

The political leadership of Nigeria has transitioned through several distinct eras, moving from British colonial administration to the current democratic fourth republic.
Here is a chronological overview of the leaders who have shaped the nation:

Colonial Era (Governors-General)

Before independence, Nigeria was administered by British officials. **Lord Frederick Lugard** is the most prominent figure of this era, known for the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates.

Leader	Period	Role
Lord Frederick Lugard	1914–1919	Governor-General
Sir Hugh Clifford	1919–1925	Governor
Sir Graeme Thomson	1925–1931	Governor
Sir Donald Cameron	1931–1935	Governor
Sir Bernard Bourdillon	1935–1943	Governor
Sir Arthur Richards	1943–1948	Governor
Sir John Macpherson	1948–1955	Governor-General
Sir James Robertson	1955–1960	Governor-General

The First Republic (1960–1966)

Nigeria gained independence on October 1, 1960. Initially, it retained the British monarch as the nominal head of state until it became a republic in 1963.

- **Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa:** Prime Minister (1960–1966)
- **Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe:** Governor-General (1960–1963); President (1963–1966)

Military Rule & The Civil War (1966–1979)

A series of coups led to a long period of military governance, interrupted briefly by the transition to the Second Republic.

- **Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi:** Jan 1966 – July 1966
- **General Yakubu Gowon:** 1966–1975 (Led during the Nigerian Civil War)
- **General Murtala Muhammed:** 1975–1976
- **General Olusegun Obasanjo:** 1976–1979 (Oversee transition to civilian rule)

The Second Republic (1979–1983)

- **Alhaji Shehu Shagari:** President (First executive president under the US-style constitution)

Military Interregnum (1983–1999)

- **Major General Muhammadu Buhari:** 1983–1985
- **General Ibrahim Babangida:** 1985–1993
- **Chief Ernest Shonekan:** Aug 1993 – Nov 1993 (Interim National Government)
- **General Sani Abacha:** 1993–1998
- **General Abdulsalami Abubakar:** 1998–1999 (Transitioned back to democracy)

The Fourth Republic (1999–Present)

This represents the longest uninterrupted period of civilian rule in Nigerian history.

- **Olusegun Obasanjo:** 1999–2007
- **Umaru Musa Yar'Adua:** 2007–2010 (Died in office)
- **Goodluck Jonathan:** 2010–2015
- **Muhammadu Buhari:** 2015–2023
- **Bola Ahmed Tinubu:** 2023–Present