

## **POLITICS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CREATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The expediency for the creation of Local Government anywhere in the world stems from the need to facilitate development. It is one of the models through which development can be fostered across all regions. It is an instrument of development aimed at bringing government nearer to the people for greater and equitable participation in the process of governance. However, tremendous changes have taken place at the Local Government level prior to the reform of 1976. The number has increased from 301 in 1976 to its present number of 774. This paper examined the demographic changes which were intended to bring about national development. It begins with the introduction which focused on the nature of the creation of local governments in Nigeria. Followed by an examination of the population of the country and the distribution of the present Local Governments according to geo-political zones, using the elites theoretical framework of analysis. The study found that military efforts in Nigeria's development through the creation of more Local Government councils have been fraught with diverse challenges of ethnic favouritism and outright looting of the national treasury by the ruling elites. The paper therefore, recommends among other things that other development options such as economic viability should be explored if indeed we want to achieve national development when considering Local Government creation in the future.*

**Keywords:** Creation, Development, Implication, Local Government, Politics

### **Introduction**

There was a calculated attempt sealed and delivered by the Nigeria Military Government especially during the reign of General Ibrahim Babangida's regime and that of General Sani Abacha who saw the creation of Local Government as one way of pleasing the Nigeria populace and also to legalize their defacto governments. It is on record that between 1989 and 1991 Babangida's Government created a total of 282 Local Government Council Areas in addition to the 301 that were in existence as at 1976. Abacha's Government again in 1996 created additional 185 Local Government councils bringing the total to its present number of 774. The creation of Local Government and subsequent demographic changes in Nigeria become a veritable tool for ethnic rivalry and struggle for political benefits. The political elite and those at the top echelons in the society see it as a justification for their monthly

returns. Ola & Tonwe (2005) stated that the bizarre scenario was clearly demonstrated by the Governors of Ebonyi and Yobe states who created additional Local Government council areas and later reverted to the old status quo because their monthly allocation were withheld by the Federal Government. Tremendous changes have occurred in the tier of Local Government in the demographic pattern since the 1996 splitting of council areas by the Military government. The implication of splitting one Local Government into two or more units is that it further reduces their population and their economic strength. The 1976 guidelines for the reform of a Local Government has stipulated that a Local Government should have a population which is not less than a hundred and fifty thousand persons (150,000) with the tendency to have up to Eight Hundred Thousand persons in Urban areas (800,000).

However, scholars of local government studies have taken different standpoints on this issue. Some believe that a population of one hundred thousand persons (100,000) to one hundred and fifty thousand persons (150,000) is ideal for any Local Government. Obateru, (1995) has suggested that each Local Government should have one hundred thousand persons to three hundred thousand as maximum (100,000 - 300,000). He maintained that the one hundred thousand should be for rural areas and 300,000 for urban areas. He also suggested two basic factors to be considered in creating any Local Council - The natural resources and living standard of the people: In this paper, it is our opinion that the base population of Local Government council areas should be between Two Hundred Thousand persons to Three Hundred Thousand (200,000 - 300,000) that is, Two Hundred thousand for rural areas and three Hundred thousand for Urban areas because of the tendency to have high population density in urban and low density in rural area. Ezeani (2005) notes that every country in the world has its own system of Local Government and its mode of creation largely depends on its constitutional status, historical structure and to a large extent its level of autonomy. Despite these essentials and variations that may exist in the features across countries and sometimes within country, he stressed that the whole essence of local government councils is for grassroots mobilization and national development. Mackenzie (1961) had earlier advocated this same view that Local Governments exist to provide services which must be judged and measured by National inspectorate based on the services so provided.

Other scholars, such as Osaghae (1986) and Suberu (1991) have suggested that the criteria for Local Government creation should include ethnic affinity, geographical contiguity, population, land area viability of the existing ones, cultural and self-determination. Abu, (2005) expresses regret for the complete absence of these requirements and said most of the agitations are seen as a sort of ethnic political economy strategy which considers the number of local government from each ethnic group as added advantage for the distribution and more equitable share of national resources. This statement was corroborated by Obasanjo, (2003) when he said "Truly there are clear evidences that the creation of Local Government has completely negated the whole essence of 1976 reform guidelines but rather depict a closer expression of patronage by revenue distribution to favour areas of interest group". Omotosho, (2004) notes, that the original criteria for Local Government creation was

derived from minority opposition in their bid to remain relevant in National politics. Abu, (2005) in like manner believes that the fear of domination and accelerated development are particularly relevant in this context. Domination refers to the official discrimination in employment, distribution of social amenities and official infrastructural facilities. Omotosho (2004) believes that once the local government councils are created, they are caught up in daunting administrative challenges and poor infra structural facilities, excessively high wage bills, low level of internally generated revenue, allocation of resources to unproductive capital projects, massive corruption and wastage through inflated contracts and in most cases outright theft from the treasury.

The creation of additional local government areas in a plural federal system is not an aberration in the sense that as posited by Morton (1960), it is difficult to find any governmental activities which does not involve all three of the so-called "levels" of the federal system. In the most local of local functions, law enforcement or education, for example, the federal and state governments play important roles in the development of the local citizens. Development relates to the fundamental human needs because it is about the people, the ability to sustain and meet basic needs of the people; the realization of freedom in every facet of life and governance. National development should result in greater happiness of the people because of their access to basic needs of life. Nigerian circumstance in this context, has witnessed lack of these basic needs of human life despite the increase of local councils created. In all respect and/or perspectives, Local government is the purest central government activity in the conduct of State affairs, for example, the State and Local Government have considerable responsibilities, directly and indirectly but where these Local Governments are financial liabilities which deepen its financial dependency, it becomes counterproductive because national development which necessitated their creation is eventually undermined by absence of local authorities' own revenues (Mawhood, 1983). Therefore, the rationale for fragmenting Nigeria's federal system into several localities was not only to enhance effective decentralization, which is the hallmark of federalism, but also to enhance administrative efficiency, and national development is far from being achieved. All these, compound the original aim of development which the councils were meant to serve.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In a Federal system of government, the existence of Local Government is a core prerequisite for the devolution of powers, the administration of services and the development of the grassroots. In exercising these basic functions and/or requirements of governance, many nations have tended to overhaul their process at the Local Government level. In Nigeria for example, governments have viewed the creation (establishment) of Local Government as a major vehicle for bringing development to the grassroots. Unfortunately, the process for carrying out this creation exercises has often been fraught by very serious challenges.

Essentially, the exercise has often been carried out through Military fiat and decrees. This process undermines basic democratic tenets of equalization, balancing

the rule of law and good governance. Secondly, after their creation or establishment, they became weighed down by lack of funds and excessive bureaucratization. These has not sufficiently allow for effective grassroots mobilization and development. There has always been a gulf between the reasons for establishing Local Government and the actual performance of these bodies. These reasons have collectively called to question the existence of Local Government in Nigeria and are the fundamental issues which have consistently called to question the demands for Local Government as being major vehicles for National development. This paper therefore becomes very pivotal, as it provides alternative variable and imperatives preconditions for establishing local governments in the future.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this paper is to examine the politics of Local Government creation exercise by the past military regimes as an instrument for promoting national development in Nigeria state. The specific objectives are:

- a) to examine the, role of ethnic considerations especially the minority factor and the need to preserve their relevance in national representations.
- b) to examine the impact of personal interests of political elites and the Military in the creation or establishment of these councils and their overriding considerations for statutory allocation and finally to serve as a national call to our States and National Assemblies the need to create enduring Local Government structure in the country.

### **Significance of the Research**

The paper is significant at this time of National discourse on the future of the Nigerian state as represented by the recently concluded national conference (2014). Particularly with the current change mantra under President Buhari regime, the issue of creation of states and Local Government have resurfaced at the national level and this paper present a suitable reference point to policy makers in this regard. Importantly, creations of Local Government have always been a recurring decimal in the history of this nation. It is in this regard that this paper becomes significant as it contributes to the discourse of this pivotal national problematique.

### **Conceptual Clarification/Review of Related Literature**

#### *Concept of Local Government.*

Local Government, according to the United Nations office for public Administration (1976), "is a political subdivision of a state (in a Federal System) which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the power to impose taxes and exert labour for prescribed purposes." The guidelines for the reform of Local Government (1976) defined it as "Government at the local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within a defined area". These powers, as it were, should give the councils substantial control of local affairs as well as the institutional financial power to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects

so as to complement the activities of the state and Federal Government in their areas and to ensure thorough active participation of the people's traditional institutions, local initiatives and needs are maximized.

Akindele, Obiyan & Owoeye (2000) believes that a Local Government is a subordinate administrative system by means of which the affairs of a particular division and subdivision of a country or state are managed. Mackenzie (cited in Gboyega 2000) agreed that Local Government serves as a vehicle for training in national governance. This position is informed by the fact that Local Government stood at vintage point in matters relating to the Community which means a firsthand knowledge of issues which enhances administration at both state and national levels to gain knowledge of the local communities of their needs and priorities.

Mukoro (2000) argued that, Local Government enables services by local importance only to be locally administered, provides education in citizenship, provides training in political leadership, makes available to the central government information about localities which is essential for adequately meeting needs efficiently and minimizing the concentration of political power by diffusing it. He further opined that these value added, promotes democracy and contributes to the development of a democratic climate. Adamolekun (1983) conceived three objectives of Local Government as an agent of development:

- Firstly, the desire to involve citizens at the grassroots in the management of their own affairs
- Secondly, to ensure that basic needs of local citizen are speedily and efficiently met and
- Thirdly, the provision of frame-work for the management of local resources (human and material) are effectively harnessed and put into productive use for the good of the people.

Ola (1984) also identifies three schools of thought in his functional responsibilities of Local Government. These are the Democratic, Functional and the Development schools. The democratic participation school holds the view that, Local Government functions to bring about democracy and to afford the citizen the opportunity of political participation, political socialization and educate citizens. The democratic and participatory role of Local Government establishes a base for future political actors and leaders that aimed towards national development.

This school of thought according to Ola (1984) places emphasis on how in the developing world Local Government can be an effective agent for better life because it helps to assert governance at local level and thus contributes to national development. Thus, he emphasized about the integration of the functional school to evolve the functional approach which assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of Local Government as a tool for development process. He then, suggested two criteria through which functional approach can be used as general category and developmental category. Under general category he identified Democratic Ideas, Political Participation, Protective Service and Infrastructural Services as constituting the major functional items of Local Government. Under the development category,

he identified National integration, social, economic development and manpower resources development. Accordingly, President Babangida (1992) put it aptly; when he said that growth points must emerge from Local Government areas and provide the much needed push to activate and energize productive activities in rural Nigeria and to reverse the phenomenon of rural urban drift.

#### *Evolution of Local Government in Nigeria under the Military Regimes*

During the regime of President Obasanjo in 1999, the Lagos State government created additional 37 local governments without bothering to comply with the procedure for such action as laid and spelt out in section (3) and (5) of the constitution of Nigeria 1999, such creation or establishment of additional councils is constitutionally *void ab initio* unless it is ratified by Nigeria's National Assembly and this was not done before and after the creation. The 1999 constitution clearly stipulates that all federating states in Nigeria can initiate creation of additional local government councils. However, if it becomes necessary, it must be done in consonance with the National Assembly. In principle therefore, it means states can create 'additional local councils provided it follows the right/due procedure and processes for such actions.

Governor Tinubu of Lagos state had said that the creation of additional 37 local governments which were later called local council development areas was to pave way for development in the local areas. The politics that witnessed the creation of these councils remains unabated even in the sphere of managing the councils. Section (7) of the 1979 constitution provided for democratic elected local government councils for the country, unfortunately the Alhaji Shehu Shagari regime (1979-1983) neglected this constitutional provision. There were no elections held and sole administrators were appointed.

The Muhammadu Buhari regime (1983-1985) introduced certain reforms aimed at making Local Governments responsive, such reforms includes the increase of the statutory allocation from 15% - 20% and re-directed the allocation to the councils without passing through the state Governors. The outcome of all these reforms was never implemented so as to benefit the local government councils. In this regards it is pivotal to emphasize therefore, that the inter-governmental relations between the Federal, State. and Local Government has been characterized by both cooperation and conflict; it has been more of conflict than cordial- a connivance that reminds us of the days of zero allocation and the outright diversion of Local Government funds by the State Governors hence direct allocation from the federation account to the Local councils cut across the reforms of President Babangida and that of Buhari regime. In Ondo state for instance, there was an this unholy alliance between State Governor and Local councils in the state, where the State Governor constitutes Joint Action Committee, tagged 'JAC' where Federation Allocations to local government are first deposited into a particular ad hoc account before calling for the committee meeting. The concept of Sole Administrators which was the doctrine of the Military which was again cherished by the political elites was undemocratic and as such consultation and the building of consensus were jettisoned

and the whole essence for the creation defeated. This situation is largely the same in almost all the 36 states of the Federation currently. Local councils cannot pay staff salaries for upwards of six to ten months.

*Local Government and Development at the grassroots*

In this paper, we argue that continuous fragmentation of the country through the establishment and/or creation of more Local Governments further weakens the power and prowess of the nationalist elites. The nationalist elite are to channel the pathway to national development but are being forced to become sectional leaders as different Local Governments was created for them where they now administer their influence and power. This outright compensation of the political elite in turn reinforced ethnicity, regionalism and religious conflicts as these sentiments were often aroused in the competition for power, materials and privileges. It is in this contention that, Ohwona (2005) opines that, it is not the farmer's son that becomes the chairman of these newly created councils but "the Minister's son, the Ex-Governor's cousin, loyalist and the top Military errand boy".

Thus, Abu (2005), posits that, these councils established by the Military have produced more absurdities such as the numerous resultant artificial boundaries. These boundaries for him, in most cases had ended up dividing people of the same cultural affinity; some were merged with traditional hostile neighbours in the strange wedlock. Examples are, Jos North and South Local Government in Plateau State, Ife-Modakeke in Osun State, Zango-kataf in Kaduna State, Ogbe-Ijoh-Itsekiri in Delta State and the Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra State, among others. This same scenario played out itself in the choice of locating the Local Government Headquarters of most of the newly created councils. Many see the siting of the administrative Headquarters in an area as one way of having direct control to the allocation that come to these councils. It has further helped to fuel rivalries and discord as particularly noticed in Warri south-west local government in 1997 where the local government headquarters was moved from Ogbe- Ijoh an Ijaw community to Ogidigben an Itsekiri community. The aftermaths of these vested interests is better imagined than experienced.

Accordingly, Mukoro, (2013) maintained that, politics in this sphere is not a recent phenomenon and that right from the 1950s, an attempt was made to democratize local administration into modern participatory form of grassroots self government the exercise he observed was vitiated by the omniscient powers of the regional parties. An account by Dudley, (1981) has it that at the end of the 1950s not only had the initial structures been changed, but political pressure to have local authorities function as voting machines for ruling parties had led to most elected councillors being suspended and in their place caretaker committees composed of government nominees substituted. Local participation had been made to give way to direct administration by the State government ministries. This has been the recurring political trend in this tier of government. It is in this regard that, we argued that, this can be changed or improved upon if and only if the State houses of assemblies are ready to create/established Local Government Council through the constitutional

provisions and checkmate the Governors from interfering with council funds. Certainly, this can guarantee sustainability of development efforts generally at the grass-root level.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopted the elite theoretical framework of analysis to contextualize the politics of local government establishment or creation and its implication for National Development in Nigeria. Accordingly, Ikelegbe, (1996) opine that, the elite theory holds the view that public policy reflects the values and preferences of the elites rather than the demand of the masses. There is a general consensus among the elite on the survival and stability of the society and its fundamental values. It is based on self vested interests in the protection of this status quo. However, to preserve itself and to avoid changes, it concedes to some welfare politics and public demands. Hence the creation of Local governments in Nigeria can be describe as that of Military conspiracy which was aggravated by the ruling political elite and their cohorts in their desire to remain relevant in the sharing that comes from these councils at the end of every month.

The political elite are in minority, they are very organized in every facet of life. They comprises of superior individuals who are intellectuals and have economic power hence in creation of Local Government, the political elite were able to use their economic power and intellectual ability to create councils in their communities. Some of them even served in the committees that made the recommendations.

The elite position is controlled through three inter -related factors,

- i) Factors entailed in the recruitment
- ii) The structure of the elite group and
- iii) power distribution among the elites.

It has been argued that with these factors the Military were able to distribute the councils to their zone and the states where their political friends originated from at the detriment of others in the federation. Thus, Mosco (1939) referring to developed and developing societies argued that,, in every society there exists two classes of people - *the class that rules and the one that is ruled*. He is of the view that the class that is ruled as represented by the masses is atomized, not organized for real political action hence it still help to preserve the values and preferences of the elite. This singular factor accounted to a very large extent the prolonged Military rule in Nigeria as all Local Government created from 1976 to date are products of Military regimes.

Ikelegbe (2013) noted that, based on these development in Nigeria, politics have revolved around the tripod of three ethnic nationalities-The Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo, hence they were highly favoured at the expense of other ethnic congregations in the Nigeria State. Looking closing at the structure of Nigeria Military and the factors that promotes elitism, It is therefore clear that the past Northern Military leaders have deliberately created more councils for their zones than any other zone in the Federation, an arrangement where ethnic considerations



are parameters for Local Government creation development cannot be achieved. This has helped to create more problems for the State than development. One great disadvantage of this theory is that it helps to segregate the society on the basis of income, power, education and professionalism.

### **Implications of Politics of Local Government Creation for National Development**

This research paper is an historical analysis. It relied mainly on secondary data of published works. The Nigerian states is structured into six political zones (Geo-Political Zones), this has enabled us to access each Local Government in the state and the population as shown below in table 1-6. The population figures is as published by 2006 NPCs report.

**Table 1: North-Central Zone**

| S/N            | States                          | LGA        | Population        |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1.             | Benue state                     | 23         | 4,253,641         |
| 2.             | Kogi state                      | 21         | 3,314,043         |
| 3.             | Kwara state                     | 16         | 2,365,353         |
| 4.             | Nasarawa state                  | 13         | 1,869,377         |
| 5.             | Niger state                     | 25         | 3,954,772         |
| 6.             | Plateau state                   | 17         | 3,206,531         |
| 7.             | Federal capital Territory (FCT) | 4          | 1,406,239         |
| Total number = |                                 | <b>119</b> | <b>20,369,956</b> |
| % of LGAs =    |                                 | <b>15</b>  |                   |

**Source:** The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

**Table 2: South-East Zone**

| S/N            | STATES        | LGA         | POPULATION        |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1              | Abia state    | 17          | 2,845,380         |
| 2              | Anambra state | 21          | 4,177,828         |
| 3              | Ebonyi state  | 13          | 2,176,947         |
| 4              | Enugu state   | 17          | 3,267,837         |
| 5              | Imo state     | 27          | 3,927,563         |
| Total number = |               | <b>95</b>   | <b>16,395,555</b> |
| % of LGAs =    |               | <b>12.3</b> |                   |

**Source:** The Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

**Table 3: North-East zone**

| S/N | STATES  | LGA | POPULATION |
|-----|---------|-----|------------|
| 1   | Adamawa | 21  | 3,178,950  |
| 2   | Bauchi  | 20  | 4,653,066  |
| 3   | Borno   | 27  | 4,171,104  |
| 4   | Gombe   | 15  | 2,365,040  |

|                |        |            |                   |
|----------------|--------|------------|-------------------|
| 5              | Taraba | 16         | 2,294,800         |
| 6              | Yobe   | 17         | 2,321,339         |
| Total number = |        | <b>116</b> | <b>18,984,299</b> |
| % of LGAs =    |        | <b>15</b>  |                   |

**Source:** The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

**Table 4: North-West Zone**

| S/N            | STATES  | LGA          | POPULATION        |
|----------------|---------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1              | Jigawa  | 27           | 4,361,002         |
| 2              | Kaduna  | 23           | 6,113,503         |
| 3              | Kano    | 44           | 9,401,288         |
| 4              | Katsina | 34           | 5,801,584         |
| 5              | Sokoto  | 23           | 3,702,676         |
| 6              | Zafara  | 14           | 3,278,873         |
| 7              | Kebbi   | 21           | 3,256,541         |
| Total number = |         | <b>186</b>   | <b>35,915,467</b> |
| % of LGAs =    |         | <b>24.03</b> |                   |

**Source:** The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

**Table 5: South-South Zone**

| S/N            | STATES             | LGA         | POPULATION       |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 1              | Delta state        | 25          | 4,112,445        |
| 2              | Akwa- Thorn state  | ' 31        | 3,902,051        |
| 3              | Cross Rivers state | 18          | 2,892,988        |
| 4              | Bayelsa state      | 8           | 1,406,239        |
| 5              | Rivers state       | 23          | 5,198,716        |
| 6              | Edo state          | 18          | 3,233,366        |
| Total number = |                    | <b>1232</b> | <b>1,044,081</b> |
| % of LGAs =    |                    | <b>16</b>   |                  |

**Source:** The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

**Table 6: South-West Zone**

| S/N            | STATES      | LGA        | POPULATION        |
|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1              | Lagos state | 20         | 9,113,605         |
| 2              | Ekiti state | 16         | 2,398,957         |
| 3              | Ogun state  | 20         | 3,751,140         |
| 4              | Ondo state  | 18         | 3,460,877         |
| 5              | Osun state  | 30         | 3,416,959         |
| 6              | Oyo state   | 33         | 5,580,894         |
| Total number = |             | <b>137</b> | <b>27,722,432</b> |
| % of LGAs =    |             | <b>17</b>  |                   |

**Source:** The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

Based on the information in tables 1-6 respectively, it is manifestly clear that most of the Local governments created were not so created for national development because one of the most critical and important considerations for Local government creation/establishment which is the size of the population was not taken into consideration. As indicated in table (6), we observed that Lagos State has almost same population with that of Kano state of 9 million people but the Local Governments in Kano State are far more than that of Lagos State as Lagos has 20 and Kano 44. In fact Lagos State at the close of the first Republic had four political divisions while Kano had two political divisions. The new Kano now has 44 councils while Jigawa that was exercised out of old Kano has 27. Nasarawa state with almost same population with Bayelsa with 1,869, 377 and 1, 406, 239 respectively also shows a great disparity of 8 Local Government for Bayelsa and 13 for Nasarawa The population of Delta State is more than that of Imo state yet Imo has more Local Governments than Delta State. We recall again that old Bendel State had 19 Councils but when the Military in 1991 created Edo and Delta each now has 25 and 18 Councils respectively.

Again, Akwa-Ibom State with population of less than four millions also has 31 Local Governments. This disparity cuts across every zone of the federation and they have more of federal presence than others in terms of representation at the Federal House of Representatives, agencies and other federal institutions. In table (4), we further displayed that, the North-West Geo-Political Zone shares the highest percentage of 24.03 of the total Local Government in the Federation with the presence of three new states that were created in the 1990s in the zone. Again, it revealed that the entire Northern zone of North central, North-East and North-West have a total of 54.0 Local Governments while the remaining zones of the Federation of South - South, South -West and South - East shares a total of 46.0%.

Using our population standpoint as our model of analysis, many states of the federation have genuine cases for their agitation for more local governments such states includes, Lagos State, Kaduna State, Delta State, Kogi State and Ondo State. Again, there are States that relatively do not deserve the number of local governments that they currently have as shown from our population figures presented.

The implication of this arrangement is a further call for the country to look for an alternative means of development because in the distribution of these Local Governments their economic viability was not even considered at all, the internally generated revenue (IGR) of most of the councils is equal to nothing excepting few States like Lagos State, Delta State, Bayelsa State and Rivers State.

Sanubi (2011) clearly provides an analysis of the national revenue sharing among the 3-tier of government between 2002 and 2006, noting that the analysis using the number of Local Government council as instruments for revenue acquisition from the National account is crucial. He believes that the higher the number of local council units, the higher the cumulative revenue receipts accruing to the respective states having such number of councils. He further observed that by the last exercise of Local Government creation in 1991, several Northern States got upwards of 33 local government units (such as Katsina state with 34, Kano state with

as much as 44) far above those States in south. Some debatable criteria (such as land mass, population and geographic spread) were provided as excuse for the seemingly lopsided Local Government council creation by then military government of Ibrahim Babangida.

From our analysis, it is pivotal to state that, all the States that have gained more Local Governments had neither gotten extra landmass nor additional economic potentials rather were done by the Military all for political, greed and ethnic considerations and these certainly cannot stimulate and/or engender national development.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The attempt for the military Government to legalize their stay in power through the creation/establishment of more Local Government councils was the centrifugal force that activated the prebendal political setting in Nigeria where emphasis and pressure was more on the state for the provision of all social-economic activities for the individuals and groups.

Our analysis in this paper has clearly revealed that states like Kano, Imo, Osun, Nasarawa and others that had upward review of Local councils have not made any difference in terms of development. Problems of poor infrastructural development, lack of social amenities and poor revenue generation still hinder development in these areas just like other states that did not gained additional councils, they still depend on the federation for statutory allocation every month for running the councils.

Be this as it may, it is our conviction that development cannot be achieved in an arrangement where personal gains are overtly placed above national interest. This was the over-riding issue in the creation of these local government councils especially during Babangida and Abacha's regimes because the key factors of economic viability, population which are important variables for creating Local councils were set aside, and jettisoned. Thus, this situation has generally occasioned the lack of national cohesion, integration and unity in the Nigeria Federation.

### **Recommendations**

Taking a holistic approach on the Local Governments created and/or established since 1989 till date and their implications for National development, Nigeria still suffer from fundamental Nation building issues such as wealth and resource distribution, ethnic and religious conflict, and failed governing institutions (Nyan, 2010), Africa countries including Nigeria operate systems and institutions that exist as a by-product of colonial rule that were designed to create rivalries and distrust among groups. Even though, we have one thousand Local government councils today as a catalyst for national development, we may not still have the needed development. Given this situation, we therefore recommend the following, as possible solution to the problem:

- i) Economic viability should be used as one yardstick for creating any Local Government in the country rather than land-mass and geographic spread.

- ii) States should be allowed to exercise their constitutional rights as it affects Local Government creation. It will further help them to determine the number of Local Government they can care for.
- iii) Again, there is the need to revert to true federalism; this will enable them to generate more revenue for themselves and the federal government. It will further help to discourage rural drift and reduce urban congestion. Finally, the institutional guidelines as enumerated in the 1976 reform to Local Government should be strictly adhered to.

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