

**LEGISLATIVE EFFICIENCY AND DEMOCRATIC STABILITY IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS OF NIGERIA: A RE-APPRAISAL OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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**Abstract**

Democracy is a vital instrument that propels political proficiency, economic development and social stability of any nation state. This is easily actualized where there is a high level legislative efficiency and efficacy. The National Assembly of any country is a binding force that transforms the politics and governance of that state into a scenario that maximally addresses the yearnings and aspirations of the downtrodden. Democracy in Nigeria has been a mere political desideratum hanging on a limping utopia (Adewusi, 2011:27). Simply put, the National Assembly dictates the operational mechanism of democracy, with certain sharp contradictions arising from defined self interest, instead of democracy dictating the operations of National Assembly. Therefore, this paper examines the roles of Fourth Republic National Assembly in actualizing legislative efficiency and democratic stability in the governance and politics of Nigeria. Accordingly, the paper discusses the History of Nigerian Democracy, Democracy Experiment and Political Life in Nigeria, Legislative Activities in Nigeria (1999 to 2011), and Democratic Stability in Nigeria. Methodologically, data for this work were gathered mainly from secondary sources of recorded human documents. Again, our research design was based on ex-post facto analysis. The paper based its theory on the analytical framework of theory of democracy. Hence, it is found that Nigeria as a nation lacks in the shared values and symbols upon which the formation of democratic consensus rests. The National Assembly members are deeply busy into unprecedented capital accumulation to the utter detriment of the electorates. Therefore, it is our recommendation, inter alia, that members of the National Assembly and politicians in general should address state of unemployment in Nigeria that has deepened level of poverty, triggering off diseases of all kinds. This completely connotes democratic restructuring and legislative enhancement in the fourth republic Nigeria.

**Introduction**

A true democracy is a sine qua non for the development of all sectors of any country's economy. Golden, (2010:82), conceptualizes democracy to incorporate the exploitative and alienative tendencies often demonstrated by the capitalists against the downtrodden. According to him, democracy, empirically speaking could mean "a socio-economic and political formation that grants the hoi polloi the irreducible instrument of

determining and participating effectively in the day-to-day smooth governance of their country". That is, the general transformative and re-structuring powers of that state are vested in the hands of the electorates.

The rudiments of a true democracy are good governance, fair and legitimate elections, justice, equity, accountability, transparency, responsible leadership, political education of the masses, efficient political institutions and respect for the rule of law. This means that a democratic environment creates an atmosphere where elections are free and fair, where legislative seats held by parties are as a result of votes received from the most recent elections and not as a result of cross-carpeting and where, if there is no clear majority in the legislature, several parties may come together to form a coalition government. Hence, democracy is not inimical to any well-organized chosen form of government, but fascism, Nazism, despotism, corruptocracy, favouritism, nepotism and prebendalism are some profound enemies of equality, liberty, fraternity and true representation which are the symbols of democracy proper (Jakande, 2008:85). Again, democracy must give room for the multi-party system to thrive. The advocates of multi-party system to be represented in government and often provided stable, enduring systems of government as in most countries in Europe.

Regrettably, the practice of the so-called democracy in the 21st Century Nigeria is intrinsically characterized by political instability, social acabre, cultural balderdash and economic quagmire, resulting in unemployment of all forms, leading to abject hunger and indescribable poverty. The attendant implication of this misnomer are practical existence of all manner of crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitution, sexual slavery, pen-robbery, and electioneering bickering and hooliganism.

Other problems according to Dike, (2011:34), are corruption, the inability of the political class to transcend politics, the ubiquitous military, and the vast array of other actors that have characterized the Nigerian polity since independence. On the other hand, favoritism, nepotism and corruption have become the de facto norm in the society on the side of employment opportunities, with meritocracy tossed out of the window. As in the past, the current economic and political problem in the society explains the recent upsurge of crises in Nigeria.

Since 1980 to date, the excruciating economic conditions were made unbearable by the constant devaluation of the Nation's currency as well as the pronounced re-occurring degenerating crises in the oil sector of the nation's economy. The ugly economic scenario in Nigeria has negatively affected the nation's population that about 75.98% live below the poverty level (Chikelue, 2011:38).

Simply put, the general success of any practicing democracy is deeply incumbent upon three major challenges. First, the challenge of legislative efficiency, in which the activities of the national assembly ought to reflect and reform positively the socio-economic and political lacuna, that has evaded the country for some reasonable length of while. Second, is the challenge of the executive and management of the nation's economy. Last, is the willingness of the legislative powers that be, to grant much revered policy of inclusiveness to the hoi polloi to participate vibrantly in the daily

governance of the country (Mamudu & Hassan, 2011:24). Driving from this tangible assertion, the legislature is the umbrella that sheds and determines the shape and survival of any country with the people there in. The paper therefore raises some fundamental questions with respect to the above empirical issues: Has the National Assembly in Nigeria been able to transform the poor economic status of the citizenry since 2003 to date? Has Nigerian National Assembly really able to demonstrate some fundamental practices of real democracy? These questions, without any prejudice to contemporary scholarship, would afford us the necessary interpretative guide to actualize some radical analytical construct in this paper.

## **The History of Nigerian Democracy**

Nigeria was granted full independence in October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, as a federation of three regions (northern, western, and eastern), under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary form of government. Under the constitution, each of the three regions retained a substantial measure of self-government. The federal government was given exclusive powers in defense and security, foreign relations, and commercial and fiscal policies. Adeleye, (2000:33), affirms that in October 1963, Nigeria altered its relationship with the United Kingdom by proclaiming itself a federal republic and promulgating a new constitution. A fourth region (the Midwest) was established that year. From the outset, Nigeria's ethnic, regional, and religious tensions were magnified by the significant disparities in economic and educational development between the south and the north.

### **The First Republic (1960-1966)**

The First Republic (1960-1966) was based on the British parliamentary system, while in the Second Republic (1979-1983) the society fiddled with the United State's style of executive presidency. But as we are aware, the lives of the democracy experiments were cut short by military rule, which was characterized by looting, brutality, violence, stealing, Advance Fee Fraud - "419," non-accountability, and autocracy, to the utter disappointment of the majority populace who agitated for democracy ( Africa Report, Nov/Dec 1992).

Consequently, on January 15, 1966, a small group of army officers, mostly southeastern Igbo's, overthrew the government and assassinated the federal prime minister and the premiers of the northern and western regions, thereby changing the dynamics of politics in Nigeria. Osagie, G.C. (2006:24), opines that the federal military government that assumed power was unable to quiet ethnic tensions or produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of the country. In fact, its efforts to abolish the federal structure greatly raised tensions and led to another coup in July. According to him, the coup related massacre of thousands of Igbo in the north prompted hundreds of thousands of them to return to the southeast, where increasingly strong Igbo secessionist sentiment emerged.

The second democratic exercise was also killed by a military coup in December 1983. The military again handed over power to a democratically constituted government on

May 29, 1999, after ruling Nigeria for 29 years of the 39 years since independence from Britain in 1960 (Ojo,1998:56).

### **The Second Republic (1979 - 1983)**

A constituent assembly was elected in 1977 to draft a new constitution, which was published on September 21, 1978, when the ban on political activity, in effect since the advent of military rule, was lifted. According to Okongwu, (1999:26), Political parties were formed, and candidates were nominated for president and vice president, the two houses of the National Assembly, governorships, and state houses of assembly. In 1979, five political parties competed in a series of elections in which a northerner, Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), was elected president. All five parties won representation in the National Assembly. In August 1983, Shagari and the NPN were returned to power in a landslide victory, with a majority of seats in the National Assembly and control of 12 state governments. But the elections were marred by violence and allegations of widespread vote rigging and electoral malfeasance led to legal battles over the results.

On December 31, 1983, the military overthrew the Second Republic. Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the leader of the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the country's new ruling body. He charged the civilian government with economic mismanagement, widespread corruption, election fraud, and a general lack of concern for the problems of Nigerians. He also pledged to restore prosperity to Nigeria and to return the government to civilian rule but proved unable to deal with Nigeria's severe economic problems. The Buhari government was peacefully overthrown by the SMC's third-ranking member, Army Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, in August 1985 (Ajayi, (1999:32).

Babangida cited the misuse of power, violations of human rights by key officers of the SMC, and the government's failure to deal with the country's deepening economic crisis as justifications for the takeover. During his first few days in office, President Babangida moved to restore freedom of the press and to release political detainees being held without charge. As part of a 15-month economic emergency, he announced stringent pay cuts for the military, police, and civil servants and proceeded to enact similar cuts for the private sector. Imports of rice, maize, and later wheat were banned. Ogunkoya, (2008: 43) opines that President Babangida demonstrated his intent to encourage public participation in government decision-making by opening a national debate on proposed economic reform and recovery measures. The public response convinced Babangida of intense opposition to an economic recovery package dependent on an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.

### **The Abortive Third Republic (1993)**

In the historic June 12, 1993 presidential elections, which most observers deemed to be Nigeria's fairest, early returns indicated that M.K.O. Abiola had won a decisive victory. However, on June 23, Babangida, using several pending lawsuits as a pretense, annulled the election, throwing Nigeria into turmoil. Ogundele, (2006:43) emphasizes that more than 100 persons were killed in riots before Babangida agreed to

hand power to an "interim government" on August 27, 1993. Babangida then attempted to renege on his decision. Without popular and military support, he was forced to hand over to Ernest Shonekan, a prominent nonpartisan businessman. Shonekan was to rule until new elections, scheduled for February 1994. Although he had led Babangida's Transitional Council since early 1993, Shonekan was unable to reverse Nigeria's ever-growing economic problems or to defuse lingering political tension.

With the country sliding into chaos, Defense Minister Sani Abacha quickly assumed power and forced Shonekan's "resignation" on November 17, 1993. Abacha dissolved all democratic political institutions and replaced elected governors with military officers. Abacha promised to return the government to civilian rule but refused to announce a timetable until his October 1, 1995 Independence Day address (Oseloka, 1994:43). According to him, Abacha's takeover was initially welcomed by many Nigerians, disenchantment grew rapidly. A number of opposition figures united to form a new organization, the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which campaigned for an immediate return to civilian rule. The government arrested NADECO members who attempted to reconvene the Senate and other disbanded democratic institutions. Most Nigerians boycotted the elections held from May 23-28, 1994, for delegates to the government-sponsored Constitutional Conference. On June 11, 1994, using the groundwork laid by NADECO, Abacha declared himself president and went into hiding. He reemerged and was promptly arrested on June 23. With Abacha in prison and tempers rising, Abacha convened the Constitutional Conference June 27, but it almost immediately went into recess and did not reconvene until July 11, 1994 (Borishade, 2000:17).

During the Abacha regime, the government continued to enforce its arbitrary authority through the federal security system which is the military, the state security service, and the courts. Under Abacha, all branches of the security forces committed serious human rights abuses. After Abubakar's assumption of power and consolidation of support within the PRC, human rights abuses decreased. According to Ogbonna, (2005:32) other human rights problems, included infringements on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and travel; violence and discrimination against women; and female genital mutilation. Worker rights suffered as the government continued to interfere with organized labour by restricting the fundamental rights of association and the independence of the labour movement. After it came to power in June 1998, the Abubakar government took several important steps toward restoring worker rights and freedom of association for trade unions, which had deteriorated seriously between 1993 and June 1998 under the Abacha regime.

During both the Abacha and Abubakar eras, Nigeria's main decision-making organ was the military Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) which governed by decree. The PRC oversaw the 32-member federal executive council composed of civilians and military officers. Odukoya, (2008:23) postulates that pending the promulgation of the constitution written by the constitutional conference in 1995, the government observed some provisions of the 1979 and 1989 constitutions. Neither Abacha nor Abubakar lifted the decree suspending the 1979 constitution, and the 1989 constitution was not implemented. The judiciary's authority and independence was significantly impaired

during the Abacha era by the military regime's arrogation of judicial power and prohibition of court review of its action. The court system continued to be hampered by corruption and lack of resources after Abacha's death.

In August 1998, the Abubakar government appointed the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct elections for local government councils, state legislatures and governors, the national assembly, and president. INEC successfully held these elections. The PRC promulgated a new constitution based largely on the suspended 1979 constitution, before the May 29, 1999 inauguration of the new civilian president. The constitution includes provisions for a bicameral legislature, the National Assembly, consisting of a 360-member House of Representatives and a 109-member Senate. The executive branch and the office of president retain strong federal powers. The legislature and judiciary, having suffered years of neglect, must be rebuilt as institutions (Ogbemudia, 2007:19).

### **The Fourth Republic (1999 to Date)**

Following the death of military dictator and de facto ruler of Nigeria, General Sani Abacha in 1998, his successor General Abdusalami Abubakar initiated the transition which heralded Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999. The ban on political activities according to Usman, (2010:54), was lifted, and political prisoners were released from detention facilities. Political parties were formed (People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and Alliance for Democracy (AD), and elections were set for April 1999. The nature of the transition to civil rule in Nigeria has been one where the governments creates parties for the people, designs and plan their manifestoes for them, funds them, foist certain candidates on these organization and invites the people to join them so as to Crystallize their democratic quest. Thus, a climate of political exclusion, alienation and robbery of the fundamental right of the Nigeria peoples are evidenced (Adejumobi, 1998).

In the widely monitored 1999 election, former military ruler Olusegun Obasanjo, was elected on the PDP platform. On 29 May 1999, Obasanjo was sworn in as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In the controversial general election on 21 April 2007, Umaru Yar'Adua of the PDP was elected President. Following the death of Umaru Yar'Adua on 5 May, 2010, Goodluck Jonathan became the third president of the 4th Republic and was eventually re-elected as incumbent, following the general elections held in April, 2011.

### **Democratic Experiment and Political Life in Nigeria**

The emergence of a democratic Nigeria in May 1999, ended 16 years of consecutive military rule. Obasanjo, a former general, took over the leadership of a country as a president that faced many problems, including a dysfunctional bureaucracy, collapsed infrastructure, and a military that wanted a reward for returning quietly to the barracks. The President moved quickly and retired hundreds of military officers who held political positions, established a blue-ribbon panel to investigate human rights violations, ordered the release of scores of persons held without charge, and rescinded a number of questionable licenses and contracts let by the previous

military regimes. The government also moved to recover millions of dollars in funds secreted in overseas accounts by corrupt government officials, particularly the former military dictator Gen. Sani Abacha (Gerald, 2009:27).

Most civil society leaders and most Nigerians witnessed a marked improvement in human rights and democratic practice under Obasanjo. The press enjoyed greater freedom than under previous governments. As Nigeria works out representational democracy, there have been conflicts between the Executive and Legislative branches over major appropriations and other proposed legislation. A sign of federalism has been the growing visibility of state governors and the inherent friction between Abuja and the various state capitals over resource allocation.

However, Problems of communal violence had confronted the Obasanjo government since its inception. Since May 29, 1999 when Nigeria began her current experiment on democracy (after many years of military rule), the nation has been bedeviled by a series of social crises. For instance, the rising religious disturbances brought about by the introduction of Sharia Law in some parts of the northern states, and the subsequent ethnic cleansing in Kaduna and other states (Igboanugo, 2000). All these political brouhaha have contributed in the continued deterioration in social relations, social disintegration, and the delay in ripping the dividends of the democracy experiment. It is appropriate to note that one good thing the present experiment on democracy has achieved, is that any person can criticize the leaders without fear of official reprisal. Perhaps, the real drawback in the process has been the autocratic posture of President Olusegun Obasanjo, which did not allow him to give the National Assembly an unfettered hand to perform its constitutional duties. As long as our leaders fail to perform their duties appropriately and consider all Nigerians – (Hausas, Fulanis, Yorubas, Ibos, Ibibios, Efik, Annang, Ijaws, Bonny, Opobo, Ogonis, Tivs, Kanuris, etc.) - as citizens endowed with the same rights, Okafor (2000:26) asserts that there would not emerge the trust which is indispensable for the unity and development of the nation. This will go a long way in making the democratic experiment yieldable.

Furthermore, since Nigeria independence; two of its numerous elections were described as been credible, free and fair by Nigerians and the international communities. The first was the 1992 general election which Chief M.K.O Abiola reportedly won with 55 percent of the total vote cast. The same election was unreasonably annulled by General Ibrahim Babangida – the Military fascist of the time. The aftermath of that annulment is a different story, not intentioned in this article. The second free and fair election was concluded in April 2011 by Independent National Electoral Commission – INEC under the chairmanship of Prof. Attahiru Jega. The incumbent president, Jonathan Ebele Good Luck was declared the winner. He reportedly won 57 percent of the total vote cast (Admin, May 28, 2011).

Though the battle was considered lost and won, there were several needless sectarian and targeted violence in response to his victory, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. While the people have the right to react to the result of the election, the acceptable corollary of democratic dictum is that the will of the majority prevails and respected in good faith. If anyone or political party feel cheated or disagree with the

result that was declared by INEC , such individual or group can invoke their rights and seek redress in the court of law as opposed to arbitrariness or taking laws into their hands. People should understand that arson and murder are not integral part of democracy, and should not be considered a solution to political disagreement.

### **Legislative Activities in Nigeria (1999 to 2011)**

The National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a bicameral legislature established under section 4 of the Nigerian Constitution. It consists of a Senate and a 360-member House of Representatives. The body, modeled after the federal Congress of the United States, is supposed to guarantee equal representation of the states irrespective of size in the Senate and proportional representation of population in the House. The National Assembly, like many other organs of the Nigerian government, is based in the federal capital territory, Abuja. In Nigeria, the Constitutional Responsibilities of the Legislature include making laws for the peace, progress and good governance of the country. The two houses also influence government policies through motions and resolutions (Okosun, 2005:19). Some responsibilities are, however, exclusive to the Senate. These include the Screening and confirmation of both members of the Federal Executive, (known as Ministers), and ambassadorial nominees. On the account of these exclusive responsibilities, the Senate is regarded as the Upper House of the National Assembly, and the House, the Lower. The Senate President is the Chairman of the National Assembly.

The Legislature was one of the casualties of Nigeria's first military rule which spanned from January 17, 1966 to October 1, 1976. During this period, most democratic structures, prominent among was the Legislature were abolished, whilst the Military rulers operated a unitary system of government. The Second republic was ushered in on October 1, 1979 through a groundwork prepared by the constitution Drafting Committee and a Constituent Assembly. According to Olugbenga, (2008:20), these two bodies functioned between 1978 and 1979 and produced the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979. This Constitution provided for an Executive Presidential system of government, whose features include separation of powers among the three arms of government viz, the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary. The second republic Legislature was also Bi-cameral. There was a Senate, with a membership strength of 95, (each of them 19 states in the country produced five Senators), and a Federal House of Representatives with a membership strength of 450. The second republic was abruptly terminated by a Military coup on December 31, 1983.

The third republic took off via a transition programmed midwife in 1985 by the military President Ibrahim Babangida administration. The imposed transition programme resulted in the election of 91 Senators to the National Assembly in December 1992, with each of the then 30 states producing three Senators, and the Federal Capital Territory producing a seat. The Federal House of Representatives, however, had membership strength of 593; the seats were filled on the basis of one Representative per each of the 593 Local governments existing then in the country.

The annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election and the resulting political crisis thereof, led to the overthrow of the pseudo democratic government led then by Chief Ernest Shonekan on November 17, 1993. Nigeria did not witness democracy again until May 29, 1999, when the General Abdulsalam Abubakar military junta handed over to a democratically elected government under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

This fourth republic was anchored on the 1999 Constitution, whose features are not substantially different from the 1979 Constitution. It provides for a bi-cameral Legislature- the Senate and the Federal House of Representatives. The former is composed of 109 members, 3 each from the 36 states in the country; while the latter is composed of 360 members representing federal constituencies on an almost equal population basis. However, since the restoration of democratic rule in 1999, the Assembly has been said to be a "learning process" that has witnessed the election and removal of several Presidents of the Senate, allegations of corruption, slow passage of private member's bills and the creation of ineffective committees to satisfy numerous interests (Olumide, 2010:23). For instance, between 2003 and February 2011, several bills have been passed into law by the assembly but without any radical approach to salvage the economic yearnings and aspirations of the down trodden. All these bills were not only bills that would attract more contracts to enrich the already rich pockets of the house members, but also very insensitive in moving the socio-economic and political base of the country to the next level. Unemployment was the order of the day, as hunger, abject poverty and high level crimes have taken the stage (Akindele, 2011:26). The statistical table below shows the legislative activities of the National Assembly, between 1999 and August 2010.

**Table 1: SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE SENATE BETWEEN JUNE 1999 AND AUGUST 2010**

TITLE	2003 - 2004	2004- 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	Total
Bills Scheduled	89	152	168	69	72	72	83	705
Bills Presented	87	119	168	69	65	67	54	629
Bills not presented	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	7
Bills read the first time	44	54	98	39	34	45	33	347
Bills not presented	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	5
Bills read the second time and referred to committees	42	55	34	7	5	8	12	163

Bills passed	27	32	18	55	44	36	13	450
Bills considered	94	152	174	69	70	130	15	704
Bills neglected	-	3	5	-	-	4	2	14
Bills withdrawn	-	2	1	4	3	2	1	13
Executive bills passed	23	21	12	27	7	4	3	97
Members bills passed	4	11	6	28	23	12	6	90
Reports presented	13	19	18	12	16	23	18	238
Reports laid	4	10	15	7	8	10	11	65
Reports considered	9	9	3	3	9	8	12	53
Motions presented	61	34	27	31	10	25	31	219
Motions referred to Committees	4	6	3	1	2	4	3	23
Motion considered	57	28	24	30	25	31	32	227

**Source: Statistical Bulletin on Nigerian Democracy 2011**

As stated above, the National Assembly in this country has not given any hope to the able bodied unemployed youths, neither have they given any tangible succor to the hoi poloi. Hence, is Nigeria really democratic? Are the basic instruments of democracy on ground in this country? Indeed, where are we heading for? The statistical table below shows the total unemployment rate in Nigeria, between 1999 and February 2011.

**Table 2: NATIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, NIGERIA (YEAR – ENDING DECEMBER), 2003 - 2010**

Survey Period	Composite		Urban		Rural	
	ILO	NIG	ILO	NIG	ILO	NIG
2003	2.9	14.8	3.2	17.1	2.7	13.8
2004	2.8	11.8	3.3	11.0	2.6	12.1
2005	3.3	11.9	4.3	10.1	2.8	12.6
2006	3.5	14.6	4.6	10.0	2.9	15.1
2007	3.5	10.9	4.7	10.0	2.9	12.6
2008	3.6	11.1	4.9	10.0	3.2	12.8
2009	3.6	11.3	4.9	11.4	3.5	12.9

2010	3.8	12.5	5.0	11.9	4.0	13.0
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Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Note: ILO = International Labour Organization

NIG = Nigeria

Source: Nigeria Today

Attendantly, the inability of National Assembly to pass bills that would create employment opportunities for the able bodied youths has ushered in diseases of all kinds into the polity, as poverty is a very difficult scenario to manage, especially when the capitalists' class enjoys the wealth of the Nation alone. The statistical table below also justifies this claim therein.

**TABLE 3: REPORTED CASES FROM NOTIFIABLE DISEASES, 2003-2010**

Notifiable Diseases	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Acute Poliomyelitis	73	335	222	1,541	718	810	620	580
Anthrax (Human)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Diarrhea	672, 692	732, 728	682, 828	800,611	1, 069,133	1, 025,212	1,080,700	1,200,101
Gonorrhoea	20, 643	9, 408	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hepatitis	8, 894	7,104	13,609	6,419	5,239	6,200	5,800	6, 728
Typhoid fever	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malaria	2,031,696	3,109,166	3,183,072	3,547,830	4,481,725	5,025,3535	5,250,560	5,797,680

Malaria Pregnant women	12, 009	73, 838	127, 266	169,208	352,271	381,222	388,122	390,219
HIV/ AIDS Cases	1,342	17,723	16,095	21,454	44,018	46,200	48,566	50,707
Pneumonia	258,009,484	269,327	269,327	269,017	268,929	374,191	390,212	4,099,212
Tuberculosis	26,643	23,382	22,582	34,506	31,264	30,150	32,250	31,560

**Source: Health in Nigeria, 2010.**

## **DEMOCRATIC STABILITY IN NIGERIA**

Nigeria’s yearnings have been an ideal socio-political environment as reflected in Chapter 11 of the 1999 Constitution. The National Political Reform Conference held in 2005 recommended Chapter 11, which outlines the fundamental human rights, to make one indivisible whole. Such is the earnestness of the citizenry’s desire for a stable polity. But this cannot be achieved in isolation. According to Chief Bola Ajibola, former judge of the International Court of Justice, the Hague, it requires institutional and attitudinal inputs, in appropriate quarters to generate the desired results. In the realms of institutional frameworks we, as a people, have always striven to attain the best with our quasi-utopian documents. Be it in the area of our constitutions, past and present, and the various development plans, the ingenuity of the Nigerian people and their knowledge of what it ought to be is never in doubt, but implementation has always been a mere illusion. We only theorize and fail to put it into practice effectively, when it comes to real democracy. He further asserts that if the nation must have a stable polity, “we must work towards a parliament that is truly representative of the people and continue to have an independent judiciary, which would continue to serve as the bastion of hope. We must ultimately have an executive that will endear itself to the populace through responsiveness and astute governance. The citizenry are quick to express their acceptance or rejection of a government over the attitude of its executive arm.

Political stability in the type of democracy provided for in the Nigerian constitution means the continuation of the exercise of power by those freely elected by the people of the country for specific periods with definite mandates which conformed with the fundamental objectives and principles of states policy clearly defined in chapter 11 of the constitution. There, it is clearly stated that the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice. Certainly, leadership is the most important element needed to build a nation. Nigerian politicians must

demonstrate the seriousness of purpose needed to build a virile nation. Okebukola, (2009:34), emphasizes that stability requires a commitment by everybody to fairness, rule of law, fair and equitable representations in a plural society. We must embrace fiscal federal architecture but, above all, we must develop our economy so as to provide jobs for our youth and the older population. Nigeria needs clear-headed, public-spirited leaders at every level to propel this country to a higher stage of development.

More so, democratic culture or development is not sustainable on the conduct of good elections alone. Other democratic virtues must be put in place and its efficiency must be ensured. Check and balances between the three arms of government, independent and incorruptible judiciary; viable fourth estate among others, are democracy sustaining tenets that should not be compromised. In a situation where the trust of the people is deflated by those entrusted to defend its sanctity, the masses should be irrepressible in their collective action to deal decisively with such betrayer of public confidence. Government whose actions and policies are inimical, and runs contrary to the expectations and total development of Nigerians should be legally run down. Civil disobedience, walk to rule, peaceful and coordinated mass protest by a legitimate trade union or organized labor are few examples of how an anti-people's government could be legally run down in order to sustain our fragile democracy and hold the political leaders accountable.

Nigeria needs to stick to the time honoured federal system of government so that we can have competition among the states for excellence as we had before and during the first Republic. Our federalism should be based on fiscal federalism by which each state will exploit its own resources and make contributions to the centre. This will need to be carefully worked out. The present system is not tenable and it breeds dependency on oil and gas revenue while neglecting other sources of income (Abayomi, 2011:39).

Also, we need to go back to agriculture not in a crude form but industrial and mechanized agriculture so that each state can emphasize its area of comparative advantage. An agriculture based economy is not only stable; it will also employ a lot of people. The agriculture suggested is not just the production of crops and its export in crude form. We must be able to add value to whatever we produce. Whatever industrial paradigm we adopt must be anchored on our agricultural production. The oil and gas we currently rely upon will in less than fifty years become obsolete and unwanted in an age of environmental concern where mitigation of the effect of previous pollution and adaptation of present mode of production in order to embrace green technology will be the rule rather than the exception (Okafor, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

The principles of democracy are the same all over the world, but the component parts of each society are peculiar. As a result, the conditions that make democracy and legislative efficiency possible in one society may constitute a hindrance in another. The leaders and citizens must encourage and show respect for cultural differences while at the same time encouraging the diverse population to work for common goals. According to George, (2010:62), Nigeria as a nation lacks in the shared values and symbols upon

which the formation of consensus rests, as Nigeria is a nation of people of different customs, culture, values, aspirations and diversity of attitudes to life. Therefore, we could take a different route to achieve democratic stability via legislative efficiency in Nigeria if the members of the National Assembly are really determined to protect and promote the interests of people they represent other than theirs.

The extent to which democracy and legislative practices are advanced in Nigeria will remain a function of the degree to which the people in elective positions imbibe the culture of constitutionalism. The National Assembly has however, not succeeded in using its powers to ensure the survival of democracy in Nigeria, considering the nature and character of bills they passed, which had no implicit and explicit effects on the citizenry.

The socio-political and economic problems facing Nigeria are far more complicated than they appear ordinarily. Despite all odds, we must continue to press on so as to remain a united and a true democratic nation. Also, the politicians (and their cohorts) must change their attitude in their pursuit of political power; and politics should not be a do or die affair in the society. The players should eschew violence (the use of thugs), bribery of electoral officers and buying of voters' cards to manipulate elections. Elections can only engender the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria if the electoral processes are reformed in ways that fundamentally address the autonomy and capability of INEC and related electoral agencies, particularly political parties, to discharge their responsibilities effectively. As the population increases, the political leadership of Nigeria must make serious efforts to conduct a national census for a reliable population figure (instead of the confusing and confused population estimates) for better national planning (Hassan, 2009:37).

In addition, social infrastructures should as a matter of necessity be provided for the citizenry with a radical creation of employment opportunities, better schools and medical services, pipe borne water, good roads, un-interrupted power supply, better communication system and effective resources management. The actualization of all these is principally incumbent upon the sincerity of purpose, good intent and administrative synergy profoundly inherent in the legislature of the modern – day democracy in Nigeria. Hence, any deviation from these would continue to place the nation's economy in a danger zone.

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