

Governance and the Executive – Legislative Relations since Nigeria’s Fourth Republic (1999 – 2019) and Beyond

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Abstract

The Year 2019 is very significant in the history of party politics in Nigeria. It marked a two decade of uninterrupted democratic regimes culminating in violent-free transition of political power from the defeated ruling political party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) to the opposition Party-All Progressive Congress (APC). The cut-throat rivalries among the political parties, as represented in the Executive and legislature, have been responsible for the political instability of the previous republics. What has been responsible for the relative calm in the political space of Nigeria? How has political elites responded to the issue of governance since the inception of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic? How can the Nigerian state build and improve on the current political climate? These and other issues are what the paper has addressed.

The work relied contextually on secondary data for appropriate information germane to the work. The findings and analyses will benefit from prognosis that would be of immense value only not to Nigeria, but further implications for other African countries faced with similar political scenario.

Keywords: governance, executive, legislative, Nigeria and Fourth Republic

1. Introduction

To study one branch of government in isolation from the others is usually an exercise in make-believe. Very few operations of Congress and the presidency are genuinely independent and autonomous. (Note 1)

Executive-Legislative relations are central to democratic governance, particularly under a presidential system of government where the doctrine of separation of powers is in vogue. Nigeria first adopted the presidential system of government under the 1979 Constitution on the return to democratic governance on October 1, 1979 after thirteen years of continuous military rule. The National Assembly (Legislative) is to “make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Federation,” revise, review, amend or repeal laws. The Presidency (the executive) is to implement “all laws made by the National Assembly.” Further, the executive initiates, formulates policies, and maintains, law and order, while the legislature deliberates, approves, or rejects it. For the smooth running of government and ensuring functional governance, there is need for continuous interactions between the three arms of government to attain good and harmonious working relationship.

In the bid to do justice to this work, there are concepts that are sacrosanct that must be contextually analyzed to reduce ambiguity, if not eliminated. These concepts include, but are not limited to, governance, executive, legislative etc. The major canopy, which the afore-mentioned concepts can be sustained and covered, will be accountability, transparency, rule of law, freedom to exercise one’s democratic rights or human rights etc.

2. Definition of Concepts

The Nigerian state has for too long been involved in government (i.e. ability to set the machinery of state apparatus at work whether actively or perfunctorily). This essentially contradicts the term governance, which according to Awotokun (1998), focuses on the effective and efficient management of public affairs or what can be generally

termed the “commonwealth” of a country. The protagonists of governance model believe (as it is gaining currency all over the world) that a society based on governance system is practicable and achievable if a set of rules and regulations are carefully and cooperatively laid down and mutually accepted by all the members of the user society as legitimate. The legitimacy must necessarily be based on what Ikhide (2003) termed as managerial and organizational efficiency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness to the public, transparency and decision-making and pluralism in policy and choices.

Furthermore, Kaufmann et.al (2006), view governance as an encompassing process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies, and the respect of citizens and the state institutions that govern economic and social interaction among them. Kaufmann et.al, (2007) went further to identify six aggregate governance indicators based on two hundred and thirteen (213) countries. These include:

- 1) Voice and accountability i.e. the extent to which a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free media.
- 2) Political stability/absence of violence in terms of perception of the likelihood that the government will be stabilized/ destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including political violence and terrorism. The Zimbabwean experience easily comes to mind. In Zimbabwe the military stood in the gap as the country wriggled through the crisis created after the fall of Robert Mugabe. Similarly the military have taken over power from Omar al-Bashir in Sudan ostensibly for deficiency in democratic ethos. The Sudanese military sincerity became doubtful, when they asked for a two-year transition to restore democracy in Sudan.
- 3) Government effectiveness, that is, the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government’s commitment to such policies.
- 4) Regulatory quality entails the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development.
- 5) Rule of law means the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of enforcement, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.
- 6) Control of corruption is the extent to which public power is employed to prevent private gain at the expense of the general public, including petty and grand (institutional) forms of corruption, as well as emasculation of the state by elite and private individuals.

The executive is a branch of government that formulates and executes policies, which are meant to impact on the people. In other words, executive, according to Ojo (1985), executes the will of the people as enacted in the laws. In a general sense, executive comprises the political executives: presidents, vice-presidents, governors, deputy governors, ministers, commissioners, the bureaucracy, i.e., all those that are saddled with execution of the functions of government with the exception of the legislature and judiciary.

The legislature can be defined as an organ of government that represents the overall interests of the people; hence, the concept of representative democracy. In the process, the legislature is expected to make laws, aggregate the interests of the people through oversight of the executive’s functions. Oyediran (1990) defined legislature as an assembly of ‘citizen ambassadors’ who serve their constituencies in various ways as ombudsmen or intermediaries between the citizens and government officials. Government officials refer to the executive and its bureaucratic apparatus.

Perhaps more germane to the concepts of governance, executive and legislature is the issue of accountability. It is important to state from the onset that the political architecture (infrastructure) of democracy is of no value without accountability. Accountability is an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions and inactions. In other words, it is answerability for one’s actions and inactions, behaviour or conduct to a superior authority. In this sense, the electorate in any democratic system is assumed as master, while the political elites are servants of the state. Every political system must demand accountability from its political elites. This is because power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is for this reason that accountability normally focuses on curtailing the misuse of power by the delegate. Hence, accountability can be termed as the process and the act to make an individual or group of persons answerable for the part or role, played in the art of governance. The mechanisms to employ to enforce accountability are expected to be coded in the constitutions of the state, the institutions to be used are expected to be impartial, objective, transparent and above board. In a specific sense, it connotes formal and informal mechanisms of making an individual or group of people accountable for their actions in the exercise of constitutional responsibilities or functions performed on behalf of the people. The demand for

accountability by the state or the citizens presupposes that the elected or appointed public officials are seen to have willingly or constitutionally surrendered their individual freedom or human rights by virtue of the positions or offices held in trust for the people. For Goddard (1994), accountability can be conceived in five pyramidally ordered segments of policy namely programme, performance, process, probity and legality. Accountability for probity and legality is concerned with avoidance of malfeasance and illegality. Process accountability is nothing, but ensuring that adequate measures, procedures and efficiency are followed. Performance accountability focuses on the achievement of required standards. Programme accountability is concerned with the achievement of goals and objectives, while policy accountability deals with the goals and objectives of the institution.

Be that as it may, there is the need to return to the issue of governance and executive-legislative relations since the inception of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. This will necessarily imply the political process between the executive and the legislature within this time frame.

3. The Political Process Since 1999

Nigeria's Fourth Republic began on May 29, 1999. It is gratifying to note that since that time, the Nigerian military has never attempted to stage a comeback to power through military coup. In other words, in the last twenty years, the country has enjoyed continuous constitutional democracy.

Like the Second Republic (1979-83), the Fourth Republic constitutional democracy employed the presidential system of governance, fashioned after the United States model. However, there are marked departure between the power, which an American president wields and that of Nigeria. The two countries (the United States and Nigeria) have the executives that control, the cabinets, who can hire and fire all the retinue of staff attached to the presidency. In addition they are commanders-in-chief of the Armed Forces. However, unlike the United States President, Nigeria's President controls the excessively centralized Nigeria Police Force (NPF), who reports to him through the Inspector General of Police (IGP). The states and local governments unlike the United States have no Police of their own. Section 214(1) of the 1999 Constitution provides that, "There shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof. Though the Constitution recognizes the state governors and local government chairs as the chief security officers of states and local governments respectively, the Commissioner of Police (CP) at state level and the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) at the local government level, are answerable to the IGP and do not take orders from the governors and chairs.

As important and critical the Legislature is to democratic governance process, it has been the most vulnerable to the power and caprices of the Executive. For instance, whenever the military took over power, the legislative arms of government at the federal and state levels is the first to be disbanded, while the Judiciary remains, though limited by military decrees. The executive in assuming its supremacy fused the other two arms in its hand.

During the Fourth Republic, the relationship between the executive and the legislature witnessed series of unpleasant events; some of which are discussed in this paper. The Republic commenced with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, as the President from 1999 to 2007. There were insinuations that the executive influenced the leadership of the National Assembly (Fourth Session -1999-2003, and Fifth Session - 2003-2007), which generated a lot of crisis. The two sessions witnessed unprecedented high rate of leadership turnover orchestrated by undue influence of the executive in the selection/election of the leadership of both Houses. The period witnessed the following as Senate President – Evan Enwerem (PDP) June to November 1999; Chuba Okadigbo (PDP) 1999-2000; Anyim Pius Anyim (PDP) 2000-2003; Adolphus Wabara (PDP) 2003-2005; and Ken Nnamani (PDP) 2005-2007. The House of Representatives was not different. Salisu Buhari (PDP) 1999-2000; Ghali Umar Na'Abba (PDP) 2000-2003; Aminu Bello Masari (PDP) 2003-2007.

There were series of allegations against these officials ranging from perjury, forgery, falsification of documents to corruption that led to their impeachments at various some of them were fingered as surrogates of the executive arm; hence, the battle line between the executive and legislature was drawn. This development led to quick succession of leadership in the National Assembly. In the House of Representatives, Ghali Na'abba who succeeded Buhari had a frosty relationship with the executive branch over his attempt to secure the independence of the legislature from the executive in line with the Constitution. Aminu Masari (2003–2007) who succeeded Na'abba had problem with the presidency over his spirited effort to prevent the President from securing a third term tenure as the President of Nigeria. The single-mindedness and the desire of Chuba Okadigbo to make the National Assembly independent of the Executive also estranged him with the presidency. Less than five months in office, Okadigbo was faced with threat of impeachment. He was later removed over alleged inflation of contracts. Awotokun (2012) observed that the trio of Anyim Pius Anyim, Adolphus Wabara and Ken Nnamani who succeeded Okadigbo in quick succession were accused of financial impropriety, while Anyim fought fiercely to sustain his

senate presidency. Adolphus Wabara was not so lucky, as he was forced to resign. Ken Nnamani merely struggled to complete the second term of civil administration in 2007 with litany of challenges. Indeed, the effort of the legislature to secure its independence from executive was pyrrhic.

The internal dynamics of executive-legislative arms was expected in any promising democracy. If properly harnessed, it could serve as a veritable moment in the democratic process. It will be uninformed to expect a convergence of views from the two arms (executive and legislature) of government. In a democratic set up where public policies are expected to be distilled from myriad of views and sometimes competing and conflicting, no one should expect congenial relationship between them. Perhaps more important is the fact that the principle of checks and balances requires that the arms of government act as checks on each other. However, a measure of cooperation and synergy is essential for smooth running of government; whole harmony between them is advocacy of collusion and smack of subversion of public interest.

However, the critical point to note is where the public interest lies in conflicts between the executive and the legislature. The two arms of government are largely self-serving with little or no visible benefit to the people who elected them. The only issue that seems to animate both the executive and legislature is lucre. Neither the executive nor the legislature has been transparent with its earnings. This is not healthy for democratic growth and development.

The presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo witnessed a firm grip of the polity with little or no regard for the legislative process. He acted as a military president and with a military fiat. The Odi and Zaki Biam communities of Balyesa and Benue States respectively were sacked by the Nigerian Armed Forces. Obidimma (2015) recalled that in 1999 the federal government deployed the military to Odi, a small village of about 15,000 people in Bayelsa State for what has been equated with genocide in retaliation of the killing (by militants) of security men deployed to the region for security purposes. In another instance in 2001, Zaki Biam, a town in Benue State suffered the same fate for similar reasons.

In 2006, President Obasanjo, declared the office of Vice-President vacant, because the Vice-President Atiku Abubakar joined the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) to enable him contest for the presidency of the country. By this act, he was assumed to have constructively resigned from Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Though as condemnable as the action of the Vice-President might be, Section 143 of the 1999 Constitution does not give the power of impeachment to any other arm of government other than the National Assembly. In the bid to coerce the National Assembly and monitor their activities, President Obasanjo clandestinely planted (installed) closed circuit monitoring cameras in the senate chamber. The planting, in the words of Obidimma (2015), was an infringement on the privacy of the senators as well as a reflection of dictatorship. The National Assembly maintained an undignifying silence over the issue. It was such that the National Assembly could not secure its independence from the executive branch between 1999 and 2007 when Olusegun Obasanjo was the President of the country.

4. The Umaru Yar'Adua (May 29, 2007 – May 5, 2009)

Umaru Yar'Adua succeeded, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29, 2007 as the 13th President of Nigeria. The inauguration of President Yar'Adua was significant. First, it was the first time that the country successfully achieved a transition from one elected president to another. Secondly, he was the first civilian president that had university education degree since the Second Republic in 1979. Although, Yar'Adua was good-intentioned, the election that produced him as the President of the country was deeply flawed with electoral malpractices, which he openly admitted.

He had a seven-point agenda that was termed the road map for Nigeria's socio-economic transformation. These are security, wealth creation, health, education, land reforms, mass transit and Niger Delta. In actual fact, the seven-point agenda really belied the broad issues germane to the crisis of the country's underdevelopment.

However, it is sad to note that the so-called seven point agenda was not properly operationalized, and analyzed to enable the government tackle the issues involved one after the other – with requisite political will. The noticeable achievement of the period was the amnesty granted the militants in the Niger-Delta region, which brought about relative peace under the period in question. In comparison, Yar'Adua appeared more civil and ready to follow the rule of law, unlike Obasanjo with military background. It can be hypothetically stated that executive-legislative relations would have received a good impetus had Yar'Adua lived to complete his term of office.

President Yar'Adua was inundated with persistent health challenges leading to prolonged absence from office that hampered his performance. His prolonged absence without handing over to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan was viewed as a gross violation of section 145 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and hence an impeachable offence. The Section mandates the president to formally inform the National Assembly of its medical

trip and transfer power to the Vice-President in an acting capacity. The reluctance of President Yar'Adua to do this led the National Assembly to resort to voting Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the Vice-President, to assume power as acting president on February 9, 2010, until Yar'Adua was able to recommence his duties. The motion drafted by Senate and passed by both Houses stated that Dr. Jonathan "shall henceforth discharge the functions of the office of the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the federation." (Burgis, 2010). Some viewed the action of the National Assembly as a breach of the Constitution, while others argued that the action was based on doctrine of necessity. Apparently, Yar'Adua never recovered until his demise on May 10 2009. Jonathan succeeded him.

5. The Goodluck Jonathan Era (May 5, 2009-May 28, 2015)

Goodluck Jonathan was eventually sworn in as the 14th President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to complete Yar'Adua's term. The decision was not without contention orchestrated by some forces from the Northern part of the country, which felt that the North should produce a candidate to complete Yar'Adua's term. After much bickering, the matter was put to rest and Jonathan had to pick a Northerner, Namadi Sambo, as his Vice-President.

The period of Jonathan witnessed an unprecedented wealth for the country. The price of crude oil went astronomically high in the world market. The then Minister of Finance, Ngozi Iweala, advised the federal and state governments to save for the rainy day, but the counsel was turned down.

The relationship between the executive and legislature during President Jonathan was too cordial that raised a question of compromise. The cordiality cannot be divorced from apparent collusion by both arms of government to defraud the nation. The investigation of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) into some notable members of the executive and legislative arms revealed monumental and atrocious frauds of great magnitude. The legislative power (function) of the National Assembly was rarely used to ensure financial accountability and probity. Indeed, the three arms of government could not be exonerated from financial impropriety (Okotoni, 2017). There were several high profiles of alleged corrupt practices in the three arms of government.

6. The Muhammadu Buhari Presidency

The transition of power from President Goodluck Jonathan of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC) was a milestone in the history of party politics in Nigeria. It was the first time that power transited from a government in power to the opposition party. More important, perhaps, was the fact that the transition was devoid of violence, arson killings, which have been hallmark of elections hitherto.

In spite of the political tranquility that greeted the emergence of APC-led government of the federation, the executive-legislative relations had been anything, but cordial. The etiology of the crisis between the Presidency and the National Assembly was traceable to the controversial and contentious mechanism of the emergence of Yakubu Dogara and Bukola Saraki as speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President respectively. The APC leadership had other candidates in mind in persons of Femi Gbajabamila as Speaker of House of Representatives and Ahmed Lawan as Senate President. The duo of Dogara and Saraki had surreptitiously worked with their sympathizers within the APC legislators- elect with connivance of members of the opposition PDP to emerge as the leaders of the National Assembly. This act did not go well with the APC-led executive, which regarded the act as disloyalty and subversive of party interest. Indeed, many viewed it as a civilian coup. As a fall out of this political game, Senator Ike Ekweremadu of PDP was handsomely rewarded with the position of Deputy Senate President. The act was unprecedented in the annals of the history of the National Assembly for the leadership position to be shared by the ruling party and opposition.

The first allegation made against the leadership of the National Assembly was that the Senate rules of the 7th National Assembly provided that the election of the presiding officers be carried out via division – which from all intent and purposes was a form of an open ballot system. However, for shielding the electoral process the National Assembly suddenly changed, to allow secret ballot. The National Assembly through its Clerk had said that there was no time the Senate changed its rules to accommodate such.

The Federal Government initiated charges of forgery against Saraki and Ekweremadu in a High Court of Federal Capital Territory, Jabi Division, Abuja. The Nigeria Police invited Ekweremadu for interrogation. However, in a dramatic turn, the Presidency dropped the charges against the duo. Hence, from the inception of the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari, the battle line between the executive and the legislature had been drawn. Consequently, there had been myriads of epic battles between the executive and the legislature, which had marred their relationship. The two arms have been working at cross purposes to the extent that APC leadership felt that Dogara and Saraki

were moles of PDP in the APC controlled federal government.

Indeed, every legislative process embarked on from 2015–2019, did not favour APC government. For instance, President Buhari's first budget of 2016 was presented on December 22, 2015; it took almost six months (May 6, 2016) before the National Assembly passed it into law. Beyond this was the introduction of a new vocabulary into the Nigeria's political parlance known as "budget padding" that some have described as social evil. This was an attempt by the legislature to increase the budget sent to the National Assembly by the Presidency. Similarly, the 2017 budget that was presented on December 17, 2016 took several months for National Assembly to pass it as the President assented to it on June 12, 2017.

The 2018 budget suffered the same fate. The executive had maintained a hard stance against the legislature; hence, all heads of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) refused to honour the invitation of the National Assembly, until the President had to intervene. At the end of the day, it was discovered that the National Assembly had unilaterally added projects worth over N570 billion into the budget. This act is unknown in any democratic practice all over the world.

Another major noticeable conflict between the executive and the senate was the non-confirmation of Ibrahim Magu as the Chairman of EFCC. Ibrahim Magu's name was sent to the Senate twice for confirmation and was rejected ostensibly following a negative report of the Department of State Security (DSS), which advised against his confirmation. Indeed, Magu's case was shrouded in clandestine struggle between the Directorate of DSS on one hand, and the legislative-executive face-off on the other hand. When President Buhari submitted Magu's name for confirmation the second time, there were two contradictory reports emanating from DSS to Senate, one in favour and the other against Ibrahim Magu's consideration. The two contradictory reports from the DSS speak volumes on the need for the executive to put its house in order. Hence, the Senate rejected Magu, but the Presidency retained him in acting capacity even against the recommendation of Senate to dispense with him summarily.

In the bid to frustrate the executive, the Senate further delayed over thirty seven (37) confirmations sought by the executive for several months, and in some cases the nominees had to wait up to a year.

The 8th Senate under the leadership of Bukola Saraki, was said to have embarked on some investigations such as, investigation into the activities of the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) Babachir Lawal, over allegations of mismanagement and corruption, which the executive had already dealt with. The Senate also investigated the reinstatement of the former head of the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on Pension Reforms, Abdurashed Maina, who the president had dismissed from the civil service.

On March 13, 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari vetoed the Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill, aimed at making changes to the 2010 Electoral Act. The President refused to sign the bill on the ground that the National Assembly has no right to determine the sequence of elections. The National Assembly wanted its own election to come first and the presidential election to come last in order to forestall the possibility of any bandwagon effect on the success of a presidential candidate might have on them. The president successfully rebuffed it.

The disagreement between the executive and the legislature was so much that the President dared to submit nominees to replace Ministers, who for one reason or the other, resigned in his cabinet knowing fully well that it would be an uphill task.

All said; it is instructive to note that by the 1999 Constitution, Senate President is the Chairman of National Assembly, comprising the Senate (the upper chamber) and the House of Representatives (the lower chamber), a bicameral legislature. He is the number three (3) man in the order of protocol. In the absence of the president and vice-president, he automatically occupies the office of the president albeit in acting capacity.

Hence, it follows that when there is a face-off between the president and the senate president, it will definitely portend a danger signal in the body politic of the country. Indeed, the differences between President Buhari and Senate President Saraki were irreconcilable. It will be politically correct to say that it was this mutual distrust between the two of them that forced Saraki to quit APC on August 1, 2018, and joined PDP, the opposition. This can be buttressed by saraki's statement, "what we have seen is a situation whereby every dissent from the legislature was framed as an affront to the executive or as part of an agenda to undermine the government itself" (*Punch*, 2018). All along, Saraki was considered as a mole in the APC controlled federal government.

7. Causes of the Face-off

Some of the causes for the face-off between the executive and legislature, not exhaustive, among others include the following

- 1) Inadequacy of Political Orientation

The two arms of government (i.e. the executive and legislature) lack requisite experience in the act of governance. The political parties that bred them are deficient of ideologies. Political ideology gives direction and directives to its members. This is lacking in the Nigeria political space, hence, the two arms of government turn atomistic (antagonistic) on every issue. Indeed, many of our political office holders lack understanding of what democracy is all about and subsequent democratic attitude. It is a democracy without democrats. Hardly do our politicians know that democracy involves a spirit of give and take based on recognition and respect for other people's viewpoints. Democracy being a political process, it is an attitudinal and psychological variables. The attitudinal aspect of democracy is usually a by-product of unbroken (stable) years of political process and governance, which is sadly missing until in the last twenty years in Nigeria's political landscape.

The lack of political ideology has contributed largely to incessant political flirting, moving from political party to another with impunity.

2) Monetization of Politics (Money Politics)

The Nigerian political space has been unduly and excessively monetized. People have to pay for whatever office they aspire for whether in the executive or the legislature. Apart from the fact that the offices are for the highest bidders, the more responsible and juicy the office is, the more one is constrained to part with one's financial resources. Indeed, some members of the executive were known to have sponsored a good number of legislators. This explains the paternalistic disposition of the executive towards the legislators, be it at the state or federal level. It is also the issue of monetization of politics that has given rise to what is known as "godfatherism" in Nigeria's political dictum. The political "god fathers" control their "political sons and daughters" to loot public treasuries as the adage says, "He who pays the pipers, calls the tune." It is an open secret that without money, prospective contestants cannot win in their political party primaries.

3) Personalization of Office

The issue of personalization of offices among political office holders is closely akin to the issue of monetization of political space as analyzed above. The Nigerian political elite more often than not could not separate offices from individual occupiers. The machinery of offices is also tailored after the occupiers. The organic rules, regulations and laws that govern the offices are usually of secondary considerations. This has in most cases resulted into clashes, bickering, vendetta and conflict of interest between the executive and the legislature in recent times. This possibly explains the unending differences and feuds between President Muhammadu Buhari and former Senate President, Abubakar Bukola Saraki. It is all about ego-boosting between the two political gladiators snowballing into political party crises, with each of them having their armies of sympathizers. These bodies of sympathizers are patently injurious to the executive-legislative process in the country. These are unhealthy weights on the political process.

In the next section, we will consider some measures for coming to grips with these problems and challenges in order to avert further deterioration in the executive-legislative relations now and beyond. These strategies also aim at strengthening the entire political process.

8. Strengthening the Political Process

Be that as it may, how can the Nigerian state build and improve on the current political climate? This is perhaps the essence of this discourse. Hence, the paper on the final analysis concentrates on useful strategies in strengthening the executive-legislative process in Nigeria.

1) Separating society, its institutions/organizations from the State

The first thing to address is the need for separating the society (the people) and its multifarious institutions and organizations from the state. The ultimate control of the executive and the legislators can be realized if the people are conscious that the power to control the political class rests with them. As Nwabueze (2010) rightly noted, democracy is not so much about institutional forms, important though they are, as about the ability of the citizenry to control and remove the elected political office holders. This is perhaps the distinguishing factor that set the advanced democracies ahead of predacious societies such as Nigeria and many African countries.

The power of the citizenry to checkmate the preponderance of the executive and legislators lies primarily in a unifying public opinion. The Nigerian electorates, majority of who are peasantries, are divided along ethnic, religious and regional lines. These cleavages more often than not usually becloud their sense of unity against the tyranny of the political class (the executive and the legislature). Indeed, most of the so-called peasantries are heavily reliant on state for their survival, this makes them vulnerable to pressure and manipulations.

2) Engendering a reliable, consistent and transparent Civil Society

Beyond the tripartite division of powers among the executive, legislature and judiciary checks and balances is the need to engender a reliable, consistent and transparent civil society. There appears to be collusion between the executive and the legislative branches to violate, traumatize and undermine the rights of the people. The attachment to kinship organizations is anti-podal to autonomy and individualism, which are necessary to grow a virile civil society. There is need by the advanced democracies of the world especially the United States, to assist in raising and nurturing civil societies that will be detached from state apparatus.

3) Dealing with abject Poverty

The level of poverty is on the increase in Nigeria. Nigeria until recently has been reliant on a mono-economy of petroleum. The failures of successive governments to meet the yearnings of citizens have weakened their institutionalized interest in governance. The society is so riddled and grinding in abject poverty such that an average Nigerian is hardly concerned about the political process, but rather with how to make ends meet. It is for this, perhaps, that Rawlings (1994), once remarked that a starving human being has little interest in the democratic process, unless it also brings with it the fulfillment of his/her basic material needs.

Besides, poverty has led many citizens/electorates to sell their votes at various stages of electoral process without minding the repercussions on the polity. When votes are sold, conscience is also sold. It becomes difficult for citizens/electorates to demand accountability of stewardship from elected politicians who often engage in looting public treasuries; thereby impoverishing the citizens the more. Poverty therefore becomes an endless cycle. To produce responsive, responsible and accountable executives and legislators that would work in harmony for the interest of the people, this monster called poverty must be dealt with.

4) Ensuring higher literacy level in the Society

There is also the issue of low level education in the western sense. Illiteracy is very much prevalent in most parts of the country especially in the Northern Nigeria. For liberal democracy to thrive, it will no doubt need a congenial environment of mass literacy with the attendant ability of the people to ask, demand and insist on their rights, petition the constituted authority (judiciary) or other institutions, in case where their rights have been violated by the power that be. Such a high level of civic responsibilities, require more than the acquisition of native intelligence. It certainly needs a functional political orientation grounded in a complimented mass mobilization.

5) Combating Corruption headlong (Note 2)

There is no doubt that corruption is one of the greatest problems currently plaguing Nigeria, and has contributed largely to governance crisis and state failure. Shamefully and regrettably, that Nigeria is corrupt has been admitted by the high and the low in the society. Sometimes in 2013, former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, publicly proclaimed that “the National Assembly is full of rogues and armed robbers.” In May 2016, it was widely publicized that President Buhari openly admitted before the Queen of England the allegation made by the former British Prime Minister, David Cameron, that “Nigeria is fantastically corrupt.” In October, 2016, at a function in Ado-Ekiti, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, was quoted as saying that “All the institutions of government ... executive, legislature and the judiciary are corrupt” and that “what we need is serious re-orientation.” (*National Helm*, 2016). As if these were not enough, Mr. Shehu Sani, the All Progressive Congress Senator representing Kaduna Central, said that “With mountains of allegations of corruption in the kitchen cabinet of Mr. President; with mountains of allegations of corruption in the Parliament; with mountains of allegations of corruption in the Judiciary, now we are having a three Arms of corruption” (Adebayo, 2016). Nigeria, the most populous Black Nation in the World has been at different times ranked high in corruption by Transparency International and other organizations.

There is no way that the political process can be strengthened without combating corruption headlong. The current approach has been severely criticized that only oppositions are being hunted by the incumbent administration of All Progressives Congress. This allegation seems to have been confirmed when the chairman of the party was quoted as inviting prospective corrupt politicians to join their party and their sins (corruption) will be pardoned.

Besides, the prosecution of corrupt public officials is rather too slow. Since the inception of the administration in 2015, one can hardly point to a single case of corruption that has been successfully prosecuted and concluded. Nigeria may need to borrow from China, which is “arguably at the forefront of the anticorruption crusade and it is one of the few countries in the world that executes public officials convicted of corruption charges. Seven thousand and seventy (7,070) senior officials were prosecuted from 1992 to 2008, eighteen were executed, and another eighteen had their death sentences suspended, while twenty received life sentences” (Wedeman, 2012: 151).

9. Conclusion

There is no way that the political process in the country can be strengthened except the critical issues raised above

are well dealt with. As the longest democratic experience in Nigeria, the Fourth Republic (1999-2020) and beyond must be nurtured by all political stakeholders particularly the executive and legislative to ensure that it does not only survive, but thrives and lives on! However, if the executive and legislator together with their connivance with the judiciary kill it, posterity will not forgive them.

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Notes

Note 1. Louis Fisher (1981) *The Politics of Shared Power: Congress and the Executive* Washington, D.C. Congressional Quarterly Press, p.xi.

Note 2. For detailed information see **Okotoni**, M. O. (2017) *Governance Crisis and State Failure in Nigeria: Are we all Guilty? 299th Inaugural Lecture* delivered on March 14, 2017, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

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