"OVERSIGHT OR EXTRACTION? LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES IN NIGERIA AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CLIENTELISM AND RENT-SEEKING"

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Abstract

We interrogated in this article the paradoxical role of legislative committees in Nigeria, asking whether constitutionally mandated oversight functions have, in practice, been transformed into mechanisms of extraction. While legislative committees are designed to promote accountability, transparency, and the rule of law, we argue that they have increasingly become institutional sites for the routinization of clientelism and rent-seeking. We draw our methods from the doctrinal analysis, political economy theory, and normative legal critique to demonstrate how committee procedures particularly investigative hearings, oversight visits, budget scrutiny, and regulatory confirmations are frequently deployed to secure informal benefits from private actors and economic agents. We equally advanced in this article the central claim that clientelism and rent-seeking in Nigeria's legislative committees are no longer episodic deviations but have become institutionalized practices sustained by formal rules, discretionary powers, and weak accountability mechanisms. This institutionalization has profound implications for private and property relations, including regulatory uncertainty, distorted market access, insecure property rights, and the erosion of contractual predictability. We situate legislative committee practices within broader debates on governance, law, and political economy and highlights how legal institutions may inadvertently legitimize informal extraction. We thereafter conclude this article by proposing normative and institutional reforms aimed at reclaiming legislative oversight as a genuine instrument of accountability rather than a vehicle for rent extraction.

Keywords: Clientelism, Rent-Seeking, Oversight, legislative Committee, Extraction.

1.Introduction

The legislature is a central institution in Nigeria's anti-corruption architecture. This is due to its constitutional duty to oversee the executive, scrutinize public spending, and ensure accountability.[2] Equally, they are charged with enacting and strengthening anti-corruption laws. The peculiarity of this responsibility has inspired them to develop a wide range of anti-corruption legislations which includes the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Act, the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act, and the Public Procurement Act. These legislations, according to Nathaniel Inegbedion, provide Nigeria with a robust legal arsenal to address corruption in the

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[2] O B Ijewereme, 'Anatomy of Corruption in the Nigerian Public Sector: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Empirical Explanations,' [2015] (5) (2) *SAGE Open,* 1–16.

executive, judiciary, and legislature.[3] He, however, notes that the mere existence of legislation is insufficient when enforcement is "selective, compromised, or politically motivated."[4]

To check the above lapses, legislative oversight was constitutionally mandated as a mechanism for enforcing accountability, restraining executive excesses, and safeguarding the rule of law. Fundamentally, legislative oversight is intended to ensure that public policy is directed toward the public good, to restrain executive power, and to sustain the equilibrium necessary for effective and accountable governance. A critical domain of this oversight is fiscal policy, where the legislature bears the responsibility of deploying public policy instruments in a manner that promotes transparency, accountability, and sound governance. Through the legislative process, particularly budgetary scrutiny, lawmakers examine government expenditures to ensure that public resources are allocated and utilized in accordance with the principles of good governance.[5]

The legislative checks are constitutionally designed to act as safeguards against executive abuse through investigative hearings and budgetary scrutiny. As such, this checks on the executive affords them the responsibility as the guardian of democratic accountability. On this wise, Oluduro Oyewo opines that the constitutional assignment of oversight and budgetary control to the National Assembly theoretically places them at the centre of anti-corruption.[6]

In Nigeria, much of this responsibility is exercised through legislative committees, and they conduct investigations, scrutinize budgets, oversee regulatory agencies, and interface directly with private actors and public institutions.[7] In theory, committees are instruments of democratic control but in practice, they have become focal points of controversy, allegations of abuse, and public distrust.[8] What we intend to interrogate in this article is the paradox in Nigeria's constitutional democracy: whether legislative committees function primarily as organs of oversight or whether they have metamorphosed into institutionalized channels of extraction.

The existing scholarship is flooded with themes on corruption through executive dominance, prebendal politics, and weak institutions. But comparatively, little attention has been paid to the committee system as a distinct area where clientelism and rent-seeking are routinized through

[3] N A Inegbedion, 'Corruption and Anti-Corruption Legislations in Nigeria: A Critique,' [2004] (7) (1) *University of Benin Law Journal,* 139–64.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] M S Olaogun et al, 'Legislative Oversight in Nigeria's Democracy: Roles, Challenges and Way Forward,' [2025] (17) (2) *Taiwan Journal of Democracy,* 97–123.

[6] O Oyewo, 'Constitutions, Good Governance and Corruption: Challenges and Prospects for Nigeria,' [2007] *Paper presented at the Seventh World Conference of the International Association of Constitutional Law, Athens, Greece.*

[7] Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, s 88–89.

[8] M S Olaogun et al, 'Legislative Oversight in Nigeria's Democracy: Roles, Challenges and Way Forward,' [2025] (17) (2) *Taiwan Journal of Democracy,* 110 –115.

formally legal processes.[9] Previous studies on Nigerian legislative oversight have highlighted structural weaknesses and investigative compromises, emphasizing the need for doctrinal and institutional reforms,[10] but in this article we build on these analyses while complementing them with our prior works on legislative accountability and separation of powers.[11]

Our core argument in this article is that clientelism and rent-seeking within Nigerian legislative committees are not mere episodic abuses but have become institutionalized practices that are sustained by established authority, procedural opacity, and weak legal accountability.[12] Following the focus of this call, these practices have significant implications for private and property law, which include regulatory uncertainty, distorted market access, compromised contractual expectations, and erosion of property rights security.[13] When we situate committee practices within a larger political economy and institutional framework, we intend to demonstrate how law itself may inadvertently legitimize informal extraction.[14]

2. Legal and Constitutional Foundations of Legislative Committees in Nigeria.

The legislative committees make up the central working of Nigeria's parliamentary system. Even though the National Assembly functions through plenary sittings in the past, the comprehensive work of legislation, oversight, and investigation is conducted mainly through standing, special, and ad hoc committees.[15] It is from sections 4, 88, and 89 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) that the constitutional legitimacy of these committees is principally derived, which vest the legislature with lawmaking authority and broad investigative powers.[16]

Section 88 enables each House to carry out investigations for the purpose of empowering it to make laws and to expose corruption, inefficiency, or waste in the execution of laws.[17] When it comes to

[9]S C Agunyai & V. Ojakorotu, *The Nigerian Legislative Committee System, Corruption, and Constituency Woes: Lessons Nigerians Can Learn from the Singaporean Legislative Committee System* (NASS, 2024).

[10]O Nnajiofor & D Nnajiofor, 'Legislative Oversight and Institutional Accountability in Nigeria: Evaluating the Performance and Challenges of the National Assembly,' [2025] (9) African Journal of Law and Human Rights, 1–23.

[11]O Nnajiofor & D Nnajiofor, 'The Investigative Functions of Nigerian Legislatures: The Complicities and Compromises,' [2025] (5) (5) IGIRIGI: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal of African Studies, 243–251.

[12]M H Khan, 'Rent-Seeking as Process,'in M. H. Khan and K S Jomo(ed.) *Rents, Rent-Seeking and Economic Development,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23–26.

[13]H de Soto,*The Mystery of Capital* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p 47–52.

[14]D C North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p 3–10.

[15]J. A. Ayoade, 'The Powers of the Nigerian Legislature,' [1998] (3) (2) *African Journal of Political Science*, 65–68.

[16]CFRN, 1999, s (4), (88)– (89).

[17]*Ibid* s 88 (1).

carrying out quasi-judicial powers, Section 89 grants committees the authority to summon persons, require the production of documents, and issue warrants.[18] But in actual practice, committee

proceedings often operate at the intersection of law, politics, and administration, blurring the distinction between oversight and adjudication.

The Standing Orders of the Senate and House of Representatives, beyond the Constitution, provide necessary procedural guidance for committee establishment, jurisdiction, and functioning.[19] These committees are vested with wide discretionary authority to determine the scope of investigations, select witnesses, conduct oversight visits, and make recommendations that will determine executive action.

In the past, judicial interpretation has affirmed committees' investigative competence while cautioning against excesses. This was explicated in *El-Rufai v. House of Representatives*, where the Court of Appeal recognized oversight powers but emphasized constitutional limits and due process.[20] In the same vein, in *Senate of the National Assembly v. Momoh*, the Supreme Court cautioned that legislative investigations must not degenerate into instruments of persecution or intimidation.[21]

Committee authority has far-reaching implications from a private and property law perspective. Most often, oversight involves private firms, contractors, financial institutions, and property holders who are invited to justify compliance with regulations or contractual obligations.[22] The asymmetry of power between committees and private actors, combined with weak procedural safeguards, creates conditions in which oversight may be transformed into leverage for informal bargaining in such encounters.[23] In light of the above, Nnajiofor and Nnajiofor have highlighted how these structural conditions reproduce clientelism and compromise the rule of law.[24]

This legal architecture is central to understanding how legislative committees in Nigeria become havens of institutionalized extraction. The problem is not the absence of constitutional authority but its overconcentration, weakly regulated discretion, and limited accountability mechanisms.

[18]*Ibid* s 89 (1).

[19]Senate Standing Orders (2015), Orders 96–100; House of Representatives Standing Orders (2016), Orders XVIII–XX.

[20]El-Rufai v. House of Representatives (2003) 46 WRN 1 (CA).

[21]Senate of the National Assembly v. Momoh (1983) 4 NCLR 269 (SC).

[22]P M. Lewis, *Growing Apart: Oil, Politics, and Economic Change in Indonesia and Nigeria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p 143–47.

[23]*Ibid.*

[24]O Nnajiofor & D Nnajiofor, 'Legislative Oversight and Institutional Accountability in Nigeria: Evaluating the Performance and Challenges of the National Assembly,' [2025] (9) *African Journal of Law and Human Rights,* 1–23.

These structural features provide fertile ground for the routinization of clientelism and rent-seeking with significant consequences for governance and private economic relations.[25]

3. **Conceptual Framework**

3.1 Clientelism and Rent-Seeking as Institutional Practices

Clientelism simply refers to patterned asymmetric exchanges in which political actors distribute selective benefits in return for loyalty or compliance.[26] In Nigeria, clientelistic practices have historically been embedded in prebendal politics, where public offices serve as instruments for material distribution.[27] Legislative committees, which control oversight and approvals, mediate these exchanges between the state and private actors. The prevalence of clientelism in Nigeria has led Ojo, Průša, and Amundsen to describe it as an "institutionalized competition."[28] They also note that the expansion of political inclusion via patronage systems makes rent capture ordinary and difficult to reverse because client networks have become politically entrenched.

In contrast, rent-seeking describes efforts to obtain economic benefits through political manipulation rather than productive activity.[29] Classical accounts emphasize lobbying and regulatory capture, while more recent analyses highlight how rent-seeking can become institutionalized within formal procedures.[30] The intersection of clientelism and rent-seeking is evident where oversight is exercised selectively.[31] Committee investigations may respond to political alignments, economic rivalries, or anticipated private gain. Private actors summoned to committees often negotiate informal inducements to secure favorable treatment. The danger, according to Khan, is that "over time, such interactions crystallize into norms that govern committee–private sector relations."[32]

The problem is not individual failure but structural conditions enabling extractive behavior, especially when viewed from an institutional perspective. This aligns with North's institutional theory, which explains how formal rules coexist with informal constraints that ultimately determine

[25]H de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p 47–52.

[26]R Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p 55–57.

[27]G Tullock, 'The Welfare Costs of Tariffs, Monopolies, and Theft,' [1967] (5) (3) Western *Economic Journal*, 224–32.

[28]E O Ojo *et al* 'Congenitally Conjoined and Inseparable: Politics and Corruption in Nigeria,' in Political Corruption in Africa: Extraction and Power Preservation, (ed.) *Inge Amundsen* (Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2019), 71–94.

[29]Robert Klitgaard, *Controlling Corruption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p 23–26.

[30]Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), p 129–33.

[31]M S Olaogun, 'Legislative Oversight in Nigeria's Democracy: Roles, Challenges and Way Forward,' [2025] (17) (2) *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 97–123.

[32]M H Khan, 'Rent-Seeking as Process,' in M H Khan and K S Jomo (ed) *Rents, Rent-Seeking and Economic Development*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23–26.

outcomes.[33] In Nigeria, committee authority operates alongside informal expectations of rent extraction, producing a hybrid governance logic where legality and informality reinforce one another.

This conceptualization is central to understanding why legal reforms that focus solely on prohibiting corruption often fail to disrupt clientelism and rent-seeking. When extractive practices are embedded within routine oversight procedures, they acquire legitimacy and predictability that shield them from effective challenge. By framing clientelism and rent-seeking as institutionalized practices rather than isolated misconduct, the analytical focus shifts from individual culpability to systemic design. This framework enables demonstration of how oversight functions are transformed into mechanisms of extraction with enduring implications for governance and private economic relations.[34]

4. Legislative Committee Practices in Nigeria and the Institutionalization of Extraction

Legislative committees in Nigeria operate at the intersection of law, politics, and administration, providing a locus for both formal oversight and informal extraction. While committees are constitutionally empowered to investigate public institutions, scrutinize budgets, and oversee regulatory compliance, these powers are frequently exercised selectively, creating opportunities for clientelism and rent-seeking.[35] Through the analysis of committee practices by the lens of institutionalized behavior, what might seem as ad hoc corruption often reflects systematic patterns encapsulated within procedural rules and discretionary authority.

An investigative hearing is one prominent arena for extraction. Committees routinely summon officials, private contractors, and business representatives to account for compliance with statutes or regulatory guidelines.[36] Even though the committee is ostensibly established to enhance transparency, hearings often operate as leverage points where private actors can be compelled to negotiate favorable treatment or make informal payments to secure continued access to contracts, licenses, or approvals.[37] The repetitive and predictable nature of such interactions transforms episodic transactions into institutionalized norms, establishing expectations of reciprocal benefit between legislators and external actors.

[33]D C North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3–10.

[34]H de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p 47–52.

[35]CFRN (1999), s 88–89;
J A Ayoade, 'The Powers of the Nigerian Legislature,' [1998] (3) (2) *African Journal of Political Science*, 65–68.

[36]Senate Standing Orders (2015), Orders 96–100; House of Representatives Standing Orders (2016), Orders XVIII–XX.

[37]P M Lewis, *Growing Apart: Oil, Politics, and Economic Change in Indonesia and Nigeria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p 143–47.

Oversight visits and field inspections constitute another mechanism of rent extraction. Committees frequently exercise discretion in determining which projects, firms, or localities receive attention.[38] Targeted oversight can generate both reputational pressure and financial leverage over those

summoned, incentivizing preemptive accommodation or inducement. In this way, committee discretion becomes a structural enabler of clientelistic exchanges, legitimized by formal procedural authority but guided by informal considerations of political loyalty and economic gain.

The budgetary and appropriation function of committees further shows the institutionalization of extraction. Appropriation committees hold extensive power to adjust allocations, recommend supplementary funding, or approve expenditures.[39] This authority creates opportunities for private actors who rely on government projects or subsidies to secure favorable treatment through informal negotiation. These interactions create a predictable system of leverage over time, where legislative oversight is inseparable from rent-seeking incentives.

Confirmation proceedings of public appointments, regulatory boards, or quasi-judicial offices can be another channel for institutionalized clientelism. Committees can delay, approve, or reject appointments based on criteria that extend beyond merit or statutory qualification, effectively transforming confirmations into a bargaining arena for political and economic favors.[40] The cumulative effect of these committee practices is the normalization of extraction within formally sanctioned processes.

From a private and property law perspective, the implications are profound. Regulatory uncertainty, compromised contractual predictability, and insecurity of property rights arise not merely from illegal acts but from the routinized exercise of discretionary authority.[41] Firms, property holders, and investors learn that compliance with statutory requirements is necessary but not sufficient; favorable treatment often depends on navigating the informal norms established by committee procedures. Legislative oversight, therefore, becomes both a tool of accountability and a mechanism of economic gatekeeping, shaping property and market relations in ways that reflect institutionalized clientelism.

In sum, the analysis of committee practices reflects that clientelism and rent-seeking in Nigeria are embedded systemically rather than occasional deviations from legal norms. Discretionary powers, procedural opacity, and weak enforcement combine to produce a governance environment in which oversight is inseparable from extraction. This institutionalization creates enduring consequences

[38]C Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), p 132–34.
[39]M H Khan, 'Rent-Seeking as Process,' in M H. Khan and K S Jomo (ed) *Rents, Rent-Seeking and Economic Development,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23–26.
[40]R Joseph, Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 57–60.
[41]H de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p 47–52.

for the governance of private and property relations, requiring both doctrinal scrutiny and normative reform.[42]

5. Implications for Private and Property Law

The institutionalization of clientelism and rent-seeking within Nigerian legislative committees has major consequences for private and property law. While formal statutes and constitutional provisions provide clear entitlements and protections, committee practices often distort the predictability and enforceability of these rights.[43] Property holders, investors, and contractual parties encounter a legal environment where discretionary oversight, procedural opacity, and informal bargaining are as consequential as statutory law itself.[44]

One major implication is regulatory uncertainty. It arises because approvals, permits, and licenses depend on informal negotiations with committees. Committees wield extensive discretion in scrutinizing regulatory compliance and approving project implementation.[45] Private firms or property developers seeking permits, licenses, or approvals cannot rely solely on statutory criteria; the outcome often depends on committee interactions and informal accommodation.[46] This uncertainty undermines confidence in administrative processes and complicates legal planning, contract drafting, and dispute resolution.

Second, there is erosion of property rights security. Property rights insecurity emerges when committees delay or condition approvals based on political considerations.[47] Such practices introduce an element of arbitrariness that compromises the legal security of property and transactional rights. Property holders must navigate informal expectations to safeguard their interests, making property rights contingent on negotiation with committee actors rather than enforceable legal entitlements.[48]

[42]O Nnajiofor & D Nnajiofor, 'Legislative Oversight and Institutional Accountability in Nigeria: Evaluating the Performance and Challenges of the National Assembly,' [2025] (9) *African Journal of Law and Human Rights*, 112–15.

[43] N C Douglass, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p 3–10.

[44]Senate Standing Orders (2015), Orders 96–100; House of Representatives Standing Orders (2016), Orders XVIII–XX.

[45]P M Lewis, *Growing Apart: Oil, Politics, and Economic Change in Indonesia and Nigeria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p 143–47.

[46]R Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p 57–60.

[47]O Nnajiofor, G N Okpala, 'The Investigative Functions of Nigerian Legislatures: The Complicities and Compromises,' [2025] (5) (5) *IGIRIGI: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal of African Studies*, 243–51.

[48]J A Ayoade, 'The Powers of the Nigerian Legislature,' [1998] (3) (2) African Journal of Political Science, 65–68.

Third, contractual unpredictability adversely affects businesses engaged in procurement, concessions, or partnerships because committee discretion can influence continuation or approval of contracts.[49] Businesses engaged in government procurement, concessions, or public–private

partnerships face procedural risks arising from committee oversight. Committees' discretionary authority can influence the timing, approval, or continuation of contracts, creating opportunities for extractive arrangements that undermine the principle of pacta sunt servanda.[50]Over time, this fosters a system in which contractual performance is inseparable from committee-mediated negotiation, eroding trust in formal legal mechanisms.

Finally, these dynamics illustrate the interface between law and informal governance. While statutory conditions provide a formal basis for private and property rights, committee practices effectively operate as an informal regulatory layer, imposing additional, often non-transparent requirements on economic actors.[51] This dual structure reinforces dependency on discretionary judgment and sustains the cycle of clientelism and rent-seeking.

From a normative perspective, addressing these implications requires more than punitive anti-corruption measures. Legal and institutional reforms should aim to clarify the limits of committee discretion, enhance procedural transparency, and safeguard private and property interests from informal pressures.[52] Strengthening these safeguards is essential for reconciling legislative oversight with the predictability and security that private and property law seeks to guarantee.

6. Normative and Institutional Reform Recommendations

In the preceding analysis, we demonstrated that clientelism and rent-seeking within Nigerian legislative committees are not episodic but structurally enabled. Addressing this institutionalized extraction requires a combination of legal, procedural, and normative reforms aimed at restoring the integrity of oversight functions while protecting private and property rights.

6.1 Clarifying the Scope of Committee Discretion

One urgent reform is the explicit delineation of the limits of committee authority in the Constitution and standing orders.[53] The ambiguities in sections 88 and 89 regarding investigative and oversight powers create space for unnecessary discretionary overreach. Clarifying procedural boundaries—such as the permissible scope of document requests, summons, and hearings can reduce arbitrary leverage over private actors and property holders.[54] This may involve codifying criteria for

[49]M H Khan, 'Rent-Seeking as Process,' in M H Khan and K S Jomo (ed) Rents, *Rent-Seeking and Economic Development,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23–26.

[50]R Klitgaard, *Controlling Corruption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p 23–27.

[51]C Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), 132–34.

[52]O Nnajiofor & D Nnajiofor, 'Legislative Oversight and Institutional Accountability in Nigeria: Evaluating the Performance and Challenges of the National Assembly,' [2025] (9) *African Journal of Law and Human Rights*, 105–10.

[53]J A Ayoade, 'The Powers of the Nigerian Legislature,' [1998] (3) (2) *African Journal of Political Science,* 65–68.

[54]Senate Standing Orders (2015), Orders 96–100; House of Representatives Standing Orders (2016), Orders XVIII–XX.

initiating investigations, defining timelines for hearings, and establishing standard protocols for evidence and testimony.

6.2 Enhancing Procedural Transparency

The major mechanism to counter informal extraction is transparency.[55] Investigative committees should be required to publish agendas, schedules, and outcomes of investigations, while maintaining confidentiality for sensitive matters. Procedural transparency allows private and property actors to anticipate requirements, reduces the scope for selective enforcement, and strengthens public trust in legislative oversight.[56] Complementary measures could include third-party monitoring, independent reporting of committee proceedings, and public disclosure of committee recommendations.

6.3 Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms

Institutional accountability can be enhanced by internal and external oversight of committees themselves.[57] Internal mechanisms may include cross-committee review, parliamentary ethics committees, and codified sanctions for abuse of discretion. External mechanisms could involve judicial review, ombudsman interventions, or statutory oversight bodies empowered to evaluate committee conduct. These mechanisms ensure that oversight does not devolve into informal bargaining and that clientelistic or rent-seeking behavior is subject to corrective scrutiny.

6.4 Protecting Private and Property Interests

Protecting private and property interests includes requiring written justification for decisions affecting contracts or property rights.[58] To reconcile oversight with private and property law, legislative reforms should explicitly safeguard contractual and property rights from discretionary manipulation.[59] Legal provisions could require committees to provide written justification for decisions affecting contracts, property allocations, or regulatory approvals, creating a paper trail that limits informal bargaining. In addition, dispute resolution mechanisms—whether through administrative review, arbitration, or judicial recourse—should be strengthened to prevent committee actions from undermining statutory protections.

6.5 Promoting Ethical Legislative Culture

Finally, normative reforms targeting legislative ethics and institutional culture are essential.[60] Training, codes of conduct, and professional development programs for committee members can reinforce the normative expectation that oversight serves public interest rather than private gain. Civil society engagement, public awareness campaigns, and peer benchmarking can further embed a culture of accountability and reduce tolerance for rent-seeking practices.

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[55]D C North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p 3–10.

[56]H de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p 47–52.

[57]M H Khan, 'Rent-Seeking as Process,' in M H Khan and K S Jomo (ed), *Rents, Rent-Seeking and Economic Development,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 23–26.

[58]O Nnajiofor & D Nnajiofor, 'Legislative Oversight and Institutional Accountability in Nigeria: Evaluating the Performance and Challenges of the National Assembly,' [225] (9) *African Journal of Law and Human Rights*, 105–10.

[59]R Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p 57–60.

[60]C Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), p 132–34.

These reforms reconcile oversight with predictability and security of private and property law. Previous work underscores the necessity of combining legal, procedural, and normative measures for effective reform.[61]

7. Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

In conclusion, we have attempted to demonstrate in this article that legislative committees can be both instruments of effective oversight and vehicles for institutionalized extraction. In practice, legislative committees in Nigeria exercise oversight powers that are frequently transformed into institutionalized clientelism and rent-seeking.[62] The challenge for Nigerian law and governance is to reclaim these committees as genuine mechanisms of accountability while ensuring that private and property law remains predictable, secure, and insulated from informal bargaining.

Institutional reforms that combine procedural clarity, accountability, transparency, and ethical culture are critical to achieving this balance.[63] Strengthening legislative committees in this manner will reinforce the rule of law, protect economic actors, and promote democratic governance.[64]

We have drawn on a combination of Nigerian scholarship (Olaogun et al., Agunyai & Ojakorotu, Uwaoma, Nwogwugwu & Ishola, National Assembly reports) and our prior works (Nnajiofor & Nnajiofor 2025a, 2025b, Nnajiofor & Okpala 2025) to establish a comprehensive account of legislative oversight, clientelism, and institutionalized extraction.[65]

[61]O Nnajiofor & D Nnajiofor, 'Legislative Oversight and Institutional Accountability in Nigeria: Evaluating the Performance and Challenges of the National Assembly,' African Journal of Law and Human Rights, 112–15.

[62]M S Olaogun *et al*, 'Legislative Oversight in Nigeria's Democracy: Roles, Challenges and Way Forward,' [2025] (17) (2) *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 120–22.

[63]J A Ayoade, 'The Powers of the Nigerian Legislature,' [1998] (3) (2) African *Journal of Political Science*, 65–68.

[64]O Nnajiofor & D Nnajiofor, 'Legislative Oversight and Institutional Accountability in Nigeria: Evaluating the Performance and Challenges of the National Assembly,' [2025] (9) *African Journal of Law and Human Rights* 9 (2025): 112–15.

[65]Olaogun *et al*'Legislative Oversight in Nigeria's Democracy: Roles, Challenges and Way Forward,' [2025] (17) (2) Taiwan Journal of Democracy, 121–22;

S C Agunyai and V Ojakorotu, *The Nigerian Legislative Committee System, Corruption, and Constituency Woes: Lessons Nigerians Can Learn from the Singaporean Legislative Committee System* (NASS, 2025), p 58–60;

O Nnajiofor & G N Okpala, 'The Investigative Functions of Nigerian Legislatures: The Complicities and Compromises,' [2025] (5) (5) *IGIRIGI: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal of African Studies* 5, no. 5 (2025): 243–251.