

## FOUR YEARS OF PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

By

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The coup d'état of December 31, 1983 by the Nigerian Armed Forces put an end to the country's Second Republic which began in October, 1979. The system of government of that Republic is worthy of analysis in that it represents a distinct phase in the political development of Nigeria and could also add to our knowledge of the factors and forces which determine the success or failure of borrowed systems of government. Focus will of necessity be on the various arms of government and some selected policies that reflect the preoccupation of the government(s) of the Second Republic.

In October 1979, when a civilian administration took over from the last military regime, Nigeria opted for at least two things. First, with the Constitution that became operative that year, Nigeria chose to continue with a federal structure. Second, Nigeria also decided to adopt a new system of government, the presidential democracy. Both imply something which, perhaps, was not immediately apparent to many Nigerian politicians at that particular time.

Essentially, the federal system of government makes great demand upon those who organize and practise federalism. These are in terms of the spirit and will to make it function as well as the financial and manpower resources that are needed to be utilized for the proper and effective governance of a federal system. By adopting the presidential system of democracy, Nigeria had thus added the challenge of operating an untested presidential system to the task of running a federal system of government. The rapidity of events, the bewildering array of political realities, socio-economic paradoxes and, indeed, the actors, forces and pressures on the Nigerian scene are rather intriguing and challenging.

In spite of the above, all we hope to do here is focus on a limited aspect of the complex drama that unfolded in Nigeria from 1979 to 1983. The major themes that have been interwoven include Federal-State competition, re-alignments among parties, executive-legislative flexing of power and influence, trials of the judiciary, and some unusual political theatrics both within executive and legislative branches of government. We will, however, restrict our analysis of Nigeria's presidential experience to the major interactions on the political stratum. We intend to examine presidential democracy as it was practised in Nigeria with a view to relating

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achievements to goals and potentials. The purpose is obvious. In view of Nigeria's plunge into a new system of government along a new path and with a sizeable proportion of new participants, it is important and timely, on the death of that first experiment at presidential democracy, to take stock of Nigeria's system of presidential democracy. Perhaps, through such examination of the «present-past», it would be possible to understand certain aspects of what went wrong in the past, look ahead and appreciate the variables that are likely to condition Nigeria's post-military system of government in the years to come.

## ON PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS

Presidential systems, in those countries that practise conventional democracy, usually exhibit certain characteristics. Prominent among these are the relatively distinct separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. There is also a pattern of relationship that is also fairly distinct. This pattern is reflected in the relationship between the federal government and the various state governments of the federation. Another important aspect is the relationship between the Chief Executive and his Lieutenants: members of the Executive, his Special Advisers and Assistants; and between these functionaries and the members of the legislature.

Predicated by the foregoing arrangement, (federal) presidential democratic systems are organized to achieve at least three objectives: The first is to create a structure which would make it possible for members of the federation to be as involved as possible within the overall political framework. In other words, they are supposed to offer, and usually tend to offer, a lot of opportunities for broadening the base of political participation and for creating adequate avenues for both vertical and horizontal involvement by all sections or regions of the federation in the government of their country.

Secondly, it is based and built upon a tradition which tends to see efficiency as a function of the structural set-up and, therefore, makes distinct the spheres of influence or the areas of jurisdiction of the various arms of government. In this regard, it is expected that by separating the executive from the legislature, unlike what obtains in parliamentary democracies, it would be possible to have greater efficiency, conditioned by the apparent separation of responsibilities.

Thirdly, it is also the tradition of presidential democracies to fill appointive posts with competent candidates with proven abilities in specialized areas. In other words, appointments to high political offices are determined not solely by the factor of political patronage but by the need to get and use the talents of individuals whose ideological inclinations or political orientations coincide with that of the government.

Moreover, in presidential systems, the procedure and pattern of operation is such that the members of the executive owe allegiance to the president, the chief executive, rather than to the party to which he belongs. This is usually so because appointees are not necessarily strong partymen but are distinguished individuals with a lot of expertise to offer to make the government function effectively and productively while exhibiting or expressing limited feelings or sympathy for the particular party in government.

Furthermore, the government machinery operates in such a way that the centre becomes something of a melting-pot, especially for the privileged elites — with a governmental structure that spreads its rays and extends the federal tentacles to the various parts of the federation in a somewhat democratic way — while also serving as the pivotal frame within the federal set-up. The symbolic and divisible benefits that are derived therefrom tend to further weld the constituents together. From the various pronouncements and manifestoes of some political parties in Nigeria before the 1979 elections, some Nigerians actually anticipated such a situation. The extent to which some hopes were shattered and certain aspirations unfulfilled will be revealed as we examine some salient aspects of the four years of Nigeria's presidential democracy.

### THE EXECUTIVE

Shortly after the 1979 elections and after Shehu SHAGARI, the presidential candidate of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) had been called upon to take over the Federal government administration from the military regime. He took two significant steps. First, he approached the other political parties — the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP), the Great Nigerian Peoples' Party (GNPP), and the Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP), to form what he called a «national government». Second, he invited his party members to send nominations from which to form his executive. These two steps eventually turned out to be two movements in the wrong direction with regard to the way a presidential system of government should be run. In the first place, by inviting the other political parties to join in forming an alliance government, the President undermined one of the fundamental principles of presidential democracy. It was his responsibility (assisted, perhaps, by a special Task Force) to search for and form a «cabinet» rather than the prerogative of leaders of any political party — including his own. It is indeed on the basis of his election manifesto that he should have set out to appoint the members of his executive.

The invitation to the other four political parties suggests at least three things. First, it implies that there were no rigid or clearly defined and specific policies to be pursued since it was inconceivable that members of political parties that had presented contending policy positions to the electorate and who even disagreed on basic principles of Federal governance and what the interests of the nation would be expected to participate conscientiously and effectively in carrying out the policies that were presented by one candidate or prepared under the influence of his party. It is significant to note here that even Aminu KANO's PRP with a distinct and most radical manifesto of the five was ready, in 1979, to support the formation of a national government.

Second, it shows that while conforming with Section 14 (3) of the Nigerian (1979) Constitution which urges that federal character be reflected in the composition of government, it really would not matter what calibre of people and what category of men were brought in to serve the President in his executive by those parties, except perhaps if the Senate which, under Section 135 (Sub-section 2) of the Constitution, would exercise its power to screen and reject those considered unfit for ministerial

appointment. Third, by that move, the President was either demonstrating a gross lack of knowledge of presidential democracy and how it ought to work in Nigeria or he was over-reacting to both the complex and diverse nature of the Nigerian political set-up and the suspense and uncertainty which attended the outcome of his election.

With regard to the second step he took (that is, requesting his partymen to send in names from which he would fill his cabinet), he was ascribing a role to his party which should not have been brought in to handle such a responsibility. By so doing, he turned ministerial posts into party patronages and ended up getting an admixture of people that were not appointed especially on the basis of proven ability or on the commitment to particular goals other than that they were strong partymen who took advantage of the President's approach to the problem.

The new President also put himself in a position whereby he had to fill positions, no matter how critical, no matter how specialized and deserving of professional handling, with people whose main credentials happened to be that they were political figures and strong partymen. President SHAGARI eventually took a third step after some of the parties, for various reasons, had rejected his offer. He went into an accord with the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) for the purpose of sharing political posts and for helping in pushing through some of his bills in the legislature. This was more or less a return to 1959 in view of the ethnic base of the NPP (1).

Thus far, subsequent events have proven that the President was also unaware of the irrelevance of such an accord in a presidential democracy. For, if he had wanted to use members of the NPP, based on some assumed competence or proven ability by those people, he could have gone ahead to enlist them (2). In any case, if the President was concerned about having an executive with a national character as required by Section 14 (3) and Section 135 (3) of the Constitution, this could have been done without going through all the political parties or into an «accord» with one of them. It could also have done without relying on his political party to nominate for him. Many observers had expected that the President would set up a Task Force to operate as a «Search Committee», and that this would, of course, comprise of party supporters and loyalists but definitely with some patriotic people well versed in the art of government but with contained interest in partisan politics who, however, have sympathies for the proclaimed policies of the President. The Task Force that was set up, more or less at the instance of the Military, was concerned primarily with *transition* matters (from the military to the civilian administration).

By taking the three steps noted above, the President had laid the basis on which his government would move or function. By the time he started to operate, his movement was on three legs: one, his ministers; two, his special advisers; and three, his party caucus. From the way the government was run, it seems that only a few of his close to fifty ministers had been assigned on the basis of relevant background knowledge or specialized knowledge that they had. Among these was Dr. Wahab DOSUMU, the former Minister for Housing and Environment who was trained in regional planning and urban development. He was, however, summarily re-assigned half-way. Another appointee who was properly assigned a ministry was Dr. Edwin MADUBUIKE who was given the responsibility

for Education. Dr. MADUBUIKE was an educationist before going into politics. In about 95 per cent of the other cases, the situation was that ministers were assigned the ministries with which they had little or nothing in relation. A medical doctor (Professor Ishaya AUDU) was, for instance, assigned the Foreign Affairs Ministry, expected to be the country's spokesman on foreign affairs, and was supposed or expected to be the Chief Administrator of the country's external relations. On the other hand, the man assigned to the Ministry of Health, Mr. Sylvester OGWU, knew absolutely nothing either about medical science or about health administration in general.

Moreover, the ministers assigned to such critical areas as defence, finance, agriculture and internal affairs knew almost nothing and definitely had no relevant background to qualify them for the appointments they were given. In fact, the first Minister in charge of Internal Affairs, Malam Maitama YUSUF, had just left school when he was given such a sensitive and demanding national responsibility. In his case (as in many others), there was no relevant basic training or exposure either to public policy-making or execution, or even to any form of serious work experience before the crucial appointment. After bungling in that Ministry, he was assigned to the Ministry of Commerce which is just as important as any other ministry in the Federation except, perhaps, defence and foreign affairs and indeed the most important with regard to the nation's foreign exchange transactions.

With this pattern of executive formation, the various ministers had to perform those functions that were performed by ministers in a parliamentary democracy. In other words, during the four years of presidential democracy, there was considerable reliance on the expertise of the civil servants; and, in those cases in which the minister had been assertive, the stand had been taken firmly on political rather than on professional grounds.

The presidential democracy of the Second Republic could therefore be said to have been run almost along the lines of Nigeria's First Republic — a situation whereby ministers were mostly rubberstamp political bosses, or executives that took decisions without regards to facts and planning. Within the set-up, the main responsibility of the minister was to ensure that the policies of government, especially those which involved the award of contracts, were pursued along some specified lines. The minister ensured that some or all of the cabinet decisions were carried out by the civil servants in compliance with the desires of the political party (or, in some cases, as preferred by the President or the Minister concerned) rather than on any other criteria.

There were some occasions when the performance of ministers constituted an embarrassment on the administration. For instance, the former Minister in charge of Steel Development, Mr. Paul UNONGO, left office (or had to resign) under suspicious circumstances. The Minister of Justice, Attorney-General Richard AKINJIDE, misled the Federal Government on some crucial occasions (in view of related court rulings) while many ministers sat over a catalogue of misdirected policies, unexecuted programmes, abandoned or uncompleted projects and unfulfilled expectations.

The NPN party caucus, for its part, played an active and effective role with regard to keeping watch to ensure that the President's programmes and policies were executed or abandoned in the interest and to the benefit of the party's parasitic bourgeoisie. One cannot, however, be assertive about the roles played by the Special Advisers. There was considerable confusion among them concerning their proper functions. Dr. Chuba OKADIGBO (Special Adviser on Political Affairs), and Chief Olu ADEBANJO (Special Adviser on Information) functioned more as party agents (hatchetmen) than as advisers to the President. Such cannot be said about some of the other advisers, even though there is a common tendency among them all of not appreciating where to draw the line between advising the President and pushing purely personal policy or party preferences.

With regard to the States, they were no different from the Federal Government in terms of the selection and assignment of political appointees. Generally, there was a consistent pattern of basing appointments on purely political calculations – including appointments on the basis of party hierarchy and the degree of political participation or the extent of command of grassroots followerships. Secondly, appointments were also based on the relative need to spread out so as to reflect, in this case, state character as much as possible. As was the case at the centre (the Federal level), the States had thus also been involved in the assignment of commissioner to ministries with which they had little or no familiarity. The performance of the members of such executives, in situations like this, is quite predictable.

## THE LEGISLATURE

While the Executive seems not to have performed up to expectation during the Second Republic, the verdict on the legislature is no less negative. Elsewhere, it has been found that while legislatures do not play a major role in lawmaking, being often pre-empted by the executive branches, they perform such functions as linkage (or representation), conflict management, leadership recruitment, policy-making and system maintenance (3). The extent to which Nigerian legislatures of the Second Republic performed any of these is debatable.

According to Section 54 of the Nigerian Constitution, the Legislature was supposed to perform law-making functions exercised by passage of bills. The law-makers, at both federal and state levels, were also expected from time to time to use either their knowledge and experience or their initiative and discretion in the screening and confirmation or rejection of presidential or gubernatorial appointees.

Judging from the low level of debate and flow of legislation, legislative indiscipline and lack of professionalism, inadequacy of knowledge and information, the ineffectual use of the Committee system and the inability to constrain the executive branches which frequently arm-twisted the legislatures, it would seem that the legislative houses, including the Senate, did not display sufficient understanding of, and commitment to, their calling as stated in the Constitution. To most observers, the performance of the Senate has been most disappointing – particularly with regard to the screening and confirmation or ratification of ministers submitted by the President. Legislative handling of the list of commissioners brought forward by the State Governors was not impressive either.

With regard to the ministers, the decisions of the senators seemed to have been influenced more by political considerations than by the relevant factors which ought to have influenced their decisions in ratifying or rejecting certain nominations. After the first round of «screening» and ratifications in 1979, another exercise was undertaken in January 1982 but this, in relative terms, amounted to no screening. They merely saw or viewed the appearances of the nominees and asked a few questions that had no bearing with the essence of the entire process. In spite of the public criticisms of earlier exercises, the legislators were prepared in 1983 to screen nominees for ministerial and commissioner posts without having any information about specific ministerial/commissioner posts to which they would be assigned. Questionable ministerial nominees originally rejected by Senate were later ratified due to the President's insistence. This was not only a mockery of screening and too much difference to the Executive but a real assault on that constitutional requirement.

With regard to the States, many of the State Legislatures performed more or less the same way as the Senate concerning the ratification of nominees for executive appointments. In all cases, there was no effort by the legislatures to request for, and get from the Chief Executives, details of the ministries to which the nominees would be assigned. They were not, in view of this, able to relate the background of the appointees to their appointments. At best in some cases, nominees merely forwarded their curriculum vitae and this was why, as EKPU observed with regard to the 1982 exercise,

*«the screening exercise itself in the Senate was a mere farce and there was no serious attempt either by the relevant Senate Committee or the Senate itself to subject the nominees to a probing interrogation to determine the breadth and depth of their knowledge, thus the public was denied the chance of finding out whether there was any nominee who could not remember his father's names» (4).*

This might seem far-fetched or unfairly exaggerated but it happened during one of those few occasions when the Senate did its job that an ambassadorial nominee did not know the National Anthem. One other nominee could not remember the title of the novel he read last while another could not answer any of the basic questions relating to his probable foreign assignment.

In some State Legislatures, the lawmakers merely ratified the list without asking any questions and even without debating the issue of the nomination or inviting the nominees for questioning or any relevant probing. This situation apparently did not help the Chief Executive who probably could have retraced his steps and undergo some rethinking concerning the assignment of certain nominees. Perhaps, too, this could have helped eventually in making sure that, to some extent, the various nominees were put in positions where they had at least some rudimentary knowledge or were relatively suited.

The second level at which the legislature was visibly involved was the area of passing bills. There was a general tendency by the various Houses of Legislature to pass bills brought by the Governor or by the President on political considerations simply because to turn down a bill put forward

by one's own party Chief Executive would be regarded as anti-party behaviour and, as such, efforts were made to always base actions with regard to the passage of bills more on political considerations than on purely rational grounds.

Moreover, there was an attempt by the Senate to destroy its own power by the illegal passage of the Revenue Allocation Act 1981. We will return to this while considering the judiciary. On March 4, 1982, the Senate also decided to hand over to the President the power to appoint the Executive Secretary of the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). Since the President was a politician with personal ambitions and political goals, such a decision negated the spirit of the Constitution which, in Section 145 (1) provides that «FEDECO shall not be subject to the direction or control of any authority or person».

On the other hand, however, the House of Representatives could be said to have performed relatively well. For instance, it followed a tradition of real legislative vigilance over Executive initiatives and performance. From 1979 onward, it initiated a number of bills and passed some into law. It demonstrated that legislators could work together on any issues – regardless of their political differences.

The bills that went through the House of Representatives were passed following the principles of collective and individual bargaining, negotiations and some degree of log rolling. The House also served as an effective watchdog on budget issues and on executive performance in general. Significantly, its members based many of their decisions not on party considerations or selfish interests but more on convictions and beliefs with regard to specific issues. They displayed some degree of independence and maturity. As one political observer put it,

*«For the National Assembly, a bold but commendable effort is being made by legislators to wean themselves from the grade of apprenticeship and even bolder and healthier stride is now being made by the legislators to shake off an endemic national plague which is as old as politics in this country – chronic partisanship and blind followership of political figures» (5).*

## THE JUDICIARY

The Judiciary was a relatively effective arm of government during parts of the Second Republic. In spite of some grand provisions in Sections of Chapter VII of the Nigerian Constitution, the operation of the judicial system took off with a shaken faith in it by some political parties who were disappointed as a result of certain decisions of some High Courts and the Supreme Court itself on the outcome of some crucial aspects of the 1979 elections. Shortly thereafter, however, the judiciary became a refuge for both the Executive and the Legislature as well as the community at large.

A number of cases were brought before the courts and the outcome proved that the Judiciary could be a useful and effective check in a presidential democracy. If not significant, it is at least symbolic that the appointment of the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General as well as the



Commissioners of Justice and Attorneys-General of States is, perhaps, one singular area where appointments were based especially on some knowledge of what a ministry required. In spite of this, however, the Ministry of Justice had a record of bungling matters for the Government. At the federal level, for example, the Federal Government was mis-advised on a number of issues and the Government took positions regarded generally by the public as unjust and unhealthy for the nation. Recourse was often to the courts for rectification. The National Revenue Act, for example, was mis-handled both by the National Assembly and the Government but was resolved in a judicious manner by the Supreme Court.

The National Revenue Allocation Act 1981, was a crucial issue for the Judiciary during the Second Republic. The Revenue Allocation Bill was signed into law by the President without being properly passed. Many of the states were not pleased with the allocation of funds which was titled against the states and changed adversely further as the bill was considered at successive stages. Due to factional disputes, conflicting perspectives and intra-party splits, the legislative leadership side tracked procedures that might halt the passage of the bill. The differences on the legislation ought to have been resolved by a Joint Committee of the two houses — with the authority to finally approve it. Mr. Joseph WAYAS, the Senate President and a key leader of the President's NPN, who ought to have called the joint session of the Assembly refused and sent the bill to the President for signature. The Governor of the oil-rich Bendel State (Ambrose ALLI) fought the bill up to the Supreme Court where it was declared unconstitutional, null and void due to the enactment procedures.

The courts also handled a number of other sensitive and potentially explosive cases. These include the Shugaba episode, a case which involved the illegal arrest and deportation of a prominent Nigerian citizen. They also include the take-over of private schools by the Lagos State Government. In the various cases brought before them, the courts tried to demonstrate as much independence as possible within the new dispensation although their handling of election cases were frequently controversial.

## **SOME SALIENT POLICIES**

It is pertinent at this point to refer to a number of policies that were pursued by the government of the Second Republic. Such a step might further reveal the interaction of factors and what we may regard as the balance-sheet of presidential democracy in Nigeria.

Domestically, it seems that what the federal administration did (the country had an 82 billion Naira Fourth National Development Plan) centred around a number of projects which the NPN that produced the President tended to hold highly. One was housing. Others were agriculture and the provision of industries, especially Steel Development.

With regard to Housing, there was a deliberate effort by the Federal Government — a policy which is equally endorsed or shared by the State Governments — to pursue a housing programme through which low-cost houses would be built all over the Federation in the various States by the Federal Government and in the various local government areas by the State Governments. The low-cost housing estates were, in general, supposed to

be located in the various state capitals, local government headquarters and some commercial or industrial towns or centres. The purpose was to increase the potentials of these areas for generating more economic activity and to provide housing and accommodation for workers who would otherwise not have such facilities.

The execution of the housing programme was not successful. There was delay even in starting and when works started, they caused the Government almost prohibitive amounts in view of the fact that both the contractors as well as the party were more interested in making money out of such projects than in creating the facilities. They were a set of ventures undertaken to divert resources from mass-oriented purposeful programmes to making more millionaires out of the deprivations of the disadvantaged and the pauperized.

In the area of agriculture, the Government placed a lot of emphasis on the need for the country to be self-sufficient. A «Green Revolution Programme» was launched. The programme was inaugurated in April 1980 and the purpose was to boost agricultural production and to encourage rural development. This twin goal was to be achieved through the establishment of agro-based industries, the construction of feeder roads and the provision of facilities that would make rural areas congenial to the production of agricultural products. The ultimate goal was to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production within five years and to make the country a big exporter of agricultural crops within seven years.

There was, in pursuit of the above, a National Accelerated Food Production Project designed to increase the production of rice, maize, guinea-corn, millet, cassava and wheat and it was expected that over half-a-million farmers would participate and that there would be many centres which would serve the farmers and help them in storing, processing and marketing their products. Each year, the Government was expected to spend millions of naira on this and seed-processing laboratories were established in Kaduna and Ibadan. The policy of maintaining commodity boards such as the Cotton Board, the Cocoa Board, the Groundnut Board, the Rubber Board, the Grains Board and the Palm Produce Board started by the preceding regime was continued. The Boards were expected to operate in such a way as to help in production and manufacturing and to boost the country's capacity to export. The decline of these products were to be halted and steps taken, including association with foreign partners, to make sure that the Boards were able to put Nigeria in favourable state of production and export.

Moreover, in pursuit of the Green Revolution Programme, the Federal Government embarked upon fertilizer procurement and distribution. Over one million tons of fertilizer were approved for procurement and distribution each year. The programme was to enable all parts of the country to increase their agricultural production through the use of fertilizer. The eleven existing River Basin Development Authorities were propped up to hasten production of rice, etc..., while the fishery sector of the Nigerian agriculture was earmarked for special attention. In all these areas, however, there were problems with regard to translating wishes to action. The main problems relate especially to the pattern of execution, the

conception as well as the mode of operation of these projects. As a consequence, the situation was that not only did these projects fail to take off well, they cost much more than was necessary due particularly to the inefficiency and greed of those charged with the responsibility of executing them.

The emphasis on industrialisation was, like the one on agriculture, very well placed. A country that is heavily dependent on oil exports and easily vulnerable to world oil glut and other contagious economic ills should, of necessity, industrialize and diversify. A number of industries were indeed cited but they suggested no industrial dependence for Nigeria. From food processing to motor assembly plants, the country was continuously short-changed. The Nigerian contents of the industrial production were less than 10 per cent. Moreover, while steel, the basic element in industrialization, was soon to be produced in million tonnes annually, it would still be cheaper to buy steel outside Nigeria (to continue importation) in view of the unnecessarily high cost of producing Nigerian steel. And, even if Nigerian steel could be made cheaper, the flat materials, etc..., needed for immediate industrial take-off were not being produced.

## FOREIGN POLICY

During the Second Republic, Nigeria was involved, to some extent, in what looks like the task of stabilizing a foreign policy. There was, no doubt, an attempt to pursue the type of policy laid down by the previous military regime and also required by Section 19 of the Nigerian Constitution. This implies concentration on Africa as a priority area and upholding the principles which would «promote African unity, as well as total political, economic, social and cultural liberation of Africa». Nigeria, therefore, focussed attention especially against apartheid South Africa and was involved in the resolution or settlement of disputes in some troubled parts of Africa, especially the Chad Republic.

The President, on a number of occasions, also stated that his administration:

*«will relentlessly work with all countries willing to apply civilized standard to bring about the early eradication of colonialism, racism and other forms of discrimination in Africa. We shall continue to do everything in our power to eliminate apartheid from our Continent and to defend the dignity of man everywhere» (4).*

Nigeria moved to solicit support from within Africa and outside of Africa in order to be able to achieve these goals. Efforts were made to attract both Africans and non-Africans against South Africa and for the purpose of ensuring peace in the Chad Republic. Nigeria opposed Libyan intervention and seemed to have faced up to the Cameroun/Nigerian border dispute on the basis of policy of good neighbourliness. The country also participated in efforts to settle or resolve the dispute in the Western Sahara, particularly the involvement of Morocco and Algeria.

Public reaction in Nigeria tended to suggest that the administration was not as assertive as it ought to be, particularly with regard to the Western world's direct and indirect intervention in the Chad Republic and the

provocation by Cameroun with regard to the seizure of some parts of Nigeria's Cross River State. It is generally felt that, in spite of the provision of international law relating to the non-use of threat or use of force by states, and in spite of Nigeria's devotion to the policy of good neighbourliness and non-interference in the affairs of others as well as the belief in the OAU's principle of non-violability of boundaries inherited by states, Nigeria ought to have displayed much interest and be much more involved in the cases involving Cameroun and Libya. With regard to the latter case, however, Nigeria joined in chorusing out the Libyans and contributed largely to the peace-keeping force of the Organization of African Unity. The force was incapable of its task and the Chadian crisis became partially resolved outside the OAU framework.

Still in the area of foreign policy, Nigeria pursued the long-standing policy of promoting ECOWAS and trying to make sure that certain things were done to sustain the growth of trade in West Africa and among African States. The Federal Government's hostile reactions to the developments in some of the member-states of ECOWAS – such as Liberia and Ghana – did not further Nigeria's cause in this regard. However, the factors of mutual benefit continued to sustain ECOWAS and foster improved relations between Nigeria and other African states.

#### **FOUR YEARS OF PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT**

As stated at the beginning, our interest has been to examine the practice of presidential democracy in Nigeria during the Second Republic in relation to constitutional provisions, the promises and expectations. Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1979, the country's Second Republic, took a different form from the parliamentary democracy of the First Republic. This new experiment, with the introduction of presidential system, might suggest that some change or revolution had taken place. The operation of the system might also show whether, in spite of the sporadic efforts by the military to spark off changes in relation to the First Republic, all had been a mere change of political liturgy with little or no consequence for the anticipated change in the pattern of governance.

From the preceding review of the operation of presidential democracy in Nigeria, it seems that to some extent the executive, the legislature and the judiciary had opportunities to act as agents of change, link government closely to the people and contribute effectively to the initiation of development-oriented policies. However, the type of objectives set by and for themselves, and by which we have tried to assess them, do not sum up to anything that could have brought about genuine development and progressive change within the Nigerian polity. It is clear, however, that these objectives, if conscientiously pursued, could have led to a new pattern of collective governance as well as a drastic change in the socio-political and economic relations in such a way as to bring about new structural formations within the Nigerian polity.

Initially, it could be said that the major task that the new leadership faced was how to negotiate the dangerous political corner in Nigerian affairs when they took over in 1979. From their records of performance,

it seems that the Executive took more steps to initiate a number of bills than the legislature but, in terms of the implementation of specific policies, there really was no remarkable display of initiative. The only areas where there seemed to have been some measure of changes was the execution of the Free Education Programme undertaken by some State Governments, especially those states controlled by the UPN. This, in fact, was a continuation of the policy introduced in the old Western region during the 1950s. Even then, and in spite of the high promise of the programme during the Second Republic, the execution was not cost-effective as to enable the programme realize its potentials.

When we look beyond the domestic policies and we examine foreign policy which was the exclusive prerogative of the Federal Government, the Government could not boast of any major achievement. Africa, for instance, was supposed to be the central focus of the Government's foreign policy with the total liberation of Africa and the liquidation of apartheid as a primary task. Yet, Namibia did not feel the impact of Nigeria's pressures while such countries as Britain, the United States or even some Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia could not be dissuaded by Nigeria or compelled by any Nigerian initiative to reduce the economic and psychological support that they were giving to South Africa. Along the same line, countries that had, at one time or the other, taken steps against Nigeria's national interests could not be given the type of assertive and instructive response required by modern diplomacy. Two examples in this connection are the Cameroon and the Chad Republics. Instead of these countries being subjected to effective pressures that would yield a change in the interest of Nigeria's African policy, they continuously defied Nigeria and this they did successfully with the backing of France.

When we move from the Second Republic's politics and consider the economic situation, we see a condition that called for alternative handling. The operational forces within the economic environment had something to do with the nature of the political direction in Nigeria during the four years of presidential democracy. In view of the patterns of economic formations and the social relations that were engendered by the new political system, the country experienced some growth without development and this was characterised basically by domestic bankruptcy and external trade imbalance. The country was out initially on a spending spree at a time of high-level smuggling and excessive importation controlled by powerful middlemen who readily took advantage of the new system which opened up to them many avenues of patronage and protection. The country thus found it difficult to take off economically in spite of the oil wealth particularly because the limited efforts made by way of national control and joint ventures brought in more external penetration and control of the economy than anything else. This pattern was complemented by the ever-growing presence of the multinationals.

With regard to the legislature, it performed, to a considerable extent, the traditional functions of representation, participation, resource allocation and legitimation within Nigeria's presidential democratic system. There also was some degree of legislative oversight. The Executive, at least in some cases, was well monitored. This, however, led to a dramatic situation in one of the States of the Federation. At the centre, for instance, it

was the activities of the legislature that led to the enactment of such bills as the Minimum Wage Bill, the Appropriation Bill, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Reorganisation Bill, the Security and Exchange Commission Bill, the River Basin Development Authority Bill, the Nigerian Reinsurance Corporation Bill while the reactions within the House of Representatives actually aided the efforts that led to the Revenue Allocation Bill being taken to court. It should be noted, however, that the Electoral Bill as well as the Bill concerning creation of new states should have been given more attention and *initiative* than they were given by the legislature.

At the State level, too, it is apparent that the Executive was more active than the Legislature. The one striking and exciting case involving unusual activism on the part of the legislature was the case of Kaduna State where the party of the Governor was in the minority. The confrontation and conflict between the Executive and the Legislature reached a crisis point that was never settled until the impeachment of the PRP Governor by the NPN-controlled Legislature. Incidentally, this State, being the only State among the nineteen States of the Federation with a Governor's party not forming the majority in the legislature, could have been a useful test case of the effective workings of a presidential democracy with its assumed separation of powers. Instead, however, untamed hostility and unguided confrontation marked the executive-legislative relationship to the extent that the Governor could not even have any of his nominees confirmed for posts of commissioners and had to administer the State almost single-handedly for a period of two years before he was impeached.

On the whole, and in spite of the anti-presidential pattern of recruitment and reshuffling, the unusual influence and dominance of parties as well as the multi-levelled confrontation and conflicts, there are no compelling reasons to doubt the future of presidential democracy in Nigeria when the present military regime leaves the stage. It appears, however, that in the absence of new and strict guidelines and standards, any new arms of Government would continue to undergo the type of on-the-job training which was the case during the Second Republic. Through such process, it could eventually be possible for the political parties, the executive and the legislature to understand the nature and essence of their roles and the limit of their powers. Along that line, the Second Republic situation whereby the judiciary shouldered an uneven burden would change and it should be possible for the processes that were implicit in the Constitution to be institutionalized to the extent that principles rather than personalities and policies rather than parties would continue to determine the direction of events and the patterns of interactions within a Nigerian presidential democracy. Anything short of this might make the problem of evolving a new political culture, a new system of government within a new political environment conducive to the building of a new polity, more difficult. This also might confound an excited and wishful citizenry that became rather weary, perplexed and even fed-up with the path along which Nigeria's presidential democracy was leading before the military terminated the Second Republic.