

Political Economy Essentialness of Local Autonomy for Nigeria's Optimal Development Beyond COVID-19: Sacrosanctity of the Bottom-up Approach

Ikemefuna Taire Paul Okudolo

Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in African Studies, ILMA Entity & School of Government Studies, Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, Mafikeng

Corresponding author: ikemefunapaul@yahoo.com/ 34323503@nwu.ac.za

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5910-5080>

Doi:10.5281/zenodo.5807988

Abstract

In this paper, I hypothesize that true, optimum, all-inclusive and comprehensive development cannot materialize in Nigeria, and also in the aftermath of COVID-19, without functional local autonomy in place. The kind of local autonomy envisaged and preferred is whereby local government authority enjoys unencumbered financial, functional, political and administrative self-determination to deliver its developmental mandates. Deriving from a critical theory valuation of the bottom-up stratagem to development, I argue that underdevelopment persists in Nigeria mainly because the local governments are denied self-government in these policy domains amongst others: a) superintend their fiscal affairs; b) determine the trajectory of grassroots democracy; c) delineate the best possible administrative structure, strategy and arrangement to actualize chiefly local economy and socio-political advancement programmes; and d) carry out constitutionally allotted functions of truly a local nature that generate worthwhile monetary earnings. Based on the aforesaid, I construct an abstract politico-constitutional model coined "model for guaranteeing local autonomy in the Nigerian federalism". The paper holds the belief that concretization of the constructed model in the realpolitik of Nigeria will prompt accelerated ripple effects on the course of advancing ideal development in the country. It notes that underdevelopment will linger and further deepen in Nigeria if denial of local government autonomy in the intergovernmental relations developmental schemes - which negates their third-tier status - keeps on. It concludes that the unrelenting dominance of local government affairs in Nigeria, especially by the state governments, will make the all-encompassing development of the country a pipe dream.

Keywords: Local autonomy; 1999 Constitution of Nigeria; self-determination/self-government;

Introduction

My point of departure is the notion validated by John Stuart Mill's (1806 – 1873) utilitarian philosophy that the political economy of development is best served with the practical involvement of autonomous local governments in the process. By so, Mill's utilitarian philosophy holds that local self-government's input in development portends an enhancer of potential to produce utmost good and positive outcomes and advancement to national development through the intergovernmental relations process of development administration (cf. Thompson, 1976 about Mill [1861]). In this sense, the

political economy essentialness of local autonomy operationalizes to imply the optimal social, economic, political developmental standing of the Nigerian state derivable from local autonomy's visible and constructive contribution to outcomes in the development trajectory. Contextually, therefore, the one sense political economy is used in the paper is not about analysis of the nature of the Nigerian state and its interactions with market forces of development, but more specifically about enduring interrelationships between the higher tiers (particularly the state governments) and the local government sector for the attainment of most favorable inclusive development of the Nigerian society (Diejomaoh & Eboh, 2010; Ohiomu & Oluyemi, 2019).

There is a recurring assumption, albeit the operationalization of local autonomy in the paper, that the concept denotes partial not full, sovereign or total self-government for Nigerian local governments. Indeed, given the necessity for intergovernmental relations in the national development trajectory of a federal state, which is often designed along with pyramidal and hierarchical structure with local governments at the bottom echelon, accordingly, it seems reasonable to assume a quasi-sovereign status of local autonomy (Agranoff, 2006). Because a universal ideal cum conceptual standard of local government autonomy is yet to exist or persist (see Lake, 1994; Clark, 1985; *et al*), I concur therefore with the postulation of the sociological school of federalism about what should constitute an ideal form of local autonomy *state qua state* that is best suited to it. This school advances the notion that every social system fashions out its manifest institutional system, process, procedure and environment of local autonomy as shaped by its unique socio-political and economic strains, variables and factors (Lobao, 2016; Benz & Broschek [eds.], 2013). This above notion is why Jinadu (1989) subscribes to the view that the Nigerian theory of federalism *a la* local autonomy reflects the interrelationships between the sociology of Nigeria's political system and the constantly fluctuating interests and consociational arrangements of the hegemonic elites.

In essence, specific to Nigeria, there likely exists a correlation between social, political and economic variables such as the character of politicking and political culture, leadership mindset, political corruption in intergovernmental fiscal sharing and the culture of intergovernmental power relations with the degree, denial or otherwise of local autonomy permissible to be. By this view, the paper proposes in concord with Woodside (1990) that the ideal state of local autonomy should enable an extension of local self-government to garner a capacity to local governments to truly superintend the construction and re-construction of grassroots development. Expectedly, it is the grassroots advances instigated by local governments that customarily transcends upwards to add value to national development. In short, although Nigerian local governments ought to be so structured to be quasi-sovereign political entities, they should be constitutionally recognized as a tier and expectedly to enjoy constitutional allotted functions, revenue sources and have the power to shape operating administrative structures best suited for them. However, quite often in the Nigeria case, the unfortunate thing is that the same constitution that defines the processes of federal-

state-local intergovernmental relations for countrywide development essentially relegates the autonomy of Nigerian local governments subject to legislations chiefly of the state governments (Agunyi, Ebirim & Odeyemi, 2013).

As a consequence of the aforesaid, and considering the language of Nigerian constitutional arrangements that influence the degree of local autonomy in play, perhaps, with a sense of conviction, it appears that the root cause of underdevelopment of Nigeria lies not in the formulation of ineffectual development plans, but more as a result of suffocation of local self-government and the denial of local autonomy to prevail over its jurisdiction in the intergovernmental development relations process (Akpan & Ekanem, 2013). This paper attempts to concretize the belief that Nigeria's underdevelopment persists due to the subordination of local government autonomy in the intergovernmental relations system in tandem with the development administration of the country. The paper set out in this intellectual excursion by seeking first to elucidate the bottom-up theory *a la* development, thereafter, explore the politico-historical and constitutional dimensions of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria that produces enduring problems that sustain dysfunctional local autonomy and yields immanent contradictions of development. It is to be noted that terms like local government autonomy, local self-government and autonomous local government can be interchangeably used for local autonomy and they all denote and connote the same sense.

About Bottom-up Theory

The bottom-up theory assumes that a basic and essential building block for anything developmentally worthwhile across different spheres to happen can only be promoted if it first permeates at the grassroots and then after ascends upwards (Keuffer & Horber-Papazian, 2020). For instance, in the democratic development sphere, the likes of Dellavalle (2017) and Jacob, Gerber and Gallaher (2018) hold the belief that no country can be truly democratized if her local democracy is incredulous and not driven by the grassroots stakeholders. According to Shipan and Volden (2006), the national antismoking laws of the U.S.A. are driven more by policy mechanisms at the local government environments than policies by the federal or state administrations. Meaning that, according to the bottom-up theory, rigid complementarities exist between the roles of local government and the conditioning of the prevailing state of national development. The bottom-up theory hence is to be understood as evoking a sense of strategy and approach to interrogate local autonomy issues is societal transformation. Indeed, the theory's application shows it possesses prescriptive, normative, and reformist constituents. Also, Diseko's (2014) study shows that the bottom-up theory has a significant impact on top-down approaches to development. The top-down approach induces the feeling of development planning and execution by higher tier governmental officials even for grassroots areas which have often produced significant failings to policy implementers to fully grapple realities of local areas. But Jacob, Gerber and Gallaher (2018) and Dellavalle's (2017) study show that a bottom-up approach to grassroots

development stimulates higher levels of participatory governance that is also needed to improve national development planning and administration.

What this indicates is that a key import of the bottom-up stratagem, approach and theory to development revolves around constructive incorporation of local self-government beyond the transformational change of the grassroots. All in all, our theoretical framework of analysis is simple to attempt to optimally fine-tune the development of the national domain. Literature indication flourishes that the top-down approach is akin to centralization while the bottom-up approach is analogous to decentralization (Enemuo, 1999). Whereas, failure of the centralism ideology (i.e. top-down approach) to produce successful development dynamics in vastly underdeveloped social systems like Nigeria has much to do with the demotion of local autonomy (bottom-up approach) in the intergovernmental development relations processes in the country. Deducing from the above view, Fukuyama's (2004) thesis, therefore, holds sway that transition from top-down to a bottom-up approach, as a development-inducing stratagem, is in line with the "new institutionalism" that presupposes that national development advancement is more assured when local autonomy persist as both an agency and structure in the development-building block for society's growth. Thus, Keuffer's (2018) views hold water that application of the bottom-up theory in the local autonomy *a la* national development discourse is reasonable. Perhaps, by deductive reasoning, therefore, well-institutionalized local autonomy efforts in grassroots development will go a long way to provide for sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Historicizing Local Government in Intergovernmental Relations in Nigeria

Local Autonomy Dynamics Before 1979

The recurring variable or factor that arises from our treatise thus far is the problem of absence or lack of local autonomy. Of all the problems bedeviling optimum development to be sustained in Nigeria, clampdown on local autonomy by the states' tiers in the intergovernmental relations schemes for Nigeria's general development seems to be predominant. However, it is pertinent to try to know whether local autonomy has ever been a consideration to realize the finest development in Nigeria at all? To the layman, this question may seem unnecessary as local governments have never really been the big deal for defining the character of grassroots democracy how much more grassroots development. Except beyond the concern of electorates knowing the regional/state governments' pre-ordained candidates that eventually won, everything about the process of electing local representatives is usually by the dictation of the ruling state party. At no time has grassroots democracy or even grassroots development enjoyed considerable determination by local autonomy in Nigeria.

It is well known to the initiated political scientist that Okonjo (1974) is correct to posit that the colonialist British administration's adopted Indirect Rule system in Nigeria itself marked the beginning of the overthrow of local autonomy in amalgamated Nigeria. This came about by the relegation of the aboriginal traditional-indigenous local administrations' authority over grassroots developmental affairs to the centralized

control and direction of the central colonial government. In whatever way one decides to see it, prevalent impressions are not opposing the postulation that colonialism of Nigeria laid the foundation for the desecration of local autonomy in the development trajectory of the entire country (Post & Vicker, 1973; Dudley, 1982; see also Akinboye & Anifowose, 1999). From the 1912 Order-in-Council which heralded the 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria, the 1922 Clifford, the 1946 Richards Constitutions through to the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, the British colonial government practiced the unitary system. This implies that centralism and not decentralization was the order of planning and administration of development policy decisions. It is worthy of note that local autonomy is an anathema in a unitary-centralist system as the concept/notion is antithetical to the centralization ideology (Ozman, 2014).

Conversion to the federal system during colonial Nigeria through the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution did not abate the diminishment of local autonomy (Report of the Political Bureau as produced by the Directorate for Social Mobilization [MAMSER] as cited in Akinboye & Anifowose [1999]; see also Iyoha, 1996). Rather than allow decentralization ideology to prevail which is a core principle of the federalism system, the colonial 1954 Constitution of Nigeria instead decided for local autonomy as a residual function of the regional/state governments. With this constitutional change policy, the regional administrations then continued to practice intergovernmental developmental relations with local governments based on unitary principles. This suggests that the degree of local autonomy preferred for grassroots development then was fundamentally dictated by the regional/state governments instead of being led by the local governments themselves (Iyoha, 1996). What this meant is that even the adopted federal system of Nigeria that supposedly *ab initio* is expected to promote local autonomy in the development process defiled granting local autonomy a pride of place in that functional area of intergovernmental relations (Okudolo, 2017).

Researches on Nigerian political and historical development note that the local government autonomy reforms of the 1950s - across the three formally acknowledged Northern, Western, Eastern regions of Nigeria then - were fashioned under a federal paradigm. But despite this, local autonomy was no better-off during this epoch (Yahaya, 1989). According to Yahaya (1989: 233), those 1950s reforms echoed the "prevailing network of class and factional alliances at the regions" and that the prevailing political culture furthered the subordination of local autonomy more in the intergovernmental development relations process. During this so-called reform era, the Northern Region retained its selective representative Native Authority System, while the Western and Eastern Regions preferred and operated the elective representative system into multi-layered hierarchical local government structures such as county-municipal-local council stratum of which credibility of the local polls were grossly inadequate. Despite Gboyega's (1987) stats that as of 1960 in Eastern Nigeria alone, there existed over 2 municipal, 107 county and 870 local council governments, Yahaya (1989: 237) comes to conclude that all of the Nigerian local governments in the aforesaid epoch were not fit to be conceived

as a tier because they completely lacked autonomy especially minutely to administer grassroots socio-economic and political development.

Iyoha (1996) holds the view that military rule in Nigeria did more to advance local autonomy than the civilian regimes before the Second Republic (1979-1983) but that such advances were more of on paper than in real terms. Although, it is a strongly held belief that military regimes cannot promote local autonomy because its philosophy is mutually exclusive to the nature of military centralism (Akinboye & Anifowose, 1999). Hence, we need not be detained by all the policy measures under the various military rulers from 1966 before 1979 to enhance Nigerian local governments' autonomy for supposedly improving their contribution to national development dynamics. This is because those policy maneuvers were inherently not borne of the sincerity of purpose. However, it is somewhat important to dwell a bit on the 1976 Local Government Reforms enunciated by the Murtala/Obasanjo military regime because that policy set the template that future constitutional frameworks for local autonomy from 1979 were anchored on.

The 1976 Local Government Reform of Nigeria

According to Aghayere (1997), the military's reorganization or reform of the local government system code-named the 1976 Local Government Reform marked a turning point for decentralization and local autonomy in Nigeria. A noteworthy ideal championed by the 1976 reform included that the local governments are now to be regarded as the third tier in an intergovernmental relations structure in Nigerian federalism. Nigerian local governments, by the 1976 reform, are meant to be independent organs of government to be governed by locally elected representatives. The Local government system is to promote fiscal, administrative, functional and politico-democratic decentralization by constitutional devolution (Aghayere, 1997). Accordingly, the military's 1976 reform policy advocates that Nigerian local governments should be governed by elected representatives who are the preferences of the local electorates. The locally elected persons will enjoy powers dictated by the constitution to perform constitutional specified functions. They are to enjoy substantial control over local affairs, as well as, enjoy constitutional support to direct its staff matters cum institutional policymaking, and also its financial earnings and expenditures for delivery of its grassroots development services (Olowu, 1981). The paper notes in concord with Chukwuemeka, Ugwuanyi, Ndubuisi-Okolo and Onuoha (2014) that this 1976 reform was intended to galvanize increased role of local autonomy in national development by extension, and that this reform agenda has ever since reflected in the future constitutional codifications for guaranteeing local autonomy in the Nigerian federalism.

Indeed, the paper agrees, that future schemes for allowing local autonomy to play constructive roles in Nigeria's overall development that the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions prompted derived largely from the ideals of 1976 local government reforms. As beautiful to know that the 1976 reform ideals are reflecting in the abovementioned constitutions, unfortunately, going by the worsening underdevelopment of the Nigerian state that is obvious, empirical and easily verifiable, one can therefore truly attribute the interplay of

a culture of lack of constitutionalism and non-adherence to the rule of law with the earlier mentioned sociological strains, forces, variables and factors such as the culture of depraved politicking and inter-party politics, inefficient political leadership and governance actions, corrupt fiscal intergovernmental sharing arrangements and subordinating culture of local government in the intergovernmental development relations processes. All these political vices deeply constraining local autonomy's constructive input in Nigeria's development. Henceforward, from a mood of prophecy, the paper theorizes that overt desecration of constitutionalism and abuse of the rule of law, particularly in the state-local intergovernmental development processes *a la* the aforesaid policy terrains, far remove Nigeria from even setting-off to overcome underdevelopment. And this postulation conforms with the findings viz contribution to knowledge of Okudolo's (2017) research.

Local Autonomy Dynamics from 1979 into the Fourth Republic

The political history of local government autonomy in Nigeria from 1979 begun with the Second Republic which lasted between 1979 and 1983, through to the Fourth Republic (1999 till date) is analyzed. Unfortunately, our analysis will show that these next phases of the historiography of local autonomy's roles in Nigeria's intergovernmental relations process for national development show negative consequences to Nigeria's overall development. This outcome is not unconnected to the fact that the dynamics of her underdevelopment under these eras are mostly driven by a political culture that promotes abdication of constitutionalism and disregard for rule of law. Ordinarily, one would have thought that return to a constitutional-civilian democracy in federalism portended gains for the consolidation of local autonomy. But these analyzed stages, hereunder the paper, of Nigeria's political history of local self-government rather than present opportunities for advancing local autonomy in the national development drive, I consider them as representing "backwardness".

The 1979 Constitution provided the legal groundings in the scheme of intergovernmental national development relations of Nigeria under the Second Republic. Section 7(1) of the 1979 Constitution provided for the system of local government by democratically elected officials that should exist in every state as at then. In the same Constitution, Section 7(6) provided for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils in the federation through a joint state-local government account. The Constitution also listed Functions of Local Governments in its Fourth Schedule. Gboyega (1987:175) in the most graphic sense portrays how local autonomy fared that can partly explain the reason for the demise of the Second Republic through a military coup:

The Second Republic of Nigeria (1979-1983) far from making improvements to the system of local government which was bequeathed by the military regime, exploited, compounded and dramatized the shortcomings and loopholes in the system. The politicians of the Second Republic quite clearly did not share the values of the soldiers, and therefore did not commit whatsoever to maintain the structure erected by the soldiers. Although the military leadership identified the values and commitment between it and the in-coming civilian

administration and, as far as local government is concerned, took the step to secure through the constitution the essence of the 1976 reforms, the Constitution was blatantly and flagrantly abused and subverted.

Gboyega (1987:184) further captures the failings of the Second Republic civilian democratic and constitutional governing elites' to deploy local autonomy favourably for Nigeria's development in the quote below:

... it can be asserted with the justification that, during the Second Republic, as far as local government is concerned, it was as if the Constitution and laws were made to be ignored or flouted. The violations distorted the character of the local government system which the military administration tried to nurture between 1976 and 1979 and also denuded it of the popular acceptance and support (i.e. legitimacy) which alone can institutionalize it. Consequently, when the military took over political power once again in December 1983, it was predicted that the caricature of the 1976 local government reform which the politicians of the Second Republic created will not be maintained for long.

We need not be detained by the provisions for inter-government relations for development in the Third Republic. Although the 1989 Constitution which was to midwife the Third Republic existed, it did not operate nor happen. The aborted Third Republic was the brainchild of General Sani Abacha regime (1993-1998) and Abacha's sudden death caused the termination of any hope of a Third republic for the country. However, suffice to note that the military's promulgated 1989 Constitution provided for local autonomy in the language reminiscent of military dictatorship that does not entertain any form of autonomy nor grant any form of independence from the federal center government to subnational entities of governance. The said Article that provided for local autonomy reads thus:

Article 5(3): Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the executive powers of a Local Government, (3)(a) shall be vested in the Chairman of that Local Government Council and may, subject as aforesaid and to the provisions of any law made by the House of Assembly of the State within whose boundaries the Local Government Area is situated and bye-laws made by the Local Government Council be exercised by him either directly or through the Vice-Chairman or Supervisory Councillors of the Local Government or officers in the service of the Local Government; and (3)(b) shall extend to the execution and maintenance of this Constitution, all bye-laws made by the Local Government Council and to all matters with respect to which the Local Government Council has for the time being power to make bye-laws; but such executive powers shall be so exercised as not to impede or prejudice the exercise of the executive powers of the Federation or of the State in which the Local Government Area concerned is situated or to endanger assets or investments of the Government of the Federation or of the State Government in the Local Government Area.

According to Awotokun (2005), provisions for intergovernmental relations with local government in the 1999 Constitution have substantial similarities with that of the 1979 Constitution, except that the language of 1999 fundamental law has been more exploited

by the states' ruling political elites to manacle local autonomy. For instance, Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution say:

The system of local government councils by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly; the State Government shall, subject to Section 8, ensure their existence under a law which provides for their establishment, structure, composition, finance and function.

Researchers such as Ikeanyibe (2016), Isa (2016), Okudolo and Onah (2019), and Oyedele, Osezua, Abdulkareem and Ishola (2017) all agree that the application of Sections 7, 8, 162 and 197 of the 1999 Constitution by the state governments have ultimately diminished local autonomy to a great extent as to disable local governments' productive input in national development. These provisions have to do with functional, fiscal, administrative and political decentralization, as well as, regarding the creation of new local governments.

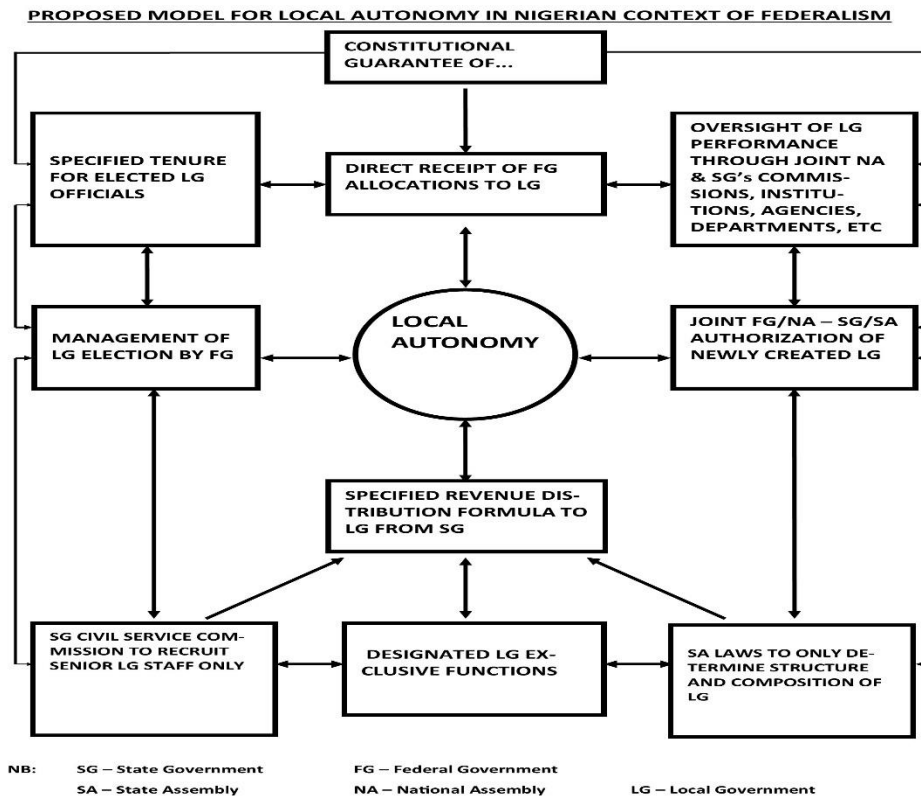
For instance, Section 162(5)(6)(7)&(8) provides for the state-local government fiscal decentralization wherein federal allocations of the local governments are paid into State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) that is under the legislative control of the states. The Subsection (8) of 162 above empowers the state's House of Assembly to prescribe the credit standing to local governments from any revenue source. Implementation of Section 8 regarding the creation of a new local government has further impoverished local autonomy's capacity to contribute to Nigeria's development austerely. Nigerians experienced a situation whereby the Supreme Court ruled in 2004 that the Obasanjo administration acted unconstitutionally by not disbursing local government allocations due to Lagos State in a suit instituted by the Lagos State Government because of the 37 newly created councils by the Lagos Government. But the Supreme Court judgment also asserted that the Lagos State Government had not conformed to the provisions of Section 8(5) & (6) of the 1999 Constitution, hence the process to creating the 37 local councils remain inchoate and therefore the political structures are not constitutional (Usman, & Erunke, 2012).

By the language of Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution, despite the provision for functions of local government in the Fourth Schedule of the document, state governments in Nigeria capitalize on the law to usurp constitutional tasks allotted to local government with high-end revenue prospects. Section 197 provides for the State Independent Electoral Commission under the legislative competence of the ruling state government. This provision has enabled state governments to erect local election commissions that deliver overwhelming victory always to the ruling party at the states in local polls. Also, the same Section 197 authorizes the state government to practical to dictate the administrative personnel system, procedure and structure including promotion, punishment, transfer and dictate remuneration of local government staff in the country. Indeed, implementation of the highlighted constitutional provisions systematically

inhibits Nigerian local governments to direct grassroots development and thereby causes them to under-contribute measures to overcome the country's underdevelopment.

Actualizing Optimal Development: The Proposed Model

From the foregoing analysis, it is pertinent that policymakers and public administrators adopt a development-growth strategy that has awareness of the need to institutionalize local autonomy's avid contribution to national development. Hence the crux of our constructed Model for Guaranteeing Local Autonomy in the Nigerian Federalism that I hold strongly rationalizes the sacrosanctity of the bottom-up theory as well as validate the political economy essentialness of local autonomy as an indispensable structure and agency for national development advancement. Although the model below speaks to the Nigerian context, I believe it is adaptable in federalism.



The above model projects that constitutionally induced absence/lack of fiscal, politico-democratic, administrative and functional local autonomy in Nigeria through the patterns of the intergovernmental relations detract from progressing national development. Regarding the fiscal intergovernmental relations aspect, the model recommends that fiscal allocations to local governments from the Federation Revenue Account should be received directly into individual local government accounts. Only the state governments' internally generated revenues to be shared with local governments at the states that should be domiciled in a State Joint Local Government Account. And the model suggests

that the state-local revenues to be shared should be based on a federal constitutional designated formula that takes into consideration factors like population density, revenue generated cum contributed to state's coffers and on need basis of each local council in the distribution patterns.

As regards local politico-democratic autonomy for enhancing grassroots democracy, the model proposes that local election administration and governance should be by a federal agency, not state government-constituted ones. By this, local polls will be spared the direct manipulation foisted on local elections by the sitting state's ruling party. A local election administration whereby the ruling state party is authorized to define the rules of engagement out rightly undermines *ex-ante indeterminacy* aphorism and that the national development aspect of democratization from the bottom will dissolve. The *ex-ante indeterminacy* concept holds as a matter of sacrosanctity that the outcome of an election should not be predetermined. And by extension, the *ex-ante indeterminacy* principle supposes that the practice should be that a more impartial election umpire should govern over local polls to promote competitiveness not favouritism to any party contesting in the poll. A credible local poll process in place means greater prospects of legitimate local representatives who will be able to superintend grassroots development and exercise more self-determination.

Regarding administrative autonomy, the model proposes that only top administrators of local governments should be recruited by the state governments, but their discipline, promotion and other administrative procedures should be determined by the local political leaders. Also, the model acknowledges that constitutionally designated tenure for Nigerian local administrations will enhance their administrative capacity as it would imbue intelligibility for grassroots development policymaking and implementation. Administrative autonomy will also be better off if state governments are only constitutionally empowered to define the structure and composition of their local government councils and nothing more structurally, as well as that mutual coordination between the federal-state governments in authorizing newly created local governments are constitutionally sustained. Lastly, as regards the functional autonomy of local government, the model recommends that the language for determining exclusive duties of local governments should not be ambiguous as to allow state legislation to usurp them. The current practice whereby the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria acknowledges local autonomy on the one hand and takes it away through the letters of some provisions in the same document fuels usurpation of high-end revenue functions of local councils.

Concluding Remarks

From all said, it is evident that the lack of a profound role played by local autonomy in the intergovernmental development relations system of Nigeria before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic contributed to the sustained underdevelopment of Nigeria. And, by way of a prophesy, going by the fostering exclusion of local government autonomy in the national developmental drives of Nigeria, a gloomy picture to overcome underdevelopment in Nigeria will persist in the COVID-19 aftermath. It can therefore be

averred that the illegitimacy and unacceptability of national development plan implementation outcomes in Nigeria are on grounds of goings-on that show subordination of local government autonomy in the intergovernmental relations arrangements with regards to overall development. What this implies is that mutual corporation, coordination and interdependence in the federal-state-local intergovernmental development relations processes in Nigeria, not the appropriation of local government affairs by the higher tiers, is an important factor in attaining positive cum optimal all-inclusive national development in the country.

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