The Color-Coded History of Nigeria

**GREEN = Civilian Rule**

1. First Republic: 1963-66
   - The first crack at a republic does not go well. The new leadership, dominated by the Hausa and wider Northern ethnic groups, leaves the Igbos out of power again under Gowon.

2. Coup #1 – 1966
   - A group of military officers from the disgruntled Igbos stage a successful coup but then realize they didn’t have a plan for after the coup and run away. General Ironsi, an Igbo, takes power.

3. Coup #2 – 1967
   - Ironsi, once in power, decides that maybe he’ll just go the full distance and try to be a full-fledged dictator? But then the Hausa ethnic group, who had been in power before the coup, stage a counter coup and kill Ironsi, an impediment to his career. General Gowon takes power.

4. Civil War: 1967-70
   - The Igbos, out of power again now with Gowon in charge, and suffering from brutal ethnic violence, decide to try to be their own country. This turns into a civil war and 3.5 million deaths before the Igbos lose and agree to remain part of Nigeria.

5. Gowon Military Rule: 1966-75
   - After fighting through the civil war, Gowon’s rule goes pretty smoothly until 1974, he decides that instead of the planned return to civilian rule by 1976, he will actually just rule indefinitely. He hopes that will be cool with everyone.

6. Coup #3 – 1975
   - Unimpressed by Gowon’s plan to stay in power forever, General Murtala Mohammed ousts Gowon in a bloodless coup and takes power.

7. Mohammed Military Rule: 1975-76
   - General Murtala Mohammed actually does a good job before he’s assassinated.

8. 1976 Assassination
   - Mohammed assassinated in failed coup attempt.

   - Mohammed’s chief of staff, General Obasanjo, who would later become president in 1999, assumes power and returns the country to civilian rule in 1979, as promised.

10. Second Republic: 1979-83
    - Despite presiding over an economic boom due to spiking oil prices, the new president, Shagari, runs into trouble and is accused of vote rigging after winning reelection in a suspiciously landslide. Typical Shagari.

11. Coup #4 – 1983
    - Unimpressed by Shagari’s vote-rigging douchiness, General Buhari pushes out the civilian government and takes power.

    - Buhari decides to clean up Nigeria’s act, but his harsh disciplinarian-style leadership annoys the shit out of everyone.

13. Coup #5 – 1985
    - Noting Buhari’s unpopularity, General Babangida just kicks him out and takes over, cause apparently you can just do that in Nigeria when you want to.

    - Babangida promises to return the country to civilian rule, but only after he “gets to be the president for a while first,” which he does for eight years.

15. Third Republic: 1993
    - In the most inexplicable move in Nigerian history, after shifting things back to civilian rule and watching popular candidate M.K.O. Abiola win the election, Babangida has a freakout and nullifies the election, putting a weak military interim government in place instead.

16. Coup #6 – 1993
    - Defense minister and unpleasant man Sani Abacha overthrows the weak interim government and takes over.

    - Sani Abacha decides to model his leadership style off of King Joffrey—a lot of people are executed, the economy stagnates, and most human freedoms are gone.

    - People cheer as Abacha dies suddenly of heart failure. General Abubakar takes over and brings things back to civilian rule for the fourth time.

    - The longest period of civilian rule in Nigerian history. Given Nigeria’s past, this is a delightful turn of events. But with potentially still shady elections happening and a ton of recent religious violence, Nigeria is still a troubled place. If Nigeria is something you care about, root for fair elections in 2015.

**BLUE = Military Rule**

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**RED = Coup**

    - People cheer as Abacha dies suddenly of heart failure. General Abubakar takes over and brings things back to civilian rule for the fourth time.