

**TRANSITION TO TRANSITION**  
**Prospects of an Enduring**  
**Democratic Polity**  
**in**  
**Nigeria**

**J. Isawa Elaigwu**



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Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies  
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## FOREWORD

After over a decade of failed attempts at transition to civil rule by successive military governments, the regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar finally midwived a successful change of power that has ushered in a democratically elected government in Nigeria. The long years of military rule have however created distortions and disruptions in the democratic institutions and ethics needed to sustain constitutionalism.

Accordingly, the main challenge for statesmen, politicians and policy-makers alike remains how best to rebuild the foundations and framework for an enduring democracy in Nigeria in order to prevent future military adventurism in the political process. Consolidating the gains already made in this direction remains an enormous task. It requires a concerted search for appropriate mechanisms and structures that will not only enshrine but also guarantee political stability and social justice.

This year's Annual Lecture, the seventeenth in the series, presents an opportunity for the Institute, as the apex institution for research and advanced studies in law and related disciplines in Nigeria, to set the pace for intellectual and policy debate on the way forward. Coinciding with the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Institute, the Lecture is presented by a leading Nigerian political scientist and scholar who has extensive research and practical experience in the subject of civil-to-military; military-to-civil transformation as well as inter-governmental relations.

Blaming both the military and the political elite for recurrent military subversion of the democratic process, Professor Elaigwu gives refreshing insights into what is required to stem the tide of these incursions into the political process. The thesis of his lecture is that while Nigeria has executed a successful transition programme from military to civil rule, the transition to democratic rule is still in its infancy and it may take at least four elections, that is to say, a period of about twenty years, for the transition to be consummated. In his analysis, the people are the only guarantors of democracy.

His prescriptions are perceptive. It is my expectation that the lecture will generate further debate on the constitutional essentials required to keep the military out of Nigeria's political arena. Key players in the current political dispensation, scholars and policy-makers as well as students of contemporary Nigeria will find his lecture most stimulating.

**Prof. I.A. Ayua**  
*Director-General*  
*October 1999.*