Politicisation of the Civil Service: Implications for Good Governance

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ABSTRACT
The Civil Service is a government institution which plays an important role in ensuring that government policies result in tangible socio-economic and political development in the society. The Nigerian Civil Service has been in a myriad of problems which have rendered the Service ineffective and have made it fail in delivering the expected services to the people. Some of the reasons adduced for this ineffectiveness are excessive politicization and misgovernance, inability to promote the public interest, authoritarian tendencies, weak governance structure, red-tapism, weak accountability, low professional standards, waste and corruption, poor productivity, lack of control, redundancy and an over-bloated staff structure, virtually since the country’s independence from Britain in 1960. To have a result-oriented and modern civil service, successive governments in Nigeria have introduced reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. Still, the service remains inefficient and ineffectual. This paper therefore argues that the various reforms have failed because there is lack of democratic practice in the administration of the civil service, and the government reform exercise did little to address it. The paper therefore posits that the gains of ongoing civil service reform would be defeated if effort is not made at democratizing the decision-making processes and administrative structure of the civil service. It however proposes democratic centralism as the best strategy and approach to resolve the persistent deterioration in the quality of governance, bureaucratic bottleneck and problems of ineffectiveness, accountability and productivity currently plaguing the civil service in Nigeria.

Keywords: Politicization, Civil Service and Good Governance

INTRODUCTION
As at the time most African Countries gained independence in the late 1950’s through the 1960’s, the Civil Service was still regarded as the pivot that would actually promote and enhance socio-economic development. The civil service is an institution saddled with the responsibility of designing, formulating and implementing public policy, and discharging government functions and development programmes in an effective and efficient way. The Civil service does consist of a lot of institutions through which decisions are made and implemented as regards the different interests of the government. It is frequently suspected that Nigeria is a failing state or failed state. This has been featuring persistently in the indices of several versions of world report; the United Nations Human Development index, The Mo Ibrahim Foundation Report, Transparency International, World Bank Governance Indicators even the African Peer Review Mechanism Reports. In most comparative indices of performance, Nigeria is not doing well. All we frequently receive is a litany of promises of potentials rather than actualization and accomplishments. What these suggest is a failing or failing Public Administration and a failing Civil Service. What is the bane of Nigerian Public administration? Is it politics and politicians? There is such high tempo of politics intervening in Public Administration as to presume that the foundation of many contemporary challenges have their foundations in the dynamics of politics and politicians. Can the Civil Service isolate itself from Politics? Can they guide, advise, restrain, caution and confront the politicians? Can both see themselves as vital partners in the crusade for national development? Can we set up a fresh code of conduct for the Civil Servant; the Politician and the civil society? How do we design a healthy operational balance
between the two? Can we write off Civil Servants or the politician as enemies of society, are they dispensable or avoidable? These are general issues that are highlighted and discussed in this paper.

Conceptual Clarification of the Study

1. Politics: derived from the Greek word ‘polis’, a city state deals with human decisions, human interactions, issues and their consequences for the group, be it the family, the church, the business, the organization, the city, the state. Politics is almost ubiquitous; it is found virtually everywhere. Some human decisions are not political, but decisions involving multiple parties frequently carry a tinge of politics. Aristotle told us the man is indeed a political animal. The study of politics is at the base of Political Science which assesses government and political institutions and processes. It tries to direct the nature of the State, of sovereignty, of government and their elements. It also analyzes human associations, interest groups, decision making processes all within the social organization. It focuses on the allocation and use of power, the context of such power, the morality of power (Machiavelli (1973:315-317) did not see any morality in the use of power), the relationship between man and society i.e. providing for the collective good of people in the society. It is often seen as the ‘art and science of government’. To Aristotle (1998), ‘politics is a single tool to maximize man’s capabilities and attain the highest form of social life’. In recent times there has been the tendency to confine politics to activities in the three arms of government: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Others define it as the struggle for and the exercise of power and influence on the society. David Easton (1965) defined politics as ‘the authoritative allocation of values/resources for a society’. Harold Lasswell (1935) defined politics as who gets what, when and how and why?

2. Governance is the act of governing; related to decisions that define expectations, Governance prevails in all organizations big or small, private or public, good or evil, rational or irrational. The World Bank defines governance as ‘the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage societies’ problems and affairs. The Worldwide Governance Indicators Project of the World Bank defines governance as ‘the tradition and institution by which authority in a country is exercised’. Ladipo Adamolekun (2006) defines governance as ‘the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs’. Another definition is ‘the use of institutions, structures of authority and even collaboration to allocate resources and coordinate or control activity in society or the economy’.

3. Good Governance or Fair Governance implies that mechanisms function allowing the executives (agents) to respect the rights and interests of the stakeholders (the principals) in a spirit of democracy. Good governance is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It ensures that corruption is minimized, the views of the minorities are taken into account, the voices of the most vulnerable in the society are heard in decision-making and it responds to the present and future needs of society.

4. Civil Service: The civil service carries out the general day to day work of the government. The civil service is a term used to cover these public servants who are direct employees of the federal and state governments, other than the police, the armed forces personnel, the judicial personnel and the teachers. Its usage excludes also employees of statutory corporations and boards. According to Adebayo (1986) the civil service comprises all servants of the state, other than those holding political appointments, who are employed in a civil capacity and whose remuneration is paid out of (money voted by the legislature). Adamolekum (1983) sees the civil service as "the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executive in formulating and implementing governmental policies". He also sees the second usage of the term as referring to "the ministries and departments within which specific aspects of government are carried out". Though people often see the civil service and the public service as the same thing, they are technically, not the same. Public service as a term is broader in scope than the civil service. Thus it can be defined as the totality of services that are organized under government authority. It can
therefore be said that civil service is narrower in scope and excludes some government employees who are public servants. The civil service and the public service combine to constitute government service and operate under various laws and the constitution.

The Concept ‘Civil Service’ Defined
The civil service is the administrative structure employed in civil capacity to fulfill government policies and programmes. The civil service is the administrative bureaucracy which occupies an essential position in the political system of nations. Throughout the world, the contributions of the Civil Service in promoting sustainable and equitable economic growth are receiving increasing attention. Efficient and effective management of the Civil Service are critical to sustainable socio-economic development of a nation. The Civil Service in Nigeria comprises workers in the various ministries or departments apart from those who hold political appointments. Civil Service reform on the other hand refers to the purposeful modification of governmental human resource management system with the goal of maximizing important administrative values.

This can be viewed in terms of structures i.e. ministries, departments, etc. or the human occupants of public offices i.e. permanent secretaries, ministers, and higher administrative staff. The Nigerian Interpretation Act of 1964 does not expressly define the term civil service. However, section 2 of the Pensions Act of 1951 defines the “civil service, as the service in a civil capacity under the government of the federation or in a college University or a pensionable employment under local authority.” The civil service is distinguishable from the military service and police service in that while the latter two are principally concerned with the safeguard of the country from external and internal dangers, the former is concerned with purely civil and non-technical affairs of the state. Members of the civil service are employed in a civil capacity as distinguished from military, judicial or police capacity. Military officers, judicial officers, police officers and many other technical officers like doctors, engineers, and draughtsmen are, strictly speaking, not civil servants. Civil servants are mainly of two categories: lower clerical staff and higher administrative and professional staff. The higher administrative staff is directly responsible to the political head of department. The lower clerical staff helps the administrative staff and works under its direct supervision and control. The State reaches the citizens through the civil servants who are well trained, skilled and permanent body of professional class of officials, and who have taken government service as a career.

The Features of the Civil Service
There are features by which the civil service is identified. These are also referred to as norms and ethics:

**Anonymity:** the principle of Anonymity states that civil servants should be seen and not by principle be heard. Though they advise political office holders on issues relating to government they neither take the blame nor the glory of such policies. They are not expected to be seen defending such policies. That job is better than left for political office holders and not the career officers. Civil servants as far as possible, are anonymous, and should not be seen as craving for publicity.

**Political Neutrality:** The civil servant must be politically neutral. His job is to serve the government of the day with full dedication irrespective of what he feels about that particular government. He is not expected to be a card carrying member of a political party or get involved in partisan politics though he is expected to vote at election times. The essence of making the civil servant politically neutral is hinged on the fact that since he does not leave with a change in government, he is not expected to have a strong attachment to any particular government so as to enable him give his best to make government policies succeed irrespective of his personal feelings towards such policies or government. The civil service is responsible for continuity of policy. Its concern is the good of the nation as a whole irrespective of party incumbency.

**Comprehensiveness**
The civil service is comprehensive because the services and responsibilities cover and affect all aspects of lives of the people in the country. The activity of the civil service are carried out within the various governmental ministries cover every group of people and all types of affairs in the country.
A Theoretical Framework

Public Choice Theory

The public choice theory was developed by Gordan, Tullock, Paul Samuelson and James Buchanan (1999). It refers to any analysis that links economics and politics. It seeks to extend the analytical framework of classical economy to the political process through ideas such as the economic theory of democracy. The theory is interested in applying methods of formal economics to the analysis of political behavior.

The public choice theory is concerned with the provision of so-called public goods, goods that are delivered by government rather than the market, their benefit cannot be withheld from individuals who choose not to contribute to their provision which is why public administration is often regarded as ‘ineluctable’. The basic assumption of this theory is that the political society is composed of self-interested individuals who coalesce into organized interests. Interest groups, which tend to form around relatively narrow issues of special importance to their members, are created by individuals seeking specific self-interested goals. Individuals join with other self-seeking individuals to acquire access to public resources (Grindle and Thomas, 1991).

The four principles that underline this theory are as follows:

(i) Public sector actors or officials behave as if they maximize their own interests;
(ii) All social entities are fundamentally sets of individual actors;
(iii) Political interaction is to be based on voluntary exchange. Politics as voluntary exchange requires the making of an economic constitution to guide the relationship between the state and the individual;
(iv) Citizens provide rulers or the state with resources and power for which they expect a return of goods and services as well as laws regulating society that matches what they are giving up.

The public choice model is important for a number of reasons. First, it offers explanation for seemingly non-rational decision making by governments. Why governments adopt public policies and programs which are harmful to society? The solution to the problem is to closely limit the activities to fall under the regulatory power of the state. Second, it explains why “the public interest” is not achieved. Third, by focusing on the power of vested interests, it demonstrates the barriers to reform that area created by pre-existing policies and by the political relationships that they engender. In so doing it explains why existing public policy is the result of an inevitable rationality of rent-seeking (Lane, 1993; Grindle and Thomas, 1991). It provides an explanation for the willingness of public officials to respond to the pressures and imprecations of lobby groups and other types of special interests. It also provides an explanation for policy choices that are detrimental to society as a whole over both the shorter and the longer term and offers a way of understanding the constraints on policy change that develop over time.

The Evolution of the Nigerian Civil Service

The Civil Service in Nigeria is of a colonial creation. Thus the evolution of the Nigerian civil service can be traced to the history of colonialism and the development of capitalism in Nigeria in 19th century. This can actually be attributed to the history of Modern Nigeria itself. Prior to colonial rule, different ethnic groups and societies that make up today’s Nigeria, lived in clans and empires. In the north, there existed Islamic Sokoto caliphates (of Borgu, Sokoto, Kano and Kanuri), in the West and East existed different empires and communities. The development of capitalism that came in the aftermath of the industrial revolution in Western Europe imposed national limitations to its economic expansion later then resorted to imperialism or imperialist quest for new colonies for trade and investment, and a cheap source of raw material and mineral resources to feed its ever bourgeoning industries, as a way of strengthening its political and economic domination at home and overseas. The British colonial power through conquest forcefully integrated different communities and kingdoms under Lagos Colony and established direct rule in 1861 (Akpojure & Crowder; 1966; 131). The evolution of colonial administration in Nigeria in 1861 necessitated the establishment of structures and institutions of modern governance. The Civil Service was created in 1862 with the specific purpose: the survival of capitalism in colonial Nigeria, and the stability of colonial capitalist state structure. As a result, the British government established different hierarchical
positions of administration. Between 1900 and 1950: The Nigerian civil service was dominated and controlled by British technocrats and generalist administrators. Therefore, the fact that these British officials were accountable to the authorities in Lagos rather than to the people, created an impression that they were masters rather than servants of the people they administered. Indirect rule system also contributed in no small measure to a faulty philosophy of the service. It further enhanced ethnicity, corruption and apathy. The model of the Civil Service Nigeria inherited from her colonial masters (Britain) was narrow in structure and objectives. It was to enable colonial masters to successfully extract the much coveted financial and material resources needed by their controlling metropolitan powers. Colonialism was therefore marked by a lack of accountability and absence of transparency.

At independence in 1960 when Nigerian nationals took over the administrative leadership, no attempt was made by them to restructure the Civil Service to suit indigenous developmental needs. The Nigeria bureaucrats who occupied the leadership position in the Civil Service imbibed the colonial mentality of status and wealth acquisition for self-aggrandizement and self-superiority. Instead of working to improve the lot of the country, they became colonial masters functioning individually as a “white man in black skin” (Adebayo:1981).

During the first republic, Nigerianisation of the public service was emphasized and enhanced. Native bureaucrats cut their teeth in acrimonious, nominally democratic and deeply divided political system. Even though internal bickering amongst the politicians enabled the bureaucrats to play prominent roles in policy formulation, they were not allowed to translate these policies into social realities (Adebayo, 1982). An agenda for democratic political culture was thus far from being achieved by the bureaucrats while the spirit of nationalism, patriotism, commitment, dedication and loyalty was largely absent in the service. The service was divided along ethnic lines, which hindered development extensively, made stability difficult and democracy susceptible to military authoritarianism. The period between 1966 and 1975 witnessed quite a number of radical but vicissitudinous changes in the role of Nigerian public officials.

After political independence in the 60’s, the civil servants were in control of government political process due to the incursion of military rulers for political power prevailing in the continent then, coupled with their lack of experience of political leaderships and in governance. It was observed that the military governments of Generals Ironsi and Gowon relied heavily on the bureaucrats and virtually all important decisions were taken by a small group of half a dozen military leaders together with a handful of civil servant advisers (Joseph, 1991). This turned out as a curse in disguise as the eyes of bureaucrats became open to anti-democratic ethos. It was widely believed by the succeeding Murtala/Obasanjo regime that the public service carried its romance with the military to an extreme by engaging in graft, indolence and redundancy as to have warranted the sacking of over 10,000 of its personnel. Rather than re-energize the service, the “great purge” left it demoralized, ridiculed and battered. The democratic government of the second republic complemented the destruction with the politicization, polarization and fractionalization of the service. The pre-occupation was struggle for supremacy between politicians and bureaucrats. Few people ever imagined that the public officials had some roles to play in enhancing democratic governance. Even though several reforms were put in place to re-invent the public service by successive military governments between 1983 and 1999, the reforms further clipped the wings of the service in improving the peoples’ quality of life. It opened the service to the hi-tech of corrupt practices and polarization of the military. The loyalty of the service was directed to the military rulers who governed the country as an extension of a department in the defence ministry and more or less an extension of their personal estate. Suffice it to say that the reforms never addressed any of the fundamental problems confronting the public service.

The Politicization of the Civil Service
The Civil Service at various times has faced a lot of problems which have been mentioned earlier in the paper, prominent among these problems is politicization. Prior to military rule, politicization as a concept was relatively unknown except for the civil service’ largely passive observance of goings-on in the political terrain in terms of watching the constant in-fighting amongst the three main political parties in so far as one or two of them were dominant in each of the original three regions. Given the fast-growing intensity of political activities, campaign and electioneering, the civil service could not but be affected,
thus regional ruling parties were conscious of the need to insist on loyalty to the ruling government and at the least, a non-partisan civil service in the British tradition. This apolitical philosophy changed dramatically after independence and an intensified tempo of political activities and activism by the regional governments and parties. Within a few years (of the 1960s), the Nigerian civil service had been politicized to the extent that most top officials openly supported the government of the day. The introduction of the quota system of recruitment and promotion, adherence to the federal-character principle, and the constant interference of the government in the day-to-day operation of the civil service—especially through frequent changes in top officials and during military times, massive purges—meant that political factors rather than merit alone played a major role in the civil service. Eme and Ugwu (2011) noted that ‘the enthronement of federal character principle of recruitment and other spoils system techniques have sacrificed efficiency and effectiveness in the Nigerian public service’. Subsequent observation by Mohammed Salisu posits that ‘considerable political interference in the process of personnel administration has led to improper delegation of power, ineffective supervision and corruption. The resulting official apathy has so far culminated into unauthorized and unreasonable absenteeism, lateness and idleness and, notably, poor workmanship’ (Salisu 2001: 2). Strong institutions cannot emerge from present day Nigerian civil service where top echelons of these bureaucracies are handpicked on the basis of ethnicity, religion and class. Furthermore, disgruntled elements within and outside the civil service tend to politicise the activities of state by reading meanings and prejudice into government policies and programmes on the basis of primordial, religious, ethnic and regional sentiments. For instance, the recent government policy that limits the tenure of the position of permanent secretaries was received with intense skepticism and apprehension even if it was to address specific administrative problems in the Service. There is frequent resort to examination-based promotion for advancement to the senior-most positions including the Directors. In an atmosphere of prevailing cynicism, there is limited faith in the likelihood of a populist integrity of the merit factor viz-a-viz competing social factors. These aggravated the abysmal performance of the Civil Service and consequently the under-development of the country. These and other factors necessitated the need and clamour for reforms in the Nigeria Civil Service. The colonial masters carried out some reforms, among which are the Harragin Commission of 1945 which was the first commission set up to look into the Nigeria Civil Service, and the Gorsuch commission of 1954-55. The Harragin Commission was the first commission set up to look into the manpower problem in the service and the discontent among the European members on what was described as poor financial reward, while the Gorsuch Commission was the first to attempt giving the regional administrative bureaucracies an indigenous structure.

After independence, Nigerian government carried out series of reforms and various commissions have studied and made recommendations for reforming of the Civil Service, including the Morgan Commission of 1963, the Adebo Commission (1971), Udoji Public Service Review Commission of 1974, Dotun Philips Civil Service Reform of 1988. The Dotun Philips Panel of 1985 attempted to reform to the Civil Service. The 1988 Civil Service Reorganization Decree promulgated by General Ibrahim Babangida had a major impact on the structure and efficiency of the Civil Service. The latter report of the Ayida Panel made recommendations to reverse some of the Babangida innovations to return to the more efficient Civil Service of earlier years. The Civil Service has been undergoing gradual and systematic reforms and restructuring since May 29, 1999 after decades of military rule. However, the civil service is still considered stagnant, unproductive and prosaic in performance over the years.

The Morgan Commission (1963)/Elwood Grading Team (1966)
The nationalist movement that ushered independence in 1960 used indigenization of civil service as part of its campaign. Shortly after the colonial rule, Nigerian leaders at that time introduced and implemented Nigerianisation policy whereby British officials in the civil service were replaced with Nigerians. The fallout of this policy came with attendant problems such as shortage of skilled manpower, inefficiency, politicization and complaint about wages. The general strike of September 27, 1963 put intensive pressure on the government which was forced to set up the Morgan Commission to look into the agitations of trade unions for increases in wages. Morgan Commission not only revised salaries and wages of junior staff of the Federal government but introduced for the first time a minimum wage for each region of the country.
The outcome of the Morgan Report developed into the Elwood Grading Team. The Elwood commission was appointed to identify and investigate anomalies in the grading and other conditions relating to all posts in the Public Service of the Federation, with a view to determining an appropriate grading system and achieving uniformity in the salaries of officers performing identical duties.

**The Adebo Commission (1971):** The Adebo panel was commissioned to ‘review the existing wages and salaries at all level in the public services and in the statutory corporations and state-owned companies’. The Commission observed that low remuneration package was responsible for extreme shortage of senior civil servants. The Adebo Commission therefore ‘recommended the setting up of a Public Service Review Commission to exhaustively examine several fundamental issues, such as the role of the Public Service Commission, the structure of the Civil Service, and its conditions of service and training arrangements’. The acceptance of the recommendations of the Commission led to the setting up of the Udoji Public Service Review Commission.

**Udoji Commission of 1974:** The Udoji Public Service Review Commission of 1974 was set up during the tenure of General Yakubu Gowon to review and over-haul the entire public service, and to ensure development and optimum utilization of manpower for efficiency and effectiveness in the service. The major thrust of the commission is to carry out holistic reform of the civil service in terms of ‘organization, structure and management of the public service; investigate and evaluate methods of recruitment and conditions of employment; examine all legislation relating to pension, as regarding all posts; establish scale of salaries corresponding to each grade as a result of job evaluation’. The Commission recommended a coordinated salary structure that would be universally applicable to the Federal and State Civil Services, the Local Government Services, the Armed Forces, the Nigeria Police, the Judiciary, the Universities, the Teaching Services and Parastatals. The Commission further recommended the introduction of an open reporting system for performance evaluation, and suggested the creation of a senior management group, comprising administrative and professional cadres. The relevance of Udoji Commission is particularly salient in its proposition of modern management style, techniques and procedures that enhance the efficient functioning of the institution (such as the adoption of a “New Style Public Service based on Project Management, management by objective (MBO) and Planning Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS). Added to this is the recommendation that encourage the mobility of manpower between the private and public sectors. Udoji commission is credited with providing a comprehensive review of standard and quality service delivery, and compensation in the entire public service.

**Dotun Phillips Commission (1985):** The Dotun Philips Civil Service Reform of 1988 was set up by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida to review the structure, composition and methods of operation to cope with the demands of government in the 1980s and beyond. The commission looked into the problems of inefficiency, lapses and inadequacies in the civil service and attempt to introduce structural changes that could ensure swiftness in administrative practices and eliminate rigour of red-tapism. The report of Dotun Philips Panel recommended that the position of Permanent secretary be replaced by a more politically oriented position of Director-General. The overview of the Panel report, suggests that the minister was made both the chief executive and the accounting officer of his ministry. But before the reform, the permanent secretary was the accounting officer of the ministry. The permanent secretary’s appointment was made political as its duration/tenure was left for the pleasure of the president or governor by making their position non-permanent henceforth. The Dotun Philips reforms properly and correctly aligned the civil service structure with the constitution and presidential system of government, designating permanent secretaries as directors-general and deputy ministers. They were meant to retire with the president or governor. The permanent secretary had a choice whether or not to accept the post. The Panel claimed to have professionalized the Civil Service, because every officer whether a specialist or generalist made his career entirely in the ministry or department of his choice. Each ministry was made to undertake the appointment, discipline and promotions of its staff and the ministries of finance and national planning were merged. The acceptance of some of the recommendations of Dotun Philips Commission report led to the Civil Service Reform Decree No. 43 of 1988.
Civil Service Reform Decree No. 43 of 1988: The Civil Service Reform Decree No. 43 was implemented under the Military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1988. The reform which was widely termed ‘Decree No. 43’ was a military fiat aimed at repositioning the civil service without input and democratic discussion from the public. The 1988 reforms formally recognized the politicization of the upper echelons of the civil service and brought about major changes in other areas. The main highlights of 1998 reforms are: the merging of ministerial responsibilities and administrative controls and their investment in the Minister as Chief Executive and Accounting Officers; (b) replacement of the designation of Permanent Secretary with ‘Director-General’ whose tenure will terminate with the Government that appointed him/her and who will serve as Deputy Minister; greater ministerial responsibility in the appointment, promotion, training and discipline of staff; vertical and horizontal restructuring of ministries to ensure overall management efficiency and effectiveness; permanency of appointment, as every officer, is to make his/her career entirely in one Ministry; abolition of the Office of the Head of Civil Service; and abolition of the pool system. The reform also established new administrative department called—the Presidency with retinue of top government officials, purposely to coordinate the formulation of policies and monitor their execution, and serve as the bridge between the government and the civil service (all federal ministries and departments). However, the 1988 Civil Service Reforms despite its lofty ideals of efficiency, professionalism, accountability, and checks and balances, did not achieve its desired objectives, indeed it was regarded as the most damaging of all reforms of the public service ever.

Alison Ayida Panel of 1994: The Ayida Review Panel on the Civil Service Reforms was inaugurated on 10th November 1994 to, amongst others, re-examine the 1988 Reforms. The Report of the Panel was highly and constructively critical of the 1988 Reforms. It reversed most of the reforms of 1988, namely, that the: civil service should revert to the system that is guided by the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Civil Service Rules, the Financial Regulations and Circulars; the Ministers should continue to be the Head of the Ministry and should be responsible for its general direction but he/she should not be the Accounting Officer. Instead, the Permanent Secretary should be the Accounting Officer of the Ministry; the title of Permanent Secretary should be restored. She/he should be a career officer and should not be asked to retire with the regime that appointed him/her; the post of Office of the Head of Civil Service should be re-established as a separate office under the President and a career civil servant should be appointed to head the office; the pool system be restored for those professional and sub-professional cadres that commonly exist in ministries/extra ministerial departments; ministries/extra-ministerial departments should be structured according to their objectives, functions and sizes and not according to a uniform pattern as prescribed by the 1988 Reforms. Each could have between two(2) to six(6) departments; personnel management functions in the Civil Service should be left to the Federal Civil Service Commission with delegated powers to ministries; financial accountability in the Civil Service should be enhanced through strict observance of financial rules and regulations; recruitment into the Federal Civil Service at the entry point should be based on a combination of merit and Federal Character, but further progression should be based on merit; Decree 17 of 1984 which empowers government to retire civil servants arbitrarily should be abrogated; the retirement age in the Civil Service should be sixty (60) years irrespective of the length of service; Government should harmonize the pension rates of those who retired before 1991 and those who retire after 1991; and salaries, allowances and welfare packages of civil servants should be substantially reviewed upwards and should be adjusted annually to ameliorate the effects of inflation, and discourage corruption.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM UNDER PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO (1999-2007)
The inception of transition to civilian rule that ushered the emergence of President Olusegun Obasanjo as the Nigerian Head of state came with fulfilling ‘electioneering’ promise of reforming the civil service and other public institutions with a view to expunging extant rules, procedures and regulations that frustrate effective service delivery consistent with modern systems in the Civil Service. The economic philosophy under which civil service reform under Obasanjo regime was hinged on market: ‘that government has no business in businesses. Therefore, all the existing government projects, plants, enterprises, refineries and
shareholdings in industries, trade, banking, finance and agriculture must be privatised and sold, so that government, particularly the Federal Government, can concentrate on governance. So, the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) has been very active, since the Obasanjo regime came on board on May 29, 1999, in selling off enterprises, including houses and other landed properties owned by the Government. The major thrust of Civil Service reform under Obasanjo regime can be summarised in five ways:

1. Pension Reform: In 2004, General Olusegun Obasanjo regime enacted a law to decentralise and privatise pension administration in Nigeria through the Pension Reform Act 2004. By this Act, the National Pension Commission (PENCOM) was constituted as a regulatory authority to oversee and check the activities of 25 registered Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs). This new pension scheme is in line with the regime's neo-liberal policies in all areas of life. Before the 2004 new scheme, there had been in existence the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) and in 1962 the creation of National Provident Fund as compulsory savings for workers in both public and private sectors. This old pension scheme was inherited from British colonialism, which purposely designed it for expatriates. It later accommodated local public sector workers and was in operation until the 2004 decentralised and privatised scheme. Although in 1974, a little amendment was made which retained the private sector within the National Provident Fund, the public sector was withdrawn from it. And in 1993, another amendment was made with NSITF re-established and converted from a Provident Fund into a Limited Social Insurance Scheme. The old pension scheme of 1962, as amended in 1974 and 1993, was very relatively favourable to workers. It was a non-contributory benefit scheme that allowed government to allocate specific resources to the consolidated revenue meant to pay pensioners. This, of course made, at least, public sector attractive to workers since their old age could be guaranteed after quitting service, especially in a country where there is no social benefit for the unemployed and senior citizens are left to struggle or to scavenge for frequently unpaid entitlements in old age.

2. Monetization Policy: The new monetization policy which is one of the key elements in the Public Service Reforms that would hopefully help to ascertain the true cost of spending that government officials used in maintaining governmental positions. The fundamental aim of the policy was to prevent and thwart government officials from using the Public or tax-payers money for personal gain. All benefits in kind including free housing, furnishing, car and driver were abolished for ministers, permanent secretaries and allied grades. Government houses were sold to occupants or via public bids. Official vehicles were discounted by 50% and sold to officials (El Rufai 2014). Despite these lofty deals, the implementation left much room for inconsistency and inequitable and selective policy reversals.

3. Restructuring of Pilot Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
One of the cardinal policies in the public service reform is the re-organisation of MDAs for effective service delivery. Obasanjo regime observed that the federal bureaucracies have considerable number of duplicating and overlapping functions between agencies, and between tiers and arms of government. In doing this, the Federal government established the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) in September 2003 as an independent agency in the Presidency to ensure the re-organisation and re-assigning of all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of all arms and branches of the federal government. Government also set up the SERVICOM (Service Compact with All Nigerian People) to prevent and thwart corruption that have become endemic and pervasive in the Civil Service, Obasanjo regime undertook a holistic review of the Public Service Rules and Financial Regulations and produced a White Paper which was amended and approved by the FEC on 9th May 2007. This policy ensures that accountability, probity and transparency (Oguonu, 2007).
Conducting an overview of the entire public service, the Public Service Reform Team arrived at the following statistics:

- Federal public servants: 1,107,000
- Federal core Civil Servants: 180,000
- Parastatals, Agencies, Education & Health Institutions: 470,000
- Public Officers at the State Level (36 States): 856,000
- Public Officers at the 774 Local Govts & the FCT: 620,000

**Steven Oronsaye Panel (2010-2011)**

In order to deepen the neo-liberal reform process of Obasanjo, President Umaru Musa Yar’adua inaugurated Steven Oronsaye Committee for another reform of Federal civil service in 2010. Mr Steven Oronsaye who was a new Head of Civil Service of the Federation at that time was mandated to review organisational structure of the service in line with the previous reform exercise. However, Steven Oronsaye Committee observed that Federal Civil Service as then constituted in a pyramid structure was massively overcrowded and clogged up at the top with so many senior persons not about to retire soon, if the old rules were followed. On the other hand, just below the top echelon, there were bright and competent officers with no room for advancement. The committee claimed that this was responsible for the lack of speedy progression at the top band. To correct this anomaly, the Committee recommended that permanent secretaries and directors (but not assistant directors) should serve for an initial period of four years extendable, subject to good performance, to eight years, irrespective of their ages and years in service. So far, the panel report was gazetted and implemented, while the affected officials were eased out of the Federal Civil Service. After the death of Yar’adua Goodluck Jonathan renamed it Presidential Committee on the Rationalisation and Restructuring of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies to review the structure of public institutions in March 2011. The Committee was given the following terms of reference:

- To study and review all previous reports/records on the restructuring of Federal Government Parastatals and advise on whether they were still relevant.
- To examine the enabling Acts of all the Federal Agencies, Parastatals and Commissions and classify them into various sectors.
- To examine critically, the mandates of the existing Federal Agencies, Parastatals and Commissions and determine areas of overlap or duplication of functions and make appropriate recommendations to restructure, merge or scrap to eliminate such overlaps, duplication or redundancies.
- To advise on any other matter(s) that was incidental to the foregoing which might be relevant to the desire of Government to prune the cost of governance.

As popular as the down-sizing recommendation by that Panel, it was substantially rejected by the Federal Government although it was recently reported that there are moves to re-visit and implement some part of that report (Punch, 13 Jun 2013).

**Overview of the Civil Service of Nigeria alongside various Reform Effort.**

(a) That it is highly regimented and militarized: The use of ‘I am directed’, ‘your obedient servant’, the anonymity of ‘for Permanent Secretary’ and the use of ‘you should be seen and not be heard’, rigid conformity with the rules and regulations, the hierarchical order from the lower to the highest, pass the file up and down routine and cultural deferential practice, all sum up to create the impression of an acquiescent follow-follow regime. Sometimes, appearances could be defective. There is differentiation as between decency and courtesy and efficiency and creative productivity.

(b) Sycophancy and excess deference to bosses and to authority: This is not peculiar to Public Administration and is more cultural than functional. It is true though that most civil Servants feel it is safer to conform than to initiate, safer to comply than to initiate challenges, safer to follow the beaten path than to trail-blaze,

(c) Being slow in responding to technological changes and modern organizational methods: The prospects for technological innovation to impact positively on the Service appear dim. There are spasmodic flashes of inspiration sometime. Civil Servants should procure laptops, some
officially, some on credit. Some offices are adorned with electronic computer based typewriting and work-stations. The biggest worry is the mind and the environment of those concerned. In many offices overseas, most form-filling is done on the internet, same with payments for most official levies. This assumes the presence of readily available information on the internet and general literacy of the citizenry. This saves a lot of time and energy by citizens. There is the long culture of over-dependence by senior officials on secretaries and other staff. In developed countries and many PLCs in Nigeria, secretaries are becoming an endangered species, they are in a cluster where senior officers use one commonly and therefore cheaply. In it all, the greatest and most commonly cited enemy of technological progress in Nigeria – in all ramifications is most probably electricity supply deficit which was described as ‘……the greatest challenge to employment generation’ as well as linked to poverty, security and deteriorating living conditions, pollution and poor health’ Adepoju; 2012:22.

(d) Poor work arrangement, hierarchical operational structure, un-streamlined operational structures: Arising from the inability to conduct maintenance routines, even modern structures sooner than later become antiquated, decrepit and unattractive. For a variety of reasons, the Service has been patently unable to operate and modernize its operations and the environment. The filing system has remained the same from colonial times. Information retrieval has become a piece of daily agony and decision-making a recurrent trauma.

(e) Lack of financial and material resources to perform its functions and fulfill its obligations: The budgeting and budget administration process constantly leave room for inefficiency on the part of the project and project executors. The Service has been invaded by the Parkinson’s ever- expanding Law often procured by political restructuring and ever constant personnel changes with ensuing endemic instability, waste, ineffectualness and futility.

(f) Corruption in various manifestations:
- Disregard of financial accountability and transparency,
- Insecurity of tenure and means of livelihood during and after service,
- Inadequate remuneration of civil servants vis-à-vis the private sector,
- Absence of basic working materials, tools and equipment,
- Glorification of materialism by the wider society.

(g) Gross indiscipline: When staff are frustrated, poorly paid, have low morale, exhibit laxity; poor and negative work ethics, general inertia, decline in efficiency, effectiveness and productivity emerge. It is possible to measure productivity although not like in the private sector,

(h) Decline in efficiency, effectiveness and productivity; it is possible to measure productivity although the indices would differ from the private sector’s,

(i) Disregard, distrust and cynicism to members of the political class, the business community and other public servants. (Udoji Commission recommended internal mobility and transferability of labour within the public service, it never worked here. An Administrator, Engineer or an Accountant, would find it difficult to move from their corporation to the Civil Service, the Universities, least of all to the private sector like in the USA).

A general caveat should be endorsed for the Nigerian Civil Service. The service is usually operating in an atmosphere of economic, social and political instability. Other organs frequently infect the service with their own inefficiency. For instance a large chunk of Public Administration malfeasance responsibility belongs to some parastatals or other parts of the public service such as electric power, law enforcement and security, enforcement of regulation and control, infrastructural maintenance, rehabilitation and development, inadequate provision of welfare services like water. It is also true that the Civil Service is an organisational behemoth, huge device for decision-making for governments everywhere. What is being said is that the problems of the Nigerian Civil Service is not insuperable or beyond solution nor that Civil Servants are incapable of performing or fulfilling their obligations to
society. The Service was the saving grace for Nigeria for years during and after the military. Indeed many indict the military for the 'failure' of Nigeria's Public Administration, 'But for the fact that the military intervened in government in 1966, the Nigerian Civil Service would have become one of the strongest Civil Services in the world and consequently the Nigerian nation itself would have developed into a strong, hardworking and very proud country' (Mohammed Dalhat, 1994). The 1992 caveat to this is the claim by Gen Yakubu Gowon and Gen Babangida as heads of state who declared that there were no bad leaders but bad advisers.

**Issues in Politicisation of the Service**

A number of background causes of politicisation can now be examined namely:

(a) Intrinsically, the very nature of most civil service functions makes them politically attracted: Most functions/decisions flow from the decisions of the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. Each of these three arms of government operates in the whirlpool of politics. Each submits the annual budget to receive operational funds from the Ministry of Finance. They pass through the pre-Treasury Board and the full budgetary process including the budget defense at the State of Assembly or at the National Assembly. It is true that the Judiciary in modern times is less structured than others and than before although it is also not totally immune from some politics.

(b) Prevailing excess centralization of governance: Stemming from protracted militarization and the presidential system, enormous power is conferred on governments at all levels especially the federal government vis-à-vis the state government and the state government vis-à-vis the local governments. Thus the federal government as product of military centralism captured a lot of functions which should properly belong to the states and local governments. In any case the takeover by the military in Jan 1966 followed by the 1967-70 Civil war and the Structural Adjustment Programme of the 1980s provide the excuse or the alibi for the drastic reduction of the derivation ratio of 50% to nothing and incrementally, to the current 13%. This has left ample predominance of money-power to the Federal Government, to the detriment of State and Local Governments. The 1999 Nigerian Constitution carries some 68 items under the Exclusive Legislative List and a paltry 23 for the Concurrent List which demonstrates which power passes which power. Agitations, spasmodic or sustained, have not procured a fruitful and serious re-visit to the derivation ratio issue. This has permanently weakened the State and Local Governments and minority oil-producing but beleaguered Niger-Delta States. Nigeria calls the oil-producing States minorities even when they produce beyond 80% of the countries’ financial wholeness. As consequence, all the nation's greed and selfishness are focused on oil extraction not on meaningful production, so we remain a nation of remorseless consumers of foreign ware. If all of us were to look at ourselves on a typical working day, we would see ourselves as 90% consumers of foreign ware.

Despite the changes procured by the Ayida 1994 Panel and the Obasanjo Reforms, as long as the Service remains feeble, weak and worn, the Politicians would not just dominate decision-making, the Service shall continue to convey cowardice, tepidity, *lukewarmness* and *apathy*, that is to apply just basic survival instincts rather than what is good for our nation,

(c) Prevailing excess politicisation of everything: The workings of today’s mass media help to enhance the euphoria, the razzmataz, the deification of politics and politicians. The heavy din of noise-making by politicians is trumpeted in screaming headlines and hot stories by most local newspapers and radio houses for their own marketing purposes. Virtually each and all activities of government leadership is trumpeted as headlines and full-page newspaper advertisements scream into daily editions whilst the radio largely report only government and ministerial activities exclusively.

(d) Monetization of politics: which is fuelled through governments’ grant of subvention to the parties and the activities of political godfathers constitute one way of mobilization of the citizenry for good or for the perverse. These have a way of spilling over into bureaucracy as the civil servants are sometimes lured into political activities,
(e) Recurrent political activities in the form of: arrangements for elections, campaigns, voters registration, actual voting engulf the governments and the people directly and indirectly. So do happenings like thuggery, rioting, boundary delimitation and election aftermaths directly or indirectly affect the Service and civil servants,

(f) The very nature of many issues, information gathering, analyses, decision- choices, implementation, post decision assessment, could be largely political. For instance the Murtala /Obasanjo regime 1976-79 took on the following issues almost simultaneously:

- The creation of a new capital city
- the creation of new states,
- the reform and mass purge of the civil service,
- forging a dynamic foreign policy,
- creating a Public Complaints Commission, a Corrupt Practices Bureau, an Assets Panel,
- Local Government Reform,
- A new 46-member constitution-review panel,
- Operation feed-the-nation.

Each of these is replete with a mass of political cause and effect and all touch on virtually all aspects of public administration and on politics, politicians and the people.

The major thrusts of the Obasanjo Civil Service Reform package have been treated as a reversal of the most worrisome of the Babangida era Reform:

(a) Revision of those rules and regulations and procedures to ensure fairness, accountability and good governance,

(b) Achieving a demilitarization of the Service – through the application of laws, the Constitution, General Orders, Financial Regulation and Circulars,

(c) Re-introduction of the pooling system qualitatively, but ensuring that posting was done to promote professionalism,

(d) Broaden the world outlook and vision of civil servants and develop the espirit-de-corps in the Service,

(e) Help to transfer skills and experience within the Service,

(f) Promote national unity ensuring that staff of ministries reflect the ethnic, geographical, religious and other divides of Nigeria,

(g) Correct such distortions as were caused by the 1988 Reform,

(h) The restoration of the office of the Head of the Civil Service,

(i) The Bureau of Public Service Reforms established in 2003 engaged in various reforms including

**Suggestions for Service Improvement**

(a) Education and Modernisation

Opportunities for training and re-training ought to be stressed and enhanced. Each civil servant should be made to procure a Laptop, learn its use and be able to participate in e-governance. Many should be encouraged to obtain post-graduate degrees in Public and Business Administration, Office Technology, Accounting, Law, Insurance, Information Management, Personnel Management, Corporate Governance, Strategic Planning, Total Quality Management, Community Service, Economics, Modernisation and Development Theory, Prismatic Theory, Banking and Finance, Personnel Management, Peace and Conflict, Fiscal Policy and Taxation and others,

(b) Like the British counterpart, the Nigerian Civil Service ought to plan an ‘efficiency initiative’ focusing on cost-reduction ie reducing public expenditure using congenial ideas and practices.

(c) Minimise extraneous factors from recruitment, promotion and discipline process. From time immemorial, accusations of interference by politicians and citizens with Service recruitment, promotion and discipline cases have been rife. The more objective and disciplined
the upper echelons of the Service are, the better able they are to resist insidious pressures from within and from outside. The prevalence of excess demand and pressures on the very limited supply of those opportunities is the harbinger of corruption and unwholesome influences often by politicians or the business community members.

(d) Strive to reduce the risk-aversion capacity of the Service

The penchant for excessive effort to avoid mistakes causes delay. Staff are inundated with warnings against any kind of deviation from old practices no matter how antiquated and obsolescent they have become. An intrinsic weapon to tackle the prevalent tendency for politicisation is the provision of constant, solid, intellectual improvement in terms of continual training so that public servants are several steps in advance to their political counterparts in knowledge, exposure, diligence and propriety. This would entail eschewing extraneous and primordial influences in the personnel management process.

(e) Synergy with research and academia

Borne out of long-subsisting cynicism and professional envy and exclusiveness, the Nigerian public service and academia stay stuck in each of their cocoon, refusing to dialogue, to cooperate, to coalesce for tackling the plethora of everyday problems facing society. When public administration or the executive uses external expertise, they tend to prefer haphazardly chosen contractors and consultants rather than nationally and internationally acclaimed academics and experts from local institutions of higher learning. Similarly, research and invention suffer because of the self-containment between industry, society and academia. The dissonance between town and gown is deleterious to Nigeria’s development and productivity.

CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding all that has been discoursed, without a systemic change, piecemeal ad-hocism, instamental and marginal improvements cannot take the Civil Service to a perceptible and new level of productivity. Such systemic change ought to encompass the entire society as the Civil Service cannot be isolated as a vibrant oasis within a vast arid desert. In any case the very nature of the Civil Service abhors revolutionary change models thus military impulsive ‘with immediate effect’ decision-making strategy failed colossally in Nigeria and in many developing countries. A vital virtue of the Civil Service is stability based on evolution, gradualism rather than revolution and speed of unplanned or badly planned action. Nevertheless change is imperative for the structure, the organ and the practice of public administration as has been demonstrated by past successes of public administration in Nigeria. Public Administration cannot flourish without meaningful and targeted changes to adapt, to synthesise with the modern world, and to make, to create and to initiate.

There can be no Public Administration without Public and Civil Servants, no Democracy without Parties, no real growth without more and more Education, no Governance without Politics, No Politics without Politicians. Some argue that ‘no nation can develop beyond the capacity of its public service’ (El Rufai: 2014 Aug 12). The Nigerian public service was intensely respected until military rule when the fortune plummeted to the abyss. It changed from attracting the best and brightest graduates to the ‘dull, lazy and venal’ ones. Politicisation is a product of the country’s history, twisted colonial history, complex and treacherous regionalism by the three regions at independence, the gross incompetence and mischievous rampaging misdirection by the military form the background to full-scale politicisation now sustained by the overwhelming federal centralism covering the three tiers of government almost to suffocation. The
destructive effect of politicization can only be checked by good governance, compliance with the rules of decency rules and regulations of the system. The effectuation of the positive and promising effects of reforms requires decisive leadership and a positive political environment. The synergy between politics and administration has to be found and to be exploited. Major achievements that can enhance good governance are in Education and Modernisation, Science and Technology, Productivity as against consumerism, civility as against coarse culture, love as against hate, development as against retrogression and mediocrity.

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