The Nigerian Legislature and Socio-political Re-engineering in the Fourth Republic

By

Joseph Yinka Fashagba, PhD

Department of Political Science and International Relations

Redeemer’s University

Omu- Aran, Kwara state. Nigeria.

Most African countries that re-democratised in the 1980s (Boadi, 1998) and those that democratized thereafter have had to tackle some evident rots and conflicts left behind by the military administrations. However, the post-military era challenges facing the states have been partially blamed on colonial legacies (Osaghae, 1998). While some of the challenges indeed are both the direct and indirect consequences of colonialism, the greatest social, political and economic troubles facing most of the African states today are in most cases self-inflicted. Mismanagement of national resources, high official corruption, absence of institutional accountability, authoritarianism, political instability, violence, and inter-tribal strife and wars have at varying degrees undermined the ability of most of the African states to develop and progress on the continents. Among the states that have been in this ways seriously affected is Nigeria.

Although Nigeria became independent in 1960, it has failed to meet the high expectations reposed in it at independence. Indeed, the Nigerian state appeared to have fallen from the position it once occupied in its early years of political independence in the 1960s. Some of the countries that became independent at the same time with Nigeria have today left her far behind in terms of political maturity and economic advancement, societal cohesion and national development (Osaghae, 1998, Nnamani, 2003, p. 18).

Osaghae (1998) identified three major challenges that have been confronting Nigeria since independence, namely political instability evidenced by high regime overthrow often prompted by constant military coups; low level of national cohesion manifesting in the form of incessant inter-ethnic struggles, religious violence and adversarial politics, which are induced by the polarization and division among the various ethnic and religious groups; and economic crisis evidenced by huge debt burden lasting up till 2005, poor living condition of majority of the citizenry and lopsided and skewed distribution of national wealth resulting in inequality and wide gap between the rich few and the wretched masses.

Most writers on Nigerian politics have attributed the regressive economic condition, absence of national unity and the political volatility in the country to the prolonged military rule (Ajayi, 2011). The democratic rule, no doubt, died at infancy in 1965, 1983 and 1993. In the three republics of Nigeria, democracy did not last for over six years. Consequently, the restoration of democracy in 1999 was seen as a welcome development, although there were skeptics who did not believe that the new democracy could survive due to the predatory instinct of the Nigerian military class. Nevertheless, the return of representative democracy was expected to mark a departure from the authoritarian-styled policy-making process that characterized the earlier, successive military regimes – regimes that did not only undermine institutional accountability but also robbed the political system of the checks and balance as well as participatory politics fundamental to system efficiency and good governance.

With the restoration of democracy and the attendant adoption of a presidential arrangement in 1999, the executive and legislative organs were made separate and functionally distinct, unlike during the military administrations. While the executive organ continued to exist under successive military regimes and law and policy-making role and policy implementation were solely borne by the executive, the creation of a presidential arrangement under the fourth republic meant that the legislature would to take up some of the responsibilities that the executive organ had exclusively performed previously.

Being the representatives of the various constituents, the members of the National Assembly, comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives, have the mandate to debate and reflect the concerns, opinions and interests of the constituents in government policy decisions. The legislature was expected to reverse the decline in the economy, stabilize the polity and integrate the society, generally. It was expected to take actions and initiate necessary reforms with a view to transforming the state, and changing its poor national picture, as Osaghae (1998) painted. Nigerians under the new democratic dispensation should be proud of their beloved country.

Against this background, this paper’s objective is to examine, in concrete terms, the extent to which the people's expectations have been matched by the performance of the legislature. One fundamental question raised in order to determine the degree of success of the legislature is: to what extent has the legislature utilised their constitutional and other derivative powers to effectively tackle the social, political and economic challenges that have faced the country since the re-democratization in 1999. The answer to this question will help to know the extent to which the National Assembly has been an agent of social, political and economic transformation in the current fourth republic of Nigeria, and in particular between 1999 and 2011.

The study data were derived from secondary sources comprising Legislative Hansards; Policy Analysis and Research Project (PARP) publications of the National Assembly research arm (now Nigerian Legislature Institute); journals; and other documents. The paper is divided into five sections. These include: the theoretical framework; constitutional powers of the legislature in the post-military era; the legislature as a reformer; and the constraints against the performance of the legislature.

**The Roles of the Legislature**

The roles the legislature performs in a democracy and the extent to which the roles are performed vary with the system of government in place, as well as they differ from one country to another. Essentially, the legislative institution provides for the citizenry the platform for participatory political process. However, the participation afforded by the legislative institution is the indirect type, as it will be practically impossible for the electorate to gather in one place for policy decisions, implementation and governance. Fashagba (2011:1) noted:

The presence of legislative institution in any modern polity suggests the indirect participation of the electorates in the making decisions on issues that affect their daily lives. Not only is the presence of a legislature salient to the acceptability of democratic regime, but also the extent to which the legislature demonstrates capability to freely express itself and asserts its power determine how democratic the government is.

Government in a democratic system implies the rule of the majority. Apparently, the legislature is one democratic institution that allows the various constituencies to which a state is delineated elect their representatives. When elected, the representatives are expected to represent the views, concerns and interests of their constituents in the legislature. In fact, central to representative democracy is the notion that elected representatives of the people constitute the legislative arm of government (Kousoulos, 1982). Indeed, representation of citizens in parliament is at the core of liberal democracy.

The legislature, hence, is saddled with enormous roles in any democratic system. This is even especially so where the institution enjoy a huge measure of autonomy in determining their internal operations, where there is constitutional provisions for operational and institutional independence. According to Fish and Kroenig (2009), the study of modern government and politics involving contemporary nation-states is impossible without an appreciation of the role of the legislature. Fashagba (2009) also affirmed that in modern democracies the roles of representation, law-making and oversight of administration are often ascribed to the legislature. In his view, Alabi (2010) established the power to make laws as distinctively resided with modern parliaments. It is however important to point out that while legislatures are often vested with the law-making role, some legislatures contribute effectively in initiating bills and raising policy issues for the House to deliberate upon but others simply debate whatever proposals the executive present to it. Of course, the former in addition to initiating bills deliberate on policy proposals and bills emanating from the executive.

Oversight function is also a very important role of the modern legislature. Oversight function particularly appears to preoccupy modern legislatures. According to Verney (1969), the watchdog function is perhaps more important for a legislative assembly than that of law-making (p. 167). The legislature provides the institutional mechanism for ensuring accountability and good governance. Stapenhurst also noted that ‘In most countries, the legislature is constitutionally mandated as the institution through which governments are held accountable to the electorate’. The role of oversight of executive administration thus specifically entails: scrutinizing and authorizing revenues and expenditures of the government and ensuring that the national budget is properly implemented. The constitutional power to participate in budgetary appropriation gives the legislature needed political influence to shape governance, and possibly carry out reforms that are sustainable. In this regard, Saffell (1989) asserted that ‘no function of the congress is more jealously guarded or more basic to administrative control than the power of the purse’ (p. 69). In the same vein, Posner and Park (2007) affirmed ‘Legislatures in some countries have gained a role in approving macro fiscal frameworks’. The Nigerian legislature belongs to the class of legislative assemblies vested with preponderance of power over fiscal matters, perhaps.

The modern legislature equally performs representational function. Principally, the people’s representatives for the singular fact that they are elected by the people, especially under a democratic regime, hold the mandate of their constituencies within the polity (Davies, 2004). Sodaro put it thus: ‘the essence of representative democracy lies in the delegation of governmental power and responsibility to a small number of people by the citizenry as a whole’ (2007, p. 179). Consequently, the elected members of the legislature are expected to pursue good public policies for national development; this is most characteristic of electorates in the developed democracies of the world. In the emerging democracies some variation may be seen, in terms of what the representational roles of the legislators specifically are. Beyond public policy goals, patronage opportunities for members of the constituencies are expected, by electorates in emerging democracies, from their elected representatives in the legislature. This other electorates are so predisposed as the result of their high level of impoverishment and their neglect especially under the prolonged military rule.

It is noteworthy that the modern legislature serves as an agent of reform in the state (Reed & Scheimer, 2003). In a state where some members of parliament are ideologically inclined the desire to implement their reform agenda will greatly influence their behaviors in the assembly. There is the instance of Japan in 2003 when some members of the ruling party switched parties to form a new party: the party defectors sought to push for their reform agenda which they could not achieve in their former part. Moreover, Nelson Polsby (cited in Ornstein, 1992) observed that the legislature may be broadly categorized into area and transformative legislatures (cited in Orstein, 1992). As area legislature, the assembly serves as forum for discussion of ideas and policies and it provides a formal platform for deliberation among significant political forces in the life of a political system. Conversely, the transformative legislature actively translates ideas into laws. The transformative legislature enjoys a huge measure of institutional autonomy to act on bills or policy proposals emanating either within the assembly itself or from the executive arm of the government. They mold and transform bills and proposals into laws, irrespective of the source.

Nevertheless, a legislature can be transformative in function, a reformer in character, but such behavior is cautiously exhibited. According to Saffell (1989, p. 66), a common strategy is for congressmen to be conservative, clinging to past positions, while cautiously reaching for new positions on a few issues. This suggests that a legislature may sometimes find it very difficult to openly and passionately champion the necessity for a drastic reform, unless the action will improve the political fortune of the members pushing for the reform. Discarding old ideas for new ones thus means that not only has the society bought into the reform proposals but also the expected benefits of electoral rewards for the proponents far outweigh the cost. When this is the case, very many legislators willingly pursue reform agenda in the legislature. However, where the political cost is seen to outweigh the benefit, personal interest of the legislators will dictate that they tread with caution, as far as reform agenda are concerned. This perhaps explains why reform agenda have been difficult to push through in the Nigerian legislature in the current fourth republic. Notwithstanding, some legislators have attempted to push for one reform or the other (Lewis, 2009).

**Power of the Legislature under the 1999 Constitution**

The extent to which the legislature of any state can shape governance and public policy as well as initiate reforms and push them to successful end is a function of the level of power given to it by the constitution on one hand and the extent to which the executive defer to it, on the other hand. Unlike the executive arm which most often wields a preponderant of discretionary power, in addition to its explicit constitutional power (Fashagba 2009), the legislature is strictly guided by the provisions of the constitution that established it. Indeed, for most part of the 1980s and 90s, precisely a period spanning fifteen years and five months between January 1984 and May 28, 1999, the Nigerian military was in power, ruling through decrees and by administrative fiat (Akintayo, 1999). The military however transferred power to a civilian government under a new constitution in May, 1999. The 1999 Nigerian constitution which was amended in 2010 is currently undergoing another amendment process. The constitution was based on the presidential system. This translates into the separation of governmental powers, institutions and personnel under three distinct arms. In other words, the executive, legislature and judiciary were created as separate institutions, with each institution manned by distinct personnel. Consequently, each arm of the Nigerian government draws its power from the 1999 constitution (amended in 2010). In this study, the interest is particularly on the power vested in the legislature.

The Nigerian central legislature, known as the National Assembly, enjoys a broad range of power under the 1999 constitution. This is perhaps so not only to rid the state of its immediate authoritarian past, but also to enable it initiates, molds and shapes policy on the democratic platform of the fourth republic. Section 4, sub-section 1 vests the power to make law for the nation in the National Assembly comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives. In sub-section 2 of section 4, the constitution provides that:

The National Assembly shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of the federation or any part thereof with respect to any matter included in the exclusive legislative list spelt out in part 1 of the second schedule to this constitution.

In addition to having the exclusive power to make laws on items in the exclusive list, the National Assembly is equally vested with power to make laws with respect to any matters in the concurrent list. This is provided for in the sub-section 4a of section 4. This means that the central legislature shares the power to make laws with the states (constituent units of the federation) on matters captured in the concurrent list.

In a similar vein, the National Assembly is vested with a unique power that makes it the only institution of the democratic government that can openly and legally amend the constitution of Nigeria. This is captured in section 9 of the 1999 constitution. However, the amendment of any section of the constitution by the National Assembly must be supported by the resolutions of not less than two-thirds majority of all the members of the central legislature and approved by resolution of the houses of assembly of not less than two-thirds of all the states. There are thirty-six states in the Nigerian federation among which twenty are required to support any proposed amendment to any part of the constitution before such amendment can become valid.

Furthermore, in section 80 of the 1999 constitution, the legislature is vested with the power to authorize expenditure from consolidated revenue fund of the federation. The sub-section 3 of the section gives the power to authorize withdrawal from public funds of the federation to the National Assembly. Also, it is also part of the power of the legislature to prescribe the manner of withdrawal of money from the public funds of the federation. The section of the constitution gives the power to authorize spending and raising funds to the legislature. This power of the purse importantly allows the legislature immense influence in shaping government policies, certainly (Saffell, 1989; Verney, 1969). The power to debate, deliberate, mold and/or amend the annual budgetary appropriation proposal presented by the executive president is hence the opportunity to shape the state policies and influence governance. In this manner, the central legislature ultimately collaborates with the executive to meet the aspirations of the governed. This legislature’s role in budgetary appropriation proposal, therefore, in a state where lack of institutional accountability and participatory policy-making under successive military regimes bred mismanagement of national resources and dysfunctional public policy, is of an uttermost imperative. With the legislature-executive collaboration on budgetary appropriation under the democratic Nigeria’s fourth republic the economic crisis and erosion of national cohesion under the juntas should be reversed. There is yet the power to impose tax or duty vested in the National Assembly, stipulated in section 163 of the 1999 constitution.

And the legislature is given power to intervene in the judicial administration. For instance, the power to indicate cases in which appeals may be right, cases arising from judgments in the court of appeal to be referred to the Supreme Court, is vested in the National Assembly by the provisions of section 233 and sub-section 21. The legislature is also given the power to override executive veto on any bill. Where the legislature decides to make a bill it has passed have the full force of law, it can decide to use its two-thirds majority power to pass the bill into law. Consequently, the bill so passed by the two-thirds members of the National Assembly will no longer require presidential assent to become a law.

Considering the enormous constitutional powers vested in the central legislature, in addition to the fact that it has absolute power to determine its internal operations (stipulated in section 101 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution), as well as constitute a distinct and independent body, the legislature of the fourth republic is maximally equipped, politically and constitutionally, to shape and influence government policies, and serve as springboard for new ideas and policy reforms. The extent to which the legislature is able to use these powers, the level at which it is able to come up with policy initiatives, and the degree to which it is responsive to public opinions, society's developmental challenges and aspirations will determine its impact level on re-engineering the nation, socially, economically and politically.

**The Legislature and Socio-political Re-engineering in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

A weak legislature is incapable of exerting any influence in the political process of a state. Conversely, given constitutional powers (either written or unwritten), the strong legislature will be well positioned to broaden the democratic space; it can shape governance through various media open to it. Indeed, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, the second and lower chamber of the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Emeka Ihedioha in a speech in the University of Lagos averred that ‘The legislature controls through legislations all economic, social and political activities of the nation’ (2012). That is to say, in a new democracy like Nigeria an independent and constitutionally empowered legislature like the National Assembly can provide the required platform to re-engineer the institutions of the state which became moribund under successive military regimes.

When Nigeria redemocratised in 1999, the challenges facing the country were enormous. Political instability, lack of national cohesion and economic crisis were some of the major issues which did not only defy solution under the successive military regimes but also constituted threat to the nation’s existence. Similarly, on the global scene, Nnamani (2003) has rightly contended:

Nigeria has been unable to participate effectively in the global economy because of pervasive poverty, pandemic corruption, marginalization, the persistence of structural vulnerability and over-dependence on oil, dispossession of the mass of the people, and the crippling burden of debt. (p. 22)

Indeed, the social, political and economic conditions of Nigeria were at a de-humanizing, crisis point at the re-democratisation in 1999. The emerged institutions of government in 1999 were thus put under serious pressure. Especially, the National Assembly was under pressure to initiate actions utilizing constitutional provisions in order to lift the country out of the abyss. It was one institution saddled with the responsibilities of salvaging the very poor situation of the country, Nigeria.

In the renewed democracy, given the roles of law-making, oversight of administration (or administrative scrutiny), and representation, the Nigerian national assembly has effectively replaced the military as the law-making institution of government. Law-making was a role appropriated to a clique under the successive military regimes in Nigeria. While the citizenry were completely alienated in policy decisions, as well as in law-making under successive military administrations, the advent of the democratic regime in 1999 marked a departure from the past. Not only are the members of the central legislature elected by the various constituencies, referred to as senatorial and federal constituencies, but also once elected they become the highest law-making body in the state. This means unlike in the past policy making is now participatory.

To be sure, while bills are rarely sponsored by members of the public, most bills sponsored by either the executive or members of the National Assembly are subjected to public hearing. Public opinions are by this harvested to enable the law-makers reflect, where necessary, the concerns and interests of the public in the bill before it is finally passed into law.

Furthermore, the will of the military ruler was law in the past. Under the current democratic regime, the legislative process that either executive or private members’ initiated and sponsored bill has to pass through often lead to a situation in which some of the proposals are modified or amended, including those sponsored by the executive arm. Yet, some such bills may never be passed into law. For instance, while the executive vetoed ten bills between 1999 and 2003, the National Assembly was able to muster its two-thirds majority power to counter-veto four of the bills. One of the bills counter-vetoed by the assembly was the Nigerian Niger Development Commission Act 2002 (Fashagba, 2009). The absence of such institutional checks on executive action and excesses under the military was what made the regime dictatorial.

Using its law-making power, the National Assembly has passed several bills to drive some of the government reform agenda. Indeed, some of the bills included the Independent Corrupt Practice and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Act, 2000; the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) Act, 2004; the Electoral Reform Act, 2006 and 2010; the Privatization Law; and the Pension Reform Act, among others. The bills have been passed to address some of the evident social, economic and political challenges militating against the nation’s development.

The importance of some of these legislations may become clear when the factors that necessitated their adoption are considered. Corruption has been an endemic problem in government circle in Nigeria. Passing into laws the ICPC and EFCC bills was to help check corruption and reverse the trend in the polity. Indeed, the descent to corruption in every sphere of life, and particularly among public office holders and bureaucrats, was total; it reached a crippling level under the successive military administrations. Thus, following his inauguration as the President of Nigeria in 1999, Obasanjo promptly resolved to take the bull by the horn and deal with the issue, corruption (Global Integrity, 2004). Certainly, without the support of the National Assembly President Obasanjo would not have been able to achieve this worthy economic policy objective. By passing the bills, the central legislature boldly marshaled its power at re-engineering the social, political and economic system of the state. This is because corruption had manifested and affected every sphere of the national life in Nigeria. The legislations were thus, appropriately, made to curb the menace of corruption. For the legislature it was an important opportunity to reshape public fund management and to imbue the society with a new mentality of financial rectitude, accountability and transparency.

Specifically, privatizing the public enterprises became inevitable considering the level of mismanagement and fraud that the various enterprises have recorded over the years (Osaghae, 1998). In fact, it appears that the managers of the government-owned public enterprises often saw their positions in the organizations as the means to take their own shares of the ‘national cake’. With this management mentality, most public enterprises like the Nigeria Telecommunication Limited (NITEL), the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC), Nigeria Paper Mill, Jebba, Nigeria Sugar Company, Bacita, the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), and others, were not only running at loss: most of them actually became bankrupt. It was the bad scenario that necessitated the new approach to economic management in the country. Responsive, at the nation’s re-democratisation the legislature passed the relevant bills including the Privatization Act for the situation in the public enterprises to be reversed. Given the privatization laws, the state divested and transferred ownership of most of the enterprises to private business operators. Some businesses whose operations were monopolized by the government have equally been deregulated and liberalized, ever since, following the passage of transformative legislations.

Apart from the economic transformation engineered by the Nigerian National Assembly, there law-making function also has had noteworthy political dimensions. To correct some of the defects in the 1999 constitution the legislators have undertaken constitution amendments. One amendment in this regard was driven by the vacuum created by the absence of the former President Yar’adua from office for a period of two weeks without formally handing over power to his deputy, the Vice President. Although the constitutional crisis that his absence could have precipitated was averted (Fashagba, 2010), the legislature took advantage of the then on-going amendment of the 1999 constitution and inserted a clause in the amended constitution of 2010. The amendment ensures that executive power will automatically be transferred to and exercised by the Vice President or Deputy Governor when the President or Governor travels without formally handing over power.

In a similar vein, the National Assembly intervened and reduced the length of time it often took the electoral tribunals to adjudicate on cases of electoral complaints. Indeed, some electoral cases were often never concluded three years after an election, therefore allowing ineligible candidates to be in office for the period of litigation. The legislature amended the electoral law and it limited adjudication of electoral disputes to a maximum of 180 days after the election, as contained in the Electoral Act, 2010.

Moreover, the Nigerian central legislature has acted as watchdog over executive administration. Institutional check has been served on executive excesses by their scrutiny of the executive administration – the institutional check lacking under the earlier successive military juntas (Fashagba, 2011). Between 1999 and 2012, the legislature has succeeded in publicizing the activities of the Nigerian government and has sometimes put the executive and its agencies under pressure to defend its administrative actions. Investigations have been carried out against the personnel of government and its agencies in most cases, with a view to exposing financial corruption, wastes and mismanagement. There was the case in which the former Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Gaius Obaseki was investigated over mismanagement of funds of the corporation. The former GMD of NNPC was indicted for wasting over ~~N~~2 billion in less than four years on hotel accommodations.

In 2008, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives Dimeji Bankole revealed to the whole world that the NNPC had no record anywhere of how many barrels of crude oil had been sold and at what price in the last 40 years (Sunday Tribune, 4 may, 2008). Other major legislative probes undertaken have included the sales of government properties; the administration of former FCT minister (2003-2007) in 2007; investigation of power sector spending between 1999 and 2007; 2012 probe of Petroleum Product Fuel Subsidy Administration; 2012 probe of Security Exchange Commission (SEC), among others. In all cases, the legislature has exposed a gross waste of public funds, outright fraud or mismanagement, as well as abuse of office by political and public office holders.

Exposing government’s poor handling of natural resources is most crucial to attaining a transformation in the official conduct of government officers. Thus, institutional checks and balance expected to be served by the legislature is definitely a viable mechanism to instill transparency and integrity in the public sector management. Nevertheless, the success of the administrative scrutiny function of the legislature is determined by to what extent it is operationally transparent and credible. On this score the Nigerian legislature has appeared to have undermined its power. Most of the investigations embarked upon by the assembly have ended up in some mess. There are the most recent instances: the investigation of fuel subsidy administration and of the businesses of the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC). Concerning the probe of fuel subsidy disbursement, the Chairman of the ad hoc committee in the House of Representatives, Farouk Lawan, who headed the panel was alleged to have collected $650 000 as bribe to remove the names of some of the companies alleged to have abused the fuel subsidy funds. Farouk Lawan is currently under police investigation.

Similarly, the Chairman of the committee on SEC was openly accused by the Director General of SEC, during the public hearing of the committee, to have demanded for 30 million naira. The inability to rise above board in the discharge of their constitutional duties has been a major undermining factor to the extent to which the legislature can tackle corruption and check abuse of office among public officers. While it has often sought to make the executive and its agencies accountable, it has often hindered its thoroughness and effectiveness itself, with some members so bereft of the high moral standing required in their business of scrutiny of administration.

The Nigerian central legislature also has ensured that appropriate measures are taken to accommodate policy and projects that could meet the immediate needs of the people in the annual budgetary appropriation. For instance, beginning from Obasanjo administration in 1999 to the Yar'Adua regime between 2007 and 2010, one major source of conflicts was the disagreement over what the presidency often termed legislative interference with its budgetary allocation (*Guardian*, March 9, 2009; Eminue, 2006; *Nigerian Tribune*, May 22, 2009, p. 41). Indeed, the fact that a body like the National Assembly now exist to ask questions about the proposed budget of the government marks a departure from the past when only a handful of military officers and their few civilian ally only dictated to the public whatever they thought was good for them. Having an institution composed of members representing different political units or constituencies surely means that various perspectives and interests are reflected in the final budgetary appropriation, which the legislature passes into law. In the words of the former Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriation, Senator Iyiola Omisore:

Everybody that comes to the National Assembly is representing a particular constituency. He is presumed to be representative of the people. For a budget to be passed, you must take care of your constituency. The basis of bringing the budget to the National Assembly from the basic period in 1999 is that it is assured that every member of National Assembly is satisfied that his own constituency has been taken care of by the budget. (*Sunday Tribune*, 2009, p. 44).

In its representational function, the legislature has on different occasions sought to mediate conflicts or disagreements between the government and the public. For instance, the Committee on Education of the Senate and the House of Representatives intervened during the trade dispute between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government in 2009. The intervention facilitated the early resolution of the crisis. Also, in January 2012 the two legislative chambers also intervened in the trade dispute between the state and the Nigerian labour union. The intervention also helped to bring about early resolution of the crisis. Other major crises like ethno-religious crisis in Jos and the Boko Haram crisis in the Northern Nigeria, among others, have remained intractable. Indeed, it appears the legislature has no clue as to how to intervene and what advice it could give the executive that should resolve these crises. The most unfortunate part of the development is that rather than looking for a way to assist the executive by giving actionable and reasonable advice the House of Representatives has been using the intractable crises to blackmail the executive. In particular, one of the motions moved in June, 2012, in the House of Representatives summoned the President to appear before it to explain how he has handled the crisis in the northern part of the country. And, expectedly, the invitation was ignored by the President Goodluck Jonathan.

**Conclusion**

No doubt, the Nigerian central legislature has made some impressive efforts at re-engineering the social, economic and political spheres of the nation. However, the political instability, absence of national cohesion and economic challenges in Nigeria has only been tackled at disparate degrees. Political instability in form of constant regime change has been properly managed, evidenced by the intervention of the legislature to prevent a breakdown of the constitution in March 2012. Volatile political environment and political violence, notwithstanding, still constitute threats to democratic survival. Because of the level of inter-ethnic suspicion and tension in the polity, national cohesion has remained unattainable, moreover.

This has even become complicated by the activities of Boko Haram which often targeted Christian worship centers. Thus, in the political and social spheres, the legislature has not been able to put the nation in the path of stability and normalcy as would have been anticipated. Economically, while the state is yet to reach the expected height, it appears some of the legislations passed by the assembly have enabled the executive to implement certain policies that gradually put the country back on the part to gradual growth. Consequently, while the legislature has sought to reengineer the state on different fronts, it has been unable to do that because of factors both internal and external to the assembly. Yet, much depends on the extent to which the assembly enjoys smooth working relationship with the executive for it to get most of its policy initiatives implemented. The Nigerian central legislature needs to do better on their integrity in the service of the federation, Nigerian.

**References**

Ajayi, M. O. 2007. *The Soccer Pitch and the Political Arena in Nigeria.* Public Lecture,

Covenant University, Otta, Ogun state

Akinsanya, A. A. 2002. Four years of presidential democracy in Nigeria. In Akinsanya, A. A. and Ijang, G. J. (ed), *Nigerian Government and Politics* (1979-1983). Calabar, Wusen publis -hers.

Akintayo, John. O. A. 1999. Legislation in Democratic Governance in Nigeria. African Humaniti es Monograph 11, Humanities Research Center, Ibadan

Alabi, M. O. A. 2012. The legislature in National Politics: A Global Scan of Growth, Organisatio n, and Power. In Alabi, M. O. A.& Egbewole, W. O. (ed), Perspectives on the Legislature in Government of Nigeria

Boadi, E. G. 1998. The Birth of African Liberalism*. Journal of Democracy*. 9(2), 18-33.

Davies, A.E. 2004. The role of the Legislature in Fostering an efficient system of Public Finance In: Taiwo, I.O. and Fajengbesi A. A. (ed) *Fiscal federalism and democratic governance*

*in Nigeria*. Ibadan, NCEMA/ACBF, 198-212.

Eminue, O. 2006. Executive-Legislature Relations: Some Preliminary observations on the bud- get process. In Ojo, E. O. (ed), Challenges of sustainable Democracy in Nigeria. Ibadan,

John Archer publisher.

Fashagba, J. Y. 2009. Legislative Oversight under the Nigerian Presidential system. *Journal of Le -gislative Studies.* 15(4), 439-539.

Fashagba, J. Y. 2010. De-constitutionalising? Democratic governance in Nigeria: Assessing exec utive-legislative handling of executive-power vacuum in the fourth republic. *Africana,* 4( 1), 6-43.

Fashagba, J. Y. 2011. The Legislature and Democratisation process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Lapai International Journal of Management and Social Sciences.* 4(1), 1-19.

Fish, M. S., & Kroenig M. (2009). *The Handbook of National legislature: A global Survey.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kousoulos, D. G. (1982). *On Government and Politics: An Introduction to Political Science.* California: Brook/Cole Publishing Company.

Sodaro, M. J. 2007. Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction (3rd ed), McGraw-Hill

Lewis, P. M. 2009. Rules and Rent in Nigeria's National Assembly. In Barkan, J. D. (ed), *Legisla -tive Power in Emerging Democracies*. Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers. Pp. 177- 204

Nnamani, C (2003).2003 edition of the public lecture series of the Political Science Department, University of Ilorin, Nigeria: *Globalizing in Poverty 2003.* Ilorin, Nigeria.

Ornstein, N. 1992. *The roles of the legislature in a democracy*. Freedom Paper No 3, California, Institute for Contemporary Study (ICS).

Osaghae, E. E. 1998. *The Crippled Giant: Nigeria since independence*. London: Hurst and Comp -any.

Saffell, D. C. 1989. *Essentials of American government: Change and Continuity*. Pacific Grove, CA, Brooks/Cole.

Verney, D. V. 1969. Structure of Government. In J. Blondel (ed), *Comparative Government: A re ader.* London, Macmillan