

Olaniyi Felix Olayinka, Towards the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria: the role of an independent judiciary in elections

Introduction

Democracy is a governance style which involves every citizen and which is run for the benefit of all, as the people's representatives form the government, and they in turn work for the collective interests.¹ Nigeria became an independent country within the Commonwealth on 1 October 1960. The operating Constitution from then to 30 September 1963 empowered the parliamentary federal legislature to make laws for the country on exclusive legislative matters. To the extent that the members of the legislature were elected by eligible voters in Nigeria, the country passed through democratic governance.² Under the 1963 Constitution Nigeria continued its democratic experiences except that the Queen of England ceased to be the head of state in Nigeria.³ Taiwo captures the political transition from 1966 to 1979 as follows:⁴ The constitutional and political order introduced into the country at independence came to an abrupt end on 15 January 1966 following a military coup. The existing democratic structure was replaced by a military order, and this scenario prevailed until 1979 when the country returned to civil rule. In 1979, a new system of government, the presidential system, replaced the parliamentary system of governance that existed under the 1963 Republican Constitution.