



## Research Article

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## The Legislature in The Nerves of Governance and Development: The Nigerian National Assembly in Perspective

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**Abstract:** In modern democracies, government is typically structured around the tripod of the legislative, executive, and judicial arms. However, there exists a common misconception that, among these three arms, only the executive significantly contributes to a nation's socio-economic development. This misconception is particularly prevalent in Nigeria, where awareness of the substantial contributions made by the legislative arm is lacking. This study reveals that the National Assembly of Nigeria, endowed with numerous powers and functions as stipulated by the constitution, plays a crucial role in the nerves of the socio-economic development of the nation. These powers encompass law-making, representation, oversight, and constituency services. An evaluation of the National Assembly's roles, specifically its constitutionally assigned roles, indicates substantial contributions to the nation's socio-economic development. The findings underscore the National Assembly's impactful initiatives, such as combating corruption through the establishment of commissions like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). Additionally, efforts in rehabilitating regions affected by militant groups and terrorists, achieved through commissions like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Northeast Development Commission (NEDC), are evidence of its developmental strides. The National Assembly's legislative acts have also brought positive changes to the educational sector and electoral system. The study acknowledges the National Assembly's commendable role in addressing and managing diversities, as well as its active involvement in various forms of constituency services. However, it identifies certain impediments that hinder optimal performance, including executive dominance, disconnection from society, inadequate laws supporting institutional functions, lack of political will, and insufficient training for legislators and supporting staff. Recognizing these challenges as surmountable, the study proposes an agenda for reforming its institutional responsibilities. Recommendations include strengthening relevant laws to fortify the institution, encouraging legislators to develop the political will necessary for effective oversight, implementing comprehensive training and re-training programs for both legislators and support staff, and minimizing legislators' turnover to capitalize on accumulated experiences. The study concludes with the belief that addressing these constraints will pave the way for enhanced performances by the National Assembly, ultimately contributing to the overall betterment of the country.

**Keywords:** National Assembly, Socio-economic development, Nigeria, constraints, Agenda, Reform.

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## INTRODUCTION

Most government is typically structured around the tripod of the legislative, executive, and judicial arms. Each of these arms significantly contributes to the socio-economic development of a nation. However, there exists a common misconception, particularly in Nigeria, where some wrongly believe that the major work of socio-economic development is solely undertaken by the executive arm of government. This misconception may stem from the prolonged military rule in Nigeria during which only the executive and judicial arms were operative, or perhaps due to sheer ignorance. What remains unknown to many is that the legislature constitutes a nerve of the institutional framework upon which democratic dynamics hinge. The legislature plays a critical role in the constitutional framework that facilitates the effectiveness of any nation aspiring to stability and democratic functionality. In a democracy, the legislature stands as the unique institution that distinguishes it from other forms of government. Like the executive and judicial arms in a democratic government, the legislature is established based on the general

principles of the separation of powers and checks and balances, which serve as safeguards against the abuse of power that could lead to tyranny, denial of liberty, and violation of human rights by those wielding absolute power if left unchecked.

In the Nigerian context, the legislature holds a prominent position among the institutions outlined in the constitution. Against this backdrop, our focus is on examining the powers and functions of the National Assembly as a legislative arm of government and their implications for socio-economic development in Nigeria. Since 1999, the powers and roles assigned to the National Assembly by the constitution have provided insight into its importance in the country's socio-economic development. This clarification aims to dispel the misconception that only the executive possesses the authority to contribute to the country's socio-economic development. In a constitutional democracy like Nigeria, legislative roles are imperative for the socio-economic development of a nation. Hence, this work concentrates on exploring the powers of the legislature, specifically the Nigerian National Assembly, and the socio-economic

development of Nigeria. Considering the foregoing, our primary objective is to address questions such as: How crucial is the National Assembly to the stability and national development of Nigeria? What is the significance of the National Assembly's roles and functions to the socio-economic development of Nigeria? Is the institution operating by the Constitution? Or are there constraints militating against its performance? These questions, among others, will be answered in the course of the work, aiming to emphasize the critical and substantial roles played by the legislative arm of government in the socio-economic development of the country under a constitutional and democratic government.

In this discussion, we will explore two prominent concepts integral to the topic:

- Socio-Economic Development
- Legislature

**Socio-Economic Development:** Development is perceived as the gradual process of becoming bigger, better, stronger, or more advanced. It involves increasing business, trade, and industrial activity. Socio-economic development specifically aims to enhance the well-being of individuals socially, economically, and politically.

According to Okobiah (1989), development is a process of economic, political, and social change progressing towards the social well-being of society members.

Nwana (1998) defines development as the utilization of the available resources by people to achieve their primary objectives without creating unfamiliar problems.

Ajayi (1985) suggests that development encompasses activities focused on improving an individual or nation's potential, attitude, material advancement, and scientific progress.

Boating (1990) emphasizes development as a series of processes aimed at improving the living conditions of human beings directly and indirectly.

While considering development in a developing nation, Adiri's (1980) adds that in a developing nation, development should address efficiency in public affairs management, provision for felt needs, improved living conditions for all, defense and protection of individual and national interests, enhancement of happiness, and the ability to benefit from experience for future planning.

From these conceptualizations, it is evident that development signifies progress achieved by individuals, societies, states, or nations through concerted efforts by various entities.

### Legislature

The legislature holds a pivotal role in a democracy, functioning in terms of law-making,

representation, oversight, and constituency-related responsibilities. Its significance lies in ensuring the health of democracy through the effective delivery of these functions. Legislatures in modern states may sometimes not perform identical functions. However, they pass laws, determine the ways of raising and spending public revenue, and discuss matters of public importance.

As Mohammed Salih (2005: 20) asserts, legislatures are at the nerves of governance and the national integrity system, entrusted with the task of fulfilling democratic functions in the interest of all citizens. Norman Orstein (1992) underscores the democratic importance of the legislature, emphasizing that a workable democracy requires a vibrant and meaningful legislative process.

The legislatures, according to Philip Norton (2007: 8), serve as constitutionally designed institutions providing assent to binding measures of public policy on behalf of a political community. Similarly, Barkan (2010) notes that legislatures are the Institutional mechanisms through which representative government becomes real on a day-to-day basis acting as the eyes, ears, and voice of the people. The proper office of a representative Assembly is to watch and control the governments, to throw the light of publicity on its acts, to compel a full exposition and justification of all of them which anyone considers questionable, and to ensure them if found condemnable. In addition to this, the parliament has an office to be at once the nation's committee of grievances, and its congresses of opinions.

The functions of the legislature extend beyond representation and oversight to include law-making and constituency services. Ayoade (2014) identifies the original functions of parliament as raising taxes, representation, and a judicial role. Over time, legislation and control of the executive branch have become additional functions. In conclusion, the legislature, as an institution plays a crucial role in a democracy, wielding powers and performing functions that contribute to progress and happiness (development) for individuals, groups, society, and the state.

### The National Assembly and Implications for Socio-Economic Development in Perspective

The 1999 Constitution which ushered in the presidential system of government effective May 29, 1999, vested the legislative powers of the nation in a bicameral National Assembly comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives. These powers, explicitly outlined, are granted to the legislature as a constitutional right, allowing it to carry out its functions unhindered. Additionally, the Constitution defines both the extent and constraints of these powers.

In Chapter One, Part II, Section 4 of the 1999 constitution, it is stated as follows:

- The legislative powers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be vested in a National Assembly for the federation which consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives.
- The National Assembly shall have the power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the federation or any part thereof to any matter included in the Exclusive legislative list set out in Part 1 of the second schedule to this constitution.
- The power of the National Assembly to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the federation to any matter included in the Exclusive Legislative list shall save as otherwise provided in this constitution, be to the exclusion of the Houses of Assembly of States.

In addition, and without prejudice to the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of this section, the National Assembly shall have the power to make laws concerning the following matters, that is to say:

- Any matter in the concurrent legislative list set out in the first column of part II of the second schedule to this constitution to the extent prescribed in the second column opposite thereto;
- Any other matter with respect to which it is empowered to make laws in accordance with the provision of this constitution.

From the above, it is deduced that the power to enact laws for the unity, orderliness, and progress of the country is vested in the National Assembly. The implication of this is that laws aimed at the development and progress of the entire country are either being made or to be made by the National Assembly. Take, for instance, the appropriation laws. The control of public funds rests in the hands of the elected Representatives of the people as expressly stated in Section 80, subsections (3) and (4) which read as follows:

**Section 80 (3):** No money shall be withdrawn from any public fund of the federation, other than the consolidated Revenue fund of the federation unless the disbursement of those money has been authorized by an Act of the National Assembly. This may be authorized through appropriation laws or supplementary (Budget) appropriation laws. From this, it is evident that the National Assembly legislates to ensure transparency, accountability, orderliness, peace, and good governance.

Additionally, the constitution addresses the establishment and composition of the Armed forces of the federation. Section 217 (2) specifically empowers the National Assembly to enact laws to equip and maintain the Armed Forces adequately and effectively for the purpose of:

- Defending Nigeria from external aggression

- Maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders on land, sea, or air.
- Suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon by the President, subject to conditions prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.
- There are other powers of the National Assembly as contained in the constitutions. These include among others:
  - Removal of the President from Office as contained in Section 143 of the constitution.
  - Confirmation of Appointment: Sections 147 (2) and 171 (4)
  - Confirmation of Appointment of Judicial Officers: Section 231, subsections (1) and (2) deal with the appointments of the Chief Justice of Nigeria and Justice of the Supreme Court, which are subject to confirmation by the Senate.
  - Confirmation of Appointment and Removal of Auditor-General: Section 86,
  - Resignation of the President and Vice President: Section 306 (3)
  - Appointment and removal of Chairmen and Members of some statutory commissions and Bodies: Section 154 (1)
  - Deployment of Armed Forces: section 5(4)(a) and (b).

#### **The Implied Powers of the National Assembly**

This set of powers stems from those granted to the National Assembly by the Constitution. They are not standalone powers but serve as auxiliaries to assist in carrying out express powers outlined in the Constitution. For instance, section 89 (1) (a) empowers the Senate or the House of Representatives to procure evidence, allowing for the examination of individuals as witnesses and, implicitly, the power to order the arrest and incarceration of those hindering evidence procurement.

Another example is the creation of new ministries or any governmental agencies, requiring legislative approval. This process aligns with the constitutional power granted to the legislature to appropriate funds for institutions they establish. The legislature cannot provide for what it has not created, thus acting as a check on the executive's authority.

#### **The Assumed Powers of the National Assembly**

Assumed powers are rights claimed by the legislature that, while not explicitly defined as rights, are constitutional. In the Second Republic, the 1979 constitution was silent on determining legislators' emoluments, leading the National Assembly to decide remunerations for certain political functionaries. Section 70 of the 1999 constitution has since resolved this, stating that members of the Senate or the House of Representatives shall receive salaries and allowances determined by the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission.

With the vast powers bestowed upon the National Assembly, it undeniably remains the pillar of the country's national development.

#### **Representation:**

Representation is a fundamental responsibility of the National Assembly, with lawmakers representing various constituencies. This key function manages the nation's diversities, serving as a vital link connecting citizens to the government. The composition of the Senate, based on the equality of all states, and the House of Representatives, based on population, reflects diverse societal interests.

#### **Oversight:**

Oversight is crucial for ensuring accountability and democracy. The National Assembly, through various committees, monitors projects, investigates compliance with laws and resolutions, and assesses budget implementation. This oversight prevents project abandonment, ensures fiscal responsibility, and maintains a check on the executive's spending without legislative approval.

#### **Investigative Powers:**

The National Assembly's investigative powers, as outlined in Section 88(2b), aim to expose corruption, inefficiency, or waste in the execution of laws and fund distribution. This bolsters the national integrity system by combating corruption and strengthening existing institutions.

#### **Constituency Services:**

Constituency services involve legislators addressing individual needs and supporting development projects in their constituencies. Lawmakers visit their districts, help, and contribute to public goods such as infrastructure, schools, and health clinics. Additionally, legislators attract development projects to their constituencies through budgetary allocations, enhancing federal presence at the grassroots level.

#### **The National Assembly and Nigeria's Socio-Economic Development: An Assessment**

Having examined the powers and functions of the National Assembly in relation to the socio-economic development of Nigeria, it is imperative, at this juncture to assess its performances with a special focus on few cases.

Before the emergence of Democracy in 1999, one of the major societal problems faced by the country was corruption. The menace became so endemic in our polity that it had the potential to destroy every valuable aspect of our system. Public officers and officials, both military and civilian, were engaged in the indiscriminate looting of public treasuries. No one was exempt from these practices.

Upon assuming office as the democratically elected President, Olusegun Obasanjo declared his commitment to putting an end to the rampant looting of public treasuries. The National Assembly responded by enacting laws to establish commissions with the authority to recover illegal or dubiously acquired wealth and funds.

Two significant commissions emerged from this legislative action:

- The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC)
- Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).

These commissions were tasked with combating corruption, particularly within public offices. They were granted the power to recover looted public properties and funds and to prosecute offenders.

Consequently, these commissions have played a crucial role in recovering illegally acquired public assets, acting as a deterrent to corrupt officials in both public and civil service. Although instances of compromise by commission officials have been observed, overall, they have contributed significantly to sanitizing our society.

Another notable case is the establishment of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). With the advent of civil rule in 1999, the government sought to address the issue of out-of-school pupils and the abuse faced by some of these children. The National Assembly responded by enacting a law to establish UBEC, making basic education compulsory for all pupils. The introduction of a home-grown school feeding program aimed to incentivize pupils to return to school, with primary education being made free under the program. Each state was mandated to domesticate the law for easier implementation, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of out-of-school students.

Another area that requires attention is the area of pensions and gratuities. In 2004, the National Assembly enacted legislation that paved the way for the establishment of the pension commission (PENCOM). The objective of this law is to streamline the process of collecting retirement benefits for our retired public and civil servants. Before this, many civil servants upon retirement, experienced agony in receiving their retirement benefits. With the establishment of the commission, civil servants and their employers are required to initiate deductions, which are then deposited into the Commission Trust Fund for retirement benefits. If professionally managed, the issue of non-payment of pensions and gratuities would have become a thing of the past. The program is commendable, and when practiced following the laid-down rules, concerned staff will not undergo stress and agony in collecting their benefits after retirement. The trust fund utilizes the contributed funds for investments, with proceeds from these investments

augmenting the contributions. While the program is praiseworthy, there is still much that the legislature needs to address for the proper implementation of the policy. It has been observed that some employers, including executives, are culpable of abusing the program.

The creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) is another area of focus. Before the advent of democracy in 1999, the Niger Delta Region faced numerous crises due to perceived injustices regarding resource exploitation and environmental degradation.

The federal government's exploration of crude oil in the region negatively affected natural resources, leading to land degradation and water pollution. In response, the National Assembly established the NDDC to address the region's grievances and promote its development. This legislative initiative aimed to provide justifiable compensation to the people of the Niger Delta for the environmental damage caused by petroleum-related activities.

The NDDC Act incorporated provisions for the rehabilitation of the region damaged through petroleum activities. Additionally, a certain percentage was allocated to the monthly allocations of states in the affected area. The law also mandated companies in the region to pay specified amounts as compensation to communities affected by their activities.

This stands out as a significant achievement by the National Assembly through its legislative functions. The establishment of the commission led to the initiation of numerous development projects, particularly in infrastructural facilities, giving the region a major facelift and restoring peace and normalcy. Consequently, there was an increase in government revenue generated from the area.

In a related context, the Northeastern Development Commission (NEDC) was established in response to terrorist activities affecting the northern part of the country. The National Assembly organized the need for the rehabilitation of the region and enacted an Act for the establishment of the NEDC, with the sole objective of rehabilitating the zone severely impacted by terrorist activities. The destructive actions of terrorists included major settlements, infrastructural facilities, schools, worship places, farmsteads, and lands. Internally displaced persons camps were established to accommodate those affected. The National Assembly, as the representative of the people, responded by establishing a commission to oversee the rehabilitation of the zone.

These efforts underscore the National Assembly's commitment to alleviating the hardships faced by the people during critical times, providing relief to their pains.

Furthermore, the National Assembly has played a crucial role in connecting constituents to the government and fostering their participation in governmental activities. The upper chamber, the Senate, is based on the equality of all states, while the lower chamber, the House of Representatives, is structured according to population. The National Assembly actively positions itself as a representative organ of society enabling legislators to engage in constituency outreach services and contribute directly or indirectly to the well-being of their constituents.

Lastly, the National Assembly has significantly contributed to achieving credible, transparent, free, and fair elections. In response to concerns about electoral manipulations, the National Assembly has continuously worked on amending the Electoral Act. The Electoral Act 2022 (as amended) includes provisions directing political parties to ensure internal democracy in selecting candidates, discouraging party leaders from imposing candidates. Other provisions include the introduction of BVAS accreditation machines and electronic transmission of election results, aiming to enhance the credibility of future elections and eliminate issues like ballot snatching.

In summary, while the National Assembly has made notable contributions to Nigeria's socio-economic development, some areas require improvement for enhanced future performance.

### **The National Assembly and Constraints to Socio-Political Development**

From the powers and functions of the National Assembly, it is evident that the institution is made to be a driver of socio-economic development. In addition, its implied powers and renewed financial autonomy, one might expect even greater accomplishment. Unfortunately, there still exist some constraints and difficulties impeding its optimal performance.

#### *These constraints include:*

**Lack of political will and Institutional consciousness:** In the Nigeria legislature/National Assembly, members prioritize party loyalties over the institution itself. Institutional consciousness is often weak or nonexistent, and members may lack a vision for the power and development of the legislature. Without key members actively concerned about legislative power and the institution, improvement is unlikely.

**Poor Perception and Relations with Civil Society:** There is a poor understanding of the workings of the National Assembly among individuals and groups in civil society. Limited interaction between legislators and constituents, coupled with institutional weaknesses, makes it challenging for legislators to address citizen needs, even when understood. A legislature unresponsive to the electorate risks lacking public support.

Additionally, the National Assembly poorly represents women and other marginalized groups.

**Lack of Formal Law-Making and Oversight Authority:** The National Assembly lacks the constitutional or legal authority for significant law-making or oversight roles. The absence of legally codified powers is highlighted by statements such as the one made by Ribadu, the former EFCC Chairman, in 2007. While the Assembly may have the power to investigate, questions arise regarding its authority to prosecute. The human and material capacity required to utilize legislative powers effectively is often lacking.

**Inadequate Preparation for Law-Making Assignment:** Legislators are often ill-prepared for the complexities of law-making. Some lack the necessary knowledge or experience in fields such as education, agriculture, public administration, medicine, engineering, etc. The National Assembly falls short of providing sufficient training opportunities for both new and returning members, hindering their effectiveness.

**Lack of Adequately Trained Staff:** The growing demands on legislatures necessitate professional staff, which is lacking in many developing nations, including the National Assembly. Inadequately trained and insufficient staff further hinder the institution's efficiency.

Considering these identified constraints, the National Assembly faces numerous challenges in fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities. Executive dominance over the National Assembly is evident, with issues such as listlessness, insensitivity, and personal aggrandizement permeating the institution. To address these challenges and unlock the full potential of the National Assembly, remedies must be sought. This involves addressing issues such as legislative inexperience, leadership changes, financial recklessness, administrative protectiveness, and internal procedural complexities. With concerted efforts to address these constraints, there is hope for the National Assembly to play a more impactful role in Nigeria's governance.

### **Options for Retooling the National Assembly**

It is encouraging that the National Assembly recognizes its inadequacies and constraints. For instance, the House of Representatives of the 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic in its "votes and proceedings" of the first session explicitly expresses its commitment to legislative reform by framing a National Legislative Agenda.

The seventh session of the House of Representatives (2011 - 2015) is committed to honouring the faith and trust reposed in it by the Nigerian people, and we are determined to chart a new course of legislative business for the benefit of our people. In this regard, we are outlining a National Legislative Agenda for the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the House of Representatives, as is

contained in this document. It is an agenda that seeks to reform our processes in the House, identify our legislative priorities, and outline a programme of action to achieve the goals that we have for ourselves.

This legislative agenda arose from the awareness that the National Assembly had fallen short of its mandate in the eyes of Nigerians. In creating a new image of the National Assembly that is pro-people and dedicated to "good governance, due process and rule of law", the House of Representatives formulated seven general principles to underpin the legislative agenda (Tunji Olaopa, 2018):

Restructure the management and functions of legislative committees toward adequacy in capacity and improved productivity.

Initiate a new order fostering transparency leading to institutional integrity through efficient public expenditure management.

Design and implement the e-parliament blueprint, elevating the National Assembly to international best practices and ensuring public access to parliamentary information and processes.

Review the legislative branch budget in line with the requirements of openness, effectiveness, and accountability.

Review the constitution in all relevant areas to facilitate the implementation of the House of Representatives legislative agenda and align with the aspirations of Nigerians.

Engage actively with other arms of government to restore public order and national security, institutionalise mechanisms facilitating more effective engagement with various stakeholders, including constituents and civil society organisations (CSOs).

From the above, critical issues for the legislative agenda can be succinctly outlined as follows:

Reviewing the internal processes of the House, focusing on institutional reform (Olaopa, 2018). This will bring about effectiveness, efficiency, and continuity in sustaining reform dynamics from one legislative session to the other. Resolving structural and procedural deficiencies in legislative processes will enhance the performance of the House, enabling it to manage itself and carry out representation, lawmaking, and oversight functions. This effectiveness will be achieved with adequate space and equipment, as well as an effective organizational structure, process, and rules.

For the successful implementation of the highlighted agenda above, the National Assembly requires legally codified powers. Amendments to

specific sections of the constitution are necessary to eliminate unnecessary legal constraints hindering the performance of their duties.

It is imperative to discard any unnecessary (political) party sentiments. Members must view themselves as a unified body dedicated to working for the nation's glory rather than any political party's interests. Liberating themselves from executive dominance is crucial.

The National Assembly needs a group of committed members who can form a reformers' bloc, irrespective of political sentiments or affiliations.

Transparency and accountability in all financial matters are paramount for the National Assembly. This integrity will enable effective oversight of government ministries or agencies and prevent abuse of financial transactions.

The Assembly must possess the determination to influence the budgetary allocation and impact executive policies positively. Mobilizing human, financial, and political resources is essential for carrying out activities vigorously.

The introduction of an e-legislature creates a democratic and transparent interface between the legislature and the Nigerian public. Establishing a functional and interactive website is crucial for facilitating public engagement on financial and budgetary matters, not only concerning the executive but also the legislature. The immediate establishment of a robust and efficient ICT unit in the National Assembly, capable of mediating the legislature's interface with the Nigerian public, will significantly enhance its duties in lawmaking and oversight, fostering people's participation in their work.

It is essential to recognize that the composition of the legislature, including the nature of electoral politics that brought it into office, determines its autonomy.

Where internal party democracy is ensured, and electoral institutions enjoy administrative and financial independence, the Executive's ability to influence the electoral process and outcomes, and consequently candidates' chances, is limited. This, in turn, empowers legislatures to act independently of the Executive with greater courage.

In the amended Electoral Act of 2022, the National Assembly made efforts to ensure that all political parties observe internal democracy when selecting their candidates, including those for the National Assembly. The Act further empowers the INEC to derecognize nominees or candidates from political parties whose nominations fail to follow due process.

However, recent experiences have revealed that executives and party leaders continue to circumvent the process outlined in the Electoral Act. The Executive and party leadership were still visibly involved in supporting preferred candidates, creating an uneven playing field for all aspirants.

The educational and professional competencies of both the legislators and support staff play a crucial role in shaping and reshaping the capacity of the legislature. Periodic training on legislative procedures and technicalities is necessary, and the high turnover rate in the National Assembly must be drastically reduced to preserve accumulated experiences.

Legislators need the political will to confront the challenges of their jobs. They require the political determination and willingness to fulfill their constitutional duties. To ensure the proper implementation of laws by the executives, they must have the political will to achieve such goals. Regardless of their or experience, and irrespective of the nature of political or executive leadership, whether friendly or hostile, without the political will to face challenges and the determination to fulfill their duties as provided for in the constitution, their efforts may yield little or be fraught with myriad challenges. Political will is essential to translate the law in theory into practice without fear or favour.

## CONCLUSION

The study delves into the powers and functions of the National Assembly, encompassing representation, oversight, law-making, and constituency services. Additionally, we examine the crucial role of the National Assembly as a legislative arm of government in Nigeria's socio-economic development. The National Assembly has made significant contributions to the nation's development, particularly in combating corruption, rehabilitating the Niger Delta region, addressing conflict zones in the Northeastern part of the country, and ensuring credible and transparent elections through amendments to the Electoral Act.

While acknowledging its positive impact, it is evident that the National Assembly could achieve more, given its constitutional powers, if not for certain operational challenges. However, there is optimism as these challenges are surmountable through the adoption of the reform agenda proposed in this study. Implementing the suggested solutions and recommendations could pave the way for the National Assembly to contribute more effectively to the socio-economic development of the country.

In moving forward, the legislative must maximize its powers to hold the executive accountable and ensure the implementation of laws, including appropriation laws, for national development. The legislative body must demonstrate the will and

determination to combat corruption and other executive excesses. Simultaneously, the legislature must address internal issues, emphasizing integrity, as those who seek equity must come with clean hands. By doing so, the National Assembly can uphold its course with credibility and contribute meaningfully to the country's progress.

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