

conclusions from the similarities and disparities found. This could well be the next step in the research on democratic innovations.

Although it does have several shortcomings, Smith's work should be complimented not only because of the pioneer attempt to offer a systematic framework and comparison of the existing forms of democratic innovations but also because it enriches the reader with practical and theoretical issues at stake and broadens readers understanding of the topic that will certainly receive more attention in the future.

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Mojeed Olujinmi A. Alabi and Wahab Olasupo Egbewole (eds.) *Perspectives on the Legislature in the Government of Nigeria* (Kingdom of Morocco: African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development, 2010).

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The legislature remains an important institution of democracy worldwide. It is the home of the elected representatives of the people and often largely responsible for law making, budgeting as well as overseeing the powers of the executive. In Africa, as elsewhere in the Third World, parliaments have had a checkered history. The executive arm of the government, more often than not, has monopolized political space, normally through excessive ruling party discipline, thereby undermining the powers of legislatures. Yet some countries in the region have experienced a history of military coups with the consequence of halting democratic practices and the functions of legislatures. Nigeria is one country in which military coups became the order of the day. With the restoration of democratic governance in Nigeria, the newly instituted legislature is a clear symbol that distinguishes democratic governance from the authoritarian past. *Perspective on the Legislature in the Government of Nigeria* is a much needed study to understand how this institution functions in a nascent democratic nation like Nigeria.

The authors of this volume contend that the Nigerian legislature is under-studied. Most scholarly works concentrate on other organs and institutions of the Nigerian

government. This lack of interest is attributed to two major factors, namely, the absence of taught courses on legislative studies as a distinct field of scholarship in many universities as well as the experience of continuous military rule in the country, particularly during the First and Second Republics. As a general rule, military regimes are inimical to democracy, its institutions as well as its teachings. The authors argue that these circumstances made the study of legislature as an institution of governance naturally suffer scholarly obscurity. The main purpose of *Perspective on the Legislature in the Government of Nigeria* is therefore to fill this gap in the literature.

With ten chapters organized into two parts and an introduction, the book focuses on understanding the origin and development, powers and functions, processes and traditions as well as problems and challenges of the legislature in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the authors of this volume admit that the book is not exhaustive on the subject matter it addresses. One of the key areas which is beyond the scope of this book, yet which remains important, is the legislative business in relation to Nigerian constitutional law and politics. Similarly, the conclusions drawn by contributors remain tentative owing to the relatively short period (1999-2009) that the legislature has existed and operated.

The book situates legislature in a solid and broad context worldwide. It draws from principles and practices in the Western world, particularly the British and the American traditions. It also includes other trends in legislatures beyond these two states. Thereafter, the volume deals with thematic areas of the legislature in Nigeria. These include its powers, judicial review, impeachment procedures, anti-corruption, intra-governmental relations, and public crime investigation. The contributors do an excellent job in communicating their subjects. They present convincing discussions which are backed by laws and decided cases making the analysis rigorous and solid. Most of the times authors of this volume were able to supply rich information and examples to delineate the theoretical and practical aspects of the legislature in Nigeria.

The core message which runs through almost all of the chapters of this volume is simply separation of powers, and checks and balances among the institutions of the government. The authors find that sometimes the powers of one institution tend to conflict with others, thereby jeopardizing the principle of separation of powers. They further posit that the cause of democracy, political stability and the rule of law is better served by accommodation rather than by competition between and among the institutions of the government. Comparatively, however, the volume argues that the legislature plays a unique role on democratic governance in Nigeria. Yet in executing its functions, the legislature faces some challenges and limitations. These may include, but are not limited to, the constitutional deficiencies, lack of integrity by legislators, undue executive interferences, weak institutional capacity of the

legislature, corruption, and the nature of the Nigerian state itself. It must be understood that these challenges are not unique to Nigeria but are a common phenomenon in almost all legislatures in the Third World.

Nonetheless, the volume contains three methodological faults. To be sure, the book claims to employ a multi-perspective approach from scholars of different and varying backgrounds on diverse aspects of the legislature in Nigeria (p.3). Contrary to this expectation, I find the volume relying much on a legal perspective. As one can see, the entire volume is full of statutes and case law making it difficult to comprehend by a non-lawyer. Yet, the diversity of scholars who contribute to this volume is not seen, the majority of them have a strong background in jurisprudence while few of them are political scientists (p. vi-viii). A further weakness is that throughout the volume the concept "democracy" is used several times without definition. Since the subject matter of this book is essentially premised on democracy, it was imperative that the concept is made clear to the reader. I have to highlight that since its birth in the Greek city-state of Athens, the concept has posed confusion. Simply put, democracy means different things to different people. A clear definition would allow one to appreciate the extent to which Nigeria, through its legislature, promotes democracy.

The last problem is related to the theoretical framework for analysis. As explained, the standards and practices from the United Kingdom and the American tradition set the stage for discussion. The authors do not spell out clearly which mode of practice guides the book. By stating that the trends elsewhere enable the readers to better appreciate the dynamics and challenges of legislative business in Nigeria, as are highlighted in different chapters of the book, in the light of experiences and observable trends in other jurisdictions, the book faces the risk of using different trends of standards for different chapters (p. 15). This poses methodological difficulties to ascertain the extent to which the Nigerian legislature fares. Yet, it distorts the theoretical flow of the book.

I should pose here and state that the *Perspective on the Legislature in the Government of Nigeria* is a welcome piece of scholarship. Indeed it addresses contemporary practices and challenges of a legislature in a state of the Third World. It does well in carrying out its objective of fulfilling the literature lacuna on the legislature in Nigeria. The themes of the volume are well selected and arranged to reflect its title. Despite the pointed shortcomings, I find the volume useful to students of politics and law, practitioners, democratic activists, and politicians.