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Constitutional Democracy and Caretaker Committee in Nigeria Local Government System: An Assessment

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Abstract

The 1976 Local Government Reform among other landmark changes unified the local government system in Nigeria, and the 1979 constitution made local governments the third tier of government and provided for a system of local government by democratically elected councils. More recently, elected local government councils have been dissolved and replaced with Transition Committees or Caretaker Committees appointed by the Governors' of their respective states. This paper therefore, examines the impact of the caretaker committees in Nigerian Local Government on the practice of constitutional democracy. The discussion is framed by the theoretical perspectives and Nigerian literature on local government and constitutional democracy, and by the recent phenomenal wave of dissolving elected local government councils and subsequent replacement with caretaker committees. Contrary to popular belief, that local government as the third tier of government has failed to achieve the objective for which it was created, this paper observes that party politics has been the bane of Nigerian local government since its inception, and that democratically elected local councils with political and financial autonomy are the major conditions for an effective and efficient multi-purpose local government system in Nigeria.

Key Words: Constitutional democracy, local government, caretaker committee, party politics, development

Introduction

In recent years, local government in Nigeria has been described as a failure, non-performing, and corrupt. This paper attempts to encapsulate the many challenges of socio-political and economic development that have confronted local government. It is against this backdrop that the governors of the various states decided to dissolve elected local councils and set up in their place, caretaker or transition committees to oversee the affairs of the local governments, contrary to the constitutional provision that established local governments as democratic entities.

The questions now are: how has the caretaker-committee system that has supplanted legal local government affected Nigeria's democratic experiment; how has party politics impacted on grassroots democracy, and how has the caretaker committee system impacted on the lives of local people? While some authors emphasize corruption and bad leadership as the cause of the failure of local government, others accuse state governments of truncating grassroots democracy and looting local government accounts but, with the exception of a few newspaper and magazine commentaries, there are few empirical studies that examine either how party politics hinders grassroots democracy in local government and hinders local development, or the impacts of the caretaker-committee system of local government on local residents.

An efficient and effective local government system is the foundation of any nation. Quoting Tocqueville, Nwachukwu (2000) wrote:

Municipal institutions (local governments) constitute the strength of a free nation.... A nation may establish a free government, but without municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty.... Man creates kingdoms but townships seem to spring from the hand of God (p.15).

In the same vein, Sir Arthur Creech Jones in his confidential dispatch to the Governors of British African territories as quoted by Rowland and Humes (1969) wrote:

I believe that the key to success lies in the development of an efficient and democratic system of local government. I wish to emphasize the words efficient, democratic and local. I do so not because they import any new concept into African administrations; indeed, they have been the aims of our policy for many years. I use the words because the system of Government must be close to the common people and their problems, [provide] local services in a way which will help raise the standard of living; and be democratic because it must not only find a place for the growing class of educated men, but at the same time command the respect and support of the masses of the people.... (vol III, No. 3)

Nigerians have continuously aspired for democracy in the belief that only leaders who are democratically elected can be responsible and responsive to their needs (Abonyi, 2011).

The first part of this paper provides a brief overview of the democratic local government system in Nigeria, briefly analysing the caretaker-committee system of local government in Nigeria and its impact on constitutional democracy and grassroots' development, and impact of party politics on grassroots democracy. The second part examines case studies of local governments in different states

of the federation. The case studies are based on 275 interviews with local government officials, members of caretaker committees, and residents, in seven local authority areas in four different states of Nigeria, and observations of the functioning of the caretaker committees in different states.

Democratisation of the Local Government System in Nigeria

The search for an effective and efficient local government system based on democratic principles has been a long one in Nigeria. This paper starts from 1950, when the first mainly elected local government councils based on the British Whitehall model took place in Lagos and the former Eastern and Western regions. The legal framework for local government was then provided by the Eastern Regional Local Government Ordinance, 1950, the Western Regional Local Government Law, 1952 and, the Native Authority Law of Northern Nigeria, 1954. The councils were granted wide-ranging functions which included primary education; health, police, judiciary etc., and enjoyed some autonomy in the areas of finance, personnel and general administration (Otiye, n.d.).

The 1976 local government reform was a landmark achievement in the democratization of local government in Nigeria. The reform unified local governments as the third tier of government in Nigeria. This was enshrined in the 1979 Constitution, which guaranteed the system of local government through democratically elected councils (Ogunna, 1996; Nwachukwu, (2000).

In an attempt to return Nigeria to a democratic order, the military Babangida administration reintroduced elected local government councils in December 1987. The election had a low turnout but was relatively peaceful and orderly. The military Abacha regime in March 1997 organised local government elections on a non-party basis.

Nigeria finally returned to democratic rule in May, 1999, and the 1999 Constitution, under which the present government operates, guarantees the existence of local government by democratically elected council (Adejo, 2004). The tenure of local governments was not provided in the Constitution, but Decree No. 36 of 1998 provided for a three year term for elected local government officers. The three year tenure was later vitiated by Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended, which empowers every state government, subject to Section 8 of the Constitution, to legislate for the existence, establishment, composition, structure, finance and functions of their local councils (Federal Government of Nigeria 1999). This constitutional provision places the local councils under the blanket control of state governments.

As a result of this provision, most local governments are run by non-elected officers appointed by state governors to serve in 'transition' or 'caretaker' committees, contrary to provision in the 1999 Constitution (s.7:1). Against this backdrop this section reviews existing literature on the democratization of local governments in Nigeria. Hence, Abbas and Ahmad (2012) suggest that the creation of local governments in Nigeria was a deliberate attempt to ensure maximum participation of

citizens in the development process and to make local government more responsive to aspirations of local communities:

This was therefore a deliberate attempt to inject a decentralized approach towards national integration, efficient and effective governance, creating a sense of belonging at the grassroots. Thus, the local government system was designed to be a means for ensuring effective democracy at the grassroots level because it is the level of government closest to the people and by implication it is the most critical in engendering good democratic cultures and values, effective participation in the process of development at the grassroots with the possibility of filtering up to the national level (Abbas & Ahmad, 2012, p. 98).

Thus local government is seen as both a nursery for democracy and a place for grooming national leaders,

Musa (2001) observes that the requirement for democratically elected councils is clear in the 1999 Constitution but has been turned into something else by state government:

The democratically elected local council is clearly what is envisaged by Section 7 of the Constitution. Yet, the local government council has practically turned into a caretaker council imposed by state governments.... In many cases, caretaker ship is perpetuated through promise of elections which are invariably postponed.... If the outright denial of democratically elected local councils through caretaker committees demonstrates the increasing authoritarian holds of the councils by state governors, the case of those where elections manage to hold does not give cause for cheers. (pp. 9-10)

Senator Uche Chukwumerije, who was elected as Senator in 2003, observes, ‘*of all the motives, primarily economic development, planting democracy at the grassroots is a consistent theme*’. He argues that efforts from 1970 to 1979 focused on freeing local administrations from anti-democratic hurdles and establishing a uniform national pattern of administration, and maintains that ‘*the local government system is and should be the founding blocks of an enduring democracy*’ (Chukwumerije, n.d.)

Abbas (2011) sees local government as a critical factor or structure for the realisation of grassroots democracy in Nigeria. For him;

The system of local government is considered as a lynchpin for the realisation of grassroots democratic politics and rural transformation. Reforms on local government in Nigeria have featured since formal political independence. But the current situation in local government throughout the country is characteristically chaotic as the envisaged primary activities to be performed by them have almost melted away, thus leaving majority of the people completely disillusioned.

The above reflects the dismay expressed by some respondents in this study, particularly in Anambra State where they thought that the Governor, Mr. Peter Obi who resorted to legal battle to claim his mandate, would have conducted a local government election in the state but to no avail. For Yusuf (2008):

Local government councils are expected to play a critical role in the democratization of their administrations and communities.

He attributes the failure of local governments to provide fertile grounds for democracy to state and national governments.

Caretaker Committees and Constitutional Democracy

Although, the caretaker committee system of local government is not mentioned in the Constitution, the system has remained common in the history and evolution of local government in Nigeria. Despite provisions for democratically elected councils in the 1979 Constitution, during the Second Republic in all the states of the federation local governments were run by caretaker committees consisting of party loyalists appointed by state governors. This caretaker model of the Second Republic gave way to the sole Administrator model when the military took power in 1983 (Ogunna, 1996, p. 116).

Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution states thus:

the system of local government by democratically elected local government council is under this constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the government of every state shall subject to Section 8 of this Constitution ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.

However, the Governors of some states of the Federation exploited the loopholes created in Sections 7 and 8 of the 1999 Constitution, and the failure of the Constitution, the electoral laws or even the National Assembly to state the tenure of elected council officials, thus inhibited the development of grassroots democracy. At the time of writing, 25 out of the 36 states of the Federation have local governments run by caretaker committees appointed by the relevant Governors. Hence, 617 out of the 774 local governments in Nigeria are run by caretaker committees, while only the remaining 157 have elected councils.

In addition to Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution, Section 1(2) of the Constitution also states:

The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the government of Nigeria or any part thereof except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.

Sub-section 3 of the Constitution states that:

If any other law is inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution, this Constitution shall prevail, and that other law shall to the extent of the inconsistency be void.

Despite the provisions of the Constitution which the Governors swore to uphold as contained in the seventh schedule to the 1999 Constitution, they have violated Sections 1(1), (2) and (3), and Section 7 of the Constitution. This amounts to acts of gross misconduct. The question is why the state Governors and Houses of Assembly have failed to obey the law? Why have they refused to conduct local government elections? In a democracy, leadership succession is expected to follow some clear process of democracy. Leaders should normally emerge freely through party congresses and general elections but the reverse is the case in selecting local leadership in Nigeria. Even where elections have been conducted, Governors may deliberately force the tenure of local government chairmen to lapse early, to pave way for the Governors to appoint loyalists as caretaker committee chairmen to deliver their local government votes to the ruling party (Abbas & Ahmad, 2012, P. 103).

Quoting Orewa, Aluko (2010) argues that:

A serious point against nominated committees of management particularly in a civilian regime is that the Government party may misuse the system to keep its supporters indefinitely in control of local government. This is to frustrate the opposition parties and use the interregnum to strengthen its party organisations at the grassroots through patronage which is provided by local governments in the form of contracts, job orders, junior staff appointments and promotions and such appointments touch sensitive positions...

The point here is that state Governors can do anything to ensure that their party hangs onto power without leaving any chance to the opposition party.

Senator Uche Chukwumerije points out that:

In the business of election of representatives – government by the people – the most casual observations suggest that the people, the electorates, make no input into local government elections. Recruitment of representatives follows a general pattern nationwide: selection of favourites by a godfather/godmother or a little conclave which exercises proprietary control over a ruling party; next the executive governor which exercises proprietary control over the government machinery (including the electoral regulatory body) gives his final anointing....

In elections, governing state regimes expect their captive local governments to DELIVER their local government constituencies for the ruling state party. In turn the ruling party in the Federal centre expects its installed state governments to DELIVER their state constituencies for the ruling Federal Party. Thus, the chain of mafia-like inter connections in a national network of electoral rigging is rooted in local government cartels which control the grassroots.

The above exposes the nature of party politics in Nigeria and the reason for the lack of constitutional democracy at the grassroots.

Discussing party politics and Democratic Governance in Nigerian Local Government Administration

Nyewusira and Kennet (2012) wrote that:

Participatory democracy and political responsibility promoted by the 1976 Local Government Reforms can only be achieved within the realm of party politics. The control of local government apparatus was now seen as crucial for electoral success of a political party because it provides the necessary grassroots base for effective control of the state and federal government machineries (pp. 164 – 165).

They maintained that the influence of party politics undermines rather than enhances the political functions of local government.

Baadam (2004) further maintains that:

Threats to democracy in the local government system have not come from members of the armed forces who have nothing but contempt for democracy, but rather from professional politicians and groups in the various political parties, who engage in criminal manipulation of the electoral process in order to win elections of the local levels, take power and then manipulate the mechanism of democracy to destroy democracy at the grassroots (p. 16).

Thus explains how politicians who are supposed to be democrats behave undemocratically in an attempt to maintain their hold onto power.

Case Studies of Local Government Caretaker Committees

Nigeria has 36 states, a Federal Capital Territory and 774 local government councils. The 25 states with caretaker committees for local government include: Abia, Adamawa, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Delta, Edo, Ekiti, Gombe, Imo, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Nasarawa, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Yobe and Zamfara. The 157 local governments led by an elected chairmen, represent just 20% of the local governments in Nigeria. Following the House of Representatives' order in 2012/13 that State Governors should conduct council elections, Ogun State conducted council elections, and other states have indicated their readiness to follow suit.

The case study focuses on seven local governments in Anambra, Imo, Edo, and Gombe States, selected to represent different political parties and different geographical areas. Due to the paucity of other research and analysis of the caretaker committees, the analysis is based on responses gathered from interviews conducted and personal observations. Questions explored how the caretaker committee system affected the practice of constitutional democracy and the lives of the local people, and how party politics affected grassroots democracy.

Anambra State: Onitsha North Local Government Council

Onitsha North, Anambra State, is an urban local government with sizeable internally generated revenue (IGR). In Onitsha North 40 people were interviewed, including: 15 local government staff; 5 members of the caretaker committee, and 20 residents in the local government area, including businessmen and public and private sector workers. 37 respondents representing 93% of council and resident respondents (excluding caretaker committee members), expressed their disbelief over the manner in which the Governor Mr. Peter Obi has handled local government elections.

Some of the respondents argued that there is no effective Constitution in Nigeria, and that the Constitution is made for the poor to obey, one arguing that: *“If we have Constitution, why are the Governors not being impeached for violating the Constitution”*. Some 32 respondents representing 80% of the respondents (excluding caretaker committee members) maintained that democracy cannot grow because the people at the grassroots are excluded, and that if you want to be a politician, you have to go to state or federal level because there is no democratic structure at the grassroots.

Most of the respondents do not understand what party politics means, and only saw what is happening as fear of losing grassroots structure. They cited the loss of seats at the Senate and House of Representatives by the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) to illustrate their points. They maintained that if a local government election is conducted that APGA will lose Anambra State.

The respondents were almost unanimous on the lack of impact of caretaker committees on improving living conditions in the area: 38 respondents representing 96% of the respondents said that nothing

was moving in the local governments, neither business activity, nor development projects. A local government officer said that:

We are only here to receive our salary at the end of the month which is paid only when the Governor approves of it.

On the way forward, 38 people (96% of respondents) maintained that things can only improve when local government is freed from state control, and its financial transfer comes directly from the federal government. They argued that local governments cannot execute projects because there is no money for capital development, only for recurrent expenditure and payment of salaries.

Anambra State: Idemili South Local Government Council

In Idemili South, the story was not much different. Unlike Onitsha North, Idemili South is a rural local government with limited internally generated revenue (IGR). 40 people were interviewed including: 15 council staff; 5 members of the caretaker committee and 20 residents. Most of the respondents thought that “*nothing is happening here*”; as one said:

Do you see the politicians here now? You can't see them unless it is during month end when they come to share the little money that comes in.

On constitutional democracy, 32 respondents representing 80% of those interviewed were sceptical, and one said that if this is what is called democracy that it should 'go to hell'. On party politics, 34 respondents representing 85% were critical - typical quotes were as follows:

If this is what is called party politics, it doesn't go well with the type of democracy we know.

Must one party occupy every position?

On the way forward, they thought that states should leave local governments to their own activities, and that the federal government should stop paying local government allocation into the joint account. However, the Governor, officials and the spokesman of the state House of Assembly and caretaker committee members attributed the persistent failure of the state government to conduct local government elections to the destructive activities of opposition parties and several cases on local government affairs pending in courts of competent jurisdiction. They confirmed that as soon as the litigants withdrew their law suits the local government election would be conducted.

Imo State: Ideato North Local Government Council

There is a general feeling of disappointment among the local government staff. Some 35 persons were interviewed including: 5 members of the caretaker committee, 15 local government staff and 15 residents. The respondents at Ideato North LGA maintained that nothing is happening in the area, because there is no fund with which to do anything.

Speaking on constitutional democracy, 28 out of the 35 respondents (80% of the Ideato sample) maintained that what is happening in Imo State is not democracy, as in a democracy leaders are elected by the people.

On party politics, 31 people (90% of respondents) believe that what is happening in Imo is that Governor Rochas Okorocha, elected in 2011, wants to secure grassroots support because his party, APGA lost woefully in the 2007 local government election conducted under Governor Ikedi Ohakim of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). So to ensure of a second term in office, he has to capture the local governments by hook or crook. One of the respondents said that:

All this propaganda he is spreading is nothing. Let him conduct a local government election if he is doing well".

On the impact of the caretaker committee on the living conditions in the area, 30 people (87%) said that the caretaker committees have no impact because they are not doing anything. As one said:

They are not elected by the people. They are not responsible and accountable to the people and they have no money to do anything except to pay salaries of workers.

Most of the respondents in Ideato North maintained that the only way forward is to allow local governments' adequate freedom to initiate and execute projects of their choice based on the need of the localities.

Imo State: Owerri Municipal Local Government Council

There was a different reaction in Owerri Municipal Council, and it was mainly council staff that did not like what was happening. Of the 50 respondents selected for interview: 20 were local government staff; 10 were members of the caretaker committee, while 20 were other residents. Residents were full of praise over what the Governor was doing, and 25 of the 50 respondents (50% in Owerri Municipal Council) believed that local governments could not do what the Governor is presently doing in Imo State, although 80% still expressed reservation about the level of democracy achieved.

In the words of one respondent:

Yes we are in a democracy and things should be done according to the Constitution. The time of the military has gone. We don't have to do something that will bring them back. We have to do things according to law.

On party politics, even though the PDP (People's Democratic Party) government under Ikedi Ohakim, conducted local government elections, there was a general loss of confidence and respondents wanted APGA to continue. In the words of one respondent:

We like it like that, Rochas will continue. From 1999 to 2011, PDP could not achieve what Rochas has achieved within one year.

Edo State: Egor Local Government Council

There is generally different reaction in Edo State, where 40 people were interviewed including: 15 council staff; 5 members of the caretaker committee and; 20 residents. Some 36 (90% of respondents in Egor council) are in support and full of praises for Governor Oshiomhole and his Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).

On constitutional democracy, 36 (90%) argued that it is not only in Edo state that caretaker committees exist. In the words of one respondent:

It is not only in Edo that they have caretakers. Go to Anambra, Abia, Ogun State, even in the North. It is everywhere.

On party politics, the respondents seemed comfortable with the dissolution of the local governments. Some 35 (87%) maintained that instead of PDP coming to power again in the state, caretakers should continue. If it were possible and easy for them to remove the PDP members in the state House of Assembly, they would do that to ensure that the last remnants of PDP in power in the state are totally eliminated. Speaking on the impact of the caretaker committee, one of our respondents said:

They are doing well because our comrade Governor is doing well?.

Edo State: Orhionmwon Local Government Council

In Orhionmwon council area, 30 people were interviewed including: 5 members of the caretaker committee, 10 local government staff, and 15 residents. The responses from respondents in Orhionmwon were similar to Egor. Out of the 30 respondents, 90% expressed confidence in the system irrespective of its constitutionality, as a result of their loss of confidence in the former PDP-led government in the state. Some 87% of respondents also argued that Edo is not the first place that had caretaker committees and will not be the last. However, because Orhionmwon is a rural local government, the few on-going projects are being executed by the state government.

Gombe State: Gombe Local Government Council

In Northern Nigeria there is a general problem of insecurity, and this is one reason given by people in the area for the failure of Governors to conduct local government elections; Gombe State is not an exception. Of the 40 people selected for interview, 10 were members of the caretaker committee, 10 were local government staff, while the other 20 were residents.

However, the research suggests that in Gombe Local Government, people would be willing to exercise their franchise in spite of the security challenges. Some 38 people (96% of Gombe respondents) are totally against the caretaker committees. One of our respondents said:

It doesn't help us at all. We elected them but they don't want us to elect others. It is not good at all.

Another respondent said:

Our democracy is going down because there is no democracy at the base.

On party politics, 34 people (86%) are against the manner in which the chairmen of committees are appointed. They complained that the Governors appoint only their relations, friends and party members as caretaker chairmen and that because one party controls the key machinery of government, checking corruption is difficult. A respondent said that:

If an election is conducted, other parties will win some chairmanship seats and councillorship seats and this will bring competition and there will be development.

Some 28 people (70%) believed that caretaker committees could not have a significant impact on the lives of the local populace because they do not have power and finance to do any significant development projects; 36 people (90%) respondents maintained that nothing short of a competitive election could help in consolidating democracy and institutionalizing democratic culture in the country.

Differences of opinion

The research shows that a majority of the interviewees, mostly career council officials and local residents, thought that the caretaker committee system violates the Constitution, and destroys grassroots democracy. The 45 caretaker committees members interviewed saw the system as legitimate, because the legal framework is provided by the State Houses of Assembly in accordance with section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), and hence the system contributes positively to the consolidation of democracy at grassroots. Responding to the question on how party politics affects grassroots' democracy, 200 respondents maintained that fear of losing an election can make a council boss to work hard, but where there is no competitive election, the chairman is free to do as he likes. Furthermore, the caretaker committee system has become a conduit for corruption by state governors to siphon off council funds.

Seventy-five respondents, who were from Edo and Imo States where people have lost confidence in the PDP, saw nothing wrong with the nature of party politics at the grassroots. All the caretaker committee members who were beneficiaries of the system supported the nature of party politics. Some 205 respondents (mainly council officials and residents) thought that the caretaker committee system did not impact positively on the lives of the local populace, while 70 respondents (mainly caretaker committee members) thought that the system was positive for residents.

Conclusion

The continued existence of local governments as the third tier of government in Nigeria has remained a controversial issue in political debates. The antagonists have accused the local governments of corruption, inefficiency, and ineffective development agendas. In this context the paper views the

caretaker committee as an experiment towards the scrapping local governments as the third tier of government in Nigeria.

The paper first examines the existing literature on democratization of local governments in Nigeria; caretaker committees and constitutional democracy; party politics and; the impact of the caretaker administrations on the lives of the local populace. Based on the existing literature and interviews with 275 people –100 council career officials, 45 members of caretaker committees and 130 residents – across seven local councils in four states, the findings of this paper indicate that there is a general desire of the people at the local government areas for genuine democratic governance. This paper also found that the image of non-performance on the part of local governments created by the state is a mirage and not a reality. The local governments, if allowed and with adequate resources, may be a better driver of grassroots development in Nigeria.

The findings of the paper also show that the caretaker committee system of local government endangers the base of local democracy in Nigeria and cannot impact positively on the lives of the local populace.

Our finding also shows that the nature of party politics pursued by state governors is a major contributing factor to the failure of local governments. Governors use strategies such as dissolution of elected councils to maintain dominance over other parties, thereby creating the needed opportunity for looting local government funds by the states. It is therefore the position of this paper that party politics is at the centre of the failure of local governments to provide for democratic consolidation.

This paper also found that there is a growing political desire for democratic consolidation, which requires democratic structures at the grassroots, and that the overall development of Nigeria is a function of grassroots democracy. The caretaker committee system is unconstitutional, undemocratic and therefore antithetical to any imagined or real development of the grassroots in Nigeria.

Therefore, to make local governments efficient and effective in the discharge of their functions, this paper recommends as follows;

1. That local governments as the third tier of government should be strengthened constitutionally by removing the clause in the Constitution which places local governments under the blanket control of the state governments;
2. The legal provisions for the state / local government joint account should either be abrogated or alternatively, the Constitution should prohibit state governments from making any deductions from the account. This has been a major contentious issue in state–local government relations. According to Uzundu (2011): *‘under the state/local government joint account, only salaries and overhead costs of between three to five million naira are released to local government councils, while the bulk of the funds are retained by the state’*. The

present joint account regime makes local governments orphans and appendages of the state government and subject to all forms of abuses by the governors of various states;

3. Electoral contests at the local level should be made competitive between and or among political parties; chairpersons and members of State Independent Electoral Commission should be appointed from the representatives of registered political parties, civil societies and labour, and funding of the Commission should be placed on the first line charge in order to ensure its independence and financial autonomy.
4. Institutional mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability at the local government level should be put in place;
5. There should be no immunity for a sitting local government chairman.

In conclusion, therefore, the nature of party politics played by the state governors at the local government level in order to maintain power violates democratic principles. It hinders local governments from performing their functions, thereby destroying democracy and development from its base. Competitive elections, political and financial autonomy commensurate with its status as the third tier of government are the essential prerequisites for effective and efficient multi-purpose local government system in Nigeria.

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