

CIVIL SERVANTS OR EVIL SERVANTS- WHICH IS THE OPTION

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Every country is run on established institutions that guarantee or install a process of guaranteeing the rewards of governance and continuity upon foundations that the structures rest. These structures are the end products of a public service sector foundation, known as the CIVIL SERVICE and the operators are called civil servants. Where the structures are constant and the civil service is well equipped against political manipulations by politicians of the moment, democratic dividends are better delivered. But where the structures are manipulated or choose to be self-serving, then there is an immediate and potential system failure.

In advance democracy's, it's the civil servants that holds these structures not just from collapsing but to serve the people increasingly in the discharge of public duties irrespective of where the political pendulum swings.

A peep into the Nigerian civil service sector would reveal a body supposedly in charge of government continuity, executing directives of state policy, implementing executive, legislative or judicial decisions and maintaining a network of absolute neutrality no matter the political wing blowing at that time.

From the ministries both federal and state, agencies, parastatals, boards-all systematically equipped to consolidate the leadership of politicians and rulers, which enables the transformation from one government to the other, the civil servant is King.

When a civil service structure is robust and equipped with intelligentsias, patriotic minds and professionals who put the interest of the state above sectional, parochial and narrow minded bigotry, the systems work for the betterment of the state and the people rejoice. Where the reverse is the case, the systems decay and the people weeps.

In Nigeria, today, there is a lingering residue of skepticism which holds the view that no matter the crop of leaders that emanates whether by election or by appointment into public offices, it will be business-as-usual since it's going to confront the civil service foundations already dead in corruption and lack of patriotism in the discharge of its civic duties.

The landlords in every government are the civil servants and the elected politicians are the tenants. While the landlords are permanent owners, the tenants intermittently come and go. Thus, no matter the kleptomaniac proclivity in a politician, he needs the backing and directive of the landlord to be able to break open the safe to extract the gold. Thus, no matter how altruistic the motive is, politicians must rely on the ingenuity and safe directive of the civil servant to achieve his objectives whether rightly or wrongly. If he confronts, he fails.

It's a twin-sister relationship where both need each other to succeed either in discharging legitimate duties or in stealing



from the public purse. In a scenario where the civil servant decides to teach the politician how to steal and abdicate from public responsibility, in view of the fact that the civil servant cannot also gets his own without the consent of the politician, then there must be a sharing formula which covers every interest and in most cases casualties emanating from lack of cleaning the Augean stables are usually suffered by the politicians alone. It therefore becomes a continuum that no politician can steal public funds without the assistance of the civil servant and no civil servant can steal without the consent of the politician.

But the off-chance exists that the civil servant can divert, abuse, mismanage and even out rightly convert public funds for personal advantage without a nod from the politician but no politician can do this without the approval of the civil servant. A politician who does this calls for anarchy and probe because they need the civil servant to cover up such mess even after their exit.

Painfully, no known civil servant is currently under attack of any form for the kleptomaniac activities of politicians. Ironically, no public stealing can be done without the knowledge of a civil servant. Either they are culprits in the crime or they remain aloof and just play the conformist role and in either case, they are guilty.

Taken the country as it is today, it will be laughable to accept the fact that a civil servant would just play a conformist role without sharing in the loot. But how many of them are under the axe as we speak. Diezani's permanent secretary may have retired peacefully or still waxing strong in service, or Beta Edu or lawal or many others whose enabling civil authorities are left out of the hook that can never have happen without their consent. Whether it should henceforth be in our laws that civil servants can counter a politician's directive when it appears that the purpose for which public funds are to be expended is contrary to law and public good is an issue for national debate at the Federal legislative houses. This becomes imperative because it's morally an aberration to prosecute a politician for public looting without involving the enabling civil authority. It should graduate from this moral wrong to a criminal wrong by enacting legislature empowering civil authorities from the yes syndrome to probe syndrome, and make them responsible stake holders when a crime is committed. The knowledge and wisdom of covering financial crimes up rests with the civil servant. So also the success of any regime lies in the loyalties of civil servants and how they use their skills honestly and patriotically for the advancement of development and growth. Therefore a public servant can be a CIVIL SERVANT when his services are for progress and advancement but when the reverse is the case, such a public servant becomes an EVIL SERVANT