

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE LEGISLATURE AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: THE NIGERIAN CASE**

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Democratic reversal rather than democratic consolidation is imminent in most African states. With the coups in Guinea, Mauritania and Madagascar; flawed electoral processes in Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, conflicts in Congo Democratic Republic, Sudan, Cote D'Ivoire etc., the fluctuating fortunes of democracy in Africa cannot be doubted. In Nigeria, a decade after a political transition to democracy, citizens continue to face enormous challenges. More than 60% still wallow in poverty, corruption is endemic, HIV/AIDS is spreading like wildfire, unemployment is growing, about 70 million are illiterate and life expectancy year is decreasing. Besides, there are crises of legitimacy, constitutionalism, security, national question, and dwindling international image. Although, varied reasons have been adduced for these scenarios, it is assumed that most of these challenges facing democratic experiment in Africa, particularly in Nigeria have their root in the weak legislative institutions. The legislature is the engine of democratic governance as laws made by it set the agenda for the government and regulate the conduct of the people. Apart, its oversight and representational duties are critical to sustainable development which is considered as one of the ends of democracy.

In view of the above, the paper will investigate the power and roles of the legislature in resolving challenges facing democratization project in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. It will assume that since democracy is not alien to Africa, African people are capable of operating democracy. Specifically, the paper will argue that democracy can flourish in Nigeria; if the capacity of Nigerian legislatures- federal, state and local could be strengthened to address critical issues relating to constitutionalism, corruption, poverty and national question, check the excesses of the executive, and collaborate with the judiciary to avert the consequences of "democracy by court order", as well as empower and work with the civil society.

**KEYWORDS: Democracy, Legislature, Sustainable Development, Africa, Nigeria**