



Executive - Legislature Relations in the Budgeting Process: A Study of President Obasanjo Years, 1999 – 2007

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Abstract: The executive and the legislative arms, working in harmony, are vital for the attainment of democratic and good governance and the much vaunted dividends of democracy. In this context, it is also axiomatic that a non-cooperative relation between the two has ominous implications for democratic growth. In the area of budgeting and in line with the principles of separation of powers that characterized most presidential systems, the 1999 Nigerian constitution has vested the executive and the legislature with different powers over national budgets. However, trends have shown that budgeting issues have been a major source of antagonism between the two arms, especially, under the reigns of President Obasanjo. It is in this light that this paper examines the fundamental basis of disagreement between the executive and legislature at the national level in Nigeria over budgetary matters. It may be reasoned, for now, that at the heart of this conflict lies a wrong appreciation of institutional roles and responsibilities between the two arms.

Keywords: *Democracy, Presidential System, Budget, Oversight*

Introduction

Nigeria is an emerging democratic system. This is coming up after a long and tortuous walk through the ages: from anti-colonial struggles prior to independence in 1960 and in later years, through the woods of military autocracy, by political and governmental instability, various forms of conflicts, threat to national cohesion, and a declining economic fortune. This has been well documented in literature (see, Dudley, 1973; Tamuno 1970; Osaghae, 1998, Akinwumi 2004). Democracy, which is a system that

is, principally, anchored on the informed and active participation of the citizens, promotion of rule of law and fundamental human rights of the citizens, generally lends a sense of appeal to virtually all countries of the world. Thus, it has acquired a universal respectability as the superior way of organising the government of a country (Ogunsanwo, 2003) much as it continues to gain appropriation by different ideological leanings. Olowu et al (1995) observed that developments within the international system have generated

a situation in which the democratic ferment cannot but be inevitable. Consequently, through decisive changes in democratic directions in Spain and other Mediterranean countries (Western Europe) in the mid 1970s; in Latin America in the 1980s and; in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991 (see, Hademins 1997; Isaac 1989), the new democratization wave equally found its way into Africa especially sub-Saharan Africa from the early 1990s. Although international pressure for democratisation was a major factor in the institutionalisation of democratic government in Nigeria, the resilience of Nigerians themselves cannot be denied. Thus in spite of what seems to be an 'endless transition' to democratic rule (Diamond et al., 1997) beginning from the 1990s coupled with the harsh terrain of military dictatorship through the period, Nigeria emerged as a democratic country in 1999 following the conduct of a general election in April and eventual swearing-in of a civilian President in May.

It is important to stress that for democracy to thrive in Nigeria, as elsewhere, it requires a set of meditating institutions through which differences are harmonised for effective realisation of the goals of democracy. These include formal institutions of the state such as the legislature, executive and judiciary as well as semi public institutions like political parties, interest /

pressure groups, trade unions and other arms of the civil society. The centrality of these institutions to sustaining democratic practice and values lies in their proximate role in the input and out processes of public policy making and implementation. It equally needs to be stated that while both public and semi public institutions are critical agents in the democratic process, the legislature and the executive working in consonance tend to be more vital in making meaning out of any democratic practice. Traditionally, the legislature makes laws, including appropriation laws while the executive, through its several agencies, translate such laws into concrete actions and programmes. This mutuality of responsibility is usually fostered by a feeling of mutual indispensability in policy making and implementation by both arms of government, proper understanding of institutional roles and a host of other factors that help eschew discordant tunes among them. The absence of these fostering agents, it should be noted, usually, under-lies executive-legislature conflict conceived in the traditional sense of disaggregate interest among the arms. There is no doubt that budgeting issue was a volatile one between the legislative and the executive arms at the federal level in Nigeria between 1999 and 2007. On the one hand, this may be understandable given the centrality of budgeting to public policy making and implementation and the overall

efficiency and effectiveness of the government (see Eminue, 2006). On the other hand, however, the tendency for budgeting issues to easily assume the dimension of a scourge leaves much to be desired. This has been the case with virtually all appropriation bills in the country between 1999 and 2007, forcing the president at times to withhold his assent to the bills. The usual consequences are delays in passing appropriation bills, horse trading/media war between the two arms and above all, slow pace of governmental activities. It is against this background that this paper examines relationship between the executive and the legislature at the federal level in Nigeria under President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Budget and Budgeting Process in Nigeria

The budgeting process is one that largely involves governmental actors in its formulation and implementation. Although there have been concerns in some countries or quarters for an inclusive or participatory budgeting process (Government-Civil Society Partnership Programme, 2007; Langa and Jerome, 2004) – such that transcends state actors alone, majority of countries and indeed scholars (Posner and Park 2007; Daggash, 2006) still recognize the principal organs of government (specifically, the executive and the legislature) as the main actors in budgeting. This perhaps informs Azuta-Mba's (2008) conception of

the budget process as the various set of steps taken in budget preparation from the executive to the legislature. Although the executive initiates the budget process, the role of the legislature in the entire process has been more stressed. Also, it has been noted that such roles by the legislature in the budgeting process varies from one political system to another (Lienert, 2005, 2010; Stapenhurst, 2004). Irrespective of the variations that may exist, however, the budgeting process lies at the heart of executive legislature relations especially in presidential systems. Posner and parker (2007) have also notes that the nature of power configuration between the executive and the legislature has a major impact on executive legislature relations in the budgeting process. According to them, in the presidential system characterized, as it were, by separation of powers, the legislature has a significant role in policy formulation and in budgeting partly, because of its electoral constituency that is different from that of the president. This is unlike the case in the parliamentary system where the power of the legislature is arguably weaker. This is because under the parliamentary system, the executive leadership is drawn from the legislature much as the legislature is politically obligated to support the government.

Opinion seems to converge on the processes involved in national budgeting. Azuta-Mbata (2006), Nzekwu (2006), Barkan et al (2004)

have recognized four processes of the budgeting process. These roughly approximates to formulation stage, approval stage, implementation stage and auditing. Noteworthy is that each stage involves a complex set of processes and actors. For instance in Nigeria, the formulation stage is driven by the executive through the Budget Office of the Federation (BOF). The BOF, situated within the Ministry of Finance, is an executive agency primarily concerned with providing necessary technical support on the preparation of annual budgets of the federation. The steps involved in the preparation of the annual budget include, developing medium term revenue framework, that is estimation of revenues that will accrue to the nation from different sources; development of medium term expenditure framework which means determining maximum spend-able amount and allocation to different expenditure heads; Budget Call Circular to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs); Evaluation and consolidation of submissions from MDAs and presentation of draft budget to Mr. President for subsequent transmission to the National Assembly. This leads to the second stage in the budget process, that is, approval stage. In line with constitutional requirement, the President lays before the National Assembly, the budget draft for the next fiscal year (also called appropriation bill). The National Assembly examines the estimates

and where necessary, makes amendment. This is also in line with constitutional duties of the legislature as provided for in the 1999 constitution. It is also noteworthy that in the course of exercising its powers over budget, the two Houses of the National Assembly also go through some steps and processes similar to the regular process of law-making. These include, First Reading; second reading which, is a general discussion on policies and principles of the bill, Consideration by relevant standing committees which also send their reports to the Finance and Appropriation Committee. (FAC)

Upon receipt of recommendations from various committees, the FAC may decide to organize public hearings on the proposed budget before submitting its report to committee of the whole House which considers and approves the bill. For the purpose of harmonization and to resolve grey areas, a joint meeting of the FAC of both Houses of the National Assembly meets to reconcile any differences in their respective approved estimates. This is followed in each House by Third Reading leading to the passage of the Appropriation Bill. Like every other bill, it is sent to the president for his assent after which it becomes an appropriation Act. The Third stage which is the implementation stage is the action stage in the budget process. This stage involves the release of approved estimates to MDA to implement approved

projects and services. It is indeed the action stage of government because it requires translation of policy statements into concrete programmes of government and it is the stage where the actions and inactions of government are felt by the citizens. Also at this stage, actions of government can be seen, felt or touched. The chains of activities at this stage provide the necessary input to engage in the Fourth and perhaps the last stage in the budget process. That is, Auditing and evaluation stage. It is important to stress that this stage also involves actions by both the executive and the legislative arms. On the one hand, the executive, through the BOF, Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation (OAGF) and the National Planning Commission (NPC) carry out periodic assessment of performance of the budget in any fiscal year. On the other hand, the National Assembly, through its public Accounts Committees (PAC) and other relevant committees, carry out oversight of budget implementation through periodic enquiries on MDAs

Executive Legislature Relations in Nigeria Prior to 1999

As earlier noted in this work, Nigeria emerged at independence in 1960 as a parliamentary democracy. Central to this system is the fusion of governmental powers among the branches of government. In this case, there was no clear cut distinction between, for instance, the members of the legislature (parliament) and

the executive (cabinet). Indeed, members of cabinet also constituted members of parliament much as the prime minister was empowered to advise the Head of State to dissolve the parliament and call for fresh elections. This practice which was equally instituted at the regional levels gave no room for any serious antagonism between the legislature and the executive. This system was however truncated with the military incursion of 1966 as it was abandoned in favour of the Presidential system at the country's return to democratic rule in 1979. For detailed account of how the parliamentary system operated in Nigeria and the attendant problems see, Benjamin (2004).

At inception of the Second Republic under the Presidential democracy variant, there was, initially, no serious conflict between the executive arm and the legislature even though the then ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was not in control of overwhelming majority in the National Assembly. This stems from its alliance with the Nigerian People's Party (NPP). As long as the alliance lasted, the relationship between the executive and the legislature seems cordial as evidenced in the hasty passage, in less than two hours, of the Economic Stabilization (temporary provisions) Bill of 1982 (Akinsanya and Davies, 2002). However, with the collapse of the alliance, conflicting situations began to emerge in executive - legislature relations. Given the initial

context and settings within which the assembly was, this trend can be attributed to the differences in party affiliation of members rather than to any serious contemplation about the implications of a particular government (executive) action. Thus several other proposals that would improve governmental efficiency and the general welfare of the people were blocked (Maduagu and Oche 1992; Aiyede and Isumonah, 2002; Akinsaya and Davies 2002). In other words, the transference of party antagonism into affairs of the National Assembly was a major factor in the emergence of friction between the legislature and the executive under Nigeria's Second Republic.

Under the aborted Third Republic, the nature and circumstances of the Republic coupled with the fact that it was truncated did not provide ample opportunities for observing definite trends in executive – legislature conflict. Commenting on situations at the national level during this period, Aiyede and Isumonah (2002), argue that the exchanges between the National Assembly and the executive branch (which in this case was military) up till the period of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election epitomises an epoch in legislative humiliation. This stems from the fact that first; decree no. 53 with which the Assembly was inaugurated equally 'castrated it by limiting the powers to debating only cultural and topographical matters' (Aiyede and Isumonah, 2002).

Second, it was an era of subjugation of all democratic ethos and free will of the citizens to military autocracy because even though there were elements of democratisation, all was still subject to military fiat. Indeed at a point, the country was operating a diarchy.

At the state level, although there were civilian heads existing alongside the state assemblies, the military influence still pervaded. This is because, apart from the fact that some state chief executives saw themselves wielding enormous powers over the legislature, the Babangida military regime equally directed the state governors to disregard the houses of Assembly where there was clash of interest. The understanding in this context was to avoid a situation where Assembly men would be demanding for "settlements" before executive proposals were considered and approved.

In effect, however, this was a continuation of the subjugation and perversion of democratic structures in which case, the legislature was the most affected. Perhaps if the Republic had survived beyond the military junta, other important trends in executive – legislature relations could have been visible.

The 1999 Constitution and Budgeting Process

In Nigeria and within the context of its presidential system, the 1999 constitution sets the tone for interaction between the executive and the legislature on the national

budgeting process. For instance, by virtue of Part I E spanning sections 80 to 89 of the 1999 Constitution it is the National Assembly that gives authorization to the executive for all expenditures from the consolidated Revenue Fund. In the case of the states of the federation, sections 120 and 121 vests such powers in the state houses of Assembly. Relevant sections under this provision deserves extensive quote from the constitution. In section 80, the constitution provides that:

All revenues or other moneys raised or received by the Federation (not being revenues or other moneys payable under this Constitution or any Act of the National Assembly into any other public fund of the Federation established for a specific purpose) shall be paid into and form one Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation (subsection 1)

Similarly,

No moneys shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation except to meet expenditure that is charged upon the fund by this Constitution or where the issue of those moneys has been authorised by an Appropriation Act, Supplementary Appropriation Act or an Act passed in pursuance of section 81 of this Constitution.

In addition, subsections 3 and 4 of the constitution give the National Assembly the exclusive right of approving any withdrawal from the Consolidated Revenue Fund or any other public fund of the federation. Section 81 describes obligations of the in the Budgetary process by noting that:

The President shall cause to be prepared and laid before each House of the National Assembly at any time in each financial year estimates of the revenues and expenditure of the Federation for the next following financial year (subsection 1)

Also, subsection 2 states that,

The heads of expenditure contained in the estimates ... shall be included in a bill, to be known as an Appropriation Bill, providing for the issue from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure and the appropriation of those sums for the purposes specified therein.

The constitution also envisaged a situation where in 'respect of any financial year it is found that' 'the amount appropriated by the Appropriation Act for any purpose is insufficient; or a need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by the Act (subsection 4). In this case,

a supplementary estimate showing the sums required shall be laid before each House of the National

Assembly and the heads of any such expenditure shall be included in a Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

In line with the idea of separate but interdependent powers and the objective of avoiding stalemate in governance, the constitution under section 82 provides that where the Appropriation Bill in respect of any financial year has not been passed into law by the beginning of the financial year,

the President may authorise the withdrawal of moneys in the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation for the purpose of meeting expenditure necessary to carry on the services of the Government of the Federation for a period not exceeding six months or until the coming into operation of the Appropriation Act, whichever is the earlier: Provided that the withdrawal in respect of any such period shall not exceed the amount authorised to be withdrawn from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation under the provisions of the Appropriation Act passed by the National Assembly for the corresponding period in the immediately preceding financial year.

Although the constitution intended well with these provision, it later became an instrument of manipulation by the actors in the course of formulating and approving the national budget. Also in line with the idea of avoiding stalemate

in governance, the constitution vests the National Assembly with powers to 'make provisions for the establishment of a Contingencies Fund for the Federation' where the President can draw fund where there is an urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure for which no other provision exists. However, even where such has occurred, a Supplementary Estimate shall be presented and a Supplementary Appropriation Bill be introduced as soon as possible for the purpose of replacing the amount so advanced from the contingency fund after due approval by the National Assembly.

It is pertinent to observe that although the legislature has the constitutional power of approval or what may be described as power of the purse, the constitution has also offered guidelines for the exercise of this power especially considering the bicameral nature of the national legislature. According to section 59 of the constitution, where a bill is passed by one of the Houses but is not passed by the other House within a period of two months from the commencement of a financial year, the President of the Senate shall within fourteen days thereafter arrange for and convene a meeting of the joint finance committee to examine the bill with a view to resolving the differences between the two Houses. It went further under subsection 3 that "when the joint finance committee failing to resolve such differences, the bill shall be presented to the National Assembly

sitting at a joint meeting, and if the bill is passed at such joint meeting, it shall be presented to the President for assent.

Although such extreme situation has hardly arisen in the Nigerian context, it nonetheless shows a kind of attempt at intra institutional balancing between both arms of the National Assembly.

It is not enough that money should be appropriated but must be ensured to be fully utilized as passed by the National Assembly. This implies auditing or oversight of governmental activities in respect of the appropriation bill. As is evident, this is an exclusive and important function of the legislature and which brings it in direct contact with the executive arm and its agencies. In this case, the office of the Accountant-General and the Auditor-General established by the constitution becomes most relevant as much of the work at this level is based on the Auditor general's report.. According to section 85, the public accounts of the Federation and of all offices and courts of the Federation shall be audited and reported on to the Auditor-General who shall submit his reports to each house of the National Assembly; within ninety days of receipt of the Accountant-General's financial statement. Upon receipt of the report, the National Assembly is expected to consider it through its appropriate committees. Essentially, the relevant committees are to review whether public money was spent for the

approved purposes and with due regard to efficiency, economy and effectiveness. It is also important to state that at the sittings of the relevant committees, the Accounting Officer (Permanent Secretary) of the audited Ministry or Office. is usually in attendance and is expected to defend itself on any issue reported on and explain what they have done in response to the Report This way, the National Assembly is able to determine the level of compliance by the executive in the implementation of the appropriation law as passed by it.

To boost the above powers, Section 88 also states *inter alia* that each House of the National Assembly shall have power to direct or cause to be directed investigation into the conduct of affairs of any person, authority, ministry or government department charged, or intended to be charged, with the duty of or responsibility for executing or administering laws enacted by National Assembly, and disbursing or administering moneys appropriated or to be appropriated by the National Assembly. Also, these powers are to enable the National Assembly, among other things to 'expose corruption, inefficiency or waste in the execution or administration of laws within its legislative competence and in the disbursement or administration of funds appropriated by it'

In other words, going by the wordings of the constitution, while the appropriation bill represents the

executive's master plan for monies to be spent at a specified period of time, such must be approved by the legislature before any expenditure is made. Equally, the constitution has, through these extensive provisions, recognized on the one hand main actors involved in the budget process as comprising both the legislative and executive arms and its agencies and on the other hand, it has laid procedures for the budgeting process that includes preparation / formulation, approval, implementation and auditing / oversight. Aside from these, other observations that derive from the constitutional provision include, streamlining all revenues accruing to the federation into a Consolidate Revenue Fund (CRF) from which all expenditure will be drawn and that it is the legislature that has constitutional power to authorize expenditure from the fund. Given these provisions, therefore, Aiyede and Isumonoh (2002) were right to conclude that the 1999 Nigerian constitution envisions a budgeting process that is typical of presidential system of government where the executive and legislative arms were both autonomous and interdependent. It also suffices to say that it is within this framework that both arms were relating over the national budget during the period under consideration.

Executive Legislature Relation in the Budget Process under President Obasanjo

May 29, 1999 marked a watershed in the history of Nigeria. It was the day when the country emerged as a new democracy based on the Presidential variant which it began experimenting with since 1979. Accordingly, after the general elections of April same year, a new Executive President was sworn-in on May 29, while the legislative arm was inaugurated by the President on June 16, 1999. With this, the essential democratic structures were finally consummated. As with all Presidential systems, especially the America model after which the Nigerian system was fashioned, the three powers of government are vested in various arms. That is, the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. These are contained in sections 4, 5 and 6 of the 1999 constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria respectively. The constitution equally established the framework for relations between the arms and most especially between the executive and the legislature both of which constitute the hub of public policy making and delivery. The link between the legislative and the executive arms revolves around virtually all the areas of primary responsibility of the former. These are law making which includes appropriation laws, confirmation of appointments and oversight of the executive and its agencies. This

notwithstanding, our focus here is on the National Budget.

From various budget presentation speeches by the president to joint session of the National Assembly as directed by the constitution, it could be gleaned that the objectives of the budget usually revolve around resolving the multitude of economic challenges facing the country which include lowering the inflation rate, laying a solid foundation for private sector led economic growth and, reduce unemployment and poverty among others. As already noted, provisions of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria approximates the process of national budgets to four main actions. That is, formulation; approval; implementation and; audit of the budget. It is pertinent, however, to observe that while the process of formulation and implementation are in the strictest sense, an executive domain, the process of approval and oversight actively involves the legislature. Also, the two areas of legislature's involvement are what usually result in antagonisms between the two arms. That is, the process of approval which involves scrutiny of executive's proposal and, oversight of the budget.

It is also worthy to note that conflicts between the executive and the legislature over budgets started right from inception of the administration but became full blown in 2000. As rightly observed by the IMF (2001),

for much of 2000, the government was involved in a bitter political battle with the National Assembly-in essence, to delineate the boundaries of their respective authorities under the new democracy. At stake, among other issues, was the responsibility of the executive vis-a-vis the legislature in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of the federal government budget.

This trend runs through the various budgets from 1999 to the end of the administration in 2007.

One fundamental issue that brings disagreement and which often produce conflict between the executive and the legislature in the budgetary process is in the discrepancy that exists between the amount budgeted by the executive and the amount eventually approved by the National Assembly. This discrepancy has occurred in all the national budgets for the period under consideration as the table below shows.

Table I: Discrepancies in Budget Amount

Year	Amount Budgeted	Amount Passed
2000	407. 0 billion	677.5 billion
2001	894.21 billion	894.2 billion
2002	840.85 billion	1.06 trillion
2003	765.13 billion	979.2 billion
2004	1.22 trillion	1.30 trillion
2005	1.61 trillion	1.80 trillion
2006	1.88 trillion	1.90 trillion

Source: Computed by the Authors from Mr. President's Annual Budget Speech and Annual Appropriation Acts by the National Assembly

Indications as to why the National Assembly often carry out changes on executive budget proposal was given by Jibrin Barau, one time Chairman House committee on Appropriation . According to him, the reason adduced for the upward review by the legislature was the urgent and dire need for the government to assuage the electorate's thirst for democracy dividend. He also added that since 1999, Nigerians had waited in vain for the touted democracy dividend. Hence the decision of the National Assembly to review the budget through larger allocation of funds (The Guardian, Sunday August 4, 2002). Unfortunately, the executive seem to be averse to such increase.

As with the approval process, budgetary oversight have also

remained tension soaked in the relationship between the two arms of government. In specific terms, the legislature has always accused the executive of shoddy or non implementation of national budgets to the extent that through out the period under consideration, the country never attained a 100 per cent budget implementation (see table II). Indeed, while debating the 2001 appropriation bill at the floor of the senate, allegations of shoddy implementation of previous budgets also stalled debates on the 2001 Appropriation Act as majority view any venture in the 2001 Appropriation Act as 'an exercise in futility' (Senate Hanzards, 28 November, 2000).

Table II: Percentage Implementation of Annual Budget, 2000 - 2006

Year	% Implementation
2000	89.72*
2001	91.37*
2002	NA
2003	35%**
2004	95%**
2005	55%**
2006	NA

Source: Computed by the Authors from various sources

* Presidents Response to Impeachment Allegations

** Hamlai, (2006) NA = Not Available

But giving the fact that both the legislature and the executive are to operate within stipulated constitutional frameworks, we may pause to ponder what the fundamental basis of this conflict are? First is that there seem to be a poor perception of constitutional roles by the two arms of government. Put differently, both arms fail to understand the limits of their constitutional exercise of power as well as appreciate the extent of the other arms powers. For instance, on the issue of appropriation, the constitution provides in section 80 (3) and (4) that no moneys shall be withdrawn from the consolidated revenue fund of the federation except with approval of the NASS and such must also be spent in the manner prescribed by the NASS. Similarly, the constitution also in section 81 places the power to prepare such amount to be expended in the executive arm. The implication of the above sections is that only the NASS has the right to authorise any form of expenditure from the federation account while the

executive has the exclusive power to propose and (after approval), implement. However, this constitutional delineation of responsibilities remains lost to both actors as they tend to encroach on each others domain. For instance, more often than not, the National Assembly unilaterally increases some budgetary allocations in the executive's proposal as indicated in table 1 above while the executive too at times *jump the gun* on some issues requiring prior legislative approval.

Ordinarily, where situations like this occur, it beholds the judiciary to intervene. But a situation where none of the parties is willing to approach the court, the judiciary cannot on its own, make a pronouncement in such respect. There is no such power conferred on the judiciary in the Nigerian constitution. This is a lacuna that requires re-examination. Thus, the essential factor lies in their failure to engender mutual understanding and appreciation of each other and inability of the judiciary to respond to the challenge.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to examine the pattern of executive – legislature relations in Nigeria’s Presidential democracy with a special focus on the budgeting process. Nigeria’s constitutions (starting with the 1979 constitution) provide the constitutional framework for relation between the legislature and the executive. It is however observed that while the constitution has laid down sufficient basis for functional relation in the budgeting process, reality has proved a contrasting situation. On one hand, recent trends in the budgeting process which have assumed the dimension of a scourge could be partly explained by the failure of both institutions to understand and respect the boundaries of their respective powers and partly within the inability of the Judiciary to savage the situation. All are not without ominous threats to the Nigerian state.

Against this background and to stem the tide of conflict between the two

arms on budget issues, it is expedient that first, both should keep within the boundaries of their respective competencies as stipulated by the constitution. In this regard, each arm needs to acquire sufficient information about the functions and workings of the other. This will also provide opportunities for appreciating each other. Although the National Assembly has set-up a policy ‘think tank’ (that is, the National Institute of Legislative Studies) to facilitate its legislative roles, but there is the need for synergy between this institution and similar institution in the Presidency for concrete achievements to be made. Second, in cases where there are doubts or disagreements, both parties should be willing to resort to the court which is expected to give the right interpretation in controversial situations. All these are necessary in order to stem the tide of executive – legislature conflicts in Nigeria’s democracy.

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