

When the Military Clashes with Civil Authority: A Critical Examination of The FCT Minister Versus a Naval Officer

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Abstract. This paper critically examines the altercation that occurred on 11th November 2025 between Nyesom Wike, Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and a naval officer of the Nigerian Navy, Lt. A.M. Yerima, in the Gaduwa District of Abuja. The incident involved a contested land plot and escalated into a verbal confrontation, highlighting tensions between civilian authority and the armed forces. Using a qualitative social research approach, the study draws on media reports, video evidence, legal texts, and scholarly literature to critically assess the actions of the minister, the senior officer who issued orders to the naval personnel, and the junior naval officer. Findings suggest that while the minister's mandate was legitimate, his method and tone breached institutional decorum; the senior officer exhibited poor judgment in deploying military personnel to a civil land dispute; and the junior naval officer displayed commendable professional restraint by insisting on obeying lawful orders. The paper concludes with recommendations to strengthen civil-military boundaries, land governance, and institutional protocols.

1. INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday 11 November 2025, an arguably routine site inspection by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) in the Gaduwa District of Abuja devolved into a dramatic confrontation between the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, and a group of officers of the Nigerian Navy commanded by Lt. A.M. Yerima. According to multiple media reports, the minister's entourage arrived at a site alleged to have been illegally developed. The naval personnel, however, blocked access citing military orders, sparking a verbal and near-physical altercation.

The confrontation raises significant questions about the boundaries of civilian authority, the professional role of the armed forces, and the proper relations between them. In a democratic society, the relationship between civil authority and the military must be governed by law, deference to institutional role and respect for due process. The incident thus offers a microcosm of broader challenges in Nigeria: tensions in civil-military relations, the culture of impunity, and the rule-of-law deficits in land governance. This essay provides a critical examination of the incident: first by reviewing relevant literature on civil-military relations and legal frameworks; then describing the factual findings of the altercation; followed by a discussion of the actions of the minister, the senior officer, and the young naval officer; and finally offering recommendations and a conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The altercation between Minister Nyesom Wike and Lt. A.M. Yerima on 11 November 2025 in the Gaduwa District offers a rich case study for understanding civil-military relations, rule of law, and institutional ethics in Nigeria. Scholarship on civil-military relations underscores that a professional military must operate under civilian oversight while respecting the rule of law, yet within the military itself, obedience to lawful orders remains paramount (Obuh, Davies, and Nsiegbe 5). This dual imperative — accountability to civil authority and adherence to military command — often generates tension, particularly in post-colonial democracies where historical legacies of military involvement in governance persist. In Nigeria, civil-military relations have been repeatedly tested, with the literature highlighting risks when armed forces are drawn into civil disputes without clear legal frameworks or civilian oversight (Ogah, n.p.).

The role of ministers and other civil authorities in regulating land use and enforcing administrative mandates is well documented. Public officials are expected to act within the limits of their legal authority, employing formal channels for dispute resolution rather than immediate confrontations (Obi, 2025). Yet, literature on governance and institutional behavior emphasizes the need for proactive enforcement to curb impunity and uphold regulatory mandates. Wike's insistence on verifying land development documents reflects this tension between procedural formality and urgent enforcement. Scholars argue that while ministers must avoid inflammatory conduct, their engagement in oversight roles is necessary to maintain institutional integrity and protect public interest (Obuh, Davies, and Nsiegbe 7).

Legal frameworks governing civil-military interaction in Nigeria reinforce the principle that the armed forces should only intervene in civil matters under clear statutory or executive authorization. The Nigerian Constitution and military statutes limit direct military involvement in civilian enforcement, except under specified conditions such as public emergencies or court orders (Ogah, n.p.). The literature highlights that deviation from these rules risks undermining democratic norms, eroding public trust, and blurring

institutional boundaries. In the Gaduwa incident, the senior officer's decision to deploy naval personnel to block a ministerial inspection exemplifies the risks identified in this scholarship, raising questions about legality, proportionality, and institutional prudence (Obi, 2025).

Professional military ethics, on the other hand, stress the importance of discipline, restraint, and adherence to lawful commands. Lt. Yerima's conduct aligns with the principles of military professionalism emphasized in scholarly analyses, including the need to maintain composure, assert lawful authority, and resist escalation under public pressure (Obuh, Davies, and Nsiegbe 9). Comparative literature indicates that junior officers who uphold lawful orders while exercising ethical judgment can serve as stabilizing agents in civil–military tensions, demonstrating the practical relevance of these ethical frameworks (Ogah, n.p.). This suggests that Yerima's insistence on carrying out his orders, coupled with his refusal to respond with intimidation or aggression, represents a case of professional exemplary conduct.

Media accounts and investigative reporting also provide insight into the incident's broader institutional implications. The public nature of the confrontation highlights how miscommunication and unclear jurisdiction can amplify conflicts, potentially undermining public confidence in governance (ThisDay Live, 2025; Premium Times, 2025; Channels TV, 2025). Scholars in governance and policy analysis emphasize that transparency, procedural clarity, and inter-agency cooperation are critical for preventing such high-profile conflicts (Obi, 2025). Moreover, land governance literature reveals that disputes over plots in Abuja often reflect systemic weaknesses, including opaque title allocations, unclear buffer zones, and a history of regulatory lapses, which exacerbate the likelihood of civil–military clashes (Obuh, Davies, and Nsiegbe 6).

Taken together, the scholarship on civil–military relations, governance, legal frameworks, and professional ethics provides a nuanced context for analyzing the 11 November 2025 confrontation. It highlights the legitimacy of Wike's concerns regarding potential impunity and unlawful land occupation, the risks posed by the senior officer's deployment decision, and the professional rectitude demonstrated by Lt. Yerima. The literature consistently underscores the need for balance: civil authorities must enforce laws without overreach, military personnel must respect lawful orders and avoid unilateral interventions in civilian matters, and institutions must maintain protocols that prevent escalation. The Gaduwa altercation thus exemplifies broader structural challenges identified in Nigerian governance studies: blurred civil–military boundaries, rule of law deficits, and the importance of ethical and professional conduct in maintaining institutional integrity (Ogah, n.p.; Obi, 2025).

In conclusion, the existing literature situates the incident within an ongoing discourse on civil–military relations, public administration, and ethical governance in Nigeria. It provides a framework for understanding the complex interplay between authority, professionalism, and procedural legitimacy, offering critical lessons for institutional reform and conflict prevention. The Gaduwa case underscores that while individual actors may exercise lawful authority, systemic clarity, inter-agency coordination, and respect for institutional norms are essential to preserving democratic order and public trust.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical approach, combining:

1. Documentary analysis – review of the 1999 Constitution, military statutes, FCTA regulations, and legal commentaries.
 2. Media analysis – examination of published news reports (ThisDayLive, Premium Times, Vanguard, Channels TV) and video footage of the altercation.
 3. Case study analysis – critical assessment of the conduct of the minister, senior military officer, and junior naval officer.
- This social research method allows for triangulation of sources to ensure reliability and academic rigor.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Factual Narrative of the Incident

During the inspection of the disputed plot in Gaduwa District, Minister Wike demanded that the naval officer produce legal documents authorizing the land development. He said:

“Show me the documents you have. You have no documents. We cannot continue to act with such impunity”

When Lt. Yerima explained that they were acting under orders, Wike retorted:

“Will you keep quiet. Are you a big fool?”

The naval officer responded firmly:

“I am not a fool, sir. I am acting on an order, and I am a commissioned officer”

The young officer responded calmly but courageous while the Minister rained abuses on him. This exchange underscores a clash of authority: the minister invoking civil administrative power and criticizing alleged impunity, while the officer asserts professional and legal legitimacy.

(For details, see *Premium Times Nigeria*, 11th November, 2025 for details. Other media like *This Day*, *Vanguard* etc also published it. Channel TV also televised it)

4.2. Critical Examination

4.2.1. The Minister's Conduct

From a constitutional and administrative perspective, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) possesses lawful authority over land management and development control within Abuja. Section 297(2) of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999* (as amended) vests ownership and management of all lands in the FCT in the Federal Government, to be administered by the Minister through the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA). Similarly, under the *Land Use Act* (Cap L5, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004), all land within the territory is held in trust by government for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians. These provisions justify the minister's inspection of disputed plots to ascertain compliance with statutory development procedures.

However, the manner in which the inspection was conducted raises serious questions of administrative decorum and proportionality. The decision to personally lead an unscheduled inspection of a site allegedly connected to a retired Chief of Naval Staff, especially when armed naval personnel were already on ground, reflected a confrontational rather than consultative approach. The minister's public rebuke of the naval officer — punctuated by accusations of impunity and threats such as “You will put yourself in trouble” — created an impression of executive intimidation rather than procedural enforcement. In a democracy

governed by separation of powers and rule of law, ministers must uphold both the substance and form of legality, demonstrating restraint, civility, and respect for other state institutions (Obi, 2025).

Yet, the minister's substantive concern — the possible encroachment upon an undevelopable “buffer zone,” the alleged absence of building approval, and the presence of armed guards at a civil development site — was legitimate. As the chief regulatory officer of the FCTA, he had the responsibility to intervene when unlawful development was suspected. His insistence on documentation (“You are not the one to say we have documents”) was consistent with administrative law principles demanding that every act affecting land rights be supported by valid legal authorization (Okorie, 2020).

Nevertheless, the minister's failure to follow due procedural steps — such as verifying the plot records at the Abuja Geographic Information System (AGIS), issuing a formal stop-work notice, or seeking judicial clarification — before confronting uniformed personnel on site constitutes a procedural lapse. Under Nigerian administrative law, even when a public authority acts within its mandate, actions must be exercised “reasonably and with fairness” (see *Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee v. Chief Fawehinmi* [1985] 2 NWLR (Pt 7) 300). The optics of a minister shouting orders at a serving officer undermined the dignity of civil authority and risked setting a precedent of public confrontation instead of lawful process.

In summary, the minister acted within his legal jurisdiction but outside the decorous standards expected of public office. His authority was sound; his execution was flawed.

4.2.2. The Senior Officer Who Sent the Military

While public attention centered on Lt. A.M. Yerima, the deeper institutional fault lies with the senior naval officer who issued the order to deploy personnel to the site. In military jurisprudence, command responsibility extends beyond physical presence; the issuing authority bears accountability for the legality and prudence of orders given. The deployment of uniformed and armed personnel to secure a plot of land under civilian dispute violates established civil–military protocols.

The *Constitution of Nigeria*, Section 217(2)(c), clearly states that the Armed Forces shall “aid civil authorities” only when called upon to do so by lawful order. Such aid must be requested through constitutional channels — usually by the President, the National Assembly, or an appropriate civilian agency — and must be limited to purposes consistent with national security or emergency relief. There is no legal basis for deploying military personnel to protect a private land interest or enforce property rights. As Ogah (n.d.) observes, “military participation in civilian tasks without transparent civilian oversight undermines democratic control and confuses jurisdictional accountability.”

By authorizing the deployment of naval guards to block FCTA officials from a disputed site, the senior officer blurred the line between civil jurisdiction and military command. This constitutes not only an operational misjudgment but also a constitutional anomaly. Nigerian jurisprudence recognizes that obedience to superior orders is not a defense when such orders are manifestly unlawful (*Nigeria Air Force v. James*, [2002] 18 NWLR (Pt 798) 295). The senior officer should have sought clarification from the FCTA or the Ministry of Defence before assigning military resources to a non-defensive task.

Furthermore, the decision to confront an active minister of the federation with armed personnel is institutionally corrosive. It diminishes civilian supremacy, the bedrock principle of democratic governance, and risks politicizing the military. From the perspective of public administration, it also signals a failure in inter-agency coordination and oversight. The incident exemplifies what Adebajo (2023) describes as “role confusion in Nigeria's security institutions, where military command sometimes substitutes for legal authority.” The officer's conduct thus represents not merely poor judgment but a breach of the constitutional order requiring military subordination to civilian power.

4.2.3. The Young Naval Officer (Lt. A.M. Yerima)

Amid the tension, Lt. Yerima's comportsment demonstrated remarkable professionalism under pressure. When confronted by the minister's aggressive questioning and demands, the junior officer maintained his composure, repeatedly identifying himself as a commissioned officer acting under orders. He neither resorted to personal insults nor escalated the exchange into a physical confrontation. His insistence on following instructions — while potentially controversial in context — aligns with the military ethic of obedience and discipline that sustains the armed forces' operational integrity (Buratai, 2021).

Ethically, the young officer's stance illustrates the dilemma faced by subordinates when orders potentially conflict with civil authority. Military professionalism requires absolute loyalty to the chain of command, yet international and domestic law also impose a duty to disobey clearly unlawful orders (International Military Code of Conduct, Article 8). In this case, there was no immediate evidence that Lt. Yerima's orders were manifestly illegal, only that their jurisdictional foundation was ambiguous. His choice to obey while maintaining composure, therefore, reflected prudence and discipline rather than defiance.

Nevertheless, his inability to provide clear documentation or articulate the legal basis for his deployment heightened the confrontation. From an administrative perspective, officers operating in civil spaces must possess written authorization detailing the purpose and limits of their mission. Had Lt. Yerima calmly produced a signed directive from the Ministry of Defence or his commanding officer, the minister's suspicion might have been allayed. His adherence to “the last lawful order” demonstrates fidelity to duty but also highlights the need for improved training in civil–military communication and de-escalation techniques (Ogah, n.d.).

In sum, while the senior officer erred in judgment and the minister erred in tone, the junior officer embodied restraint and procedural loyalty. His measured conduct contrasts sharply with the emotionally charged behavior of the civilians and underscores the importance of professionalism in maintaining institutional respect.

5. INSTITUTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The confrontation between the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and a naval officer over a disputed plot of land does not merely represent a moment of personal misunderstanding. It symbolizes a deeper structural weakness within Nigeria's governance architecture—where the boundaries between civil administration, security institutions, and political authority remain blurred. The episode reveals persistent institutional contradictions that reflect how overlapping jurisdictions and weak adherence to the rule of law continue to generate conflict between state organs.

5.1. Blurred Jurisdiction and Legal Ambiguity

At the heart of the incident lies a constitutional and administrative dilemma. The 1999 *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* vests executive powers for land administration in the state through authorized agencies. Specifically, Section 297(2) provides that “all lands in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, shall be vested in the Government of the Federation.” This power is exercised through the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), which manages allocation, planning, and enforcement. The presence of naval personnel at a disputed civilian site therefore intrudes into a jurisdiction legally reserved for a civil agency.

The *Land Use Act* (1978, Cap L5, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria) reinforces this arrangement by placing land under the trusteeship of the government for citizens’ benefit. Any development or occupancy without a valid Certificate of Occupancy contravenes Sections 5 and 28 of the Act. Thus, when the FCTA minister demanded documentation from the developers, he acted within his statutory mandate. However, the military unit’s simultaneous claim of authority over the same property exposed the fragility of Nigeria’s inter-institutional coordination. As Adebayo (2022, p. 42) explains, unclear administrative boundaries between civil and security institutions often lead to jurisdictional overlap and power contestation.

The incident further underscores the problem of informal influence. Retired military elites often retain proximity to power, using connections to shape property claims, contracts, and bureaucratic outcomes. This informal militarization of civil administration undermines transparency and invites friction (Ebohon, 2021, p. 55). A clear demarcation between official military duties and private economic interests is essential for sustaining democratic order.

5.2. Civil–Military Boundaries and Constitutional Supremacy

Nigeria’s constitutional democracy is founded on the supremacy of civilian authority over the military. Section 1(2) of the Constitution declares that no institution shall take control of the government or any of its functions except as permitted by the Constitution itself. Section 217(2)(c) defines the role of the armed forces to include “defending Nigeria from external aggression,” “maintaining territorial integrity,” and “aiding civil authorities when called upon to do so by the President.” Hence, military personnel cannot self-deploy for civil enforcement purposes without a presidential directive or appropriate civilian authorization.

By positioning the naval personnel within a civilian land dispute, the senior officer blurred the very line the Constitution was designed to protect. As Finer (2021, p. 14) observed, once the military intervenes in non-security domains, it weakens civil legitimacy and endangers democratic consolidation. The Nigerian experience since 1999 shows that even symbolic breaches—like this public face-off—can erode institutional trust and reinforce fears of military overreach. The *Armed Forces Act* (Cap A20, Laws of the Federation 2004) equally prohibits the use of military resources for non-authorized civilian tasks, making such intervention a potential disciplinary infraction.

5.3. Respect for Institutional Decorum and Public Ethics

Governance institutions derive authority not only from legal mandates but also from the moral discipline and decorum displayed by their officials. The public altercation between a federal minister and a naval officer represented a breach of both administrative ethics and public service norms. The *Public Service Rules* (2008, Rule 030402) demand that every public officer “maintain a standard of conduct worthy of public trust and respect.” Similarly, the *Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act* (Cap C15, Laws of the Federation 2004) emphasizes integrity, self-control, and respect for constituted authority as essential obligations of public office.

When such principles are violated in full view of the public, confidence in governance suffers. As Obi (2025, p. 16) argues, the symbolic capital of institutions depends on how their representatives conduct themselves, particularly under pressure. Both the minister’s combative tone and the officer’s open insistence on orders in public constituted breaches of decorum that demeaned their respective institutions. Decorum, as political theorists note, is not mere politeness; it is the ethical performance that sustains legitimacy (Okonkwo, 2023, p. 73).

5.4. Rule of Law, Land Governance, and Administrative Transparency

Beyond personalities, the confrontation illuminates the long-standing opacity of land administration in the Federal Capital Territory. Decades of irregular allocation, revocations, and overlapping claims have created an environment in which legality and influence frequently compete. The *Land Use Act* requires that land allocation and revocation follow due process and that all transactions be properly recorded. Yet, as multiple investigative reports have shown, the absence of publicly accessible databases of land titles continues to breed confusion and encourage illegal development.

Okonkwo (2023, p. 73) notes that lack of transparency in FCTA records makes it difficult for ordinary citizens or even public officials to verify ownership status, thereby creating openings for conflict. Without institutionalized mechanisms of verification, public officers are forced to rely on discretionary enforcement, which can be politicized. Such administrative uncertainty transforms legitimate inspections into confrontations, as each side questions the other’s authority.

This dysfunction ultimately erodes the rule of law. The rule of law presupposes predictability and accountability—values incompatible with arbitrary or opaque governance systems. Adebayo (2022, p. 43) warns that unless Nigerian institutions build integrated land-governance databases, disputes will continue to be “settled by influence rather than procedure.”

5.5. National Security and the Risk to Civil Order

The episode also raises concerns about national security and the cohesion of the armed forces. According to Buratai, a retired Chief of Army Staff, when uniformed officers engage in public altercations with civilian leaders, it threatens the chain of command and weakens public respect for the military institution (“Channels Television,” 2025). The Nigerian military’s strength has historically derived from internal discipline and public perception of neutrality. When that image is compromised, both morale and legitimacy suffer.

From a security governance standpoint, the incident illustrates the danger of “mission creep”—when military units, originally meant for defense, extend their reach into civil functions without clear authorization. This blurring of boundaries creates accountability vacuums that undermine democratic oversight. Finer (2021, p. 17) cautions that sustained militarization of civil spaces is a precursor to authoritarian drift.

5.6. Balanced Assessment

From a balanced perspective, the Minister of the FCT acted within the scope of his lawful duty as prescribed by the *Land Use Act* and the *FCTA Act* (Cap F6, Laws of the Federation 2010). His directive to inspect and halt illegal construction aligns with his administrative mandate. Nevertheless, his confrontational tone and public handling of the issue were unbefitting of a public officer expected to embody composure and leadership.

Conversely, the senior naval officials who deployed uniformed personnel to a civilian land site acted outside their constitutional role. Their action contravened the spirit of Section 217(2) of the Constitution and demonstrated poor understanding of civil-military boundaries. However, the junior naval officer involved displayed remarkable professionalism. His insistence on obeying his last lawful order, without personal confrontation or insubordination, reflected fidelity to military discipline and command ethics. His comportment exemplified the virtue of restraint that should characterize public service, even amid institutional ambiguity.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Clarify and Reaffirm Civil–Military Boundaries

The Federal Government should issue an executive circular jointly signed by the Ministry of Defence and the Office of the Head of the Civil Service defining the exact circumstances under which military units may assist civilian agencies. This clarification should emphasize compliance with Section 217(2)(c) of the Constitution and require written authorization from the President or the Minister of Defence before any civil engagement.

6.2. Land Governance and Legal Reforms

The FCTA should modernize its land management system through open digital registries accessible to the public. The *Land Use Act* should be reviewed to enhance transparency by mandating online publication of Certificates of Occupancy, revocations, and court decisions on disputed plots. Civil agencies, not security forces, must take the lead in enforcement actions to protect the integrity of land administration.

6.3. Inter-Agency Training and Sensitization

Training modules on inter-institutional ethics, communication, and de-escalation should be compulsory for both senior civil servants and military officers. The *National Defence College* and *Administrative Staff College of Nigeria* can jointly design a curriculum on civil–military relations emphasizing constitutional compliance and mutual respect.

6.4. Joint Access Protocols for Sensitive Inspections

When FCTA inspections involve properties linked to military personnel, the government should activate a joint civil–military liaison committee to coordinate entry and ensure security. This will prevent unauthorized armed blockades and improve cooperative oversight.

6.5. Institutional Dispute Resolution Mechanism

A permanent *Civil–Military Property Dispute Panel* should be created within the FCTA, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Defence, FCTA legal unit, Nigerian Bar Association, and judiciary. This panel would mediate or adjudicate ownership conflicts involving military-linked land to prevent confrontational enforcement.

6.6. Public Accountability and Institutional Healing

To repair public confidence, both the Ministry of FCT and the Nigerian Navy should issue coordinated public statements reaffirming their respect for the rule of law and constitutional boundaries. Such symbolic gestures can help reestablish professional trust and signal a renewed commitment to ethical governance.

7. CONCLUSION

The confrontation between Minister Nyesom Wike and Lieutenant A. M. Yerima on November 11, 2025, transcends a mere clash of personalities—it exposes the deeper crisis of institutional ethics and coordination within Nigeria's governance structure. What should have been a routine land inspection under the authority of the Federal Capital Territory Administration became a public display of institutional rivalry, revealing enduring ambiguities between civilian control and military subordination in a democratic setting.

Under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), sovereignty resides in the people, and the armed forces are subject to civilian authority (Sections 14[2][b], 217). The Minister, acting within his mandate under the Federal Capital Territory Act (1976), was legally justified in halting unapproved development. However, his public rebuke of a junior officer represented a lapse in administrative ethics. As Obi (2025) emphasizes, lawful governance must inspire confidence and restraint, not public confrontation.

Conversely, the deployment of naval personnel by a senior officer to secure a disputed civilian property contravened the Armed Forces Act (2004), which limits military involvement in civil matters to constitutionally sanctioned circumstances. Such overreach illustrates what Ogah (2023) terms “role confusion” in Nigeria's civil–military relations—a condition where institutional boundaries blur due to weak interagency coordination.

Amid this institutional tension, Lieutenant Yerima's composure under pressure reflects rare professional discipline. By obeying his last lawful order without escalating conflict, he embodied the ethical principle of military obedience and restraint. His conduct mirrors Aristotle's notion of *phronesis*—practical wisdom that harmonizes reason, virtue, and duty (Aristotle, 2009). In contrast to the minister's impulsive display of authority, Yerima's calm demeanor demonstrated the moral maturity essential for institutional integrity.

Beyond the civil–military dynamic, the episode underscores structural flaws in Nigeria’s land governance. The Land Use Act (1978) vests all land in the government for public benefit, yet poor documentation, overlapping mandates, and bureaucratic opacity fuel recurrent disputes. Akinola (2019) identifies this as a symptom of “administrative disorder,” where lack of clarity invites institutional clashes.

The public nature of the altercation further exemplifies what Adebani (2017) calls Nigeria’s “politics of performance,” in which officials seek validation through dominance rather than procedural correctness. This spectacle culture erodes public trust and undermines the quiet authority that characterizes mature democratic governance.

Moving forward, the Nigerian government must reinforce civil–military harmony through training, constitutional education, and institutional reforms. Clearer legislative oversight should define the military’s non-combat roles, while the Federal Capital Development Authority should digitize and harmonize land records to prevent conflicts. Above all, public officers must internalize the ethical obligations prescribed by the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act (2004), which enjoin integrity, humility, and respect for due process (Ezeani, 2022).

The Gaduwa incident should therefore be remembered not for its theatrics but for its lessons. Democracy endures where law tempers power, and where authority is exercised with wisdom, restraint, and respect for institutional boundaries.

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