

CHAPTER 13

SECOND REPUBLIC (1979 – 1983)

Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- discuss the 1979 constitution;
- describe the nature of party politics;
- identify the achievements of the Second Republic;
- discuss the fall of the Second Republic.

Introduction

This chapter sets to discuss the establishment of Second Republic (1979 – 1983) following the end of military rule in the country. It further studies the principle of 1979 as well as the nature of administration during the period. The elections were carried out on the platform of political parties formed after lifting a ban on political parties in September, 1978.

13.1 Principles of 1979 Constitution

The main features of 1979 constitution are:

- (i) A presidential system of government whereby the president was the executive head while states formed the component units. It replaced parliamentary system practice in the First Republic.
- (ii) The people were given the right to elect the president.
- (iii) The president was allowed to elect ministers who were confirmed by the Senate. Each minister was expected from each state of the federation.
- (iv) The president and vice president could be impeached.
- (v) The constitution made provision for separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government.
- (vi) The constitution made provision of bi-cameral legislative, that is at the upper and lower houses. Legislature at the upper house is called Senate while at the lower house it is referred to as House of Assembly. The Senate had 95 members out of which each state produced 5 members and one from Abuja, while House of Assembly has 450 members.
- (vii) There was the establishment of federal structure comprising of federal, state and local governments.

13.2 Practice of Multi-Party Democracy

During the Second Republic, election into various offices was carried out under the platform of different political parties who competed with one another in a bid to form government. The political parties were formed after lifting a ban on formation of political parties in 1978. The political parties were approved by Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), a government agency formed for that purpose. Some of the political parties formed in the Second Republic with the intention of winning election are:

- (i) **National Party of Nigeria (NPN):** It was formed in September 1978. Alhaji Shehu Shagari was made the presidential candidate while Dr Alex Ekwueme was the vice president. The membership of the party was from former NPC that ruled in the First Republic. But the membership of the party was drawn from all parts of the country.
- (ii) **Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN):** It was formed in 1978 immediately after lifting of ban on political associations. It was founded by Chief Awolowo who became the presidential candidate while Chief Philip Umehadi contested for the position of vice president under the UPN.
- (iii) **Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP):** The chairman of NPP was Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya. It refused to make Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim its presidential candidate. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe was made the presidential candidate who contested election under the NPP.
- (iv) **Peoples Redemption Party (PRP):** It was formed by Mal. Aminu Kano who ultimately became the presidential candidate of the party.
- (v) **Great Nigerian People Party (GNPP):** It was formed by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim when he was not made the presidential candidate for NPP. After forming the party, he became the presidential candidate under the platform of the GNPP.

Before the election was conducted, the FEDECO screened all candidates and Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe were disqualified for failure to pay taxes, but the order was reversed by the court of law.

NPN won the presidential elections and ruled the country between 1979 – 1983. Also the party won gubernatorial election in seven states: Rivers, Cross Rivers, Benue, Niger, Sokoto, Bauchi and Kwara. UPN won in five states: Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo and Bendel. NPN won in three states: Imo, Anambra and Plateau, GNPP won in Borno and Gongola while PRP won election in Kano and Kaduna states.

The practice of multiparty democracy leads to efficiency in governance as people who have different political ideologies join efforts in the formulation and implementation of policies. The multiparty system enhances and promotes the success of democracy in a federal system. Also, the multiparty democracy allows for representation from different parts of the country.

13.3 Achievements of the Second Republic

The government of the Second Republic was headed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari who won election on the platform on the National Party of Nigeria. Some of the achievements of Second Republic are:

- (i) **Political:** The government headed by Shehu Shagari came into power under the platform of the NPN. Thus, it implemented the objective of the party which was based on promoting Nigerian unity. It also encouraged working together and harmonious relations of different people of Nigeria irrespective of ethnicity or religion. The government entered into alliance with the NPP who members were the Dr Azikwe, and this unity of the Nigerian nation, and also promoted peace and progress. The government also pardoned General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1981 and brought back General Ojukwu who was in exile in 1982.
- (ii) **Economic:** The economic party of the regime was based on provision of food and shelter to all Nigerian people. That was why it came up with the Green Revolution in February 1980, which was a policy meant to provide food to all Nigerians. To achieve that objective Ministry of Science and Technology was commissioned by the president. Also, River Basins under the Ministry of Water Resources were designated with promoting farming, animal husbandry and fishery. Also the administration made efforts to strengthen the value of the Nigerian currency and prevent it from devaluation by encouraging foreign investments into the country. This helped in strengthening the currency of Nigeria.
- (iii) **Promotion of Education:** The federal government introduced a policy on the provision of qualitative education to all Nigerians at all levels of education. Shagari's administration implemented the policy on education which led to the division of secondary education into junior and secondary schools which came into effect in 1982.
The administration increased the number of tertiary institutions in the country. Polytechnics were established which increase the number from seven to twenty-one. Also, more federal universities were in Imo, Gongola, Bauchi, Ondo and Niger states. This helped in promoting education in the country.
- (iv) **Promotion of Health Care:** The administration made healthcare as part of its goals. Primary healthcare clinics and health clinics were established in the country.
- (v) **Transport and Communication:** The administration made River Niger navigable throughout the year. Communication was also promoted by introduction of more additional telephone lines. There was the re-introduction of ships that moved along the coast of West Africa which promoted trade.
- (vi) **Foreign Policy:** Nigeria upheld her position as giant of Africa during this period because peace-keeping forces were sent to some African countries to maintain peace. The countries included Guinea, Chad, Benin and Congo.

13.4 Failure of the Second Republic

1. The regime failed because it lacked legitimacy due to the nature of the government that came into power. The constitution made it clear that a president emerges after winning two-third majority in about 13 states out of 19 states of the federation. This constitutional provision was not adopted, as we can see, the NPN only won 7 states. This led to crises in the regime.

2. **Lack of effective leadership:** The leadership was not forceful in the sense that policies and laws for good governance were not implemented effectively. This is coupled with the fact that the leadership did not entertain any form of opposition from its opponents. That is why PRP and NPP leaders were imprisoned in Anambra and Niger states.
3. **Economic issue:** The leadership faced the problem of corruption and mismanagement of resources which led to budget deficit and consequently, led to borrowing from abroad which put the country in problem. The leaders of the regime were known for wearing expensive clothes and use of limousines and jets which showed the level of spending of public resources in their interest. The regime was known to have participated in high level of corruption and could not be checked by Shagari because he was not powerful to do that.
4. **Health care and education:** The problems facing the economy affected healthcare and education as they lacked facilities necessary for their existence. The hospitals lacked drugs and the number of doctors decreased. Also, schools and polytechnics were not properly funded which was a serious problem.

Thus, these factors led to the overthrow of the Second Republic in a coup by General Buhari in December, 1983. This was followed by the Buhari-Idiagbon regime of 1983-1985.

Summary

- Second Republic came into effect with the end of military rule in Nigeria in 1979.
- Second Republic came into being as a result of election which took place in 1979. Five political parties contested for election namely:, NPN, UPN, NPP, GNPP and PRP.
- NPN won election at the federal level in 1979 and Alhaji Shehu Shagari became the president.
- The achievements of the Second Republic are: promotion of Nigerian unity, Green Revolution to boast food production, establishment of polytechnics and universities.
- Principles of 1979 constitution are: establishment of presidential system similar to that of America, establishment of bi-cameral legislature at the Senate and House of Representatives.
- Establishment of federal, state and local governments.
- The Second Republic had problems of corruptions, inefficient leadership, lack of infrastructure and facilities in health and education sectors. Thus, the regime failed.
- As a result of the failure of the Second Republic, there was a coup in December, 1983 which led to the overthrow of the government, and the Buhari/Idiagbon administration was established.

Revision Questions

Objectives

1. Second Republic was formed in
 - A. 1972
 - B. 1975

- C. 1979
 - D. 1976
2. _____ became the president in the Second Republic.
- A. Alhaji Shehu Shagari
 - B. Dr Nnamdi Azikwe
 - C. Chief Awolowo
 - D. Alex Ekwueme
3. The following are the political parties that contested for election in the Second Republic except _____.
- A. National Party of Nigeria (NPN)
 - B. Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)
 - C. People's Redemption Party (PRP)
 - D. Social Democratic Party (SDP)
4. The president of the Second Republic came to power under which political party.
- A. Action Group
 - B. National Republic Convention (NRC)
 - C. Social Democratic Party (SDP)
 - D. National Party of Nigeria (NPN)
5. The achievements of the Second Republic include the following except:
- A. promotion of Nigerian unity
 - B. boasting food production through Green Revolution
 - C. establishment of polytechnics and universities
 - D. free education to all citizens
6. The following are principles of 1979 constitution except:
- A. establishment of presidential system of government
 - B. establishment of bi-cameral legislature
 - C. establishment of federal, state and local governments
 - D. establishment of parliamentary system
7. Bi-cameral legislature means having legislators at the Senate and
- A. House of Commons
 - B. House of chiefs
 - C. House of assembly
 - D. native authority
8. _____ was one of the major reasons for the overthrow of Second Republic.
- A. Patriotism
 - B. Corruption
 - C. Nationalism
 - D. Economic development

9. Second republic was overthrown in a coup in 1983 by _____.
- A. General Obasanjo
 - B. General Babangida
 - C. General Idiagbon
 - D. General Buhari

Essay Questions

- 1. Discuss the principles of the 1979 constitution.
- 2. Discuss the achievements of the Second Republic.
- 3. Examine the factors that led to the collapse of the Second Republic.
- 4. Discuss the nature of multiparty democracy under the Second Republic.
- 5. Examine the importance of 1979 constitution in the development of federalism.