



LEGISLATIVE CONFLICTS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: AN INTERROGATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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Abstract: *The Legislature is officially elected or otherwise selected body of people vested with the responsibility and power to make laws for the good governance of the State. The Legislature like every other institution of the State, hardly functions without conflict which could either be internally or externally induced. This research is empirical, and interrogates conflicts in the National Assembly of Nigeria between 1999 – 2018 and reviews the implications for democratic consolidation. Employing secondary data and content analysis as methods of data collection and analysis as well as conflict theory as a framework of analysis, the study revealed the inordinate ambition of the political class to retain power at all cost for economic gains as the major cause of conflicts in the Legislature and recommends respect for the rule of law, making legislative offices as part-time and less attractive as the panacea for democratic consolidation.*

Key words: *Conflict, legislature, party, politic, democratic consolidation*

INTRODUCTION

In daily human interaction, there is politics. Politics is exciting because people agree and disagree with overpowering and the management of scarce resources. They also agree or disagree about the conduct of people over who gets what, when and how? Also important is disagreement over how collective decisions are made; who should have a say and what qualifies him or her to assume such influence and power. Aristotle sees politics as a 'master science' Above all, politics a social activity that challenges the mind, it is always a dialogue, and never a monologue, that is why people agree and disagree on issues, principles, and concepts. Nevertheless, the disagreement that lies at the heart of politics also extends to the nature of the subject and how it should be studied and practiced. Politics is phenomenal and inextricably linked to conflict and cooperation. As noted by Heywood (2015, p.165), politics involves 'the existence of rival opinions, different wants, competing for the needs and opposing interests'. It guarantees disagreement about the rules under which people live and in its broadest sense, it is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live and are governed.

Democracy is one paradigm through which politics strives. The concept of democracy on its own has generated a lot of controversies, analytical disputations, ideological and philosophical camps (Akindele 1, Oluwatobi & Oluwakemi, 2012, p. 176). It has a nebulous definition and has received contestation from scholars. As a form of political organization, democracy like other similar concepts, 'has not been easy to define without ideological equivocation' (Akindele and Obiyan, 1996, p. 84). Democracy means the 'power of the people'. It is now regarded as a form of government in which the people rule themselves either directly or indirectly through their representatives (Kapur, 1996, p. 377). Also, it may be described as a 'system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either

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directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves (Apadorai, 1975, p. 177).’ Egobueze (2013, p. 1) conceptualizes democracy as a government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. Indeed, democracy is a form of government in which there is the direct participation of all eligible citizens or those eligible citizens to participate through elected representatives in the proposal development, rulemaking, implementation, and interpretation when hitches exist. It encompasses the gamut of social, economic and cultural conditions that allow for the free and equal practice of political self-governance.

In conceptual narratives, the beginning of democracy as a type of political regime is located in the ‘assembly democracy’ of Athens in ancient Greece with the ‘invention’ of the political and the participation of the citizens of the polis in the shared exercise of the rule. Republican Rome contributed to the democratic tradition on the notion of a res publica, a common good or ‘the thing that belongs to the people’ as well as ‘the idea of law as the directing principle of the political society. With the fall of the Roman Republic, ‘popular rule’ disappeared in Europe to make a short re-appearance in Italian city-states around 1100 CE – only to give way after about the mid-1300s to oligarchic forms of rule in some of the major cities (Axtmann, 2013, p. 118). It is important to note that in all democratic systems, majority rule is adopted by the citizens in decision making.

A state is said to be democratic when there are functionally the three basic organs of government, namely – the Legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Thus, democracy flourishes effectively where there is an elected body saddled with lawmaking, often referred to as the Legislature or Parliament, an Executive that implements the Law made by the Legislature and a Judiciary that interprets the Law, when in breach (Egobueze & Elem, 2015, p. 197). The existence of these structures that manage the institutions mentioned above tantamount to government.

Governance entails the process of making decisions and implementing same based on different considerations such as popular participation, respect for the rule of law, accountability and transparency, observance of human rights, transparency, prompt responses to human needs, free access to information, accommodation of diverse interests, equity, effective results, and inclusiveness. Failure to adhere to these considerations usually result in a crisis of governance as the political situations in many developing states show. Nigeria’s experience of the crisis of governance can be examined from different perspectives such as colonial experience, decolonization process, constitutional development, political instability, institutional decays, and reforms.

Legislatures are the heart of any democratic government across the world and are not static institutions (Mbah & Egobueze, 2016, p.7). This institution evolved and develops internally in reaction to the broader political environment. As a political institution, the legislature is seen as an important organ used to address the important question of unity and stability in any given society. Significantly, the functionality of the legislature has been given less attention than the executive and the judiciary, which evolved and consolidated earlier, especially in advanced democracy with least authoritarian regimes.

The grand norm, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides the framework that directs power distribution in the Federation. Thus, Sections 4 (1) and 4 (7) of the 1999 Constitution provide for the law-making function of the legislature at both the Federal and State levels (FRGN, 1999). This Egobueze (2016, p.1) notes the National Assembly and the 36 Subnational Legislative Houses all are legislating for peace, order and good governance of the Federation and states respectively. Since the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, five Legislative Assemblies have been elected at both the Federal and State levels. These are 1999-2003, 2003-2007, 2007-2011, 2011-2015 and 2015 - 2019. Most of the Legislative chambers of the National and State levels have witnessed one form of crisis and or conflict or the other. Each of these crises or conflict was propelled by either internal or external influence or a combination of both. These conflicts not only have threatened the democratic evolution, but have shaped the path to democratic consolidation.

Mbah (2014, p. 678) argues that ‘the prevailing explanation of the conflicts in the National Assembly is that it is part

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of the unavoidable teething problems of a nascent democracy.' This amplified by the fact that the legislature remains seen as young with stunted growth and fragility due to the devastating consequences of the long period of military interregnum, wars, conflict, and the dictatorship of the Executive. It is expected that conflicts will be common within the National Assembly when different parties are in the majority. Increasingly, this explanation is deemed to be an optimist's dream. In this case, if issues are seen from different views and perspectives, no party will be willing to abandon its position.

There appears to be a dearth of literature on the legislature as an organ of government, legislative behavior and legislative conflicts within the legislature itself in Nigeria. The literature on the Nigerian legislature is not as rich as those of the developed politics. Despite the strategic importance of the legislature in Nigeria, especially, the National Assembly, adequate and scientific explanations to inter and inter-party conflicts as well as its relationship with the Executive have not been given considerable academic attention. This research, therefore, fills the gap.

This study, therefore explored the reasons, types, dimensions, management and effects of conflicts in the Legislature, especially, the National Assembly of Nigeria, between 1999-2018. This strand of analysis is critical to confronting our problematic which defined the conflicts that engulfed the National Assembly of Nigeria within the Fourth Republic.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research, we are adopting the conflict theory as our conceptual analysis in the context of the contemporary capitalist state, where the political class has created weak institutions to continue to control the resources of the State. To begin with, we locate our explanation in the theoretical writings of Prussian political economist and activist, Karl Marx (1818-1883). The Marxian thought is predicated on dialectical materialism. He posited that capitalism, like previous socioeconomic systems, would inevitably produce internal tensions leading to its destruction. This would be achieved through proletarian revolution and fight for freedom from the ruling classes. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity. Phenomenally, conflict theory interrogates a wide range of societal issues like wars and revolutions, wealth and poverty, inequality, discrimination, and violence.

Conflict exists because there is an imbalance of power and economic resource, wherein the minority few in the upper classes control political power and skew governance in their advantage for continues primitive accumulation of wealth, at the expense of the majority of the poor, who provide most of the labour required for sustaining the society. Marx theorized that 'by controlling social institutions, the elite can maintain control and order in society by perpetuating ideologies that justify their unfair and undemocratic position (Cole, 2017)' and, when that fails, the elite, who control police and military forces and thugs in Nigeria, can turn to direct physical repression of the masses to maintain their power. The masses are perpetually coerced into submission by those in power into accepting their wishes and values. They achieve this by employing to their advantage, the weak institutions of the states, which they intentionally failed to develop and stiffening competition and divide and rule, to continually exploit the masses. It, therefore, is a struggle of the have, using all repressive strategies at its disposal to suppress the have not. This theory pays great attention to class, race, and gender because they are seen as the bases of most enduring struggles in society.

This theory is therefore very germane as our study because it evaluates the efficiency of the legislature and service delivery as a result of the quest for political offices, which is predicated on economic gains rather than service to the people. It is important to note that the failure of the Nigerian leaders to establish good governance, forge national integration and promote what can be called real political and economic progress, through deliberate and articulated policies, has led to deteriorating development and dampened democratic consolidation. Instead of forging ahead with law-making, our lawmakers keep themselves busy with unhealthy rivalries over primitive accumulation, thereby heightening tension in the polity and creating political brouhahas that distort institutional strengthening and democratic consolidation.

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Social conflict theory could be summarized as:

- * The exploitation of one class that is seen as superior over the other class considered inferior.
- * The unfair relationship between the worker/renter and the landlord/boss.
- * The belief is a critical instrument to conflicts.

Based on the above, the researcher then makes the following conceptual propositions regarding the rising party politics and conflicts in the Fourth Republic Nigeria's National Assembly:

1. The principal role of the present-day state, particularly its governmental apparatuses, is to establish and maintain the general long-term interests of the dominant classes. Given the foregoing, the political gladiators in the National Assembly use all arsenals within them to sustain their power base for primitive accumulation.
2. The long-term interest of the dominant classes is principally expressed in political instability, that is to say, maintenance of economic, political and ideological dominance of these classes.
3. In contemporary times, this role is marked by both harmony and contradictions in the interest of the dominant classes which the state apparatuses and branches try to balance.
4. Following Poulantzas (1980,p.134), we theorize that the overall role of maintaining the long-term interests of the dominant classes and its necessary expression in the distribution and balancing of functions among the branches of government and state apparatuses produce the hallmarks of the contemporary capitalist state:

The following explanatory statements are derivable from our conceptual propositions:Legislative conflicts arise as a direct consequence of the inordinate ambition of the political class and their allies to retain political power for economic gains in the State.

- i. Most Legislative conflicts in Nigeria are externally induced and most often located within the frontiers of the Executive over the control of the Legislative leadership and decision-making process.
- ii. The failure of the political parties to address the fundamental problems of party discipline and cohesion exacerbate conflicts in the legislature.
- iii. The weak economic and sociopolitical institutions in Nigeria create a wide gap between the political class and their constituents and engender political instability in the State.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

This study critiques party politics and legislative conflict in the National Assembly of Nigeria, 1999 – 2019. To establish our work within the context of others related to this study, we conceptualize the following words: conflicts, the legislature, politics and political parties. Also, we would give a synoptic overview the historical trajectory of legislative conflicts in Nigeria, the legislative conflicts in the Nigerian Senate, 1999 – 2018, legislative conflicts in the Nigerian House of Representatives, 1999 – 2018 and close the curtain with critiques of democratic consolidation in Nigeria - re-inventing the legislature for conflict management.

Conflicts

Generally speaking, conceptualizing conflict is difficult because of its nebulous nature. Conflict as a phenomenon does not have one generally accepted definition. There are general definitions and also inter-subjective definitions of the concept. However, one important factor that is central to all of them is that there is no one major cause of conflict all over the world. The word 'conflict' could be likened to war, fighting, arguments, misunderstanding, disorder, stress, crisis, hostility, and so on.

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In his work, Fink (1968, p. 456) defines conflict as to any “situation or process in which two or more social is linked by at least one form of antagonistic psychological relation or at least one form of antagonistic interaction”.... The psychological antagonisms are such things as incompatible goals, mutually exclusive interests, emotional hostility, factual or value dissensions and traditional enmities; while antagonistic interactions range from the most direct, violent and unregulated struggle to the most subtle, indirect and highly regulated forms of mutual interference”. Contributing to the concept, Egobueze (2016, pp. 17-18) conceptualizes conflict as a disagreement among groups or individuals characterized by antagonism and hostility. This is usually propelled by the opposition of one party to another, in an attempt to achieve an objective different from that of the other party. Thus, a conflict exists when people are in divergence and opposition. According to Robbins (2000), conflict does not appear out of thin air instead it has caused. These causes can be managed consciously and unconsciously, that is, positively and negatively. For example, one of the causes of conflict is objective interference. This is so because, in many situations, the achievement of one’s person objective blocks the achievement of another’s objectives. Personal differences may also cause conflict. Indeed, conflicts can evolve out of a person who idolizes personal value systems. This is so because the chemistry between some people makes it hard for them to work together. Factors such as background, education, experience, exposure and training, mold each individual into a unique personality with a particular set of values. Conflicts in an organization arise when people are competing for the same resources (such as territory, jobs, income, and housing) when they aren’t fairly distributed or when there aren’t enough to go round. Conflict is indeed a special kind of social interaction process, or “interaction” relationship between parties who have mutually exclusive or incompatible values, a struggle between opposing forces; battle, the opposition between ideas, interests, etc. controversy. It is an opposition between two simultaneous but incompatible wishes or impulses sometimes leading to emotional tension.

Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation is achieved when all actors in the political environment accept the people as sovereign and act in manners that promote democratic principles and norms. That is when all the political actors and gladiators accept the legitimacy of democracy over personal, normative and primordial interests. It implies, when democracy is institutionalized, utilized and normalized and when democratic traditions are exercised and the people see democratic dividends radiating in their environment.

In the words of Linz and Stepan (1966), ‘a democracy is consolidated when no political actors seek to overthrow it.’ Thus, consolidation requires the existence of a functional State with reinforcing arenas like liberty, rule of law, free civil society, periodic free and fair elections, free and virile independent press, an independent political society to name but a few. Consolidation also requires strong institutions that define the independence of the organs and arms of government.

Politics

Politics is vastly complex to define. A commonly accepted definition of the word politics appears to be difficult within the scholarly realm of political science in particular and social science in general. From philosophical thoughts of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the down to Machiavelli, they all attempted to craft a definition for a qualitative society anchored on justice and equity, but failed to provide a generally accepted definition for the major subject of politics. Each of them had ideas of what they considered an ideal society and the features of such a society. The Greek philosopher Aristotle’s original notion of politics is the idea of freedom people grants themselves to rule themselves (Aristotle 1908). The term “politics” relates simply to issues of interest in the administration of the polis. It is how a form is given to the life of a person. To Aristotle, this meant that there was an ideal size for a polis, which he defined as the number of people that could be taken in a single glance (Aristotle 1908).

The legislature

One of the gifts of democracy is the Legislature. It is the law-making body of any government, and the distinctive

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mark of a country's sovereignty (Nwabueze, 2007). The Legislature is a unique institution, and probably, the symbol of democracy (Egobueze, 2020, p. 50). Legislatures are set up to represent the people and play central roles in a constitutional democracy (Okon, 2012, p. 2). It is "the institutional body responsible for making laws for a nation and one through which the collective will of the people or part of it is articulated, expressed and implemented" (Okoosi-Simbine, 2010, p. 1). Salim, (2010:52) describes it as a representative institution in the sense that its members are elected representatives of the nation. Importantly, the legislature is vested with formal lawmaking power that gives it some capacity to shape or influence public policy.

The Legislature is a formally elected or otherwise selected body saddled with power to legislate for a political unit such as a local, state or national government. It could also be seen as a body of persons authorized with power to make, amend and repeal laws. The legislature in Nigeria, being it the National Assembly or State Houses of Assembly, has a very significant role to play in creating the legal and institutional frameworks for ensuring the existence and sustainability of transparency and accountability in the public service (Eme, 2014, p. 54). To Abayomi (2003, p.12), the legislature emerged from the need to make government accountable to the people, thus, the legislature is a body that enacts legislation, oversees and scrutinizes the actions and activities of the other arms of government.

Lawmaking is fundamental because the wills of the people are expressed through the laws of the State which is an essential element of democracy. After all, the legislature is the conscience of the people and their will is expressed through the Acts, Laws or Bye-laws enacted by it. Like legislatures elsewhere, the main functions of the legislature in Nigeria are lawmaking, representation, and oversight. Thus, through legislation, the legislature controls governmental activities that set the direction of the legal, economic, social and political activities of the nation.

The legislative function is therefore very crucial because the legislature serves as a watchdog over the executive that implements the Laws. This is achieved through its third cardinal function – an oversight to safeguard the liberties of citizens. Besides legislation, the legislature is peopled by persons that represent wards, constituencies, and districts; this best reflects the concept of representative democracy.

The significance of the legislature as one of the strong pillars of democratic governance cannot be unraveled. The others being the Executive and Judiciary; in tripod strands, they match the philosophical exposition of Abraham Lincoln as he classically defined democracy as "government of the people, by the people and for the people". In the light of this, the legislature is a symbolism of a true representation of the people, who, albeit are the sovereigns, since its members are drawn from across the various wards, constituencies, and districts all over the country.

Political Party

Political participation is very significant in democratic consolidation. This can take the form voting for members of the legislature or executive, serving on a jury, or participating in a public protest. These are key features of democracy. According to Sargent (2009), the most fundamental characteristic of any democracy is the idea that citizens should take part and be actively involved in making political decisions, either directly or through representatives of their choice. The electoral system provides the necessary paradigm for periodic change of government. It refers to a set of rules by which the electorates determine the selection of their representatives based on the distribution of votes cast (Umo-Udo, 2014, p. 52). Political parties are key pillars for the realization of the electoral process.

Edmond Burke as cited in Adigwe (1974) defined the party as ' a body of men united for promoting, by their joint endeavours, the national interest upon some particular principles in which they are agreed'. Egobueze (2020, p. 262) is a group of electorates knitted together by common beliefs of projecting and promoting their members to take over the machinery of the State through the free and fair election to protect their interest. A political party is an organization of people, with common ideology and that organize themselves to achieve political power and to control government machinery with all its advantages and responsibilities, and in the overall interest of the state.

A SYNOPTIC INTERROGATION OF LEGISLATIVE CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Conflicts in the Legislature in particular and the political system at large are common phenomena in developing polities and Nigeria's experience is not new. The causal reason for this unhealthy state of affair is the nature of the political power which is seen as an end in its self. The quality of representation, together with the real and perceived consequences of acquiring and managing power calls for questions. Generally speaking, political victory is seen as a "winner-takes-all" form concerning wealth and resources, patronage, and the prestige and prerogatives of office.' This hideous trend tends to truncate efficiency in administration and affect democratic consolidation. Political instability arises as a result of greed, ravenousness, gluttony, the veracity of elected officials who see the office as a conduit pipe for primitive accumulation. This has been a defining feature of the polity in Nigeria, shaped by corruption and designed dishonesty and perpetrated with impunity.

Nigeria's legislative conflict has a chequered history, with corruption and the zeal for primitive accumulation at the echelon of the activities of politicians and most technocrats. This unbridled appetite is typically attributed to how leaders are selected and sustained in power. Leaders across the country hold onto office by purchasing support through the distribution of state resources; as such, they commercialize the polity and use crude and crooked means to retain power at all costs for their selfish interest. In trying to achieve this, they make themselves as 'demigods', and see themselves as 'godfathers' as well as capons. They equally fight their former godfathers and acquire the power to their advantage and become political buccaneers. Conflict erupts either because some elites crave a larger share of the spoils controlled by the leader or because those outside the leader's patronage-based coalition want access to resources to which they have been denied to become leaders themselves. Legislative conflict in particular therefore is caused by some or all of the following factors: leadership, corruption, political affiliation, greed and selfishness, societal influence, the unbridled ambition of the members of the legislature, the impunity of members, absence of legislative independence and management/staff relations. Consequently, the legislative conflicts in the Fourth Republic National Assembly of Nigeria are associated with some or all of the above. Suffice it to say that the conflict did not leave without many casualties. Apart from the image issue associated with them, other socioeconomic quagmires were consequential for a scholarship which the conflicts also left behind.

Bello-Imam, (2004, p. 1) states 'democracy is a global maiden which every nation woos.' The statement above from Bello – Imam explains the global rejection of authoritarian regimes and the acceptance of democracy and as an alternative to those regimes. The acceptability of democracy is anchored on the fact that it is globally recognized as the peoples' government where the people are given the freedom to elect their leaders, especially, their representatives in the various legislative houses in the states. Democracy, therefore, gives the people the right to govern and this spirit flows with the thoughts of Ake (1991) as he posits 'it extols the consent of the governed and it protects human personality and values.' These are the values of democracy and defining reasons why social science scholars see the worst democracy as being better than the best dictatorial and or authoritarian regime. Meritocracy and its like fall within this category.

Universally, an election is a major dividend of democracy, as it is a means of enthroning new government and a process of changing government whose tenure is over. Besides an election, other features of democracy are liberty, rule of law, freedom of association, political participation, freedom of press amongst others. Like many other progressive nations of the world, Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and the largest black nation in the world has had an epileptic democratic journey. A colonial territory of the British till 1st October 1960 when the Union Jack was lowered in favour of the National 'green - white – green' flag which signified her nationhood, and liberation from the shackles of colonialism from the British colonial masters. Nigerian democratic journey commenced from that date. Ajaji & Fashagba (2014) has this to say:

Nigeria became an independent nation on October 1, 1960, by an Act of the British Parliament. The 1960 Independent Constitution conferred full independence on the entire federation and remained in force until 1st October 1963 when the country became a republic.

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The Country adopted a Federal Constitution with Parliamentary democracy modeled like the British Westminster type. The Parliamentary system provided for dual executive – the head of State and the Head of Government. While the Head of State was still the Queen of England represented by the Governor-General, the Head of Government was the Prime – Minister. Thus, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was appointed as the Prime Minister of the First Republic. Nnamdi Azikiwe was also appointed the Governor-General and became the ceremonial Head of State, till 1963 when the nation attained a republican status and he was appointed as the first President after Nigeria cut ties with Britain almost completely.

The Federal Parliament was Bicameral and consisted of the Senate and House of Representatives. The Senate was composed of 44 members while the House of Representatives was 212 members. Nnamdi Azikiwe was the first Senate President of Independent before he abdicated the seat for Osita Osadebe in the same 1960 for ascendancy as the Governor-General representing the Queen of England. Between 1963 – 1966 Nwafor Orinze was elected as the Senate President too. All of them were members of NCNC. In the House of Representatives, Ibrahim Jalo Waziri of NPC was elected the first Speaker of the House of Representative and he acted in that capacity till the collapse of the First Republic in 1966.

The first known parliamentary conflict in Nigeria's democratic experiment occurred in the Western Region House of Assembly in 1962. It occurred as a result of the feud between Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Federal Parliamentarian and leader of the opposition Group in the new Nation and Chief Akintola, the Premier of Western Region. Adeeko, (2015) opines:

The same month (May 1962), the Western House of Assembly was set to remove Chief Akintola after the party had earlier passed a vote of no confidence on the premier in a party meeting, a crisis erupted on the floor of the house....

The Prime Minister, Sir Tafawa Balewa, as cited by Usman-Janguza (2017) gave an even more graphic account of events as he averred: the whole House was shattered, every bit of furniture there was broken ... some persons were stabbed.

ISSUES THAT MAY TRIGGER CONFLICTS IN THE LEGISLATURE

Party conflicts are common features of party politics. This is located in the divergent nature of men that makes them adopt different approaches in achieving their goals. Thus, as cited in Ibrahim & Abubabar (2015) Momodu & Matudi, (2013) states that though a political party is an assemblage of men with a similar view on how best to run a state, the lack of homogeneity in their approach coupled with the series of activities that take place within the party predispose members to articulate divergent interests which sometimes breed intraparty conflict leading to factionalization within such a party. It, therefore, follows that, as a social group, conflict is inevitable within the Members of a political party. This is more so giving the reality that whenever people come together to pursue a common goal, there is the tendency that some members would pursue their interests instead of the group's interest (Ibrahim & Abubabakar, 2015, p.113). Nevertheless, the articulation of the varying interest of Members of the party is pivotal in achieving the views of the party. The pursuance of this goal would limit the destructive impact of intraparty conflict in the polity.

Intra and Inter-party conflicts have been a recurring decimal in Nigeria's political evolution and it has been profoundly common in the current 4th Republic National Assembly of Nigeria. Some issues that may ignite conflicts in the Legislature are as follows:

- ◆ Election of Chamber Leadership
- ◆ External influence (Executive and Political Party)
- ◆ Corruption
- ◆ Political affiliation

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- ◆ Greed and selfishness of leadership and Members of the Chamber
- ◆ Societal influence
- ◆ The unbridled ambition of Members
- ◆ Impunity of Members
- ◆ Absence of Legislature Autonomy
- ◆ Management / Staff relations
- ◆ Leadership/ Management relations
- ◆ Disrespect to the House Rules, and absence of the Rule of Law
- ◆ Ignorance of Member and Staff

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There is no gain stating the obvious again that the Legislature is the first arm of government and the symbol of democracy. This is a truism because when democratic governance is overthrown by any form of totalitarian regime expressed in one-party State, meritocracy and other variations of autocracy, the Executive and the Judiciary Institutions still function, but the sections of the Constitution that deal with the Legislature are suspended and the democratically elected Legislative arm of Government is sacked and replaced with an appointed Military law-making organ and other variations, know at different climes with different nomenclatures like the Supreme Military Council, the Armed Forces Ruling, Supreme Peoples' Assembly, National Peoples' Congress, amongst others. Consequently, most Executive and the Judiciary Officials support the ruling Military junta to administer the State.

Party conflict is a constant occurrence that finds expression in different forms and at different stages in the democratic process. Nonetheless, the dimension, multitude, and impact of party conflict in Nigeria have continued to be a bothersome phenomenon to the consolidation of democracy. An examination of the activities of political parties in Nigeria, right from the colonial period to the Fourth Republic, would reveal a disturbing varying degree of inter and intra party crises or conflicts. Why are Legislative Chambers theatres of conflicts? What is the business of the Executive in Legislative leadership? We would in the course of this work appraise in a synopsis order, Legislative Conflicts in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, critiquing it from the 4th through the 5th, 6th, 7th, and the current 8th Assemblies.

Mba (2014, 67) opines that 'the third wave of democratization for political reform that spread across Africa and other parts of the world in the late 1980s and the mid-1990s culminated in the restoration of electoral pluralism in most of the countries of the continent, including Nigeria in May 1999.' Mbah further contends that since the return to democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999, intra-legislative relations at the federal level have witnessed three phases:

1. The radical phase (1999-2003)
2. The conservative phase (2003-2007)
3. The egocentric phase (2007-date)

The Fourth Senate and House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 – 2007.

The Fourth National Assembly of Nigeria was inaugurated on May 29, 1999. The inauguration of the Members of these two Chambers signaled the full return to democratic governance in Nigeria. 109 Senators and 360 Members of House of Representatives were administered oaths of Membership and Allegiance. The first noticeable conflict that

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existed in these two Chambers was over the appointment of the leadership of the Houses. The overbearing influence of President Obasanjo over who became the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives caused the first rift in the Chambers. In the Senate, while Members preferred Senator Chuba Okadigbo to emerge as the President of the Red Chamber, President Obasanjo preferred Evan Enwerem. Eventually, Evan Enwerem representing Imo East Senatorial District was returned elected as the President of the Senate. Since his emergence was Executive induced, he played the biddings of President Obasanjo, his colleague could not trust him so much and they impeached him from office based on the controversies over the falsification of his name 'Evan' or 'Evans', one of the names, of which they were sure it was he was an ex-convict. Amidst this raging controversy, he was removed from office on 18 November 1999, and replaced by Dr. Chuba Okadigbo an Associate Professor of Politics. Okadigbo was independent-minded and a major threat to the Executive, he ushered in flamboyancy to leadership and believed and enjoined the National Assembly to practice separation of powers. Above all, he was high handed and egocentric, thus, his Colleagues levied corruption charges against him and impeached on 8th August 2000 and replaced him with Pius Anyim. Before his exit, he warned his successor against the 'banana peels'. This made Anyim very cautious and he eventually led the Senate to the end of the 4th Assembly on May 29, 2003.

In the House of Representative, the preferred candidate of Mr. President, Hon. Ibrahim Salisu Buhari emerged as Speaker. However, documents and facts prove beyond doubt that he was dishonest in his age declaration and academic qualifications. These offenses could be regarded as perjury. Based on this, he resigned; his resignation gave way for the emergence of the representative of a Kano Municipal Federal Constituency, Hon. Ghali Umar Na'aba as Speaker. With the ascension of Na'aba came Obasanjo's worst nightmares. Obasanjo and his hatchet men saw in the new Speaker, a recalcitrant hard nut to crack; a situation which must be arrested, thus efforts were made to impeach him including the Four Billion scans by a South-South Governor.

Eme and Ogbochi (2014) argued that Most National Assembly watchers at the time saw the Presidency as the unseen hand behind the crisis of confidence that almost wrecked the Senate. But President Olusegun Obasanjo was resisted by the House of Representatives, where attempts to unseat former Speaker Ghali Umar Na'Abba was aborted within the period under review. Finally, the protracted face-off between the first and second arms of government affected policy directions and internal cohesion in the administration of the State. In Mbah's categorization, it could be regarded as radical.

The fifth Senate and House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2003 - 2007

The culture of the inauguration of the fifth Senate did not take a different shape from the other Assemblies of the 4th Republic of Nigeria. As usual, The Fifth National Assembly of the Federal Republic existed between June 3, 2003, to June 5, 2007. However, that Senate was led a dutiful protégé of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Adolphus Wabara. No sooner than he was inaugurated, the financial crisis soon rocked the Senate. As was popular at the time, pressure began to mount after he was deemed to have disbursed funds for various purposes disproportionately, to the chagrin of not a few lawmakers. Unable to get him, the bribe-for-budget allegation was made against him. Wabara allegedly demanded N55m from the then Minister of Education, Prof Fabian Osuji, to increase the ministry's budgetary allocation. Within the same period, a minister-designate, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, alleged that monetary inducement was being sought to clear him for ministerial positions. However, the last straw that broke his back was when he was alleged to be eyeing the office of the president. Even Obasanjo could not forgive that. He was forced to resign in 2005. Senator Wabara was succeeded by Senator Ken Nnamani, representing Enugu East. His presidency of the Senate was the most turbulent, as that period was marred with contestation for Obasanjo's Third Term in office, 'the third-term agenda.' The President's desperation for a third-term in office became the greatest threat to Nigeria's nascent democracy at the time. To guarantee a third term, the senate was required to insert a 'Third Term' clause into the 1999 constitution by a corresponding 2/3 vote by the Houses of Assembly of states. Accordingly, a Political Reform Conference, headed by Senator Ibrahim Mantu, was set up in 2005 and a colossal amount of taxpayers' money was sunk into the project. When anti-third term forces learned that Obasanjo was inches from having his way, they rallied lawmakers and

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traditional rulers to pressure their representatives at the National Assembly to 'kill' the constitutional reform process. One man that quickly hijacked the struggle was Obasanjo's vice-president, Atiku Abubakar. He was instrumental in the scheme to 'kill' the third-term bill. In the end, Nnamani was able to avoid the 'banana peels', repel the third-term plan and saw the 5th National Assembly to a credible conclusion - but not without sordid drama.

The Green Chamber (House of Representatives) elected Katsina-born politician, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, as the Speaker. Hon. Masari sustained the chamber in the best legislative tradition and had a good relationship with the Executive. He remains the only Speaker in this 4th Republic that completed the tenure of office. Even in the constitutional amendment debate with the controversial tenure elongation component, which was emotionally-charged, the chamber did not explode as many had feared. What was evident in Speaker Masari's leadership style was his meticulousness and consensus-building in which all shades of opinions and views were carried along. The earlier feuds which characterized the Legislature/Executive relations in the first four years from 1999 to 2003 were creatively transformed into strategic cooperation and partnership without compromising the independence of the parliament.

The Fifth National Assembly could be termed as conservative and was characterized basically by compromise and consensus-building. Democracy was beginning to consolidate in that Assembly. This Assembly could be considered conservative; or 'rubber stamp' legislature,' as was noted by Mbah (2014). To state the obvious that experience is the best teacher was manifested in this Fifth Assembly. The cantankerous nature of the 4th Assembly made President Obasanjo ensure that radical elements that opposed his views in the House were not returned elected. He not only did not allow them to scale through the huddle of Primary elections but, ensuring that those who scaled through the Primaries lost the election. The aim was to enthrone a 'rubber-stamped House' that would have no or minimal dissenting voices on governance issues, whether good or bad. Indeed, he wanted an 'Halliloya' Assembly that would be positively disposed to his whims and caprices. This phase lacked the vibrancy of the first phase as it ceased to be a check or watchdog on the excesses of the executive.

The Sixth Senate and House of Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2007 - 2011

The 6th Senate was inaugurated on June 5, 2007, and exited on June 6, 2011. Leading the Red and Green Chambers were allies of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who shortly before he left, used his influence to facilitate the emergence of Senator David Mark as Senate president and Mrs. Patricia Olubumi Etteh as the Speaker of the House of Representative respectively. This was compensatory for their unalloyed support for his ill-fated third-term bid.

The Senate under Mark witnessed little or no conflicts. Upon his emergence, he introduced an antidote to the 'banana peel', as he was able to endear himself to his colleagues and even the Executive; he ushered instability to the volatility which the Chamber was associated with. This era marked a paradigm shift in the Executive-Legislative relationship, as Mark's influences continued to grow, especially in the face of the controversy which trailed the illness and subsequent death of President Yar'adua. No thanks to this constitutional lacuna, the NASS was expected to step-in and invoke the 'doctrine of necessity,' to enable Goodluck Jonathan to take over as acting president. Unequivocally, it is important to note that Nigeria had a tranquil Senate; the Senate under Mark was peaceful and had robust Legislative/Executive relations under Presidents Musa Yar'adua and Goodluck Jonathan respectively.

The Green Chamber, on the other hand, did not have a restful House. After the inauguration of the House of Representatives in June 2007, the PDP's anointed candidate, Hon. Patricia Olubunmi Etteh, clinched the speakership of the House, making her the first female speaker of the House of Representatives. Five months down the line, however, she was accused of financial recklessness - attempting to buy a body massage machine for N90m. She was also accused of attempting to renovate her official residence with an amount big enough to build the same house. In the brouhaha that ensued between the 'pro' and 'anti' Etteh lawmakers, Hon Aminu Safana from Katsina State slumped and died. Hon Etteh was eventually pressured into resigning in October 2007. With time, it became clear that the issues involved in her predicament were more sociocultural than administrative.

Egburonu, Dare, Remi & Sunday (2015) note:

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The polarization of the House led to the formation of the Integrity Group led by Hon. Farouk Lawan. Other members include Halims Agoda, Lynda Ikpeazu, Mercy Almona Isei, Igo Aguma, Ikechi Nwogu, and Abike Dabiri. The group cut the image of a group seeking an ideal National Assembly, where decorum and integrity reign among members and in which legislators conduct themselves in a responsible, dignified and transparent manner. Within weeks, the Integrity Group swelled in ranks and became very dominant in the proceedings in the House. And in September 2007, Etteh faced a committee to answer charges that she acted inappropriately for the N628 million scandal.

The three-month crisis in the then 6th Assembly, of the House of Representatives, ended with the election of Hon. Dimeji Sabur Bankole, also from the South-West, as the new Speaker. He represented Abeokuta South Federal Constituency in Ogun State. Bankole's time in the saddle was marred by controversies. Free-for-all fights at the hallowed chamber were a current feature and allegations of massive corruption were hauled at the Speaker incessantly. Members like Hon. Dino Melaye and several others were dragged out of the chambers for trying to stand in Bankole's way.

A comparative analysis of the Senate and House of Representatives reveals that while the Sixth Senate was unwavering and stable, the House of Representatives boiled and almost melted, with corruption being celebrated at different times.

The Seventh Senate and House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011 – 2015.

The 7th Senate and the House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria were inaugurated on June 6, 2011, and the assembly ran its course till June 6, 2015.

The Senate was again led by David Mark. There was no departure between the Sixth and the Seventh Senates. Mark continued with his leadership styles and he maintained a friendly relationship with his colleagues and the Executive. Mark could be regarded as an epitome of native intelligence as he regularly brought that to bear in leading the House. The Senate maintained a level of maturity and tranquility in almost all its activities.

The amity in the Senate was a departure in the House as Hon. Tambuwal who eventually emerged as the Speaker was not the preferred candidate. The preferred candidate of the PDP establishment for speakership was Hon Mulikat Akande Adeola, from the South-west. However, owing to a twist, Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, in connivance with the then Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), ambushed the PDP. The party never forgave the duo and, arguably, set landmines on their way, but, despite the frosty relationship between Tambuwal and the PDP, his time in office was a delight to observe, thanks to the active support of the ACN.

The action of Tambuwal it came with its attendant consequences. In September 2013, the factional chairman of the PDP (New PDP), Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje, led the seven dissenting PDP Governors and their supporters to the green chamber, to address the PDP caucus, but it came to naught. In the twilight of Hon Tambuwal's leadership of the House, his long-standing 'romance' with the opposition parties came to the fore. He abandoned the PDP and decamped to the newly-formed All Progressives Congress (APC). This led to a further deterioration of his relationship with the PDP. The party, in turn, used every known ploy to remove him from office - including using his trusted ally, Ihedioha. The PDP's desperation got messier when the Hon. Hon. Tambuwal and his loyal lawmakers were locked out of the National Assembly complex, leaving anti-Tambuwal lawmakers and Hon Ihedioha with the active support of the then-Senate President, Mark, in the green chamber, to effect Tumbuwal's impeachment. The impeachment plot was kicked against by fierce-looking lawmakers who would have none of it. Hon. Tambuwal was able to serve out his term on the platform of the APC and was later elected governor of Sokoto State.

The Seventh Senate and House of Representatives witness a lot of intra and Inter-Party squabbles. There were severe issues of decamping and cross – carpeting from one party to the other. Again, while the Senate handled these issues with demureness, the House on its part handled the matter with a misdemeanor. Furthermore, it is important to state that the leadership and indeed the National Assembly in the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Senate and House were dominated by the Peoples' Democratic Party, the current opposition party in the Country.

The Eight Senate and House Of Republic of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015 – 2019.

As was political order, the Eight National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was inaugurated on June 5, 2007, and the assembly ran its course till June 9, 2015. Following the triumph of the APC in the 2015 general election, the godfathers in the party began wetting ground for their anointed candidates to assume 'command' of the 8th National Assembly.

Groups began to emerge in pursuit of their various goals. Asiwaju Bola Tinubu's group had allegedly anointed Senator Ahmed Lawan of the Unity Forum for the position of the Senate Presidency and Hon Femi Gbajabiamila as Speaker of the House.

Just like it happened in the days of Tambuwal's emergence, while the Senators were holed up at the International Conference Centre (ICC) to make a decision, Bukola Saraki and Mark led what could best be described as "the greatest political ambush of the Fourth Republic" and installed Saraki as Senate President, with the required number of senators required for the victory.

Distinguished Senator Saraki the then-Senate President was called upon by the party many times to rescind the office which he got 'behind' their back, but he held on. Shortly after his victory, his political travails with the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) began and many have insisted that it was not unconnected to his emergence as Senate President, but he has managed to hold onto the leadership of the Senate, thanks to the undying support of the PDP bloc in the Senate.

Just like in Saraki's case, Hon Dogara was elected in defiance of party preference, but he was smart to have adopted Hon Femi Gbajabiamila as House Leader. He has been able to stabilize the House, but the script is still being written.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Nigeria as a State has democratic institutions that arguably should engender consolidation of the polity, but democratic consolidation is a deficit because of corruption in governance orchestrated by the existence of a microcosm of strong individual and the docility of an army masses that represent the majority of the society. These strong individuals deliberately use the privileges of their office to appropriate the commonwealth to themselves through flawed elections organized by an imperfect electoral umpire that sees the political office holders selected, rather than elected to public offices to control the State's resources which they use to oppress the majority who live in obscurity, murkiness, abject poverty and perpetual wants. Hence, the majority lives afflicted amidst abundance and remain oppressed, exploited and dehumanized. Obnoxious policies are put in place by the micro few elites that control the State's machinery just to elongate their stay in power and continue to accumulate the commonwealth primitively. The lust for primitive accumulation is behind the hydra-headed conflicts not only in the National Assembly but the entire landscape of Nigeria.

In critiquing the problematique, attempts were made to identify the causes of unending legislative conflicts in the National Assembly of Nigeria; central to these was the issue of corruption and maladministration. These are the maladies that have truncated democratic consolidation in the country because they not only made the institutions of the State weak but also debased the administrative machinery. Consequently, as President Obama observed in Ghana, that African has strong individuals instead of strong institutions, Nigeria is a replica of the frenzy Africa with strong individuals that undermine the State's institutions.

To end the hydrophobic legislative conflicts in Nigeria, there must be a moral rebirth of Nigerians that would engender discipline and respect for the rule of law by all and sundry. To this end, the restructuring of the electoral system is imperative. This would be possible through institutionalizing the electronic voting system which is a desideratum against fraud in the country. Suffice it to say that almost all Members of the National Assembly went through monetized and flawed elections characterized by fraud, this accounts for the persistent conflicts over who gets what, when and how. This act is dangerous for the polity and has incubated legislative conflicts in Nigeria.

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Also important in abetting conflicts in the National Assembly and consolidating democracy is a radical restructuring of the Nigerian Judiciary. Nigeria's judiciary is accused by the many as being extremely corrupt; injunctions are procured and wittingly slammed even when such injunctions are capable of causing or exacerbating conflicts. If the Judiciary is purged of corruption, then Judges would be apt to their responsibilities and the rule of law would prevail. Today, justice is sold to the highest bidder and has affected party politics in the National Assembly in particular and the entire nation at large. This is indeed dangerous and debilitating to the polity. If these restructuring is not achieved, Nigeria would be placed on the front line of consolidating democracy and reducing bickering that has shrouded the National Assembly.

Constitutional restructuring is recommended to make the work of the Legislators as Part-time; this would reduce the amount of money earned by them and eliminate Legislators whose interests are on the money earned, but not service to the people. With a slime appropriation to the legislature, there would be purposeful Legislators with a focus on how to develop the nation and not how to struggle over what enters their pockets.

The legislature metaphorically is the crossroads where the political actors and the public meets and give visibility to democracy. Political parties are the precursor and catalyst that brings this to fruition. They bring people of diverse backgrounds together to achieve control of the government and develop policies of interest to their group. In doing this, they attempt to control their members, this attempts lead to conflict, which is visible in most legislative Houses, especially in developing states. Party politics and conflicts in the Fourth Republic National Assembly of Nigeria are democratic experiments that are expected to deepen democracy and democratic values in Nigeria. The legislature remains the fortress of hope for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria in particular and the world at large. The implementation of our suggestions above provides the speed lane for drivers of democracy to drive the Nigerian project to safety.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of Interest. All the three authors are in agreement that the article be published in your journal

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