

*Restoring Good Governance in Nigeria (Vol. 1): The Civil Service Pathway*, Lagos: Kachifo Limited, 2015, pp. 429) by Goke Adegoye, reviewed by John Olushola Magbadelo, Director, Centre for African & Asian Studies (P.O. Box 6563, Garki Area 10 Post Office, Abuja, Nigeria).

The Federal Civil Service in Nigeria has been in the throes of seemingly endless reforms, particularly so, since the emergence of civil rule in 1999. The Obasanjo administration (1999-2007) which is on record as one of the most reform-inclined administrations in post-independent Africa did quite a lot in repositioning Nigeria's public service through the implementation of a bouquet of reform programmes in the country's public sector of which the Federal Civil Service was a major part of, thereby providing exemplary inspiration for other African countries. But, unfortunately, no sooner did the administration hand-over the reins of power to its successor government than the country began to backtrack on all those reforms. The ease with which the reversals were effected was an indication that the policies on which the reforms were anchored lacked requisite legal frameworks.

This book gives a detailed account of the manifest and latent politicking, intrigues, processes and perspectives of the *dramatis personae* in the country's Federal bureaucracy while the series of reforms in the Federal Civil Service were being implemented. The action or inaction of the different actors in the reform process was properly put in perspective by the author. Thus, unlike other publications on public sector reforms of the Obasanjo years, this book is expository, objective and analytical without any recourse to intellectual obscurantism that often robs scholarship of its essence, value and meaning. The incredible lucidity of the book's narrative makes the facts on display easily comprehensible. The volume of facts and figures presented in the book could only have been accessed by the author who, as one of the key drivers of the programming and implementation of the series of reform initiatives during that period when he served as the pioneer Director General of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms, acquitted himself as a clear-headed and perceptive reformer, and hence eminently qualified to give his own account.

The book comprises four parts covering nineteen chapters, an afterword, as well as twelve factual appendices. In Part I, the origin of the Nigerian Civil Service is traced to the influences of imperial China, British merit-based administrative system and British-India. In this part, the governance challenges of bureaucracy in a democracy were carefully articulated. The essence and import of integrity in Civil Service evident in the quality or otherwise of those appointed into such functional portfolios as Permanent Secretaries, Directors and Heads of parastatals and agencies, engaged the focus of Part II. The politics and geo-political considerations that are often influential in critical decision-making process for the appointment of principal officers in federal bureaucracy including the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) and their implications for leadership efficiency were lucidly analyzed in Part III.

In Part IV of the book, the author presents an extensive but critical discourse on the structure of the Federal Government, size of the cabinet, nomenclature of ministerial portfolios, as well as the roles of such key functionaries of government as Head of the Civil Service, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Principal Secretary to the President, etc.

Throughout the book, certain strong views were expressed which could be considered as the kernel of the author's arguments. It is the belief of the author that the institutional integrity of the federal civil service has been completely eroded within a space of a decade (2001- 2011). Pointing out instances and examples, Adegoroye stated that both the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) and the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) which are the two key institutions providing leadership in the Civil service have compromised their institutional integrity( pp. 47- 62). The operations and processes in the Nigerian Public Service including procurement activities, are considered to have become terribly compromised (p. 66).

On the issue of the poor quality of Permanent Secretaries, Directors, and other transferees, whose entrance into the Federal Civil Service, was traced to what he called "irregular regularization" and "improper proper placement," and which the author attributed to the poor conduct of the FCSC in 2001 up to 2011, was acknowledged by the author as being the same as what obtained in 1992 to 1998 (pp.67- 69). By that admission, our author has confirmed rather unwittingly that the reforms he and others superintended had no positive impact on both the OHCSF and the FCSC.

The ills of deploying permanent secretaries to Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments purely on grounds of geo-political considerations, religion, ethnicity and other primordial sentiments as well as nepotism unrelated to merit and without due reference to the expertise and experience of each of the affected officers were pointed out as a recurring dilemma in the federal civil service ( pp. 96 – 143). The roles played by career officers especially Director( Finance & Accounts) and Chief of Protocols among others in encouraging the flouting of financial regulations by Ministers and other political appointees were identified as one of the reasons for the entrenchment of corruption in the Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments. Sundry violations of budgetary and accounting procedures were chronicled in Pages 144- 164 of the book.

Our author complained about the below-average performance of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) under President Jonathan administration which he said was evident in the poor quality of advice given to the President on appointments into different offices which were considered lopsided in favour of some geopolitical zones in violation of the extant Federal Character principle meant for ethnic balancing in a plural society like Nigeria (pp. 167- 203).

On the assessment of the structure of government and the number of ministerial portfolios in the country's federal government, Adegroye expressed strong views on the need to merge the 28 ministries currently in existence into 18 re-grouped ministries taking into cognizance the management requirement of effective span of control. He believes that reduction in the size of cabinet could be done in such a way as to ensure that both the constitutional requirement of having each state of the 36 States in the country produce a minister and the geo-political balancing requirement would still be upheld (pp. 207 – 229). In proposing strategies for strengthening the country's bureaucracy, our author in chapter 19 elaborated on his passing suggestion in chapter 7 on the imperative of establishing a Federal Public Service Council (FPSC), which would serve as a check on the subsisting institutions responsible for the appointment of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation and the Permanent Secretaries by beefing-up the institutional integrity and credibility of the processes for such appointments (pp. 296- 301).

It is, however, a certainty that a book of this nature would elicit diverse reactions which could border on very critical stance from a wide spectrum of readers across countries of the world especially those in developing countries and Nigeria in particular. By focusing his analysis of the problems in the Federal Civil Service on the atrocities perpetrated by the FCSC between 2001 and 2011, the author would appear to have given an impression that the post-2011 FCSC had overcome the integrity deficit that gave rise to all the identified manifestations of corruption that bedeviled the Federal Civil Service which constituted the subject of his publication. Nothing can be farther from the truth than such minimalist theorizing which is a reductionist perspective on the pervasive dilemma of corruption facing the FCSC and the OHCSF which have both continually stood in the way of requisite reforms in Nigeria's Public Service. Or how else can our author convince his readers that he never meant to convey such impression in his book which was published in 2015 but preferred to restrict his critical comments on the Civil Service to pre-2012 era of the FCSC and OHCSF? It is an indisputable and empirically verifiable fact that the FCSC and the OHCSF are currently as bad as what they were in periods ranging from 2001 to 2011 or even worse. It is therefore necessary for our author to do a postscript that would incorporate all obviously omitted issues that would consequently add value, legitimacy, and currency to this publication.

Another issue pertains to the author's predilection for generating panaceas for identified problems. Most of the recommended solutions were not derived from any rigorous scientific analysis of the problems, and therefore would create their own new problems. For instance, our author's recommendation that a Federal Public Service Council (FPSC) should be established to check the excesses of both FCSC and OHCSF would appear unrealistic and unconvincing in the light of the causative factors responsible for institutional decay and loss of institutional integrity in most Nigerian Public Service institutions. What is the guarantee that the members of the FPSC would eschew conducts that are inimical to the Council's integrity, thereby ensuring that its existence is not superfluous in the final analysis?

Overall, the book under review is a unique and an original effort by the author. The book is indeed an empirically analytical exposition on the series of problems militating against the implementation of requisite reforms in the Public Service system of Nigeria. It does not only document the problems; it is also prescriptive of some useful ideas on what could be done to correct identified problems in order to reposition the country's Federal Civil Service. As it stands today, this book is the most detailed account of the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of post-democratization reform efforts in the Federal Civil Service by successive administrations in the country since 1999. It is therefore a worthy reference book for scholars of comparative Public Administration and all those interested in studying the problems of administering public service in developing societies.