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Ethics and accountability in Nigeria's public service: An historical overview

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This paper seeks to assess the ethical environment within which the public service in Nigeria has operated since independence through a focus on accountability and control measures specifically designed to guard against abuse and misuse of bureaucratic power. It argues that these measures have failed to provide the service with the necessary ethical environment in the post -independence period due to deliberate frustration by civil servants and the government hence resulting in unethical conducts and unbridled corruption in the public bureaucracy.

Key words: Ethics, accountability, Nigeria, bureaucracy.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a considerable debate in the literature of political science and dating back to the period of hobbes as to whether the state, as a sovereign, should be accountable to anyone or whether it should be treated as a moral and responsible agent. The consensus now seems to be that while the state must be self -accounting on the basis of the constitution and the laws of the country, the individuals who exercise power on behalf of the state whether appointed or elected, must be accountable for the actions they take on behalf of the state (Adamolekun, 2002)

One of the most important and significant features of most modern societies today is the emergence of a powerful state bureaucracy. This, has raised the issue of bureaucratic power which can be abused by the bureaucrats, either for selfish ends (especially for personal or family enrichment) or in the course of their dealings with private citizens. In regard to this latter issue, attention is usually drawn to the weak position of the citizens in relation to the powerful state bureaucracy. Most modern states have devised some methods of dealing with problems that may emerge from this interaction. In Nigeria, the public complaints commission, usually called the ombudsman system, has been established to act as a grievance redressing mechanism for the populace. The ex-

tent to which it has been successful had been discussed in some earlier papers (Agarah 1989, 1990).

Apart from this are some other internal mechanisms and control measures put in place to ensure that the bureaucracy conduct its business within some ethical parameters. These internal mechanisms not only provide an ethical environment within which the bureaucracy is expected to perform its responsibilities but also act as a form of accountability measures for the service. These are the civil service rules (CSR) which replaced the general orders bequeathed to the service by the colonialists and the civil Service Handbook. The CSR is the grundnorm for service conduct and it covers from appointment to separation from the service, discipline, salary, leave, and reward for performance.

The civil service handbook acts as a reference book and guide for all levels of personnel in the service. The scope of the handbook is quite exhaustive, dealing with all salient features of the service, the role of the civil servant in government and the manner in which government business should be conducted in order to have an efficient and effective administrative system capable of winning public confidence. In a chapter titled "Code of ethics in government business", the values of discipline, loyalty, honesty, courage, courtesy, cooperation, tact, industry, fairness and equity were emphasized. In a bid to have an ethically upright and accountable bureaucracy, the handbook and the CSR are further complemented by the following documents, the guidelines for appointment,

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Promotion and discipline issued by the civil service commission, the code of conduct bureau whose mandate covers the behavior of both political and public servants alike, the Fifth schedule of the 1999 federal constitution which contains codes to guide the conduct of officials with emphasis placed on how to avoid conflict of interests and finally, the code of conduct tribunal whose responsi-bility is to bring to trial or prosecute all cases of infringe-ment or non-compliance of the ethics governing the con-duct of government business.

It is interesting that in spite of all these control measures put in place to ensure an ethical bureaucratic system, the bureaucratic ethics has been abandoned and acts of corruption has become the norm. The primary purpose of this paper therefore is to assess the ethical environment within which the public service operates in Nigeria. In doing this, we shall also look at certain accountability and control measures that were instituted by the colonialists and which were specifically designed to guard against abuse and misuse of bureaucratic power.

We shall attempt to offer explanations for why these measures failed to provide the service with the necessary ethical environment in the post-independence period. Our argument is that as these control measures were deliberately frustrated and not allowed to perform, so also has been every other control measures introduced, whether constitutionally (1979, 1999) or otherwise, hence resulting in unethical conducts and unbridled corruption in the public bureaucracy. We shall start our discussion by defining the concept of bureaucratic corruption.

PERSPECTIVES ON BUREAUCRATIC ETHICS AND CORRUPTION

Most administrative systems in African states have to undergo one reform or the other especially when such reform is expected to transform the administrative system from a mere service delivery mentality and orientation of the colonial period to a more dynamic, virile and developmental one. To achieve this, the various reforms aimed at professionalizing the service. Professionalism is an overarching value that determines how the activities of the public service will be carried out. It encompasses other values such as loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, effectiveness, impartiality and such values as may be peculiar to individual countries. Every member of the public service are expected to accept and imbibe these values. These shared values are what is collectively referred to as public service ethics. Ethics, therefore, is at the core of professionalism and efficiency of the public service.

Davis, (1990) has defined ethics as "those morally permissible standards of conduct that each member of a group wants every other to follow even if their following them would mean he or she has to follow them too". Thus, the concept "ethics" is reserved for the morally permitted standards that apply only to particular groups. Professional ethics would therefore refer to those special standards governing the conducts of members of a parti-

cular professional group basically because they are members of that profession. Professional ethics can only be learnt as part of the training for that profession. Thus, members of the administrative system are expected to learn the ethics of their profession either during formal training or on the job.

Thompson (1985) has defined administrative ethics as involving the application of moral principles to the conduct of official responsibilities and duties. Chapman (1988) on the other hand has defined civil service ethics as the application of moral standards in the course of official work. So it is expected of civil servants to apply and exercise certain ethical considerations when carrying out orders of political bosses and when they are faced with a situation where they have to make value judgment that have implications for their professional standing.

Ethics in the public service are therefore the broad norms that stipulate how public servants should behave and exercise judgment and discretion in carrying out their official duties. Central to administrative ethics are attitudes, standards, and systems of values which have been internalized in the civil servant. Its foundation is the belief that what public officials and employees do has a central and inescapable normative component involving values, morality and ethics (York, 1984).

Even the members of the society expect the civil servant to act with unwavering integrity, absolute impartiality and devotion to the public interest and the state (Rohr, 1976). This becomes important because the public service is often seen as an extension of the government and the logic of modern government depends increasingly on the acceptability of those who govern to those they govern, acceptability which is further enhanced if those who are governed have confidence in the moral uprightness of those who govern (Baker, 1971). The failure or the jettison of every ethical standard will inevitably lead to corruption and corrupt practices in the public service as well as the lowering of efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

Concerning corruption, the distinction must be made from the onset between political and bureaucratic corrupt-tion. This distinction is more than a mere academic exercise as the failure to delineate between both has led to mystification and the inability to find solution or to syste-matically address the issue. Hope (1985) has attempted to trace the genesis of bureaucratic corruption by stating that; With the politicization of the bureaucracy in the third world has come bureaucratic corruption. Political corrupt-tion has laid down the ground rules for bureaucratic corruption in the third world.

Similarly, Nwabuzor (2003) has made such a distinction when he sees political corruption as the "fraudulent and or forceful acquisition of power over a group of people" However, Hope's analysis has opened us to two implications. One is that in the genealogy of corruption, poli-tical corruption comes first before bureaucratic corruption. This implies that political corruption nurtures, sustains and even breeds bureaucratic corruption. In Nigeria, the

reality presented is that there is a dialectical relationship between the 2, such that the absence of one may cause the other to atrophy since political corruption led to bureaucratic corruption, (but the sustenance of the former is not without the support and connivance of the latter and vice versa).

The other is the ethno-centric implication of this assertion, which implied that the phenomenon of corruption is a third world exclusive. As Caiden (1979) brazenly puts it, corruption is "regarded as an exotic subject related to underdevelopment, a stage which it is assumed western societies had long outgrown". Almost in an apologetic attitude characteristic of bourgeois intellectualism, certain writers have tried to link the development of a 'modern' bureaucracy with corruption of the bureaucratic process (La Palombara, 1963). They have come close to stating that corruption or its functional equivalent may be an important ingredient for achieving a modern bureaucracy. They are quick to cite the examples of Britain (before the Northcote - Trevelyan commission) and America (during the Jacksonian period) (Agarah, 1995). However, Rose-Ackerman (1978) pointing out that no bureaucracy, whether developed or developing, is corrupt free writes.

A fragmented bureaucracy may generate extensive delays as corrupt officials hold out for large bribes, a sequential bureaucracy may be permeated with corruption even though officials have overlapping jurisdictions, while a corrupt bureaucrat at the top of a hierarchy may transform the entire administrative structure into an engine for the maximization of corrupt receipts.

Most writers on corruption have either assumed a moralistic posture or stressed the behavioral aspect of the act. They are all agreed that it alludes to a psychological state of putrefaction of a society and its citizens. Its controversial nature is due to its relativity in that what passes for corrupt act in one locale may not be so in another. This in turn has led to a variety of definitions and meanings, nearly obfuscating the phenomenon. However, Johnson (1996) had classified the many definitions into 3 categories, public-office centered, market-centered and public-interest centered.

Benson (1978) emphasized on the abuse of official power by seeing corruption as "all illegal or unethical use of governmental authority as a result of consideration of personal or political gain". Bailey's (1966) definition is of greater currency because it conceptualized corruption as not necessarily involving exchange of money, but as "a general term covering misuse of authority as a result of considerations of personal gains which need not be monetary". Rose-Ackerman (1978) definition of corruption as the use of illegal market mechanisms in allocative decisions set aside for the democratic political system and Gardiner and Lyman's (1978) definition of corruption as "the exchange of money or other material goods for preferential treatment by public officials" all described corruption in terms of a market theory.

Nwabuzor (2003) has classified corruption into two broad categories of materialistic and non-materialistic corruption, arguing that non- materialistic corruption has to do with service or benefit unjustly received. Nwabuzor's (2003) category of materialistic corruption approximates the definition of corruption by Osoba (2000) which is that:

Corruption…is a form of anti-social behaviour by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators (and) is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prescribed moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well being of all members of society in a just and equitable manner

Two attempts at conceptualizing corruption seem to capture our interest in this paper. The first is by Mcmullan (1970), who sees corruption as behaviour resulting in private gain at public expense. As he puts it; "a public official is corrupt if he accepts money or money's worth for doing something that he is under duty to do anyway, that he is under duty not to do, or to exercise a legitimate discretion for improper reasons". The other is Friedrich's (1966) definition which captures the notion of public interest thus

…corruption can be said to exist whenever a power holder charged with doing certain things, that is who is responsible functionary, or an office holder, is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for, induced to take actions which favour whoever provides he rewards and thereby does damage to the public and its interests.

Many reasons have been adduced for the existence of bureaucratic corruption. One popular reason has been stated above and this is to link it to the process of political modernization. Subsequently, it has also been argued that as the political process becomes modernized, bureaucratic corruption will decline. However, Werner (1983) had argued against this notion stating that; Political and bureaucratic corruptions are not necessarily associated with political modernization. Neither is corruption doomed to destruction as a political system matures. (Instead), corruption alters its character in response to changing socio-economic cultural and political factors. As these factors affect corruption, so does corruption affects them…Corruption carries a dynamic mechanism that allows it to spills over and perpetuate itself.

Other reasons propounded include corruption being a reflection of the prevailing socio-economic realities of the society, what Caiden (1979) called market criteria, while another perspective sees it as being the logical outcome of a defective institution building, the result of "multiplication of functionally unnecessary, non-complementary and competing institutions" (Jones, 1985). Another reason is that corruption is the result of an emphasis on structural formalism manifested in laws being passed to solve certain problems while these are sabotaged to prevent actual implementation (Aina, 1982).

A monolithic causation of corruption has been floated, adopting the revisionist-cum-functionalist approach that tends to ignore the administrative consequences of corruption instead of the more analytical political economy approach. The consensus is now to discountenance a mono-causal reason of corruption. Instead, the phenomenon has been recognized as being complex. This complexity is further compounded by the simple fact that corruption is self-perpetuating, begetting more corruption as the circle widens.

Caiden (1981) aptly puts it thus, that "once it enters the blood of a public organization, it spreads quickly to all parts" such that finally, the whole fabric and sensibilities of the society become affected and thus bastardized. Naomi and Gerald Caiden (1977) expressed this eventuality thus; it is a situation where wrongdoing has become the norm and the standard accepted behaviour necessary to accomplish organizational goals according to notions of public responsibility and trust has become the exception, not the rule. In this situation, corruption has become so regularized and institutionalized that organization supports wrongdoing and actually penalized those who live up to the old norms.

The suggested solution has suffered from the revisionist-cum-functional methodology used for its analysis. Thus, the contention has been that good leadership is a panacea for corruption (Olowu, 1983). Citing the cases of prime minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and General Murtala Muhammed of Nigeria, Carino (1985) and Aina (1982) respectively have also expressed similar sentiments. Although instances abound of crusading and morally upright leadership, the prevailing reality has shown this belief to be too naïve and simplistic as either such leaders eventually fall prey to the pervasive corrupt system in the society, or, as in the case of General Murtala Muhammed are deposed or killed. The argument here is that while good, honest and dedicated leadership may go a long way to curbing corruption, it is not a sufficient condition.

More fundamental is the implication of a complex casual factor which can lead to the eradication of the phenomenon. It follows that if corruption is a complex issue, attempts to eradicate it must also be complex. As Braibanti (1979) puts it, "unilinear notions of causation and cure of governmental corruption is mythical" and according to Caiden (1979), "reforms of corruption is not a costless undertaking" as "the higher the goals of reform, the higher the costs". This consideration seems to have prompted Sherman (1978) to opine that reform efforts should not be dissipated in an attempt to totally eradicate corruption, but should be directed to defeating and preventing organizational corruption and the minimization of individual corruption.

THE COLONIAL HERITAGE

The British parliamentary system, sometimes called cabinet government or party government, operates essential-ly through elected representatives of the people in parliament. The representatives in parliament exercise sovereign power on behalf of the people, with the actual conduct of the government being in the hands of the leading members of the majority party (Ministers) which form the government, thereby constituting the cabinet. To assist the executive (Ministers) in carrying out their responsebilities to the people through formulation of policies and implementing same, is a group of people called the public servants whose tenure, unlike the politicians, is permanent and who man the administrative structure called the bureaucracy. Despite the assistance of the bureaucrats, the ministers are still individually and collectively held responsible to the parliament for the activities of the government. This is the doctrine of ministerial responsibility and accountability, a fundamental part of British parliamentary system.

The exclusion of the bureaucrats from this responsibility rests on the assumption that the ministers as heads of their respective ministries are totally in charge and must be abreast of everything happening there. Second, the bureaucrats who are expected to observe the ideals of anonymity, impartiality and political neutrality as enunciated by Max Weber in his conceptualization of the ideal bureaucracy, are not responsible for policy making but only for policy implementation under strict watch and directives of the ministers. Put differently, the ministers are not expected to lose touch or political control of their ministries. As former prime minister, Harold Wilson puts it in 1966: "civil servants, however eminent, remain the confidential advisers of ministers, who alone are answerable to parliament for policy; and we do not envisage any change in this fundamental feature of our parliamentary democracy" (Adamolekun 1986).

However, the concepts of accountability and control measures were engineered when it was realized that public servants may need some restraints in their dealings with the public especially during the execution of their official duties. Thus, the word 'control' as used in reference to administration signifies administrative control, measures aimed at restraining and checking the behavior of public servants with a view to preventing the abuse or misuse of bureaucratic power. Accountability, on the other hand, "focuses attention upon the sanctions or procedures by which public officials may be held to account for their actions" (Gould and Kolb, 1964). Thus, although, accountability as a concept is broader than administrative control since its scope includes both political and administrative officials, we are using it here as a synonym to administrative control.

The British, therefore, introduced certain systems of controlling the administration which became a legacy that the colonies inherited. The parliamentary control of the administration was effected through such political and devices as question time, letters by members of parliament to the ministers, and parliamentary committees. In addition to these, the British system also employed two other methods which were also inherited by the colonies.

These were internal and judicial controls. The internal control measures refer to certain internal arrangements peculiar to the bureaucracy and which was aimed at preventing the abuse of bureaucratic power by superior on the subordinate. The measures are, therefore, connected with the hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy, and they mediate the kind of relationship between superior and subordinates, career expectations and penalties for contravening rules and regulations governing the conduct of government work. Judicial control was put in place as a form of legal accountability which provided judicial remedies to any citizen who may be adversely affected by administrative actions or inactions contrary to law.

THE NIGERIAN POST-INDEPENDENCE EXPERIENCE

By independence in 1960, the existing colonial "Westminster model" and the methods of parliamentary control not only remained unchanged, but there were also no doubts that the indigenous politicians also accepted them as the norm. After all, there were no other alternatives they could choose from, not after been exposed to these methods since the colonial days. Thus, it was a wonder to note that shortly after independence, the methods that had worked for generations in Britain and which had constituted the backbone of British democratic system, suddenly became ineffective in Nigeria, with the politicians who were 'schooled' in its use, deliberately thwarting its implementation and effectiveness. All these could be seen as deliberate and not due to problems accompanying transplantation of models or ideas from one locale to another.

For example, the tradition of question time in parliament which had been an effective instrument for turning the searchlight on the public service and for probing the conduct of administration in the inherited British model was the first to be stifled. The reasons for this are as numerous as they were personal to the politicians who were interested in 'killing' everything that would have hindered them from their primary preoccupation of self perpetuation and enrichment. Consequently, the absence of these parliamentary methods which would have called the civil service to order through the political ministers in charge of them paved the way for the abuse and misuse of bureaucratic power and subsequently corruption. Thus, the link between political and bureaucratic corruption was further concretized.

Theoretically, many reasons could be adduced for the abandonment of the question time. The first was that the majority of the questions asked were mainly concerned with the distribution of amenities such as electricity, postal services, water and roads instead of how the service was doing in implementing decisions and their relationship with the citizens. Second was the short duration in which the parliament sat for business. This was because the politicians preferred to be busy looking for opportunities to feather their nests. There was, therefore, no adequate time for serious business to be discussed or searchlight turned on the conduct of the public service.

Records have it that between 1960 - 1965, the Nigerian parliament sat for about 38 days. When compared with the British equivalent of about 160 days for the same period, there is no doubt that the Nigerian parliamentary members preferred other preoccupation to the one they pledged to and which they were voted for by the citizens. Third was the fact that the question time session took an air of inquisition, an opportunity which the opposition saw to ridicule and castigate the ruling party for inefficiency. Therefore, the majority of the ministers were unfavorably disposed to answering questions such that their continued absence at such sessions eventually led to its abandonment.

The public accounts committee, another control method, was rendered ineffective also as a result of almost similar reasons. Between 1960 and 1965, the effective func-tioning of the PAC was hampered by the uncooperative attitude of the senior public servants, the limited know-ledge of the members concerning their response- bilities, the high turnover rate of membership and more impor-tantly the preponderance of pro-government mem-bers on the committee including the chairman (Adamolekun, 1974).

The Nigerian judicial system operates at three levels, the federal courts, state courts and customary courts. There is no public law system, therefore, the courts have responsibilities for settling conflicts between private indivi-duals and between private individuals and the state. The remedies used in settling disputes include the order of mandamus, prohibition, order of certiorari, habeas cor-pus, injunction, doctrine of ultra vires, natural justice and the rule of law. In Nigeria, this system of judicial control and remedies has persistently proved ineffective in cur-bing instances of bureaucratic corruption. A major factor for this was the long time it takes for justice to be done in our courts. It is not impossible for a case in court to drag on for years until the aggrieved party loses all interests in the case. Of more importance is the cost of litigation which in Nigeria, is not mitigated by a system of legal aid.

The ineffectiveness of all administrative control measures in Nigeria, some have argued, is due to imperfect imitation and transplantation (Adamolekun, 1974). The confusion can be traced to the doorstep of the colonial government. For example, the introduction of a quasi-parliamentary system of government in Nigeria in 1952 was not based on the established British model of a government and an opposition. Instead, a national government was formed in Lagos whose composition reflected a search for national consensus that was expected to emerge from the sharing of power by the three broad interests groups represented by the country's three regions at that time.

However, at the regional level, the political arrangement was that of a government and an opposition. By independence, the national consensus arrangement was jettisoned for the government and an opposition arrangement

and without question this feature proved inappropriate for the Nigerian milieu. This was because at independence, two of the prominent political parties; the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) formed a coalition national government with the third major party, the Action Group (AG) acting as the opposition party.

However, this may not be a sufficient justification as the politicians had enough time to learn and master their workings under the British colonial government. Rather, it should be seen as more of a deliberate action on the part of the culprits. The politicians' deliberate move to stifle all possible control measures that may hinder them from realizing their purpose of using their position for self enrichment also enabled the administration to do likewise. As a matter of fact, the preoccupation of the political class to consolidate their hold on their positions while enriching themselves left the bureaucracy without political direction and monitoring, hence the bureaucrats were able to become a power unto themselves. Thus, the collapse of every form of political control of the bureaucracy enabled the bureaucrats to hijack power and in most cases acted as a decision making organ, thereby resulting in the bureaucracy's unholy romance with politics. Bureaucratic power now provides veritable opportunities for self aggrandizement and this realization had necessitated that the system should frustrate every control measure that may hinder this possibility. The bureaucracy has be-come a festering ground for corruption and the age long Weberian norms governing administration are no longer respected. Who will guard the guardians?

Deriving from the above discussion, therefore, it becomes very clear that the British colonial elite who supervised the political development of Nigeria did bequeathed to the post- independent Nigeria certain political cum administrative legacies which the metropolitan dominant elite held sacrosanct and had become committed to. These legacies provided the early nationalists opportunity and a framework within which colonial policies and practices could be challenged. As we have been at pains to show, these legacies did not survive the immediate period after independence. The reality was that the interest of the political and bureaucratic elite changed drastically after independence.

This change of interest could also be interpreted to imply a change in support of liberal democracy, its institutions and the process of government. The increasing level of intolerance that has characterized political rule in Nigeria since 1960 and the ease coupled with the longevity of military rule are pointers to this abandonment of the values of liberal democratic values and institutions. It is our candid opinion that the abandonment of all values of liberal democracy by the elite was deliberate and was a prelude to the removal of all administrative checks on excesses. This leads to only one conclusion, that the nationalist elite accepted the liberal form of democracy under British colonial rule mainly because of the

constraining effects it had on the colonial administrators. On the other hand, they rejected its continuation after independence precisely because they did not want such constraints on their rule.

Democracy of the bourgeois western style, wherever it is being practiced, has certain desirous effects. More than any other form of government, liberal democracy of the western bourgeois type increases the probability that government will follow or be guided by the general interest. This is because, how governments act is affected by the constitutional systems through which they emerge…and democracies will ensure that governments pursue policies in the general interest or for the common good (Lively 1975)

In both parliamentary and presidential systems of government, the locus of competition rests with the political parties and victory is ensured if a political party can produce good policies that will satisfy the majority of the citizens. This notwithstanding, the dictates of democratic system requires that government should submit itself to periodic assessment and renewal of mandate. Within the framework of alternative choices, this implies that the government in power and which wishes to retain power must be responsive to the wish of the governed.

Second, the liberal democratic form of government also imposes some restraint on the state. The state's right is limited by the constitutional provision that it must respect the rights of individuals and groups in the society. Thus, in this regard, the "temptation of the political leadership to wield absolute power is restricted by the competitive nature of democracy" (Perry, 1969). Thus, by definition, liberal democratic government is a limited government as arbitrary use of power is curtailed. This probably provides us with one of the reasons that endeared liberal democracy to the bourgeoisie, and this is that it protects them from arbitrary state interference.

Third is that competitive democratic system compels attention not just to the form of government but also to the substance of politics in as much as political parties compete on the basis of what they have to offer to the electorates. A fourth one is that democracy provides the citizenry with more opportunities to get involve in political decisions. The literature on mass society and political participation suggest that citizens' participation in decision can be either as individuals or members of groups. It is only in this sense that representative democracy encourages "a belief by the masses that they exercise an ultimate self-determination within the existing social order…a credence in the democratic equality of all citizens in the government of the nation" (Anderson, 1977).

Finally, the primary concern of democracy with the formal political equality of all citizens, majority of whom are economically disadvantaged, provides for the economically advantaged and powerful groups to dominate and of-ten times hijack the system thereby undermining the notion of political equality. Perhaps more than any other reason, this particular advantage made democracy quite

attractive to the bourgeois. As Nairn (1977) has rightly observed; the representative mechanism converted real class inequality into the abstract egalitarianism of citizens, individual egoisms into an impersonal collective will, what would otherwise be chaos into a new state legitimacy.

However, the institutionalization of mass participation in politics has thrown up what Przeworski (1986) has called the "institutionalization of uncertainty". Now looking at the advantages derived form the institutionalization of democracy by the nationalists during the colonial period, it becomes plausible to argue that these same elite who were in active support of democracy and its institutions under colonialism turned against it primarily because they wan-ted to deprived the people and political opponents of the various opportunities presented by liberal democracy. As noted above, some of the most damaging effects of de-mocracy, at least from the perspectives of the hegemonic political elite, and which must not be allowed to flourish by the practice of democracy, are the restriction on state power and the check on arbitrary exercise of state power. It is right to conclude therefore that the Nigerian elite were very interested in restraining the power of the state when they were not part of the state government, but ve-ry reluctant to have their power restrained once they be-came part of the government. Deriving from our analysis above, it becomes easy to note that all subversion of de-mocracy, its tenets and institutions have taken the form of elite reluctance to conduct itself within the prescribed rules of the democratic game. These rules are intended to restraint and compel the elite to subject their perfor-mance to the judgment of the masses.

This becomes possible in liberal democracies and per-haps impossible in our own democracy because as Mayer et al. (1996) have postulated, democracy seems to require a cultural context within which to operate, a cul tural context in which the democratic format has acquired a deep-seated legitimacy that exceeds one's commitment to any given set of political outcomes. Within this cultural context, poli-tics is generally thought of as conflicts of interests rather than conflicts between right and wrong or good and evil.

Politics based on considerations of class and the distribu-tion of material well-being leads to greater tolerance of op-position and the propensity to compromise with one's op-ponent than does the politics of symbols emanating from such divisions as linguistic, religious, ethnic or cultural cleavages. This seems paradoxical because experience has shown that it is primarily because of these same con-siderations of class and the distribution of material well-being, who gets what and how, that has generated a cul-ture of intolerance thereby causing the political elites to subvert all democratic tenets which the same elites in western liberal democracies hold sacrosanct.

Conclusion

Deriving from the above, it should be realized that ac-

countability is essential for the efficient functioning of the bureaucracy especially as it is the primary and major implementation arm of government. Accountability acts as a quality control device for the public service and so the public as citizens and consumers in the public realm can expect to receive the best service. Accountability also underscores the superiority of the public will over pri-vate interests of those expected to serve and ensures that the public servants behave according to the ethics of their profession. The public expects nothing more or less and it is in this regard that the argument has been made that where professional ethics and accountability have been eroded or abandoned, the servants become the master and corruption thrives.

On the other hand, the concept of accountability cannot be excised from democracy and the enjoyment of the de-mocratic life by the public. This is basically because de-mocracy implies the supremacy of the public will and the citizens in the governing process. The idea and notion that appointed and elective officials of government be ac-countable is at the very core and root of democracy. This is very important in the face of the tendency by these offi-cials to abuse and misuse their positions for personal gains and accumulation of wealth (Ekpo, 1979; Reno, 1995). As Olowu (2002) has further pointed out, account-tability is very necessary now especially in the face of a sharp decline in resources available to most African states and aggravated by the rising expectations of the citizens which has further imposed tremendous pressure on governments to ensure that they give the citizens mi-nimum possible value for their money.

Finally, it is pertinent to reiterate that the peculiar cha-racter of the Nigerian democracy has made it possible to defy all attempts at instituting control and accountability measures mainly because the dominant groups' support for democracy, even where it ever existed, was purely in-strumental- rational in that it continues for as long as the institutions enable them to protect and promote their ma-terial or sectional interests. Their support for democracy and its institutions, especially the control and accounta-bility measures, ceases when the exercise of these mea-sures begin to threaten the basis of their economic and political power and dominance. This may explain partly the reason for the various cover-up acts and secret cult-like attitude of the elected representatives of the people at the national and state levels when it comes to their va-rious acts of corruption, demands and sharing of illegal money. This may also explain in part the present attitude of the President who has discovered that the only way to tackle the problem of corruption at this level is to per-sonally intervene and expose them since the various con-trol and accountability measures instituted in the consti-tution have been rendered inoperative by the same peo-ple who are expected to work by them. This was what partly informed the establishment of the dreaded Econo-mic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to combat acts of corruption by both public and elected officials of

the state.

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