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Nigeria has been led by various presidents and military heads since its independence in 1960. As the giant of Africa, Nigeria's growth and development are deeply rooted in the contributions of past leaders. This article highlights the names and brief biographies of Nigerian presidents from 1960 to date (2023). The list includes: * Azikiwe Nnamdi (1 October 1963 – 16 January 1966) * General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi (16 January 1966 – 29 July 1966) * General Yakubu Gowon (1 August 1966 – 29 July 1975) * General Murtala Mohammed (29 July 1975 – 13 February 1976) * General Olusegun Obasanjo (13 February 1976 – 1 October 1979) * President Shehu Shagari (1 October 1979 – 31 December 1983) * General Muhammadu Buhari (31 December 1983 – 27 August 1985) * General Ibrahim Babangida (27 August 1985 – 26 August 1993) * Ernest Shonekan (26 August 1993 – 17 November 1993) * General Sani Abacha (17 November 1993 – 8 June 1998) * General Abdulsalami Abubakar (8 June 1998 – 29 May 1999) * Olusegun Obasanjo (29 May 1999 – 29 May 2007) * Umaru Musa Yar Adua (29 May 2007 – 5 May 2010) * Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (29 May 2010 – 29 May 2015) * President Muhammadu Buhari (From 2015 to 2023) * Bola Ahmed Tinubu (Current president) This article aims to provide a comprehensive list of past Nigerian presidents, along with brief biographies. For more information about these leaders, readers are encouraged to continue reading, Nigerian Nationalism and Key Figures in Independence Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, often referred to as the father of Nigerian Nationalism, played a pivotal role in the country's independence. While born in present-day Niger State, he identified as an Igbo man and developed strong social skills, including fluency in Hausa, which contributed to his charismatic personality. Before entering politics, Azikiwe was well-educated, attending prestigious institutions like Storer College, Howard University, Lincoln University, and the University of Pennsylvania. He became a core member of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons before returning to Nigeria and taking on leadership roles in various political parties. Other notable figures who contributed to Nigeria's independence include Ahmadu Bello, Herbert Marculey, and Awolowo. Their efforts were crucial in shaping the country's future. Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari, Baba Africa, played a pivotal role in shaping Nigeria's growth and development during the Congo Crisis and Nigerian Civil War. He joined the Nigerian Army in 1958 and is widely regarded as one of the most successful leaders in Nigeria's history, with the majority of the military's achievements occurring under his government. Shagari was elected president in 1979 and became the first democratic leader of the country after a power struggle following Azikiwe's regime. He played a key role in economic development as minister from 1959 to 1960. Additionally, he served as governor for the World Bank and a member of the IMF committee. Muhammadu Buhari, the current president, was a military head of state from 1983 to 1985. Born in 1942, he joined the Nigerian Military Training College at age 19 and became a Platoon Commander by 20. He implemented anti-corruption measures during his government. General Ibrahim Babangida ruled from 1985 to 1993, removing Buhari and implementing his own policies. Babangida was known for his exceptional leadership and key role in military coups. Ernest Shonekan served as head of state from August 1993 to November 1993. Chief Ernest Adegunle Oladeinde Shonekan handed over power to civilian government in 1993, becoming the first lawyer to become president of Nigeria. Before his appointment, he served as CEO of United African Company of Nigeria PLC. His regime paired him with Moshood Abiola as vice president until the military intervened again. General Sani Abacha took office in 1993 and served until his death in 1998. He was a well-known dictator who ruled the country with an iron fist, criticized for his policies and decisions. Despite this, he had some positive achievements during his leadership. Abdulsalami Abubakar succeeded Abacha as president in 1998 and served until 1999. A significant leader in Nigerian history, Abubakar was active in the Civil War and other conflicts. He was born in 1942 in Minna, Niger State, Nigeria. Olusegun Obasanjo took over from Abubakar in 1999 and served two terms as president until 2007. A well-known figure in Nigerian politics, Obasanjo is popularly called Baba Africa. Before his presidency, he was a member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Umaru Musa Yar'Adua succeeded Obasanjo in 2007 and served until his death in 2010. He had a tumultuous start to his presidency, winning an election marred by controversy. Before becoming President of Nigeria, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua followed in his father's footsteps as an active politician. His dad was the National Vice Chairman of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). As for Umaru, he started contributing to Nigeria's growth even before becoming President. He was a member of the 1988 Constituent Assembly. Unfortunately, Yar'Adua passed away due to a sickness and received treatment abroad. Upon his return on February 24th, 2010, Vice President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan took over as President. Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, a former Governor of Bayelsa State and President of Nigeria, served from May 29th, 2010 to May 29th, 2015. During his term, the country experienced one of its best leaders globally. However, security issues led some citizens to criticize his inability to address these problems. After losing the 2015 presidential election to Muhammadu Buhari, Jonathan handed over power and said "Nobody's ambition is worth the blood of any Nigerian." He currently chairs the International Summit Council for Peace (ISCP) and is known as an ambassador of peace. Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria's current President, took office in 2015 through the All Progressives Congress (APC), defeating incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan. While some citizens believe his regime has failed, others see him doing well as President. His Vice President is Prof. Yemi Osibajo, a professor of law. It's interesting to note that Buhari was once a Governor of Bornu State from February 3rd, 1976 to March 15th, 1976. He hails from Daura, Katsina State and comes from a Fulani family. His father passed away when he was just four years old. Muhammadu Buhari's government is committed to eradicating corruption in Nigeria. Bola Tinubu popularly known as Jagaban, is a veteran Nigerian politician and businessman born on March 29, 1952, in Lagos, Nigeria. He pursued his education at St John's Primary School and Children's Home School before moving to Chicago State University where he earned a BSc in Accounting and MBA. After completing his studies, Tinubu worked for several American companies before returning to Nigeria and joining Mobil Oil Ltd. He entered politics full-time in 1992, contesting under the SDP umbrella and winning election as senator representing Lagos West constituency. However, his tenure was cut short by the military coup of 1993. In 1999, he switched to the Alliance for Democracy party and won the governorship of Lagos State. Tinubu played a key role in the formation of the APC, Nigeria's current ruling party. He successfully reelected for two terms as governor before handing over power. His tenure was marked by significant contributions to Nigerian politics. Nigeria's leadership transition after independence occurred due to a shared alliance with Cameroon. The two leaders, Prime Minister and President, were chosen in the 1959 general election. Upon Nigeria's independence from British rule in October 1963, it adopted a new government system based on the US model, merging the roles of Prime Minister and ceremonial President. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the country's first president in 1963, while Tafawa Balewa held the prime minister position until his assassination in 1966. The military coup that followed led to the deaths of several high-ranking officials, including Balewa and General Aguiyi Ironsi. This event sparked a civil war between 1967 and 1970. Nigeria's tumultuous history from 1979 to 2015 was marked by periods of military rule, civilian governments, and significant political changes. The Second Republic, which began in 1979, saw five parties contest elections, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari emerging as president. However, the government's corruption allegations led to another military takeover in 1983, with Major General Muhammadu Buhari becoming the leader of the Supreme Military Council. Babangida seized power in 1985 and later stepped down after the freest election in Nigeria's history. The military intervened again under Sanni Abacha, who died in 1998. Abdulsalami Abubakar took over and introduced elections for various positions, culminating in Olusegun Obasanjo winning the presidential election in 1999. Obasanjo ruled for eight years before handing over to Umaru Musa Yar'adua's vice president, Goodluck Jonathan. Yar'adua died, and Jonathan succeeded him as president until 2015, when Muhammadu Buhari of the APC won the presidency. Buhari was re-elected in 2019 and is expected to serve until 2023. Despite its challenges, Nigeria has abundant resources that could improve citizens' lives, but corruption remains a significant obstacle. Nigeria's current state is a result of past actions, dating back to the 1960s under civilian rule. The nation has struggled to move forward ever since. Despite this, many still believe in Nigeria's potential to become a dominant force in Africa and achieve greatness.

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