

Challenges Of Democratization At The Grassroots In Nigeria: Case Study Of Taraba State

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Abstract:

This paper is concerned with the processes and problems associated with democratization at the grassroots level in Nigeria with particular reference to local governments in Taraba State. The study reviews some basic issues in the democratization of the local government system including the legal framework, the influence of state government and the role of party politics in the local government democracy, and the consequences of these on development initiatives at the grassroots. The findings show that the democratic practices prevailing at the local government level in Nigeria, and Taraba state in particular since 1999 is not in consonance with the general expectations of the citizens and deviate fundamentally from the constitutional ideals for achieving the desired grassroots development in the country. The study reveals that the attitude of the state government towards local government councils, and the interference of the state in the affairs of the local governments have mainly served to limit the capacity of the local governments to effectively discharge their constitutional responsibilities to the grassroots communities. Recommendations are suggested to move the grassroots democracy forward in a more responsive and effective manner.

Key Words: Democratization, Local Government, Grassroots Community, Corruption, Taraba State

1. Introduction

The creation of local governments in Nigeria was deliberately designed to ensure maximum participation of citizens in the development process, promote balanced development so that the third tier of government will be more responsive to the developmental aspirations of local communities. This was therefore a deliberate attempt to inject a decentralized approach towards national integration, efficient and effective governance and 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 (Bashir and Muhammed, 2007). Unfortunately many observers believe that democracy in Nigeria has not thrived at the grassroots level (Lawal and Oladunjoye, 2010; Omadia, 2009; Oviasuyi, 2010; Maurice and Adams, 2012).

As a catalyst for democracy and good governance the local government is expected to serve as a form of political and administrative structure that can facilitate decentralization, integration, efficiency in governance, promote and ensure a sense of belonging at the grassroots. Local government may take different forms all over the world. Whatever form it takes however, the local government is also expected to provide a feedback to the state and National government relying on the opinions and demands of people at the grassroots while at the same time promoting democracy at the local level, and mobilizing human and material resources for the development of local communities. It is no wonder therefore the local government system has been a major characteristic of Nigeria's politics since the colonial period. Over the years following various government reform policies there have been changes in the structure, composition and name of the local system of administration. The 1976 local government reforms carried out by the military administration of General Obasanjo brought about uniformity in the administrative structure of the system.

Laudable as these initiatives may appear towards enhancing the capacity of the local communities for participatory democracy and to bring about greater socioeconomic and political development at the grassroots, the much needed development has continued to elude the grassroots communities in the country. The apparent failure of the local government system to achieve its objectives has been blamed on persistent problems of poverty, ignorance, despondency and political disenchantment among the people. This raises the fundamental questions of

whether true democracy exists at the grassroots in Nigeria and Taraba State in particular. The aim of this paper is to examine the nature, pattern and effectiveness of democratic culture and practices and their implications for sustainable development at the grassroots in Nigeria

2. Research Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to examine the extent to which constitutional democracy and the factor of intergovernmental relations are influencing the process of grassroots democratization in Nigeria and Taraba state in particular.

3. Justification:

It is generally believed and rightly too, that the success of democratic practices at the grassroots is a fundamental requirement for enduring human freedom and effective participation without which the challenges of poverty and ignorance cannot be attacked meaningfully. Governments at both the national, state and local levels are often being accused of (and it so appears that there is) bad governance, lack of accountability and transparency in governance and among political leaders, sectionalism and marginalization of certain groups in the democratic process sometimes leading to frustration and involuntary (forceful) withdrawal from the democratic process by individuals and communities in the country. But the question that continues to be asked is that, how much do we know of the problems threatening democratization at the grassroots? Jega (2011) observed that the practice of democracy in Nigeria is based on a weak foundation, the degree of which we need to investigate. This study we hope shall enhance our knowledge about the problems affecting democratization at the grassroots in Taraba State and therefore serve as a baseline source of information for the process of repositioning our democratic ideals, principles and practices for better governance which can translate into better social, economic and political development of the state.

4. Materials and Methods:

The study is focused on the particular case Taraba State, Nigeria. The state was created in 1991 out of the former Gongola State. It covers a total of 54, 478sqkm land area, (thereby being the third largest in the country). Taraba State is bordered to the east by Adamawa State, bordered to the north by Gombe, Bauchi and Plateau States, bordered to the west by Nasarawa and Benue States and Republic of Cameroon to the south (figure 1). The state has a population of about 2.7 million (2006), distributed in 16 Local government areas. The local government areas are further subdivided into 165 electoral Wards.

The study relies on data drawn from oral interviews and administration of questionnaires in three purposively selected local government area. In addition focus group discussion with members of Taraba State Independent Electoral Commission also served to provide firsthand information about the activities, achievements and constraints of the electoral body.

Three local government areas were systematically selected for empirical survey. The Local government areas include Jalingo in the Northern Senatorial Zone (represent higher order urban local government), Bali in the central Senatorial zone (as semi Urban) and Ibi Southern Senatorial Zone (selected as a relatively more rural local government). This was done to allow for fair representation not only of all the senatorial zones but also the hierarchical levels of the settlement system in the state.

5. Findings and Discussions

5.1 The constitutional bases of Local Governments for grassroots democracy:

The Nigerian constitution has provided for the establishment of democratically elected local government councils in the country. Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution guarantees a system of local governments by democratically elected local government councils. It further entrusted the survival of the local government councils on the shoulders of the state governments where it stated that *“the government of every state shall subject to provisions of section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under a law which provides for establishment, structure, composition, financing and functions of such councils”*. Thus while the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees the existence of a democratically elected Local Government Council in the state at the same time it failed to guarantee autonomy of the local government councils or make such provisions that may shield the local government councils from being direct appendages of the state government. In fact Jega (2011) observed that *“local government authorities are constitutionally placed under the domineering and crippling influence of state governments which are willing to concede limited autonomy to this third tier of government. Local governments therefore operate under the shadow of state governments... ”*

The major instrument for democratization in a polity is the National Constitution, while the agents of the democratic process are the Electoral Monitoring Bodies (EMB) like the INEC and SIEC on one hand and the Political Parties (PPs) on the other. At the local government level the major agents of the democratic process are

the State Independent Electoral Commission and the Political Parties. State Independent Electoral Commissions are the equivalent of INEC for the states. They were established pursuant to the provisions of Section 197 (1) (b) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. They are accordingly charged with the responsibility of undertaking and supervising all elections to the Local Government Councils within the States. However, each State Assembly enacts and passes its own laws to supplement or compliment the provisions of the constitution whenever it pleases them. Consequently the Taraba State Independent Electoral Commission (TSIEC) was set up by the Taraba State Independent Electoral Commission Law No. 6 of 2002. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Part II of the Third Schedule Sections (3) and (4) made provision for the establishment of State Independent Electoral Commission with the following powers:

- i. To organize, undertake and supervise all elections to local Government Councils within the State; and
- ii. To render such advice as it may consider necessary to the Independent National Electoral Commission on the compilation of and the register of voters in so far as that register is applicable to local government elections in the State.

Since 2002 TSIEC had two sets of membership. The first lasted from 2002 to 2011 (9 years) and the current members were appointed by the Governor in 2011. Since 2002 to 2011 the electoral body had seven members drawn from Takum, Donga, Wukari and Kurmi (all in the southern senatorial zone), Zing and Karim Lamido (in the northern senatorial zone) and Gassol which produced the TSIEC Chairman (in the central senatorial zone). Thus the southern senatorial zone which has (6) about 37.5% of the 16 local governments in the state had about 71.5% members drawn from the zone. The central zone with 4 (i.e. 25%) of the 16 local governments in the state technically had 14.3% representation while the Northern Senatorial zone also with a total of 6 (37.5%) local government areas had about 14.3% representation on the Commission. The Commission was reconstituted in 2011 and the membership and spatial pattern of representation changed only slightly. The skewedness in the representation still remains highly in favour of the Southern Senatorial Zone (Table 1).

Thus from 2002 to 2010 representation of the local governments areas on the State Independent Electoral Commission may was skewed in favour of the south. If democracy is about fairness in representation at all levels of democratic institutions then the case of SIEC in Taraba State shows that there is a wide gap between reality and peoples' democratic expectation in the membership and representation on the TSIEC. Thus, both geographical and sectional imbalances in the appointment of members of TSIEC leave much to be desired if fairness is to be claimed in constituting the electoral body.

5.2 Regularity of Elections:

Regularity and credibility of elections is the bane of democracy in any country. From the year 2002 (inclusive) to 2011 (10 years), the state conducted two (2) general elections in 2004 and in 2007 respectively, two (2) bye-elections (one each in Bali and Jalingo Local Government Areas), and one (1) recall election in Lau Local Government. Another (the third) Local Government Council election was conducted in May 2012.

A summary of the 2004 Local Council elections conducted on 27th March, 2004 in Taraba state (table 2) shows that the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) carried away all (100%) of the 16 chairmanship seats and 151 (91.5%) of the councillorship seats contested for in all the local governments of the state. The ANPP won 13 councillorship seats representing 7.8% councillorship seats in six local government areas (i.e. Donga, Gashaka, Jalingo, Karim Lamido, Lau and Zing Local government Areas). The National Democratic Party NDP won only one councillorship seat in Takum Local Government. Thus seven local government areas deviated from the monotony of the pattern of representation that was dominated by the PDP. Four (4) out of the 7 deviant Local government areas were from the northern senatorial zone which also houses the cosmopolitan state capital (Jalingo).

5.3 Voter Registration and Electoral Voting:

Voter registration is a fundamental component of the democratic process. In fact the success of any election depends also on the validity and reliability of the voter register. However, TSIEC does not carry out any voter registration. Rather it relies on the voter register provided by INEC. This is therefore one of the areas of synergy expected between the National and State EMBS.

In 2007 the second ever state-wide Local Government Council Election was conducted in which five political parties participated effectively. These were the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress (AC), Democratic Peoples' Party (DPP), Progressive Peoples' Alliance (PPA) and the Advance National Peoples' Party (ANPP) participated. The local government councils elected in 2007 for Wukari and Karim Lamido Local Governments were however dissolved in 2008 due to some disagreement between the state executive council and the state assembly. Since then the two local Governments remained under Care-Taker Committees appointed by the Governor to oversee the activities of the two local governments pending fresh elections. The dissolved Chairmen went to court and the matter was finally settled and fresh elections were conducted in 2010 for the two Local Government Councils. Like in the previous elections the PDP went away with all the contested seats in the

two Local Governments. It is expected that new elections will hold for the two Local Government Areas in 2013.

During the 2004 local government councils elections the “registered” adult voting population in Taraba State was about 1,012,451 representing about 49.6% of the state’s population. In 2010 (within 6 years) the state’s voter population rose to 1,430,393 representing an absolute increase of about 408,939 voters or 40% (table 3). The average increase in adult voter population in the state between 2004 and 2011 was about 46.38 and the range is from a minimum of about 10% increase in Kurmi Local Government area to a large as 111.2% in Gashaka Local Government Area.

There is a general believe among our respondents that both TSIEC and the Government in office only connive to twist the electoral process in favour of the ruling party. For example about 73.9% of the people interviewed are of the opinion that party primaries to nominate candidates for local council elections were hardly held in any local government election, especially by the ruling party. Rather candidates are nominated through what was described as compromise among party stake holders (not the party congress) who also incidentally are some kind of “godfathers” to some contestant, who may eventually emerge as the nominated candidates. By implication the process does not always involve election by party congresses. In some sense this also amounts to some form of disenfranchisement of the party members, a demonstration of lapse in the internal democracy of the political parties. Thus more often than not, aspirants with closer relationships with party executives are usually favored. This is a common denominator among most political parties in Nigeria.

Voters’ disenchantment with the electoral process at the grassroots is also associated to the non-reliability of the results often declared after the elections. About 67% of the respondents in Bali Local government area, 68% in Jalingo Local Government area and 87% in Ibi Local government area (an average of 73.9% in the state) are of the opinion that nomination of candidates during the last elections at the local government level were not fair for most of the political parties that participated. However, an average of 42.6% of our respondents has the feeling that the election that followed was credible (good). About 20% felt that it was partially credible (fair) blaming the shortfall not on the process of voting but the declaration of results after the votes were counted. On the other hand an average of 36.6% of our respondents believes that the elections were totally incredible (i.e. poor) (table 4). There are variations from one local government to another as exemplified in the case of the three sampled local governments. About 64% in Ibi, 59% in Bali and 56% in Jalingo felt that they will not vote in future elections for various reasons some of which are purely personal.

It is easily claimed that all political parties registered in Nigeria have equal stake in the electoral system anywhere in the country. Regardless of the nature of election being conducted the ballot paper displays the names of all existing political parties. In reality however only a few actually are active and participated in some of the National and local government elections conducted in Taraba state. For example in 2004 only three political parties participated and in 2007 five made their presence felt in the state. The most prominent among the political parties in the 2004 local government elections were the PDP, ANPP, and ACN out of about 33 political parties. In 2007 out of the 50 political parties only PDP, ANPP, AC, DPP and PPA participated in the Local Government elections. In all cases the PDP remained the most dominant and most influential political party in the state. It seems to draw its strength from its large membership, control of the state government machinery, funding by government and its pool of highly placed politicians and business men etc., which other political parties in the state do not enjoy.

5.4 Leadership succession and democracy in at the grassroots

In a democracy, leadership succession is expected or assumed to following some clear democratic process. In fact the whole essence of democracy is about representativeness and accountability in leadership. In this case the freedom to select, appoint or elect leaders is achieved through the interplay of political parties, the electorate and the electoral regulatory agency. Leadership in a democracy should normally emerge freely through party congresses, and general elections. The question however is whether this has been the case in Taraba state since 1999. Omodia (2009) observed that “in a situation where political parties are elitist formed and the support base resides in the elites rather than the people, intra and inter party elections to a greater extent would not be free and fair”. Under this elitist system which characterizes most of the current political parties, nominated candidates for an election may be replaced at will and with impunity often leading to intra-party crises, as well as crises of legitimacy. It is no wonder therefore when Omodia (2009) remarked that poor electoral process snowballing into legitimacy crises is one of the major impediments of an enduring democracy in developing states.

5.5 Impact of the Nigerian Constitution on the leadership at the grassroots:

The local government system as the third tier of government in Nigeria is the product of, and is regulated by the country’s constitution. This fact has been alluded to in section 3.01 above. The constitution in addition to other provisions has provided for the democratic processes necessary to make the system achieve one of its primary objectives of facilitating fairness in representation, accountability of leadership, spatial equity in development for all communities within the local government. Whether these desired goals are being achieved require investigation. In particular, to what extent are the provisions of the constitution being complied with in the process of selecting/appointing leadership into the Local Government Councils in the state since 1999?

The impact of the constitution on LGCs has been enormous. The most important section of the Nigerian Constitution in reference is Section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution which guarantees a system of local governments by democratically elected local government councils. It however did not guarantee autonomy for the LGCs when it further provided that *“the government of every state shall, subject to provisions of section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under a law which provides for establishment, structure, composition, financing and functions of such councils”*, thereby made the local government councils mere appendages of the state government financially, politically and administratively.

Our field investigation reveals that a good number of our respondents (68%) indicate knowledge of and apprehension for section 7(1) of the Nigerian Constitution. Most of them believe it is this section of the constitution that empowers the state governments to exercise control over the local government councils. Consequently the state government uses that to render the local government councils weak and ineffective. They argued that unless that section of the constitution which empowers the State government to exercise control over the LGCs is removed or amended, democracy at the grassroots can never be achieved. It is this provision of the constitution that mars the democratic process of selecting and or electing leadership at the grassroots. The “ruling party dominance” and “good father” syndromes have majorly influenced the selection of candidates for elections at the grassroots. For example no primaries were conducted before filling in candidates for elective positions by the political parties especially the PDP. Instead, the nomination of candidates for chairmanship elections were always decided by fiat of the sitting governor and imposed on the party which in any case is also under the control of the governor.

5.6 Role of state government on the Performance of Local Governments:

Some of the immediate past Local Government Council Chairmen were interviewed on their experiences during their tenure of office and general knowledge about the relationship between the state and local government. The relationship between the local government council and the state government has not and will never be healthy with the current trend of incessant dissolution of local government councils by the state government and the enthronement of Caretaker Chairmen on one hand and the joint account syndrome on the other hand. This is a common feeling among all the Local government council chairmen interacted with who also believe that the two scenarios have firmly entrenched corruption at the local government levels. Budget and budget implementation as well as L. G. C’s access to their own funds has been the most critical issues in the relationship.

The Nigerian Constitution Section 7(3) has vested responsibility on Local governments in the state to “participate in economic planning and development of the area referred to it in subsection (2) of this section and to this end an economic planning board shall be established by Law enacted by the House of assembly of the state”. In Section 7(6), it further provides for the National Assembly to make statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils in the Federation; and the House of Assembly of the State shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government Councils within the state. The question however is whether both the National and State Assemblies do comply with these constitutional provisions as far revenue allocation to local governments in Taraba State are concerned?

The Federal Governments Revenue allocation formula (2004) as approved by the National Assembly has provided a revenue sharing formula that allocated to the FGN 52.68%, States 26.72% and Local Governments 20.6% (Babalola, 2010). Each Local Government council in the state now has a Department of Budget and Planning and the annual budgets of the Local governments are presented and approved by the State House of Assembly for implementation. Although the state government statutorily is expected to make revenue allocation to the local government councils as provided under Section 7(6) of the 1999 constitution, the amount allocated if any can be best described as infinitesimal as exemplified in the case Jalingo Local Government from 2006-2012 (Table 5). Instead, the state government has set up what is popularly called the Joint Account Committee (JAC) to re-disburse federally allocated Local governments shares of the Federal revenue to all the local governments in the state. In Taraba state the agency is called Bureau for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs popularly called the Joint Account Committee, headed by an “Advisor” to the Executive Governor.

From table 5 above the local governments (if the Jalingo example is anything to goby) shows the nearly total dependence of local government councils on the federally allocated revenue which is generally over 80% of the LGCs’ annual revenue. The internally generated revenue (of 0.79% -2.4%) is equally insignificant (even if completely realized) to meaningfully support any planned development.

The joint account concept was initially developed with good intention of helping the state checkmate and exercise control over the way and manner the Local Government Councils spend their allocations. With time the whole idea and concept changed completely as the State Governors began to exploit it to the detriment of the Local Government Councils. For example in Taraba State, the money is kept under the custody of the Bureau for Local Government and Traditional councils. Each month, the Bureau meets to release an amount that it considered sufficient enough to pay the Local Government workers salaries which figure were already known to

the Bureau. The balance (of the federal revenue allocated for the local governments from the Federation account) is left in the coffer of the Bureau so that if any of the local government Councils has any need to finance any project in the council area, it will have to apply to the Bureau stating the details of the project, the cost, purpose, benefits of the project to the community, the contractors that will handle the project etc. The Bureau then scrutinizes the project proposal and (on behalf of the local government council) decides to approve or not to approve the request. Thus, apart from payment of salaries, the Local Council has no direct access to its statutory allocations from the Federal Government.

A cross section of past Local Government Chairmen, Local Government employees as well as some politicians interacted with in the course of this study testified that JAC does not allow for proper accountability in budget implementation and expenditure control (a problem the JAC was initially conceived to eliminate) in the local government system. Extra budgetary deductions from local government finances and the 10% syndrome are among the problems affecting accountability in the system. Consequently the level of corruption in the Local Government Councils was so much that practically nothing happened at the local government level in terms of development. Lack of accountability is therefore a big problem in the management of Local Government finances especially when it comes to the issue of joint account syndrome.

The above situation is further compounded by the unnecessary interference into the local government democratic system by the State Government. Over 76% of our respondents in all the sampled local government area are of the opinion that that the politics of the relationship between the State and LGCs is a complex one. This is such that the State Governors will never allow their own tenure of office to end at the same time with, or before that of the LGA Chairmen. A deliberate situation is usually created by the Governors that will force the tenure of the local government chairmen to elapse before the end of their tenure in office so that they (Governors) can have the opportunity to appoint Caretaker Committees (CTCs) whose members are totally loyal to the serving governor and with the intention that they (Care taker Committees) will deliver the votes of their LGAs (to the ruling party) in a forthcoming election so that the party and the governor's cronies will continue to perpetuate themselves in power. These appointed loyalists are normally the ones that will ensure the reelection of the governors and/or their cronies back to power in the next dispensation. Thus politics of cronyism or god-fatherism is real and indeed a powerful strategy used to twist democracy in favour of a few.

Also the LGA Chairmen's tenure of office varies from one state to another. In Taraba State during the first tenure of the fourth republic, the tenure of local government council was 2 years but later changed to 3 years. Although the country is now in the fourth regime of the present political dispensation (fourth republic), the LGAs in the state have so far conducted only two LGC elections since June 1999. Even those elected hardly served to the end of the tenure and they were dissolved prematurely, or the elections are delayed after the end of tenure of an elected local government council. The short tenure of the appointed LGA chairmen does not in any way allow for meaningful development planning at the grassroots level. For example, between April 2006 and December 2006 (8 months only) Bali LGA had 3 different Council Chairmen (table 5). Jalingo Local government also had 3 Care-Taker Chairmen in three years 2006-2007 (Table 6).

The period 1999 to 2011 is only 12 years. In a democracy where local government administrator are supposed to serve a three year tenure after an election it will be expected that four regimes would have put in place since 1999 to date. However, the cases of Bali and Jalingo local government areas, each of is typical of what happens in the state, are testimony of the frequency of state government interference in the democratic process at the local government level. In Jalingo only three out of 11 Chairmen that served from 1999 to 2011 were elected. Eight were appointed either sole administrator or care taker chairmen (not democratic). The scenario in Bali is quite similar where 10 out of the 14 Chairmen that served within 12 years were appointed by the state government (also not democratic).

5.7 Consequences on grassroots development process

Oviasuyi (2010) observed that successive governments in Nigeria for too long have neglected the rural/local communities, and that little evidence may found to suggest that past policies of governments made significant impact on improving the quality of life of over 70% Nigerians living in the rural areas. Most rural areas in Taraba state lack good water supply, motor-able roads, electricity supply, good health care facilities, good schools etc. These problems are sometimes blamed on lack of effective involvement of the local communities in the development process, and more seriously on lack of good governance. Alila (1998) thinks that the reasons for lack of good governance in rural/local areas include: lack of commitment by government and inadequate development support institutions for the local community, inadequate programs design, poor management/implementation, corruption and the failure of government to tackle the problem of poverty. The introduction of democracy in Nigeria certainly rekindled the hope of the average Nigerian for a better life, because he thought that the legacy of corruption and lack of accountability bequeathed by many years of military rule had been an impediment to the achieving the goals of socio-economic development.

However, the hopelessness seems to remain within even the current democratic dispensation because of the

flagrant abuse of the democratic process and culture engendered by poor governance. The interference of state government in the affairs of the local government councils in the manner found in the state have the potential of breaching lack of initiative in/absence of clearly articulated development plans in the local government system, lack effective budgeting and budget implementation, poor or lack of accountability, decay in physical and social infrastructure, and general underdevelopment and backwardness at the grassroots community level. The implication is that development initiatives are killed and poverty remain endemic, thus failure of democracy.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

If development means attainment of freedom, self-determination, self-reliance and the eradication of poverty among the rural communities in Nigeria, the entrenchment of an enduring democracy is a necessary prerequisite. The local governments as the third tier in the system of spatio-political arrangement of the country is expected to mobilize and harness the local resources within their respective domains and ensure their effective utilization for the socio-economic development of the grassroots communities with the support of the state and federal governments. While it is evident that the federal government support is not in doubt, the role of the state government in complementing the democratic process and activities of the local governments for grassroots mobilization and development has at best remain cosmetic, exploitative and uncomplimentary.

The continues domineering and crippling influence of the state governments against the local governments which have now operated only as an appendage of the state government, makes the Local Government in Nigeria system almost a useless instrument of democratization at the grassroots. The Joint account system of the state government under whatever nomenclature it operates has mainly succeeded in entrenching official corruption and lack of accountability in leadership and by extension poor governance in Taraba State. Both financial and electoral corruptions have become endemic in the system. Subversion of democracy breeds corruption while corruption in turn leads to mismanagement of resources which, results in underdevelopment, poverty and chaos in the polity. While the grassroots communities do not feel adequately if at all represented in the grassroots leadership system, the local administration continue to operate under the shadow of state governments such that they have no certainty of tenure, not able to decide independently about the conception, planning and execution of development projects, have no control over their finances and they could be dissolved by the fiat of the sitting governor without notice. Thus the life and demise of any local government administration is at the mercy of the governor. The implication is that grassroots democracy is constantly being threatened, with irregular elections. Where elections take place at all, they are at best described as “selective appointment” by the governor in power. What is the nature and extent of problem in Taraba State? To correct these anomalies it is necessary for the National Assembly in its constitutional review to consider and grant financial autonomy to the local governments, protect the local government administration from undue interference of the state government, and transfer the powers of SIEC to INEC. Thus it has been observed that unless the LGA’s election is conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the issue of Caretaker Committee will never cease to exist in the country.

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Table 1: Membership of TSIEC by Local government and by period 2002-2011

S/No.	Local Government Area	TSIEC Membership			
		2002-2010		2011-date	
		Number of Members	%	Number of Members	%
Northern Senatorial Zone					
1	Ardo Kola	0	0	0	0
2	Jalingo	0	0	0	0
3	Karim Imido	0	0	1	11
4	Yorro	0	0	1	11
5	Lau	0	0	0	0
6	Zing	1	14.3	0	0
		1		2	22
Central Zone					
7	Bali	0	0	1	11
8	Gashaka	0	0	0	0
9	Gassol	1	14.3	0	0
10	Sardauna	0	0	1	11
		1	14.3	2	22
Southern Senatorial Zone					
11	Dong	1	14.3	0	0
12	Ibi	0	0	0	0
13	Kurmi	2	28.6	2	22
14	Takum	1	14.3	2	22
15	Ussa	0	0	0	0
16	Wukari	1	14.3	1	11
		5	71.5	5	55
Total		7	100	9	

Source: Official Records of Taraba State Independent Electoral Commission (TSIEC, Jalingo)

Table 2: Summary of the 2004 Local Government Council Elections in Taraba State

S/No.	Local Government Area	Elected Chair by Party of affiliation			Elected Councilor (Party of Affiliation)		
		PDP	ANPP	NDP	PDP	ANPP	NDP
1.	Ardo Kola	1	-	-	10	-	-
2.	Bali	1	-	-	11	-	-
3.	Donga	1	-	-	7	3	-
4.	Gashaka	1	-	-	9	1	-
5.	Gassol	1	-	-	12	-	-
6.	Ibi	1	-	-	10	-	-
7.	Jalingo	1	-	-	8	2	-
8.	K/Lamido	1	-	-	8	3	-
9.	Kurmi	1	-	-	10	-	-
10.	Lau	1	-	-	9	1	-
11.	Sardauna	1	-	-	11	-	-
12.	Takum	1	-	-	10	-	1
13.	Ussa	1	-	-	8	-	-
14.	Wukari	1	-	-	10	-	-
15.	Yorro	1	-	-	11	-	-
16.	Zing	1	-	-	7	3	-
	Total	16	0	0	151	13	1
	Percentage (%)	100	0	0	91.5	7.88	0.62

Source: Records of Taraba State Independent Electoral Commission, Jalaingo

Table 3: Voting strength by electoral wards, 2001 and 2010, Taraba State, Nigeria

S/N o.	L. G. Area	Elect. Wards	Voting Units	Voting Strength 2001	Voting Strength 2011	Differen ce	% Change
1	Ardo Kola	10	68	40566	71758	31192	76.89
2	Bali	11	129	63044	87935	24891	39.48
3	Donga	10	107	56817	88626	31809	55.98
4	Gashaka	10	73	33376	70493	37117	111.21
5	Gassol	12	257	113247	129106	15859	14.00
6	Ibi	10	78	44488	54411	9923	22.30
7	Jalingo	10	124	108485	141378	32893	30.32
8	K/Lamido	11	160	84791	123642	38851	45.82
9	Kurmi	10	105	52907	47579	5328	10.07
10	Lau	10	83	38876	61832	22956	59.05
11	Sartdauna	11	171	94566	118530	23964	25.34
12	Takum	11	116	69268	111675	42407	61.22
13	Ussa	11	74	34961	60911	25950	74.23
14	Wukari	10	188	100711	151134	50423	50.07
15	Yorro	11	78	35521	52686	17165	48.32
16	Zing	10	100	49833	58697	8864	17.79
		168	1911	1021457	1430393	419592	46.38%

Source: Official Records of Taraba State Independent Electoral Commission, Jalingo.

Table 4: Sample opinion on Democratic Processes in some selected local Government Areas of Taraba State

L. G. A.	Nomination process		Credibility of the last election				Willingness to vote in future		
	Fair %	Not Fair %	Good %	Fair %	Poor %	Undecided %	Yes %	No %	Not sure %
Bali	33.3	66.7	30.0	23.3	46.7	0	59.0	18.0	23.0
Ibi	13.3	86.7	40.0	20.0	36.7	3.3	64.0	33.0	3.0
Jalingo	31.6	68.4	57.9	15.8	26.3	0.0	56.0	22.0	22.0
Average	26.1	73.9	42.6	19.7	36.6	1.1	59.7	24.3	16.0

Source: Author's Field Work (March 2012)

Table 5: Annual Revenue Estimates of Jalingo Local Government, Taraba State 2006 – 2012

Financial Year	Local (IGR) (Nmill.)	IGR as % Total Revenue (Nmill.)	From State (Nmill.)	From Federation (Nmill.)	VAT (Nmill.)	Total Revenue (Nmill.)	Federal as % of total revenue
2006	10,000,000	1.4	2,017,930	732,393,380	58,960,710	803,372,020	91.64
2008	10,500,000	0.85	3,670,047	1,083,272,223	139,932,810	1,237,375,080	87.88
2010	16,300,000	0.79	0	1,034,517,581	212,199,501	1,263,017,582	81.91
2012	50,000,000	2.4	0	1,696,255,947	315,610,780	2,061,866,727	82.27

(Source: Annual Budget estimates of Jalingo Local Government Council 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012)

(IGR = Internally Generated Revenue)

Table 6: Local Council Chairmen of Bali LGA since 1999 to date

S/No	Nature of Appointment of Local Government Council Chief	Period Served	
		From	To
1	Executive Chairman (Elected)	June 1999	Aug. 2002
2	Caretaker Chairman (Appointed)	Sept. 2002	June 2003
3	Caretaker Chairman (Appointed)	July 2003	February 2004
4	Sole Administrator (Appointed)	Feb. 2004	April 2004
5	Executive Chairman (Elected)	April 2004	April 2006
6	Ag. Chairman (Appointed)	April 2006	April 2006
7	Caretaker Chairman (Appointed)	April 2006	July 2006
8	Caretaker Chairman (Appointed)	July 2006	Dec. 2006
9	Sole Administrator (Appointed)	Dec. 2006	Dec. 2007
10	Executive Chairman (Elected)	Dec. 2007	April 2009
11	Ag. Chairman (Appointed)	23, April 2009	One Day only
12	Executive Chairman (Elected)	April 2009	Dec. 2010
13	Transition Head (Appointed)	Dec. 2010	Feb. 2011
14	Caretaker Chairman (Appointed)	Feb. 2011	Till date

Source: Field survey (from records of Bali Local Government Council)

Table 7: Local Government Council Chairmen, Jalingo Local Government 1999 – 2011

S/No.	Nature of Appointment of Local Government Council Chief	Highest Qualification Attained	Period Served	
			From	To
1	Elected Chairman	O/Level	1999	2004
2	Elected Chairman	NCE	March 2004	March 2006
3	Care-Taker Chairman (Appointed)	PGD	April 2006	July 2006
4	Caretaker Chairman (Appointed)	M. Sc.	July 2006	December 2006
5	Sole Administrator (Appointed)	M. Sc.	December 2006	April 2007
6	Care-Taker Chairman (Appointed)	O/L	April 2006	Jul 2006
7	Caretaker Chairman (Appointed)	O/L	July 2006	December 200
8	Elected Chairman	O/L	December 2007	2009
9	Elected/advanced	Dip.	2009	December 2010
10	Caretaker Chairman	Dip.	December 2010	May 2012
11	Elected Chairman	Dip.	May 2012-	Date

Source: Field survey (Records of Jalingo Local Government).



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the location of Taraba State