

# THE CIVIL SERVICE IN NIGERIA; EVOLUTION AND CHALLENGES, WRITTEN BY CHIEF EBUN OLAMIOTAN OMOYELE

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Book Review

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## 1.0 PREAMBLE

In his book, *The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges*, Chief Eburn O. Omoyele offers a definitive account of the Nigerian bureaucracy from an insider's perspective. Drawing on his over 30-years career as a veteran civil servant and retired Permanent Secretary, Omoyele provides more than just a historical timeline; he presents a vigorous defense of the institution against common public perceptions of corruption and inefficiency. The book serves as a vital record of the service's "metamorphosis" across three distinct eras:

- Colonial Origins: Tracing how the British established the service in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to maintain law and order.
- The Post-Independence Golden Age: Examining the transition to indigenous leadership and the initial professionalism of the parliamentary years.
- The Era of Instability: Detailing the "heart-rendering" impacts of military juntas; most notably the 1975/76 mass retirements, the removal of 17 Permanent Secretaries during Buhari administration and subsequent reforms that fundamentally altered the texture of the service.

Omoyele highlights a core tension: while the civil service remains the "engine room" of government, it has been systematically weakened by political interference, the erosion of meritocracy, and a shift from administrative permanence to political patronage. This book stands as both an essential historical document for students of Public Administration and a call to restore the integrity and professionalism of the Nigerian state.

## 2.0. TITLE, MOTIVATION AND GENERAL LAYOUT OF THE BOOK

**Title:** The full title of this book under review is *The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges*. It was written by Chief Eburnoluwa Olamiotan Omoyele, who joined the Federal Civil service in 1959 and diligently served in different administrative capacities in a number of ministries including Ministry of Finance, where he held top positions. He was a Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet office from 1977 – 1978; Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 1978 – 1979; Employment, Labour and Productivity 1979 – 1981; and the Presidency (Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, from 1981 – 1984.

Chief Ebun retired in 1984, marking 25 years in Civil Service but continued working in the Nigerian public sector on appointments and was conferred the national honor of Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON); while the National Council on Health in 2007 honored him with a Special Award for his Purposeful Leadership when he was Permanent Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare from 1978 – 1979.

**Motivation:** Omoyele’s primary motivation was to provide a defense of the Nigerian Civil Service. The essence of this book is to provide an insider’s record of the service’s origin from the British colonial era through various military and civilian transitions. To counter the narrative that civil servants are primarily defined by bribery and corruption, highlighting instead their vital role in nation-building. Omoyele also used this book to recount the institutional trauma the civil service experienced in the 1975/76’s mass retirement, which the author believes destroyed the traditional sense of permanence and security and the authoritarian impact of military regime. This book aims to educate future leaders and new entrants (staffs) seeking career as civil servants to learn the rudiments, the structure and the origin of Nigerian Civil Service which could help in future directions/reforms.

**General Layout and Structure of the Book:** “The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges” by Chief Ebun O. Omoyele is a 253-page (2019 revised edition) historical and professional analysis first published in 2012 with a total of 142 pages and 20 preliminary pages numbered in roman figures. The book’s layout is designed as a hybrid of a historical record and a professional memoir, moving chronologically from the service’s colonial roots to modern-day reforms. The book is organized into several key thematic sections that trace the lifecycle of the Nigerian civil service:

- **Historical Foundation:**
  - **Colonial Beginnings (19<sup>th</sup> Century – 1950s):** Examines the establishment of the service by the British to maintain law and order.
  - **The Transition Era:** Focuses on the nationalistic civil service during the 1950s and the immediate post-independence period.
- **The Era of Transformation and Turbulence:**
  - **The First Republic and Military Interventions:** Details the structural changes under the first military regimes.
  - **The 1975 Mass Purge:** A pivotal section covering the mass retirement of civil servants under General Murtala Muhammed, which the author describes as a “sacrilege” against the service.
  - **Successive Regimes:** Reviews shift under the Buhari and Abacha eras, specifically noting the dismissal of 17 Permanent Secretaries during Buhari’s tenure.
- **The Evolution of the Commission:**

- **Constitutional Framework:** Traces the Federal Civil Service Commission's role through the 1954 Order-in-Council, the 1960 independence constitution, and the 1999 constitution.
- **Thematic Analysis of Challenges:**
  - **Corruption and Politics:** Discusses how political interference eroded the service's traditional neutrality and introduced systematic corruption.
  - **Image and Public Perception:** Addresses the decline in the service's prestige and the "abuse" of civil servants by political leaders.
- **Conclusion and Recommendations:**
  - **Building an Excellent Service:** The final portion serves as a guide for future civil servants, emphasizing courage, wisdom, and professional integrity as the path forward.
- **Physical Specifications:**
  - Length: 253 pages
  - Preliminary Pages: xiv (14 pages including the title, dedication, and preface)
  - Main Body: 239 pages of text (reaching page 253 total when combined with front matter)
  - Back Matter: includes bibliographical references on pages 239 – 243 and an index
  - Publisher: Self-published or privately published in Lagos (2019)
  - Author Credentials: Written from the perspective of a retired Permanent Secretary with 30 years of experience.

### 3.0. Chapter Summaries

#### ❖ Summary Of Chapter One: Evolution of Nigeria Civil Service

In Chapter One of *The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges*, Chief Eburn O. Omoyele details how the Nigerian Civil Service was established by the British for colonial control, focusing on the administrative, legal, and tax functions rather than development. According to the author, the Nigerian Civil Service was "established principally to maintain law and order in the areas being colonized and to give full support for the expansion and consolidation of British Administration in them" [p.1]. The chapter noted the exploitative revenue generating fragmented structure of the civil service with little concerns about the welfare and development of the three principal territories (The Lagos Colony, The Niger Coast, and The Northern Nigeria), until Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945 was passed.

#### *Key Landmarks:*

**The Colony of Lagos and its Civil Service;** the annexation of Lagos on the 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1861 in the name of Queen Victoria and its proclamation as British Colony in 1862. The appointment of the first Governor Mr. Henry Stanhope Freeman who was on a salary of £500 per annum, and the establishment of eight departments.

**1863:** The passing of the Registration Ordinance on the 25<sup>th</sup> October, under the governorship of John Hardley Glover who succeeded Freeman, subsequent creation of Registry department, the introduction of

census to the colony, appointment of a Registrar by the Governor and a Colonial Accountant to manage the colony revenue. On 9<sup>th</sup> December 1863, a six-member Legislative Council established under Freeman passes an ordinance authorizing administrative salary and wages services of the colony for fiscal year 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1864 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1865.

**1866: West African Settlements** grouped together under a Governor-in-Chief resident in Sierra Leone centralizing administration.

**1874: Division of West African Settlements** into two; Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, now Ghana and Lagos became part of the Gold Coast, amidst strong agitations against.

**1886: Restoration of Lagos to pre-1866 status** with C.A. Moloney as the Governor of the colony. Restructuring into 18 departments; British rule was consolidated in Lagos and extended beyond. By 1897, all Yoruba lands through signed treaties by Yoruba Monarchs were under the British control as a protectorate to the colony of Lagos.

**The Niger Coast Civil Service:** According to Michael Crowder, the author noted in chapter one, that the Civil Service of the Niger Coast Protectorate, consisting of the Eastern Region and parts of former Bendel State had only four departments; Customs, Postal Services, Marine, and Medical Departments, and a Defense Unit with staff strength of 200 to ensure the security of the area.

**The Civil Service of the Northern Territory:** According to the author, the administration of the Northern Nigeria was under the Royal Niger Company who was granted a charter on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1886, resulting to the creation of Courts of Justice and British Officers as armed constabulary to guard the areas. Formal tax collection machineries were also established.

#### □ **Summary of Chapter Two: The Emergence of One Civil Service**

In chapter two of *The Civil Service in Nigeria*, Chief Eburn O. Omoyele outlines the transition from a fragmented, pre-independence regional administration toward a centralized, unified national entity, adopting a British-based structure and prioritizing the indigenization of staff. The chapter details the establishment of a “One Service” ideal, characterized by neutrality and merit, while setting the stage for the future challenges involving political pressure and federal character.

#### **Key Landmarks:**

**1898**, a gradual integration of the three civil service across the three colonized territories began.

**1<sup>st</sup> April, 1899:** Colonial Office takeovers and the emergence of Southern of Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria following revoking of the Royal Niger Company charter, with Sir Frederick D. Lugard appointed as the first High Commissioner.

**1900 - The Protectorate Administration:** Northern and Southern Protectorates formally created.

**The Civil Service of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria:** Division of the Protectorate into Provinces; each Province having a British Officer appointed as Resident, reporting to the High Commissioner Lugard.

**The Southern Protectorate and its Civil Service:** inherited a structured administration from Niger Coast Protectorate before the colonial office took over in 1899 and expanded.

**1902:** Forestry Department established by the Forest Ordinance of 1902.

**1906:** Amalgamation and Unification of the Colony of Lagos with its protectorate of Yorubaland with Southern Nigeria Protectorate on 1<sup>st</sup> May and named the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria; later divided into three Provinces (Western, Central and Eastern) for easy administration.

**1907:** Transportation department was created.

**1909:** Customs, Forestry, Mines and Mineral Surveys, and educational departments were created.

**1910-1911:** A total of 25 departments were in existence, with staff strength was 1, 628. The administrative cost was £565, 760.0s.8d and anticipated revenue same year was £619, 989.12s.0d.

**1912 – 1914:** The protectorate of Northern and Southern Nigeria amalgamated as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria by Sir Frederick Lugard on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1914 and the establishment of a “One Civil Service” administratively ran in three parts; the Colony of Lagos and Northern (Kaduna) and Southern (Enugu) Provinces.

#### □ **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE: THE CENTRALIZED CIVIL SERVICE**

Chapter three of the book details the transition from fragmented regional systems to a unified, centralized administration and the emergence of administrative officers with varied administrative functions that included settling of disputes in criminal and civil cases. This centralization aimed to foster national unity and professional meritocracy by standardizing hiring and promotions, while introducing the hierarchical bureaucratic structures that define the civil service. The centralization ran till 1954 until regionalization of the civil service.

#### *Key landmarks:*

**1913 – 1919:** Lord Lugard’s Political Officers became Administrative Officers

**1919 - 1925:** Clifford’s 1923 Constitution - Amalgamation of departments and creation of the Nigeria Secretariat by Sir Hugh C. Clifford.

**1931 – 1935:** Removal of administering of justice function from Administrative Officers by the Order-in-Council promulgated in 1934.

#### □ **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR: THE REGIONALIZATION OF THE SERVICE**

This chapter analyzes the 1950s regionalization of the Nigerian Civil Service following the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution, which fractured the unified structure into distinct regional and federal bodies. This shift facilitated varying rates of “Nigerianization”, with Southern Regions accelerating the replacement of expatriates while regional loyalties began to surpass national identity within the bureaucracy.

#### *Key landmarks:*

**1939 – 1945:** Post second world war, need for constitutional developments and clamour for early independence.

**1947: Arthur Richardson’s Constitution** replaces Clifford’s 1923 Constitution. Provision of a Central Legislative Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons and re-introduction of separate Secretariat for regions.

**1948: The Foot Commission** – Chaired by Sir Hugh Foot; this was the formal beginning of

“Nigerianization”, a policy to start training Nigerians to take over senior roles from the British.

**1951: Sir John Staurt McPherson Constitution** - Replaced Richardsons’. A central legislature known as the House of Representative and a Council of Ministers were established. The council made policies for the country.

**1953 – 1954: The Oliver Lyttleton Constitution** – The establishment of the Federal Public Service Commission, regional restructuring and the transition of power to Nigerian Officials. This is where the

“Federal” structure we know today was born. It split the Civil Service into a Federal Service and three Regional Services (North, West, and East) with Lagos as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There was division of powers; introducing the federal power (Exclusive List), federal and regional powers (Concurrent List), and regional powers (Residual Power). Office of the Regional Premier was created and Ministers given real portfolios.

**1954 - 1955:** The James Robertson Constitution – While Lyttleton spearheaded the conferences that drafted the 1954 constitution, Robertson managed the implementation and conclusion of the constitutional framework it established. There were agitations from various political parties for a 1956 independence for Nigeria which led to discussions about a new constitution. The centralized unitary civil service was split into four administrative parts (Federal, Northern, Western, and Eastern Civil Services). Gorsuch Commission submitted a model of structure for the civil service which was adopted.

**1957:** Establishment of National Councils for Ministries and Departments of similar administrative functions and creation of Prime Minister position. On August 30<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa chaired the Council of Ministers.

**1959: Omoyele’s Entry** – The author himself joined the service just one year before independence, giving him a front-row seat to the final colonial handover.

#### ❖ **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FIVE: THE NIGERIANIZATION OF THE SERVICE**

In Chapter Five of *The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges*, Chief Eburn O. Omoyele examines the Nigerianization policy; the strategic process of replacing British expatriate officials with indigenous Nigerian personnel as the country moved toward Independence in 1960. Omoyele noted that the shift was fueled by intense agitation from Nationalists and the Nigerian Council of Ministers, who argued that an independent nation must have its own citizens controlling its administrative machinery. The transition encountered challenges such as the skill gap and regional imbalances. The author reflects on this era as a period where merit-based competitive examinations were still central, though the seeds of later politicization and ethnic quota systems were sown during this transitional phase. Omoyele ultimately frames Nigerianization as a “worthy step toward self-determinism”, despite the administrative complexities and sectional tensions it introduced.

#### ❖ **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SIX: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MINISTRIES**

Omoyele in chapter six details the transition from a department-based colonial model to the formal establishment of ministries driven by the 1951 and 1954 constitutions. This shift integrated political policymaking with professional administration, creating the roles of Ministers and Permanent Secretaries to handle the rapid expansion of the federal bureaucracy. The chapter highlights this period as the transformation of the civil service into departmental instrument, establishing the crucial balance of power between political leadership and career civil servants. The Newns Committee was appointed to straighten the functions overlap resulting to a parallel administration between the Permanent Secretaries and the Directors of the Departments, and to structure civil service into Ministries.

**1960:** October 1<sup>st</sup>, marked the Nigeria independence; the landmark shift from a colonial tool of control to a sovereign national bureaucracy.

## ❖ SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CIVIL SERVICE UNDER PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT

In chapter seven, Omoyele examines the Parliamentary Era (1960 – 1966), focusing on how the Civil Service transitioned from serving colonial masters to serving elected Nigerian Politicians. He talked about the concept of neutrality, emphasizing that the service was modeled after the British Whitehall system, and the civil servants were expected to be “seen but not heard”, maintaining strict political neutrality while providing anonymous, expert advice to Ministers. The chapter explained the Minister-Permanent Secretary relationship; highlighting the delicate power balance between the political head (Minister) and the administrative head (Permanent Secretary). Omoyele notes that during this period, there was generally high mutual respect, as many pioneer Nigerian Perm Secs were highly intellectual and assertive. Omoyele states that the civil service was the “engine room” for the First National Development Plan, describing a period of high efficiency where the service was responsible for translating the manifesto of the ruling political parties into actionable government projects. This chapter recorded the growth of bureaucracy as the new government expanded its reach into social services and infrastructure, and the emerging tensions from ethnic politics and regionalism. The author reflects on how the “winner-takes-all” nature of parliamentary politics occasionally pressured civil servants to favor certain interests, foreshadowing the friction that would later destabilize the institution. Omoyele portrays this era as the “Golden Age” of professionalism, where the boundaries between politics and administration were most clearly defined and respected.

## ❖ SUMMARY OF CHAPTER EIGHT: THE CIVIL SERVICE UNDER THE MILITARY REGIMES

In chapter eight of *The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges*, Chief Egun O. Omoyele provides a critical analysis of how military rule fundamentally altered the character and operations of the Nigerian civil service from 1966 onward. Omoyele noted that under General Yakubu Gowon, top civil servants (Permanent Secretaries) gained unprecedented influence. Because young military officers often lacked administrative and policy-making experience, they relied heavily on senior civil servants, leading to the emergence of the “Super Permanent Secretary” era where bureaucrats effectively shaped national policy. As a result, the traditional parliamentary hierarchy was replaced by a more direct command structure. While civil servants became powerful advisors, the ultimate decision-making power rested with the Supreme Military Council. The author cited year 1975 as the year of mass retirements; a purge under the Murtala/Obasanjo regime, where thousands of civil servants were summarily dismissed on the grounds of inefficiency or corruption, and this Omoyele identified as the turning point that destroyed the service’s traditional sense of permanence and security. The author argues that military intervention introduced “authoritarian norms” into the bureaucracy. The strict neutrality and anonymity that characterized the parliamentary era were eroded as the service was increasingly used to execute the specific, often rigid, agendas of the military juntas. Omoyele reflects on how the “command and control” style of the military led to systematic inefficiencies and culture of fear, setting the stage for the deep-seated corruption and politicization that would plague the service in later years. Omoyele concludes that while the service proved its resilience by keeping the country running during the civil war and various coups, the military years significantly impaired its constitutional integrity and professional standards.

### ***Key landmarks:***

**16<sup>th</sup> January – 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1966:** General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi assumed power. He dissolved all existing power structure and institutions except for the civil service. He reassigned normal political duties to civil

servants in addition to their normal duties. He relied heavily on civil servants which caused them to be “seen and heard” against the traditional anonymity.

**3<sup>rd</sup> of August, 1966 – 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1975:** General Yakubu Gowon succeeded General Ironsi. Gowon’s administration empowered the civil service, establishing it as part of peace convoy prewar, a stabilizing force during the civil war and initiating key structural reforms like the Adebo Salaries and Wages Commission of 1970 – 1971 and Udorji Public Service Review Commission of 1972 – 1974. The era saw the rise of “super” permanent secretaries, the implementation of national development plans, and the structural expansion of the civil service to accommodate the creation of 12 states.

**29<sup>th</sup> July 1975 -1976:** General Muritala Muhammed overthrown Gowon and aimed to return civil service to its neutral, anonymity and accountability functions, limiting their roles in the government. He introduced “summary dismissal and retirement of offending officers without due process. There were reforms aimed at promoting accountability in the public service and across the judicially and in education sector. The Public Complaints Commission and the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau were among many reforms to curb corruption, and instill discipline among public servants.

**13<sup>th</sup> February, 1976 – 1979:** General Olusegun Obasanjo took over after the assassination of General Muritala Muhammed. He inherited the 1975 mass purge of his predecessor earning it the title the “Great 1975/76 Purge”, with estimated over 10, 000 people relinquished of their duties unceremoniously. Key contributions of this regime include efforts to re-orientate the civil service towards civil rule through series of trainings, the implementation of the 1976 local government reforms, initiating the move to a new federal capital in Abuja, and managing the expansion to 19 states.

**1<sup>st</sup> October, 1979:** General Obasanjo handed over to a civilian administration of Shehu Shagari.

**1<sup>st</sup> January, 1984 – 1985:** General Muhammed Buhari via military coup took over power. His administration imposed intense military-style discipline and structural purges, including the dismissal of 17 permanent secretaries. The regime implemented the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) to combat inefficiencies, which ultimately eroded the security of tenure for civil servants, notes Omoyele.

**27<sup>th</sup> August, 1985 – 1993:** General Ibrahim Babangida took charge and his tenure was characterized by radical structural adjustments, including the 1988 civil service reforms that professionalized the service and replaced Permanent Secretaries with political Directors-General. Key contributions include the creation of the FRSC and NDE, implementation of economic deregulation through privatization, and the administrative expansion of the state structure. While aimed at efficiency, these reforms significantly reduced the traditional neutrality and security of tenure within the civil service.

**26<sup>th</sup> August, 1993:** Civilian administrator Chief Ernest Shonekan inaugurated.

**17<sup>th</sup> November, 1993 – 1998:** General Sani Abacha hijacked power and began what is known till date as an oppressive government. His regime revised previous reforms by restoring the title of permanent secretary and returning the accounting officer role to them. The era also featured the 1996 creation of six new states and the establishment of the Petroleum Trust Fund as a parallel, non-civil service structure for project execution.

**8<sup>th</sup> June, 1998 – May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999:** General Abdulsalam Abubakar came to power following the death of General Abacha, and marked the end of military regime and the transition to a second phase of the presidential system of government as noted by the author. His regime was a period of rapid institutional restoration aimed at de-politicizing the service after years of military strain. Key contributions include the

restoration of professionalism, abolition of political interference, civil service salary review, positioning the civil service to be the institutional framework for the transition, establishment of INEC, constitutional review, and economic liberalization and privatization.

### ❖ **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER NINE: THE CIVIL SERVICE UNDER THE PRESIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT**

Chapter nine discusses the transition of the Nigerian bureaucracy from the parliamentary model to the Presidential System of Government, primarily beginning with the Second Republic (1979 – 1983) and continuing into the 1999 constitutional era. The author explained the structural realignment, noting that unlike the parliamentary system where the executive and legislature were fused, the presidential system introduced a strict separation of powers, placing the civil service directly under the authority of the Executive President. The Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) and the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) were created. He detailed the friction and overlap that sometimes occurred between these two roles; the former being a professional career head and the latter often being a political appointee. The chapter critically examines the increased politicization of appointments of Permanent Secretaries and Advisors, eroding the merit-based tenure system as senior positions became subject to the pleasure of the President, leading to a loss of institutional memory and administrative independence. The author analyzes the impact of The Federal Character Principles on recruitment and promotion, observing the often clash of its implementation with the core civil service principle of meritocracy, which sometimes leads to “over-bloated” and less efficient departments. Omoyele views this transition as a period of significant stress for the institution, where the traditional career-service model struggled to maintain its integrity against the pressure of a highly political executive office.

### ❖ **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TEN: ADMINISTRATION OF CIVIL SERVICE**

In chapter ten, Chief Egun O. Omoyele shifts from historical timelines to the internal mechanics of the institution, focusing on the structures, rules, and agencies that govern the daily life of a civil servant. Omoyele explains the dual authority structure and the functional divide between the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) and the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF); clarifying that while the Commission handles “external” matters like recruitment and discipline to ensure fairness, the Head of Service manages “internal” career progression, training, and welfare. The chapter predominantly discusses the Public Service Rules (PSR) and Financial Regulations; which he refers to as the “bibles” of the service, designed to ensure uniformity, transparency, and accountability across all ministries. The chapter details the processes of manpower planning, describing how “Establishment” positions are created and filed. Omoyele notes that proper administration requires a balance between the actual needs of the government and the budgetary constraints of the nation. The author explored the promotion and discipline mechanism; describing the rigorous, though sometimes compromised process of Annual Performance Evaluation Reports (APER), emphasizing that for the service to remain healthy, the administration must strictly adhere to merit-based promotions and swift, documented disciplinary actions for misconduct. Omoyele critiques the “red tape” or excessive bureaucracy that often slows down government business. He reflects on how administrative bottlenecks, originally intended as safeguards, have sometimes become obstacles to efficient service delivery in a fast-paced modern economy. Summarily, chapter ten portrays the administration of the service as a complex machine that requires strict adherence to rules to prevent chaos, while warning that without constant modernization, these same rules can lead to stagnation.

## ❖ **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE AND NATIONAL HONOURS**

The chapter eleven explores the relationship between the civil service and the Nigerian National Honors system, which was established by the National Honors Act of 1964. In recognition of selfless and outstanding service rendered to the nation, Omoyele details the civil servants' awards ranging from the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR) to the Member of the Order of the Niger (MON) in this chapter. These awards he said were historically seen as the ultimate validation of a long, integrity-filled career. The selection process according to the author is by nomination of civil servants from various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to the National Honors Award Committee, which scrutinizes a candidate's achievements and record of service before recommending them to the President. Omoyele uses this chapter also to highlight civil servants who received honors for their contributions to nation-building, countering the public perception that the service is defined solely by corruption. He equally observes that the honors system has at times faced scrutiny and the growing concerns that the awards have occasionally been "panel-beaten" to accommodate political interests rather than purely merit-based achievements. For the civil service, he argues that the devaluation of these honors through questionable selections can discourage the "honest and upright" who deserve recognition. Ultimately, the author frames National Honors as a powerful tool for fostering a culture of patriotism and hard work. He suggests that when administered fairly, they serve as a critical non-monetary incentive to keep the best minds in the public sector.

## ❖ **SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWELVE: REFORMS IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE**

In chapter twelve of the book: *The Civil Service in Nigeria; Evolution and Challenges*, the author Chief Egun O. Omoyele provides a critical post-mortem of the various attempts to "fix" the bureaucracy, focusing heavily on the landmark 1988 Civil Service Reforms (Decree No. 43) and subsequent efforts. The 1988 Reform (The "Dotun Phillips" Reform) was critically examined, highlighting how this reform tried to "professionalize" the service by making the Minister the Accounting Officer (instead of the Permanent Secretary) and changing the title of Permanent Secretary to "Director-General", a political appointee whose tenure ended with the government that appointed them. The author is highly critical of the 1988 reforms, arguing that while they intended to make the service more specialist-oriented, actually succeeded in politicizing the top hierarchy and stripping away the "permanence" that allowed civil servants to give objective, fearless advice. Omoyele discusses the "corrective" reform of the Allison Ayida Study Group of 1994 which eventually reversed many of the 1988 changes starting with restoration of the title of Permanent Secretary and returned them to their role as Accounting Officers, a move the author views as a necessary return to sanity. This final chapter identifies a pattern in Nigerian reforms which are often top-down, driven by military fiat or political desire to control, rather than a genuine need for administrative efficiency. He notes that frequent changes created a climate of uncertainty for workers. The author touches on subsequent modern reforms, including the 1999 reforms; aimed at downsizing, monetization of benefits, and the introduction of Information Technology (IT). He acknowledges the need for a leaner, more tech-savvy service but warns that no reform will work without addressing the underlying issue of integrity. Omoyele concludes that most reforms failed because they focused on changing structures rather than changing the culture of the people within those structures. He advocates for reforms that protect the career path of civil servant from the whims of politicians.

## **Notable Reforms**

**1959 Mbanefo Commission** – Was established as a crucial pre-independence review of salaries and wages to boost morale amid rising living costs, it aimed to stabilize the public sector and harmonize administration by supporting a 10% to 15% salary increase.

**1963 Morgan Salaries and Wages Commission** – A post-independence review driven by industrial unrest that introduced a zonal, cost-of-living-based minimum wage for junior employees. The commission focused on immediate economic relief and addressing the daily wage system, laying the groundwork for the 1966 Elwood Grading Team to address resulting disparities.

**2004 Bureau of Public Service Reform (BPSR)** – Serves as the central coordinating body for reforms within the Nigerian Federal Public Service, addressing fragmented efforts by harmonizing policies and restructuring ministries. Key 2004 initiatives include the workforce streamlining, the monetization of benefits, the introduction of the Contributory Pension Scheme to increase efficiency.

**2004 SERVICOM-Service Delivery Reform** – Designed to transform Nigerian public service by adopting a “citizen as a customer” philosophy, shifting focus from “favor-giving” to quality service. Key components include mandatory Service Charters for ministries, the establishment of Ministerial Service Units for monitoring, and a pledge for timely, transparent service delivery.

**2006 Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS)** – A digital reform designed to modernize Nigerian public service administration by centralizing personnel records and automating salary payments. It aims to enhance accountability and eliminate “ghost workers”, though it faces challenges with technological infrastructure and implementation in specific sectors. The author highlights that the overcentralization of IPPIS, which places payroll control within the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation, has stripped Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) of their autonomy. This centralized approach creates significant logistical bottlenecks for remote employees, removes a human face from administration, and poses risks to service neutrality and data security.

**Performance Management System (PMS)** – Presented as a critical shift from the traditional, often secretive Annual Confidential Report (ACR) to a more transparent and results-oriented framework. ACR to APER to KPIs. Omoyele noted the challenges with PMS, which include internal resistance to change, poor training, and subjectivity in grading.

**Public Expenditure Management Reform** – The author highlighted the reforms as essential to curbing waste and shifting toward performance-based budgeting to ensure development. Key elements include the institutionalization of “Due Process” to prevent contract inflation, the introduction of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) in 2012 under President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, and the implementation of the IPPIS. While focusing on the three Es (Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness) the text highlights that the success of these reforms hinges on overcoming challenges regarding political will and technical capacity.

**Public Procurement Reform** – Chief Egun highlights PPR as being centered on the due process mechanism, the creation of the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU), and the 2007 Public Procurement Act to foster transparency and value for money. Despite successes, the author outlines challenges regarding persistent political interference and capacity gaps within Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

**Statistical System Reform and Strengthening** – The book outlines the 2004 to 2007 reform of the Nigerian statistical system, centralizing data management through the merger of the FOS and NDB into the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Driven by the Statistics Act of 2007, this reform focused on

evidencebased policymaking, professionalism of staff, and the implementation of a Statistical Master Plan, though challenges regarding funding and data politicization remain.

### **Recent Reforms since Chief Eburn Omoyele first publication of the book “The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges in 2012:**

Since the publication of the book, the Nigerian Civil Service has moved from the era of initial automation into a more aggressive phase of digitization and strategic re-engineering. These reforms are primarily anchored on the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan (FCSSIP).

Strating from the most recent reforms:

1. **FCSSIP 2026-2030** – The Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan is in a critical transition year, moving from the foundational FCSSIP 2021 – 2025 into its successor five-year plan (2026-2030). The current focus is on institutionalization, shifting from launching new projects to ensuring recent reforms become lasting administrative habits.

#### **Key Features of the 2026 – 2030 Successor Plan:**

- **Merit-based Recruitment** – A major pillar of the new five-year plan is enhancing recruitment through Computer-Based Tests (CBT) and competitive digital platforms to ensure only the most qualified candidates enter the service.
- **Complete Digitization** – Following the milestone of reaching a fully paperless system on January 1, 2026, the focus this year is on maintaining these digital work processes and Enterprise Content Management (ECM) across all ministries.
- **Performance-Driven Promotions** – The Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) is formally linking career progression directly to the Performance Management System (PMS), replacing the old seniority-based model with one driven by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- **Strengthened Accountability** – Implementation of the Incentive and Consequence Management Policy, designed to reward high performance transparently while providing structured consequences for underperformance.
- **Knowledge Transfer** – Introduction of a Civil Service Mentoring Policy to bridge experience gaps and prevent the loss of institutional memory as senior officials retire.

#### **Ongoing 2026 Milestones**

- **Global Collaboration:** Nigeria is preparing to host the Second International Civil Service Conference later this year to showcase its digital transformation and share best practices with global partners.
- **State-Level Integration:** There is a new push to help states domesticate the federal strategic plan, using Abia State as a current model for sub-national civil service reform.

- **Staff Welfare:** Continued expansion of the Federal Integrated Staff Housing (FISH) programme and the deployment of digital HR solutions that provide employees with easier access to loans and earned wage access.
2. **FCSSIP 2017-2025** – This is the successor to the earlier reforms Omoyele appraised. The (FCSSIP25) focuses on six pillars:
- i. **Pillar 1: Capability Building** – Introduction of the Structured Mandatory Assessment-Based Training (SMAT-P) and the Leadership Enhancement and Development Programme (LEAD-P) to professionalize the workforce.
  - ii. **Pillar 2: Performance Management system (PMS)** – The full transition from the old Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) to a digitized system based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and real-time monitoring.
  - iii. **Pillar 3: IPPIS-HR Module** - Expanding the IPPIS beyond just payments to include human resource records, helping to eliminate ghost workers and manage staff careers more effectively.
  - iv. **Pillar 4: Innovation** – Establishing Innovation Divisions across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to encourage internal problem-solving.
  - v. **Pillar 5: Digitalization** – A major goal to achieve a paperless civil service by December 31, 2025 through the deployment of Enterprise Content Management (ECM) systems.
  - vi. **Pillar 6: Staff Welfare** – Including the Federal Integrated Staff Housing (FISH) programme and improved non-monetary incentives.
3. **Institutional and Financial Accountability** o **Treasury Single Account (TSA):** Fully implemented in 2015v under President Buhari to consolidate all government inflows into a single account at the Central Bank, curbing the financial leakages Omoyele warned about. o **Bank Verification Number (BVN) Integration:** Linking civil servants' biometric data to their bank accounts to enhance payroll integrity.
4. **Operational and Structural Reforms**
- **Revision of the Public Service Rules (PSR 2021):** This updates Nigeria's civil service framework to align with the FCSSIP 2021- 2025 strategy, introducing tenure limits for Directors and Permanent Secretaries, Paternity leave and extension of Maternity leave, visual work provisions, while also modernizing disciplinary and promotion procedures. It formally replaces the APER system with a modern PMS and supports digitalization efforts.
- Annual Leave Reforms** – While the PSR was revised in 2021, the formal circular to commence these specific leave benefits was issued in November 2022. Under the 2021 rules, Leave is now calculated based on working days rather than Calendar days.
- 2021 Paternity Leave Components:**
- a. **Duration:** Male officers are entitled to 14 working days of leave.

- b. **Eligibility:** Available to serving male officers when their spouse gives birth or when the family legally adopts a child under four months old.
- c. **Frequency & Limit:** This leave can be taken no more than once every two years and is capped at a maximum of four children during career.
- d. **Documentation:** Requests must be accompanied by an Expected Date of Delivery (EDD) report from the officer's wife or official evidence of child adoption.
- e. **Purpose:** The primary goal is to allow fathers to bond with their newborns or adopted children during the critical early stages.

#### **2021 Maternity Leave Review:**

- a. **Duration:** Federal female civil servants are entitled to 16 weeks (112 working days) maternity leave with full pay. (Note that this is more generous than the standard 12 weeks at 50% pay prescribed by the National Labour Act for the private sector).
- b. **Timing:** It is mandatory to begin the leave one month (4weeks) before the expected date of delivery, leaving approximately three months for postnatal care.
- c. **Nursing Provision:** Upon resumption, nursing mothers are permitted to close early (often by 2:00 pm) until the baby reaches six months of age to support breastfeeding.
- d. **Job Protection:** Female officers are protected from dismissal due to pregnancy or while on maternity leave.

**6 Months Maternity Leave Extension:** This is a major shift toward International Health Standards in Nigeria. As of 2026, the implementation remains a tiered process across different levels of government.

**Federal Status (Current)** – At the federal level, the standard remains 16 weeks (112 days or 4 months) of leave with full pay.

**States with 6 Months Maternity Leave:** Many states have recently increased maternity leave to 6 months (24 – 26 weeks) with full pay to encourage exclusive breastfeeding. They include Enugu, Lagos, Abia, Kogi, Nasarawa, Cross River, Kwara, Niger, Ekiti and Oyo state.

**Private Sector and Federal Law:** The national Labour Act provides a minimum standard that applies to private-sector workers.

- a. **Statutory Duration** – 12 weeks total (usually 6 weeks before and 6 weeks after delivery).
- b. **Pay** – At least 50% of the normal salary if the employee has been in service for at least 6 months.
- c. **Nursing Breaks:** Upon return, mothers are entitled to two half-hour breaks daily for nursing.

#### **4.0. Appraisal**

The book “The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges by Chief Eburn O. Omoyele offers a great insight to the historical evolution of Nigeria as a country and its civil service, from the pre-colonial era, all through the British exploitative administration (colonialism), and a glimpse into the struggles for

independence, briefly highlighting the transition and activities culminating to transfer of power birthing nationalism, to the post-independence governance in Nigeria. The detail account of the civil service identity struggles all through the military regimes deeply characterized by way too many coups and power tussles provides a background knowledge of our ever-nascent democracy sadly still titling on verge of collapse, and also provide insight on the root of the inherent systematic corruption that continues to define this nation. His detailed coverage of numerous reforms aimed at getting things right but unfortunately still comatose in addressing foundational problems facing the civil service and Nigeria as a country tend to give credence to the book, backed by his personal experiences in public service spanning over three decades. Nigerian Civil Service keep evolving, with presently on digitalization era aimed for efficiency, accountability and effectiveness. I found the book to be breath-taking, educational and inspiring for further researches. A big kudos to Chief Egun Omoyele for the efforts in gathering, organizing and presenting this book that will continue to be relevant ages to come. Needless to say, that this book is essential for Nigerians and foreigners who are interest in knowing the journey so far. The book serves as a compass to researchers who wants to learn beyond a single account story. As a public servant newly employed, reading this book gave me several “now I understand” moments.

## **5.0. Conclusion**

The Civil Service in Nigeria: Evolution and Challenges written by Chief Egun Olamiotan Omoyele is a powerful call for institutional restoration; advocating for a return to foundational principles of a good civil service. The author advocates for restoration of security of tenure to avoid loopholes that destabilizes the civil service with each regime change such as the “Great Purge of 191975/76 with its traumatic effects. Chief Egun in this book made a case for Nigeria Civil Service in light of the negative public image trailing it as a den of corruption and unnecessary bureaucracy, highlighting political interference as the major negative influence that not only introduces and maintain corruption in the service but also destabilizes it with each change of government. Omoyele made a call for return to former glory, which includes professional integrity and accountability, while also advocating for government supports via a true living wage and recognition of years dedicated to service. The book ends on a hopeful yet demanding note, encouraging those still in the service to maintain courage, wisdom, and passion in their duties, regardless of the difficult prevailing circumstances. He urges the government to utilize the civil service as a professional engine for national growth rather than a political tool.