

# BULLETIN

OF "CAROL I" NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

<https://buletinul.unap.ro/index.php/en/>

## Nigeria's Development Trajectory, Security Conundrum and the State-Citizens Relations

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### Abstract

Crime represents a profound threat to societal well-being, generating misery and disorder. Understanding its nature, causes, patterns, and consequences is vital for its effective prevention and control. In Nigeria, the past two decades have witnessed a steady rise in criminal activities, straining resources and impeding national development. Relying on the Social Contract thesis, this study examines how the preponderance of criminality and insecurity has systematically hindered Nigeria's developmental aspirations. In this study, we contend that the state's primary duty is to safeguard citizens and their property, as espoused by the social contract theory. However, the relentless wave of criminality in the last two decades in Nigeria has greatly undermined the social agreement between the Nigerian state and its citizens. This is in addition to the diversion of resources from other state's responsibilities to the security of the citizenry and the defence of the state. The implication of this situation, as revealed in this study, is the general hampering of the comprehensive national progress and prosperity of the Nigerian state. In this regard, we, therefore, recommend the imperativeness of a communal approach towards tackling the spate of security challenges in Nigeria whilst also recognizing that safeguarding the society remains a collective responsibility of both the Nigerian state and its citizenry. By fostering a culture of security amongst all, the Nigerian state and its citizenry can address the pervasive triggers and impact of crime whilst building a safer and prosperous future for all.

### Keywords:

crime; insecurity; social disorder; developmental aspirations; social contract; security.

### Article info

Received: 31 January 2024; Revised: 18 February 2024; Accepted: 5 March 2024; Available online: 5 April 2024

Citation: Adeyinka, T.Y., M.O. Lawal, O.O. Akinrinde and R.K. Alatise. 2024. "Nigeria's Development Trajectory, Security Conundrum and the State-Citizens Relations". *Bulletin of "Carol I" National Defence University*, 13(1): 194-211. <https://doi.org/10.53477/2284-9378-24-13>



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Crime is a common and regular feature of social life. Its pervasiveness accounts for its recognition as a significant threat to human existence across all known societies ([Durkheim, 1938](#)). The fact that much of society's resources are dedicated to crime prevention and management ([Carter and Youngs 2016](#)) underscores the relevance of criminality to ordered social life. The widely acknowledged social import of criminality has persuaded scholars to conclude that crime is as old as human society. As anthropological knowledge of primitive social organisation indicates, deviation from societal norms and actual acts of criminality have characterised human societies regardless of size and level of modernisation and complexity ([Malinowski 1926, 2](#); [Marshall and Johnson 2005](#)). Crime in the contemporary period is commonly reported in both developed and developing societies ([Ahonsi-Yakubu 2001](#)). That crime report permeates the global media scene may be linked to the fact that the prescribed social precepts through which social relations are mediated are routinely compromised across cultures.

Described as an act punishable by law ([Odekunle 1992](#)) or the breaking of 'prohibiting' laws to which legitimate punishments are attached ([Scott and Marshall 2009](#)), crime varies based on period, place, and society ([Henry and Lanier 1998](#)). The prevalence, magnitude, and modes in which criminal activities are perpetrated equally differ spatiotemporally ([Cahill 2005](#)). Thus, violations of social rules, whether deliberately or otherwise, are liable to sanctions following the dictates of traditions and conventions of different social settings in which they occurred. In other words, variations in criminal behaviours and the associated punishments are culture-specific. Regarding its effects, criminality could be described as antithetical to development as it generally thwarts genuine efforts and plans toward nurturing human progress. [Canter and Young \(2016\)](#) believe that the nature, techniques and volume of criminality are critical to how society and its culture are constructed and reconstructed. The incidence of crime and its rising profile can be closely linked to poverty, unemployment, inflation, illiteracy, lack of education, greed and over-population ([Oguntunde et al. 2018](#); [Kunnuji 2016](#)). An escalation of crime increasingly stimulates insecurity in society and destroys the very basis of trust between the state and its human resources. Underscoring the significance of security to human progress, [Oyebode \(2011\)](#) states that "without security, hardly anything is possible." The nexus between crime and insecurity underscores the need for man to routinely appraise and fine-tune the existing crime management strategies or scout for more effective options to attain a more secure existence.

While crime generally constitutes a significant source of grief to an ordered social life, it is not the only factor of insecurity in human existence ([Werthes, Heaven and Vollnhals 2011](#)). Over the years, this fact has necessitated a global effort towards arriving at an expanded conceptualisation of "security" from different perspectives. Apart from the anxieties inflicted by acts of criminality, security has been holistically measured by considering man's social, political, economic, and environmental circumstances, including his access to adequate food, income, good

health and environment, essential social services, and other vital elements that make for a secured existence (Adger et al. 2014; Werthes, Heaven and Vollnhals 2011). Expanding the concept to capture Nigeria's situation vividly, Babangida (2012) identified food sufficiency, water supply, power supply, good roads, good schools, good hospitals, functional infrastructure, decent housing, effective public transportation system, etc., as genuine indices for measuring national security. To guarantee adequate security for members of a social group, however, there is a need to entrench positive cultural values and attitudes. Studying the nature, causes, and patterns of crime has been of tremendous value to social existence given that the social, economic, and cultural consequences on society at large cannot be over-emphasised (Oguntunde et al. 2018). From this standpoint, this paper examines the Nigerian state's capacity to realise its developmental aspirations amidst the rising trend of criminality and insecurity. The rationale for this attempt is to underscore the imperativeness and social values of inculcating a culture of security among the populace.

### **Nigeria's Security Situation: A Review of Extant Literature**

The extant literature has shown that human life is generally becoming more precarious by the day as cases of criminality have become commonplace, while all the state security apparatuses seem lacking in capacity to curtail the trend. There is an increasingly high level of uneasiness and apprehension across all regions of Nigeria as communal and ethno-religious clashes, armed robbery, assassination, murder, and gender-based violence have become daily occurrences. As the number of criminals increases with desperation and ruthlessness, their tactics and strategies become more sophisticated (Otto and Ukpere 2012). In the last decade, however, crime volume has increased, and the pattern has varied as new strategies have been devised to carry out criminal machinations. Apart from the usual categorizations such as stealing, armed robbery, rape, fraud, corrupt practices, assassination, religious violence, and other criminal activities that have gained predominance over the years, additional modern concerns include cybercrime, identity theft, hostage taking, kidnapping, ritual killing, and so forth. The already scary security situation has been unfortunately worsened by violent conflicts, resulting in insurgency and terrorist activities. The political angle to Nigeria's drab security situation has also been aggravated by the secessionist agitations of the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-eastern axis, which ruthlessly impose terror on the social, economic and material existence of the ordinary people daily. Of utmost concern, according to the Civil-Military Fusion Centre (2013), is the height of human misery inflicted by the gruesome activities of the agitators, insurgents, and bandits. In recent years, a seeming atmosphere of siege and social tension has engulfed Nigeria's socio-physical space.

The primary responsibility of any state is to care for and protect its people. This core obligation underscores why security attracts the highest priority among the preconditions for human development (Haider 2011; DFID 2010). In effect, the primary purpose of the Nigerian state as enshrined in Section 14, sub-section (2) (b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) is to secure the lives, properties, and welfare of the people (The Nigerian Constitution, 1999). In recognition of this, successive administrations in Nigeria have focused on human welfare and promoting the sanctity of human life. Nigeria’s annual budgetary allocation to the security sector in the last twelve years (shown in Table 1) underscores the burden placed by the need for security on the Nigerian economy. Although large sums are budgeted to cater for the security needs of Nigerians annually, security challenges continue to mount as large chunks of security funds are being diverted for private use (Abiodun, Asaolu and Ndubuisi 2020).

**TABLE 1 Budgetary Allocation to the Security Sector from 2012 to 2022**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Budget Allocation in Naira</b>
2012	764.19 billion
2013	953 billion
2014	932 billion
2015	969 billion
2016	1.06 trillion
2017	1.14 trillion
2018	1.35 trillion
2019	1.76 trillion
2020	1.78 trillion
2021	22.7 billion
2022	2.41 trillion
2023	2.98 trillion

Source: www.budgetoffice.gov.ng

Apart from the massive federal allocations for defence and internal security, the 36 states and 774 local government areas make budgetary provisions amounting to billions of naira to secure people within their territorial boundaries (Adebakin and Raimi 2012). These figures exclude the whopping sums paid (albeit secretly) in local and foreign currencies as ransom by families, government agencies, private organisations, etc., to secure the releases of individuals held in one form of captivity or another. Added to these are the large sums annually allocated since the 2009 fiscal year to cater for the amnesty initiative aimed at stemming the tide of militancy in the Niger Delta region. These and many other reasons underscore the socio-economic importance of crime and insecurity to human and national development in Nigeria. While it remains a fact that security is *sine qua non* to socio-economic and political progress, the ever-increasing security expenses and related costs constitute serious setbacks to Nigeria’s quiescent economy and have particularly weighed down on the country in the pursuit of her developmental aspirations in recent years.

Recently, efforts by the Nigerian government to deter or disrupt potential attacks and strengthen the nation’s security apparatuses via the provision of security facilities and broadcast security tips have been noted in the mass media

(Azazi, 2011). Nonetheless, the penchant for criminality in Nigeria remains very high. This phenomenon can be understood from Obafemi Awolowo's statement in Gbenga and Augoye (2011) that "insecurity is a result of a malignant environment dominated by man's insensitivity to man." Thus, a good number of public officeholders in Nigeria have taken advantage of their privileged positions to introduce and implement policies that impoverish the downtrodden and strip them of their right to security while their interests are protected.

On account of the preceding, Nigeria has consistently ranked low in the Global Peace Index (GPI 2012), thus indicating a worsened state of insecurity in the country. For quite a while now, the government's efforts to secure lives and properties in Nigeria have not yielded enough positive results (Adagba et al. 2012; Uhunmwangho and Aluforo 2011). In confirmation of the worsening crime situation, a particular pattern appears to have also been formed along the geographical subdivisions of the country (Okechukwu and Onyishi 2011). For instance, armed robbery attacks generally used to dominate Nigeria's criminal scene have recently been surpassed by kidnapping and abduction. In the North, cases of cattle rustling, cross-border banditry, and ethno-religious violence have constituted threats to human security, while the problems of hostage-taking and kidnapping are among the criminal activities commonly reported in the South-South and Southeast. The various sources of security threats to Nigeria and their geographical predominance are shown in Table 2. The changing dimension of criminality has made every Nigerian, irrespective of class, status, sex, age, or geographical location, become a potential victim of this despicable and asocial act.

The country's current insecurity situation has led many to wonder if Nigeria has not returned to the Hobbesian state of nature where life was 'nasty, brutish and short with no just law to checkmate human excesses. To further show the criticality of insecurity in Nigeria, Adahi (2011) observed that public functions and gatherings are now held amidst tight security and that the Nigerian government has done far less to secure itself, not to talk of providing adequate security for the populace as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

**TABLE 2 Patterns and Geographical Prevalence of Insecurity in Nigeria as at 2022**

S/N	Security Threat	Zonal Prevalence
1	Militancy, Separatist agitation and vandalism	Southeast, South-South, and Southwest
2	Ethno-religious crisis	North West, North Central, Southwest
3	Banditry, Kidnapping, Ritual Killing	All Zones, but prevalent in the Northwest
4	Terrorism and Insurgency	North-East, Northwest, and North-Central
5	Cattle rustling	North-East, North-Central, Northwest
6	Security Sector violence against civilians	All zones
7	Maritime insecurity (Piracy)	Southwest, South-south
8	Herder-farmer related conflicts	Northwest, Northcentral, Southeast, Southwest
9	Armed robbery, criminal gangs	All zones

Source: Adapted from Duerksen (2021) and Africa Centre for Strategic Studies

The atmosphere of insecurity that pervades the nooks and crannies of Nigeria has been worsened by the allegations of compromise and conspiracy levied against security personnel, particularly those at the top stratum, commissioned to give security and safety commands. The impact of the resulting feeling of insecurity on the psychic and overall functioning of Nigerian society cannot be overestimated. Given the presently alarming security challenges and uncertainties, a cross-section of the populace has been canvassing for the creation of state police to complement the present 'unitary' policing structure obtainable within the Nigerian federal structure. The seeming ineptness of the central government has propelled the emergence of some regional security outfits in the last two years. For instance, the five states in Southwestern Nigeria have lately established a security network codenamed *Amotekun* (leopard). Similar agencies like *Ebube Agu* (wonderful tiger) and *Shege-ka-Fasa* (I dare you to attack or surrender) have been established in Southeast and Northern Nigeria, respectively. Given this persistent state failure, one may be tempted to question the appropriateness and applicability of the word "society" in the face of the current social quandary. Thus, exploring the nexus between people and the state may be necessary to understand the significance of the state's role in securing people's lives and properties.

### **Theoretical Explication**

Nigeria remains a country characterized by diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious dimensions, which grapples with an alarming rise in security challenges and criminality. Here, we adopt the Social Contract Theory of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau in shedding light on the shortcomings of the Nigerian state in safeguarding the security and welfare of its citizens and the reason why the breach in the social contract between the Nigerian state and the people has constituted a challenge to Nigeria's development aspirations.

Specifically, in the past two decades, Nigeria has witnessed an upsurge in criminal activities, spanning communal clashes, armed robbery, terrorism, and insurgency. The complexity of the security landscape is further intensified by ethno-religious tensions, secessionist movements, and the emergence of regional security outfits, causing significant human suffering and emphasizing the pressing need for effective solutions. Thomas Hobbes argued that individuals, in a state of nature, would relinquish certain freedoms for security under a powerful sovereign. In Nigeria, the escalating insecurity signifies a breakdown of this social contract. The government's inability to establish a monopoly on the use of force allows criminal elements to flourish, challenging the Hobbesian contract ([Hobbes 1651](#)).

John Locke, on the other hand, emphasized the protection of life, liberty, and property as the fundamental role of government ([Locke 1690](#)). The Nigerian state's failure to curb criminality breaches this contract. Inadequate policing, corruption,

and the misallocation of security funds contribute to a lack of protection, infringing on citizens' rights and properties. The Nigerian police force and other security services continue to face challenges of insufficient personnel, outdated equipment, and low motivation. This failure to provide an effective security apparatus violates the social contract's premise of citizens surrendering certain freedoms for protection. The diversion of substantial security funds for private use exacerbates the challenges. Corruption within the security sector undermines the state's ability to fulfil its end of the social contract, as resources intended for protection are misappropriated.

Similar to Locke's thesis, Rousseau's social contract posits that citizens collectively shape the general will, and the state should ensure the common good. In Nigeria, the fragmentation of society and the emergence of regional security outfits reveal a failure to forge a unified general will. Ethnic and regional tensions undermine Rousseau's theorizing, hindering collective security efforts (Rousseau 1762). Nigeria's diverse ethno-religious landscape has led to regional tensions and the formation of independent security outfits. This fragmentation weakens the state's authority, failing to unite citizens under a common goal of security as envisioned in the social contract.

Unsurprisingly, the evolving nature of security threats, such as cybercrime and terrorism among other thriving criminal enterprises, reveals the failure of the Nigerian state to adapt and respond effectively to the burgeoning security situations in the state. The state's inability to anticipate and address emerging challenges further breaches the social contract, thereby compromising the citizens' security.

It is however clear that Nigeria's security challenges and criminality demonstrate a significant breach of the Social Contract between the state and its people, as popularised by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. The state's failure in areas of policing, resource management, ethno-religious unity, and adaptation to new threats further highlights the urgent need for comprehensive reforms. Addressing these failures is thus crucial to restoring the social contract between the state and the people whilst ensuring the protection and well-being of Nigerian citizens in a unified and secure nation.

## Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design to delve into the complex dynamics of security issues in Nigeria's underdevelopment problematics. It scrutinizes existing reports, government documents, and academic publications related to crime, insecurity, and development in Nigeria with emphasis on understanding, through the prism of the social contract thesis, the nature, causes, and consequences of criminality and insecurity, as well as the role of the state in the provisioning of security for the people. Thematic analysis is applied in categorising and interpreting the data obtained from documents, and secondary sources. Thus, the aim is to identify recurring themes, patterns, and nuanced understandings of the security challenges and their impact on development.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **The State and Security Needs of Citizens**

Social thinkers, both classical and modern, have analysed the nature of human society, particularly concerning the relationship between the state and the people it governs. The social contract theory was propounded through the works of intellectual giants like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The central thesis of the theory borders on the notion that in the prehistoric era, man had lived in the state of nature where his life was never secure for reasons of inequality in terms of strength and intelligence. In this natural state, no individual was powerful or smart enough that he could not be outwitted by any other. Each person thinks he is capable of achieving whatever he wants. Hence, there was competition over available limited resources, thus leading to the war of all against all. As the social contract theorists pictured, life in the state of nature was generally chaotic, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, short, and characterised by fear and apprehensions due to man's greed, selfishness, and lack of just law to checkmate human excesses. The desire to escape this natural arrangement and the need for order, self-preservation, and protection led men to surrender individual powers (excluding their rights) to a sovereign authority capable of utilising the same to achieve collective good. The substance of this theory is that the state results from an agreement entered into by men who initially had no governmental organisation (Laskar 2013). In other words, the powers of the state were derived from the people inhabiting it.

The previous explains why Section 14 (2b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has recognised "security, protection, and welfare of the people of Nigeria as the primary purpose of government" ([The Nigerian Constitution 1999](#)). For it to realise its aim in this regard, the Nigerian state has established a wide range of security agencies and institutions, including the Nigeria Army (NA), Nigeria Air Force (NAF), Nigeria Navy (NN), Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Department of State Security Service (DSS), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Correctional Services, Nigeria Security Agency (NSA), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and several others to curb criminality and provide for the security needs of its people. This arrangement validated the social contract between the citizens and the Nigerian State, more so that individual freedom has been relinquished to enthrone higher-order collective safety and security.

### **Policing to Secure Nigeria: Issues and Challenges**

One of the central government agencies in charge of modern society's internal security and safety is the professional police force, with policing being its primary function. In Nigeria, the Police institution is principally in charge of law enforcement and the lead security agency ([Wikipedia n.d.](#)). Policing has always been of great



necessity in all societies for safeguarding safety, order, and social relations. The inevitability of policing becomes more evident in modern societies as social life has become characterised by multiplicities and ambiguities arising from population heterogeneity, urbanisation, industrialisation, and conflicting ideologies ([Alemika and Chukwuma 2000](#)). Therefore, the place of the Police in security discourses and management cannot be undervalued. Without the Police, creating and maintaining order, legality, and attaining desired social progress may prove very difficult. As earlier noted, the primary responsibility of the Police is policing. By policing, we refer to acts of securing obedience to extant laws and conforming to the precepts of social order. As [Alemika and Chukwuma \(2000\)](#) have reiterated, the importance of the Police is acknowledged and highly recognised. Still, security responsibilities were not placed solely on her if matters of policing in Nigeria were considered holistically. This points to the fact that policing goes beyond training, kitting, and equipping some specialised officers and men to mount vigilance and ward off criminal acts and tendencies. Everyone, including the ordinary man in the neighbourhood, needs to get involved in the policing process for society to be sufficiently secure.

Being a body of individuals assigned by the state to enforce law and order, the emergence of the Police is a recent development in human history ([Reiner 2000](#)). The Nigeria Police, in particular, was established in 1930 ([Alemika and Chukwuma 2000](#)). The organisation was saddled with the responsibilities of maintaining law and order and preventing criminal behaviour among the citizens of Nigeria. Its roles are vividly captured in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where the Nigeria Police are assigned the statutory powers to:

Investigate crimes, apprehend offenders, interrogate and prosecute suspects, grant bail to suspects pending completion of investigation or before court arraignment, serve summons, and regulate or disperse processions and assemblies. They are also empowered to search and seize properties suspected to be stolen or associated with crime and to take and record, for purposes of identification, the measurements, photographs, and fingerprint impressions of all persons..., in their custody ([The Nigerian Constitution, 1999](#)).

Section 4 of the Police Act specifically provides that:

The (Nigeria) Police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property, and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are charged ([FGN 1990](#)).

The above legal provisions place the Nigeria Police at the core of crime prevention and internal security management. In addition, ever since its establishment, the police institution has been contributing its quota towards fulfilling the broad national

security objectives of the Nigerian state. The rising insecurity within Nigerian society has shown that its security management system is grossly inadequate. If the United Nations stipulated standard for an effective policing system is considered, one would understand why the best performance by the Nigerian Police has never been enough, and may never be, to meet the everyday security challenges facing the citizenry unless the requisite attention is accorded to the policing system. Going by the United Nations' (2009) recommendation, a ratio of 1:400 Police per person is required, among other preconditions, for a country to confront security challenges in its jurisdiction amply. By implication, at least one Police should be available to cater to the security needs of 400 persons before any country could reasonably boast of achieving effective crime prevention and management. Personnel deficit, among other essential factors, has contributed significantly to the terrifying security situation in the country today. Nigeria, with an estimated population of over 214.5 million people (World population Review 2022), can boast of having only 371,800 police personnel to manage its internal security (Interpol 2016). Even though it has one of the most considerable police personnel in the world, the current ratio of about one police personnel to six hundred citizens (1:600) is grossly inadequate as it falls below the United Nations' recommendation. Thus, for Nigeria to meet up in her latest efforts to increase the strength of its staff, the country needs to recruit more hands. It is in light of this deficit that one of the erstwhile Inspectors-General of Police has mentioned that the Nigeria Police Force required an additional 155,000 personnel to be able to adequately measure up handling the security issues upsetting the country (Vanguard 2017).

Whether the UN recommended figure is met or not, the capacity of the Police to effectively manage security lies' not entirely on its number but in the spirit of discipline and professionalism that must be built into its daily operations.' Regrettably, everyday encounters of ordinary Nigerians with police personnel or institutions have always generated negative assessments of the Police from significant segments of the Nigerian populace. In several instances, officers and men of the organisation have been accused of complicity in criminal matters. This has been observed to flow from low motivation and professionalism (Alemika and Chukwuma 2000). Additionally, intelligence gathering - a *sine qua none* for efficient and effective policing - is at its lowest ebb. These have created a high distrust between the Police and the masses, regardless of its personnel and equipment sophistication. The ordinary men in the neighbourhoods who may be willing to vouch for information are often suspected and unfairly treated by the Police. All these have discouraged the free flow of information to the Police from willing members of the public. It is also disheartening that the neighbourhood vigilance culture seems non-existent to the extent that people no longer show interest in taking notes of the happenings and wanderings of strange people around them.

Away from the numerical strength of police personnel is the question of the age of the equipment they brandished in most of their engagements. Sources also

indicate that police officers are often low-paid, lacking equipment, and need re-training ([Vanguard 2017](#)). Apart from being inadequate, most of their weapons have become outdated. Modern and state-of-the-art equipment needed to facilitate the adequate performance of the Police in combating security challenges facing the Nigerian populace is not available to the Nigeria Police. In the era of internet technology, it is abnormal for basic computer systems to be conspicuously absent in Police stations, let alone officers being computer literate. The gulf between Nigeria's analogue approach and the e-policing system is far apart. Police inefficiency in the maintenance of law and order became glaring as cases of armed robbery involving the use of sophisticated weapons and high casualties, as well as incidences of ethno-religious conflicts, persisted in the country.

### **State Security Apparatuses and Security Management**

Because of the shortfall in public policing, governments in Nigeria have had reasons to engage the Nigerian military deeply, along with other state security apparatuses like the DSS and NSCDC, to complement the efforts of the Nigeria Police in internal security management. While substantiating this claim, Muhammed Abubakar, the GOC of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mechanized Division in Ibadan, quoted in [Albert \(2012\)](#), reported that the Nigerian Army was directly supporting the Police to maintain security operations in 33 out of the 36 states of the Nigerian Federation. Hardly is there any state in Nigeria today where the military is not involved in providing internal security. Despite the enormous support offered by the military and large chunks of the nation's resources sunk into the security sector, Nigeria's security situation remains precarious. However, it berates rational judgment to blame the growing insecurity in Nigeria entirely on the Nigerian Police and other supporting security institutions. This is against the backdrop of the facts gathered through studies on the political economy of police operations, which established that no agency or institution could function outside the dictates of its social, economic, political, and cultural environments. In other words, all the state security agencies in the country are just sub-sets of the more extensive Nigerian social system. As a result, the imperfections emanating from Nigeria as a nation having its distinct peculiarities are bound to be reflected in the operations of its security institutions. For instance, despite the shortfall in Nigeria's police per person ratio, services of the Police appear to be for the highest bidders- the elite, as the police officers are quite often assigned to guard the homes of the influential, government buildings, and act as bodyguards for critical public officials ([Marenin 1985](#)) and traditional rulers. Such practices teach the rank and file of the Police who needs protection and who does not, who is entitled to police services, and whose demand can be rejected ([Alemika and Chukwuma 2000](#)). Ibrahim Coomassie, a former Inspector-General of the Nigeria Police Force, once decried that:

“... any time a citizen becomes a public figure, his first official correspondence on assuming duty is to write the Inspector-General

of Police to ask for an orderly and policemen to guard his house... Everybody wants to use the Police as a status symbol. Yet, members of the organisation remain without accommodation, adequate remuneration, tools to work with, transport to patrol, effective communication, and appropriate intelligence outfits to support their operations (Coomassie 1998, 10).

The above underscored that the political, economic, social, and cultural precepts obtained within the Nigerian society are affecting the capacities of its security agencies, particularly the Police, to prevent criminal activities effectively. It is, therefore, self-evident that this pattern of police service delivery persists until now and reflects the economic and political hierarchies in the country.

Since independence, the cumulative experience in Nigeria also demonstrates a linkage between socio-political and economic crises and insecurity. Okechukwu and Onyishi (2011) rightly observed that insecurity has manifested in Nigeria in various forms. While some have emerged via the nation's chaotic political process, others came through ethnic bigotry and religious fanaticism. Economic factors have also accounted for the currently biting insecurity situation. Many crises have erupted from struggles among a large army of able-bodied but unemployed Nigerian youths over the distribution or re-distribution of national resources.

### **Towards a Bottom-top Approach to Security Problems in Nigeria**

Culture as an attribute of a social group evolves over time. For any group to develop or imbibe a specific culture, members need to be socialised or re-socialised in the context of the norms and values available in the cultural milieu. To develop a security culture, Nigerians must be appropriately socialised or re-oriented towards achieving the larger objectives of securing lives and property in Nigeria. For instance, with the nature and current level of criminality at the community level in Nigeria, not many people care any longer to seek information about friends and next-door neighbours regarding what they do and where they do it. Also, fewer numbers (if any) have taken time to keep some security alert numbers as made available to the public through various media channels. In addition, many parents do not deem it necessary to instruct or monitor children to be watchful of or monitor all happenings within their immediate environments.

As earlier noted, adult members of society must change their orientations *vis-a-vis* the security of their respective communities. The lingering indifferent attitude must be discarded for a warm embrace of a security-inclined attitude. Keener attention needs to be paid to some taken-for-granted, but security-enhancing dispositions.

For example, people need to be vigilant about movements and events around them and be mindful of the implications of such happenings for personal and community safety. Beyond this, people must be informally trained to avoid revealing personal information to prospective afflicters. Closely related to this is the fact that people need to refrain from discussing personal affairs in public spaces, physical or virtual. Knowledge about police-community relations and the roles of security agents must be deepened. Adult members could be taken through semi-formal classes explicitly focusing on the basic tenets of community security and safety. People of proven integrity should be recruited into committees where security issues would be discussed. Vigilance and alertness on the part of homeowners and other stakeholders regarding the suitability of individuals for membership would help. Even though security matters should be the business of all, attendees at security meetings must, for security reasons, keep security discussions secret.

There is great wisdom in gaining access to the official phone numbers of the security units covering the immediate neighbourhoods or access lines to Police control rooms to alert them when the need arises. Sadly, not many have considered it a necessity to have those important phone numbers on their mobile phones. As a demonstration of sheer lag in security culture, many do not care about these numbers, probably to show their disbelief (or distrust) in the nation's security system.

Perhaps due to negligence, absent-mindedness, pride, or over-westernisation, many find it difficult to recall the details and identities of their valuables and personal effects in cases of burglary or theft. Individuals might need to start paying attention to these details to reduce the chances of losing them totally in cases of attacks. Besides, people must memorise the mobile numbers of close relations or colleagues. These may be useful in cases of distress or emergencies. Driving requires extra vigilance to be secured against the dangers of other reckless road users. This is in addition to being safety and security compliant anytime they are on the wheel.

Parents must be watchful of who their children socialise with. They must always voice out on strange behaviours or items noticed with their children or wards. The benefits offered by the internet and mobile technological revolution are irresistible, while its abuses are also colossal. The positive opportunities must be utilised to reinforce the security network among family members and the community. At home, children could be given helpful security instructions such as some parents instructing their children/wards "not to talk to strangers." This will probably prevent them from being kidnappers, child abusers or paedophiles. As we ride with them in cars, they could be encouraged to take notes of strange events as they drive along.

Security and safety culture can also be entrenched in the school curriculum to traverse the levels of our educational system. Basic tips on pro-security habits could be introduced at the primary and secondary levels. At the same time, courses on safety and security should be developed and incorporated into the general studies

curriculum across Nigeria's higher institutions. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) training programmes could also be reviewed and expanded to include more intensive and compulsory military service for a certain minimum number of years. The Turkish Compulsory Basic Military Training ([IFOR 2021](#)) and the Israeli Compulsory Military Service ([Itsik 2020](#); [Moshe 2004](#)) can be adapted to evolve a more robust and sustainable security policy for Nigeria. It needs to be clarified that it is not until Nigeria is transformed into a police society that it can sufficiently secure its people. There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria, going by its population, occupies an important position in Africa and the entire black race. Therefore, it needs a correspondingly strong and formidable security system to remain a rallying point within the continent. The central idea is that the success stories recorded in other climes concerning security management can be shared and adapted to improve Nigeria's security situation.

## Conclusion

Environments inundated with crime and insecurity are always permeated with tension and anxiety. That prompted Tagba (2011 cited in [Otto and Ukpere 2012](#)) to conclude that an insecure environment impinges directly on development; it disenfranchises communities, contributes to poverty, distorts economies, creates instability, and stunts political development. In Nigeria, apart from the thousands of people who had been killed in the course of one security breach or another, sources of livelihood have been destroyed, families have disintegrated, and social infrastructure has been disrupted ([Otto and Ukpere 2012](#)). Efforts to reduce insecurity should not only top the government agenda but should be complemented by actions. However, the discourse on Nigeria's security situation so far has revealed that some factors are limiting the capacity of the Nigerian state to secure its citizens adequately. Given this reality, combating crime should not be left to the Nigerian government alone. However, the fact remains that if the government is collecting taxes, fines, dues, and other financial entitlements and manages all the resources accruable to the state, it owes the citizens the responsibility of securing their lives and property as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that even where state resources are effectively managed, citizens still support government security initiatives. Barrett's philosophical axiom quoted in [Albert \(2012\)](#) can guide individuals to their security responsibilities. As Barret suggests, "When it comes to getting things done, we need fewer architects and more bricklayers". As a way out of the current security challenges dazing Nigeria and Nigerians, it is of great essence for people to be conscious of security at individual and collective levels.

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