



Legislative Violence and Underdevelopment in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Ontological Cousins

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Abstract

Since the Fourth Republic, physical fights and other aggressive behaviors have remained constant features of the legislature. The lawmakers have punched, kicked and injured each other; shattered glasses, upturned tables and chairs, and torn their clothes. This condemnable act directly translates to bad governance, widespread corruption, poverty, cronyism and prebendalism across the country. But then, the big question has been what factors are responsible for legislative violence and what are the impacts in the Nigerian society? Against this background, the paper examined legislative violence and its impact on sustainable development in Nigeria. Using the survey descriptive and library research method, the paper revealed that legislative violence is a symptom of imbalance of power between the executive and the legislature. It recommended that the legislature should extricate itself from the self-imposed servants of anti-democratic political merchants whose stock-in-trade is the commercialization of politics and politicization of the legislature. It concluded that the legislature should tame the savages of man and build superb institutions and establish state-of-the-art benchmarks that will serve as touchstone and springboard to economic prosperity, political stability and descent society.

Keywords: Democracy; Good Governance; Fourth Republic; Legislative Violence; Sustainable Development.

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Introduction

Globally, democracy is accepted as the best form of civil government because of its tenets such as checks and balances of the system. Munroe (2011:48) contends that it is “built on the premise and principles of the “majority rule” and the “protection of individual rights it has given voice to the people and provides opportunity for broad-based participation in the political process by the people”. Nigeria adopted the system shortly after it became a republic in 1963. Essentially, democracy is “a participatory system of government which recognizes three main arms of government, namely: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Democracy thrives on two fundamental principles: separation of powers, and checks and balances” (Inko-Tariah 2014; Adedepo, 2022:1). The necessity to operate on these two doctrines is based on the fact that concentration of power in the hands of a single individual or group would easily lead to tyranny and abuse (Munroe; 2011; Inko-Tariah; 2014; Adedepo: 2022:1). The modern idea of separation of powers is to be found in one of the most important 18th century works on political science by Baron de Montesque, titled: *The Spirit of the Law* written in 1748. It states that “there can be no liberty where the legislature and executive powers are united in the same person, or body of magistrates . . . or if the power of judge be not separated from the legislature and executive power”(Adedapo; 2022:1).

To put it more concretely, for any democracy to survive and succeed, the legislature must be free, especially from the yoke of corrupt democrats, fake progressives, and all-for-sale legislators through open, free and fair processes (Isijola; 2022:1). In this vein, Ihedioha (2012:1) punctiliously states that “the legislature occupies a central role in any democratic government. While there can be government without the legislature; there can be no democratic government without the legislature”. The legislature according to section 4 of the Nigerian constitution is vested with several functions. Prominent among them are lawmaking, representation and oversight functions. Beyond this, the legislature carries out other functions in the polity which are intended to promote good governance and development. With the benefit of hindsight, the attitude of the legislature in terms of governance, transparency and accountability to the people is still very primordial, antediluvian and pristine. This poor attitude to governance is revealed through the incident of fighting in the legislature where legislators engage themselves in a free for all fight inside what is often called their



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“Hallowed” chambers. Describing such despicable act, Iredia (2016:1) opines that “lawmakers punched each other while glasses were shattered; tables and chairs were also upturned in the violence that engulfed the House for hours. Some legislators sustained injuries during the violence while some had their clothes torn”.

This worrisome and condemnable act directly translates to bad governance, poverty, wide spread corruption, nepotism, electoral malpractices, cronyism, prebendalism across the country, lack of growth and development as well as disruption and destruction of democracy as epitomized by the death of the first and second republics. Against this background, one major problem of the democratic government in Nigeria today is legislative violence from top to



bottom. In 2002, for instance, legislators loyal to the multimillionaire business man and leader of the Anambra Peoples Forum (APF), Emeka Offor, and supporters of the then Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju was on December 24 engaged in a brawl inside the Anambra State House of Assembly. The bone of contention was the presentation of the state appropriation bill. Similar acts of hooliganism prevented the Ogun State House of Assembly from official business for not less than six months during the administration of Governor Gbenga Daniel. In Edo State, lawmakers went physical on each other in June 2014 as they tried to enforce the suspension of some of their colleagues. In July 2010, when a group led by Dino Melaye called for accountability from the Leadership of the House of Representatives, he and his team were thoroughly beaten as shown on national television as if it is easier to fight than to account for stewardship (Inko-Tariah; 2014;Iredia;2016;Eni and Nwoma,2021).

From the foregoing, legislative violence contributes to the subversion of elections, rule of law and popular legitimacy. It results to frequent impeachment of principal officers, politics of exclusion and irresponsible governance. Besides, legislative violence leads to indefinite suspension and to a reign of terror, where threads of violence, kidnapping, open intimidation and cheap blinking blackmail are common place through mass incarceration, police terror and repression (Nnachi Ude and Igu; 2007:178-179; Aliu; 2013:1; Eni and Nwoma: 2021:222). Notably, it fuels the cankerworm of political and economic corruption which seems to be escalating rather than abating in the nation's polity. In Nigeria, political corruption has assumed a ludicrous dimension. The Nigerian situation aptly fits into what Amuwo (2005) in Ugwu, Izueke and Obasi (2013:137) described as the "folklore of corruption". These developments are not only dangerous precedent but an aberration which is capable of derailing the fledging democratic system in the country. When legislative violence continues unabated, Inko-Tariah; 2014:2 opines that it "would constitute a nerve upon which similar occurrences would crop up in future". Accordingly, since the Fourth Republic, Eni and Nwoma; 2021:222 contends that "physical fights and other aggressive behaviors have remained constant features of the legislative houses". Accordingly, what factors are responsible for legislative violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic? What are the impact on democratic consolidation and development in Nigeria?



Against this background, the thrust of the paper is to explore legislative violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic with emphasis on the National and State Houses of Assembly, and its



impact on sustainable development in Nigeria. Using the survey descriptive and intensive library research methodology, the paper emphasizes that the legislature as the bulwark of representative democracy is germane to the sustenance of democracy since it is constitutionally and strategically positioned to undermine authoritarian tendencies on the part of the executive, engender government effective and adequate response to the delivery of public goods and services, and enhance strict adherence to constitutionalism and the rule of law. Stated more generally, the legislature is critical to the sustenance of popular trust in “governance processes, institutions, and improving government legitimacy. Obviously, the state of the legislature of a nation at any particular point in time is a significant pointer to the health of the social contract between the government and its citizens (Aliu;2013:1). This study contributes invaluable insights by moving beyond mere identification of causes of legislative violence to highlighting on its impact on democratic consolidation and development in Nigeria. Theoretically, the study using Frustration-Aggression theory reveals that legislative violent behavior stems from inability to fulfill needs. To facilitate an effective discourse, the study in addition to the introduction consists of analysis of concepts, legislative violence in Nigeria, research methodology and theoretical framework, legislative brawls as obstacle to democratic consolidation, as well as recommendations and conclusion.

Delineation of Concepts

Legislative Violence

Legislative violence broadly refers to “any violent clashes between members of a legislature often physically inside the legislature and triggered by divisive issues and tight votes”(BBC News, July 18, 2017). Such violent clashes, brawls and/or fights are physical confrontation or combat between two or more people or groups intended to oppose physically, to try to overpower, and to fiercely counteract an opposing ideas or forces. A correlation to legislative violence is political violence which is a common means used by people in government around the world to achieve political goals. Many groups and individuals believe that their political systems will never respond to their political demands. As a result, they believe that violence is not only justified but also necessary in order to achieve their political objectives. Hence, legislative violence can take a number of forms including but not limited to the following;



legislative recklessness; brawls, police brutality, splash of water, torture, human rights violations; use of intemperate language, intimidation and outright violence by political parties and by their allies; use of pepper spray, broken glass and stationery items to hurt each other (Bayagbon;2014; Abimola, 2021; Eni and Nwoma 2021).

Legislative brawls are caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interest between needs, values and interest between people working together. Legislative conflicts are inevitable clash between formal authority and power and those legislators and progressive groups affected. These disputes may be over how revenues or Committees' largesse from unspent budget should be shared; appointments to juicy committees in the National or State Houses of Assembly and the misappropriation of money from the House budget. Also, the hierarchical structure of the legislature, and financial consequences, miscommunication resulting from confusion or refusal to cooperate, reduced creative collaborations, distrust, split camps and gossips are not left out (Moriarity;2007). To underscore this, Eni and Nwoma (2021: 210-222) suspect that the perversity of physical violence in Nigeria's National Assembly is traceable to deficient rhetorical skill amongst some of the legislators on account of their reliance on a second language (English) as the medium of legislative communication in the face of the low educational benchmark set by the country's constitution for membership of the National Assembly. Other contentious issues include but not limited to receiving money (bribes) for contracts or dishing out no bid contracts to insincere politicians, pretenders, interlopers, charlatans and irredeemable impostors and cronies. There are jurisdictional disagreements among legislators, house committees and between the parties and Assembly management. Also, there are subtler forms of conflict involving rivalries, jealousies, personality clashes, role definitions and struggles for power and favor. There is also conflict within legislators, that is, between competing needs and demands to which they respond in different ways (Johnson; 1976;148-152).

From the foregoing, legislative violence arises because of the scarcity of freedom, position, and resources. Law-makers who value independence tend to resist the need for interdependence and, to some extent, conformity within the legislature. Legislators who seek power therefore struggle with others for position or status within the legislature. According to Mills (1967:14-15) rewards



and recognition are “often perceived as insufficient and improperly distributed, and members are inclined to compete with each other for these prizes”. The point being made is that when there is a fixed amount of resources to be distributed throughout the



Legislature and those resources are scarce; this can set off legislative conflicts that is generally win-lose in nature. Those legislators who are the losers are not likely to be supportive of the decisions. This is clearly articulated by Halverstadt (1991:78) who states that an organization that is losing such resources as “money, volunteer work hours, communal self-esteem, or status in the larger community is put on edge emotionally. Parties to conflicts within that system are more likely to display and act out system tensions and fears on one another”.

Consequently, widespread legislative violence among lawmakers portends grave danger to the deepening of democratic culture, values and processes in Nigeria. Therefore, Nigeria continues to grapple with socio-economic problems of endemic poverty, massive unemployment, inflation, huge external and domestic debts, deindustrialization, ethnic and religious tensions, decadent infrastructure, and widening income inequality (Aliu,2013:102,Adelapo (2022), Ezukanma; 2022). The authors argued persuasively that politics in Nigeria is overshadowed by widespread political and electoral violence, intra-party bickering, electoral malpractices, general insecurity of lives and properties, blatant violation of human rights and the rule of law, widespread corruption, suppression of political opposition, and political apathy. On this premise, legislative conflicts represents a serious obstacle to sustainable development in Nigeria, constraining citizens’ access to public goods and services, as well as undermining their rights to the enjoyment of a better life.

Upon the unjaundiced reading of the above thesis, development according to Iroanya;(2014:11) refers to “a process of change in the social structure, attitude, and general acceleration of economic growth through reduction of inequality and poverty”. Development involves a major social and structural change in economic, political or religious changes that enhance institutional transformation, the monetization of local economics, and progressive substitute of subsistence exchange activities. Mohammed (2002) in Akpagu and Okoro (2012:198) identified three important facts about development as follows;

Increasing the availability and widening the distribution of basic life substance, such as food, shelter, and protection; raising the level of living in addition to higher income, provision of jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and humanitarian values, all of which serve to enhance material well-being, but also to generate greater individual and national self, and; expanding the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence.



Given the above position, some indices of national development include; improved standards of living in terms of availability of decent accommodation, improved nutritional standard, qualitative health care and education services of the majority; life expectancy which is mainly influenced by the standard of living, availability of health services, literacy level, and income of the people.

In the same vein, the Christian Council of Asia in Kuala Lumpur further elaborates that the fundamental goal of development:

Should be human goals which emphasize human dignity, freedom, and integrity. The Asian repudiation of development which, merely emphasizes materialistic goal is not an escape into hopeless moralism but rather a positive emphasis on more human concepts of the quality of life (Eme;2007:18-19).

What is breath taking in this conception is that national development should regard growth and social justice as one entity and focus on the economic sectors that will better the poor. This implies no to the technology which affluence is its goal, and favors the type that agrees with the developing world concept of the quality of life suitable to their own cultural and social environment. In consequence of this, the All African Council of Churches lend credence to the “human” and “communal” type of development and expresses it as follows;

Africans need to relate to our criteria for development to the basically communalistic orientation of our traditional societies...technology by itself cannot improve the spiritual quality of human life. We need therefore to give serious thought to the relation between modern technology and our own cultural values concerning the nature and purpose of man...Our traditional orientation towards nature still affords us the opportunity to offer some creative alternative to the rampant exploitation of the earth's environment in the name of progress (Eme; 2007:19-20).

Ultimately, sustainable national development comprises three components—environmental, economic and social perspectives. Accordingly, the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Scott and Marshall; 2005). Development then is the creation of conditions, both material and spiritual, which enables man, the individual, and man the species, to become his best. Therefore, to talk of the development of man, and to walk for the development of man, must mean the development also of that kind of society that serves man which enhances his well-being, and preserves his



dignity. It is clear, then that development is the realization of higher needs like self-expression, human creativity and liberty. Such development centers on the human person and not on things. It aims at the eradication of poverty, inequality, illiteracy, injustice, hunger, disease, alienation, deprivation, oppression and other social challenges. It promotes social justice, freedom and egalitarianism (Iroanya; 2014).The point being strenuously emphasized is that legislative violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic is not only detrimental to democracy but constitutes a threat to popular participation, to democratization process and to sustainable development.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Frustration-Aggression theory which was first developed by John Dollard in 1939 and later expanded and modified by scholars like Leonard Berkowitz and Aubrey Yates in 1962, to be the most common explanation for violent behavior stemming from inability to fulfill needs. Frustration-Aggression theory holds that there must be a marked difference between expected need satisfactions and where expectation does not meet attainment, people have reason to confront those they feel are instrumental in frustrating their expectations (see Iroanya;2010:35).

Therefore, where legitimate legislative desires, needs and expectation do not meet individual or group attainment, this breed feeling of disappointment which expresses itself through anger and violence against those they hold responsible for frustrating their legislative desires. Accordingly, Gurr (1970:24) asserts that "the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is saving it and what seem attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and (2013:124) have "termed malignant narcissism – muffles their internal voice of reason and morality". In that circumstance, the authors conclude by observing that "whatever sense of esteem has developed in that process is extraordinarily fragile". This makes the legislator "particularly vulnerable to any slight insults or ideas that threaten to shatter the façade of self-worth". Such insults are known as narcissistic injuries and have the triggers of narcissistic rage (Akhtar:1999:350-355). This produces jealousy, distrust, suspicion, hate and other violent behaviors. This is the fulcrum of the next section.

Methodology

A study of this nature demands a multidimensional approach and this is carefully utilized. The study is a problematic one because of its wide and complex nature. The methods in this study



are; survey descriptive method. Since it involves the study of a people's attitude towards a particular aspect of life, the survey descriptive method was used. According to Onwioduokit (2000:27) survey means "type of study whose essence is to identify or seek the opinion of a large number of people about events, developments and proposals". This was achieved using intensive library research to narrow this study down to the objectives of the study. Legislative Violence in the Fourth Republic

The legislature is the distinctive mark of a country's sovereignty, the index of its status as a state and the source of much of the power exercised by the executive in the administration of government. According to Sagay (2012:1) the sovereign power of the state is "therefore identified in the organ that has power to make laws by legislation, and to issue 'command' in the form of legislation binding on the community". Nwabueze (n.d) in Sagay (2010) buttressed this point by stressing that in the constitution, the legislature is dealt with first before the other organs of government. Thus, section 4 deals with legislative powers, section 5 with executive powers and section 6 with judicial powers. The legislature is therefore, the number one arm of government in any democratic state. However, the current low esteem in which the federal and state legislature in Nigeria is held arises not from lack of negative values and practices, but from gross disdain against the interest of Nigeria and Nigerians. Implicated in the above assertion is the fact that the legislature in Nigeria has been overwhelmed by numerous legislative violence since its inauguration in June, 1999.

Since the Fourth Republic, there have been occasional hiccups here and there but not seriously damaging to the political culture as recent development in interrupting democratic principles. For instance, results of the study reveals that in Rivers State, there was the then governor, Rt. Hon. Rotimi Amaechi of All Progressive Congress (APC) and twenty-seven (27) lawmakers on one side and the police and five lawmakers of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on the other side. The situation deteriorated to the point where five out of thirty-two lawmakers who were allies of former Minister of State for Education Nyesom Wike tried to impeach the Speaker of Rivers State House of Assembly Hon. Otelemaba Amachree with alleged back-up of heavy police presence at the complex of the Rivers State Assembly (Bayagbon; 2014:1). In Edo State House of Assembly, the battle between the APC legislators and the then governor Adams Oshomole on one side; and the Edo police command and PDP on the other side began with an attack on the



legislative quarters of lawmakers in the state on October 11, 2014; destroying 36 cars belonging to members of the APC, leaving property worth several millions destroyed on the trail of their operation.

In Ekiti State, immediately Ayo Fayose of PDP, won the gubernatorial election, it soon became obvious that there was no love lost between members of the APC dominated lawmakers in the Ekiti State House of Assembly and the new state government of the PDP. Expectedly, on November 17, 2014, seven members of Ekiti State House of Assembly backed by well-armed policemen impeached the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Hon. Adewale Omirin and installed a new one to move Fayose's government forward (Bayagbon; 2014:1, Ifowodo;2014:19). The situation in Ekiti was still trending when the police invaded the House of Representatives with a mission to stop the Speaker Aminu Tambuwal from performing his legislative duties. The fiasco that followed especially with the Speaker forcing himself into the premises and some lawmakers scaling the fence and pockets of reports about some police men being beaten up have remained a subject of controversy (Fasan; 2014). Similarly, there was a fracas in Ogun State House of Assembly, during which the mace was destroyed (This Day live; 2013; Eni and Nwoma; 2021).

Furthermore, a fight broke out in Nigeria's parliament on Tuesday June, 2010, after a group of members were suspended for accusing the Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Oladimeji Bankole of corruption. The group of eleven legislators calling themselves "the Progressives" called for a probe of the Speaker for misappropriation of money from the house budget from 2008-2009. He was accused of receiving bribes for car supply contracts, dishing out no-bid contracts to the tune of nine billion naira (₦9 billion) as well as engaging in a series of corrupt activities including creaming of funds meant for his party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (Eboh; 2012:1). In June 2015, the House of Representatives exchanged blows over leadership tussle leading to disruption of plenary. The fighting took place in the presence of some secondary school students who were on excursion to the National Assembly. The issue at stake was whether or not to allow Hon. Yakubu Dogara to become the Speaker. On July 15, 2021, a fight broke out at the House of Representatives, as lawmakers debated the electronic transmission of election results, which is a major component of the electoral Act Amendment bill. Accordingly, the above violent legislative behaviors stem from inability to fulfill needs.



In the Senate, recent examples include: the fight between those in support and those in opposition to Senator Arthur Nzeribe's motion for the impeachment of the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo in April 2000. The contentious vote of confidence on the then Senate President, Dr. Bukola Saraki in September 2015; the ill-tampered debate over President Muhammadu Buhari's claim in April 2018 that the civil war in Libya gave rise to the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria; the reactions by members to the threat by Senator Dino Melaye in July 2018 to beat up and impregnate a fellow Senator, Mrs. Remi Tinubu who called him a "dog" and a "thug", among others. President Buhari's request for the Senate to approve N23.7trillion already spent by the Federal Government was the most recent that divided lawmakers. The chamber became rowdy when some lawmakers kicked against the request described as unconstitutional. The disagreement forced the lawmakers to suspend consideration of the President's request till January 17, 2023 to allow for proper scrutiny (Iroanusi; 2023:1). But the big question has been who would be blamed for the legislative violent incidence and a perceived sickening reflection of a debased society where law and order have been thrown to the dogs? Bemoaning the precarious situation, Bayagbon; (2014:1) ask, "What is the guarantee that this national disgrace and continued disrespect for democracy will not keep rearing up its ugly head?"

From the foregoing, it goes without saying therefore that brawls are common features in parliaments across the nation. Although the sight of brawling politicians is incongruous with a legislature's stately image, its occupants like in any other workplace, are still prone to stress and anger. The confrontational nature of politics and the high stakes often add to the simmering tension. This Day live (2013) and Bayagbon (2014) reveals that such clashes have occurred in many countries such as Bolivia, India, Mexico, Jordan, Kenya, South Korea, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States and ancient Rome. Recent examples of brawls in legislative houses across the world include that of Ukrainian parliament in March 2013, Jordanian parliament in March 2013, and the Georgia lawmakers' brawl in the United States (US), during a Television show in February 2013. Political leaders in countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Ghana, Turkey and many more have also written history with some very ugly and nasty fights during parliament sessions. Against this background, the Frustration-Aggression theory justifies the theoretical framework of this study.



In India, for example, protests in the Indian Parliament happen occasionally. Indian MPs have used pepper spray, broken glass and stationery items to hurt each other. In Ukraine, deputies clashed during debates on the country's budget for 2014 in the Parliament in Kiev. Again, on January 16, 2014, Ukraine's Parliament approved a 2014 state budget with a deficit of 3.6 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) despite attempts by the political opposition to block proceedings (Bayagbon; 2014). The author demonstrates that in Taiwan, a legislator in Lin Hung – Chih from the ruling National Party (KMT) had a scuffle with legislator Chiu Chih-Wei from the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) at the legislative Yuan in Taipei on August 2, 2013. Also, on July 8, 2010, opposition DPP legislator Kuo-Wen Chen fell off the podium while scuffling with ruling KMT party legislators at the legislative Yuan in Taipei. Legislators threw objects, splashed water and kicked one another, sending two to hospital in a brawl over how fast to ratify a trade pact with China that shaped up as a pivotal election issue (see BBC News; 2016; Abimbola; 2021; trtworld.com 2022/01/magazine/legislative-violence on Dec.10, 2022). From the foregoing results, legislators resort to anger and violence always against those they hold responsible for their frustration or feeling of disappointment.

Legislative Violence as Obstacle to National Development

1. Weakened Institution and Negligence of Duty

The basis of Nigeria's problem revolves around weak institutions, governance and leadership. This leads to poor development and implementation of national plans. To underscore this position, Ebenezer (2021:1) affirms that

An institutional failure has become scandalous and disheartening to Nigerians, and is also threatening the corporate existence of the Nigerian state. Poverty, anger and depravations in the society have made it difficult to address the multi-dimensional ineptitudes of the Nigerian state. Thus, institutions established to address societal needs and demands are utilized for personal aggrandizement by those elected or appointed to lead these institutions.

Manifestly, Nigeria lacks the institution, institutional framework and dynamics that need to enable the government to deliver impacts that could be the game-changer. This hampers the delivery of government objectives to the people. In that circumstance, as citizens are frequently let down by their government institutions and by those elected or appointed to head these institutions, the cut is deep, the pain enduring and the trauma leaves a scar. According to Azaiki (2023:1) the cost is often expressed as “a loss of faith in systems and the recourse to self-help



and shortcuts which in the end undermines the whole system, since shortcut often imply non-compliance with rules and the concomitant lawlessness that pervades the land”. The Nigerian legislators are the most dramatic in this regard. These legislators abandon their constitutional mandates and succumb to all manner of external interference. These clearly position them as ‘use any means and break any rules ‘in the quest for power and wealth.

Unfortunately, Braithwaite (2022:1) contends that they have “set an unworthy example of corruption, kleptomania, greed, self-centeredness, ineptitude and partiality, amongst many other evils; and sadly, these disgracefully bad examples has been followed by many”. Notably, those who are placed in institutions which they are not qualified to be in, can only do one thing – weaken and may be even destroy the institution. Apparently, the legislature has become a weakened institution. The country now have weak institutions and strong personalities inflicting irreparable damage to it (Auwal; 2014; Braithwaite; 2022). The point to emphasis is that the Fourth Republic is characterized by impotent legislatures that “have failed to harness her constitutional powers, rights and privileges in the direction of promoting the public good. While some “legislatures misused and abused their power, others neglected to exert their power to make their governor accountable” (Fagbadebo; 2019:254).

It is also shameful that some legislators have neglected their primary duties of representation, lawmaking and oversight, and are preoccupied with externally motivated plan to unseat their Speaker or to hobnob with outsiders or powers that be to usurp the powers and jurisdiction constitutionally and democratically conferred on them. What is more worrisome is the fact that the assembly members oftentimes move the House deliberations to obscure and undisclosed places in the state despite the fact that no rule or resolution of the assembly permits that. Ifijeh (2014:19) emphatically declares that this act is “a flagrant disobedience of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Balonwu vs. Obi* (2007 NWLR PT1008/488) to the effect that the House of Assembly can only conduct its legislative functions in a legally designated place in the state capital.” A corollary of weakened institution and negligence of duty is the increasing level of political violence in the contemporary society.

2. Political Violence

Anifowose (1999) in Ugwu, Izuekeand Obasi(2013:136) defines political violence as the use of:



Threat of physical act carried out by an individual or individuals within a political system against another individual or individuals and or damage with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and or damage or destruction to property, that...have political significance.

Across the country, there has been a spike in violent attacks and frequent breakdown of the law and order. The killings in Anambra, Lagos, Kaduna, Imo, Plateau, Rivers and Osun typify the deluge of violence featuring clashes by hoodlums, arson and assassinations. For instance, in Enugu State, the way the political crisis within the legislature degenerated into actual physical fighting within the State House of Assembly provides a disturbing example of the way violence is used as a political tool in Nigeria. Several other states have also experienced a split between legislators supporting a state governor against those supporting federal politicians based on the state or between a godfather (Senator Jim Nwobodo) and Governor Chimaroke Nnamani (godson) (Human Rights Watch; 2003:5). The faction supporting the federal politicians is sometimes referred to as the “Abuja group” after the federal capital. Human Rights Watch (2003:6-7) demonstrates that the 2002-2003 legislative crisis in Enugu State House of Assembly led to the suspension of Nwabueze Ugwu, a state legislator who was strongly opposed to the governor. Ugwu’s repeated public criticism of the governor’s unconstitutional actions led to the death of his brother Sunday Ugwu in the brother’s shared residence in circumstances that indicates the killers had intended to target Nwabueze. In July 2002, the crisis reached an exceptionally low point when physical fighting broke out in the grounds of the state legislature.

Ostensibly, Nigerian politicians are generally desperate, and some are out-rightly irresponsible. To further the quest, the Punch Editorial Board of November 30, 2022 declared that

“Even after gaining high political office, they persist in odious behavior; they campaign with a retinue of thugs; when those hirelings unleash violence including murder, state institutions that should hold them accountable do not because they have been emasculated by public office holders”.



On the basis of these developments, Ifowodo (2014:19) confidently asserts that a major source of the nation's predicament is "our insistence on practicing democracy without democrats. It is a phenomenon founded on a shocking contempt for history, ethics and plain decency". This explains why they trample on every sacred principle and desecrate every state institution, blinded by a brute will to power or immediate personal gain and do not ever care how many people died, how many were maimed and how many were denied their liberty in the struggle to democratic consolidation. Again, the Punch Editorial Board of November 30, 2022 underlined the impact of political violence thus "the weaponization of politics has eroded confidence in the integrity of Nigeria's democratic process; and democracy, anchored on the pillars of participation, inclusion and legitimacy, suffers. Decent people steer clear of politics and voter apathy prevails". Anxiety is heightened by the apparent unwillingness and seeming inability of the security forces to prevent the violence, or arrest and prosecute the perpetrators and their sponsors. This is a symptom of inequality in the country.

3. Promotion of Expediency and Growing Inequality

The legislature in any democratic system of government is supposed to be the watchdog of the people against the authoritarian and indeed predatory tendencies of the executive, which is the most powerful arm of government, given the capacity to control and deploy state funds and coercive forces (Sagay; 2010:5). The legislature is supposed to protect the interest of the people. They are supposed to be the grassroots arm of government. But this has not been the case. The legislators, at least at the national level, have jettisoned the interest of the nation for self-interest. Instead of serving the people of this country, they are engaged in the pursuit of self-interest, to a degree that can only be regarded as shocking. This can be demonstrated by a quick examination of legislative activity at the national level with regard to self-awarded salaries and allowances (Sagay; 2010:5; Animasaun; 2013:1, Ebenzer; 2021:1-5).

In spite of the dismal standard of living, poverty of the country and low income per capita of Nigeria; high infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, malnutrition, inadequate healthcare and transportation, lack of electricity, high crime rates, high number of young people not in education, employment or in training; Nigerian legislators in Abuja, have awarded themselves the highest salaries and allowances in the world. Research by Sagay (2010), Hardball (2011), Animasaun 2013



revealed that the Nigerian lawmakers in Abuja are the highest paid in the world. A senator in Nigeria earns ₦240m in salaries and allowances whilst his House of Representatives' counterpart earns two hundred and three million naira (₦203m). Put differently, a senator earns about one million seven hundred thousand US dollars (\$1.7m), and a member of the House of Representatives earns one million four hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$1.45m) per annum. By contrast, an American senator earns one hundred and seventy-four thousand dollars and a British Parliamentarian earns about sixty-four thousand pounds per annum.

For instance, Barrack Obama, former President of the United States and the richest country in the world, earned four hundred thousand dollars per annum. David Cameron, a former British Prime Minister, earned one hundred and ninety thousand pounds per annum. Whereas, a senator in Nigeria, the poverty capital of the world, earns one million seven hundred thousand dollars per annum. It is simply absurd and shocking. It is “a feeding frenzy” (Sagay; 2010:6). The author argues brilliantly that the Senate President earns two hundred and forty million naira (₦240m) quarterly or ₦83.33 million per month, whilst his deputy earns fifty million naira (₦50m) per month. The Senate has allocated one billion and twenty-four million naira (₦1, 024, 000,000.00) quarterly allowance to its ten principal officers known collectively as Senate leadership. Each of the principal officers earns seventy-eight million every quarter. Accordingly, they “luxuriate in crudity, greed, anarchy, obscurantism and buccaneering depredation of the country and her wealth. Not surprisingly, Nigeria celebrates public officials that stole billions of naira from public coffers” (Ezukanma 2022:1). This tragic state of affairs Sagay (2010:6) quips is “clearly unsustainable. Those engaged in this feeding frenzy are endangering the nation’s democracy”. This results in high cost of governance in Nigeria.

4. High Cost of Governance in Nigeria

The unprecedented cost of governance in Nigeria has such a dangerous proportion that Nigerian masses have become so pauperized at the expense of a select few that goes about with the impression that they were elected to enjoy on behalf of others (Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre; 2013:1). To put the issue at hand in proper perspective, Oby Ezekwesili, the former Vice President of the World Bank for Africa and former Minister of Solid Minerals at a One Day Dialogue on the cost of governance in Nigeria, spoke on several issues that cut across governance, public financial management and development with statistics from credible sources of government



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and international institutions. She bemoaned wasteful spending and improper utilization of resources by government (CISLAC; 2013:2). On this score, Business News of November 1, 2012 reports the former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crime

Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu as criticizing the high cost of governance in Nigeria, while advocating drastic reduction in expenses associated with all tiers of government and suggesting the country drops the keeping of a full time National Assembly. Additionally, the Guardian of May 19, 2019 and December 20, 2021 underlined the fact that as a result of the expensive governance structure, less than 30 percent of the Federal Government revenue were allocated to capital projects.

More so, Sanusi M. Sanusi former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria affirms that 25 percent of national budget is spent on the National Assembly and expresses concern that over 70 percent of the nation's revenue was being expended on recurrent expenditure. To illustrate this with the 2023 budget will suffice (Iroanya, 2014). Of the 2023 ₦20.51trn budget, only ₦5.35trn or 26% was allocated to capital project, while ₦6.31trn or 30.8% of its expenditure will be on debt service (Ndujihe, 2022). More fundamentally, Business Day of March 11, 2013 reveals how the legislature spent five billion two hundred thousand naira (₦5.2bn) per Bill in two years. Cumulatively, the recurring huge spending of the nation's budget on politicians at the local, state and national levels have become an added burden to the country in this critical period of socio-economic challenges requiring urgent redress. More so, this feeding frenzy is the major cause of development crises confronting Nigeria. Despite earning hundreds of billions of dollars in oil revenues, two thirds of Nigerians continue to live in poverty; 20.2 million children are presently out of school, thrown and abandoned to the streets to battle with poverty and hunger instead of Mathematics and Science. About thirty three million able youths are without gainful employment, a demographic group that traditionally serves as the catalyst for societal transformation (Hussairu; 2013:12; Aliu; 2013:108; Ojo; 2019:1; Punch Editorial Board of January 5, 2023).



Conclusion

The study explored the impact of legislative violence on sustainable development in Nigeria. The study discovered that the absence of ethical value is responsible for the high rate of expediency, corruption, impunity and violence characteristic of the political process in the nation. This accounts for the lack of ideological politics which is the solution to the crisis-driven politicking in contemporary society. The vicious cycle that has formed the bane of the political dynamics of Nigeria cannot be “broken by the helpless and incapacitated politician who is so entangled in the cycle. This is where only God, an external and greater force, can come in” (Ituma; 2008:29). This appeal to higher moral authority helps inspire what had seem impossible and move the nation to embrace a common destiny in the larger project of national renewal. This will enable the legislature to tame the savages of man and build superb institutions and establish state-of-the-art benchmarks that will serve as touchstone and springboard to economic prosperity, political stability and descent society.

Recommendations

The conceptual framework and context of this study is based on the fact that elite politics and its concomitant legislative violence is one of the endemic factors undermining institutional trust necessary for the legitimacy of government and deepening of democracy. It orchestrates political, socio-economic, ecological and religious crises in Nigeria. It is on the basis of this study’s contextual diagnosis of the problems associated with legislative brawls in Nigeria that the following panaceas are adumbrated below;

- a. The legislators should appreciate the incorruptible nature of the sovereignty of the legislature and stop hobnobbing with outsiders or powers that be to usurp the powers and jurisdiction, rights and privileges, constitutionally and democratically conferred on them.
- b. The capacity building and informational roles of Civil Society Organizations and Faith Based Organizations as well as their constant attack and criticism of instances of legislative violence, and political corruption, abuse of power, human rights violations, police brutality and torture in Nigeria is commendable and must be sustained.
- c. The government should work assiduously to strengthen anti-corruption agencies to ensure the



effective discharge of their statutory mandates. Also, their legal framework and institutional capacity needs to be reformed and this should be complemented by are-orientation of Nigerians.

- d. As a corollary, it is high time for drastic change of orientation, especially in the exercise of political power among the elites. This should be characterized by sincere and honest service for the common good.

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