

ABSTRACT

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN LOCAL LEVEL POLITICS, CONSTITUTIONALISM AND STATE FORMATION IN MALAWI THROUGH THE LENS OF THE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF)

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The paper explores how local level politics has influenced, shaped and nurtured the culture of constitutionalism within the framework of local governance including its effects on national constitutional debates and state formation processes. This is achieved by critically scrutinizing the operative dynamics of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) which was introduced entirely by an administrative decision as a key component of the local governance framework. The officially stated objective of the CDF is to facilitate the spread of development to every possible corner of the country which would in turn bring the government closer to the people. However, the paradox is that this development has taken place at a time when the future of local governments which is guaranteed by the constitution is quite uncertain. It is, in fact, not known at all when the local governments will be reconstituted as an integral part of the evolving democratic dispensation that is a critical aspect for the renewal of vibrant state formation processes. Yet it is well known that the country quickly degenerated into an authoritarian regime because it had weak or no constitutional safeguards to facilitate the development and entrenchment of the culture of constitutionalism broadly understood as a set of political values and aspirations that reflect the desire to protect political freedom through the establishment of internal and external checks upon government's power.