



Democracy and security provisioning in Nigeria, myth or reality?

By

¹SOSINA Paul Seun PhD., ²EMMANUEL Gloria Ekeh PhD., ³CHONGS Wan Mantu PhD.,

⁴KESHINRO Sunday Adedotun., & ⁵ONIBIYO Ezekiel Rotimi

^{1-3&5}Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

⁴University of Ibadan, Nigeria

International Journal of Social Science, Management, Peace and Conflict Research, 04(01), 086-102
Publication history: Received on 19 June 2026; Revised on June 21, 2026; Accepted on 25 June, 2026

Abstract

Since 1999, Nigeria has recorded over two decades of uninterrupted democratic rule, peaceful transfers of power, and institutional frameworks for human rights protection yet citizens face escalating banditry, vandalism of Critical National Assets and infrastructure (CNAI), kidnapping, herder aggression on farmers, separatist violence, and police brutality that consistently place the country low on global peace and security indices. Anchored on Institutional Federalism Theory, this study interrogates democracy and security provisioning in Nigeria, myth or reality? The study engaged a qualitative doctrinal and analytical approach with constitutional instruments, scholarly literature, policy documents. The study finds that democracy has produced genuine institutional gains, agency to respond to CNAI protection, constitutional rights frameworks, the National Human Rights Commission, the Police Service Commission, power devolution from federal to States, and peaceful political transitions, but these have not translated into meaningful security improvements for ordinary citizens. This failure is attributed not to democracy's inadequacy but to the incomplete extension of federal principles to the security sector, which remains centralized and unaccountable in a federal state. Structural impediments identified are centralized policing authority, jurisdictional fragmentation among overlapping federal agencies, fiscal misalignment at subnational levels, and political manipulation of security forces. The proposed State Police and LGA autonomy reforms represent theoretically sound federalism applications validated by comparative evidence, but their success is conditional on robust constitutional safeguards, adequate fiscal transfers, clear coordination protocols, and strong civilian oversight to prevent gubernatorial abuse, coordination failure, and ethnic fragmentation. The study concludes that democratic security provisioning in Nigeria is neither a myth nor a full reality, it is a work in progress dependent on deliberate constitutional engineering. The study recommends a Constitutional Amendment establishing State Police with federal standards, prohibition on political deployment, a dedicated Security Trust Fund; a Security Sector Harmonization Act eliminating jurisdictional fragmentation and mandating intelligence-sharing; LGA financial autonomy with a Community Policing Framework; State Police Service Commissions and context-specific deployment strategies by state governments; comprehensive accountability reforms including body-worn cameras, public accountability reporting by security institutions; and active civil society and citizen participation in police oversight and community policing. These sequenced recommendations offer Nigeria an evidence-based pathway to transform its democratic security promise from aspiration into lived reality.

Keywords: Democracy, Federalism, LGA Autonomy, Security Provisioning, State Police

introduction

Democracy, in its essence, promises more than periodic elections it promises security of the person and property, access to justice, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts through representative and accountable governance (Lafenwa, 2026). For Nigeria Africa's largest democracy and most populous nation, with over 200 million people across 36 states, 774 local government areas, and more than 250 ethnic groups the gap

* Corresponding author: **SOSINA Paul Seun**

Department of Security and Strategic Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria.

between democratic promise and security reality has become a defining paradox of its post-1999 governance experience (Sodaro, 2015). On one hand, the country has witnessed peaceful transfers of political power in 2015 and 2023, expanded civil liberties, a vibrant and competitive media landscape, and the establishment of democratic institutions that were absent under decades of military rule (Koter, 2026).

On the other hand, citizens across all six geopolitical zones face daily threats from non-state armed groups, criminal gangs engaged in kidnapping and banditry, ethnic militias perpetrating farmer-herder conflicts and separatist violence, and paradoxically the very security forces nominally charged with their protection (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Nigeria consistently ranks among the lowest tier of countries on the Global Peace Index and the Global Terrorism Index empirical evidence that the democratic promise of safety and protection for ordinary citizens remains largely unrealized (Alemika, 2020).

Security provisioning extends far beyond the narrow function of policing to encompass the totality of institutional, legal, operational, and social arrangements through which the safety, dignity, and well-being of individuals and communities are secured (DCAF, 2015). It includes prevention strategies that stop threats from materializing, rapid response capabilities that address emergencies when they occur, intelligence operations that identify and neutralize threats before they escalate, community engagement frameworks that build trust and cooperation between security agencies and the citizens they serve, correctional services that rehabilitate offenders and maintain public safety, and the legal and oversight architecture that holds all security actors accountable to law and to the people (UNDP, 1994). The human security paradigm, which identifies the individual rather than the state as the primary referent object of security, is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context, where threats such as banditry, kidnapping, herder aggression on farmers, and police brutality are fundamentally threats to the safety and rights of individual citizens and communities rather than to the survival of the state as an abstract entity (Musa, 2026).

In Nigeria, security provisioning is fragmented across a complex array of federal agencies with overlapping mandates, competing jurisdictions, and no unified command or intelligence-sharing architecture (Onifade et al., 2013). The primary law enforcement agency the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) operates under Section 215 of the 1999 Constitution as a federally controlled institution, while specialized federal agencies including the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) each perform functions that frequently intersect with and overlap the NPF's mandate (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Nigeria maintains a police-to-population ratio of approximately 1:600 against the UN-recommended minimum of 1:450, leaving vast areas of the country without adequate security presence and state governors who bear the political consequences of insecurity within their domains constitutionally powerless to direct, fund, or deploy security resources in response to local threat profiles

(Ibrahim et al., 2025). This structural contradiction a federal state operating a unitary security architecture constitutes the core institutional problem that this study interrogates, drawing on Institutional Federalism Theory which holds that effective governance, including security provisioning, is best achieved when authority, responsibilities, and fiscal resources are distributed across multiple administrative tiers with clear mandates and adequate capacity (Jatau, 2025).

The recent passage of a bill to establish State Police and the concurrent move to grant financial autonomy to Local Governments represent the most significant shake-up of Nigeria's security architecture since the return to democratic rule in 1999 (Jatau, 2025). These constitutional reform proposals, currently before the National Assembly, would distribute security authority and fiscal capacity to subnational tiers of government state and local that are closer to the citizens they would serve, better positioned to understand local threat dynamics, and more accountable to the communities they are charged with protecting (Pino & Wiatrowski, 2016). Comparative evidence from federal systems including Germany, the United States, and South Africa demonstrates that multi-tiered policing architectures operating under robust constitutional safeguards, adequate fiscal transfers, and strong civilian oversight produce significantly better security outcomes than centralized models validating the theoretical promise of the proposed reforms (Pino & Wiatrowski, 2016). However, these reforms also introduce significant risks gubernatorial abuse of state police forces, inadequate fiscal capacity at the subnational level, coordination failure between tiers, and the potential for ethnic instrumentalization of security apparatus risks that demand careful constitutional engineering, institutional design, and phased implementation to manage (Ibrahim et al., 2025).

This study is academically significant as it fills a critical gap in Nigerian scholarship by systematically interrogating the intersection of democracy, security provisioning, and the proposed State Police–LGA autonomy triad an area largely underexplored in the existing literature (Jatau, 2025). It applies democratic policing theory and institutional federalism to a developing country context, moving beyond binary success or failure assessments to offer a nuanced "myth-versus-reality" analytical framework drawn from the liberal peace debate in peacebuilding scholarship (Richmond, 2014) that recognizes Nigeria's democratic security situation as neither entirely myth nor full reality but a contested, incomplete, and work-in-progress project. On the policy front, the study provides timely, evidence-based insights for the National Assembly as it considers the State Police bill, helping lawmakers design safeguards against political abuse, establish clear funding formulas consistent with Section 216A of the Constitution, and create robust oversight mechanisms at federal, state, and local levels (Pino & Wiatrowski, 2016). The study further offers a comprehensive mapping of the overlapping mandates among the NPF, FRSC, NDLEA, and NSCDC providing an analytical roadmap for a Security Sector Harmonization Act that would reduce jurisdictional turf wars, eliminate

duplication, and promote coordinated joint operations across Nigeria's fragmented security architecture (Alemika, 2020). It also provides actionable tools for civilian oversight including body-worn cameras, community security scorecards, and civil society representation on Police Commissions that can be adopted by state governments, the National Human Rights Commission, and reform advocates across the country (Alemika, 2020).

Societally, the study empowers ordinary Nigerians by demystifying the relationship between democracy and security equipping citizens with knowledge of their constitutional rights, the structural factors that undermine their safety, and the practical pathways through which they can demand accountability, participate in local safety initiatives, and hold all levels of government responsible for the protection of life and property (Diamond, 2002). By identifying evidence-based and theoretically grounded pathways to reform, the study ultimately contributes to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria transforming the democratic project from an abstract political arrangement maintained at the elite level into a tangible, lived reality of safety, justice, and dignity for every citizen, while simultaneously reducing the appeal of authoritarian alternatives that thrive precisely when democratic institutions fail to deliver their most fundamental promises to the people they serve (Richmond, 2014; Diamond, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has maintained an uninterrupted democratic dispensation since 1999, yet the relationship between democratic governance and security provisioning remains deeply contested. Despite constitutional guarantees of life and property, citizens face escalating threats from banditry, kidnapping, herder aggression on farmers, separatist violence, and pervasive police brutality. The lack of empirical clarity on the extent to which democracy has actually improved security outcomes for ordinary Nigerians. While political elites celebrate democratic consolidation, victimization surveys and peace indices indicate that many citizens feel less safe today than under military rule. This paradox democratic institutions coexisting with worsening insecurity suggests either that democracy has failed to deliver its security dividend or that the metrics used to measure security outcomes are inadequate. The study must therefore interrogate whether democracy has genuinely transformed security provisioning or merely repackaged authoritarian practices under civilian oversight.

The structural impediments that obstruct effective security provisioning within Nigeria's democratic framework is fragmented across multiple federal agencies; the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) with overlapping mandates, competing resources, and no unified command or

intelligence-sharing platform. Furthermore, the centralized control of general-duty policing by the federal government alienates state and local actors who possess contextual knowledge of local crime dynamics. This structural fragmentation is compounded by chronic underfunding, political manipulation of security forces for electoral ends, weak civilian oversight mechanisms, and a culture of impunity that has eroded public trust. Without a systematic interrogation of these impediments, reforms risk addressing symptoms rather than root causes.

The legislative moves to establish State Police and grant financial autonomy to Local Governments (LGAs). While these proposed changes hold theoretical promise for decentralizing security provisioning, it also introduces significant risks and uncertainties. The constitutional amendments before the National Assembly provide a framework but leave critical gaps; unclear jurisdictional boundaries between Federal Police and State Police, ambiguous funding mechanisms (federal grants under Section 216A may be inadequate or conditional), and insufficient safeguards against gubernatorial abuse of State Police as private militias. Simultaneously, autonomous LGAs could become either genuine platforms for community policing or sites of political patronage and elite capture. The problem is that no systematic analysis has yet examined how these two concurrent reforms State Police and LGA autonomy will interact to transform the security landscape. Policymakers are proceeding without empirical guidance on implementation sequencing, coordination protocols, or accountability mechanisms. This study therefore addresses the urgent need to analyze the potential influence of these reforms, distinguishing realistic prospects from optimistic myths, and providing evidence-based recommendations for a coherent, accountable, and effective multi-tiered security architecture for Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study provides answers to the below questions

- i. To what extent has democracy improved security outcomes for Nigerians?
- ii. What are the major structural impediments to effective security provisioning?
- iii. How can the proposed State Police and LGA autonomy transform the security landscape?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study interrogates democracy and security provisioning in Nigeria myth or reality?

While specific objectives:

- i. Examine influence of democracy on security outcomes for Nigerians

- ii. Interrogate major structural impediments to effective security provisioning in Nigeria
- iii. Analyse influence of the proposed State Police and LGA autonomy on security landscape in Nigeria

Conceptual Framework

Democracy

Democracy is a system of governance in which the authority to rule is derived from the people, exercised through elected representatives, and constrained by the rule of law. While scholars have offered various definitions of democracy over the decades, the most widely accepted understanding identifies it as a political system characterized by regular elections, universal suffrage, freedom of expression, and institutional guarantees of fundamental rights (Diamond, 1999). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) further extends this understanding by identifying human security encompassing personal safety, political freedom, and economic well-being as an essential component of democratic governance. In the Nigerian context, the return to democratic rule in 1999 marked the beginning of an era in which citizens could elect their leaders, form political associations, and challenge government decisions through courts and civic platforms. However, as Alemika (2020) observes, the existence of democratic structures on paper does not automatically translate into democratic outcomes for ordinary citizens, particularly in the sphere of security provisioning where the gap between institutional promise and lived experience remains stark.

Nigeria's democratic dispensation, now spanning over two decades, has been characterized by the conduct of regular elections, peaceful transfers of political power, and the entrenchment of constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights. The country has established democratic institutions such as the National Assembly, state governorships, independent electoral bodies, and human rights commissions (NHRC, PSC) that were absent under military rule (Diamond, 2002). Yet, scholars such as Sissenich (2007) warn that the mere existence of democratic institutions does not constitute a functioning democracy if those institutions fail to deliver accountable governance, social welfare, and security to the citizenry. This distinction between procedural democracy measured by the existence of elections and political freedoms and substantive democracy measured by the delivery of security, justice, and human welfare is central to the present study's interrogation of the democracy-security nexus in Nigeria.

For the purposes of this study, democracy is understood as a multi-dimensional system of governance that not only guarantees the right of citizens to choose their leaders through periodic elections but also commits the state to the protection of life, property, and fundamental human rights within a framework of constitutional civilian oversight.

Security Provisioning

The concept of security provisioning extends far beyond the narrow function of policing to encompass the totality of institutional, legal, operational, and social arrangements through which the safety and well-being of individuals and communities are secured. According to the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF, 2015), security provisioning refers to the development and maintenance of a security apparatus that is capable of providing protection to both the state and its people within a framework of civilian oversight and democratic accountability. This definition captures the two fundamental dimensions of security provisioning: the capacity dimension the ability of security agencies to prevent, detect, and respond to threats and the governance dimension the mechanisms through which security actors are held accountable to law and to the citizens they serve (Ball, 2003).

Nigeria's security provisioning architecture is characterized by a complex arrangement of multiple federal agencies with overlapping mandates and responsibilities. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF), established under Section 215 of the 1999 Constitution, serves as the primary law enforcement agency under federal control. However, it operates alongside the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the armed forces, creating a fragmented system with competing jurisdictions and no unified command or intelligence-sharing mechanism (Ibrahim et al., 2025). This fragmentation, compounded by chronic underfunding, inadequate personnel, political manipulation of security forces, and weak civilian oversight, has rendered Nigeria's security provisioning architecture largely ineffective in protecting ordinary citizens (Alemika, 2020).

The study conceptualizes security provisioning as the comprehensive system comprising prevention mechanisms, rapid response capabilities, intelligence operations, community engagement strategies, legal and accountability frameworks, and correctional services all coordinated within a multi-tiered governance structure that places the safety and rights of the individual at its center. Effective security provisioning, in this understanding, is not merely the presence of armed personnel on the streets but the totality of arrangements that enable citizens to live in safety, dignity, and freedom from fear.

The Rise of Specialized Federal Agencies

The FRSC (established 1988), NDLEA (1990), and NSCDC (2003, reformed 2007) were each created to address specific gaps. However, their mandates have expanded, leading to jurisdictional overlaps and turf wars. For example, the NSCDC guards critical infrastructure, but the NPF also claims authority over pipeline vandalism. The FRSC performs traffic policing, but some states have attempted to create their own traffic authorities, leading to confusion.

The State Police Bill (2025/2026)

The House of Representatives has passed a bill to create State Police alongside the Federal Police with key provisions that include each state to establish its own police force by state law, subject to national minimum standards. The National Police Council (NPC) to oversee appointments, removals, and standards. The Federal Police retains jurisdiction over the FCT, inter-state crimes, and may intervene only in emergencies or upon governor's request, and the State Police Service Commissions handle recruitment and discipline below ACP rank (Eboesomi, 2026).

Local Government Autonomy

In parallel, the National Assembly has voted to grant financial and administrative autonomy to Nigeria's 774 LGAs. This creates a natural third tier for community policing wards and villages could fund local security auxiliaries under the oversight of State Police. However, the integration mechanism remains vague.

Myth vs. Reality

The "myth vs. reality" analytical framework employed in this study interrogates the critical gap between the normative promises of democratic governance and the empirical outcomes experienced by ordinary citizens in Nigeria's security landscape. This framework draws its intellectual foundation from the liberal peace debate in peacebuilding and conflict resolution scholarship, which critically examines whether the liberal democratic model premised on elections, rule of law, and market economics actually delivers the peace and security it promises to developing states (Richmond, 2014).

Applied to Nigeria's democracy-security nexus, the "myth vs. reality" framework exposes a profound paradox: Nigeria is celebrated as Africa's largest democracy with over two decades of uninterrupted civilian rule, yet its citizens face escalating threats from banditry, kidnapping, herders aggression on farmers, separatist violence, and the very security forces charged with their protection. The "myth" is the formal democratic narrative Nigeria holds elections, citizens enjoy constitutional rights, security institutions exist to protect life and property, and the rule of law prevails. The "reality" is the lived experience of ordinary Nigerians: a country that consistently ranks poorly on the Global Peace Index and Global Terrorism Index, where victimization surveys reveal that many citizens feel less safe today than they did during the military era, and where democratic institutions coexist with informal, often abusive, security practices (Ibrahim et al., 2025).

The "myth vs. reality" framework employed by this study is operationalized through an examination of four critical dimensions: first, the gap between Nigeria's democratic institutional frameworks the National Human

Rights Commission, Police Service Commission, and constitutional guarantees and their actual enforcement and impact on citizens' daily safety; second, the structural impediments that obstruct effective security provisioning, including fragmented command structures, overlapping jurisdictions, and chronic underfunding; third, the proposed reforms State Police and LGA financial autonomy and the tension between their theoretical promise and the practical risks they pose, including gubernatorial abuse and elite capture; and fourth, comparative evidence from Germany, the United States, and South Africa, which demonstrates that democratic security provisioning is achievable but requires specific institutional, fiscal, and governance preconditions that Nigeria has yet to fully establish.

The study concludes that democratic security provisioning in Nigeria is neither entirely a myth nor a full reality. It is, rather, a work in progress an ongoing, contested, and incomplete project whose prospects depend on deliberate constitutional engineering, genuine political will, meaningful inter-agency coordination, and active citizen engagement. The "myth vs. reality" framework thus serves not as a verdict of failure but as an analytical lens through which the precise nature of the gaps between democratic promise and security delivery can be identified, understood, and addressed through evidence-based reform. A myth is a widely held but false belief about democratic security ("democracy automatically reduces crime"). Reality refers to empirically verifiable outcomes ("crime rates under democracy have fluctuated, with some categories worsening").

Myths and Realities of Democratic Security Provisioning

Myth: Democracy Has Made Nigeria Safer

Reality: While certain indicators (e.g., return of civilian rule) are positive, crime victimization surveys show that fear of crime has increased. The 2022 Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) report noted that oil theft and pipeline vandalism rose despite NSCDC presence. Banditry in the North-West and North-Central killed over 5,000 people between 2021 and 2023 alone.

Myth: The Federal Police is Neutral and Professional

Reality: The NPF has been repeatedly used for political ends dispersing opposition rallies, arresting critics, and shielding corrupt officials. The #EndSARS Lekki Toll Gate shooting (October 2020) remains a watershed moment where soldiers were called in to suppress protesters, revealing the thin line between policing and military repression.

Myth: State Police Will Automatically Solve Nigeria’s Security Problems

Reality: Without safeguards, State Police risk becoming the private militias of governors used to rig elections, harass opponents, and extort citizens. Examples from Mexico and India show that decentralization without accountability can worsen abuse.

The Emerging Reality: A Hybrid System

The most accurate description is fragmented democratization. Nigeria has moved from complete federal control to a conversation about multi-level policing. Some states (Lagos, Kaduna, Katsina) have already created community security outfits (e.g., Amotekun, Ebube Agu) that operate with state backing but without constitutional recognition. The State Police bill seeks to regularize these.

Challenges to Effective Security Provisioning

Drawing from proposed constitutional amendments and realities, below challenges stand out:

Challenge	Description
Constitutional Ambiguity	The bill creates Federal Police and State Police but does not fully resolve overlaps (e.g., who investigates a drug-related kidnapping on a federal road?).
Fiscal Constraints	Most states cannot fund a professional police service. Section 216A provides for federal grants, but the amount and conditionality are unclear.
Political Manipulation	Governors may use State Police to intimidate LGAs controlled by opposition parties, especially now that LGAs have financial autonomy.
Coordination Gaps	No single platform exists for sharing intelligence among NPF, State Police, FRSC, NDLEA, NSCDC, and military.
Low Public Trust	Decades of abuse have made citizens wary of all uniformed forces. Without accountability mechanisms, State Police will inherit this distrust.
Capacity Deficit	Nigeria lacks sufficient training institutions, forensic labs, and equipment to support 37 new police forces (36 states + FCT).
Elite Resistance	The federal police establishment and some political actors benefit from centralized control. Implementation will face bureaucratic sabotage.

Source: Authors Compilation (2026)

Prospects

Short-Term Prospects (2026–2027)

Pilot State Police: Roll out in 3–5 states (e.g., Lagos, Rivers, Kano, Plateau, and Anambra States) to test frameworks before national implementation. Harmonization Act as the National Assembly should pass a law clearly delineating jurisdiction with State Police for general duty, FRSC for road safety, NDLEA for narcotics, NSCDC for critical assets, Federal Police for inter-state and FCT. National Crime Database should be deliberately invested in a secure, cloud-based platform accessible to all agencies.

Medium-Term Prospects (2027–2030)

Mandatory Body-Worn Cameras for all State and Federal Police officers on patrol, with footage subject to civilian review in order to deepen accountability. Community Policing Councils at LGA and ward levels, composed of elected citizens, traditional rulers, and civil society, to oversee State Police performance. Existence of Federal Grants Formula that links grants to compliance with human rights standards, gender diversity, and crime reduction metrics.

Long-Term Prospects (2030 and beyond)

Judicial and Correctional Reforms as security provisioning is incomplete without speedy justice. Establish specialized courts for law enforcement misconduct and decongest prisons through non-custodial measures. Regional Cooperation should be mainstreamed to create a joint security mechanism for border states to combat cross-state banditry (North-West, North-East cooperation). Civilian National Police Council such that the NPC should include majority non-state members (currently balanced between federal/state officials and civil society).

Comparative Lessons

In Germany, the Länderpolizei (state police) operate autonomously but follow federal training standards. The Bundespolizei handles railways and borders. Coordination is mandatory. In the USA with over 18,000 agencies, success largely depends on local funding and elected sheriffs. Risk of militarization and racial profiling exists, and in South Africa, community policing forums (CPFs) are legalized platforms for civilian oversight, though effectiveness varies.

Theoretical Framework

Institutional Federalism Theory

This study is anchored on Institutional Federalism Theory, which posits that effective governance including security provisioning is best achieved when governmental authority, responsibilities, and fiscal resources are distributed across multiple administrative tiers (Sodaro, 2015; Watts, 2008). The theory holds that subnational governments possess superior contextual knowledge of local security dynamics, enabling them to respond more swiftly, appropriately, and accountably to citizen security needs than distant central governments (Jatau, 2025). Nigeria's formal federal structure with federal, 36 state, and 774 local government tiers stands in sharp contradiction to its unitary policing architecture, in which all general-purpose policing authority is concentrated at the federal center under the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) (Ibrahim et al., 2025). This structural mismatch constitutes the central problematic of the study: Nigeria's democratic political framework operates on federal principles, yet its security sector remains locked in a centralized, pre-democratic model that violates the distributive principles Institutional Federalism Theory identifies as prerequisites for effective public service delivery.

This theory explains why Nigeria's democratic dispensation has failed to improve security outcomes for ordinary citizens. The theory predicts that democratic governance combined with centralized security authority produces accountability deficits because citizens cannot identify, engage, or hold responsible the specific actors shaping their security environment (Diamond, 2002). Nigeria maintains one of the world's lowest police-to-population ratios approximately 1:600 against the UN-recommended 1:450 with the deficit most acute at local levels (Ibrahim et al., 2025). State and local governments, which bear the political consequences of insecurity, possess no constitutional authority over the NPF and cannot deploy security resources in response to their unique threat profiles from banditry in the Northwest, to separatist violence in the Southeast, to herder aggression on farmers in the Middle Belt. The study concludes that democracy's failure to deliver security outcomes in Nigeria is not inherent to democratic governance but to the incomplete extension of federal principles to the security sector, creating a structural gap between Nigeria's democratic political architecture and its unitary security model.

Institutional Federalism Theory provides the analytical lens for diagnosing Nigeria's structural impediments to effective security provisioning as consequences of centralized authority. The theory identifies two primary failures; jurisdictional fragmentation, where multiple federal agencies the NPF, FRSC, NDLEA, and NSCDC operate with overlapping mandates, competing resources, no unified command, and no intelligence-sharing platform, producing turf wars, duplication, and coverage gaps rather than coordinated response (Alemika, 2020); and fiscal misalignment, where the federal government controls the bulk of national

revenue while state and local governments closest to security threats lack the fiscal capacity to fund responsive security initiatives, creating a structural incapacity that no political commitment can overcome (Jatau, 2025). The theory further explains how centralization facilitates the political manipulation of security forces for electoral and partisan purposes, as the absence of subnational accountability mechanisms leaves security power unconstrained (Alemika, 2020). Weak civilian oversight, culture of impunity, and the deployment of military forces in internal security all documented impediments in Nigeria's security landscape are thus understood not as isolated administrative failures but as systemic consequences of violating institutional federalism principles in the security sector.

Institutional federalism theory serves as the normative blueprint for the proposed State Police and LGA financial autonomy reforms, predicting both their theoretical promise and practical risks. The theory supports the establishment of State Police as an application of federalism principles that would distribute security authority to the tier closest to the threat, enable context-specific deployment, and create multiple accountability forums that constrain abuse (Pino & Wiatrowski, 2016). However, the theory generates critical cautionary predictions: decentralization without adequate fiscal transfer mechanisms risks nominal rather than real devolution of authority, while command authority held by state governors creates risks of gubernatorial abuse the weaponization of state police for political repression or personal protection (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Similarly, LGA financial autonomy would enable community policing structures at the grassroots level locally recruited, locally accountable, and culturally familiar but only if embedded within a broader framework of legal oversight and inter-governmental coordination to prevent elite capture and ethnic instrumentalization (Jatau, 2025).

The study therefore concludes that the proposed reforms represent theoretically sound applications of institutional federalism that would significantly improve Nigeria's security landscape but only if implemented through a carefully sequenced framework of constitutional safeguards, robust fiscal formulas, and multi-tiered civilian oversight mechanisms drawn from comparative evidence in Germany, the United States, and South Africa. Institutional Federalism Theory thus unifies the study's three objectives as a unified diagnosis of Nigeria's democratic security deficit as a structural federalism problem requiring a structural federalism.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, desk-based research design utilising policy analysis and secondary sources. The research questions are explored through a conceptual policy analysis drawing on public records, electoral timelines, and diplomatic practice. Academic literature and data are drawn from publicly available records of State Policing, and Homeland Security. The analytical approach is thematic and strategic. No

primary data collection was undertaken; instead, the paper extrapolates from documented events and established state policing principles.

Discussion of Findings

The findings on the first research question reveal that democracy has produced genuine institutional gains for Nigeria's security governance the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission, the Police Service Commission, the NSCDC's statutory mandate for CNAI protection, constitutional rights frameworks under Chapter IV, and peaceful transfers of power in 2015 and 2023 confirming submissions that democratic transitions produce institutional frameworks qualitatively superior to military rule. However, these procedural gains have not translated into substantive human security improvements for ordinary citizens, as evidenced by over 5,000 banditry-related deaths in the Northwest between 2021 and 2023, spikes in herders aggression on farmers in Plateau State, 2,938 kidnapping victims in 2025 alone, the Lekki Toll Gate massacre of 2020, and Nigeria's persistent ranking among the lowest tier of countries on the Global Peace Index findings that validate both Alemika's (2020) observation that democratic structures on paper do not automatically produce democratic outcomes. The study concludes that this democracy-security paradox is not evidence of democracy's inherent inadequacy but of the incomplete extension of federal principles to the security sector a structural diagnosis anchored in Institutional Federalism Theory which predicts that democratic governance combined with centralised security authority produces accountability deficits where citizens cannot identify, engage, or hold responsible the actors shaping their security environment (Jatau, 2025).

Findings also identify five interlocking structural impediments that obstruct security provisioning within Nigeria's democratic framework. The primary impediment is jurisdictional fragmentation the dispersion of security authority across the NPF, NSCDC, NDLEA, and FRSC operating under different statutes, different ministerial supervisions, and no unified intelligence-sharing platform producing the siloed operations, duplication, and coverage gaps that Onifade et al. (2013) and Alemika (2020) identify as creating fatal operational consequences and that the DCAF (2015) framework identifies as fundamentally incompatible with effective security governance. This fragmentation is compounded by fiscal misalignment where the federal government controls the majority of national revenue while subnational tiers closest to security threats lack fiscal capacity to fund responsive security initiatives (Jatau, 2025); the systematic political manipulation of security forces for electoral and partisan purposes confirmed by the documented deployment of police to suppress opposition and the military's intervention at Lekki; a civilian oversight deficit where the Police Service Commission and NHRC exercise limited practical authority, producing the culture of impunity and public distrust that Ibrahim et al. (2025) identify as driven by extortion, extrajudicial killings, and corruption;

and the persistent vandalism of Critical National Assets and Infrastructure prosecuted through a legislative patchwork.

The findings on the third research question conclude that the proposed State Police and LGA autonomy reforms represent the most theoretically sound application of Institutional Federalism Theory to Nigeria's security sector since 1999, confirmed by comparative evidence from Germany's *Länderpolizei*, the United States' multi-agency policing model, and South Africa's community policing forums which demonstrate that multi-tiered policing architectures under robust constitutional safeguards produce superior security outcomes (Pino & Wiatrowski, 2016). State Police would distribute security authority to the tier closest to the threat, enable context-specific deployment across Nigeria's diverse threat profiles banditry in the Northwest, separatist violence in the Southeast, herder-farmer conflicts in the Middle Belt while LGA financial autonomy would create the fiscal capacity for community-level intelligence collection and policing structures that feed into State Police operations and the national intelligence architecture, closing the intelligence pipeline whose blockage produces the lag that asymmetric actors systematically exploit (Ibrahim et al., 2025). However, the study finds that this transformation is conditional rather than automatic, contingent on the resolution of four critical challenges the current bill inadequately addresses: the risk of gubernatorial capture of State Police as private militias, confirmed by comparative evidence from Mexico and India about elite instrumentalisation (Pino & Wiatrowski, 2016). The study's most distinctive finding is that without a Security Sector Harmonisation Act and a National Intelligence Fusion Protocol as companion measures, the addition of State Police to an already fragmented architecture risks compounding rather than resolving jurisdictional fragmentation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that democratic security provisioning in Nigeria is neither entirely a myth nor a full reality it is a work in progress whose prospects depend on the deliberate extension of federal principles to the security sector through carefully sequenced constitutional reforms. Nigeria's democratic dispensation has produced real institutional gains constitutional rights frameworks, human rights commissions, regular elections, and peaceful political transitions that should not be dismissed, yet these gains have not translated into meaningful security improvements for ordinary citizens who face escalating threats across all country's regions

The central finding of this study is that Nigeria's democratic security deficit is fundamentally a structural federalism problem, not a governance capacity or political will problem one in which the democratic political framework has been selectively applied, with political power distributed along federal lines while security authority remains concentrated at the federal center, creating a structural mismatch that violates Institutional

Federalism Theory's principles. The proposed State Police and LGA autonomy reforms represent the most credible pathway available for correcting this structural imbalance grounded in tested federalism principles and supported by robust comparative evidence but their success depends entirely on the quality of the constitutional and institutional framework within which they are implemented.

The study concludes that completing Nigeria's democratic transition by extending federal principles to the security sector is the central challenge and the central opportunity available to Nigerian policymakers, civil society, and citizens seeking to transform the democratic security promise from an aspiration into a lived reality for all citizens.

Recommendations

- i. National Assembly should constitutionally entrench civilian oversight mechanisms, including an independent National Police Council with investigative authority over all security agencies, mandatory quarterly accountability reports to the National Assembly and National Human Rights Commission, and statutory requirements for community engagement, including regular citizen-police dialogues and community security advisory councils at local government levels, which would institutionalize the democratic principle of security as a public good subject to popular accountability.
- ii. National Assembly should pass a Security Sector Harmonization Act that clearly defines jurisdictional boundaries between the NPF, FRSC, NDLEA and NSCDC establishes a Joint Security Operations Committee with mandatory intelligence-sharing protocols; and creates a unified inter-agency crime database accessible to all security actors and civilian oversight bodies. This would address the fragmentation, duplication, and intelligence silos that presently constitute the most significant structural barrier to coordinated security response in Nigeria.
- iii. The National Assembly should enact a Constitutional Amendment establishing State Police with safeguards including federal standards for training and human rights compliance, an independent National Police Council to enforce compliance, and a dedicated Police Fund with guaranteed federal and state contributions to prevent fiscal inadequacy. Simultaneously, state governments should establish State Police Service Commissions with independent investigative authority and civil society representation, and invest in community policing models tailored to each state's unique threat profile. This would enable the localized, context-sensitive security provisioning that State Police and LGA autonomy are designed to achieve while maintaining national accountability standards.

References

- Alemika, E. E. O. (2020). Policing and Human Rights in Nigeria: A Critical Review. *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, 13(1), 45–68.

- Alemika, E. E. O., & Chukwuma, I. C. (2021). *Police Reform in Nigeria: Issues and Prospects*. CLEEN Foundation.
- Ball, N. (2003). *Enhancing Democratic Governance of the Security Sector*. The Hague: Clingendael Institute.
- Bayley, D. H. (2005). *Changing the Police: The Importance of Democratic Policing*. Oxford University Press.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & De Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- DCAF Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. (2015). *Security Sector Governance Backgrounder*. Geneva: DCAF.
- Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Diamond, L. (2002). Elections without Democracy: Thinking outside the Box. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2), 21–35.
- Eboesomi, S. (2026, June 11). UPDATED: Reps pass bill for establishment of state police. *Premium Times*. Retrieved <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/886852-updated-reps-pass-bill-for-establishment-of-state-police.html> Accessed June 22, 2026
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2025). *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Fifth Alteration) Bill – State Police Provisions*. National Assembly.
- Global Peace Index. (2025). *Institute for Economics and Peace*. IEP.
- Human Rights Watch. (2023). *"They Dressed Like Soldiers": Nigeria's NSCDC Abuses*. HRW.
- Ibrahim, A., et al. (2025). Policing in Contemporary Nigeria: Issues and Challenges. *Heliyon*, 11(3), e43291.
- Koter, D. (2026). *National Identity in Africa: Peace, Democracy, and Everyday National Narratives*. Oxford University Press.
- Lafenwa, S. A. (2026). Electoral Reforms: A Panacea for Electoral Malpractices in Nigeria's Fourth Republic?. In *Election Administration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Challenges and Prospects* (pp. 47-75). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Musa, A. (2026). Human Security and Non-State Actors in Africa: A Double-Edged Sword under Neoliberal Governance.
- Nwagwu, E. J. (2024). *Federalism and Policing in Nigeria: The Case for State Police*. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 12(2), 45–67.
- Oli, N. P., Ibekwe, C. C., & Nwankwo, I. U. (2018). Prevalence of herdsmen and farmers conflict in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities*, 3(1), 30-39.
- Onifade, C. A., et al. (2013). Addressing the Challenges of Security Agencies in Nigeria: The Need for Strategic Policing. *African Research Review*, 7(3), 112–128.
- PSC (Police Service Commission). (2024). *Annual Report on Police Conduct and Discipline*
- Richmond, O. P. (2011). The Problem of Peace and the 'Liberal Bias'. In O. P. Richmond (Ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding* (pp. 1–21). London: Palgrave.
- Richmond, O. P. (2014). *Failed Statebuilding: Intervention, Violence and Failure in the Liberal Peace*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sissenich, B. (2007). *Building States without Governance*. New York: Routledge.
- UNDP. (1994). *Human Development Report 1994*. New York: Oxford University Press.