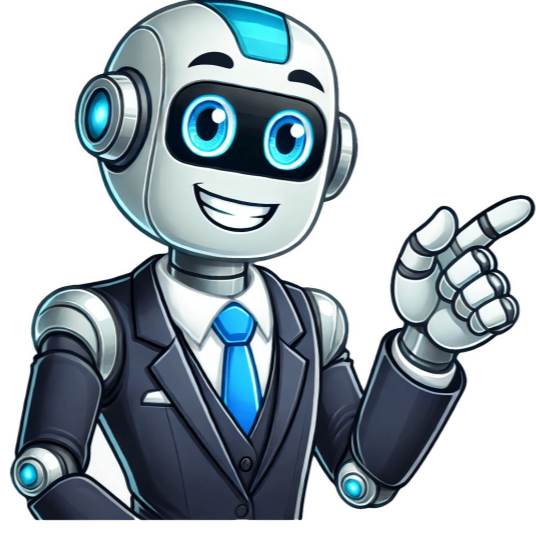


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Nigeria's top law is outlined in its constitution, which needs more sources to prove its facts. Help improve this article by adding citations from reliable sources. Help improve this article by adding these sources, if you don't add these sources, the article may be removed because it's not backed up. Find out how and when to remove this message. The Nigerian Constitution is the written law that governs the country as a whole. Nigeria has had many different constitutions over time. The one in use today was created on May 29, 1999, which marked the start of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria. The country's structure and how it's put together are a result of British colonial rule. Nigeria is home to more than 374 groups that speak different languages and have their own cultures and traditions. This diversity makes Nigeria one of the most divided countries in the world, with widespread corruption. Because of this division, Nigeria has tried many times to create an effective constitution. It's had both civilian and military rule, as well as centralized and decentralized federalism. The country was ruled by a British colony in the past, and it wasn't until 1946 that the UK approved a new constitution for Nigeria, known as the Richards Constitution. This constitution gave power to the Governor-General and his appointed council, but also created a legislative body with more power. It introduced the idea of federalism, which recognized the country's diversity by giving regional governments more autonomy. However, this move actually made regionalism stronger instead of helping to unite the country politically. In 1950, Nigeria suspended its constitution in response to demands for more freedom. A new constitution was drafted at an inter-parliamentary conference in Ibadan that same year and came into effect the following year. The Macpherson Constitution created a central government with a Council of Ministers and gave regional governments more legislative powers. The Macpherson Constitution played a significant role in boosting regionalism in Nigeria by being unable to be overridden by the newly established federal House of Representatives. This led to its revision and eventual replacement by the Lyttleton Constitution in 1954, which firmly established the federal principle. The Lyttleton Constitution paved the way for Nigeria's independence from Great Britain and promoted regional sentiments among Nigerians. It was followed by various constitutional revisions, including the one that abolished the monarchy and established the First Nigerian Republic in 1960. This constitution was later replaced by the Second Nigerian Republic in 1979, which introduced a United States-style presidential system with direct elections. The Third Nigerian Republic, established in 1993, aimed to return democratic rule but was never fully implemented. Finally, the Fourth Nigerian Republic, created in 1999, remains in force today and outlines the national capital, states, local government areas, and the separation of powers between federal and state governments. Nigeria's constitution has undergone significant changes since its adoption in 1999. The country has had multiple constitutions, with the first being introduced in 1954 by British colonial authorities. In 1963, Nnamdi Azikiwe's government drafted a new constitution that enshrined democracy and federalism. However, Nigeria was plunged into military rule from 1966 to 1979, and again from 1983 to 1999. In 1999, the current constitution came into effect, but it has been amended twice since then - in January 2011 by President Goodluck Jonathan. The amendments reflect changes made to ensure a more equitable distribution of power among Nigeria's regions. The country's federal system has faced criticism for not delivering true democracy. Nigeria's constitutional history is marked by periods of military rule, which led to the annulment of democratic governments and constitutions. The 1979 Constitution was also annulled in 1993, leading to a return to military rule. Key aspects of Nigeria's constitution include its federal structure, with powers divided between the central government and regional authorities. The country has a president as head of state and a prime minister as head of government. However, critics argue that the system has not been effective in delivering good governance and development for Nigerians. Despite these challenges, Nigeria remains committed to democratic ideals and continues to review its constitution to make it more inclusive and representative of its diverse population. Note: I have paraphrased the text while maintaining its core information and main points. However, please note that this is not a word-for-word translation, but rather an attempt to convey the same meaning in different words. The historical development of Nigeria's constitution began with the British creation of the geographical entity known as Nigeria. Initially, there was no defined territory called Nigeria, but through treaties, conquests, and acquiescence, the British acquired control over various territories that comprise modern-day Nigeria. These regions can be broadly categorized into three main groups: Lagos and its neighboring Yoruba land (Bight of Benin), the Lower Niger Basin and surrounding areas known as Bright of Biafra or Oil Rivers, and the Northern kingdom or Emirate along with adjacent middle belt territories. This article will explore the evolution of Nigeria's constitution from 1914 to 1963. As a citizen of Nigeria, understanding the country's constitutional history is essential because it serves as the supreme law of the land. Knowing how the constitution has developed over time is crucial for every Nigerian. Thus, I urge readers to continue reading this article till the end, as they will gain valuable insights from its content. The constitutions that will be extensively discussed in this article include: The 1914 Constitution or Lugard's constitution. The 1922 Constitution or Clifford's constitution, The 1946 Constitution or Arthur Richard's Constitution, The 1951 Constitution or Macpherson Constitution, The 1954 Constitution or Lyttleton's constitution, The 1960 Independence Constitution, and The 1963 Republican Constitution. The first of these constitutions, the 1914 Constitution or Lugard's constitution, was established following the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria. Sir Lugard, as Governor General of the United Nigeria, introduced a legislative council known as the Nigerian Council to facilitate public opinion on administrative matters. Membership was drawn from across Nigeria, with traditional rulers representing native inhabitants. This constitution ensured minimal input in official policy-making, with meetings required at least once annually. This account will provide detailed information about each of these constitutions and their characteristics, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of the historical development of Nigeria's constitutional framework. The Nigerian council, established under a resolution passed by the council, did not have legislative or executive authority except for the Governor, who gave effect to such resolutions. As a result, it was a purely deliberative and advisory organ that didn't participate in legislating for any part of Nigeria. Additionally, an elective council comprising the Governor and 10 other officials was established for the entire country. The council only met when summoned by the Governor, with a quorum requirement of two members. The main function of the council was to advise the Governor when his advice was sought, but the Governor was not bound by such advice. If the Governor rejected the council's advice, he must report his decision to the Secretary of State, stating reasons for doing so. Prior to this constitution, the 1922 Constitution or Clifford's Constitution had established a legislative council with limited jurisdiction over the colony of Lagos and the Southern province of the protectorate. However, it did not legislate for the Northern province except that its sanction was necessary for all expenditures from Nigeria's revenue in respect of these provinces. This exclusion could be due to the fact that the Northern provinces were essentially self-contained states, with a de facto government provided by native administrations. Additionally, the Emirs were accustomed to the Governor making laws for them and would not have taken kindly to the transfer of this responsibility to any legislative council sitting in Lagos, even if they were represented on it. The membership of the legislative council consisted of 46 members, comprising the Governor as president, 26 official members, 4 representative members, and 15 nominated unofficial members. One significant aspect was that the powers to make laws for areas under its jurisdiction became vested in the Governor acting within the advice and consent of the council. However, this establishment did not diminish the subordination of the government of Nigeria to the imperial government, as the Governor was required to legislate only with the consent of the council. In reality, all legislative councils functioning in the country up to 1922 were composed predominantly of officials appointed by the Governor and therefore voted as directed by him. The development of Nigeria's constitution was marked by significant changes introduced by the Richard's Constitution of 1946, which came into effect on January 1, 1947. This new framework replaced Clifford's constitution, which had been in operation for 24 years. The 1946 constitution was conceived by Governor Bourdillon and improved upon by Arthur Richard, its namesake. One notable aspect of this constitution was that it marked the first time that Nigerian leaders were consulted on constitutional matters before they were framed. Under the 1946 constitution, a new legislative council was established with authority over the entire country, including Northern Nigeria. This council was composed of officials and nominated members, but unofficials began to outnumber officials for the first time in history. The constitution also marked a significant departure from previous frameworks by recognizing the legitimacy of the Northern province within the newly created Nigerian legislative council. The Richard's Constitution introduced regionalism as a concept, replacing the term "provinces" with "regions". This was a first in Africa and led to the establishment of regional councils across the country. The constitution also gave regional assemblies certain powers, but it did not introduce any principles of federalism. The executive council was re-established for the entire country, mirroring that of the 1922 constitution. However, with the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, Nigeria began to take a step towards federalism, with a focus on consulting public opinion at all levels. The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 was established through a series of conferences and drafting committees, providing Nigerians with a chance to voice their opinions on the new constitution. This represented a significant advancement over the previous constitutional position, introducing elected majorities in the central legislature and regional House of Assembly with independent legislative power. However, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor still maintained significant influence, as they retained powers of certification and reservation towards bills passed by the Houses of Assembly. The 1951 Constitution operated for only three years before being revoked due to a major crisis in the House of Representatives on April 1, 1953. A motion was tabled calling for the attainment of self-government for Nigeria in 1956, which was perceived as being directed against the Northern Region and its elected members. This led to an amendment substituting "as soon as practicable" into the motion, but ultimately resulted in the House adjourning due to opposition from AG and NCNC members. ### The North and South's relationship started to deteriorate after some party leaders attempted to delay a key vote. They responded by walking out of the house, deciding to discredit Northerners as traitors backed by British imperialists through nationwide campaigns in newspapers. This led to a strained relationship between the two regions, putting Nigeria's unity at risk. On May 21st, 1953, the UK Secretary of State announced that Nigeria couldn't be governed with its current system of government due to recent events. As a result, separate legislative powers were given to federal and regional legislatures. Following this, Nigerian leaders attended conferences in London between July 30th and August 22nd, where they debated and agreed on the framework for Nigeria's new constitution based on federal principles. The 1954 constitution came into effect on October 1st that year, dividing the country into four major units: the federal capital territory and three regions. Additionally, Southern Cameroon became a separate state, while Lagos was detached from the Western Region to become the federal capital. The East and West regions gained internal self-government in 1957 and 1959 respectively. Nigeria achieved full independence from Britain on October 1st, 1960, thanks to the Nigeria Independence Act 1960 passed by the British Parliament. This marked significant changes in Nigerian constitutional history, as it stated that any act passed after this date wouldn't be part of Nigeria's laws and established a new citizenship law based on birthplace or parental ties. The development of Nigerian citizenship and governance was significantly shaped by its colonial past. A person born in Nigeria or naturalized as a British subject could become a citizen, but their spouse's citizenship status would not be affected unless their husband lost his citizenship. The federal and regional legislatures had the power to make laws with extraterritorial application, which only applied to matters within their legislative competence. The 1914 historical context of Nigeria saw a redefinition of its relationship with the British government upon independence. The British parliament's power to legislate for Nigeria was terminated, and the administration of Nigeria shifted from the British government to the new Nigerian authorities. However, the monarch's personal capacity remained unchanged, and the queen continued to hold her position as Nigeria's monarch. The 1963 Republican Constitution brought significant changes to the governance structure of Nigeria. It redefined the relationship between the country and the British monarchy, withdrawing the British parliament's ability to make laws for Nigeria and transferring the responsibility to advise the queen on matters within Nigeria's jurisdiction to the ministers. The sovereignty of independent Nigeria was divided among three regional governments and a federal government, with the governor-general and governors representing the monarch in the centre. The executive authority rested solely with the queen as the head of state, but this led to concerns about Nigeria's international image. In 1963, the British constitution was replaced by a republican one, which transferred the queen's constitutional functions related to law-making to the president, governor, and legislative houses. The executive authority now vested in the president and regional governors signified a shift away from monarchical rule. The preamble of Nigeria's constitution establishes it as an autochthonous instrument, drafted by Nigerians, rather than a legacy of British colonial rule. This highlights the transition from the Queen's Order in Council to a locally developed framework for governance. Nigeria has had several constitutions since its independence in 1963. Each constitution contributed significantly to the development of the current 1999 constitution, making it essential to understand the historical context and evolution of Nigerian constitutions.

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