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PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE IMPERATIVES FOR NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

By

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INTRODUCTION

May I start by expressing how honored I feel to be invited to deliver this lecture by the alumni of this great institution on its 65th anniversary. The University of Ibadan is not just your garden variety institution of learning but the veritable foundry where Nigeria's independence, leadership, self-reliance, and great intelligentsia were born. The University of Ibadan lived up to its motto, "***Recte Sapere Fons***," which in English means "For knowledge and sound judgement". This citadel of learning gave us great thinkers and writers in the post-colonial era such as Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's first Nobel Laureate, Chinua Achebe, and one of Africa's best cardiologists, Jubril Aminu. All one has to do is remember that this is the first university in Nigeria, alias the Premier University, and ponder the factors that made the University of London and, by extension, the colonial government, to cite the institution in this historic town of Ibadan.

I want to thank the leadership of the University of Ibadan Alumni Association Worldwide led by Professor Saawua Gabriel Nyityo for

giving me this golden opportunity not only to address this unique gathering of some of our nation's best and brightest but also for giving me the liberty to select the subject of my presentation. I feel profoundly grateful and exceedingly honored to accept this invitation. My topic for today's discourse is ***Public Service and The Imperatives for National Security in Nigeria***. I opted for this theme because the nexus between public administration and national security is still not clearly defined. As such, the public servant is not fully aware of the implications of his actions or inactions on national security. A key central component of national security is human security, which entails access to good healthcare, education, farm implements, markets, affordable housing, and public law and order. These are basic human needs that constitute human security, and when a country fails to provide these needs to its citizens, peace, development, and national security will be in jeopardy. Any family or individual deprived of these needs is an insecure family. I decided to take a critical look at the Public Service because it is through this medium that the government can deliver these basic needs to its citizens.

The history of modern public service in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era when the British established a highly centralized and bureaucratic system of governance. However, since independence in 1960, the public service sector has been characterized by a series of challenges because of systemic and structural challenges that stand

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as impediments to efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Scholars on public service like Adegoroye (2006) and Nwachukwu (2007) are of the view that corruption, nepotism, political interference, and a lack of competent personnel contributed to reducing the efficacy of the public service.

Public service plays a crucial role in making the state a tangible entity that people interact with on a regular basis, whether directly or indirectly. The images and practices associated with the state are greatly influenced by the provision of public services (Migdal 2001). Therefore, these services are instrumental in shaping the perceptions and behaviors of citizens towards the state. Let us not forget that one of the major instruments the colonialists used to control Africa and command respect and loyalty was an effective public service. Post offices, town halls, police posts, hospitals, schools etc. were built in many localities; people were hired and paid as police officers, village teachers, railway station chiefs, town hall clerks etc., thereby creating a sense of loyalty and belonging to the state; public infrastructure works made the previously far away centers of power more accessible (Weber, 1976). But unfortunately today, many public infrastructures are in very bad situation. These include schools from primary to tertiary institutions. Both federal and state institutions are guilty of neglect. The situation has continued to deteriorate over the years, and today, the Public service sector in Nigeria is not performing at its optimal level. The sector is perceived to be plagued

RESTRICTED

by inefficiency, low productivity, and inadequate infrastructure. Furthermore, lack of proper funding, poor working conditions, and inadequate capacity building initiatives have further compounded the situation, leading to a decline in service delivery to Nigerian citizens. The issue of capacity building is glaringly despicable.

There are several organizations and agencies that provide services within the public sector. Particularly, my primary constituency, which is the military plays a significant role in public service by providing essential services to protect the nation's security and maintain its sovereignty. Through commitment to duty and sacrifice, military personnel ensure the safety and well-being of the public. They are responsible for defending the country against external threats, safeguarding national interests, and upholding peace and stability. Additionally, the military often engages in humanitarian efforts, such as disaster relief operations and peacekeeping missions, both domestically and internationally. By actively participating in public service, the military demonstrates its dedication to serving and protecting the public.

In my view which I strongly believe is in alignment with that of many in this August gathering, the public service holds a vital role in the process of nation building. As a retired military officer and a citizen, I believe that the public service is responsible for delivering essential services and supporting the needs of the state and its people. This belief stems from my understanding that the public service is a

RESTRICTED

fundamental institution that is designed to serve the interests of the public. Through efficient and effective public service delivery, we can build stronger and more resilient communities, foster economic growth, and promote social cohesion. My mission here is to share my thoughts on the importance of the public service, both civil and military, in nation-building and its potential to shape the future of our country.

AIM

The primary aim in this lecture is to share with you my experiences in public service and explore the imperatives for national security and development.

For convenience and clarity, the lecture will cover the following:

- a. An Overview of Public Service.
- b. Public Service and National Security.
- c. My Experience as a Public Servant.
- d. The impact of political interference.
- e. My foray into policies.
- f. Recommendations.

AN OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC SERVICE

President Umaru Musa YarAdua in a foreword to “Public Service Rules 2008” stated that "the main thrust of the 2008 edition of the Public Service Rules is to ensure that the fundamental ethical issues

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in the Public Service are strictly adhered to. It is, therefore, aimed at entrenching the issues of transparency, accountability, justice, equity, due process, and the rule of law. All these are very paramount to the conduct of Government business, which all Public Servants must imbibe." He further stated that: "As the machinery through which Government articulates and implements its policies and programmes, the Public Service needs to be provided with the enabling environment to play this pivotal role effectively; ... The long term goals of this review, therefore, is to achieve our national development agenda and collective goal of becoming one of the 20 leading industrialized nations of the world by 2020 through a focused and vibrant Public Service". This particular statement underscores the strategic importance of the public servant in Nigeria. From the above assertion, it is evident that the importance of public service cannot be over emphasized because it is associated with higher human needs satisfaction. Its significance is also brought to the fore in view of the process undertaken to assess the needs of the people of an area and the systematic way of designing and securing an appropriate means of meeting these needs, which are commonly termed 'public goods' Hence, all developmental initiatives will come to naught without an efficient public service. In the very words of Ededeji (2006), "without an accountable, efficient, effective and incorruptible Public Service, there cannot be a good governance."

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Public goods is essential for the overall well-being and development of any society. Public goods not only benefits the individuals who access them but also promotes the general welfare of the entire community. Healthcare, justice, affordable and quality education, security, social amenities, and decent and affordable housing are among the most crucial public goods that every society should prioritize. Healthcare ensures that everyone has access to medical services and treatment regardless of their socio-economic status. Justice guarantees that all citizens are treated equally under the law, while education is essential for building a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Security protects citizens from harm and promotes peaceful coexistence, while social amenities like parks and recreational facilities contribute to a better quality of life. Decent and affordable housing are fundamental human needs that enable individuals to lead dignified and healthy lives. Ensuring access to these public services should be a top priority for any responsible government. Public Servants are critical because it is through them that these essential goods and services are delivered to the general public. Of what use is a government, if it cannot deliver these public goods to its citizens? Ralph Bunch (1904-1971), the African American diplomat and UN official who was awarded with the Nobel Prize in 1950 for his work as a UN mediator in Palestine said: "The real objective must always be the good life for all the people. International machinery will mean something to the common man throughout the world only when it is

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translated in terms that he understands: peace, bread, housing, clothing, education, good health, and above all the right to work with dignity on the world's greatest boulevard". This is true of national and sub national governments. As you can see from the above quote, the erudite diplomat is trying to make us understand the public service is an imperative, hence the public service is an essential tool that government uses to provide public goods and services to its citizens. It serves as the hands and feet of the government, working tirelessly to ensure that the needs and demands of the public are met. The public service is a critical component of good governance, and its effectiveness is key to the success of any government. It is through the public service that citizens can access essential services that improves their quality of life, and it is therefore critical that governments invest in building strong and capable public service.

16. When it comes to the issue of Public Service, it is impossible to overlook the contributions made by dedicated public servants such as Rotimi Williams, Ishaya Audu, Ahmed Joda, Philip Asiodu, Ibrahim Damcida, Emeka Anyaoku, MD Yusufu, and many others. Their dedication to public service and their tireless efforts to make a positive impact on their fatherland has left a lasting impression on the lives of many. Their legacies serve as a reminder of the crucial role that public servants play in shaping the world we live in. As we reflect on the past and look towards the future, it is important to honour and remember those who paved the way for a better

tomorrow. I want to say with all sense of responsibility that there are many hardworking and dedicated public servants across the country even today. You see them undertaking guard duty or are attending to you at the court registry. Sometimes you just get inspired by the way a clerk or a school teacher executes her task.

Public services make the state visible to its citizens, often forming the principal tangible link between governments and the people. Public services carry and diffuse the values of the new nations and contribute to the bonding between the state and citizens. An analysis of Western European history reveals three main processes through which public services have contributed to state and nation building.

Penetration: A process of establishing control and the presence, authority and visibility of the state or the ruling powers. The aim of penetration is to contribute to the cohesion and legitimacy of the state through a process of political and territorial socialization. This lack of penetration within the Nigerian system is one of the causes of insecurity in the nation.

Standardization: The creation of a common culture through the presence of similar and readily identifiable public services. There is serious erosion of public standards in virtually all public works. National ethical orientation is lacking.

Accommodation: Public services serve as instruments for dispute settlement and for the creation of political loyalty.

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Service provision becomes instrumental in ‘binding critical elements of the population to the state.’

The public service plays a pivotal role in extending the authority, control, and law and order of a government within a country due to its extensive penetration and standardization. Through its various branches and agencies, the Public Service ensures the implementation and enforcement of government policies and regulations across all levels of society. It acts as a bridge between the government and its citizens, disseminating information, providing services, and upholding legal proceedings. With its wide-ranging reach, the public service helps to maintain social order, resolve conflicts, and protect the rights and interests of individuals and communities. Furthermore, its standardized procedures and protocols ensure consistency and fairness in the application of laws, reinforcing the authority of the government and promoting a sense of stability and trust among the populace. Thus, the Public Service functions as a vital tool in preserving the rule of law and enhancing the effectiveness of governance in a country.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Further to functioning as a vital tool in preserving the rule of law and enhancing the effectiveness of governance in a country, Public service equally enhances human security, which is an important subset of national security. Human security basically involves ‘freedom from

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fear and freedom from want'. While 'freedom from want' ensures that people are not denied their basic needs, 'freedom from fear' entails providing adequate security for the people. The Armed Forces, police and several other paramilitary, security and intelligence agencies provide this service to the public. Once again, being my constituency, let me elaborate on the role of the Armed Forces in providing this public service. The constitutional imperative for the Armed Forces of Nigeria are derived from Section 217 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended. It states inter alia:

(1) There shall be an armed forces for the Federation which shall consist of an Army, a Navy, an Air Force and such other branches of the Armed Forces of the Federation as may be established by an Act of the National Assembly.

(2) The Federation shall, subject to an Act of the National Assembly made in that behalf, equip and maintain the Armed Forces as may be considered adequate and effective for the purpose of:

- a. Defending Nigeria from external Aggression.
- b. Maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders from violation on land, sea or air.
- c. Suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President, but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly; and
- d. Performing such other functions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.

RESTRICTED

Of Special significance to our discourse is Section 217 (2) c, where the question of national security comes in. Defence and security are inseparable. However, the various security and police Acts further expatiated and specialize their roles as regards national intelligence distinct from national defence.

Furthermore, the Nigerian National Security Strategy 2019 aims at ensuring that Nigeria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interests, the well-being of the people and the country's institutions are preserved, protected and enhanced.

Public service is a critical aspect of national security in Nigeria because it is the most practicable means available for the delivery of human security, which is critical to safeguarding national security. It is imperative that the government invests in, and maintains a competent Public Service to ensure the safety and security of its citizens. Public Servants are responsible for implementing policies and programs that promote peace and stability as well as for delivering essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, and maintaining law and order which are vital to the well-being of the population. A well-functioning public service helps to build trust in the government and promotes social cohesion, which is essential for maintaining peace and security. Therefore, it is essential that the government prioritizes the recruitment and training of competent public servants and provide them with the

RESTRICTED

necessary resources and support to carry out their duties effectively. One of the major preoccupations of the military in fulfilment of its constitutional mandate is ensuring the best are recruited and commissioned into the various services of the armed forces. These officers are constantly trained and retrained to ensure effectiveness.

In sum, we must understand that those serving in government are called public servants and their service is usually referred to public service. Since military personnel are also government employees, their service is public service because they protect public from foreign and domestic hostility, protect our borders and come to the help of the public in national disasters. But they are not directly answerable to the public. They are answerable to their commanders and courts to make them effective. They usually do not come in contact with public directly except in emergency situation or breakdown of law and order. This is where Section 217 (2) (c) of the 1999 Constitution as amended readily comes to mind.

MY EXPERIENCE AS A PUBLIC SERVANT

Military service is often regarded as a significant component of public service, and I would like to offer insights into my personal journey as both a member of the armed forces and a diplomat. My time in the Nigerian army provided me with a unique opportunity on the responsibilities and challenges that come with defending one's country. Through rigorous training and diverse experiences, I developed a deep appreciation for the values of discipline, teamwork,

and sacrifice. Transitioning into a diplomatic role allowed me to further contribute to public service by engaging in international relations and fostering diplomacy. By combining my military background with diplomacy, I have been able to navigate complex situations and work towards promoting security, peaceful coexistence and cooperation between nations.

MY 40 YEARS IN THE ARMY: A LIFETIME OF SERVICE

I was appointed as Chief of Army Staff in 2015 at a time when the sovereignty of the country was threatened by insidious forces within our borders. Throughout my forty years in the Nigerian army, including those momentous sixty six months as its head, my sole preoccupation had been public service. The records of my modest achievements are obvious, some of which had been mentioned earlier in this hall. My commitment to the army and the Nigerian public never wavered from my cadet days to my retirement. I started as a young officer, eager to serve my country and make a difference. Over the years, I rose through the service, promoted as at when due and took on various roles and responsibilities that allowed me to contribute to the greater good of the service and the nation. As I gained experience and expertise, I was entrusted with leadership positions. These opportunities allowed me to contribute to shaping the direction of the Nigerian army and implement strategies that enhanced its efficiency and effectiveness. My tenure as Chief of Army Staff was particularly significant, as it provided a platform to

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influence policy and ensure the army's readiness to face all security challenges that arose. Some of my obvious key achievements include preservation of democracy, improved professionalism of the Nigerian army and maintaining our nation's unity. During my tenure as COAS, I focused on modernizing the Nigerian army's capabilities and adapting to the ever-evolving nature of warfare. I spearheaded initiatives to enhance training programmes, improve equipment, and promote innovation within the ranks. These efforts not only bolstered the Army's operational readiness but also ensured the safety and security of our nation. An officer of the Nigerian armed forces is guided by both the Constitution and the Armed Forces Act CAP A20 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria which forms the major part of military laws in Nigeria. This is referred to as 'Doctrine of Compact', which simply means that a military personnel is subject to two laws. That is Civil Law and Military Law. While in Service, I made sure that my decisions, as well as the actions I took were guided by this doctrine. I prioritized fostering strong relationships with international allies, recognizing the importance of collaboration in addressing global security concerns. Through joint exercises and partnerships, we strengthened our collective defense capabilities and promoted counter terrorism efforts regionally and globally. Through the instrumentality of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) we coordinated and fought the war against Boko Haram and ISWAP. Through the CENSAD and the Islamic Coalition against Terrorism we contributed significantly to the global war against terrorism.

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In retirement my dedication to public service remains as strong. I am grateful for the trust placed in me and the experiences that have shaped my character. Moving forward, I will continue to contribute to society, leveraging the skills and values instilled in me during my military career.

My four decades in the army, including my tenure as COAS, has been marked by a deep commitment to serving the public through a focus on modernization, collaboration, and unwavering dedication. I endeavored to make a positive impact on the army and the nation as a whole. The verdict is out, and I am fulfilled to have played a role in safeguarding our country's security and well-being.

LEADING WITH ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

My preoccupation as head of the army was to lead with accountability and effectiveness, which are the hallmarks of good governance in the army. I firmly believe that a transparent and responsible leadership is crucial for maintaining the trust of both the soldiers and the public. My vision was very clear – “to have a professionally responsive Nigerian Army in the discharge of its constitutional roles”. Unfortunately for all our efforts we were inundated with false and erroneous information from social media by those who were unhappy with our firm commitment to our set goals.

ESTABLISHING CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To promote accountability and effectiveness, it was imperative to establish clear goals and objectives for the Nigerian army. By defining our mission and vision, we provided a framework for all personnel to align their efforts towards a common purpose. This clarity of purpose not only enhanced accountability but also improved overall effectiveness. In addition, I introduced a system of regular performance evaluations to assess the progress made towards these goals. This allowed us to identify areas of improvement and take necessary corrective measures. By setting measurable targets and regularly reviewing our performance, we ensured that accountability was ingrained at every level of the army.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

Open communication and transparency are vital for fostering accountability within any organization, including but especially in the army. To achieve this, I implemented several measures to enhance communication channels and promote transparency. First, I established an open-door policy, encouraging soldiers to voice their concerns and ideas without fear of retribution. Regular town hall meetings (called durbar in military terms) were conducted where soldiers could directly interact with their superiors, fostering a culture of open dialogue. This I did anytime I was with the troops in the field, which was quite often as I spent considerable time in the

field. Furthermore, I introduced a comprehensive information-sharing system that ensured all relevant information was accessible to those who needed it. This facilitated better decision-making and minimized the chances of miscommunication or misunderstandings. The Nigerian Army Secure Information Portal (NASIP) was established during my time. This greatly improved communication and efficiency in passing directives and general administration.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Accountability and effectiveness are closely tied to the skills and capabilities of the army personnel. Recognizing this, I prioritized training and development programmes to enhance the proficiency of our soldiers. I implemented a robust training policy that focused not only on technical skills but also on leadership and ethical conduct. By instilling a strong sense of responsibility and professionalism, we ensured that our soldiers were well-prepared to face the challenges of their roles. The various training exercises introduced like Python Dance, Crocodile Smile, Lafiya Dole, etc. were very effective.

I also emphasized continuous learning and professional development by encouraging soldiers to pursue advanced courses and certifications. This not only enhanced their individual capabilities but also contributed to the overall effectiveness of the Army. As at the time of my retirement, the Special Forces Command along with its relevant brigades and battalions had been firmly established and

hit the ground running. The number of officers and soldiers that attended courses both at home and abroad were the highest in recent times. I strongly believe that capacity building is the surest way to professionalizing the armed forces.

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

To remain effective in an ever-evolving landscape, it was crucial to embrace technology and innovation within the army. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as drones, advanced surveillance systems, and data analytics, we were able to gather real-time intelligence and make informed decisions. This not only improved our effectiveness but also increased accountability by enabling us to track and analyze our performance more accurately. The establishment of the Nigerian Army Cyber Warfare Command and the Land Forces Simulation Centre among other initiatives brought the Nigerian army in line with the most modern warfare concepts and techniques.

Furthermore, I encouraged a culture of innovation within the army, where officers and soldiers were encouraged and empowered to propose new ideas and solutions. This fostered a sense of ownership and accountability among the personnel, as they actively contributed to improving our operational effectiveness. The invention of a mine resistant armored vehicles christened EZUGWU MRAP is a great initiative that took the army a step further toward self-sufficiency and

RESTRICTED

effective service delivery. This was a response to the difficulty and delays experienced in securing direly needed military equipment at some point.

FISCAL DISCIPLINE

In today's digital age, the convenience and efficiency of electronic payment systems have revolutionized various sectors, including the military. As the COAS, one of my key initiatives was to introduce e-payment of troops' operational allowances. This move aimed to streamline the payment process, eliminate delays, and ensure that our brave soldiers received their salaries and allowances promptly. By embracing technology and implementing e-payment systems, we not only improved the financial well-being of our troops but also enhanced their morale and overall operational effectiveness. Moreover, the introduction of e-payment systems brought about greater transparency in the payment process. Each transaction was recorded electronically, leaving an audit trail that could be easily accessed and reviewed. This not only minimized the potential for fraudulent activities but also allowed for better accountability and oversight.

MY NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS AS CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF

One of my greatest achievements as the head of the army was respect for and subordination to civil authority and preservation of

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democracy. We ensured that the army remained apolitical and subordinated to the democratic rule. We constantly emphasized that military professionalism and partisan politics cannot coexist. The hallmark of any professional armed force in a democratic setting is its neutrality from political competition and subordination to democratic government. We ensured this through human capacity building and continuous sensitization. Some of the major initiatives of the Buratai years, 2015 – 2021 include establishment of the:

- a. The Nigerian Army University Bui.
- b. Nigerian Army Resource Centre.
- c. Army War College Nigeria.
- d. Nigerian Army Special Forces School, Buni Yadi.
- e. Land Forces Simulation Centre Nigeria
- f. Army Command and NAOWA Hospital, Abuja.
- g. Nigerian Army Women's Corps.
- h. Nigerian Army Cyber Warfare Command.
- i. Nigerian Army Farms and Ranches (NAFRAL).
- j. Command Science Secondary Schools in partnership with some State Governments.
- k. ORBAT 2016. Establishment of 6 and 8 Divs.
- l. Establishment 4 Special Forces Command.

THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Political interference in military affairs can arise when politicians attempt to influence or control military decisions for their own political gain. This is capable of compromising service personnel, who are also public servants, thereby eroding public service. My colleagues and I faced the most political interference during our time.

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This interference often stems from a lack of understanding of the complexities of military operations, strategy, and the unique challenges faced by military leaders. When politicians impose their own agenda or micromanage military affairs, it can undermine the effectiveness and autonomy of military leaders. Furthermore, political interference can erode the morale and trust within military ranks. When military leaders are constantly subjected to political pressures and demands that do not align with military expertise, it can create a sense of disillusionment among the troops. This can negatively impact their motivation, discipline, and overall effectiveness in carrying out their duties. During my tenure, I encountered a significant amount of interference from politicians and armchair critics who seemed to believe that the Commander-in-Chief lacked the necessary expertise to fulfill his duties. This unnecessary interference often hindered the smooth operation of military affairs and impeded the effective execution of plans. In spite of my extensive experience and dedication to my duties, the constant skepticism and second-guessing by those outside the military sphere added an unwarranted layer of complexity to the decision-making process. This interference, while well-intentioned in some cases, ultimately created a challenging environment for me.

There have been individuals who have expressed the opinion that in order to address the issue of insecurity, it is necessary for General Buratai to be sacked from his position. It is important to note that

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such assertions seem to stem from personal biases rather than an objective evaluation of my performance. These individuals may hold negative opinions of General Buratai based on subjective factors, such as personal preferences or biases unrelated to his actual capabilities. It is crucial to approach discussions regarding national security matters with a fair and impartial mindset, focusing on relevant aspects rather than personal biases and idiosyncrasies. The National Assembly had twice or more passed resolutions calling for the sack of the service chiefs. The President, Muhammadu Buhari had told the ninth National Assembly to mind their business. If properly interpreted, the call by the ninth National Assembly was a call to derail the democracy by the military. This should be a lesson for political actors. It was a direct confrontation blaming the service chiefs as if they are the ones who started insecurity. The insecurity being faced in the country since 2009 was the creation of the political class. With a very strong political will, it can be surmounted.

STRIKING A BALANCE

It is essential for civil authorities to have oversight and democratic control over the military in a democracy, however, those in civil governance should respect the expertise and professionalism of military leaders. There is the need to strike a healthy balance. A healthy civil-military relationship requires mutual trust, respect, and open communication. Politicians should rely on the advice and

expertise of military leaders in matters of defense and security rather than playing to the gallery or politicizing national security.

MY DIPLOMATIC SOJOURN

I was appointed as an ambassador along with my colleagues immediately on retirement. Before our deployment, Mr. President categorically tasked us to watch Nigeria's flanks. Security alertness was apparently the major consideration in appointing ex service chiefs as envoys to neighbouring countries. The flanking countries include Ghana, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin. As Nigeria's envoy to Benin Republic, I embarked on a journey that proved to be both challenging and exciting. Stepping into the realm of diplomatic service in a foreign country was a new terrain for me, but I embraced the opportunity with enthusiasm and determination. A bird's eye view of my experience, highlighting the challenges faced and the interesting moments encountered during my tenure will be discussed here. An ambassadorial appointment meant representing my country's interests in a foreign land. It required me to navigate through unfamiliar diplomatic waters, understanding the cultural nuances and political dynamics of Benin Republic. Building relationships with local officials and stakeholders was crucial in fostering cooperation and advancing bilateral ties. However, this task was not without its difficulties. One of the main challenges I encountered was the language barrier. While English is widely spoken in Nigeria, French is the official language of Benin Republic.

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Communicating effectively with local authorities and citizens required me to quickly adapt and learn basic French. This hurdle, though daunting at first, eventually became an opportunity for personal growth and cultural exchange. Thanks to Google Translate.

Public service is not without its obstacles, and my tenure as Nigeria's envoy to Benin Republic was no exception. From bureaucratic hurdles to complex diplomatic negotiations, each day presented new challenges that demanded resilience and adaptability. Navigating through these obstacles required strategic thinking, effective communication, and a deep understanding of both countries' interests. Amidst the challenges, my tenure as Nigeria's envoy to Benin Republic was filled with moments of fulfillment and excitement. Witnessing the positive impact of our diplomatic efforts on the lives of both Nigerian and Beninese citizens was truly rewarding. From cultural exchanges to joint development projects, each initiative brought us closer together and fostered a sense of camaraderie between our nations. Main areas that preoccupied my tenure in Benin Republic include the joint ownership of the Save Sugar Company, the land border communities and the Bilateral Trade Agreement – Joint Border Management Drill. There was a near clash along the border with our naval troops and Beninese gendarmerie. I was summoned by the Benin Foreign Ministry on this incident. However, this was quickly resolved. It was my first direct diplomatic confrontation. Furthermore, the opportunity to represent

my country on the international stage allowed me to showcase our country's rich cultural heritage and diverse economic potential. Through various diplomatic events and engagements, I had the privilege of promoting Nigeria's interests and strengthening our global presence. The Nigerian Embassy fully participated in the 2022 Porto Novo Cultural Festival.

MY FORAY INTO POLITICS

In the realm of politics, transitions from military rule to democracy have been a recurring theme in the nation's history until 29 May 1999. These transitions often came with challenges and uncertainties, but they also present opportunities for growth and progress. After retiring from the army, I embarked on a new journey in politics with the intention of serving the public in another impactful manner, albeit unregimented. This decision stems from my deep-rooted desire to contribute to society and make a positive difference. Having spent years serving my country in the military under strict regimentation, rigidity and with little initiative as a junior officer then, and I have witnessed first-hand the challenges and issues that affect the lives of ordinary citizens. With my venture into politics, I intended to address these concerns and work towards creating a better future for the community I am privileged to be a part of selflessly. By utilizing my skills and experiences gained from my time in the army, I believe I can bring a unique perspective and

dedication to public service, striving to influence meaningful change and improve the lives of those I aim to represent. After a vigorous military service with total commitment and sacrifice, coupled with an unprecedented achievement in the defence and security, I thought that I will be accepted into the political class seamlessly. Albeit I was mistaken, I never knew that some desperate politicians were not comfortable with my presence on the terrain. I have made a conscious choice to refrain from being a mere onlooker and instead take an active role in bringing about positive change. Recognizing that progress requires collective effort, I have sought out like-minded individuals with a shared vision for our nation's future. Of course President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is one of such visionaries, but I first started my foray into partisan politics with Rotimi Amaechi. By joining hands with these individuals, I aim to contribute to the revitalization of our country and steer it onto the right track. Together, we are determined to address pressing issues, advocate for necessary reforms, and foster a spirit of unity and cooperation. Embracing a proactive approach, we hope to play a part in salvaging our country and paving the way for a brighter and secure future.

POLITICAL POWER AND PEOPLES' PERCEPTION

Military takeovers have long been a means for ambitious officers to seize power and control a nation. The allure of authority and the belief that they can bring stability to a chaotic political landscape can be enticing. However, history has shown that military rule often leads

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to oppression, corruption, and a disregard for human rights. I served the Nigerian public by remaining true to my oath of office, defending the constitution and the democratic government, and also ensuring that the army protects the territorial integrity of Nigeria, and assist civil authority in providing internal security. This in part explains my reason for engaging in partisan politics after consulting widely with my family, friends, and associates. I consider politics, utilized properly, as public service because politicians are elected to represent the interests of their constituents and make laws and implement them as they affect the lives of their communities. As public servants, politicians have a responsibility to be fair, just, and true to their conscience. It is essential that they prioritize the needs and well-being of the people they serve above their own self-interests. Politicians must adhere to ethical principles and demonstrate integrity in their actions, decisions, and communications. A commitment to these values is critical to building trust and credibility with the public, which are crucial for effective leadership. Politicians who prioritize public service motivate others to do the same, creating a culture of accountability and transparency in government. Ultimately, politicians who serve with fairness, justice, and truth to their conscience help build a better society for all.

But alas this is not the case in Nigeria. Politics and democratic governance in Nigeria have long been a subject of discontent among its citizens. Many Nigerians perceive politicians and the political

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system as a failed mechanism for effective governance. This sentiment stems from a variety of factors, including corruption, lack of accountability, and the failure to deliver on promises. However, it is essential to delve deeper into the complexities of Nigeria's political landscape to understand the root causes of this disillusionment. My advice to politicians, the core public servant and of course civil servants is that they must live above board by eschewing corruption. Corruption has plagued the country's political sphere for decades, eroding public trust and hindering development. Misappropriation of public funds, bribery, and embezzlement have become all too common, diverting resources away from essential services and leaving citizens disillusioned. Despite efforts to combat corruption, it remains deeply entrenched within the political fabric of Nigeria.

I will also advise politicians that they should be accountable and transparent within Nigeria's political system. Politicians often make lofty promises during election campaigns but fail to deliver once in power. This lack of accountability erodes public confidence and perpetuates the perception that politicians are more interested in personal gain than serving the people. Moreover, the opacity surrounding political processes and decision-making further alienates citizens, leaving them feeling disconnected from the governance process. Public servants must provide basic public services and address pressing societal challenges. In spite of being blessed with vast natural resources, many Nigerians still lack access

to clean water, healthcare, education, and reliable infrastructure. The inability of politicians to address these fundamental needs has led to frustration and a loss of faith in the political system's ability to effect positive change.

CONCLUSION

The public service is a critical channel through which governments provide good governance and distribute dividends of democracy to their citizens. Public servants play an essential role in ensuring that the policies and programs of the government are effectively and efficiently implemented. They are responsible for the delivery of public services and programs, such as healthcare, education, security, and social welfare, among others, that ensure the well-being and development of the citizens. Through the public service, governments can establish institutional structures and frameworks that promote transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, which are necessary for sustainable development. Therefore, the public service is an indispensable tool for any government that seeks to provide good governance and promote the welfare of its people.

As privileged individuals who have had the opportunity to attend this esteemed university, it is your duty and responsibility to serve fellow Nigerians through efficient public service. It is not enough to simply attain quality education and pursue individual success. We must also recognize the importance of giving back to our communities and

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contributing to the development of our nation. In serving the public, we have the opportunity to positively impact the lives of our fellow citizens and create a lasting legacy of progress and prosperity. As leaders and professionals today and tomorrow, we must embrace this responsibility with humility and dedication, and commit ourselves to serving Nigeria with integrity and excellence. As an objective observer of political developments in our country, I strongly believe that the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is poised to implement innovative and bold measures to make public service more efficient and accountable. With a track record of excellence in both the private and public sectors, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has demonstrated a deep understanding of the challenges facing our nation and the urgency of finding lasting solutions to them. I am particularly impressed with the President's commitment to transparency, due process, and meritocracy, which are vital ingredients for a modern and effective public service. I am confident that with the right policies, strategies, and leadership, President Tinubu's administration will transform our public service into a world-class institution that delivers quality service to citizens and enhances our national competitiveness.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for taking the time to listen to my presentation. Your presence and attentiveness have truly made a difference and have greatly contributed to the success of this event. Your unwavering support

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and encouragement have not only motivated me to deliver my best, but have also reinforced my belief in the power of collaboration and shared knowledge. As I conclude, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your engagement and for the opportunity to share my insights. Lastly, I cannot overlook the significance of our shared roots, and I humbly ask for God's blessings upon our beloved nation, Nigeria. May we continue to work together towards progress, unity, and prosperity. Thank you once again, and God bless Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At this point let me make the following recommendations:

- a. Public service should be seen as a sacrifice. The public servant must see himself first and foremost a person placed to serve the people. Accountability, sacrifice and dedication should be his watchwords.
- b. Public servants should not allow political office holders to make them deviate from the rules. They must serve as checks for the political office holders.
- c. Defence and security are sensitive national issues that politicians should avoid interfering with for political expediency. National security must be above partisan consideration.

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