



AN EXAMINATION OF THE EPOCHS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEGISLATURE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive chronological analysis of how Nigeria's legislative frameworks have evolved, focusing specifically on the federal tier to establish a groundwork for comprehending its operational mechanics and authority as the nation's primary governance organ. Emerging from the era of colonial advisory bodies, the Nigerian legislature has transformed into an essential mechanism for driving governmental transparency and accountability. Under colonial administration, these lawmaking bodies were heavily overshadowed by imperial executives who wielded both legislative and executive functions simultaneously. Such historical executive overreach left a lasting imprint on the nation's modern presidential framework, which advocates for the separation of powers while demanding shared responsibilities among government branches. Furthermore, this piece details the post-independence transition from the British-styled parliamentary model of the First Republic to the presidential architecture introduced during the 1979 Second Republic and carried into the Fourth Republic starting in May 1999. Frequent military incursions into the political landscape since January 1966 profoundly influenced the character and operational culture of this vital democratic pillar. Ultimately, the sluggish utilization of necessary oversight capacities continues to undermine the robustness of Nigeria's democratic practices today.

Keywords: Lawmaking Body Evolution, Nigeria's Constitutional History, Federal Assembly, Parliamentary Sub-groups, Democratic Consolidation, Executive Scrutiny.

Introduction

Nigeria's lawmaking apparatus has progressed significantly, transitioning from a rudimentary colonial advisory board established in 1862 to today's fully-fledged bicameral National Assembly. Guided by various shifts across British parliamentary templates and subsequent military administrations, the legislative branch finally stabilized under the 1999 Constitution as an independent democratic pillar wielding distinct powers. Prior to the formal establishment of



legislative houses, the colonial Governor effectively functioned as the sole lawmaking authority, an absolute position he maintained until the final days of imperial rule. He single-handedly crafted and executed regulations, possessing a level of autocratic control that was only later rivaled by military regimes. Existing decrees, as well as those instituted by the British officials who installed the Governor, were designed entirely for his convenience and to simplify his administrative duties. Consequently, the Governor embodied the law itself, utilizing his vast legal authority to govern the annexed regions in strict alignment with the economic goals of the British Empire.

It is crucial to recognize that the primary motivation behind colonial involvement in Africa—and Nigeria specifically—was driven by economic exploitation. Political expansion was merely a byproduct of this financial ambition, heavily accelerated by the resolutions of the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference. The pursuit of financial gain remained the core catalyst even as European territorial dominance expanded across the continent. Reflecting this commercial priority amidst fierce European rivalry, Dr. Baikie explicitly directed British merchants to convince local chiefs that their presence was strictly for trading purposes, rather than for land acquisition or colonial domination. However, as rival European explorers began to jeopardize British commercial interests, these merchants petitioned their home government for assistance. The British Crown reacted by designating Mr. John Beecroft as the inaugural Consul, a pivotal maneuver that marked the official commencement of British sovereign control over Nigerian territories.

Fundamentally, a legislature serves as the beating heart of democratic rule, tasked with formulating laws, representing the populace, and holding the executive branch accountable. Within the Nigerian context, this institution has experienced profound mutations from its imperial origins to the contemporary Fourth Republic, mirroring the broader administrative and political metamorphoses of the state. Beyond mere statutory drafting, modern assemblies rely heavily on internal operational structures—most notably the committee system—to navigate their extensive and complex workloads. Academic observers have noted that such specialized groups are crucial for ensuring administrative efficiency, maintaining governmental accountability, and streamlining legislative operations. Consequently, this document maps the historical progression of Nigeria's lawmaking bodies while critically evaluating the systemic importance of legislative committees through the lenses of both Nigerian and British paradigms.

Conceptual Clarification: Legislature and Committees

As an arm of the government, the legislature holds the constitutional mandate to draft laws that ensure harmony, public order, and the general welfare of the citizenry. Additionally, it executes crucial representative duties and monitors executive actions.

Within parliamentary procedure, a committee functions as a condensed assembly of lawmakers entrusted with managing specific inquiries or broad tasks on behalf of the larger legislative body. This concept was legally underscored in the case of *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Hillingdon LBC*, which characterized a committee as an entity of individuals handpicked by a parent organization to carry out designated, delegated responsibilities. Locally, Section 62(1) of the 1999 Constitution grants the Nigerian National Assembly the explicit authority to create such sub-groups to optimize the regulation and execution of its legislative affairs.

Colonial Heritage of the Legislature in Nigeria



Today's National Assembly—the primary statutory organ of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, comprising the Senate as the upper house and the House of Representatives as the lower house—boasts an extensive evolutionary background. This lineage traces back to June 1862, following the forceful British annexation of Lagos that concluded a decade-long military campaign. The genesis of this lawmaking body is deeply intertwined with the mechanics of British colonial administration. The establishment of Lagos as a crown colony simultaneously birthed the Lagos Legislative Council, a body that became central to imperial governance. Governor Stanhope Freeman, overseeing the newly annexed dependency as part of the Crown's conquered domains, inaugurated the Central Legislative Assembly to serve strictly as an advisory panel. Within this colony, the Governor directed the executive branch while also dominating the legislature as the foremost proxy of the British Monarchy.

Although a unified central authority for British West African settlements (including Sierra Leone, Lagos, the Gold Coast, and the Gambia) operated out of Freetown between 1866 and 1874, the Lagos Legislative Council maintained a distinct existence. It operated under an administrator who, based on the Royal Commission of February 19, 1866, answered directly to the government-in-chief in Freetown. This administrative structure remained active until 1906, pausing briefly between 1874 and 1885 when Lagos was governed from the Gold Coast (contemporary Ghana) to minimize financial overhead. As British forces entrenched their authority in Lagos, they aggressively extended their reach into the interior regions. This expansion resulted in the legislature's jurisdiction stretching to encompass the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria by 1906. Designed to aid the governor's administrative efforts, the Legislative Council of Southern Nigeria operated until 1913, with its territorial bounds formally delineated by the Lagos Protectorate Order in Council of 1899. Throughout the British colonies, these early legislative councils were assigned four primary duties: acting as an outlet to express public grievances, providing administrative counsel to the state, and maintaining a restricted level of supervision over public spending.

While the foundational expectations for the legislature stayed relatively stagnant during the colonial epoch, the central assembly's physical makeup and structural design underwent continuous modifications from 1862 until the dawn of independence in 1960. These councils featured a blend of officially appointed bureaucrats and nominated unofficial participants. A notable shift occurred with the 1922 Clifford Constitution, which injected the elective principle into the system, granting limited franchise rights to Lagos and Calabar within Southern Nigeria. The institutional layout evolved further when the unicameral format was abandoned in 1958 to accommodate a newly created Senate, though regional assemblies in the Northern and Western territories had already embraced bicameral structures earlier in the decade. Concurrently, the House of Representatives had been active since the early 1950s, blending elected officials with appointed members who served alongside a Council of Ministers. Operating under the 1960 Independence and 1963 Republican Constitutions, this bicameral framework flourished, heavily reflecting the Westminster tradition of merging executive and parliamentary powers during the First Republic (1959–1966).

Although imperial lawmaking bodies were theoretically modeled after the British Parliament, stark disparities existed regarding their authority and composition. Surging nationalist and anti-colonial activism compelled a gradual increase in indigenous African representation, slowly diluting the monopoly of European administrators. Nevertheless, these colonial parliaments remained thoroughly subjugated to the local Governor and the centralized Colonial Office situated in London.



In sharp contrast to the autonomy enjoyed by the British Parliament, Nigeria's colonial assemblies possessed minimal independence in shaping policy. The Governor maintained an iron grip on legislative proceedings, frequently executing mandates issued by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Most lawmaking initiatives were heavily executive-driven, and specific legislative proposals required explicit imperial clearance before enactment. Consequently, local ordinances were entirely subservient to the statutes passed by the British Parliament. Furthermore, the cooperative dynamics between official and unofficial members meant there was no legitimate opposition party as seen in the traditional Westminster system. Ultimately, this resulted in a parliament structurally inferior to the executive—a lingering authoritarian legacy that complicated the post-independence legal landscape.

Clifford Constitution 1922

A major watershed moment occurred with the Clifford Constitution, which formally introduced the concept of elective representation to the Nigerian political sphere. Even though voting rights were tightly confined to the populations of Lagos and Calabar, this structural reform served as a monumental leap toward democratic governance. The document successfully catalyzed local political engagement and provided fertile ground for the rapid expansion of nationalist organizations.

Prior to this, Sir Frederick Lord Lugard had instituted the Nigerian Council in 1914, an entity that survived until 1922. Sir Hugh Clifford abruptly dissolved Lugard's council that year precisely because it was devoid of any tangible executive or legislative clout, replacing it with his own Legislative Council grounded in the new elective principle. Under this arrangement, four indigenous Nigerians secured elected seats within the council—three representing Lagos and one representing Calabar. Participation, however, was heavily gated; candidates were required to meet a strict income threshold of 100 pounds, alongside gender restrictions requiring candidates to be female.

The administrative adjustments brought about by these early reforms were vast. Key structural elements introduced during this era included:

- The consolidation and centralized administration of both the Nigerian protectorates and the colony.
- The restructuring of the erstwhile Northern and Southern protectorates into provincial groups, each supervised by a Lieutenant Governor.
- The placement of the Lagos colony under the distinct leadership of an Administrator.
- The inauguration of a nationwide Executive Council.
- The creation of Lugard's Nigerian Council, which he originally justified as a tool to cultivate informed public sentiment.
- The establishment of a primary national secretariat alongside two regional secretariats for the Northern and Southern provincial clusters. Each component province was managed by a Resident who reported directly to the respective Lieutenant Governor.
- The centralization of vital public utilities and revenue streams, including customs, treasuries, marine operations, ports, telegraph services, and railways.



Despite these advancements, actual legislative dominance remained tightly gripped by colonial administrators, aided by a highly exclusive voter franchise. Because the preceding colonial constitution was largely unwritten and highly adaptable, Lord Lugard had previously possessed the unilateral freedom to dictate provisions, ratify legislation, declare civic measures, and issue binding state directives. This unchecked concentration of legislative capability set a formidable precedent for all subsequent colonial governors who assumed office in the territory.

Richards Constitution 1946

Enacted as The Nigeria (Legislative Council) Order in Council No. 1370, the Richards Constitution officially took effect on January 1, 1947. Prior to its implementation, the region was governed by a patchwork of existing statutes that operated alongside or eventually superseded the provisions of the 1922 framework, notably the Nigerian (Legislative Council) Orders in Council of 1922, 1928, and 1941. Governor Arthur Richards assumed leadership from Sir Bernard Bourdillon in 1943. Bourdillon's predecessor was Sir Donald Cameron, who had previously served as Chief Secretary under Lord Lugard, and Cameron himself had taken the reins from Governor Sir Graham Thompson.

The historical reverberations of the First World War had significantly amplified colonial interventions across Africa, while the turbulence of the Second World War subsequently fueled intense nationalist resistance against imperial rule globally. Before Richards' tenure, Sir Cameron implemented sweeping judicial and native administration reforms through various legal ordinances, establishing foundational systems that heavily influenced the structures inherited by Nigeria upon its independence. Importantly, the renowned regional division of the country, frequently credited to Sir Richards, actually originated from the administrative strategies pioneered during Sir Bourdillon's era.

During the preparatory phases for the new constitution, the Chief Secretary put forth several proposals for administrative overhaul. The approved plan officially categorized Nigeria into distinct regional blocs for the first time. Consequently, the Northern provincial cluster was designated as the Northern Region, while the Southern cluster was bifurcated to form the Eastern and Western Regions. These newly minted regional administrations were granted limited jurisdictional authority over specified local issues. Beyond merely regionalizing the territory, the new legal framework sought to foster broader national inclusivity by expanding the central legislative council to accommodate 45 members.

Functionally, this constitution empowered the central government to enact legislation for the general peace and stability of Nigeria, contingent upon the advice and approval of the legislative council. At this juncture, Nigeria maintained its status as a unitary state, albeit one experimenting with regional scaffolding. Predictably, these regional lawmaking bodies lacked substantial authority, functioning almost exclusively in an advisory capacity. Draft bills originating in the central Legislative Council were dispatched to the regional houses, which were permitted to engage in rigorous debates but were entirely stripped of the power to amend the texts. Lawmakers at the regional level could merely attach observational notes based on their deliberations before returning the unaltered bills to the central authority.

Because both the regions and the Native Authorities (local governments) were products of the central administration, they remained thoroughly subordinated to the central legislature and the



executive authority embodied by the Governor. This paradoxical approach—expending immense effort to amalgamate the colony and protectorates only to fragment them into regional blocs with toothless councils—sparked widespread critical questioning. The quest to resolve these structural contradictions directly paved the way for the adoption of federalism in the subsequent 1951 Constitution, a system that was fully actualized by 1954.

Summary of the Richards Constitution:

- The structural regionalization of the nation into three primary zones: the North, East, and West, alongside Lagos functioning as the Federal Territory.
- The inauguration of Regional Houses of Assembly located in the cities of Kaduna, Enugu, and Ibadan.
- The creation of a House of Chiefs to integrate indigenous governance.
- The specific establishment of the House of Chiefs within the Western Region.

The 1951 John Macpherson Constitution

The year 1951 marked a critical inflection point in Nigeria's trajectory toward self-rule, heavily characterized by the rollout of the Macpherson Constitution and the surge of regionalized party politics. This document held immense historical gravity because it provided the indigenous population with their inaugural platform to voice their preferences regarding their desired governance framework. The era was defined by the aggressive emergence of the Action Group party, fierce electoral rivalries, and a tangible augmentation of legislative clout across the three designated regions. By promoting both regional self-governance and a cohesive federal union, the Macpherson framework established a central administration supported by a Council of Ministers, thereby supercharging political engagement and partisan mobilization nationwide.

Upon succeeding Arthur Richards, Sir John Macpherson delivered an inaugural address pledging immediate constitutional reforms beginning in early 1950, predating a subsequently aborted delegation to London. Following extensive consultative dialogues, a dedicated review committee was formed to scrutinize the preceding Richards Constitution alongside the public feedback. This meticulous process culminated in a draft constitution presented at the Ibadan General Conference (December 1949 to January 1950). The robust participation of Nigerians at this conference birthed the Macpherson Constitution, which formally introduced distinct legislative lists—a foundational pillar of genuine federalism.

The resulting architecture was distinctly quasi-federal. It instituted a central House of Representatives populated by a mix of appointed and elected figures, alongside dedicated Houses of Assembly for all three regions. Furthermore, Houses of Chiefs were erected in the Northern and Western Regions to integrate indigenous royalty. Crucially, this constitution facilitated the downward delegation of authority from the federal hub to the regional peripheries, granting them oversight over specific sectors such as forestry, native courts, education, and local government. This deliberate devolution heralded the true dawn of Nigerian federalism. To manage jurisdictional friction, the framework stipulated that in instances where central and regional statutes conflicted, the most recently enacted law would take precedence, regardless of which legislative body drafted it.



Despite widespread initial support, the 1951 Constitution was soon engulfed by severe political turbulence. The tension reached a boiling point when Chief Anthony Enahoro, representing the Action Group (AG), introduced a provocative motion on the floor of the House of Representatives demanding that the assembly formally commit to achieving national self-government by 1956. This bold proposition fractured the legislative body, drawing intense opposition primarily from the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and Northern delegates who felt the 1956 timeline was premature. They countered with a modified motion advocating for independence only "as soon as practicable".

Nevertheless, this constitutional phase remains a monumental political milestone as it effectively catalyzed the national agenda for sovereign independence. It systematically dismantled the highly unpopular unitary governance model, which had faced fierce resistance from prominent nationalist figures like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ahmadu Bello (the Sardauna), and Obafemi Awolowo. More profoundly, the regions transcended their former status as mere administrative partitions to become legitimate political entities, each wielding executive and legislative authority over defined geographical areas. For the first time in history, both the central and regional assemblies were dominated by an elected Nigerian majority. The newly formed executive councils assumed the role of principal policy drivers, effectively displacing the archaic, autocratic dominance of the Governor and his expatriate officials with democratic representatives, even though the Governor technically retained some reserved legislative veto powers. Ultimately, this vibrant political atmosphere fostered the rapid proliferation of political parties throughout and beyond 1951, groups that exerted the relentless pressure necessary to eventually dismantle this very constitution in favor of greater autonomy. To resolve lingering administrative ambiguities, a subsequent constitutional summit was convened in London to hash out an updated framework.

Summary of the Macpherson Constitution:

- The expansion of regional political autonomy, outfitting each territory with its own House of Assembly, supplemented by Houses of Chiefs in the West and North.
- The establishment of a 136-member Central House of Representatives, predominantly composed of indigenous Nigerians.
- The debut of the ministerial system, elevating Nigerians to cabinet positions for the first time, albeit under the watchful eye of British supervisors.
- The transition of the central legislative council's nomenclature to the House of Assembly in 1951.
- The historical documentation connecting the naming conventions of Nigeria with the modern-day Port Harcourt state.

Lyttelton Constitution of 1954

Bearing the name of Oliver Lyttelton, the era's Secretary of State for the Colonies, the 1954 Constitution stands as a monument in Nigeria's legal and political maturation. Analysts widely celebrate this charter as the definitive instrument that anchored authentic federalism within the country, providing the structural blueprint that heavily influences Nigeria's contemporary governance models.



A cornerstone of the Lyttelton reform was the historic implementation of direct electoral voting in 1954, a move that drastically widened citizen participation and fortified the democratic credibility of the nation's lawmaking institutions. The charter legally restructured the territory into a tripartite federation comprising the Eastern, Western, and Northern Regions, bestowing each with profound administrative and legislative independence. This reorganization represented a resolute departure from the rigid centralization of earlier colonial regimes in favor of a robust decentralized framework.

To sustain this new structure, the constitution meticulously partitioned legislative competencies into distinct domains: the Concurrent Legislative List, the Exclusive Legislative List, and residual powers. By deliberately assigning residual authorities solely to the regional governments, the constitution successfully insulated regional autonomy and cemented the federal nature of the state. Another critical structural adjustment was the excision of Lagos from the Western Region's jurisdiction, rebranding it as the Federal Capital Territory to symbolize its vital status as the federation's administrative nucleus.

Regional legislative maturity was further accelerated by the staggered integration of Houses of Chiefs. These chambers were instituted in the North in 1946, the West in 1951, and the East in 1954, serving as a strategic mechanism to weave indigenous traditional leadership into the formal colonial statutory process. At the federal echelon, the transformations initiated in 1951 had already upgraded the Central Legislative Council into a more democratic House of Assembly. This progression continued with the 1957 re-establishment of a bicameral federal legislature, featuring an expanded House of Representatives alongside a newly minted Senate to ensure comprehensive regional equity. The phasing out of the old Central Legislative Council underscored the rapid indigenization and democratization of parliamentary bodies during the twilight of British rule.

Following independence, constitutional refining persisted, most notably with the carving out of the Mid-Western Region in 1963 to address administrative complexities and minority agitations. However, this trajectory of democratic constitutionalism was brutally severed by the military coup d'état of 1966. This forceful takeover resulted in the immediate suspension of all federal and regional legislative houses, dragging the nation into an era of martial rule where the power to make laws was heavily concentrated and executed via military decrees.

The 1960 Independence Constitution

Validated by the 1960 Order in Council, the Independence Constitution formally ushered Nigeria into an era of self-governance and sovereign autonomy. While the country's international legal standing underwent a radical transformation, the newly minted constitution preserved a bicameral legislative structure. According to Section 36 of the document, the federal parliament was legally defined as consisting of the Senate, the House of Representatives, and Her Majesty the Queen. The British Monarch's presence was executed locally by a designated Governor-General. This position was institutionalized by Section 33(1), which dictated that the Governor-General served as the Commander-in-Chief and the Crown's direct representative, holding the office entirely at the pleasure of Her Majesty.

The composition of the upper legislative chamber was strictly outlined in Section 37. The Senate was to comprise twelve delegates from each of the regions, chosen through joint sessions of the respective regional assemblies from a pool of candidates nominated by the Governor. Furthermore,



the Federal Territory of Lagos was allocated four distinct senatorial seats, while an additional four senators were handpicked by the Governor-General based on the Prime Minister's recommendations. Conversely, the lower chamber, the House of Representatives, was significantly larger, accommodating 305 directly elected lawmakers. The Senate was conceptualized primarily as an upper house designed to provide a voice for minority interests and underrepresented groups that might be drowned out in the lower chamber's majoritarian politics.

Nigeria's political identity evolved again on October 1, 1963, when the nation severed its remaining monarchical ties to become a Republic. The new 1963 Constitution discarded the Governor-General role, introducing a ceremonial President to act as Head of State, while the Prime Minister retained practical control as Head of Government. Section 34 of this republican charter legally established the presidency, conferring upon the officeholder the title of Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The electoral mechanics for this high office were detailed in Section 35(2), which mandated that the President be chosen via a secret ballot conducted during a specialized joint "election meeting" of both parliamentary chambers, with each participating member granted a single vote. Despite cutting ties with the British Crown, the structural DNA of the national legislature remained remarkably stable; there was fundamentally no structural discrepancy between the parliamentary compositions outlined in the 1960 and 1963 legal frameworks.

The Legislative Powers and Role of the Committees to the Development and Growth of Nigerian Legislature

Internationally, legislative bodies are tasked with duties that extend far beyond the mere passage of statutes. They function as vital arenas for robust public representation, rigorous policy evaluation, thorough deliberation, and strict executive oversight. To execute these multifaceted mandates with high precision, legislatures universally depend on the architecture of the committee system.

Driven by the necessity for a fluid and highly functional parliamentary environment, dedicated committees are routinely assembled to shoulder specific constitutional responsibilities. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria explicitly articulates the indispensability of these sub-groups. The document expressly authorizes both the House of Representatives and the Senate to form specialized panels consisting of their own members to tackle general or hyper-specific objectives. The constitution affirms that the National Assembly may delegate any of its exercisable powers to these committees via formal resolutions or internal regulations, ensuring that parliamentary business is meticulously regulated and managed. Ultimately, these specialized cohorts are the lifeblood of the National Assembly's day-to-day administrative success.

Because of their irreplaceable role in streamlining decision-making and shaping parliamentary outcomes, legislative committees have been heavily analyzed by political scholars. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, for instance, notes that virtually all democratic parliaments rely on these compact clusters of lawmakers—appointed either permanently or temporarily—to dissect intricate issues far more thoroughly than a full plenary session ever could. Other academics have expanded on this, describing committees in their most basic form as functional legislative working groups engineered to optimize parliamentary output.

Scholar Ojo frames a legislative committee as a micro-level mirror of its broader parent assembly. Similarly, researchers Aduba and Oguiche define them as specialized subdivisions tasked with continuous or ad-hoc services, operating to prepare draft legislation for final chamber voting or to



execute targeted investigations. Adding to this discourse, Hamalai argues that committees are strategic subdivisions intended to dramatically boost legislative efficiency and productivity. She compellingly likens these panels to the "factory production lines" of the parliament, observing that they wield immense decision-making gravity since the vast majority of critical legislative determinations are solidified at the committee level before ever reaching the main floor.

Comparative Analysis: Nigeria and Britain

The committee infrastructure within the British parliamentary framework was cultivated over centuries of gradual institutional reform and entrenched political tradition. Specifically, the implementation of Departmental Select Committees in the UK has proven highly successful in amplifying governmental transparency and enforcing executive accountability. In contrast, while Nigeria's committee systems boast solid, formalized constitutional backing, their everyday application continues to be hindered by numerous practical and systemic hurdles. As demonstrated by the historical evolution of both nations, ensuring democratic longevity relies heavily on cultivating resilient legislative bodies equipped with sophisticated committee structures. These micro-assemblies are fundamental to modern governance, as they allow for exhaustive policy scrutiny, cultivate transparency, and enforce accountability across the constitutional spectrum.

Challenges Facing the Legislature

The contemporary Nigerian legislative branch grapples with a myriad of operational impediments that stifle its effectiveness. Prominent among these obstacles is pervasive interference from the executive branch, which frequently attempts to strong-arm parliamentary proceedings. Lawmakers also suffer from chronic financial underfunding, severe deficits in technical and research support, and the corrosive impacts of corruption. Furthermore, overbearing political party influence often supersedes independent legislative judgment, while the persistent failure of the government to properly implement the rigorous recommendations generated by legislative committees drastically undermines the institution's investigative authority.

Recommendations

To overcome these institutional bottlenecks and optimize performance, it is imperative to aggressively fortify the autonomy of the legislature against external pressures. The National Assembly must be outfitted with superior technical resources and highly advanced research capacities to facilitate evidence-based lawmaking. Additionally, cultivating a culture of absolute transparency within the chambers is non-negotiable. Finally, the government must institute binding mechanisms to ensure that the findings and investigative reports produced by legislative committees are promptly and effectively executed by the relevant state agencies.

Conclusion

The historical maturation of Nigeria's legislative branch represents a profoundly intricate journey of constitutional adaptation, spanning from indigenous pre-colonial administrative setups through rigorous colonial experiments, and finally into the post-colonial era. From the initial moments of territorial annexation and indirect British rule up to the pivotal realization of sovereignty in 1960, the Nigerian parliament metamorphosed from a heavily constrained, advisory clique into a robustly structured entity empowered by constitutional law. Every sequential legal charter—commencing with the 1922 Clifford Constitution and advancing through the Richards (1946), Macpherson



(1951), and Lyttelton (1954) blueprints—methodically widened the scope of local indigenous participation, meticulously laying the bedrock for Nigeria's contemporary legislative architecture.

As the absolute cornerstone of a democratic republic, legislative authority is legally entrusted to the National Assembly at the federal echelon and to the State Houses of Assembly at the regional levels. These bodies are granted the constitutional mandate to legislate for the harmony, orderliness, and optimal administration of the Nigerian state. This strict allocation of duties brilliantly highlights the doctrine of separation of powers, a principle vital to the nation's democratic health that ensures the drafting of laws remains completely insulated from executive enforcement and judicial review. To handle this immense responsibility, the legislature has cultivated potent internal engines—chiefly the committee system—designed to radically elevate its oversight, accountability, and operational speed. These specialized enclaves are indispensable for conducting forensic bill analyses, executing investigative public hearings, scrutinizing national budgets, and policing executive parastatals, all of which heavily reinforce democratic transparency.

Furthermore, Nigeria's strategic embrace of the presidential governance model, supported by a dual-chamber federal legislature (comprising the House of Representatives and the Senate), showcases an institutional layout deliberately crafted to foster rigorous deliberative processes, equitable representation, and unyielding checks and balances. Yet, despite these impressive constitutional leaps, the actual potency of the parliament remains heavily reliant on unwavering political commitment, systemic institutional strength, and a strict adherence to the rule of law. Lingering democratic friction points—such as rigid partisan dictates, instances of compromised parliamentary independence, and recurring executive bullying—continue to threaten the assembly's optimal functionality. Therefore, the path to enduring democratic stability and exceptional national governance in Nigeria intrinsically requires the continuous professionalization of the legislature, the empowerment of its committee systems, and the fierce protection of its institutional sovereignty.

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