



THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF PRESUPPOSITION AND POLITENESS IN PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU'S 2025 DEMOCRACY DAY SPEECH

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Abstract

Since 2018, when the former Nigeria President, Mohammad Buhari declared June 12th a national holiday in Nigeria to commemorate the restoration of democracy in 1999, it has now become an annual ritual, marked with social activities and a presidential speech, christened: “Democracy Day Speech”. It is an observance that constitutes the formal review of socio-political developments in the country since the annulment of June 12 presidential election in 1993. Democracy Day Speech is usually anticipated for the soothing promises it makes and the reassurances it contains. This study investigates pragmatic presuppositions made and politeness strategies employed by President Bola Tinubu in the 2025 speech delivered at his Democracy Day ceremony. The text of the speech is downloaded from the net to ensure accuracy, and the fifty-seven (57) sets of sentences are numbered serially for ease of reference and close analysis. The study reveals that Tinubu presupposes among others, the uniqueness of the event, the socio-political and economic challenges facing Nigeria, and deploys the imperatives to address some key areas in the country. Regarding politeness, the paper unravels both the face saving and face threatening acts performed by the speaker through the various strategies deployed. It concludes that although Tinubu strives hard to mitigate the threats to the face of the past political leaders among others, the emotional touching effects of the threat still remain painfully memorable for their enormity and emphasis.

Keywords: Bola Tinubu, Democracy Day Speech, Presupposition, Politeness

1 Introduction

Regular occasions of speech delivery by elected presidents of Nigeria include, Inauguration Ceremony, Independence Day Celebration and most recently, Democracy Day. Such speeches are delivered amidst fanfare, jubilation and renewed hope for a better future. A presidential speech is therefore unique in a number of ways. Although almost all the presidential speeches mentioned above are political, only inauguration speech is delivered at an interval of some years, most often four years because it is connected with a new elected president on assumption of office. Inaugural speech is a victory speech, presented to make the reality of the success of the new president felt by the people, especially the opposition party or parties, and consequently marks the beginning of their compulsory acceptance and submission.



Nigeria is often described as the giant of Africa. Therefore, its nascent democracy occupies a pride of place in the political topography of Africa, and her actions and inactions attract international attention. The president of Nigeria is perceived in some quarters in this connection as a prominent political leader who has a voice in Africa affairs, through remarkable organizations, such as UNO, WHO, among others. This background makes the Democracy Day speech of Nigerian president very important, widely anticipated, collectively heard and variously interpreted. The logical expectation, considering the enviable place of African affairs and politics is that the president employs tact in national discourse to effectively manoeuvre governance in order to achieve steady political growth and peace across the nation. To that end the president used the Democracy Day Speech to anticipate for the soothing promises and reiterate reassurances of hopes and aspirations democracy holds for Nigeria and Nigerians.

The paper therefore attempts to examine the Pragmatic features of Presupposition and Politeness in President Bola Tinubu's 2025 Democracy Day Speech. The study explores the linguistic features in the president's speech that convey the socio-political developments in the governance of the country since after the annulment of June 12 presidential election in 1993, coupled with X-raying legislative procedures of the social-political and ideological era in the National House of Assembly. The President's creative and resourceful employment of language accounts for his drive for success in leadership. Since this paper investigates the nature of presupposition and politeness, it is revealed that Bola Tinubu's Democracy Day Speech employs language to serve as an empirical base to define and shape his linguistic behavior and to address the concern of his critics, with a view to motivating them.

2. Language of Politics

The bond between language and politics is derivable from the association of language and communication. Man is a political being whose entire life is shaped by politics, and his eloquent speech provides apt enablement. Language plays a crucial role in politics as every political action is inspired, accompanied, controlled and influenced by it (Schaffer, 1996). The importance of the study of language of politics, according to Beard (2000) is to know how language is utilized by those who desire to gain, exercise and keep power. Language is used in politics to make speeches and remarks. Thus, political career is negotiated, secured and practised through the instrumentality of language whose product, in this wise is mainly speech making. Beard (ibid: 35) further adds that "making speeches is a vital part of the politicians' role in announcing policies and persuading people".

Lakoff (1990:7) presents the inextricable relationship between language and politics more aptly. He posits that "language is politics, politics assigns power, and power governs how people talk and how they are understood". He notes further that political manipulations depend on the use of language because language initiates and interprets power relations. Thus, language serves to bestow or confer power and delineates the relationship among its users through the roles it allots to them. Power is demonstrated through the use of language and every language user "plays the linguistic power game according to hidden agendas, the unsaid being far more potent than the said" (ibid :21). The clarification of the unstated meaning or the 'hidden agenda' is the concern of pragmatics (Mey, 2001:207).

It is language that provides the opportunity for politicians to explore its verbal communicative resources and manipulate words to suit their intentions. Hence, language could be regarded as the vehicle of politics. In this direction, Opeibi (2009) points out that language is the channel for the expression of the candidate's manifesto, superior political thoughts and party's ideologies and it is the tool for translating them into social actions for social change and continuity. Therefore, the



place of language in convincing, mobilizing, persuading and enlightening the citizenry cannot be over emphasized. It is the link to people's hearts. Akinkurolere's (2011) argument that the support politicians enjoy from the citizens is predicated upon their message and the manner of presentation is apt as these determine success of candidacy, programmes or policies. Both the political message and its manner of presentation are consequently very important. For this reason, it is expedient to interrogate political discourse through the related frame works of discourse analysis, stylistics, rhetoric and pragmatics. However, the resources of pragmatics are explored in this study to analyze our data.

The various definitions of pragmatics available emphasis primacy of context for a meaningful interpretation of language in use. Pragmatics, according to Leech (1981) investigates the aspect of meaning derivable from the manner in which utterances are used, and how such utterances relate to the context of their use. This view regards pragmatics as a theory of appropriateness in any discourse. Lawal (2003:150) defines pragmatics as "the study of how context influences our interpretation of utterances." Pragmatic analysis of language according to Adebija (1999:189) is an investigation of "how language is used in any particular communicative contexts or situations". Yule (1996:3) similarly provides four interrelated aspects of the definition and scope of pragmatics as; the study of speaker meaning; the study of contextual meaning; the study of how more meaning get communicated than said; and the study of expression of relative distance. Thus, the concern of pragmatists includes the interactants, the context, the unsaid or meaning communicated and its implication in discourse. This informs Allan's (1986) definition of pragmatics simply as the study of interactional meaning. Pragmatics, to unravel interactional meaning, includes in its scope such aspects as: context, speech acts, deixis, conversational principle, politeness, presupposition among other concepts concerned with basics and nuances of communicative values. This study pays attention on Interactional meaning in a public speech.

3. Theoretical Framework: Presupposition and Politeness

The theoretical framework is anchored on presupposition and Politeness.

a. Presupposition

Yule (1996:25) defines presupposition as "something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance." The speakers, according to him, not the sentences, have presuppositions. It is, thus, a premise or ground assumed by the speaker in relation to the hearer's knowledge. Presupposition is "the explicit assumption about the real world which speakers make, and on which the meaning of an utterance largely depends" (Lawal, 2003:153). Speakers or writers usually design their message on the assumption that the hearer or reader already has a degree of the knowledge of what is being communicated. The presupposed knowledge is naturally taken for granted as it is believed that the listener or reader will understand the communication, by processing the said with the shared information about the subject and the context.

As Grundy (2000) points out, certain clauses are employed to make presuppositions because of some words that they contain. Such words express change of state predicate like begin and continue or time such as after and before. Yule (1996) similarly notes that certain forms – words, phrases and structures - have been associated with the expression of presupposition. He identifies types of presupposition as: (i) existential (expressed through possessive forms or noun phrases), (ii) factive (expressed by words signifying fact), (iii) lexical (expressed through the non assertive meaning of words), (iv) structural (expressed through certain grammatical constructions), (v) non-factive (expressed to show that something is false) and (vi) counter-factive (expressed through



structures used to show unreality). Presupposition is natural in interaction as it helps the speaker to predicate his/her speech on common knowledge and helps the hearer also to make inferences.

b. Politeness

Part of the political nature of man is his innate sense of dignity or self-importance that he wants others to acknowledge. This is the sense to be regarded and treated as human. Grundy (2000: 147) describes linguistic politeness as “the function of language to imply the most appropriate speaker-hearer relationship”. Appropriateness in this regards essentially involves a lot of linguistic considerations to effect and maintain acceptable interpersonal relationship. Politeness is a means of avoiding conflicts and establishing harmonious interpersonal relationship between social interactants (Izadi, 2013). Communication involves doing things with words or performing speech acts (Austin, 1961) and the exercise of caution in the performance of acts not to avoidably hurt the feelings of others is called politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) underline the use of indirect speech act as a feature of politeness and further relate politeness to *face* which they describe as “the public self image that every individual wants to claim for himself.” They identify two types of face as: positive face, “the individual’s want of admiration and approval” and negative face, “the individual’s want of freedom from imposition” (ibid: 67). Similarly, Yule (1985: 134) describes politeness as “showing awareness of another person’s face.

Some speech acts have intrinsic threat in them; they are Face Threatening Acts (FTA’s) while certain acts are performed to lessen the possible threat to face; these are Face Saving Acts (FSA’s). Both positive and negative face types are constantly at the risk of being threatened and as a result conscious interactants usually strive to save them in communication. FSA’s are achieved through mitigation, which involves employing such politeness strategies as indirection, hedges, deference, apology, generalization and nominalization among others (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The nature of texts however determines both the kinds of acts, the prevalence or otherwise of FTAs and the appropriate politeness strategies.

Presidential speech as a genre is characterized by the clear distance between the president and audience participants. The president is the speaker and the listeners or audience include the law-makers, citizens, and non-citizens. Besides, there is inequality in terms of the power relation between the speaker and the audience. These demand a great deal of face work on the part of the president who will need to articulate his unique mission and achieve solidarity and peace.

4. Analysis of the Speech

The 2025 Democracy Day Speech of President Bola Tinubu of Nigeria is composed of fifty-seven (57) sentences which are largely structurally simple. Perhaps, this is a linguistic reflection of his promise to hit the ground running and keep faith with the spirit of democracy. The sentences (scs) are numbered serially for ease of reference in the analysis. The speaker’s assumptions about the reality of his determination and attitude to run smooth governance and guaranteed interpersonal relationship as reflected in the speech are analyzed under the two headings: Presuppositions and Politeness Strategies, as employed in the address.

a. Presuppositions in the Speech

In a speech of this kind, presupposition is a measure of the way the speaker characterizes the knowledge listeners share about their personalities, their affairs and the general state of the nation. Tinubu’s speech reveals key areas of knowledge of common reality which he shares with his listeners, especially the law-makers on account of the evolving democracy in Nigeria.



The uniqueness of the event, and invariably the speaker, is profoundly presupposed. The ideas shared are taken for granted and thereby presented unarguably in a number of ways. The speaker achieves this presupposition particularly in five sentences – scs: 6,7, 8, 9, &13. This set of sentences appreciates rather than greets as it is typical:

Since 2018, we have celebrated Democracy Day on this day; to commemorate the sacrifices of the men and women who fought to restore democratic governance to Nigeria (sc 6). Let me pay tribute to former President Muhammadu Buhari for reaching back into history to rectify a national misdeed by making June 12 Democracy Day and by officially acknowledging Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe, as the victors and thus duly elected President and Vice President respectively of Nigeria after the June 12, 1993 elections (sc 7). Year by year, election after election, every time we debate instead of battle, discuss instead of fight, and argue instead of destroy, we preserve the institutions of democracy... (sc 8). we must not forget the long list of those who equally deserve to be called heroes of Nigerian democracy (sc 9)...It is fitting that I come to this chamber. You are the authors of the people's law, and I must be their faithful implementer.... (sc 13).

The speaker's presupposition in the first sentence through the last sentence is that, he appreciates both his immediate and remote audiences: all Nigerian citizens, the immediate past president of Nigeria (Muhammadu Buhari) and various dignitaries. In particular, in sentence 13, he concretizes the knowledge of the uniqueness of the occasion held in the National Assembly, which underscores his audience's belief that the ceremony has special meaning in its unprecedented nature, since it held in the National Assembly. This same presupposition is consolidated with the reference to the venue of the ceremony, as representing the seat of law-making:

With profound honour, I stand before this joint session of our National Assembly; a parliament that embodies the will of the Nigerian people (sc1).

Most importantly in the above presentation, is the speaker's assumption that the listeners know their responsibilities to make laws that respect the desires and needs of the people. This presupposition is obvious in sc1 of the speech, and it is particularly signalled by the phrase: **the will of the Nigerian people**. The phrase further inspires the sentence below:

I felt a sense of collective accomplishment when I realised how far we had come as a nation. Since 1999, democracy has risen from the ashes and destitution of military rule to take its rightful place as the only mode of governance of our resilient and beloved people (3).

The expression, 'a sense of collective accomplishment' in the above presentation indicates the speaker's presupposition that signals far reaching action through democratic process, which has rebuilt or restore good governance in Nigeria. Again, Nigeria is believed by Bola Tinubu to have known the source of the setback to be the military government who had consistently denied others of the supposedly common opportunity. Both the knowledge of the loss and the agents of denial are communicated as common, through the excerpt below:

... Since 1999, democracy has risen from the ashes and destitution of military rule to take its rightful place as the only mode of governance of our resilient and beloved people (3). Upon assuming office, my team and I moved to reform our



ailing economy. We introduced fundamental reforms to correct structural imbalances that prevented maximum growth (27).

In the above extract, Tinubu presupposes the current state of Nigeria as a product of democracy, which he encodes as common knowledge through political, social and economic achievement for national needs. Similarly, he underlines the general assumption underlying the poor performance of the military rule in such structural description as ‘the ashes and destitution of military rule’ (sc 3).

In communicating the knowledge of Nigeria’s past frustrating encounters in the hands of the military as a reality to him and other citizens, Tinubu employs the following excerpt:

... under the military, the National Assembly tried to protect our democracy. After General Abacha took over power on November 17, 1993, and dissolved the National Assembly, some of us, led by Senator Ameh Ebute, the Senate President in the 3rd Republic, defied the General and his goons to reconvene in the Old Parliament Building in Lagos. We were jailed on our defiance (sc15).

The above presupposition reveals the speaker’s belief that the listeners, especially the law-makers, know that Nigeria was a strong, wealthy, proud, safe and great nation with a huge political challenge. The resolution of the political conflict as presupposed in the sentence, is consequently apt and warranted by the shared national and international knowledge that Nigeria is currently democratically progressing.

As a logical sequel to his assumption of a stable democracy, Tinubu presupposes that everyone knows that change is inevitable to restore civil governance. This knowledge can be deduce from his clamour for free and fair elections and the right to belong to any of the registered political parties in Nigeria. The following sentences in the speech would be questionable without such an assumption:

To those who ring the alarm that the APC is intent on a one-party state, I offer you a most personal promise. While your alarm may be as a result of your panic, it rings in error. At no time in the past, nor any instance in the present, and at no future juncture shall I view the notion of a one-party state as good for Nigeria. I have never attempted to alter any political party registration with INEC ... (18). I dare not do such a favour to any political adversary by repeating the same mistake of political overreach (22) A one-party state is not in the offing. Nor should it ever be. That said, we would be guilty of political malpractice (23)

The speaker’s rejection and values placed on the potency of multi- political groups is communicated with emphasis through repeated metaphorical language. Repeating “alarm” twice in ‘To those **who ring the alarm** that the APC is intent on a one-party state...’ (sc 18), Tinubu presupposes the pursuance of the uniqueness of his action plan. He underlines the need for collective participation in politics by different group, as a definition of an ideal democracy and reality, as against what his government believes. The speaker’s willingness to dismiss a one-party state is expressed by the following lexical/modal verbs: offer/ shall/ have never attempted (18); and dare not do (22), to reveal his assumptions of the common knowledge and aspiration of the need for oriented actions.



(b) Politeness Strategies in the Address

The task of governance, though often vested on a group of people, is a collective responsibility if it must be successful. The periodic speech of a sitting president is to formally update the citizens on political development and the direction of governance in a country. Thus, as a communicative event, Democracy Day speech normally features promises or reassurances by the president as well as call or request for support by the citizenry and other nations. There is a major role relationship of the political leader (the president) and the citizens. Among the citizens, however, are some socially and politically special people. These may include the ex-presidents, business tycoons, educationists and other important dignitaries. The composition of the audience nationally is complex, and so is the nature of the distance. From the foregoing, the speech needs to aptly present the vision and or mission of the government and deftly save the face of the listeners to whom references may be made in it. Politeness is, therefore, requisite in ensuring fairness in the task. Tinubu's efforts in this direction are discussed in the next two subheadings:

(i) Face Saving Acts

The speech reflects premeditated face saving acts in spite of the biting criticism it contains. The speaker's consciousness of the importance of saving the face of his varied listeners and avoiding, or at least limiting face threatening acts, is asserted in the following words:

We must welcome and accept the diversity and number of political parties just as we welcome and embrace the diversity of our population. Our efforts must never be to eliminate political competition but to make that competition salutary to the national well-being by working across the political aisle whenever possible. (sc 25)
We are committed to giving more opportunities to young people through job creation and skills development... (sc 30)

The President's declaration of his government's promise to tolerate other political parties outside his party, underscores his knowledge of the place of sportsmanship and cooperation in achieving ideal democratic practice in Nigeria. It is a promise of recognition and an appreciation of collectivism. Besides his crave for unity in diversity, which defines a positive face saving act, the declaration of his administration's intention to uplift the economic fortunes of the younger generation is a testimony to his consciousness of the need not to threaten the listeners' negative face. The two pledges satisfy the requirements of both positive and negative politeness.

The speech begins on a note of appreciation and praise which are invariably a mark of recognition and a call for support. The expression, 'With profound honour' in the first sentence of the address enacts a polite recognition of the national law makers, and by extension, the people of Nigeria. The appreciation begins from the specific to the general. Expectedly, President Tinubu more specifically appreciates his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari and Chief M.KO Abiola and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe - for their role in the actualization of democracy in Nigeria as follows:

Let me pay tribute to former President Muhammadu Buhari for reaching back into history to rectify a national misdeed by making June 12 Democracy Day and by officially acknowledging Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe, as the victors and thus duly elected President and Vice President respectively of Nigeria after the June 12, 1993 elections (scs 7)



This is certainly pleasing to the outgoing president, the families of MKO Abiola, his running mate and listeners who believe that Buhari did his best during his tenure. In some subsequent sentences – 10, 11 and 52-55 the same expression of appreciation, and conferment of awards on certain Nigerians, is reiterated to show gratitude to the listeners generally, in order to give them recognition and make them feel valued in line with their own estimation of their self-worth.

The speech also features devices of inclusion which are prerequisites for achieving positive politeness. The first person plural and reflexive pronouns ‘we/us and ourselves’ are employed to foreground the speaker’s crave for support and perception of his home audience as active stakeholders in achieving the heights that Nigeria deserves. He, therefore, represents the audience as important through the audience inclusive pronouns deployed. Remarkable among the occurrences of these pronouns are the ones highlighted in the following part of the speech:

...we will launch a bold new initiative to empower four hundred thousand young Nigerians, including youth corpsers, with consumer credit (sc 29); We are committed to giving more opportunities to young people through job creation and skills development(sc 30); ... let us rededicate ourselves to the ideals of June 12; (sc 56)

The personal pronouns in each of the sentences above are face devices employed to reflect the collective spirit of democracy, which Bola Tinubu shares about the roles every individual owes Nigeria in a better society. The same reason explains the rare occurrence of the first person singular pronoun I in the text. Only in few sentences (52 -53) in the whole of the speech, do we find its use by the president, only employed while performing the personal role of presenting awards to beneficiaries.

(ii) Face Threatening Acts

Although the speech consists of varied face saving attempts made by the speaker, especially through such speech acts as appreciation, recognition and inclusion, it features a lot of criticisms which according to Levinson (1987) are intrinsically face threatening acts. At some point, the criticisms translate into poignant accusations. Perhaps, the speaker’s reason is to justify his capability and readiness to propel a democratic process. Unarguably, face threatening acts are natural in some contexts even though they are detestable. It is doubtful, however, if they are quite appropriate, especially as enormous as they are in this context. Threatening the face of social equals and dignitaries who have made selfless contributions to common course is not desirable.

Conscious of this fact, President Tinubu generalizes his criticism of the military regime as the failure of all Nigerians. The following excerpt exemplifies this strategy:

... Since 1999, democracy has risen from the ashes and destitution of military rule to take its rightful place as the only mode of governance of our resilient and beloved people....(scs3).

The above excerpt is a portrayal of the military administration as inept, and also, the employment of ‘ashes and destitution’ implies the negative influences of military government, which had caused the economy of Nigeria some setback.

Apart from mitigating the obvious threat posed to the military leaders in the speech act of criticism and or condemnation as shown above, Tinubu equally indicts his political opponents, for laying



false accusation against APC. He strives to mitigate this through metaphoric expression as shown below:

... I have never attempted to alter any political party registration with INEC. ... we cannot blame anybody seeking to bail out of a sinking ship even without a life jacket. (sc 18)

In the above sentence, 'seeking to bail out of a sinking ship' symbolizes the opponents who need help from alternative party, while 'a life jacket' refers to the acceptance the optional party (APC) grants intending opponents to deflect to another party. That exemplifies a fairly understandable face threatening act in the speech of the speaker.

Conclusion

Democracy Day speech as a form of discourse offers elected public office holders the opportunity to make promises and to give assurance of good governance through effective language use. Through the analyzed speech, Tinubu makes a lot of presuppositions to demonstrate his vast knowledge of Nigerians and current socio-political realities of Nigeria. The presuppositions serve as premise for the various promises he makes. They also account for the prevalence of structurally simple sentences through which he draws on the shared knowledge of his listeners without boring details. President Tinubu also embarks on a lot of face work asserting lucidly the essence of collectivism and the evil of dictatorship. The speech, however, conspicuously include ample avoidable face threats occasioned primarily by extensive criticism and accusation. The hedges employed are meant to mitigate the shock associated with his criticism, thus making them unavoidably bearable, but still sadly memorable.

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Appendix

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Speech In Commemoration Of Democracy Day, on June 12, 2025

Protocol:

1. With profound honour, I stand before this joint session of our National Assembly; a parliament that embodies the will of the Nigerian people.
2. Today, as I entered this grand edifice built from the sweat and toil of our democratic yearning, my heart stirred. It was a blend of accomplishment and resolve.
3. I felt a sense of collective accomplishment when I realised how far we had come as a nation. Since 1999, democracy has risen from the ashes and destitution of military rule to take its rightful place as the only mode of governance of our resilient and beloved people.
4. With every footstep I took through these hallowed halls up to the moment I now stand before you, I remembered that we still have much further to go.



5. To achieve this progress, we sought an elective office to lead this nation forward. Thus, I hereby affirm before our Merciful and Almighty God and all men my resolve to do all that I can to safeguard and build our democracy as the Divine hand intends for us to do.
6. Since 2018, we have celebrated Democracy Day on this day; to commemorate the sacrifices of the men and women who fought to restore democratic governance to Nigeria.
7. Let me pay tribute to former President Muhammadu Buhari for reaching back into history to rectify a national misdeed by making June 12 Democracy Day and by officially acknowledging Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe, as the victors and thus duly elected President and Vice President respectively of Nigeria after the June 12, 1993 elections.
8. Year by year, election after election, every time we debate instead of battle, discuss instead of fight, and argue instead of destroy, we preserve the institutions of democracy. More importantly, we weave the culture of democracy into the very fabric of our nation.
9. Whilst Chief MKO Abiola is June 12's central figure, we must not forget the long list of those who equally deserve to be called heroes of Nigerian democracy.
10. We must celebrate the courage of Alhaja Kudirat Abiola and Pa Alfred Rewane, both of whom were murdered by agents of military repression. We also remember the many civil rights activists, journalists, and politicians imprisoned, exiled, tossed aside, tortured and beaten by the military regime.
11. We remember Chief Anthony Enahoro, Commodore Dan Suleiman, Chief Abraham Adesanya, Ayo Adebajo, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, Balarabe Musa, Ganiyu Dawodu, the journalist Bagauda Kaltho, and Commodore Ndubuisi Kanu. I mention these names not to exclude or degrade the profound contributions of anyone else, but to illustrate, through these few heroes, the universality of our pursuit of democracy.
12. The struggle was never the province of any one group or section of the country, it was pan-Nigerian in its conception and will be even more pan- Nigerian as we strive to perfect it.
13. It is fitting that I come to this chamber. You are the authors of the people's law, and I must be their faithful implementer. While we may not always agree, we must forge a way to work together because this is what democracy demands of us. I pledge myself to this cooperation and ask that you do the same for the good of our people.
14. Mr. Chairman, the National Assembly has acted to uphold democratic ideals at every critical moment in our national history. In 2006, the 5th National Assembly protected our democracy against an unseemly third-term bid that would have ripped our constitution apart. In 2010, the National Assembly, through the doctrine of necessity, opened the door for then-Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to become the acting President following the illness of his predecessor.
15. Even under the military, the National Assembly tried to protect our democracy. After General Abacha took over power on November 17, 1993, and dissolved the National Assembly, some of us, led by Senator Ameh Ebute, the Senate President in the 3rd Republic, defied the General and his goons to reconvene in the Old Parliament Building in Lagos. We were jailed for our defiance.



16. On behalf of a grateful nation, I commend your invaluable role in lawmaking, oversight, and constituency representation.
17. At this point, I plead for your indulgence so that I may put a terrible rumour to bed.
18. To those who ring the alarm that the APC is intent on a one-party state, I offer you a most personal promise. While your alarm may be as a result of your panic, it rings in error. At no time in the past, nor any instance in the present, and at no future juncture shall I view the notion of a one-party state as good for Nigeria. I have never attempted to alter any political party registration with INEC. Equally, my friends, we cannot blame anybody seeking to bail out of a sinking ship even without a life jacket.
19. Look at my political history. I would be the last person to advocate such a scheme. In 2003, when the then-governing party tried to sweep the nation clean of political opposition through plot and manipulation, I was the last of the progressive governors standing in my region.
20. In all their numbers and false grandeur, they boasted of ruling, not governing, Nigeria for the next half century or more. Where are they now?
21. Yet, I stood alone. My allies had been induced into defeat. My adversaries held all the cards that mortal man could carry. Even with all of that, they could not control our national destiny because fate is written from above. A greater power did not want Nigeria to become a one-party state back then. Nigeria will not become such a state now.
22. The failed effort to create a one-party state placed progressive political forces on a trajectory to form the APC. It put me on the trajectory which has brought me before you today. I dare not do such a favour to any political adversary by repeating the same mistake of political overreach.
23. A one-party state is not in the offing. Nor should it ever be. That said, we would be guilty of political malpractice if we closed the door on those from other parties who now seek to join the APC and I sincerely welcome our party's newest members from Delta and Akwa Ibom States led by Governor Sheriff Oborewori and Pastor Umo Eno and other members of this National Assembly.
24. Political parties fearful of members leaving may be better served by examining their internal processes and affairs rather than fearfully conjuring up demons that do not exist. For me, I would say try your best to put your house in order. I will not help you do so. It is, indeed, a pleasure to witness you in such disarray.
25. We must welcome and accept the diversity and number of political parties just as we welcome and embrace the diversity of our population. Our efforts must never be to eliminate political competition but to make that competition salutary to the national well-being by working across the political aisle whenever possible.
26. One area in which democracy calls us to work together, whether in the legislative or executive branch, whether in this or other political parties, is that of economic and social development.
27. Upon assuming office, my team and I moved to reform our ailing economy. We introduced fundamental reforms to correct structural imbalances that prevented maximum growth.
28. We are already seeing results. GDP grew by 3.4 per cent in 2024, with Q4 hitting 4.6 per cent, the highest quarter of growth in over a decade. Inflation is easing gradually, steadying the price of



food staples like rice and beans. Our net foreign reserves have increased fivefold, and the Naira exchange rate has stabilised. Our balance of payments position is positive; our sovereign credit rating is improving as we continue to promote oil and non-oil exports. States now do not need to go about borrowing to pay salaries.

29. In less than one year, over one hundred thousand Nigerians, including thirty-five thousand civil servants, have benefited from affordable consumer credit through the Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation (CREDICORP), enabling them to purchase vehicles, light up and improve their homes and purchase life essentials. This July, we will launch a bold new initiative to empower four hundred thousand young Nigerians, including youth corpsers, with consumer credit.

30. We are committed to giving more opportunities to young people through job creation and skills development. Through such programs as NELFUND, we are investing in education, vocational training, apprenticeships, and internships to ensure our youth are job-ready and

future-ready.

Iyayi (CON), Dr John Yima Sen (OON), Alhaja Sawaba Gambo (CON), Dr. Edwin Madunagu (CON), Dr. Alex Ibru (CON), Chief Bola Ige (CFR), Pa. Reuben Fasoranti (CFR), Sen. Ayo Fasanmi (CON), Sen. Polycarp Nwite (CON) and Dr. Nurudeen Olowopopo (CON).

52. I also confer national honours on Prof. Wole Soyinka (GCON), Prof. Olatunji Dare (CON), the journalist and journalism teacher; Kunle Ajibade (OON); Nosa Igiebor (OON), Dapo Olorunyomi (OON), Bayo Onanuga (CON), Ayo Obe (OON), Dare Babarinsa (CON), Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah (CON), Senator Shehu Sani (CON), Governor Uba Sani (CON), Barrister Femi Falana, SAN (CON), Prof. Shafideen Amuwo (CON), Barrister Luke Aghanenu (OON), Senator Tokunbo Afikuyomi (CON), Hon. Labaran Maku (OON), Dr. Tunji Alausa (CON), Mr Nick Dazang (OON), Hon Abdul Oroh (OON), Odia Ofeimun (CON), Seye Kehinde (OON), Barrister Felix Morka (CON) Barrister Ledum Mitee (CON), Hon. Olawale Osun (CON), Dr. Amos Akingba (CON), Prof. Segun Gbadegesin (CON), Mobolaji Akinyemi (CFR), Dr. Kayode Shonoiki (CON), Prof. Julius Ihonvbere (CON), Prof. Bayo Williams (CON), Sen. Abu Ibrahim (CFR), and Sen. Ameh Ebute (CFR), General Alani Akinrinade, GCON.

53. Additionally, I confer the national honour of CON on Uncle Sam Amuka Pemu, a legendary journalist and publisher who remains true to his lifetime calling as he marks his 90th birthday tomorrow, June 13.

54. Furthermore, I also confer posthumous national honours on Ken Saro Wiwa (CON), the leader of the Ogoni Nine and his fellow travellers, Saturday Dobe (OON), Nordu Eawo (OON), Daniel Gbooko (OON), Paul Levera (OON), Felix Nuate (OON), Baribor Bera (OON), Barinem Kiobel (OON), and John Kpuine (OON). I shall also be exercising my powers under the prerogative of mercy to grant these national heroes a full pardon, together with others whose names shall be announced later in conjunction with the National Council of State.

55. Finally, it is my great privilege to now decorate the presiding officers of the National Assembly with the National Honours earlier conferred upon them last year:

Presiding National Assembly Officers

Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio, GCON – SENATE PRESIDENT



Rt. Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, PhD, GCON – Speaker

Senator Jibrin Ibrahim Barau, CFR – DEPUTY SENATE PRESIDENT

Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu, CFR – Deputy Speaker

56. In conclusion, let us rededicate ourselves to the ideals of June 12; freedom, transparent and accountable government, social justice, active citizen participation, and a just society where no one is oppressed.

57. Happy Democracy Day, and may God continue to bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria and protect our troops.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR

President, Commander-in-Chief of The Armed Forces,

Federal Republic of Nigeria