

Review

Healing the ailing old colony (Nigeria)

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This paper addressed the rationale for the establishment of a state and the institutions of governance and state administration of Nigeria, the old British colony which was annexed in 1861 by the then British Government. It further analysed the social challenges that the old colony has been battling with since independence in 1960 which constitute variety of social ailments for the country and its citizens. Yet, the country still suffers from the ailments, and to this end, this paper attempted to further identify the ailments and proffer healing solutions. This paper heavily relied on secondary sources of information and documentary responses on the social ailments inflicting Nigeria. The facts were elicited and descriptively analysed. The findings of the analysis revealed that the social ailments infecting Nigeria since her independence are not insurmountable as long as the Nigerian political elites are upright, selfless and regard political offices as a national service, and not a forum for acquisition of personal wealth. The authors also asserted that strict adherence to democratic principles and legal compliances with the constitution and statutes will go along way to heal the country of its social ailments. This paper concluded that unless the leadership variable is properly reexamined and sanitized, healing of Nigeria social ailments may be a mirage hence political and economic decay instead of political, social and economic transformation and development.

Key words: Old colony, social ailments, bureaucracy and administration.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria was a former colony of the British Government and the origin of governance and administration of state can be traced to the administration of Lord Lugard who was the Governor-General of the amalgamated Administration of the Northern and Southern Nigeria. The objective of the colonial bureaucracy is basically to maintain law and order (Akinboye & Anifowose, 1999). This is tagged as "Minimal Administration". The rudimentary administration was guided by indirect poli-

tical system just like that of the French Assimilation and Portuguese Assilados. The scope of bureaucracy was limited owing to paucity of financial and human resources. For instance, in 1913, the Nigerian Government total revenue, stood at 3.4 million pounds and total expenditure was 2.9 million pounds (Umahoro, 2006).

In spite of its political shortcomings the colonial bureaucracy was able to be financially self sustaining for

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its maintenance of law and order. Its little performances were far reaching. For instance the following performances were noted.

- a. Construction of Western Railway line between Iddo, South and Nguru North, 847miles (1,365.2km);
- b. The first motor road in Nigeria was constructed in 1905 which connected Ibadan with Oyo;
- c. 3,700 miles of roads were constructed as far back as 1930;
- d. Public Works Department replaced the traditional hammock and timber bridges with steel and concrete structures;
- e. Medical facilities were spread to the rural areas inspite of the conservative beliefs of the people in traditional medicine; and
- f. In 1931, 83 dispensaries were opened in Nigeria (Balogun 1983). We now consider the performance of Bureaucracy under Representative Government in Nigeria (Umahoro, 2006).

Bureaucracy under Representative Government

With the advent of Politics and representative government, the bureaucracy underwent some changes which had both negative and positive effect on the performance of the Institution it was working for. The first change was that of new Cabinet government and its attendant problems. Then it was a problem to situate administration vis-a-vis politics (Olowu, 1995). Due to differences in orientation, the political class viewed that entire administrative process from the political perspectives only, whereas the career officials by their training examined issues from the professional and administrative angle.

In line with the conventional West Minister model, the political leaders were expected to initiate policies while the civil servants were expected to carry out the decisions and remained impartial, politically neutral and anonymous. The relevance of change lied in the fact that the political class viewed administrative processes from political and ethnic perspectives.

Obviously this was the commencement of ailment attack on Nigeria as a nation. This problem greatly contributed to the limited contribution of civil servants to socio-economic development of Nigeria during the period under review.

Another problem handicapping the bureaucracy's performance was the sharp conflict between the generalists Administrators and the Professionals. The professionals were of the view that the generalists lacked skill, knowledge and professional competence in the process of policy formulation (Olowu, 1995).

At the end of the day, it was resolved that professional skill and competence alone should not be the only overriding criterion for leadership in Ministries. Instead,

the holders of the highest career of Permanent Secretary ought to have proven administrative experience.

The implication of this decision of the generalist Administrator being appointed Chief Executive of Ministries is that of perennial frictions within the system. The conflict generated lack of mutual trust, inferiority complex, power tussle and suspicion among the bureaucrats/technocrats in Nigeria. At the end of the day, it was administrative stalemate, jeopardy, and delay in policy implementation that ensued.

The gradual decay of political values and institutions in Nigeria and in particular in Western region led to a wave of violence in the House of Assembly which spread to the rest of Nigeria (Omoleke, 2004). The house then was turned into pandemonium where chairs, mace etc were used as weapons of battle in the House of Assembly. This situation worsened the ailment that attacked Nigeria as a nation newly independent: Consequently in 1962, Mr. Majekodunmi was appointed as a Sole Administrator to govern the Western Region of Nigeria.

The persistence of the anarchic situation dented the image of the Politicians, created political and administrative decay hence it generated disillusion with politics and politicians. Thus the political turmoil in the West became a chronic social ailment.

Coupled with the controversial census as well as charges of corruption and "operation wet" i.e. burning of political party opponents houses eventually prepared ground for the military cabal to intervene in the governance of Nigeria and of course by January 15, 1966, the soldiers observed some political dislocation and fermented ground for intervention, hence the decayed system collapsed and the Military stepped in to manage the government bureaucracy (Omoleke, 2008).

What is important to us here is the impact of the political functionalities on the performance of the government bureaucracy in the Nigerian State. The implication of the political trend discussed lies in the fact that the political pandemonium pushed the career bureaucrats into performing the role of political functionalities. This is also a misonormer ailment.

Consequently, the administrative process was coloured with bias, political sentiment, primordial considerations hence the institution of bureaucracy was infected with corruption both at the political and administrative levels of the State Administration. This situation gave way to Administrocracy which enables us to assess the strength of government bureaucracy to cope with extra-ordinary situation. We will now examine some ailment affecting the Nigerian State under the Military Administration.

Government Bureaucracy under the Military Administration

The Military politicians came in to replace the civilian

politicians. In the first few months of the military Administration, the bureaucrat (the career officials) literally took over policy functions formerly carried out by the civilian politicians. Perhaps this was so because of the political inexperience and innocence of the soldiers whose administrative experience of a larger society almost drew close to nil then.

Perhaps, this inexperience is due to the fact that they were schooled to fight external aggression and suppress internal insurrection only, e.g. J.T.F. Joint Tax Force, where the Police is incompetent to address (Omoleke, 1999). It is worthy of note that even when the Civilian Commissioners were eventually appointed as political heads of Ministries, effective leadership role was still being discharged by some civil technocrats. At the Federal bureaucracy for instance, these civil servants did not only execute policies but also formulated them.

Perhaps the above assertion informed Obasanjo (1979) when he declared:

“Let me once again underpin the role of the Public Servants in the context of Nigeria. It is true that no country can develop without efficient, dynamic, dedicated, and loyal public servants. Over the last two decades, the Nigerian Public Service had witnessed significant transformation from the colonial role of maintaining law and order to a development oriented service. It is not only the citizens of this country that look up to its public service for positive contribution and leadership, other black African countries in their search for identity, economic and political recovery do the same. I am happy to note that so far, inspite of some falterings, the public service in general has contributed in no small way to the achievements already made in the development of the nation’s economy”

Arising from the foregoing, the civil bureaucracy became more pronounced, powerful and went beyond its traditional policy implementation. It became a creative organization rather than being ordinary administrative machinery for policy implementation.

SHORTCOMINGS AND AILMENTS OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

In spite of its track records, the following explanation seems to account for bureaucratic ailment, constraints and failures in Nigeria.

Effects of the Military regime

The military regime which created a good atmosphere for bureaucrats enhanced the powers of the technocrats and recognized their role and functions paradoxically purged

the system in 1975. About 10,000 public servants were compulsorily removed with its democratising effects on the performance of the system.

The ignorant and dogmatic application of Decree No. 4 of 1978 by some of the administratively inexperienced military governors did not help matters either.

Paradoxically again, about similar figure was un-procedurally removed in the South Western Zone of Nigeria. Instead of equipping the technocrats with necessary skills, the military oligarchy and democratic governments irrationally embarked on national purge of the civil servants which demoralized and damaged the system (Ubeku, 1983).

Worse still, the Decree No. 43, 1988 promulgated by Babangida Administration did more evil than good. It politicised the leadership of government bureaucracy which spelt doom on the system. The Director-General then held his office at the mercy, whims and caprices of the regime that appointed him.

The whole exercise was a ruse while the draconian decree frustrated the bureaucrats. The Military regime denied the bureaucracy the right leadership as it abrogated the post of the Head of Service and replaced it with the post of Secretary to the Government who could be picked from outside the bureaucracy.

Another ailment is;

Poor remuneration

Frustrated by the Military Administration the bureaucrats (except the Permanent-Secretaries and their equivalents) hardly made two ends meet and could not raise their productivity as their morale was dwindling and dampened every day with little or no hope at sight. Their poor monthly stipend has been engulfed by hyper-inflation with weak perquisite to assist him. When you approach than for assistance, they look morose and unfriendly. They are fed up of the job except that they are yet to get alternatives. The future career looks bleak to them. They only retire to fate. The description of the Nigerian bureaucrats lends credence to Olowu (1991) who observed that the Public Service is being denied of those very things that would enable it fulfill its mission.

Federal Character Syndrome

In practical terms, the federal bureaucracy has been marred by a high level of primordial sentiments, serious ethnic and religious chauvinism. The social ills/ailments have manifested themselves in the behavioural pattern of the officials/bureaucrats. The Federal Officials rarely see themselves as Nigerian bureaucrats instead, they behave as Hausas, Yorubas and Igbos reflecting their ethnic loyalty. The most unfortunate aspect of it is that the

virtues of the Civil Service like impartiality, anonymity, meritocracy etc have surrendered to federal character syndrome. Consequently, this condition affects efficient and effective service delivery in Nigeria.

Obedient Servant (Anonymity)

Unfortunately, the anonymity virtue does not allow the bureaucrat to defend himself as he is supposed to be heard and not seen. He serves every regime without corresponding benefits marching his inputs. He is blamed for failures and hardly praised for successes. He is an errand boy. Perhaps this informed Olowu (1991) who described the civil servants as *“The whipping boy of every administration and held responsible for failures in the Public service”*.

Bureaucratic Corruption

This is a chronic ailment attacking Nigeria which is becoming endemic and almost incurable. The word, corruption simply refers indecency. There are two types – Political and bureaucratic corruptions and the two are ailments that Nigeria Governments are battling with. It is evident that corruption is more prevalent and perhaps institutionalised in the Nigerian Public Sector. Perhaps this informed Divivied (1998) to assert that:

A problem of ethics in the Public Service may be said to exist whenever public servants individually or collectively use positions (or give appearance of doing so) in a way which compromises public confidence and trust because of conflict of loyalties or as a result of attempts to achieve some form of private gains at the expense of public welfare or common goods.

Research findings in this area had identified three major reasons for the ailment of corruption in Nigeria.

(1) There is the wide spread of socio-economic poverty reinforced by the pervasiveness and hegemony of the economic system by a highly centralized government bureaucratic elite.

(2) Inadequate identification by the political functionaries and civil servants with the bureaucracy itself as an institution of modern government. The resultant effect is alienation which leads to the erroneous notion that the Public Service is no one's father's field. Public sector corruption is therefore seen as a right by its beneficiaries.

(3) Finally and closely related to the second reason is the absence of a sense of mission, and of professionalism among the Public Servants themselves which civilian and military politicians quickly use to their own advantage.

In the words of Olowu (1983) the three major sources of corruption in the Nigerian Local Government

Administration into which enquiries were conducted between 1976 and 1983 have been found to be;

- (i) inability of the political leaders to provide necessary political initiatives and control;
- (ii) lack of appropriate knowledge and skill especially relating to financial management of the appointed officials and
- (iii) collusion between the political and administrative leaderships.

What Olowu asserted in his research findings on corruption at local government administration can also be assumed true, perhaps with greater force at other levels of government in Nigeria. Perhaps the magnitude of political and bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria informed the campaign mounted through news media during Gowon military administration. Various institutions were setup to combat bureaucratic corruption. The institution included Public Complaints Commission which has branches in all the 36 States including Abuja; Code of Conduct Bureau, Corrupt Practices Bureau, Declaration of Assets for Public Officers etc. Still on corruption as a social ailment infecting Nigeria – the old colony, in May 2000, the Obasanjo Administration, worried by bureaucratic corruption, sponsored an anti-corruption bill which was finally accented to by the President accordingly.

Regrettably, one may be skeptical about enforceability of such Act when one considers that those public officials in charge of enforcing such Act have been one time or the other alleged of being corrupt and that is the Nigeria Police which is a microcosm of the allegedly corrupt bureaucracy. Then what is the hope of the Act, in curing the ailment of corruption?

This doubt has been supported by Akinseye (2000) who observed that Corrupt Practice Act 2000 provisions are unduly rigid, static, confusing and non-effective of the contemporary realities of Nigerian Society.

We now turn to another democratic regimes of Yar'adua/Jonathan Administration and we will briefly itemize few ailments that are challenging the Administration of Nigeria State. Obviously, the ailments are numerous but we want to highlight or diagnose them and proffer healing solutions.

The following social and political ailments can be diagnosed when examining Nigerian administration during Yar'adua and Jonathan regimes. The first ailment is insecurity of life and property in Nigeria. The Boko Haram strikes nearly every week. Last week it was speculated that that they struck in Abuja. It was also on record that the group had once attacked the Inspector General of Police and United Nations Office, Abuja where many lives of Nigerians and non-Nigerians were lost. Worse still, the innocent Federal Girls Secondary Schools was attacked and the girls and their principal were killed

in the hostel.

Industrial strike is another ailment that is seriously worrying Nigeria Government. Hardly can a week pass away in Nigeria without industrial strike in the economy. For instances, Academic Staff Union of Universities went on strike for months in 2009 and for six months in July 1st 2013 to January 2014. Similarly, the Nigerian President Doctors were also on strike in the same year Association of the Polytechnic lecturers also was on strike paralysing academic and health institutions activities. In January 2012 the Labour went on strike and the Nigeria economy was almost paralysed. The strike was prompted by unilateral jacking up of fuel price to 120 Naira.

Unemployment is another social ailment which calls for healing. It was just a few weeks ago that Nigeria lost 19 job seekers in their attempt to struggle to gain employment with the Immigration Department.

Another serious ailment is hyper-inflation which Nigeria is battling with. Is it not shameful to exchange 160 Naira for One dollar and 260 Naira for one pound, 40 Naira for 1 Riyal and 40 Naira for 1 Dhiram. This means that Naira has no value compared to other international currencies; hence transformation agenda of Jonathan administration is yet to cure this ailment

Others include unsafe airspace, poor social welfare, no portable water to drink, epileptic supply of electricity and worse still, Nigeria cannot boast of accurate figure of Nigerians living in Nigeria. The Nigerian population counting is always controversial, e.g Kano is said to be more populated than Lagos which is against any demographic principle that savanna cities are less populated than the forest cities.

Most issues are heavily politicized in Nigeria hence due processes are jettisoned. In essence, politics takes precedent over the law. Obviously this is an absurdity and lastly the Nigerian conduct of election is replete with rigging, stealing of ballots and ballot boxes, use of thugs by the political parties to scare voters and inflation of voting results etc.

The constellation of the social ailments infecting Nigerian administration perhaps informed the initiation of the National Conference currently on with the hope that these social ailments mentioned and discussed in this paper may be addressed.

Meanwhile, we want to proffer some social prescriptions that may heal the Nigeria ailments, the old British colony.

A WAY OUT

Hope is not totally lost if the Nigerian Political leaders – President, Vice President, National Assembly members and the Local Government Chairmen and Councillors are upright, and able to set good examples for their followers; motivate their workers and seriously address the poverty level in the society. This may be more effective in

addition to institutional and legal responses to tackle corruption so far hence the Independent Corrupt Practice Commission and Economic and Finance Crime Commission may be relevant in this direction.

1. It is recommended that the civil bureaucracy be insulated as much as possible from all political influences which tend to compromise standard.

2. The bureaucrats should be adequately motivated like their counterparts in the private sector, if high level productivity is to be expected, guaranteed, and sustained. Anyway, there is need to tropicalise the government bureaucracy to suit the Nigerian culture.

3. Of great concern is the issue of corruption. It is our feeling that appeal should be made to emphasize public accountability in the training and retraining of the political and administrative functionaries in the government bureaucracies in Nigeria and specially orientate the political functionaries aspirants to the post of President, Governors and Chairmen of Local Government as well as other political office holders on the need to follow due process throughout their stay in office e.g. the speaker of the House of Representative was alleged to have breached the Procurement Act 2007. Furthermore, anti-corruption law/Acts should be enforced along with SERVICOM policy to serve as deterrent, hence minimizing or eliminating corrupt practices in the system of governance in Nigeria.

4. Normal administrative procedure is hereby recommended for disciplining the (erred officials/bureaucrats, rather than regimented, spasmodic, unorthodox, uncivilised, illegal, unprocedural and irrational discipline (e.g. dismissal and purge) as witnessed during the military despotism in Nigeria.

5. Although man has been described as a political animal, yet effort should be directed to disallow political sentiment and ethnic orientation to becloud the merit, judgment and actions of the bureaucrats and the Political Office holders. Atomization of career officials into political party (ies) camps will affect the performance of the officials in a manner contrary to the spirit and norms of the service, (anonymity) given the Nigerian contemporary circumstances.

6. Effective performance is a function of the Civil Service and Public Service bureaucracy being professionalized. To this end, it is being suggested that a staff development programme directed towards professionalisation, training and retraining be instituted. The crude, naïve and parochial military or civilian politicians should be educated that the bureaucrats/technocrats are professionals by their training and must be regarded as such. We suggest organic law to protect the bureaucrats from being embarrassed by the civilian or military political bosses. Also efforts should be directed to tropicalise bureaucracy so as to respond to the needs, nature, and culture of the people it is billed to serve.

7. As much as possible, unsettled political order should stop by providing an enduring national philosophy as there is little the bureaucracy can offer within a political framework that is deficient or lacks national philosophy and selfless leadership. The leaders at each level of State Administration need to know how to govern and how not to govern as governance involves patience, knowledge to interpret issues, reconcile opinions, respect the right of all, allow freedom of expression, abide by the law, have courage to accept fault, rectify mistakes and finally ask for and listen to advice, Omoleke (1999).

8. It is not enough to enact law but the most important thing is the Government political will to enforce/implement the law in good faith. Nigerian governments are in most cases reluctant to implement, labour agreements reached with the labour unions e.g. Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) etc. Worse still, the employer of labour see workers as servants that could be treated any how, but the Labour and Managements relationship should be seen as symbiotic and NOT as Master/Servant relationship if Nigeria is ready to sustain industrial peace and guarantee socio-economic development. Finally, labour needs capital and capital needs labour. This is an irrefutable statement of facts which Nigerian Employers of labour must understand and uphold. Both are partners in the same trade and must respect each other. The need for Nigeria Government to adequately fund knowledge-industry and other similar service industry and motivate workers therein is a sinequanon for industrial peace and development if Nigerian Government is serious in managing Public Interests. Interest of the citizens must supersede the interest of the Rulers.

Summary and conclusion

In a way this paper has examined and analysed the shortcomings of the old Colony (Nigeria) which constitutes social ailments. We also considered the structure and workings of institutions of governance as well as developmental profile of the Nigerian Government Bureaucracy right away from her pre-colonial, colonial through the military and to civilian Administration to date.

We could observe the limited contributions the Bureaucracy could offer during the colonial days due to the colonial masters' design. We also analysed the bureaucracy during the Military Administration and democratic dispensation where bureaucratic failure was nascent due to social ailments like dictatorship, corruption, abuse of office, coercion, breach of law by the leaders, election malpractices and political indecencies.

We also proffered healing solutions if politicians are ready to comply.

The Political Leaders should also learn from Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W.) when he remarked that the leader

of a group or community is their servant but it appears that the reverse is the case in Nigeria.

This leads us to conclude by drawing the attention of the Nigerian Political leaders (President, Vice President, Senate Leader, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, National Assembly members, Governors, Deputy-Governors, Chairmen and Councillors of Local Governments) to Chapter 38 Verse 25 where Allah was addressing Prophet Daawudu when he said:

O! Daawudu we did make you a vicegerent on earth. So judge between men in truth, and justice not follow the lust of your heart for they will mislead you from the path of (God) Allah; there is a penalty for that they forget in the day of Account.

The politicians should learn from Chapters 16 Verses 89 and 90 of the Holy Quran that Allah (God) commands justice, the doing of good and liberality to kith and he forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion. He instructed you that ye may receive admonition Chapter 16 Verse 90.

Fulfill the covenant of Allah and when ye have entered into it and break not your oath after ye have confirmed them. Indeed, ye have made Allah your surety for Allah knoweth all that you do.

The political leaders should also learn from Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W) who said that the leader of a group is their servant but it appears the reverse is the case in Nigeria. The Prophet also advised us both the leaders and the followers to live in this world as if we are visitors. In other words, tenacity of political office or do or die contest for elective offices should be avoided and deemphasized.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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