

The Bureaucratic Elite in Nigeria

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Nigeria has been under, within the past 70 years or more, a colonial regime until 1960, a civilian democratic regime until 1966, and four military regimes until 1979. It is presently under a presidential form of government. During these changes, the patterns of recruitment into the higher public service in Nigeria have been influenced by both merit and non-merit criteria. Ethnic politics, educational imbalance among different states, and the need to ensure unity and stability were among several factors affecting recruitment patterns. The level and form of political role of the bureaucratic elite in Nigeria varied according to the type of regime in power, the quality of political leadership, and the prevailing constitutional arrangement.

Introduction

Within the past seventy years or more, Nigeria has been under a colonial regime which ended in 1960; a civilian democratic regime that was ousted by the military in 1966; and four authoritarian military regimes. With the adoption of a new *Constitution* in 1980, the country has come under a presidential system of government. Except for the exodus of most of the European civil servants from Nigeria shortly before and after Independence, the public bureaucracy in Nigeria has maintained relative continuity despite the frequent changes in governments.

The major concern of this paper is to compare the status of the higher public servants during these various regimes. In pursuit of this objective,

four relevant areas will be focused upon:

- (1) Some theoretical considerations on public bureaucracies in developing nations;
- (2) The literature on the politics of administration and on the relationship between the bureaucrats and political leaders in Nigeria;
- (3) Variations in recruitment patterns into the higher civil service under these regimes. What kinds of variables account for these variations and what impact did the variations in recruitment patterns have on bureaucratic performance and on the political system?
- (4) The political role of the higher bureaucrats. Did this role increase or decrease during the military regimes, and why? Did the type of relationships between the higher public servants

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and the political leaders influence bureaucratic attainment or frustration?

In this study, the use of the term "bureaucratic elite" is confined to the higher civil servants who comprise the administrative and professional classes. These categories of civil servants, by reason of their expertise and bureaucratic attainment, are likely to relate more often with politicians than with the lower levels of civil servants.

It is hoped that the findings of the present study will shed light on the validity of the following working hypotheses:

- (1) The political situation in most developing countries is such that recruitment into the public service is based on both merit and non-merit criteria.
- (2) In most developing countries, much emphasis is placed on rapid development, thereby increasing the decision role of the higher civil servants due to their possession of technological expertise.
- (3) In countries under military rule, the military officers usually rely on the public bureaucracy for the maintenance of an administrative apparatus necessary for the continuity of the regime, as well as for the planning and implementation of development policies and programs. This situation tends to increase the power of the bureaucrats in the making of public policy.
- (4) In developing countries, there is a tendency for the public service to become highly politicized.

That bureaucracies are found in the

operation of modern polities lends support to the relevance of the bureaucratic approach in comparative political analysis. From a bureaucratic perspective, it is both possible and convenient to compare the role of the administrative elites across national boundaries in terms of their recruitment and training; their roles in public policy making and political development; the various mechanisms for their control, and so on.

Max Weber has formulated an ideal model of bureaucracy which, among other things, emphasized the following distinctive characteristics: impersonality on the part of officials in carrying out their official obligations; hierarchical organization of offices; functional differentiation and specialization, recruitment on basis of merit; presence of permanent full-time staff with fixed salaries, and, in most cases, pensionable. In addition, Weber perceived the genuine bureaucrat as one having no political role: rather than engage in politics, the bureaucrat's concern is with impartial implementation of what the politician (by virtue of being an elected official) prescribes.¹

Max Weber's model of public bureaucracy has come under serious criticism as an "ideal type" or a mental construct that was not intended to represent real conditions. In reality, however, bureaucrats are increasingly intervening in policy making because of their possession of expert or professional knowledge and by virtue of the powers that are often delegated to them because of the ever-increasing

¹Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans., A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, 1st American ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).

volume of social, economic, environmental, military, political, and other problems demanding governmental attention. This raises the problem of the influence of bureaucrats in public policy making.

Jean Maynaud used the term "technocracy" to identify the "form of government in which essential decisions would be based exclusively on technical considerations."² According to Maynaud, the bureaucrat switches from technical adviser to a technocrat when he "acquires the capacity for making decisions, or carries the most weight in determining the choices of the person officially responsible for them."³ In democratic political systems, this technocratic phenomenon tends to run contrary to the norm that people should participate in public policy making through their elected representatives.

However, Maynaud's formulation placed undue emphasis on the indirect influence of bureaucrats on the making of public policy; the model did not account for the varieties of controls which politicians have over bureaucrats. Despite its flaws, the technocratic model could be helpful in understanding the relationships between the bureaucratic elite and the politicians in various polities.

The role of public administrators in planning and administration of national development programs (especially in the developing countries) has increased so rapidly that the current literature on development administration attributes an entrepreneurial or

²Jean Maynaud, *Technocracy*, trans. Paul Barnes (New York: The Free Press, 1968), p. 31.

³*Ibid.*, p. 30.

managerial role to the higher civil servants.⁴ The problem with this model is that the government bureaucrats are usually limited by policy making powers that are officially vested in their political superiors. Consequently it is difficult to perceive them as assuming the kind of managerial roles that are normally associated with private entrepreneurs who operate under conditions of relatively less constraint.

Despite this political constraint on the bureaucracy, Henry Reining, Jr. saw the bureaucracy in developing nations as having an important political role in terms of the "determination of values, the allocation of resources, and the regulation of some of the more significant areas of social organization."⁵ Thus, he hypothesized that where "other social, economic, and political institutions have often been unable to fulfill the functions expected of them in emerging nations, the bureaucracies have often assumed these tasks."⁶ The tasks of nation-

⁴See Joseph E. Black *et al.* (eds.), *Education and Training for Public Sector Management in Developing Countries* (U.S.A.: Rockefeller Foundation, 1977); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Development Administration: Current Approaches and Trends in Public Administration for National Development* (New York: United Nations, 1975), William J. Siffin, "Two Decades of Public Administration in Developing Countries," *Public Administration Review* Vol. 36, No. 1 (January-February 1976).

⁵Henry Reining, Jr., "The Fourth Dimension: The Administration of Development and the University's Role," Papers of the Comparative Administration Group, American Society for Public Administration (Chicago, 1964).

⁶*Ibid.*

building and political development for example, might fall on the bureaucracy in situations where political parties are weak or non-existent; the socialization process for purposes of political integration inadequate; and the avenues of interest articulation and governmental responsiveness insufficient.

A number of papers edited by Joseph La Palombara presented various perspectives on the relationship between bureaucracies and political systems in developing countries.⁷ In that volume various reasons for heavy bureaucratic involvement in economic, social, and political change were clearly stated. They ranged from the bureaucracy's willingness to assume responsibility for development, and the availability in the bureaucracy of professional, technical, and managerial talents to the presence of strong ideological commitment on the part of the bureaucrats. Fred Riggs, however, has argued that "the presence of a strong bureaucracy in many of the new states tends to inhibit the growth of strong executives, political parties, legislatures, voluntary associations and other political institutions essential to viable democratic government."⁸ He considered that a bureaucracy based on the "spoils" system might be relevant to a developing political party system since a public bureaucracy run on the basis of merit criteria "may aggrandize bureaucratic power at the expense of political institutional de-

velopment in the early stages of growth of a party system."⁹

The relationship between the military rulers and the civilian bureaucracies in developing countries has received considerable attention in the literature of comparative government. The crucial question is why the military, in most cases, tend to be in alliance with the bureaucrats in the process of their governance. Edward Feit saw the alliance between the military and the public bureaucracy as resulting from the need for the military to legitimize its regime once it has succeeded in seizing political power from a discredited civilian regime. This alliance is facilitated by the existence of common characteristics shared by both the military and the public bureaucracy, such as hierarchy, specialization, and training. The major distinction between the two public organizations is that soldiers, unlike the public servants, have arms and are trained to use them. Perhaps, it is because of these considerations that Feit has described the military as "armed bureaucrats." According to him, military and civilian public bureaucracies shared similar perception of the world as "essentially plagued by poor organization."¹⁰ Therefore, where military intervention arises from the failure of politicians to produce policies, it receives the support of the bureaucrats who view it as an escape from "an impossible impasse."¹¹

⁷Joseph La Palombara (ed.), *Bureaucracy and Political Development* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963).

⁸Fred W. Riggs, "Bureaucrats and Political Development: A Paradoxical View" in La Palombara (ed.), *op. cit.*

⁹*Ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁰Edward Feit, *The Armed Bureaucrats: Military Administrative Regimes and Political Development* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), p. 11.

¹¹*Ibid.*

In the same way, Abdo I. Baaklini perceived military institutions in developing countries as "an extreme form of modern bureaucracies similar to other bureaucracies in society."¹² According to him, the role of the military in society "as instruments of power in pursuit of public goals is primarily shaped by their bureaucratic characteristic. As bureaucratic institutions, they tend to share values and operational ideologies similar to those upheld by civilian bureaucracies and various segments of the middle class."¹³ The problem with these models of civilian-military relationship is that they do not adequately consider the possible relationship of other variables, such as ethnicity, class or group interest, personal ambitions, and so on, which may be important in looking at the reasons for military intervention, and the persistence of military regimes in developing nations.

Politics of Administration and the Bureaucracy – Political Leadership Relationships in Nigeria

The literature on the above subject could be divided into four categories. The first group consists of empirically-oriented specialized studies by scholars and practitioners of public

administration in Nigeria.¹⁴ The second category comprises writings that deal with the political, economic, and cultural environment of Nigerian public administration.¹⁵ The third group of works consists of historically-oriented studies dealing with the pre-colonial or traditional elite as well as the colonial and postcolonial administration in Nigeria.¹⁶ The last group comprises government publications, such as public service reports, handbooks, government gazettes, national development plans, and occasional papers from scholars and civil servants. This study focuses more on the first category. The writings on this subject give more coverage than other works to analytical issues, such as the origins of the bureaucratic elite, the sources of their influence, their relationship with civilian political leaders and the military rulers. There seems to be a dearth of literature on the education

¹⁴For example, Adebayo Adedeji (ed.), *Nigerian Administration and Its Political Setting* (London: Hutchinson Educational Ltd., 1968); Richard L. Harris, "The Role of the Higher Public Servants in Nigeria" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1967); D.J. Murray, *Studies in Nigerian Administration* (Ife, Nigeria: Hutchinson Educational Ltd., 1970).

¹⁵See James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963); Richard L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963); Emu O. Awa, *Federal Government in Nigeria* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964); J.P. Mackintosh, *Nigerian Government and Politics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966); Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe (eds.), *Nigeria: Modernization and the Politics of Communalism* (Michigan State University Press, 1964).

¹⁶See J.C. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition 1885-1906* (Cambridge, 1966); A.E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect*

¹²Abdo I. Baaklini, "The Military in Development: The Military – Civilian Bureaucracies, The Middle Class and Development: An Organizational Perspective," in Sudesh K. Sharma (ed.), *Dynamics of Development*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Concept Publishing Co., 1977), p. 423.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 424.

and training of the higher civil servants; their managerial role in development, as well as their relationship with the traditional elite.

Hugh H. Smythe and Mabel M. Smythe attempted to discover "what kinds of persons make up the new elite group, how they have achieved status, and what trends are discernible in the current development of this group."¹⁷ Their concept of "elite" as applied to Nigeria was that of "a broad and heterogeneous one, a group, some members of which have great prestige is traditional . . . , all of whom together constitute a reservoir of skills, talents and influence of all kinds."¹⁸ They, however, did not provide an adequate coverage of the bureaucratic elite. Their contribution lay with the approach to the study of the elite in Nigeria through the utilization of certain important variables, such as historical background, cultural diversity, imbalance in high status, employment, regional separation, tribal rivalries and hostilities, and impact of Western education and culture.¹⁹

Richard L. Harris has carried out a study of the bureaucratic elite in

Nigeria by means of personal interviews and mailed questionnaire survey of the bureaucratic, political, business, and professional elite in the federal territory in all the regions except the West, which was then undergoing a tense political situation.²⁰ The questionnaires were designed for data-gathering on:

- (1) the role expectations of the higher public servants;²¹
- (2) the expectations held for their role by the occupants of closely related positions; and
- (3) information as to whether or not the higher public servants perceive that their role expectations conflict with the expectations held by the occupants of related positions.²²

The survey revealed "a relatively high degree of consensus among the expectations of all the respondents on the 'core role of higher bureaucrats, i.e., their general functional involvement in the political system.'²³

There was disagreement among the respondents on the public servants'

Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1891-1929 (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1972); T.M. Tamuno, *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase 1893-1914*; Margery Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1937); I.F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria 1900-1960: Men, Methods and Myths* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

¹⁷Hugh H. Smythe and Mabel Smythe, *The New Nigerian Elite* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), p. 4.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 24

²⁰Richard L. Harris, *op. cit.*, part of this study is also contained in Richard L. Harris, "The Role of Higher Public Servants in Nigeria: As Perceived by the Western-Educated Elite" in D.J. Murray, *op. cit.*

²¹Within the boundary of the term "higher public servants" as applicable to Nigeria, Richard Harris includes "all the permanent secretaries, deputy permanent secretaries (under secretaries), division heads, special advisors, commission secretaries . . . and section chiefs in the various ministries of Nigeria's regional and federal governments." Harris *op. cit.*, p. 91.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, p. 96.

"political neutrality and impartiality in dealing with the members of the public, and promotion of national consciousness and unity, which were either incompatible with the general nature of the dominant party regimes in power at the time or the psycho-cultural traits of the role actors."²⁴

Harris' work centered on official and legalistic relationships between the bureaucratic elite and politicians. He did not probe into the patterns and effect of informal relationships between these elite groups; nor did he investigate the cultural orientations of the civil servants. These factors do have some impact on the policy making role of the bureaucrats.

In contrast, Victor A. Olorunsola has covered the "variables relevant to informal communications." In his study, Olorunsola developed a number of communications hypotheses which help to clarify the relationship between informal communications among bureaucratic attainment of frustration" in Nigeria.²⁵

Hypothesis 1:

... when political leaders and higher civil servants belong to the same organizations and groups, the latter tend to communicate more informally with the former.²⁶

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Victor A. Olorunsola, "Patterns of Interaction Between Bureaucratic and Political Leaders: A Case Study," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. II (October 1968), pp. 51-66.

²⁶*Ibid.*

Hypothesis 2:

To the extent that the higher civil servants who share membership in similar organization or groups as the minister have the opportunity to communicate with these political functionaries, such higher civil servants will then tend to be high on the index of bureaucratic attainment.²⁷

Hypothesis 3:

Pressures from multigroup affiliations may cause conflicting loyalties; such conflicting loyalties tend to have an effect on the actual decision-making process of the Nigerian federal government in general and bureaucratic operations in particular. Therefore, the degree of social stress experienced by higher civil servants in the efficient performance of bureaucratic tasks is intensified in relationship to their involvement in non-governmental groups.²⁸

Such hypotheses were formulated to control for the influence of ethnic grouping, religion, education, party, and other selected characteristics. Using a survey technique by means of questionnaires, he found that "similar political sentiment, cultural homogeneity, and ethnic homogeneity or at least compatibility, were definitely important variables as far as the promotion of informal communications between bureaucratic leadership and the political elite was concerned."²⁹

The politics of administration in Nigeria was also covered in a collection of papers edited by Adebayo Adedeji.³⁰ The papers dealt with the na-

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Adedeji (ed.), *op. cit.*

ture of bureaucratic involvement in politics, the impact of party politics on public administration; the nature of elite conflict within the public service, and the congruity of the structure of Nigerian Public Service with the current developmental orientation of the country.

D.J. Murray addressed his paper to the politics of administration.³¹ He saw intense political activity as being a special characteristic of Nigerian public administration. "The administration is the focus of a great deal of political activity; it is subjected to constant and insistent demands from a wide range of interests and from many individuals: letters, telephone calls, telegrams, personal calls received in requesting interviews, messages in one way or another, press particular causes, public meetings and newspaper comments are used to air demands and criticize decisions or inactivity."³² These activities arise from the demands of interest groups, such as town unions or political parties that put pressure on the administration to provide particular amenities or services. The demands were seen as products of a rising level of expectation due to an increase in postwar spending by the colonial regime on development projects, election promises of politicians who fought for national independence, increased communications, and an administrative culture deriving from colonial heritage. Under the colonial government which was characterized by limited political participation, the district officer was the central figure when it came to accommodating the demands of the local

people. The belief among the masses that public servants could and ought to satisfy the demands of the people derived from this colonial tradition.

Adebayo Adedeji dealt with the issue of the managerial role of the higher public servants. His observation was that the hierarchical and class basis of the organizational structure of the Nigerian ministries was rooted in the British administrative system. He argued that such a system might not be suitable to the development needs of a growing country, such as Nigeria, "where the public sector plays a direct and dominant role"³³ in development. As he wrote:

A public service organized hierarchically tends to reduce administration to a routine process. Papers are passed from subordinates to superior officers, who in turn are content to pass orders accordingly or to forward them to their superiors. The same routines tend to be followed too closely, regardless of the nature or importance of the issue under examination. The result is that many administrators do not operate at a level commensurate with their responsibility.³⁴

Consequently, policy and program initiatives were hard to find at top levels. He predicted: "If Nigeria is to achieve rapid economic and social development, and if the governments of the republic are to play their role in this process, the country's public service should be organized in a less hierarchical and less class-conscious way."³⁵ Unfortunately, he does not say how this could be realized.

³¹D.J. Murray, "The Impact of Politics on Administration," in Adedeji (ed.) *op. cit.*

³²*Ibid.*, p. 12.

³³Adebayo Adedeji, "The Evolution, Organization and Structure of the Nigerian Civil Service," in Adedeji (ed.), *op. cit.*

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 9

James O'Connell seemed to agree with Adedeji's view that the Nigerian public bureaucracy is not development-oriented.³⁶ He pointed out that the bureaucrats have not been trained to innovate, they only administer and transmit orders.³⁷ This view was based on two important factors: the colonial heritage and the pattern of transfer of power from the colonial rulers to the governing elite of the newly independent state. In this process, the professional administrators performed the important task of maintaining the continuity in the public services. On the administrative culture derived from the colonial heritage, he wrote:

The colonial civil servants were mainly concerned with maintaining law and order in the early years of colonization. In the later years, they began gradually to devote a growing part of their time and energies to expanding social welfare and promoting economic growth.³⁸

The conclusion emerging from O'Connell's study was that in newly independent and developing countries, both politicians and administrators do face similar leadership, developmental and decision making problems (even though each of these categories of elite possesses different kinds of skills). According to O'Connell, it was difficult to draw any clear line of distinction between politics and administration. Both Adedeji and O'Connell did not consider the growing involvement of the higher public servants in national development planning espe-

cially in countries under military regimes.

A.A. Ayida, a civil servant in the federal public service in Nigeria, appeared rather ambivalent in dealing with the problem of the developmental role of the higher civil servants. He agreed, however, with Murray and others that "many top Nigerian administrators brought up in the traditions of the colonial service, were more interested in routine administration"³⁹ than in "the civil servant as an advisor in the formulation of public policies, and as the main instrument for executing such policies is one of the key elements in the development process."⁴⁰ He went on to prescribe that "public officials should be given sufficient time to work out the full implications of the proposal before the government takes a decision."⁴¹

Only a few studies have been done on the relationship between the military rulers and the higher public servants in Nigeria. A number of papers dealing with the subject has been edited by Keith Panter Brick.⁴² In one of

³⁹ A.A. Ayida, "The Contribution of Politicians and Administrators to Nigeria's National Economic Planning," in Adedeji (ed.), *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Keith Panter-Brick (ed.), *Soldiers and Oil: The Political Transformation of Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1978). Also Humprey N. Nwosu, *Political Authority and the Nigerian Civil Service* (Enugu; Fourth Dimension, 1977) who investigates how successive regimes (including the military) in Nigeria "sought to create and maintain political authority and structures which in turn have shaped and influenced the development and role of the Nigerian Civil Service and its capacity to induce economic development through national planning.

³⁶ James O'Connell, "The Politics of Modernization and Its Effect on the Administration," in Adedeji (ed.), *op. cit.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

the papers, Henry Bienen and Martin Fitton investigated the relationship among the military, the civilian commissioners, and the military rulers in the Western state and the federal government in Lagos.⁴³ They reported an increase in the power exercised by the higher civil servants during the military regime. Their data were based on information gathered through questionnaires distributed to top-ranking public servants and civilian commissioners. The investigation revealed that permanent secretaries could bypass the civilian commissioners and speak directly with the military governor on public policy issues. Inasmuch as the authors saw this pattern of communication as an increase in the power of the civil servants, the question of the extent to which decisions taken by a military ruler or governor reflect the advice of the civil servants remains unanswered. On the federal level, however, the study showed that while the military stuck to their guns on matters that concerned the administration and welfare of the military, the bulk of public policy making depended heavily on the advice of civil servants.

However, Bienen and Fitton argued that this increased participation of civil servants in policy formulation brought them into "factional alliances with military officers" and contributed to the weakening of the public service as an institution. As they put it:

The increasing visibility of the civil service and the perception among elites and non-elites in Nigeria that the civil service was a political actor made

the civil service more vulnerable to the housecleaning that a new military leadership undertook in 1975.⁴⁴

This phenomenon coupled with "charges of corrupt practices" accounted for the reasons behind the removal of 11,000 civil servants before General Mohammed was assassinated in February 1976.⁴⁵

Some of the hypotheses (such as those pertaining to the politicization of the public service in developing countries; the increase in the decision rule of the public servants under military regimes) have been supported by the studies that have so far been reviewed.

Nigerian Bureaucracy: Recruitment Patterns and Political Role

In an ideal type of bureaucracy, such as that portrayed by Max Weber, the recruitment of public bureaucrats is supposed to be based on merit criterion.⁴⁶ To use the above yardstick as the sole determinant in looking at the patterns of recruitment into the administrative corps of the federal public service in Nigeria is to miss the point. This is because the recruitment of this type of bureaucrats in Nigeria, even in the colonial period, has been influenced and continues to be influenced by both merit and non-merit criteria.

The analysis of the Nigerian experience will show that the merit criterion for recruitment into the public bureaucracy in a developing country could be greatly modified by certain

⁴³Henry Bienen and Martin Fitton, "Soldiers, Politicians and Civil Servants" in Panter-Brick (ed.), *op. cit.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 53

⁴⁶Weber, *op. cit.*

variables, such as the type of regime in power, the extent of the regimes²¹ commitment to socioeconomic development, and educational balance or imbalance among the geographical areas of the political system. These and other related factors determine the patterns of recruitment into the managerial cadre of the public bureaucracy, and which in turn affect the performance of the public bureaucracy.

Recruitment Patterns Before and After Independence.

Until the second half of the 1950s, European officials occupied most of the senior administrative and professional as well as technical positions in the Nigerian civil service. In fact, during the early part of the Nigerian colonial experience, almost all senior positions in the civil service were exclusively occupied by European officials. The only exception to the rule occurred along the coastal areas, such as Lagos where a few Africans managed to rise to senior positions in the Nigerian civil service.⁴⁷

The exclusion of most educated Nigerians from recruitment or promotion into the senior ranks of the central colonial administration was a deliberate policy pursued by the British government. The policy was aimed at preventing the formation of a powerful African interest group within the senior cadre of the colonial public bu-

reaucracy. Such a bureaucratic interest group might be in a position to work against the interest of the colonial rulers. In addition, the exclusion of most educated Africans from the colonial "senior service" was influenced by the organizational need of the colonial administration. The primary aim of the colonial regime was not socioeconomic development of the country. Consequently, the colonial administration restricted the planning and implementation of development programs and projects to those activities which could lead to the opening up of the country for economic exploitation. An example is the development projects of the colonial regime which were mainly in the area of construction of roads and railways that linked the cash crop producing areas and the colonial administrative centers with the coastal ports. Also, it involved the building of new centers of colonial administration. The colonial administration too placed emphasis on the maintenance of law and order for the perpetuation of the colonial regime.

In the context of the above minimal commitment of the colonial administration to developmental objectives, it was unnecessary for the British colonial rulers to voluntarily embark on the development of a corps of higher civil servants in Nigeria. Hence, whereas the "senior service" was almost exclusively European in composition the "junior service" which came under the control of the senior cadre was almost entirely Nigerian in composition.⁴⁸ The "junior service" class comprised those employed as clerks, lower technical and management personnel, and messengers. The members

⁴⁷Dr. Henry Carr, a Nigerian civil servant of the early period of colonial rule in Nigeria, rose to the position of Deputy Director of Education. He retired in 1974. Another African, Joseph McEwin, rose to the rank of Assistant Secretary in Lagos. For a detailed description of Nigerian colonial administration, see I.F. Nicolson, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸Harris. *op. cit.*, p. 115.

of this cadre were recruited mainly from Southern Nigerian who had taken the initial advantage of the Western education made available by missionary organizations.

There was no uniform method of appointment to the British colonial service. The report of a committee on the system of appointment in the colonial office and the colonial services:

"The power of selection lies with the secretary of state (for the colonies) while the actual appointment rests on a letter of appointment from the crown which the officer receives on his arrival in the country."⁴⁹

Most of the recruitments into the colonial administrative corps were made with the selection and recommendation of the private secretary to the Secretary of State to the colonies. Where such appointments were to be permanent, successful candidates were made to serve on probation for a number of years. However, from time to time, some departments of the home government might be asked to select and recommend certain positions in the colonial service.

This system of personnel recruitment into the British colonial public service was too diverse to ensure high quality of staff involved. Moreover, since colonial services offered less money than the domestic, private, and non-private jobs, they were likely to attract personnel of inferior quality. W.R. Crocker, a colonial administrator in Nigeria, has written an account

of the categories of personnel serving in Nigeria up to the 1930s. He observed that even though the majority of colonial officials in Nigeria were people of average ability, "there has undoubtedly been a thread of inferior quality running through the service larger than was comfortable."⁵⁰

Mainly Boer War veterans composed the first group of colonial officials serving in Nigeria during the first decade of the present century. Their education and training were not necessarily relevant to public administration. The second category of administrators employed in Nigeria between 1908 and 1913 were recruited mainly from Oxford and Cambridge Universities; the third group, from the British universities during the First World War, the fourth category of officials serving between 1919 and 1925, from veterans of the First World War. From 1925, the recruitment of colonial administrative personnel for the Nigerian service has been mainly from Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The primary criterion for recruitment into the administrative corps was the possession of an honors degree in areas of study, such as liberal arts, anthropology, and foreign languages. This criterion was applied to Europeans and not to Nigerians because of the character and objectives of the colonial regime.

New recruits were required to undertake a nine-month colonial administrative course in either Cambridge or Oxford University and were instructed in such subjects as tropical hygiene, surveying, Islamic law, native

⁴⁹Great Britain Colonial Office, *Report of a Committee on the System of Appointment in the Colonial Office and the Colonial Services* (1930).

⁵⁰W.R. Crocker, *Nigeria: A Critique of British Administration* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1936), p. 22.

languages, and history of the colonial Empire.⁵¹ Implicit in the pre-entry education and training of British colonial administrators in Nigeria is the assumption of a generalist conception of administration. This notion of administration requires that administrators should have a general education that will produce a broad outlook on the work of administration. It has often been argued in the literature of development administration that this type of educational preparation may be suitable for an administrative environment which places emphasis on the maintenance of law and order rather than on the management of rapid change.

Nigerianization of the Senior Levels of the Federal Public Service

The demand for recruiting qualified Nigerians into the senior cadres of the Nigerian public service began in the 1930s and the pace of the Nigerianization process in the above area gradually continued until it was accelerated from 1960 when Nigeria achieved political independence. The gradual recruitment of Nigerians into the "Senior Service" was a result of the pressure brought upon the British colonial administration by Nigerian politicians and nationalists. These nationalists saw the increased participation of educated Nigerians in the public service as a necessary phase in the struggle to bring an end to colonial rule in the country. Nigerianization of the public service during the later period of colonial rule could also be explained in terms of the increase in the number of educated Nigerians, especially from the southern part of the country. The new educated elite were

the products of the mission schools which were allowed to operate in the southern areas of the country.

In the North, however, the growth of Western education proceeded at a snail's pace. This is because the colonial government discouraged the expansion of Christian missions and their schools into the Northern parts of the country. It has been correctly argued that the colonial administration pursued this educational policy in the North to retain the existing social structure of the area for the purpose of utilizing the services of Northern emirs in the administration of this vast and unfamiliar part of the country.⁵²

The emerging educated elite, who found themselves being discriminated against in matters of recruitment into the higher public service, allied with nationalists and politicians in bringing pressure upon the colonial administration in their demand to have more Nigerians working in the top cadres of the public service.

Most of the major steps made in the area of Nigerianization were preceded by Commissions of Inquiry into the nature and requirements of the civil service. The first of them was the Harragin Commission of 1945-1946 which influenced the colonial administration's acceptance of the need to identify Nigerians more closely with the running of the civil service."⁵³

⁵²E.C. Amucheazi, "The Problem of National Development" in E.C. Amucheazi (ed.), *Reading in Social Sciences: Issues in National Development* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd., 1980) p. 24.

⁵³Alhaji Sule Katagum, *The Development of the Public Service Commission System and the Problems of Recruitment into*

⁵¹Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

Consequently, a Civil Service Commissioner's Department was set up in the Chief Secretary's Office.

The major step in the Nigerianization process came with the publication of the H.M. Foot Commission report. As the Commission reported:

The training and recruitment of Nigerians for senior posts in the government service is not only necessary to enable Nigerians to take an increasing share in the management of their own affairs and to allow the service to keep in step with the pace of constitutional advance, it is also essential for the development and progress of the country.⁵⁴

The Foot Commission went on to make far-reaching recommendations in the area of recruitment, personnel training, and organization which were expected to facilitate the progress of the Nigerianization of the public service. Among these recommendations are:

- (a) Except in cases where suitable Nigerian candidates are already available for promotion from within the service all vacancies in the Senior Service should be advertised in the Gazette and the local press.
- (b) No non-Nigerian should be recruited for any government post except when no suitable and qualified Nigerian is available.
- (c) There should be no discrimination in regard to promotion or in any other respect against non-Nigerians already in the service.

the Public Service in a Plural Society (Nigeria: Federal Public Service Commission, Miscellaneous Publications, n.d.), p. 4.

⁵⁴Nigeria, *Report of the Commission, Appointed by His Excellency the Governor to Make Recommendations About the Recruitment and Training of Nigerians for Senior Posts in the Government Service of Nigeria* (1949).

- (d) The selection of candidates for senior posts should be undertaken by an independent body appointed for the purpose in which there should be un-official representation.
- (e) Facilities for training of promising officers in the Junior Service in Departmental training schools should be improved, and the standard of instruction in such schools raised.⁵⁵

For the implementation of these recommendations, the Foot Commission prescribed the creation of central and regional public service boards whose functions were:

- (1) To select qualified candidates from within the government service for promotion to senior posts.
- (2) To select qualified candidates from outside the service for appointment to senior posts.
- (3) To select candidates in the Junior services for scholarships and special training with a view to accelerated promotion.
- (4) To select candidates from outside the service for scholarships and training schemes to fit them for posts in the Government, Native Administrations, other local government authorities or voluntary agencies.⁵⁶

Despite this important recommendations, the Foot report did not produce immediate dramatic results in the Nigerianization of the public services. By 1952, when the Phillipson-Adebo Commission reported on the

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 19.

progress of the Nigerianization policy, the number of Nigerians holding "Senior Service" posts increased from 245 to 685. At the same time, the number of expatriates in the service rose from 2,296 to 2,984.⁵⁷ This trend in the process of Nigerianization was reversed from 1954 on as a result of the constitutional change to a federal system of government in which the regions were granted a large measure of political autonomy. The regional governments saw this change as an opportunity to fill the higher posts in the regional public services with personnel of their own states of origin.

The pace of the "Nigerianization" process was fastest in the East and the West where there were more of the educated elite. Moreover, for reasons of more security and, possibly higher pay, most of those serving in the Federal Public Service (under the defunct unitary system) offered their services to the states of their origin.

The Northern region was slower than the rest of the country in filling its senior posts with indigenous officials. This was partly due to the fact that the region lagged behind others in the production of a sizeable number of Western educated elites who could hold senior positions, and partly because the Northern regional government was not willing to fill its vacant senior posts with Southern Nigerians since it feared the domination of its public services by Southerners. Consequently, the Northern region preferred retaining expatriate officers until it was able to produce enough

Western educated people to take over the senior posts from expatriates (See Tables 1 and 2).

Since independence, the federal Nigerian government has continued the tradition of assigning the job of recruiting federal civil servants to the federal Public Service Commission. This central organization is also responsible for promotions and discipline of public servants. The various state governments also have their own public service commissions which are responsible for appointments, transfers, secondments, promotions and discipline of public servants.

In principle, appointments to the administrative, professional, scientific, and research posts are based primarily on merit. As the *Federal Nigerian Civil Service Handbook* clearly states:

Potential administrative officers are usually honours graduates and professionally qualified candidates in the fields of education, engineering, law, etc. Some are transferred or promoted to posts within the classes in the service or public bodies. Appointments to posts other than initial grade maybe made direct by the Public Service Commission from candidates considered suitably qualified.⁵⁸

In practice, however, the educational imbalance between the Northern and Southern states, coupled with political and probably ethnic considerations, has resulted in the application of non-merit criteria when it comes to the appointment of people of Northern origin to senior positions in the Federal public service.

For the Nigerian political elite, the advocacy of either merit or non-merit criteria in federal civil service ap-

⁵⁷Sydney Phillipson and S.O. Adebo, *The Nigerianization of the Civil Service: A Review of Policy and Machinery* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1954), p. 37.

⁵⁸*Federal Nigerian Civil Service Handbook*.

Table 1. Northernization Plan For Senior Professional and Administrative Positions In The Northern Nigerian Civil Service, 1956-1960

Professional and Administrative Positions	New Appointments					Promotions					Transfer from Native Authorities						
	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	:	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	:	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
Northerners	35	13	11	19	51	:	44	9	17	3	46	:	—	3	9	2	—
Nigerians-Pensionable	—	2	—	—	—	:	52	1	1	—	2	:	—	—	—	—	—
Nigerians-Contract	1	—	—	2	—	:	—	—	—	2	—	:	—	—	—	—	—
Expatriates-Pensionable	71	17	42	1	—	:	93	56	90	30	69	:	—	—	—	—	—
Expatriates-Contract	213	106	123	138	142	:	25	10	1	32	2	:	—	—	—	—	—
Total	420	138	176	160	193	:	214	76	109	67	119	:	—	3	9	2	—

Source: A.H.M. Kirk Greene, "The Higher Public Service," in Frank Blitz (ed.), *The Politics and Administration of Nigerian Government* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1965), p. 231.

Table 2. Nigerianization of the Administrative Class in the Federation of Nigeria

	October 1957		April 1959		April 1960		January 1962		January 1963	
	Expatriates	Nigerian	Expatriates	Nigerian	Expatriates	Nigerian	Expatriates	Nigerian	Expatriates	Nigerian
Super-scale (Groups 1-5)	16	1	16	2	15	3	6	9	3	17
Administrative Officers Class I (Group 6)	13	—	10	—		3	10	7	5	7
Administrative Officers Class II (Groups 7-8)	24	4	41	16	55	14	21	31	10	34
Administrative Officers Class III and IV (Scale A)	41	21	66	54	17	52	6	81	2	62
TOTAL	94	26	133	72	101	72	43	128	20	120

NOTE: Super-scale Groups 1-5 include all permanent secretaries, plus a few other high ranking administrative officers; Group 6 includes all the deputy permanent secretaries, the secretary of the Public Service Commission, etc.; Groups 7-8 include all senior assistant secretaries, and Scale A includes all the assistant secretaries—the entering grade of the Administrative Class.

Staff List, Federation of Nigeria, October 1957; April 1959; April 1960 January 1962; and January 1963. Compiled by Richard Lege Harris, "The Role of Higher Public Servants in Nigeria" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1967), p. 140.

pointments has a political implication, since there is a tendency among political leaders to perceive the federal civil servants as "representatives of regional interests, rather than as national civil servants, owing allegiance to federal authority."⁵⁹ Consequently, as H.N. Nwosu has observed, "while the Northern members of the federal government generally favored recruitment into the federal civil service on a quota (representative) basis, the Eastern and Western members, because they had more educated and qualified personnel, argued that recruitment into the federal civil service should be based on merit. In practice, in pursuit of "Nigerianization" the principle of merit was diluted into one of representativeness and this obviously affected the quality and output of the Federal Civil Service."⁶⁰

Recruitment on the basis of representativeness has affected the federal public service in two major areas. First, it has put into positions of federal bureaucratic authority an increasing number of personnel occupying positions that do not match their qualifications and experience. This results in the problems of coordination and the lowering of performance levels in the federal public service. Second, the practice of representativeness in the federal public bureaucracy makes the public officers so recruited more vulnerable to serving the interests of their ethnic groups rather than those of the nation.

Despite its failings, the quota system may continue to effect the patterns of recruitment into the federal public service. The 1979 *Constitution* of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

states that presidential appointments to most high-ranking positions in the federal public service should reflect "the Federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity."⁶¹ The drafters of the *Constitution* have probably placed the objectives of national unity and stability above that of efficiency in the federal public service. It may be due to the same considerations that some legislators at federal level have recently come up with the demand for a review of higher civil service positions (at federal level) with a view of making sure that they reflect the federal character of Nigeria. Inasmuch as the proposal augurs well for the principle of representativeness in the federal bureaucracy, it may well generate the feelings of disunity and disaffection among the groups which have gained from the merit criteria in the process of the Nigerianization of the higher public service.

It must be stated, at this point, that hypothesis number one has been validated by the present study. This hypothesis states that "the political situation in most developing countries is such that recruitment into the public service is based on both merit and non-merit criteria." In the Nigerian case (as shown above), factors, such as ethnic politics, educational imbalance among different states, and the need to ensure unity and stability in the body politic, have all contributed to the merging of the principle of representativeness with that of the merit criterion in matters of recruitments and appointments into the higher public service.

⁵⁹H.N. Nwosu, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979*, Chapter VI, Part I, 157 (5).

Political Role of the Bureaucratic Elite

In part one of this study, the various models of the relationship between the bureaucratic elite and the political class, as well as those pertaining to the reasons for and the character of the participation of the senior administrative cadre of the public service in the political process, were discussed. In this part of the study, it will be argued that the nature of participation of the Nigerian bureaucrats in the political process heavily depends on the type of regime in power. It will be shown that in the course of Nigeria's socioeconomic and political transformation, the traditional model by which public bureaucrats are often perceived as politically neutral agents was radically modified. The factors responsible for this modification will be analyzed.

It may be convenient to focus on three periods:

- (1) The First Civilian Regime that lasted from 1960 to early January 1966;
- (2) The Military Regimes — January 1966 to 1970; and
- (3) The Post-Military (Civilian) Regime 1979 to present.

Throughout the periods outlined above, the federal civil service did not necessarily change radically in its structure and norms. Structurally, the civil service has continued to be hierarchical and class oriented throughout the period. At the apex of the service is the administrative and professional class; next to it is the executive class and its general, technical, and specialized cadres. Below the executive class

is the clerical and technical grades; and at the bottom are the subclerical and subtechnical grades. The entire system still remains under the management of the administrative and professional class. This structure has remained the same throughout the period outlined above. During the period, the political leadership and the political structures which linked the various regimes with the public services changed. The higher public service has been defined as the most senior corps of administrative and professional officers comprising: permanent secretaries, deputy permanent secretaries and administrative officers, directors of professional departments, and the chief executives, general managers, and assistant managers of statutory bodies and corporation.⁶²

The norm of the service, too, did not necessarily undergo any change in the perception of the higher public servants themselves. Throughout the period, they still saw themselves as a politically neutral group, rendering their services as advisers of political leaders in the public policy making process. Despite the above similarities, the degree of political participation among top public bureaucrats in the making of public policy in Nigeria significantly differed during the above periods. In general, what accounted for these differences were the type and quality of political leadership, the nature of other political and governmental structures within which the higher public servants (outside the

⁶²P. Chiedo Asiodu, "The Civil Service: An Insider's View" in Oyeleye Oyediran (ed.), *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule, 1966-1979* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1979), p. 75.

public service) rendered their services; the volume and pace of social and economic changes that were being undertaken or planned. These will be explained, along with other factors, as the political involvement of the bureaucratic elite during the various periods is discussed.

The First Civilian Regime

In theory, the role of the higher public servants under the first civilian regime was to advise ministers on policy issues by preparing a list of possible options from which the ministers, collectively in cabinet, could decide on one of the options. Where the ministers or the cabinet placed much reliance on the advice of the bureaucratic elite, they could decide on policies based on the preferred options indicated by the public servants. In such situations, the political role of the higher public servants could be very significant. This dependence by political leaders on the advice of the higher public servants was a common feature of the first civilian regime. Most of the political parties of this period, though vocal and militant in their struggle against colonial domination, were not able to build up party bureaucracies that were competent enough to deal with the amount of data gathering and the technical expertise that were involved in the formulation of public policies. The public service, on the other hand, was better equipped than the politicians in dealing with these issues. In addition, it was not uncommon for permanent secretaries of the first civilian regime to go all out for briefings with the prime minister when they strongly felt that a wrong decision was about to be taken by the minister or the cabinet.

It is difficult to establish the extent to which the internal politics within the public bureaucracy itself reduced the effectiveness of the bureaucratic elite as advocates of public policy options. It is certain that the internal conflict within the public bureaucracy weakened the posture of the higher public service as a united front, and gave the service a bad public image. The conflict arose from the rivalries between the administrative and professional officers. The professional officers resented the system whereby most permanent secretaries (heads of ministries) were chosen from the administrative class. The situation was made worse by the fact that most of the administrative officers who took over from the colonial administrators during the "Nigerianization" process were much younger than their predecessors. It took more than a decade before more officers with professional background began to be appointed as permanent secretaries.

The Military Regime

The intervention of the military in Nigerian politics did not alter the structure of the civil service, nor were there any radical changes in the kinds of functions assigned to the public bureaucracy in general. However what witnessed some changes were the governmental structures with which politicians had performed legislative and executive functions of state. The military blamed most of the ills of corruption, nepotism, and other malpractice on politicians of the First Republic of the country. Thus, when the military intervened in the politics of the country, they suspended the existing *Constitution*, and placed a ban on party politics, and the legislature. The result was that public bureaucrats did not have to deal with the cabinet min-

isters, the cabinet, and the Prime Minister. They were accountable to and advised commissioners, the Federal Executive Council, and, sometimes, the commander-in-chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces (the Head of State).

There are two major views with regard to the political role of the bureaucratic elite during the military regimes. One view says that the role of the higher public servants as politically neutral agents remained the same in both civilian and the military regimes. In this context, the higher public servants of the military period were mainly performing the traditional functions of advisers and executive functionaries in the public policy making and implementation processes,⁶³ but the ability of the bureaucrats to persuade the military rulers to accept their own preferred policy options was greater than ever.

Another view perceives the bureaucratic elite of the military period not only as advisers to the powers-that-be and managers of government programs but also as direct political actors, advocating or "pushing" its preferred policy options, and meticulously weaving a network of alliances with other political interest groups for the realization of the above objectives. This view is especially reflected in A.D. Yahaya's paper at the National Conference on "Twenty years of Nigerian Public Administration."⁶⁴ The paper

gave an analysis of the political role of high-ranking civil servants of Northern states origin serving at federal and state levels during the period of military rule. As Yahaya correctly observed, they participated in politics as:

- (1) Technocrats in the making of public policy.
- (2) A particular interest group forging out powerful links with the military, politicians, and intellectuals of northern origin with the objective of protecting the political interests of the Northern States.

These two views of the political involvement of the bureaucratic elite are slightly different in terms of the nature of this involvement. Nevertheless, they are similar in the sense that both views talk about the increase in the political role of the higher public bureaucrats during the period of military rule. It is pertinent, therefore, to examine the various factors that contributed to this increase in their political role.

First, when the army came into power, they tended to rely too heavily on the public servants not only for the legitimization of their regimes but also for the planning and implementation of policies designed for national unity and socioeconomic development. There were several reasons for this heavy reliance on the civil service. Traditionally, the Nigerian army is trained for combat, and not for the planning or execution of the nation's political and socioeconomic programs. Since the first coup-makers had blamed most of the country's political ills on politicians, they were not willing, at least for the first year, to coopt this discredited group into the military administration. On the

⁶³*Ibid.* pp. 73-95.

⁶⁴See A.D. Yahaya, "Nigerian Public Administration Under Military Rule: Experiences of the Northern States." unpublished paper.

other hand, the military perceived the public bureaucrats as a politically neutral group possessing the necessary technical expertise and the kind of orientation that were most needed to improve the country's administration.

The political involvement of the bureaucratic elite enormously increased during this period because of the absence of civilian commissioners or ministers in the military executive council. Expert advice from the top civil servants went directly to the ruling military executive council. Even when civilian commissioners were appointed later, the permanent secretaries were persistent in maintaining this direct line of communication with the Executive Council. As Major-General J.N. Garba once concluded:

Gowon (the then military leader and head of state) was partly right when he said that his advisers in the civil service (and he had many) should be blamed for some of the mistakes and misdeeds of his administration." And as he further explained: "Everyone knows that during the nine years of the Gowon regime, senior civil servants literally held sway over decision-making, and some of them could in fact over-rule their commissioners and get away with it. This unfortunate but probably inevitable situation arose during and immediately after the civil war, when many senior civil servants found themselves playing the role normally played by Ministers. The regrettable consequence was the reversal of the traditional role of the civil servant from that of being a quiet, behind-the-scene adviser to the dual role of being seen and heard.⁶⁵

⁶⁵J.N. Garba, "Military Administration and the Nigerian Society" in *Nigeria in Transition: A Critical Examination of the Main Political, Economic and Social Aspects of the Nigerian Society*, Report of the Seminar on Nigerian Transition, Kaduna, 1979.

Second, the increased rate of government business as a result of military intervention also helped to make the public bureaucrats more involved in national politics. A number of major events that occurred in the country during the military regimes help to explain the accelerated rate of government business. Two of such events were the secession of Biafra and the civil war that followed. In the absence of civilian ministers or commissioners, (for a period of one year before they were appointed) the higher civil servants were taking part directly along with the military in the making of policies with regard to the nature of the political system that would satisfy the contending sides of the crisis, the peace plans, the creation of states and the conduct of war. At the end of the civil war, civil servants were actively involved in the programs for reconciliation of the opposing sides, the rehabilitation of people from the war-affected areas, and the reconstruction of the war-damaged parts of the country.

Third, it may be pertinent to talk about ethnicity as a relevant factor in shaping the political behavior of the bureaucratic elite during the military regime. The patterns of killings of during the first and second coups coupled with the bloody killings of civilians from particular ethnic groups whipped up ethnic sentiments among the major groups. Most of the federal civil servants from the former Eastern region fled along with their kit and kin to their area of origin. The rest from other parts of the country joined the federal military government in effort to keep Nigeria united. The top federal civil servants from Northern Nigeria maintained a link with their counterparts from the northern states

who had constituted themselves into a powerful political interest group, and persistently worked for the protection of the interests of the Northern states within a united Nigeria. As A.D. Yahaya explained.

"They were primarily concerned with restoring the so-called Northern political dominance. They believe that the interest of the North could be protected only if the North is in political control. Their conception of Northern political control was for their group to merely step into power to be relinquished by the Military."⁶⁶

Fourth, there was mutual mistrust between the army officers and the civilian politicians who were coopted into the military administration as Ministers or Commissioners. The politicians looked forward to an early return to civilian rule, a situation which was bound to rid the military of its political leadership of the country. On the other hand, the military had not forgotten that its first military coup was directed against the politicians for their alleged malpractices. When it comes to rendering advice on policy issues, the military often preferred the higher public servants to politicians.

Such was the increase in the political role of the bureaucratic elite during the military regime that the public perceived them as the actual rulers of the country. Consequently, most of the ills of the military administration were blamed on the civil servants. Ironically, this increased role brought the public servants into conflict with the military during the regime of General Murtala Muhammed.

The unprecedented rise in the cost of goods and services following the "Udoji" salary awards had created unexpected hardships for people in general and to civil servants in particular. This resulted in a gradual fall in morale and productivity among the civil servants. In his determination to rid the public service and society of these ills, General Muhammed directed his historic "purge of 1975," in which about 11,000 civil servants were fired or retired from the service.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, this step could not produce the expected result. The loss of traditional security among the civil servants led to continued loss of morale and even voluntary resignations among many top civil servants.

The Presidential System

With the present system, top civil servants at the federal level are now accountable to more political masters than before. These include the president and the vice-president (the chief executives of the federation), the ministers, and special advisers to the president. The legislature, too, could use any of its power under the *Constitution* to control or supervise the actions of the higher public servants.

With the present presidential system of government, the tendency for civil servants to "push" their preferred policy options will continue to meet with frustration from the po-

⁶⁶Yahaya *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁶⁷"The Public Service: we need to meet the challenges of the 1980's." Papers presented by the Nigerian Delegation to the Round Table Conference of African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) Nairobi, Kenya, August 7-5, 1979, p. 16.

litical executives. This is more so because of the tendency of the present political parties to develop party bureaucracies that are capable of developing several policy options for their regime.

Despite these, the higher bureaucrats still have some indirect influence on public policy formulation and implementation because of the tendency of their political masters to rely upon their advice based on technical expertise coupled with the control of information needed for policy making and implementation. Even with the reduced powers of the bureaucrats in Nigeria's policy making process, politicians still perceive most higher public servants as capable of obstructing the implementation of their programs.

Ethnicity, as a factor, is very relevant in this consideration. Even though civil servants are barred from participation in partisan politics, they could use their positions in the service to frustrate the programs of parties that they do not like. Most of the present political parties still draw their main support from particular ethnic groups. On the other hand, the federal civil service is trying to reflect the "federal character" in its personnel administration. Some federal pro-

grams will continue to be frustrated unless top civil servants would give their loyalty to any regime in power irrespective of its party or ethnic base.

Conclusion

In conclusion, for about two decades now the patterns of recruitment into the higher public service in Nigeria have been influenced by both merit and non-merit criteria. Such factors as ethnic politics, educational imbalance among different states, and the need to ensure unity and stability in the body politic have been found relevant in explaining the above generalization. Additionally, the level of political role of the bureaucratic elite in Nigeria (within the same time period) had depended heavily on the type of regime in power, the quality of political leadership, and the prevailing constitutional arrangement. The problem of adjustment by the higher public servant to the requirements of the new presidential system of government has much to do with increase in their political role during the military regime. A gradual solution to the problem may be found by involving the higher public servants in a program of systematic re-orientation and training.