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Legislative-Executive Relations and Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Case Study of the 9th Assembly

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Abstract

This study examines the nature and dynamics of legislative-executive relations under the Fourth Republic of Nigeria, specifically the 9th National Assembly (2019-2023) of President Muhammadu Buhari. It questions the constitutional, political and institutional interface involved in the legislature and the executive and how they impact governance and national development. The paper is anchored on the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances, which are provisions of the 1999 Constitution and examines how the pursuit of harmonious relations between the two arms of government grew into too much cooperation that compromised the independence of the legislature. Based on secondary data, official reports and media coverage, the work found out that although the 9th National Assembly enjoyed legislative achievements, especially in law-making and passing of appropriation bills on time; it failed to meet the expectation of the people regarding its oversight mandate as evidenced in the number of oversight hearings, the rate at which executive bills were tabled and underwent substantive amendments, and the results of high-profile investigations. In this context, the attitude of the National Assembly towards the executive had been termed as compliant or rubber stamp, but this designation is relative to the assessing standards which are used. The era also corresponded with increasing government debt, ineffective policies and transparency concerns. The paper revealed that too much legislative-executive cooperation leads to a decline in democratic checks and undermines institutional accountability. It thus proposed the enhancement of legislative independence, capacity building towards effective oversight and compliance with constitutional separation of powers as requirements for sustainable democratic government in Nigeria

Keywords: Legislative–Executive Relations, Development, National Assembly, Oversight Governance

1. Introduction

The social and economic performance of modern states is closely associated with the capacity, autonomy, and patterned interaction of core political institutions, namely the legislature, executive, and judiciary. Within the framework of Political Science, particularly Institutionalism and Separation of Powers, these institutions are understood not merely as formal structures but as

arenas of contestation and coordination that shape governance outcomes. The functionality of these institutions, especially the legislature and executive, determines the effectiveness of public policy formulation and implementation. In a presidential democracy such as Nigeria's, where powers are constitutionally separated yet institutionally interwoven, the relationship between the legislature and the executive becomes pivotal to political stability, accountability, and development. The constitutional design, as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), envisages a healthy interplay between cooperation and independence among the arms of government to sustain the principle of checks and balances. However, the Nigerian experience since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999 reveals that this relationship has oscillated between cooperation and confrontation, consensus and conflict, depending on the political climate, leadership style, and party configuration of the time (Nwokoo, 2015; Fatile, 2017; Ibietan, 2019).

The need to develop consensual legislative-executive relations in order to achieve policy stability, effective governance, and democratic consolidation has been highlighted by scholars over the years (Momodu and Mudi, 2013; 2017). Although the two arms need to work together to ensure that government operates smoothly, too much consensus especially through partisan alignment and not institutional integrity is a major challenge to the idea of separation of powers. It undermines legislative control, promotes executive supremacy and corruption of democracy. This paradox is one of the main puzzles of the presidential democracy in Nigeria: how is it possible to preserve a cordial relationship between the legislature and the executive, without the loss of its institutional independence and powers of control? Nigerian case particularly with the 9th National Assembly in place, presents this puzzle to the limelight because the Assembly was largely viewed to be too submissive to the wishes of the executive arm, and as such, questioned the balance of power and the well-being of democratic governance in Nigeria.

It is against this background that this paper questions the nature and consequences of legislative-executive relationship in the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, specifically, the 9th National Assembly under the Buhari government (20192023). It aims to evaluate the effect of the Assembly on the quality and the development of governance through the lawmaking and control process. The paper also discusses the question of whether the collaboration of the legislature with the executive helped in development or only served to cement executive power and policy ineffectiveness.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse on Legislative–Executive Relations

In this discussion, it is critical to provide the conceptual underpinnings of the term legislature and executive prior to the exploration of the relationship between them and what it means to their development in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria. The legislature name takes various nomenclatures in various political systems. In Britain, it is referred to as Parliament, in the United States, Congress; and in Nigeria, the National Assembly. Regardless of these differences, the legislature is still a universal democratic body that is mainly involved in law-making, deliberation, and policy supervision. The legislature as seen by Bewdx and Remick (2008) and Okoosi and Simbine (2010) is the nerve centre of democratic governance, which enacts laws, deliberates on the issues of the people and shapes policies to promote the development of the society.

According to the 1999 Constitution, the Nigerian legislature has three basic roles; law-making, representation and oversight. According to Ibietan and Olaniyi (2019), these functions are constitutionalized in Chapter V, Part I (Sections 4751) of the 1999 Constitution, which provides the National Assembly with its establishment and defines the powers of the assembly. These

functions give the legislature a voice of the citizens, legitimize government acts and hold them accountable by questioning executive performance.

The administrative and policy-implementing branch of the executive arm of government is the one that enforces laws and administers the state. The executive in democratic rule plays a key role of converting intentions of the legislature into realities. It aligns the ministries, agencies, and parastatals in order to have sound policy implementation and service delivery. The executive therefore supplements the legislature power, making sure that the enacted laws as well as budgetary provisions lead to desired developmental results.

Ideally, there should be a harmonious collaboration between the institutions, the legislature and the executive to realize the overall objectives of governance and development. The nature of their relationship defines how well the government is governed and how mature the institutions in a democracy are. The legislative, oversight, and representational roles of the legislature have a significant impact on the quality of governance because, as Angelo (2018) concludes, they enrich the policy design, legitimize the executive actions and prompt the reforms initiated by citizens.

The point where executive accountability is established in democratic governance is legislative oversight. Muheeb (2018) notes that legislative oversight has been taking a central role in contemporary governance, with the executive being held to constitutional and ethical principles of their actions. The control mechanism does not only ensure that power is not abused, but also enhances efficiency, transparency and financial discipline in managing the government resources. Harrop (2004) suggests some of the main instruments of oversight: parliamentary questioning, votes of confidence, censure motions, and committee inquiries. On the same note, Olson (2006) adds such mechanisms as plenary hearings, committee inquiries, and parliamentary question time.

The concept of development plays a main role in comprehending the importance of legislative-executive relations. Development does not only involve economic growth but it is structural, institutional and attitudinal changes that enhance the quality of life of citizens. According to Todaro (1977), development is a multidimensional process of reorganization and reorientation of the economic and social systems, which go beyond income gains, and incorporates the changes in the institutional structures and social attitudes.

On the same note, Seers (1963) suggests that any sensible conception of development should provide answers to three key questions: What has happened to poverty? What has happened to unemployment? So, what has become of inequality? When these indicators drop, then real development has taken place. A good relationship between the legislative and executive is therefore a requirement in making and enforcement of policies that can address such developmental issues.

3. Legislative–Executive Relations in Perspective

The interactional relationship between the two main arms of government in charge of law-making and its enforcement is called legislative-executive relations. Such relationships are constitutionally stipulated and based on the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances. What these teachings boil down to is to keep the branches of the government separate so that no one branch has power over the other, and that the individual liberties are not violated and that there is accountability.

According to Ibietan and Olaniyi (2019), the key to participatory democracy and sustainable development lies in the harmonious and systematic relations between the legislature and the executive. Fatile (2017) also argues that the legislature, which is the voice of the will of the people, should collaborate positively with the executive to bring the aspirations of people to life. However, this collaboration should be conducted within the limits of the constitution so as to maintain institutional independence and avoid dictatorial predilections.

3.1 Theoretical Foundation: Separation of Powers and Checks & Balances

The hypothetical basis of the legislative-executive relations lies in the classical theory of the separation of powers as developed by John Locke, and popularized by Baron de Montesquieu (1778). According to the theory, political power must not be vested in a single person or institution because all this will result in tyranny. Montesquieu believed in a three-part administration, legislative, executive and judiciary, each having its unique and independent role, but interdependent, through checks and balances.

As a matter of fact, total compartmentalization is neither possible nor a good thing; instead, there should be shared supervision and cooperation to prevent paralysis of governance. Checks and balances principle thus provides a check on the excesses of each arm. An example is that the legislature checks on the executive by approving budgets, conducting investigative hearings, and appointments confirmation, and the executive can check the legislature by assent powers and discretion to interpret and apply administrative regulations.

This structure encourages equal distribution of power leading to accountability, stability and good governance. In the Nigerian context, though, partisanship, executive supremacy, and institutional ineffectiveness have usually pitted the two arms against each other especially in the current 9 th National Assembly where critics noted undue executive influence at the expense of legislative autonomy. However, legislative assertiveness, like the rejection of some executive nominees and budget reviews, are indications of how power is still being negotiated as a part of democratic consolidation.

Based on the above, legislative-executive relations are a critical variable in democratic governance and developmental governance. Basically, the policy implementation and administrative power of the executive is balanced by the oversight, representation and law-making roles of the legislature in the logic of Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances. In this case, operational definition of excessive cooperation is a pattern of legislative behavior that is marked by: (i) high approval level of executive bills with few or no substantive amendments; (ii) low incidence and shallow depth of oversight hearings; (iii) weak follow-up on findings of investigation, especially the lack of sanctions or policy reforms; and (iv) cohesiveness in voting, which is consistent with the executive preferences even When co-operation is within these limits, it can bring about co-ordination of policies and efficiency in administration. Nevertheless, it can become more than they are when it involves a lack of scrutiny and accountability that can lead to the undermining of institutional autonomy, transparency and governance outcomes.

3.2 Legislative–Executive Relations in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic

The essence and the nature of legislative-executive relations are established by the constitution and are intended to promote cooperation, accountability and good governance. According to Muheeb (2016), this organ of government together has a responsibility of upholding democratic

governance by making laws, implementing the policies effectively, and upholding justice and the rule of law. The legislature, being the representative voice of the people, is especially endowed with the power to offer responsible representation and check and balances that ensure that the public resources are used properly and that the public goods are delivered.

3.3 Assessing Legislative–Executive Relations under the 9th National Assembly (2019–2023)

On June 11, 2019, the 9th National Assembly was inaugurated, with the executive presidency of Muhammadu Buhari, with Senate President being Senator Ahmed Lawan and Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila as the Speaker of House of Representatives. Similar to its predecessors, this Assembly was working under the presidential model that underlines institutional independence as well as inter-dependence between the legislature and the executive.

The powers of the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary are clearly vested in Section 4, 5 and 6 respectively of the 1999 Constitution, with the Section 4(2) providing that the National Assembly shall have power to make laws to the peace, order, and good government of the Federation. This constitutional enabling act puts the National Assembly at the heart of the Nigeria governance architecture as the institutional linkage between the citizens and the state.

Nonetheless, the success of this position, especially in the 9th Assembly has been a topic of heated academic and non-academic discussions.

3.4 Law-Making and Legislative Productivity

The most visible and constitutionally important role of the legislature is law-making. This role was commended and criticized during the 9th Assembly. The Senate leadership, led by Ahmed Lawan, said the Assembly was the most productive since 1999 as it is based on consensus building and political coordination (Lawan, 2021). In empirical terms, 162 out of 874 bills introduced between 2019 and mid-2022 were passed, which is about 18.5 percent of the total bills introduced and being meaningfully compared, 31 (4th), 98 (5th), 52 (6th), 60 (7th), and 74 (8th), which need to be normalized as percent

In spite of this statistical success, an increasing literature warns that, even though the productivity of legislature is associated with developmental relevance, the two must not be confused. Research on the 9th National Assembly notes that, although there is an increased passage rates of bills, the substantive effect of such bills on socio-economic outcomes is still disputed, especially in such areas as infrastructure and accountability to the people. Empirical studies also indicate that policy responsiveness was not always an influencing factor in legislative processes, with elite bargaining and executive-legislative congruence instead being key drivers, raising questions about the quality and prioritization of legislative outputs in meeting the urgent socio-economic needs of Nigeria, such as insecurity, joblessness, and structural inequality (Sinime-Paulker and Tesin 2024) Although media outlets.

It is worth mentioning that the 9th Assembly has been able to pass the Deep Offshore and Inland Basin Production Sharing Amendment Act (2019) and the long-awaited Petroleum Industry Act (2021), which are aimed at reforming the oil and gas industry of Nigeria and opening it to private investment (Punch 2023). It also established a January-to-December budget cycle thus restoring fiscal predictability and budget discipline that had been lacking since 1999.

These successes, however, came with the criticisms of executive subservience especially in the enactment of appropriation bills. The somewhat rapid passage of the 2020 and 2021 Appropriation Acts prompted the question of the extent of congressional review. An example is that the time lag between the presentation and passage of budget was relatively small compared to previous Assemblies, implying insufficient time to have a plenary debate and review by the committee. It was also reported that there was a limited access to full budget documentation before deliberation (The Nation, 2021).

Moreover, the 9th Assembly did not make any progress on important electoral reforms that the Uwais Electoral Reform Committee had recommended, especially the ones touching on internal party democracy, campaign financing and the formation of state police to help deal with the deteriorating security situation in Nigeria. Rather, it gave a glory to controversial and populist bills like the Hate Speech Bill and those aiming to control religious activity, casts doubt on legislative priorities and the vision of development.

3.5 Oversight and Executive Accountability

One of the important tools of executive accountability, transparency and responsiveness is oversight. It is through oversight that the legislature keeps check on how the public resources are used and that policies and programmes are implemented effectively. Article 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution give the National Assembly the power to investigate the actions of any individual or body that is tasked with the implementation or administration of the federal legislation and funds.

But this constitutional duty seemed in practice to be weaken in the 9th Assembly. One of the greatest criticisms was the culture of take-a-bow-and-go that was into the confirmation of ministerial nominees. In the Constitution, Section 147(2) and (4) stipulates that Senate confirmation of presidential nominees to fill the ministries is a requirement. However, when Muhammadu Buhari screened his ministers in 2019, 20 out of 43 nominees were vetted and 23 were simply cleared without any form of questioning (The Guardian, 2019; Punch, 2019).

This banditry confirmation function was a breach of the checks and balances and enabled a number of nominees whose records were dubious or whose competence was questionable to take up key public offices. As a result, there was poor governance performance especially in security and economic governance, which portrayed the inability of the legislature to be an effective gatekeeper.

An even more worrying development was the appointment of former Service Chiefs as Ambassadors in 2021 who were previously criticized by the National Assembly due to their ineffective performance and accused of human rights violations. They were General Gabriel Olonisakin (rtd.), Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai (rtd.), Vice Admiral IbokIbas (rtd.), and Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar (rtd.). The fact that the Senate approved their diplomatic posts despite their initial demands to abolish it demonstrated the inconsistency in the legislative practice and reduced the trust of people in the independence of the institution (The Guardian, February 5, 2021).

3.6 Investigative Powers and Legislative Inertia

According to Salami (2019), one of the most important tools of countering corruption and maladministration is the investigative power of the legislature, which is one of the most significant constitutional powers. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives routinely use this power to investigate inefficiency, mismanagement or fraud in the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

One of the most notable instances of legislative control over the 9th Assembly was the fact that the House of Representatives began an investigation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) over alleged financial irregularities in the ₦81.5 billion. During the hearings, it was noted that the state spent heavily in two years (a total of 8.1 billion) with the following spending sprees; 1.3 billion on COVID-19 palliatives, 3.14 billion on duty allowances, 122 million on condolence visits, and 900 million on legal services. These revelations were indicative of grave issues of financial management and institutional responsibility in the Commission.

The success of the probe was however limited by institutional and political elements. The investigative committees, which included members who had possible conflict of interest, cast doubt on the ability of the committees to be impartial as there were allegations of involvement of people like Peter Nwaoboshi. Moreover, the relationship between the legislature and the executive, especially on the basis of party alignment under Muhammedu Buhari, influenced the motivation behind the strict control, restricting the opportunity of decisive sanctions or reforms. This was complicated by the intervention of executive players, such as Godswill Akpabio, whose presence caused the process to be in a jumble of claims and counter-claims, thus diluting accountability. Collectively, these dynamics indicate that these structural incentives, partisan factors, and institutional design played an important role in determining the course and results of the probe thus limiting its ability to provide substantive accountability.

Eventually, the investigation failed due to corruption between the investigators and the accused and the ₦81.5 billion scandal remained unsolved. Not only did this episode demonstrate the flaws of the legislature as an institution but also provided a demonstration of the level of corruption and elite collusion that acts against developmental governance in Nigeria (Punch, 2022, Channel TV 2022).The Constitution of 1999 in Section 80(3) clearly explains that no money shall be withdrawn out of any public fund of the Federation, other than the Consolidated Revenue Fund, except in accordance with an issue of that money, authorized by an Act of the National assembly. This is envisaged to ensure prudent spending on critical areas of development and to avoid waste that could draw back the hands of transformation of the entire country. This clause gives the legislature substantial fiscal oversight authority to end prudence and accountability in state spending.

The failure of the 9th National Assembly to strictly exercise this power was, however, a larger trend of laxity in legislation. Approval of budgetary allocations was usually done with minimum scrutiny and reports of extra-budgetary expenditure and opaque subsidies continued. This undermined financial responsibility and slowed down the development agenda of the government especially in infrastructure, education and poverty alleviation.

3.7 Insecurity Issues and Legislative-Executive Relations (2019-2023)

The 9th National Assembly worked under a situation where the insecurity in Nigeria was increasing. The 2023 Global Peace Index (GPI) of the Institute of Economics and Peace, reported by Pulse Nigeria (2023), Tribune Online (2023), and The Guardian (2023), ranks Nigeria as 144th out of 163 countries in the world and 37th out of 44 African states, in terms of peacefulness. This ranking indicates unremitting insecurity issues such as terrorism in the Northeast, banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer violence, separation agitations, and communal violence. These circumstances were the wider context upon which both the legislature and the executive fulfilled the mandate of the constitution towards security and stability of the nation. Although questions have been raised on the effectiveness of legislative oversight in this time, especially in security sector.

At the beginning of the 9th Assembly, the senate and house leaders alleged that they would use legislative tools in tackling insecurity. For example, in January 2020, Rep. Benjamin Kalu (spokesman for the House) stated that the Assembly would use constitutional amendments and other legislative tools to confront alarming levels of insecurity (kidnappings, banditry) and respond to citizens' "sleepless nights" over lost lives (Vanguard News, 2020). This demonstrates that legislative actors recognised insecurity as an urgent governance issue.

But legislation tended to be reactive or symbolic, rather than systematic and robust. Although the executive headed by President Buhari reacted by increasing military and security funds, and by initiating counter-insurgency campaigns, the oversight roles of the National assembly were less than comprehensive in most cases. The incidents of continuous, regular legislative scrutiny of executive security policies were few. Checks on security service chiefs, such as confirmation hearings, were at times even superficial. Bills to strengthen security institutions, including policing, community security or local justice system reforms, were introduced, but frequently held up, watered down, or not enacted in forms comprehensive enough to meet the magnitude of the problem.

The oversight was not done well and this was felt. Insecurity was high, and people used more money on security, yet they did not experience any increase in the indicators of peace or security. The government also tended to channel funds to short-term emergency measures (military deployment, surveillance, reactive operations) as opposed to dealing with underlying factors; poverty, youth unemployment, poor judiciary, under-resourced local policing, etc. When the National Assembly did not closely watch and hold to account these spending, it implied that leakages, inefficiencies and corruption in security contracting and procurement continued to compromise legitimacy and effectiveness of state responses.

Besides, legislative-executive collaboration in insecurity occasionally became a trade-off of civil liberties and institutional control. In a case in point, legislative measures and executive interventions aimed at curbing insurgency or banditry sometimes trumped judicial protections or social responsibility in the guise of expediency and urgency. This brought tensions on the issue of the rule of law, human rights as well as whether or not the executive arm was going beyond the constitutional boundaries. Instead of being vigorous in pushing back, the legislature at times acquiesced to executive accounts of national security to grant the executive large powers or to grant ex-post facto consent to spending or appointment and undermine the constitutional system of checks and balances.

Overall, the 9th Assembly era of insecurity underscores the possibility and the constraint of legislative-executive relations. On the one hand, the executive possessed the constitutional imperative and means, and the legislature the legal authority, to develop coherent responses to insecurity. On the other, the performance of the legislature in oversight, law making initiative and restraining executive overreach was patchy. Global rankings of peace indicate that, even though the Nigerian government has invested heavily in security and made promises, the safety and security indicators in the country had been poor, which is an indication that legislative checks and reforms were ineffective or not properly focused.

4. Implications of Legislative–Executive Relations on Governance and Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The type of legislative-executive relationships has significant consequences on the governance results and the course of development during the Fourth Republic in Nigeria. Their interaction determines the effectiveness, accountability and responsiveness of the state as the institutions that are supposed to make the laws and execute the policies are mandated by the constitution. In cooperative relations, policy designing and implementation can have fewer procedural bottlenecks; conversely, adversarial relations have traditionally been linked to policy gridlock and delays in passing budgets (Fatile, 2017; Okoosi-Simbine, 2010). Following classical development theory roots, specifically Development Economics, expressed by scholars like Michael Todaro and Dudley Seers, development here is viewed in terms of quantifiable shifts in poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Macroeconomically, empirical evidence about the macroeconomic variables in Nigeria during the period 2019 to 2023 indicates that the country continues to face structural issues, which impact the evaluation of governance and development. World Bank (2024) reports that the ratio of the poverty headcount at the international poverty line was high, with an estimate of 41.8 per cent of the population living below the poverty threshold of $3.00 a day in 2022, the last year of a comparable survey. Even though the official unemployment level has decreased to approximately 5 % in 2023, with the National Bureau of Statistics revising the official unemployment statistics downward, due to the methodological changes, analysts note that the updated values conceal substantial underemployment and informality in the labour market (World Bank, 2023). In the meantime, inflation has increased rapidly in this timeframe, headline inflation has increased to over 24% in 2023, one of the highest rates in decades (African Development Bank, 2019). The growth of public debt, in relation to GDP, too has increased dramatically in the second half of the decade, with projected government debt of around 40-50 per cent of GDP by 2023 amidst continuous fiscal deficits (World Bank 2025).

Even though legislative executive cooperation in the 9th Assembly worked to pass major reforms like the Finance Act (2020) and Petroleum Industry Act (2021), these larger indicators indicate that the institutional coordination, alone, did not translate into unquestionably positive socio-economic outcomes. Rather, the legislative behaviour should be considered in conjunction with other variables, such as fiscal policy decisions, global shocks in economics, and structural impediments, to perceive the complexity in governance and developmental performance in the Fourth Republic.

Nevertheless, too much collaboration to the detriment of legislative independence is also a threat to democratic rule. With the legislature as a mere arm of the executive, the checks and balances are diluted, corruption thrives and checks and balances are eroded. Angelo (2018) and Olaitan (2021) have cautioned that executive capture of the legislature erodes the checks and balances that are vital in transparent governance. This has been the case in the Nigerian setting where legislative control on key areas of development like power, petroleum and defense has been at times silenced in favor of political favors or executive grace. This kind of propensity erodes the institutional character of the legislature as the watchdog of the people on the performance of the government.

Weak legislative oversight has its impact on the development outcomes. Weak oversight of the spending of government funds and project implementation gives waste, mismanagement, and inconsistency in policy a free hand. The case of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) corruption scandal, in which billions of naira were reportedly embezzled, presents the developmental implications of laxity in the legislature. Although the House of Representatives has

formed an ad hoc committee to examine the purported ₦81.5 billion fraud in 2020, political interference and executive influence watered down the investigative impetus. These instances strengthen the lack of confidence of the people on the democratic institutions and continue to foster underdevelopment in those areas with plenty of resources and poor populations.

Effective service delivery, strong and independent legislative oversight, on the other hand, increases transparency, curbs corruption, and increases transparency. The checks of the legislature on the performance of the executive are that there is a judicious use of budgetary allocations and that developmental programmes are achieved at the targeted objectives. According to Harrop (2004), the success of the oversight in question is directly proportional to the independence of the legislature, its institutional capacity, and ability to take on the executive excesses. To this extent, a strong legislature is the conscience of democratic governance and the enforcer of development-based accountability.

Moreover, the legislative executive relationships can affect the quality of representation and participation of citizens in the governance. Governance will be participatory and inclusive when the legislature is a true expression of the wishes of the people and acts as the linkage between the people and the state (Joseph, 2025). In Nigeria, where developmental issues like unemployment, inequality and poverty are still deep rooted, the capacity of the legislature to promote developmental initiatives by constituency and equal distribution of resources is important. Democratic legitimacy is reinforced by legislative-executive harmony, which focuses on the interest of citizens and not on partisan benefits, and it increases the ability of the state to provide the citizens with social benefits.

Ultimately, the trend of the legislature-executive relationship continues to be the heart of developmental process in Nigeria. Sustainable governance entails a subtle equilibrium of cooperation and independence, cooperation to promote coherence in policies and independence to protect accountability. The Nigerian experience shows that neither being too confrontational nor compliant is conducive to development. Institutional maturity based on constitutionalism, political toleration and shared development vision is what is demanded. The principle of Montesquieu is true, power should check power, not in order to create conflict, but to safeguard liberty, to increase transparency, and to develop the good of the people under the rule.

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper has discussed the legislative-executive relationship of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria with special reference being given to the 9th National Assembly. The discussion highlights the pivotal role that is vested in the legislature both in theory and in the constitution in ensuring good governance and national development. The 1999 Constitution is categorical regarding the lawmaking and the oversight role of the legislature especially in its relationships with the executive arm. These measures are meant to curb arbitrariness, wantonness and corruption when exercising executive powers thus making them accountable and economically manage the state resources.

Evidence in this paper however suggests that the 9th National Assembly did not entirely live up to the expectations of the people in discharge of its main role of legislation and oversight. As much as legislative-executive relations should be typified by fruitful collaboration and minimal friction to good governance, the collaboration should not be met with institutional subservience and compromise. Regrettably, the 9 th Assembly seems to have been functioning more or less in a system of excessive deference to the executive as was evident in the content of the speech made

by the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan, at the start of the Assembly session. In a courtesy visit by the Presidential Committee Against Corruption, Lawan publicly said: "I would like to assure you that any request that the President sends us will be a request that will make Nigeria better, either in terms of appointments or legislation, and the Senate will act promptly to do so in order to play our part in the confirmation or passage of such legislation (Lawan, Channels TV, 2019). This statement was a good preliminary of a legislature that believed in executive harmony rather than in aggressive control.

Although the 9th National Assembly leadership was celebrating its warm relations with the executive as a sign of institutional maturity, the evidence indicates that law making and oversight roles were impacted because of this. Despite the notable amount of bills that were passed under its tenure, the rate and shallow manner in which some of these bills were passed cast doubt on the ability and the integrity of the legislature to be diligent. Moreover, the powers of investigation and control of the National Assembly were highly misused. Some of the high-profile corruption cases were either not investigated or dropped, especially those involving legislator members or influential executive players. This collapse undermined institutional accountability and society trusting the legislature as an autonomous organ of government.

Its failure to take the constitutional duty of overseeing its constitutional roles more so in the management of public expenditure, only emboldened the executive to allow it to indulge in unchecked external borrowing. There was no serious legislative scrutiny and this led to the high rate of growth of public debt profile in Nigeria in the period. This resulted in a tightening of fiscal space in the country, limiting the ability of the government to finance essential infrastructure, spur growth and absorb the impact of inflation. These ensuing consequences, lowered power of the population to spend, skyrocketing cost of living and increased poverty, mirror the cost of development of a legislature who abandons its constitutional task of accountability in favour of political concordance.

The consequences are thus dramatic. A weak legislature is the bane of not only the checks and balances system, but also of democratic consolidation and sustainable development. The 9 th National Assembly experience highlights the necessity to revive the legislative institution in Nigeria, make it stronger, and increase its ability to fulfill its main constitutional functions effectively. To ensure real development, the legislature needs to regain the mandate of acting as a co-equal arm of government that is dedicated to strict lawmaking, open oversight and protection of the interest of the people over partisanism. Such institutional reform and insistence alone can enable the legislature to achieve its constitutional role as the protector of democracy, as well as a driver of national progress.

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