

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND THE COLLAPSE OF PROBITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL SUPERSTRUCTURE.

ABDULHAMID OZOHU-SULEIMAN, Ph.D.

Department of Public Administration,

Faculty of Management Science,

University of Abuja

ABSTRACT: *Emerging from the vestiges of about one hundred years of imperial rule, the Nigerian public administration system has experienced significant transformation to secure a place of pride in the general discourse on governance. However, the stream of political developments that brought the system into sharp focus and relevance have been as challenging to the public service as they are instructive in intellectual reflections. For example, in the growing literature on the collapse of probity and good governance in Nigeria, the public service has been severely scored on account of its failure to provide the required institutional grounding for good governance. While not absolving the political class of culpability for this failure, the general assessment of the leadership question in Nigeria has been heavily skewed against the bureaucracy. The paper seeks to deconstruct this notion and argues that the political superstructure is largely responsible for the governance failure, and that the public service under the suffocating grip of its political masters, only managed to maintain its going concern within the constraints of political instability, policy inconsistency, and the lack of political accountability in the last fifty three years of public administration. Within the framework of politics-administration dichotomy, the paper exposes the nature and character of interaction between the political class and the administrative class on the basis of which deductions are made and conclusion drawn. In the final analysis, two recommendations stand out among others: a call for legislative activism sufficient enough to institutionalise a culture of political and managerial accountability, and a call for policy consistency sufficient enough to sustain and drive the current reforms of the public service to its logical ends.*

KEYWORDS: Accountability, Administration, Governance, Politics, Public Service

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the geopolitical consequences of the scramble for Africa in the second half of the 19th century. Once the sharing of the virgin continent was completed by the imperial powers, the expanse of untamed topography of what eventually came to be called Nigeria fell under the imperial rule of the British. The process of incubating a nation out of the motley tribal groups was itself very challenging. History books are replete with several account of the causes and consequences of this imperial adventure (See Young, 1993; Coleman, 1996 & Ikime,2001). Although the motive of economic exploitation was paramount, the British were no doubt overwhelmed by the un-envisaged task of organising a political community that is conducive to economic imperialism. Beginning with the pacification of hostile natives up to the period of constitutional and political engineering that eventually led to the granting of political independence, the history of the conception and birth of Nigeria is as chequered as it is engaging in intellectual discourse.

Nigeria as an independent nation is a little over fifty three years old. Reflecting over her political and constitutional history also amounts to reflecting over her public administration system which has equally endured for over five decades. However, this manner of reflection in intellectual circle, calls for a critical assessment of how the system of public administration has helped to nurture a nation in the past fifty three years. The good news is that Nigeria has remained a nation in spite of several challenges that has trailed her chequered existence. From 1960 to date, the country has witnessed four Republics and several Administrations – broken down into four civilian regimes, five military interventions and one interim government. She has also fought a civil war from 1967 to 1970, largely on the question of what should constitute an acceptable social, political and economic order.

The bad news is that fifty three years after independence, Nigeria is yet to evolve a workable socio-political and economic order. This derives from the failure of leadership to facilitate the realisation of the collective hopes and aspirations of the people through good governance. In other words, there is a crisis of governance. Therefore, in reflecting over fifty three years of public administration in Nigeria, the preoccupation should be to offer a critical perspective on the institutional actors involved in the governance project. In this connection, two actors come to mind – the political class which expresses the will of the state and the administrative class which gives effect to this will once they are given official ‘sacrament’.

The institutional locus of the political class can be found in the law making organ of government, political parties and organised pressure groups; whereas that of administration is located in the formalised executive branch of government. It is the synergy between these two distinct institutional actors that engenders governance in concrete terms. Where one falls short of the required standard of performance, the quality of governance will be affected. Since independence, Nigeria’s history has been marked by a crisis of governance. The consensus arising out of the general debates on good governance and its requirements have severely scored the bureaucracy for its failure to provide the much needed institutional support for good governance. It is the abiding concern of this paper to discharge the bureaucracy from the ‘dock’ where it sadly stands, to establish that the political superstructure is largely to blame for the leadership failure, and to argue that, due to obvious constraints some of which includes political instability and policy summersaults, the public service failed to optimise its statutory role of translating the will of the state into concrete and desirable terms.

To realise these objectives, the paper is organised into seven sections. Section one, which is the introduction, provides a background to the study. Section two articulates the leadership question in Nigeria. Section three revisits the politics-administration dichotomy. Section four summarises the history of political development of a nation in search of leadership. Section five discusses and reflects on issues arising from the study, while section six and seven concludes the paper and offered some recommendations respectively.

THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Perhaps one of the most outstanding pronouncements on the Nigeria state, especially in respect of her ability to tackle the challenges of governance in a globalising world, was the verdict of pundits as contained in the conference report on sub-Saharan Africa in 2005. In it, experts were unanimous in their assessment that Nigeria is a failed state, and that the dismemberment of the federation as a geo-political entity was just a question of time. The

conference report acknowledged that Nigeria is plagued by poor leadership, divisive ethnic politics, decayed government institutions ... and a brain drain, unable to engage the international economy sufficiently to reverse her downward trajectory (NIC, 2005). This shocking expression of pessimism about Project Nigeria is not unconnected to the leadership crisis that has continued to stare the nation in the face since independence. Whereas the 1980s was considered a 'lost decade' for Africa, Nigeria has continued to feature prominently in almost all international fora where Africa's governance crises are ex-rayed. Utomi, in Olaopa (2010:v), observed that, "with an obvious disconnect between the state and citizens, high levels of goal displacement in the public bureaucracy and the emergence of the patrimonial state as people in power expropriate economic rents that are unearned..., the state in post-colonial Africa has been a cause for despair". Other scholars in an effort to offer a critical perspective on governance abuses and failures in Africa have gone ahead to identify a number of causes:

... the personalised nature of rule in which key political actors exercise unlimited power; systemic clientelism; misuse of state resources and institutionalised corruption; opaque government; the breakdown of the public realm; the lack of delegation of power and the withdrawal of the masses from governance (Hyden, 1992 & 2000; Bratton & Van De Walle, 1992).

The foregoing diagnosis captures the symptom of leadership failure in Nigeria. However, in specific terms, the political and constitutional crisis occasioned by the long spell of military intervention lies at the heart of governance crisis in Nigeria. Almost three decades of military rule produced in the end, weak institutional structure and the absence of accountability. As a consequence, the public service came under intense patronage system where leadership was personalised and public interest compromised. In the opinion of Olowu, Otobo and Okotoni (1997), the armed forces and the public bureaucracy are responsible for these disappointing outcomes. They argue that, "the restiveness of the military in constantly taking power from fumbling politicians and then renege in their promise to relinquish power and the subsequent politicisation and corruption of the military elites; a public service that has, overtime, lost its inherited commitment to political neutrality, professionalism and developmental ethos, are the major factors responsible for leadership failure in Nigeria" (Olowu, Otobo & Okotoni, 1997:7).

Thus, several explanations of what went wrong that brought Nigeria to this unenviable governance situation abound in the vast literature. In all these explanations, one clear message stands out; that the Nigeria public service has been subject to two major influences – the civil and military rules, both of which are located under the domain of the political superstructure. It therefore means that, within the context of a turbulent political environment, the bureaucracy as loyal servant of the state came under the suffocating influence of the political superstructure. As leadership exchange hands and public policy is subjected to constant tinkering, the undoing of the political masters became the institutional failings of the bureaucracy. In the light of these observations, it is pertinent to ask; what are the streams of political development since independence that shaped the nature and character of the Nigeria public service? How has the orientation influenced the performance of the bureaucracy? To what extent can we shift the responsibility for leadership failure to the political masters? These questions constitute the foci of the paper.

POLITICS-ADMINISTRATION DICHOTOMY

The politics-administration dichotomy offers a revealing explanatory variable in an effort to examine the relationship between policy makers and administrators. Before the 1920s, the traditional assumption that there is a clear distinction between politics and administration held sway. It is assumed that politics is essentially concerned with the processes connected with the shaping and uses of state power, while administration is the means for the realisation of policy objectives. It is therefore argued that; administration must divorce itself from the field of politics and be based on a single organisational prototype universally applicable to all political regimes (Chandler & Plano, 1988). The argument for the separability of politics and administration has received the endorsement of a considerable number of scholars (Wilson, 1887; Goodnow, 1900; Willoughy, 1918; Pfiffner, 1935; and White, 1948). Wilson in his essay, *The Study of Administration*, trailed the blaze in the classical conception of politics-administration dichotomy. He observed that:

Public administration is detailed and systematic execution of public law. Every particular application of general law is an act of administration. The assessment and raising of taxes ..., the hanging of a criminal, the transportation and delivery of mails ... etc, are all obviously acts of administration; but the general law which direct these things to be done are obviously outside of and above administration. The broad plans of government action are not administrative; the detailed execution of such plans is administration (Wilson, 1887:197-222).

Goodnow (1900) corroborates this view when he submits that in all governmental systems two primary functions vis: the expression of the will of the state and the execution of that will are performed by separate organs. These functions are respectively politics and administration (quoted in Shafritz & Hyde, 2007). Willoughy (1918), argues that administration should be considered as a fourth branch of government, the other three being legislative, executive and judiciary – a submission which represents the most extreme, but perhaps the most logical result of the strict separation of politics and administration (Lepawsky, 1970).

However, the debates on politics-administration dichotomy have also produced stringent voices that are opposed to a watertight separation (Waldo, 1992; Frederick, 1941; Appleby, 1949). Waldo declared that politics-administration dichotomy is a misleading distinction which has become a fetish, a stereotype in the minds of theorists and practitioners alike. In his, *A Theory of Public Administration Means in Our Time a Theory of Politics Also*, Waldo (1992:82) asserts; “if one searches for a term to designate a human collectivity in which politics and administration are well integrated, two of the terms considered certainly would be totalitarian and utopian. Patently, we are not currently at risk for totalitarianism or within sight of utopia. But if and as we seek to move towards the latter, we must be aware of the former”.

With the spate of criticism of the classical politics-administration dichotomy, especially after the 1920s and the increasing volume and complexity of modern government, the need to re-examine the relationship between policy makers and administrators became imperative. In the light of this development, Adamolekun (1983), opined that politicians dominate issues of high content of political judgement and a low content of technical expertise, whereas

administrators dominate issues of high content of technical expertise and low content of political judgement. Therefore, Pfiffner warned:

Let no apostle of political realism think that advocates of such a separation of power are unaware of its doctrinaire pitfalls. They do not advocate that it be embalmed into constitutional backwaters designed to stand for centuries as was the classical threefold division into legislative, executive and judicial functions ... there is no denial that in a considerable number of instances, question of politics will be closely intermingled with administrative action (Pfiffner, 1935:7).

While some degree of fusion between politics and administration is inevitable, there have so far not been clear and persuasive explanations of why and how politics often gets in the way of administrative decision making and institutional operations. It is however observed that the historical, cultural, geographical, situational and traditional backgrounds of political systems have often bridged politics and administration together and significantly affected administrative operations (Shaw, 2010). In Nigeria for example, the constant political interference into administrative operations and state policy implementation has had damaging impact on governance since independence.

A SYNOPSIS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Starting with the period immediately after political independence this section summarise the challenges that confronted a nation at birth and how these challenges predisposed the political environment to military incursion, the emergence of corruption and maladministration. The analysis stretches further to capture highlight of the contestation for power by the political elite groups emerging from diverse cultural and ethnic background, and how such have contributed to the collapse of probity and good governance. To realise these, our theoretical point of departure is the perceptive observation on the potentials of Nigeria to achieve greatness:

When the Nigeria state emerged from colonial rule in 1960, it held great hopes of becoming an African democratic and developmental state. It has a large and diverse population ... a Westminster style democratic federal system of government. Besides, the country was well-resourced in terms of both natural and human resources. These combined with the large potential market, were thought to make her a promising African black hope ... unfortunately three decades and half later, these hopes have been painfully dashed (Olowu, Otobo & Okotoni, 1997:1).

THE FIRST REPUBLIC: POST-INDEPENDENCE GOVERNANCE CRISES (1960-1966).

Nigeria joined the comity of sovereign nations on 1st October, 1960 after a century of imperial domination. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became the first leader of an independent Nigeria under the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. No sooner had the country got her independence that it ran into political crisis. Some of the crises that brought about the premature collapse of the first republic include among others; the 1959/60 independence election crisis, Chief Awolowo's treason trial, the 1962 crises in the Action Group (AG), the 1962/63 national population census controversy and the 1964/65 regional and federal elections crisis (Duddley, 1982). It was the inability of the political leadership to contain these crises that resulted in the collapse of the first republic in 1966.

At this time, the modus operandi of the public service still retained the British colonial legacies, without any attempt to transform the service to address the socio-economic realities of a post-independent Nigeria. The political leadership was too absorbed in widespread bickering and contestation for power to give attention to this all important permanent structure of governance. Pundits have offered several explanations on the causes of the collapses of the first republic.

Gambari (1977) pointed to four developments at that time, which in their combination brought down the First Republic. They are the crisis of legitimacy which made it extremely difficult for the political leadership at the centre to enjoy the acceptance of all the ethnic and ideological groups in the country, the relatively powerful regions when compared to the centre, the mutual lack of trust and understanding between the different ethnic and ideological groups and the failure of the politicians to provide decisive leadership. Hence the centre lost control of affairs of the country and degenerated into chaos when the army struck.

The First Military Intervention: Politics of Regionalism and the Crisis of National Integration (1966-1979). As the army struck on January 1966, many leading politicians including the Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa were killed. Giving reasons for the bloody intervention, the junta explains that the aim of the revolution was to establish a strong, united and prosperous nation (Jinadu, 1989). Specifically, the army identified “political profiteers” as the main target of the revolution. However, the coup was given different interpretations by the various sections of the country. The southeast interpreted it as a nationalist movement to end domination of the country by the North. The North on the other hand saw the coup from the point of view of ethnic cleansing. Although the coup did not succeed in toppling the federal government, General Ironsi who took charge of the affairs of the country was tasked to bring the January 15 coup plotters to book. Failure to do this created suspicion among the people, which eventually led to the abduction and death of General Ironsi.

On August 1st, 1966, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon took over the leadership of the nation. The choice of Gowon was vehemently rejected by the Military Governor of Eastern Region, Lt. Col. Ojukwu, who argued that the choice of a low ranking officer to take charge of the country after the exit of the Supreme Commander was offensive to military tradition. On the killing of some Igbo officers in the North, Ojukwu observed that the brutal and planned annihilation of officers of Eastern Nigeria had cast a serious doubt as to whether the people of Nigeria could ever sincerely live together as members of a nation (Crowder, 1973). The crisis reached its climax on 30th May, 1967 when Ojukwu in a broadcast proclaimed the Republic of Biafra. Gowon declared Ojukwu’s action a rebellion and promised to crush it. He quickly divided the country into twelve states. The country was thrown into a thirty month bloody civil war which ended in 1970.

Nigeria emerged from the civil war a strong nation, with potentials for development and national integration. Thus, Gowon was preoccupied with the task of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction (the triple R). Pursuant to these, a programme of actions was considered which include but not limited to the implementation of the second national development plan and the eradication of corruption from the leadership of Nigeria. Although, the second national development plan was finally implemented, other issues in the programme of action, especially the problem of official corruption was not given the seriousness it deserved, thus:

Unprecedented forms of flagrant corruption appeared when oil revenues began to fill the federal treasury ... military governors spent large sums on openly lavish life-styles, thus tarnishing the image of the military, which had supposedly come to power in reaction to corruption of the First Republic (Mundt & Aboride, 2004:707-708).

With respect to the public service, the first significant impact of the political process was recorded at the period. As a radical departure from the colonial legacy of the limited objectives of maintaining law and order, the Gowon administration expanded the public service based on the recommendations of the Udoji public service review. This was meant to enable the public service pursue broad socio-economic development objectives. Thus, with the increase in oil revenue, government was able to fund various programmes and projects, most of which were initially linked to post-civil war efforts of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The size of the federal service grew from about 30,000 at independence in 1960 to 98,877 in 1974 (Otobo, 2002:298).

However, Gowon presided over a corrupt and inept leadership until July 29th, 1975 when he was ousted in a bloodless palace coup while attending an OAU meeting in Kampala. Explaining the reasons for the take-over, Brigadier Muhammed Murtala who became the new head of state remarked that; the Gowon administration was characterised by “lack of consultation, indecision, indiscipline and even neglect”. He retired all service chiefs and military governors and announced the suspension of the controversial 1973 census figure. On the public service, the Murtala regime reacted to the Udoji review by embarking on a massive purge with the intention of purifying it of its bad eggs. This spectacular purge notwithstanding, the service remained essentially ill-equipped to assume the numerous developmental responsibilities that accompanied the modernisation process in Nigeria.

However, the euphoria over Murtala’s dynamism was shattered when in an abortive but bloody coup, he was assassinated. Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo who became the new head of state admitted that the nation was once again passing through a critical period in her history. In a swift move to return the country to civil rule, Obasanjo received the report of the constitution drafting committee. The high point of the report was the recommendation of a presidential system of government for the country – a shift from the British legacy of Westminster system. Obasanjo established a Constituent Assembly with responsibility to receive and collate comments from the general public on the draft constitution. Despite the controversy that trailed the assignments, the constituent assembly completed its assignment on good time and a copy of the constitution was submitted to the federal government for approval (Nwabueze, 1982). The head of state signed Decree 25, which promulgated the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria into law with effect from 1st October, 1979. He also announced that the twelve-year ban on political parties had been lifted which set the stage for political party formation and politicking.

The Second Republic: Presidential Democracy and Leadership Failure (1979-1983)

The second republic was ushered in after the conduct of a controversial general election which saw to the emergence of Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The first four years of Shagari’s administration was characterised by poor governance, widespread corruption and schism among political leaders. Political officer holders squandered what remains of the surplus from the oil boom of 1970s. The ruling party (NPN) was reduced into an agglomeration of corrupt element whose disposition towards leadership

was business-like in nature, where interest was expected to yield both dividend and profit at the same time. Thus:

Corruption by political office holders ... stigmatised the image of the government ..., weakened its credibility and reduced the effectiveness of development programmes and policies which so far have been formulated (Bolanta, 1992:528).

It should be noted that between 1979 and 1983; there were so much bickering, expulsions, decamping, impeachments and alliances such that the political environment was unhealthy for smooth transition. In spite of this, the elections were held. The NPN won in a “landslide victory”. However, public opinion ranging from the views of individuals, groups and organisations differ significantly from its acclaimed victory. The party was alleged to have rigged the elections through manipulation of electoral officials and the use of the public force to intimidate supporters of other parties. These, prompted the military to intervene and seize power at the very inception of Shagari second term in office in 1983.

Second Military Intervention: Transition Politics and the Aborted Third Republic (1983-1999). General Muhammadu Buhari who took over the reign of power established a special military tribunal to try and recover ill-gotten wealth from corrupt politicians of the second republic. Some of them were later sentenced to various jail terms. The regime also tried to inject some discipline into all facets of the society through the promulgation and enforcement of a Decree on War Against Indiscipline (WAI). However, the administration of Buhari was toppled within a space of about one year through a palace coup. General Babangida emerged as the first self-styled military president of Nigeria. Barely one month of coming into power, Babangida set in motion programmes of action to return the country to democratic rule.

A Political Bureau was set up for this purpose. After thirteen months of public sittings, the Bureau submitted its report to the military president. The Bureau recommended among others; presidential system of government, a socialist ideology that would commit the state to nationalism and socialism of the commanding heights of the national economy and a bi-party political system for the Third Republic. However, while the presidential and bi-party systems were accepted, the junta rejected socialism as an ideology for the country arguing that the government did not find it necessary to attach any ideological label to our new social-political power (Oyobaire and Olagunju, 1989).

The second major reforms of the public service came under the Babangida administration – the 1988 reforms. The reforms related to the structural, institutional and operational patterns of the pre-existing model of governmental administration. The reforms introduced the following changes; it politicised the upper echelon of the public service by abolishing the pool system and introduced a system where all civil servants were specialists or professionals who spent their entire career in their respective ministries, it abolished the post of Head of Civil Service and invested the powers of the accounting officer hitherto held by the permanent secretary in the ministers who were heads and chief executives of their ministries.

The changes brought about by the 1988 reforms came on the heels of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which inflicted severe hardship on Nigerians. Corruption and abuse of public office was institutionalised while the political process suffered endless transition manoeuvres and extensions. However, a general election was held in 1993 that was to usher in the Third Republic in Nigeria political history. The election was annulled – an action that

threw the nation into severe political crisis. The heat of the crisis led to the exit of Babangida and the inauguration of an interim national government headed by Ernest Shonekan. The legitimacy of Shonekan administration was seriously questioned, and was eased out of office by General Sanni Abacha.

The Abacha administration which lasted for five harrowing years was simply another painful reminder of the military as an aberration in politics. There was widespread human right abuse. Nigeria became a pariah state as she was roundly condemned by the international community. The political environment was characterised by civil disobedience resulting in widespread insecurity. The Nigerian state became notorious “by a strong military and security network as precondition, and violence as its logic” (Kukah, 2003:41). On the public service, the Abacha administration established the Ayida Panel to review the 1988 reforms. The review made sweeping reversal of the 1988 reforms and returned the service to the status quo ante. The sudden death of Abacha put paid to what many considered as a classic example of mindless military adventure into politics.

An interregnum headed by General Abubakar Abdulsalami was put in place in 1998. In a swift move to return the country to true democracy, the new regime disbanded all existing political parties and cancelled previous elections conducted under the parties. Modalities and structures for the formation and registration of new political parties were released immediately, and a general election was held which returned Nigeria to civil rule in May, 1999. There were minor reviews of the public service from 1998 to 1999, mainly on salary review and staff rationalisation.

The Fourth Republic: Democratic Rebirth and Rising Expectations Since 1999. The historic transition to civil rule in 1999 marked the beginning of a new dawn in the chequered political and constitutional history of Nigeria – the Fourth Republic. The new civilian administration brought with it a lot of anxieties. The long period of suffering and deprivation was over, and Nigerians looked forward to a better deal from the elected government. But the task of rebuilding the nation was no doubt Herculean to the new leadership. The infrastructure had deteriorated; corruption was widespread in all aspect of the country’s national life, the public service and the Armed Forces had been politicised and professionalism thrown to the winds. The economy had gone flat with rising inflation and collapsing manufacturing sector.

The president in his inaugural speech responded to this state of affairs by promising to make a choice between ‘governance as usual’ and ‘governance unusual’. ‘Governance as usual’ meant the sustenance of our national maladies; while ‘governance unusual’ would necessitate a fundamental paradigm shift, the confrontation of entrenched status quo interests in all ramifications, and a drastic and pervasive re-ordering not only of the country’s national priorities and policies, but also the implementation of his new national agenda in a way that would guarantee due process and procedural integrity (Presidential Inaugural Speech, 1999). Thus, the need to reposition the public service as a critical institution of democratic governance became imperative. As the administration settles down for business, a reorientation programme involving retreats for ministers, members of board of parastatals, their chief executives and permanent secretaries was convened. There were series of workshops for senior officers in the public service. The climax of these whole efforts was the Kuru declaration of the year 2001, which represent a statement of commitment and the core elements of the vision for a greater Nigeria. The declaration seeks to:

Build a truly great African democratic country, politically united, integrated and stable, economically prosperous, socially organised; with equal opportunity for all, and responsibility for all, to become the catalyst of (African) Renaissance, and making adequate all-embracing contributions, subregionally, regionally and globally (The Kuru Declaration, 2001).

This declaration was made against the backdrop of a chequered political history (spanning four decades) – a history that was punctuated with deep seated schism within the political class coupled with intermittent military interventions. For the bureaucracy, the technical team that was set up to undertake an environmental scanning of it, revealed a disturbing report of systemic decay, resulting in blatant disregard for the norms and practices associated with the operation of established government institutions. There was therefore a compelling need to bridge the gap between the challenges of service delivery, developing effectiveness through innovations and best practices (Adegoroye, 2005).

DISCUSSION

The nature and character of interaction between the political superstructure and the administrative structure of governance is largely determined by their institutional setting. Nigeria has experimented with both the presidential and parliamentary institutional arrangements. The presidential form of government, it is argued, possesses strong political and bureaucratic control structure while a parliamentary form of government possesses centralised control. This difference in institutional setting presumably affects the relationships between political authorities and administrative servants of government (Shaw, 2010). Institutional arrangement is here defined as the formal and informal rules that govern the extent of democratic government practices. These rules affect the behaviours of public officials who are faced with both opportunities and constraints of varying political systems while discharging their statutory responsibilities (Ostrom, 1991). We have observed earlier that the Nigeria political system has been subject to two major influences – civil and military. Under civil rule, not much can be said of parliamentary democracy which came up between 1960 and 1966. With the shift to presidential democracy in 1979 after a long spell of military interventions, the Nigeria political system replicates the United States (U.S.) presidential democracy albeit with obvious imperfections.

In the US system, for example, power of government is decentralised, given the fact that various government functions are shared among an array of bureaucratic mechanisms (Shaw, 2010:4). The same is true with Nigeria where the political authorities supervise a complex mesh of bureaucratic agencies. The complexity of this kind of institutional arrangement has considerably affected the relationship between political authorities and administrative institutions. These effects are viewed within the framework of both classical and neo-classical politics-administration dichotomy. In the US experience, the institutional arrangement has contributed to the adversarial as well as fragmented nature of bureaucratic politics (Wilson, 1989). In Nigeria, political interference into administrative policy implementation has been extremely devastating to her socio-political and economic development. At this juncture, we draw attention to the second form of influence in Nigeria's political system – the military. Military rule which altogether accounts for about thirty years out of the fifty three years of political independence is here treated as a variant of political superstructure of governance. It is however an unusual superstructure perhaps because the military is considered as an aberration in governance. Its impact over the years coupled with

the overbearing and irresponsible character of the political class under civil rule, generated negative consequences such as political instability, policy inconsistency/reversal and the absence of public accountability.

Political Instability. The high points of Nigeria's political development since independence have been captured in the preceding section of the paper. These high points are instructive to the extent that they underscore the tragic political instability of a nation since independence. In the last fifty three years, Nigeria has witnessed four republics and several military interventions. Each regime (civil and military) have had course to reform the public service. Thus as leadership exchange hands, the public administration system has always been the first casualty of regime change. The major reform initiatives since independence are as follows: Morgan Commission, 1963; Elwood Commission, 1966; Adebo Commission, 1971; Udoji Commission, 1974; Dotun Philips Commission, 1985; Decree No. 43 of 1988; Ayida Panel Review, 1994; Abdulsalami Review, 1998; and the Obasanjo Public Service Reforms, 2004 (see Ozohu-Suleiman, 2010).

In this constant tinkering with the permanent structure of governance, the military is widely believed to have dealt the most severe blow on the Nigeria public administration system. Out of the nine reforms identified, six were undertaken during military rule. In an effort to advance reasons for this tendency, Olowu, Otobo and Okotoni (1997), argue that; the military perceives the public service as crucial to its own survival in power, the modernisation of the nation and the task of democratisation and national transformation. However, in spite of these reforms and their lofty objectives running through all administrations till date, the state of public service has remained a sad commentary on the Nigeria public administration system. Moreover, most of these reforms (with the exception of the Udoji Commission and recently, the Obasanjo reforms that started in 2001), have focused more on structural reorganisation, salaries, wages and condition of service than on the more fundamental performance issues that can impact positively on service delivery (see Ozohu-Suleiman, 2010).

Some of these reforms whose salient features were opposed to each other, have only succeeded in doing more harm than good – a fact which underscores the damage that political instability has done to the polity. The 1988 reforms and the Ayida review of 1994 provide a vivid illustration of this damage. The 1988 reforms which initiated far reaching structural reorganisation in the public service were reversed by that of 1994. The return to status quo ante after a fairly long period of changes, only helped to weaken the public service and transformed it to a 'guinea pig' for mindless social experimentation.

Moreover, political instability can also be thought of as the absence of a predictable and rule bound electoral system with far reaching implications for a secured democratic space that guarantees popular participation. To this end, current trends and tendencies in party politics in Nigeria is capable of overheating the polity with dire consequences for the democratization process. At the moment, the political system is under shock and rising temperature – no thanks to the un-abating schism within the political class. The high point of this schism was the implosion in the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) which saw to the massive defection of party members to the opposition All Progressive Congress (APC). In the wake of the bitter politics that ensued, the opposition has called for the impeachment of the Jonathan administration, observing that; "There is a total failure of leadership, even as insecurity, unprecedented corruption, palpable impunity, massive unemployment and hunger stalk the land" (Daily Trust, December, 16, 2013, pg. 2 & The Nation, December, 16, 2013,

pg. 2). Although this development may be consistent with the nature and dynamics of party politics especially in emergent democracies, the heat it generates coupled with the fragile security situation in the country, pose huge challenge to the survival of the fourth republic.

Policy Inconsistency/Reversal. Closely related to the issue of political instability is the challenge of policy inconsistency/reversal. Inconsistency in public policy implementation has been one of the major undoing of the political masters – a situation that has made it increasingly difficult to achieve the goal of sustainable development. Given that socio-economic transformation is tied to the quality and consistency in public policy implementation, the frequent change of leadership with its attendant policy reversal constitutes a major disconnect between the past and the present in terms of policy continuity. For example, poverty alleviation related policy in Nigeria has constantly changed face and focus depending on the leadership in place. Beginning in 1986 when the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was put in place up to 1999 when the National Poverty Eradication Programmes (NAPEP) was established, poverty alleviation related policy has changed in contents and nomenclature (under different administrations) for nine times (see Oladeji and Abiola, 1998). Despite these changes and the huge budgetary outlays attached to them, poverty has remained a familiar bed fellow with the vast majority of Nigerians.

Coming close to the current dispensation which began in 1999, in terms of policy consistency, government efforts in the last fourteen years leave much to be desired. One of the salient features of the current reforms of public service is the streamlining of the bureaucracy in response to the clarion call for limited but strong government. However, the way and manner the Nigerian state has responded to this call to roll back the state is instructive in an effort to underscore the question of policy reversal. Before the reforms, the total number of federal ministries stood at twenty nine. In the year 2006, the government pruned down the number from 29 to 19. Some ministries were scraped and some merged (ThisDay, December, 14, 2006, pgs. 1-4). This action was understood in the context of the demands of the reforms. But, in the last quarter of the year 2008, a major cabinet reshuffle was undertaken at the end of which the number of federal ministries shut up from 19 to 27. Consequent upon the swearing in of the Jonathan administration in May 2011, the number of federal ministries increased again to 30, comprising of 36 ministers each representing the 36 states of the federation. (see Ozohu-Suleiman & Ibori, 2012). This obvious policy summersaults no doubt, jolts the sensibility of experts and practitioners.

Still on policy reversal, Adamolekun (2011), in his presidential inaugural lecture, noted three cases of policy discontinuity between June, 2007 and June, 2008. One was identified in the privatisation policy and two in the education sector. In the privatisation policy, some transactions namely; sale of Kaduna and Port Harcourt refineries, sale of SAT3, takeover of NICON Insurance, sale of NITEL and some concession agreements were cancelled. These policy reversals, in spite of the impressive achievements recorded in the liberalisation of the telecommunication sector, gives out the administration as lacking in commitment to policy implementation (see Adamolekun, 2011:7). However, it is interesting to note that the privatisation of the nation's refineries is now hotly debated in the public domain, with the organised labour calling for the sustenance of the policy reversal, ostensibly on the ground that the policy was designed to deliver the nation's major source of wealth to the ruling class who, in the first place were responsible for its mismanagement (see The Guardian, December, 18, 2013, pg. 4). In the education sector, the policies on public-private-partnership (PPP) for the management of one hundred and two federal government colleges and the merger of

polytechnics and colleges of education with universities were reversed. Although some reasons were advanced by the government for the reversals, they fell short of offsetting the far reaching objectives for which the policies were designed to achieve abinitio. For example, unity schools are considered to be crucial to national integration, thus, justifying government continued ownership. This opinion is erratic in so far as it is not empirically grounded (see Adamolekun, 2011:8). In the grip of these policy summersaults, the bureaucracy comes across as an ‘errand boy’, confused and frustrated by the conflicting instructions of his political masters.

Absence of Public Accountability

The demand for public accountability has become a common refrain since the return to democracy in Nigeria. In fact, accountability is considered as the hallmark of democracy and therefore a major requirement for good governance. In the words of Booven (2005:2), the concept of accountability has become a rhetorical device; it serves as a synonym for many loosely defined political desiderata such as transparency, equity, democracy, efficiency and integrity”. In the general discourse on good governance, two forms of accountability are suggested; political accountability and managerial accountability. The former has to do with those in authority being answerable for their actions to citizens, while the later is concerned with delegated authority being answerable for carrying out agreed tasks according to agreed criteria of performance (Day and Klein, 1987).

However, political accountability is a necessary condition for managerial accountability, both of which contributes to good governance. Therefore the issue of political justification of decisions and actions that emanates from the superstructure of governance first provides the enabling environment for good governance. The writer has argued elsewhere that; in Nigeria, political decisions and actions raise the question of accountability to citizens as they are in many cases not taken in the interest of the common good. If the bureaucracy is expected to provide the required institutional grounding for good governance, the political masters must inspire the necessary confidence and trust in their policy determination (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2010).

The apparent lack of political accountability has given rise to widespread political corruption with the predictable consequence of a bureaucracy that is increasingly less accountable and more corrupt. Political corruption affects the manner in which decisions are made, as it manipulates institutions of government, rules of procedure and perverts acceptable standards of government practice. Although incidence of political corruption is as old as Nigeria, the dimension it has taken in contemporary Nigeria, especially with the return to democratic rule in 1999, has continued to amaze public affairs analysts. The efforts of the Independent Corrupt Practice and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), in combating official graft has only helped to further expose the depth of political corruption hitherto unknown to Nigerians. From the indictment of corrupt members of the National Assembly through allegation of corruption on the part of ministers, state governors, top political appointees of government to the mindless looting of local government treasury by council chairmen, the catalogue of cases that EFCC has confronted is quite unsettling (see EFCC, 2008 and 2009). The public outcry, disaffections and crises generated in the war against official graft should have, in the words of Aucoin and Heintzman (2000), “an important ritual to purify government processes and help to provide public catharsis”. But such is not the case in Nigeria as a considerable number of government officials charged for corrupt practices have become ‘celebrities’ of a sort.

Apart from cases of official infractions that are institution specific, the budget cycle has become a disturbing annual ritual of impropriety for which the political class has been severely scored. In the last ten years or so, the National Assembly has made questionable insertions into the annual budget estimates. Four of such insertions readily come to mind; budgetary allocation for the highly contested constituency projects, arbitrary increases in the capital vote (sometimes not matched by a corresponding reduction in the recurrent vote), the unilateral increases in the budget for National Assembly; and the increases in the vote to certain Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAS) under conditions that are suggestive of bribe-for- budget (Adedokun, 2012:18). These alterations were made ostensibly on the strength of the powers conferred on the hallowed chambers by the constitution. However, the poor implementation and lack-lustre performance of annual budgets within the period under review coupled with the weak and ineffectual oversight role of the peoples' representatives, gives them as lacking in political accountability (see Ozohu-Suleiman, 2013).

The implications of these findings are that: (a) although the two institutional settings are critical to democratic good governance, the political superstructure is fundamental to the realisation of the goal of good governance and is therefore expected to nurture the entire institutional landscape, set and enforce standards within a rule-bound public policy process to strengthen government capacity to respond adequately to the growing public expectations; (b) given the power calculus that imposes on the National Assembly responsibility to make law for the good governance of the country, the political superstructure of which it is a critical part, is expected to superintend its own internal dynamics to address contradictions such political instability, policy inconsistency and lack of public accountability that are largely responsible for the unenviable score card of government; and (c) that the political superstructure within the periods under review (1st ,2nd, 3rd & 4th Republics), get the nature and character of bureaucracy they deserve. Thus, the failure of public service is a predictable consequence of the inability of the political class to demonstrate exemplary leadership.

CONCLUSION

The democratisation process in Nigeria is fourteen straight years old. Fourteen years out of the fifty three years of political independence is sufficient enough to disconnect Nigeria from her ugly past and to look forward to a promising future. In other words, the environment of democracy has provided the needed impetus to engage in sundry reflections in the task of nation building. One of such reflections is the scholarly preoccupation to pontificate on fifty three years of public administration in Nigeria. This paper was devoted to reflecting on the aspect of the interaction between the political superstructure and the administrative structure of governance. It observes that the nature and character of this interaction in the last fifty three years has not generated the required synergy for good governance.

This appalling failure is rooted in Nigeria's chequered political history, dating back to the period shortly after independence through the short stint with civil rule to the various military interventions and now the current democratic dispensation. The synopsis of political developments provided in the study was undertaken to underscore the impact of political superstructure on the collapse of probity and good governance. It was observed that the frequent and abrupt change of leadership created a policy environment that is at best precarious and unpredictable. In this kind of environment, the permanent structure of governance became subject to the whims and caprices of the political superstructure. Depending on the leadership in place, each incumbent has its different understanding of the

use to which the public service should be put to achieve the much taunted goal of good governance. These different perceptions informed the litany of reforms that has trailed the public administration system in the last fifty three years.

In the growing literature on good governance and its requirements, scholars are in agreement that the bureaucracy should provide the required institutional support for good governance. This consensus perhaps is not unconnected to the general tendency to score the bureaucracy for leadership failure in Nigeria. The abiding concern of this paper has been to deconstruct this notion, drawing from concrete examples of how political instability, policy inconsistency/reversal and lack of political accountability have conspired to weaken the bureaucracy and rendered it ineffective. This argument constitutes an antithesis to reconsider the popularly held notion about the bureaucracy, and to turn attention to the primacy of the political class and how their failure translates to the failure of the administrative class.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the search for a predictable and stable policy environment that can engender good governance, the inescapable conclusion is that the tin line that separates policy from administration has been blurred by the complexity and challenges of socio-economic and political development especially in Nigeria. Although this conclusion may serve to confirm the neo-classical politics-administration dichotomy, it also helps to underscore the interdependence of the institutional actors in the governance project. Thus, in the light of issues discussed and observations made and findings established, the following recommendations are proffered.

- i. The National Assembly remains the major institutional innovation in a democracy. Therefore, the quality of legislation at this level of leadership is crucial to the whole idea of probity and good governance. There is an urgent call for legislative activism sufficient enough to institutionalise a culture of political and managerial accountability. Effective and efficient public policy implementation is a function of the potency of legislative oversight. The writer has argued elsewhere that; law making as a constitutional responsibility is only a means to the greater end of actualising good governance (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2010). This greater end depends on the ability of the legislature to ensure that such laws are faithfully implemented through honest and transparent oversight role. This involves the constant and constructive policing of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government.
- ii. Consistency in public policy implementation remains one of the major requirements of good governance. Experience has shown that the problem with Nigeria is not the paucity of policy to address public problem, rather it is the absence of policy continuity that can link past efforts with the present to achieve a wholesome society. In a press briefing by the presidential monitoring committee on project implementation (See Daily Trust, 20011), lack of continuity was a major area of lamentation. In the light of this obvious setback, government is expected to ensure that the policy environment is stable and predictable in order to realise the long term objectives of public policy.
- iii. To achieve consistency in public policy implementation and avoid the danger of policy reversal that has become part of Nigeria's policy process, a stable political system is required. Although, tremendous progress has been made in this regard given that democratic rule has endured for fourteen straight years, political stability in the form of predictable and rule bound electoral system that can guarantee open, competitive, free and fair elections remains a sine qua non for stable policy environment and good governance. Adamolekun

(2002:7), has argued that; “A more widespread dividend of democratic transition, in the sense of reliance on establishing governments through elections is peace”. In Nigeria, the unhealthy electoral contexts with its attendant crises and electoral litigations constitute an unnecessary detraction from the business of governance. Depending on the outcome of these litigations, policy continuity is often the first casualty at all levels of governance. Therefore, this recommendation suggests faithful and transparent implementation of the current electoral reforms in order to achieve smooth transition and a stable polity.

iv. Finally, there is a compelling need on the part of Nigeria’s political leadership to demonstrate commitment to the implementation of the current reforms of the public service. The reform initiatives no doubt represent the most comprehensive and focused in the history of public administration system in Nigeria. The change process which started in 2001 has faltered in very critical areas like Human Resources Management and Budget Reforms. In order to realise the full objectives of the reforms and consolidate on the modest achievement recorded in the last few years, government should refocus on the salient features of the reforms.

REFERENCES

- Adamolekun, L. (1983), *Public Administration: A Nigerian and Comparative Perspective*. London: Longman.
- Adamolekun, L. (2002), “Governance Context and Reorientation of Governance” in L. Adamolekun (ed.), *Public Administration in Africa: Main Issues and Selected Country Studies*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Adamolekun, L. (2011), “A Transformation Agenda for Accelerating National Development”. Being a Lecture Delivered on the Occasion of the 2011 Presidential Inauguration Ceremonies, Thursday, May 26.
- Adedokun, M. O. (2012), “Budgeting Process in Nigeria and Experience From Other Jurisdictions”, Paper Presented at the House of Representatives Stakeholders Forum on Budget Implementation in Nigeria, Titled “Towards a more Effective Budget Implementation in Nigeria, and held at Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja, July 9 – 10.
- Appleby, P. H. (1949), *Policy and Administration*. Alabama: University of Alabama.
- Aucoin, P. and Heintzman, R. (2000), “The Dialectics of Accountability for Performance in Public Management Reform”, *International Review of Administration Sciences*.
- Bolanta, K. S. et al (1992), “The Issue of Corruption”, in Irnobighe (ed.), *Politics of the Second Republic*. Kuru, Jos: National Institute Press.
- Boven, M. (2005), “Public Accountability” in E. Ferlie, L. Lynne & C Pollitt (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bratton, M. and Van de Walle, N. (1992), “Towards Governance in Africa: Popular Demands and State Responses” in G. Hyden and M. Bratton (eds.), *Governance and Politics in Africa*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder.
- Chandler, R. C. and Plano, J. C. (1988), *The Public Administration Dictionary*, (2nd ed.). Santa Barbara, California.
- Coleman, J. S. (1996), *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Crowder, M. (1973), *The Story of Nigeria*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Daily Trust Newspaper, July, 11th, 2011.
- Daily Trust Newspaper, December, 16, 2013.
- Day, P. and Klein, R. (1987), *Accountabilities: Five Public Services*. London: Travistock Publishers.

- Dimock, M. E. (1937), *Modern Politics and Administration*. New York: American Book Company.
- Duddley, B. J. (1982), *An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Goodnow, F. J. (1900), "Politics and Administration", in J. M. Shafritz and A. C. Hyde (eds.), *Classics of Public Administration* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Hyden, G. (1992), *Governance and Politics in Africa*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder.
- Hyden, G., Olowu, C. and Okoh-Ogendo, W. (eds.) (2000), *African Perspective on Governance*. Trenton: African World Press.
- Ikime, O. (ed.) (2001), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc.
- Kukah, M. H. (2003), *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Mundt, R. J. and Aborisade, O. (2004), "Politics in Nigeria", in Almond et al (eds.) (2004), *Comparative Politics Today*. India: Pearson Education Inc.
- National Intelligence Council (NIC) (2005), *Mapping Sub-Sahara Africa's Future*. Accessed on the 16th, March, 2011. Site www.dni.gov.
- Nwabueze, B. O. (1982), *A Constitutional History of Nigeria*. Ikeja: Longman.
- Olaopa, T. (2010), *Public Service Reforms in Africa*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Olowu, D. O., Otopo, E. and Okotoni, M. (1997), "The Role of the Civil Service in Enhancing Development and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Nigerian Experience", Paper Presented at the Conference on "Civil Service Systems in Comparative Perspectives", Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, April 5 – 8.
- Ostrom, V. (1991), *The Meaning of American Federalism: Constituting a Self-Governing Society*. San Francisco: ICS Press.
- Oyovbaire, S. and Olagunju, T. (1989), *Foundations of a New Nigeria: The IBB Era*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Ozoho-Suleiman, A. (2010), "Democracy and the Common Good: Familiar But Elusive Bedfellows?" in K. Mato (ed), *The Democracy Question and Election Management in Africa*. Ibadan: Daily Graphics Nigeria Ltd.
- Ozoho-Suleiman, A. (2010), "Service Compact and Governance in Nigeria: A Perspective on the Reforms of the Public Service", Paper Presented at an International Conference on Global Financial Crisis and Africa's Quest for Development, Organised by Faculty of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. Tuesday 20th – Thursday 22nd, July, 2010.
- Ozohu-Suleiman, A & Ibori, M S (2012),"Post Beijing Conference and the Politics of Affirmative Action: A Critique of Gender Mainstreaming in Contemporary Nigeria", *International Journal of Arts and Combined Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2012.
- Ozohu-Suleiman, A. & Etudaiye, M. E (2013), *Legislative-Executive Dichotomy in the Public Policy Process: A Perspective on Nigeria's Fourth Republic*, *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration (GJPSA)*, Vol. 1 Issue No. 1 September.
- Pfifnner, J. (1948), *The Federalists: A Study in Administrative History*. New York: Macmillan.
- Shafritz, J. M. and Hyde, A. C. (eds.) (2007), *Classics of Public Administration*. United States: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Shaw, J. (2010), "Revisiting the Politics – Administration Dichotomy: The Political Intrusion in the Democratic Governance in Taiwan (2000-2009).
ThisDay Newspaper, December, 14th, 2006
The Guardian Newspaper, December, 18, 2013
The Nation Newspaper, December, 16th, 2013

United States Conference Report on Sub-Saharan Africa, 2004, New York.

Waldo, D. (1992), "A Theory of Public Administration Means in Our Times a Theory of Politics Also," in N. B. Lynn and A. Wildavsky (eds.), *Public Administration: State of the Discipline*. New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers.

Willoughby, W. F. (1918), "The Moment for Budgetary Reform in the Senate" in J. M. Shafritz and A. C. Hyde (eds.), *Classics of Public Administration*, (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Wilson, J. Q. (1989), "National Differences" in *Is Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies do and Why They do it?* New York: Basic Books.

Wilson, W. (1887), "The Study of Administration". *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (June, 1887), URL" <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2139277>).

Young, C. (1993), *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria)

