for August 27, 1993.

It is very unfortunate to us to recount here that the election which was fruitfully held on 12th June, 1993, but the leadership of Babangida's administration for no just cause annulled the said election which the Nigerian public was convinced was won by the Yoruba business icon M.K.O. Abiola. With the action of the federal military government, political tension heavily descended on the administration. In the wake of public out-cry and pressures from both the domestic environment and even the external environments asking Babangida to vacate the presidential villa. He finally and reluctantly declared that he is "stepping aside". It was this action that brought a reputable international economist viz Ernest Shonekan.

Infact, Babangida had based all his economic policies aimed at revamping the economy of Nigeria, having declared a state of national economic emergency which assumed sweeping interventionist power over the economy. The basis of his economic policy were the fifth national development plan (1986-1990) and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) offered as an alternative to IMF loan.

Suffice to say that this point that IBB even after all his harsh economic policies which he told Nigerians he had to adopt as alternative to IMF loan, later went and took the said loan from IMF behind by so doing enslaved Nigerians through all forms of external debts which he procure to keep his long and expressive transition to civil rule afloat. After all these pains which he caused the Nigerian peoples, he only ended up causing more political upheavals which nearly consumed the entity called Nigeria.

Summary

- Shehu Shagari's leadership was toppled because it was characterized by ineffective leadership, high space of corruption and insecurity of lives and property of Nigerian citizens.

- Buhari/Indiagbons regime in their bid to carry out social and economic reforms promulgated harsh decrees which made their regime unpopular amongst Nigerians.
- Babangida's regime operated the longest and most expensive transition to civil rule Nigerian's had ever witnessed.
- Babangida's administration relaxed most of the obnoxious decrees made by Buhari/Idiagbon and restored human rights records which his predecessors in office violated greatly.
- Babangida's administration in political and economic reforms introduced MAMSER which turned out to be for the administrations on organization, a movement and the avowed official philosophy. As part of his regimes economic and social reforms, Babangida introduced such programmes like MAMSER, DFRRI.

Revision Questions

Objectives

1. _____ is not among the problems faced by the leadership of the second republic.
 - A. Constitutional crises
 - B. Economic problem
 - C. Political problems
 - D. Poor foreign policy postures
2. Buhari and his military men overthrew Shagari's regime on _____.
 - A. 1st January 1960
 - B. 29th May 1999
 - C. 31st December 1993
 - D. none of the above
3. _____ was the GNPP governor that was removed from office in Kaduna.
 - A. Alhaji Shehu Shagari
 - B. Alhaji Balarabe Musa
 - C. Alhaji Shugaba
 - D. Chief Awo
4. Buhari/Idiagbon's regime was toppled on _____.
 - A. 31st December, 1983
 - B. 27th August, 1985
 - C. 1st October 1960
 - D. 29th May 1999
5. The highest decision-making body under the regime of Ibrahim Babangida was _____.
 - A. state executive council
 - B. federal executive

- C. supreme military council
D. armed forces ruling council
6. _____ regime adopted MAMSER for his economic and electoral reforms.
A. Alhaji Shehu Shagari
B. General Buhari
C. General Abacha
D. General Ibrahim Babangida
7. _____ is an outstanding difference between Buhari's SMC and Babangida's AFRC.
A. The head of state is a member of SMC only
B. AFRC includes civilian and army officers
C. AFRC is an all military personnel affairs
D. SMC is made up of only military personnel
8. The journalist who was convicted following Buhari's Decree No 4 of 1984 is from which newspaper organization _____.
A. Vanguard
B. New Nigeria Newspaper
C. Guardian Newspaper
D. Champion Newspaper
9. The two government-sponsored political parties during Ibrahim Babanigida's regime are _____ and _____.
A. NPN & PDP
B. PRP & UPW
C. SDP & NRC
D. NPP & CPC
10. The two new states created by the Babangida's administration on September 23, 1987 are _____ and _____.
A. Imo and Abia
B. Lagos and Oyo
C. Akwa Ibom and Kaduna
D. Kaduna and Kano

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the factors which led to the military overthrow of President Shehu Shagari.
2. Discuss in details the economic programmes undertaken by Ibrahim Babangida's administration in order to revamp the Nigerian economy.
3. What are the factors that led to fall of General Buhari's administration?
4. Discuss the major steps taken by the Buhari's regime to sanitize the corrupt Nigerian society he inherited from Alhaji Shagari.

5. How did poor leadership and constitutional crises affect the second republic?