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Integrating Public Policy Responses to Emerging Security Threats in South-West Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the nature of emerging security threats in South-West Nigeria. Specifically, it evaluates public policy responses to the escalating security challenges in South-West Nigeria, including banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, and political violence. Existing security strategies have shown significant gaps in the region's public policy responses, which have often been fragmented, reactive, and insufficiently integrated, failing to effectively address the complexity of these emerging threats. The research utilises a qualitative approach, drawing on primary and secondary data, including interviews with security personnel, government officials, and community leaders, as well as content analysis of security-related policy documents. The paper is anchored on the Policy Integration Theory (PIT), which emphasises the importance of multi-level governance, inter-agency coordination, and adaptive policy frameworks in addressing complex challenges. The findings reveal significant fragmentation in security responses, with weak institutional coordination among federal, state, and local actors and limited integration of community-based initiatives. The paper concludes that sustainable strategies, including a convergent policy agenda, are pivotal for enhancing security in the South-West region of Nigeria. It proposes strengthening inter-agency coordination, institutionalising regional security initiatives such as Amotekun, fostering community engagement, adapting policies to emerging threats, and leveraging technology in security governance across the region. A very important ancillary to these functional strategies is a sweeping constitutional reform that prioritises clearer provisions on the control, funding and management of the country's security architecture, and must also define the boundaries of power and responsibilities between the levels of government in the federation.

Keywords: *Amotekun, Constitutional Reforms, Policy Integration, Security Governance, South-West Nigeria.*

Introduction

Security remains the bedrock upon which sustainable development, democratic governance, and societal stability are built. Without an enabling and secure environment, political institutions falter, economic growth stagnates, and social cohesion disintegrates (Adebayo, 2021). In recent years, Nigeria's South-West geopolitical zone, historically regarded as relatively peaceful compared to the country's North-East or North-West, has experienced a notable surge in security threats. Emerging issues such as banditry, kidnapping for ransom, herder-farmer conflicts, cybercriminal activities, cult-related violence, and political unrest have deeply unsettled communities across states like Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Ekiti, and

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Lagos. These dynamic threats have exposed deep-rooted structural weaknesses in Nigeria's security architecture, pointing to the urgent need for integrated, adaptive, and community-centred public policy responses (Ezeibe, Osakwe, & Ezeibe, 2022).

Historically, Nigeria's approach to internal security has been heavily centralised, with the federal government holding monopolistic control over law enforcement and security apparatus. The 1999 Constitution vests the responsibility for policing solely at the federal level, limiting subnational entities' roles to peripheral security functions (Adebanwi, 2022). However, the South-West's recent security crisis revealed the profound inadequacies of a centralised model in effectively responding to localised and emerging threats. Poor inter-agency coordination, fragmented interventions, jurisdictional tensions, and weak community engagement have characterised federal security efforts, leaving many communities vulnerable (Ojo & Afolabi, 2021). The rigidity of the state-centric security framework has proven grossly insufficient in addressing the fluid and often localised nature of the new threats.

The situation has, however, catalysed significant policy innovation at the subnational level. In a notable move towards regional collaboration, the six states of the South-West established the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), popularly known as Amotekun, in 2020. This initiative marked a ground-breaking moment in Nigeria's federalism discourse by asserting regional agency in security governance while still operating within constitutional limits (Omitola & Adebisi, 2023). While Amotekun has demonstrated some capacity to deter and respond to local criminalities, questions persist regarding its institutionalisation, sustainability, operational synergy with federal forces, and legal robustness. Despite the enthusiasm surrounding Amotekun, critics argue that it remains reactive, under-resourced, and insufficiently integrated with broader public security policies (Nwagboso, 2020).

Beyond Amotekun, various state-level interventions have been introduced. For example, Lagos State enhanced its Neighbourhood Safety Corps to bolster grassroots surveillance, while Ekiti and Ondo states created anti-kidnapping task forces. Nevertheless, these efforts often suffer from poor horizontal and vertical integration, leading to fragmented operations and inconsistent impact. This pattern reflects broader challenges within Nigeria's public policy processes, particularly in the security sector, where overlapping mandates, lack of strategic coordination, and politicisation frequently undermine effective service delivery (Akinola, 2020). Moreover, most interventions have largely marginalised community participation, thus forfeiting critical opportunities to build local ownership and trust, which constitute essential ingredients for sustainable security governance.

Given these dynamics, the need for an integrated, coherent, and sustainable security framework in South-West Nigeria has become undeniable. Integration here implies not just coordination among different state-led initiatives but also harmonisation with federal operations, the incorporation of traditional institutions, the engagement of civil society, and the embedding of adaptive strategies that reflect the rapidly changing nature of threats (Shehu & Adesote, 2022). Integration must also encompass vertical coordination between federal, state, and local governments as well as horizontal collaboration across sectors such as justice, education, and social welfare. Furthermore, security governance must evolve beyond reactive law enforcement towards proactive risk management. The growing prevalence of cybercrime, for instance, demands forward-looking strategies that combine technological investment, youth engagement, and public awareness, which traditional policing models are ill-equipped to provide. Similarly, the persistence of herder-farmer conflicts necessitates not only policing but also policy interventions in land management, agricultural reform, and climate change adaptation (Adedire, 2022). In this light, the usual practice of a conventional militarised response is not only inappropriate but counterproductive.

This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the complex nature of emerging security threats in South-West Nigeria and assess the effectiveness and limitations of existing public policy responses. Ultimately, the objective is not only crucial but timely. This is because, as security deteriorates, lives are lost, communities are displaced, and public trust in government erodes. Building effective security systems is, therefore, both a developmental imperative and a democratic necessity. If the region, and by extension the entire country, is to achieve its socio-economic aspirations and consolidate its democratic gains, then rethinking, integrating, and localising security policies must be prioritised urgently and strategically. This research offers a step in that critical direction. To achieve this, the paper is organised into five parts. Part one is the foregoing introduction. The second part examines the extant literature and explicates the theoretical framework relevant to the research problem and purpose. Part three discusses the research methodology. The fourth part presents the study's findings and discusses their implications for policy integration, while the last part concludes the paper with proposals for integrating policy responses to emerging security threats in the South-West region and across the nation.

Literature Review

This section examines the major themes of policy responses to emerging security threats in the South-West region to unpack the structural inadequacies of Nigeria's current security architecture and identify the gaps this paper seeks to address.

Structural Inadequacies of Existing Policy Responses to Security Threats

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Security is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development, democratic consolidation, and good governance. In recent years, Nigeria's South-West region has witnessed a sharp escalation in security threats, ranging from banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, cybercrime, cultism, and political violence. These evolving threats have exposed significant gaps in public policy responses, including fragmented interventions, poor inter-agency coordination, and the limited integration of local communities into formal security frameworks (Adebayo, 2021). The rising complexity of security challenges has rendered conventional state-centred responses insufficient. While the federal government remains constitutionally empowered to manage internal security, subnational actors, including state governments, have increasingly taken proactive roles, as evidenced by the creation of regional initiatives such as the Amotekun security network. However, a major concern persists: the absence of a fully integrated, coherent, and sustainable policy framework to address the evolving security dynamics.

Security governance in Nigeria's South-West has been extensively explored in recent scholarship, particularly focusing on the interplay between federal authority and subnational security initiatives. Scholars such as Oladeji and Folami (2020) emphasise the emergence of regional security outfits, such as Amotekun, as a response to perceived inadequacies at the federal level. Their study highlights that while regional security agencies have successfully improved localised intelligence-gathering and community trust, they face legal ambiguities and coordination challenges with federally controlled security forces. Similarly, Akinyemi and Adegoke (2021) argue that these outfits enhance rapid response to threats but operate without a fully harmonised policy framework, leading to jurisdictional tensions. The strengths of these studies lie in their ability to capture the grassroots legitimacy of regional interventions, but they often lack a critical exploration of how these initiatives can be structurally integrated into Nigeria's national security architecture.

Other scholars focus on the evolving nature of threats rather than the security apparatus itself. For instance, Salawu and Hassan (2022) interrogate the rising spate of cybercrime, cultism, and political violence in South-West Nigeria, arguing that these new threats require non-traditional, adaptive policy responses. They commend existing community policing strategies but criticise the piecemeal nature of interventions, highlighting a reactive rather than proactive policy stance. In contrast, Adebawu (2021) critiques the heavy militarisation of public safety initiatives, arguing that security policies rely too heavily on force rather than addressing socio-economic root causes. These works provide valuable insights into the multidimensional nature of insecurity but tend to treat policy failures in isolation rather than as systemic issues requiring integrated responses.

In examining public policy integration more broadly, scholars such as Ojo and Olagunju (2023) advocate for multi-level governance approaches in which local, state, and federal agencies collaborate to share intelligence, resources, and strategic frameworks. They highlight successful examples from comparative contexts, such as South Africa's hybrid security models, but note that Nigeria's federalism complicates seamless integration due to political competition and trust deficits among actors. In a similar vein, Ajayi and Olumide (2022) underscore the need for policy coherence, arguing that fragmented policymaking has rendered many security reforms unsustainable. They propose institutional reforms to improve coordination but acknowledge the difficulty of building intergovernmental trust. While these studies commendably address the need for collaboration, they often underestimate the deep-seated political rivalries that obstruct integrated security governance in Nigeria.

A related body of work explores community engagement in security management. Scholars like Adedeji et al. (2021) emphasise that the exclusion of local communities from formal security planning undermines the legitimacy and sustainability of security initiatives. Their study shows that security architectures that incorporate traditional institutions, vigilante groups, and civil society organisations tend to be more resilient. However, critiques such as those by Olatunji and Ogundele (2023) warn against the potential for local elites to hijack community security mechanisms for political gain. Thus, while community-based models have participatory strengths, they also face vulnerabilities to politicisation and informality.

Critical Pillars for Policy Convergence in the Nigerian Security Sector

The literature on public policy and security governance in Nigeria reflects an increasing concern with the fragmentation and inadequacy of policy responses to dynamic threats (Adebayo, 2021; Ezeibe et al., 2022). Historically, Nigeria's security architecture has been heavily centralised and modelled on a federal policing system that often lacks local responsiveness. Scholars such as Olanrewaju (2020) argue that the unitary command structure undermines effective community policing, particularly in culturally diverse regions like the South-West. More recent studies emphasise the role of multi-level governance and subnational innovation in addressing security challenges (Ojo & Afolabi, 2021). The creation of Amotekun is cited as a critical example of bottom-up regional security policymaking. However, Omitola and Adebisi (2023) highlight that while such initiatives demonstrate political will, they often lack legislative backing, inter-agency synergy, and integration with federal security operations, limiting their effectiveness.

Compared with the best international practices in integrated security policymaking, these emphasise community engagement, intelligence-led policing, and cross-sectoral collaboration (Shearing & Loader, 2019). Nigerian policies, however, often

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remain reactive, militarised, and disconnected from local realities, calling for urgent and sweeping reforms to the country's security governance. At the heart of these necessary reforms lies the principle of multi-level governance as a critical tool for policy integration. As posited by scholars such as Akinrinade and Ukeje (2021), effective security governance in complex federations like Nigeria requires the devolution of responsibilities and resources to subnational units, alongside mechanisms for collaboration and accountability. The South-West's experience demonstrates that when states are empowered, they can innovate context-specific solutions. However, for such initiatives to be effective and sustainable, they must be nested within broader policy frameworks that ensure alignment with national objectives while respecting local autonomy.

Community engagement is another critical pillar. Security cannot be achieved without the active involvement of local populations. Traditional rulers, community development associations, youth groups, religious leaders, and other grassroots actors possess invaluable local knowledge and influence that formal security agencies often lack. Yet, current policies often treat communities as passive recipients of security services rather than active partners. This disconnection not only reduces policy effectiveness but can inadvertently exacerbate mistrust, making communities less willing to cooperate with authorities (Edeh & Chukwuma, 2021).

Another essential dimension is adaptability. In an era marked by rapidly evolving threats from technological disruptions to transnational organised crime, security policies must be dynamic. Static policy frameworks risk obsolescence. Adaptive governance entails continuous monitoring, policy learning, scenario planning, and flexible resource allocation mechanisms that can respond swiftly to new challenges (Shearing & Loader, 2019). Unfortunately, many existing policies in South-West Nigeria remain rigid, failing to anticipate or adjust to emerging risks. From the foregoing, it is evident that the literature agrees on the need for integrated frameworks but differs on implementation strategies. Some advocate constitutional restructuring to enable state policing (Adebanwi, 2022), while others propose enhanced coordination within the current federal structure (Nwagboso, 2020).

Despite the breadth of these contributions, a critical gap remains largely unaddressed: the lack of a systematic, integrated public policy framework that aligns regional innovations like Amotekun with national security priorities while also addressing emerging non-traditional threats. Most studies either focus on specific security outfits, particular types of threats, or isolated policy critiques without offering a holistic view of an integrated policy architecture that is adaptable, collaborative, and sustainable. There is a need to rethink and localise security policies through a convergent agenda that prioritises the structural integration of local and regional initiatives into Nigeria's national security architecture. This paper

seeks to fill this gap by proposing a model of policy integration that not only institutionalises regional security initiatives within Nigeria's constitutional framework but also mainstreams adaptive policy innovations to address cybercrime, political violence, and socio-economic security threats. The paper argues that focusing on multi-level governance, participatory frameworks, and proactive policy design offers a more comprehensive roadmap for sustainable security governance in South-West Nigeria.

Theoretical Explanations

This study draws from Policy Integration Theory (PIT) to interrogate the effectiveness of public policy responses to emerging security threats in South-West Nigeria. PIT is grounded in the understanding that policy processes at the local, regional, and national levels must be aligned and integrated to achieve coherent, sustainable outcomes, particularly in complex governance environments (Borrás & Edquist, 2019). There is no single group that can be credited as the proponent of the PIT, but scholars from various fields and disciplines, such as marine studies, environment, policy design and governance, have, over the years, contributed to its usage and growth. Scholars like Schout and Jordan (2008) and Cairney (2012; 2013) pioneered the theoretical construct of PIT to policy and governance while others, such as Howlett, McConnell and Perl (2016), Weible and Sabatier (2018) and Howlett (2019) later extended its usage by advocating for the integration of multiple policy theories for better understanding of complex policymaking.

The theory advocates for the inclusion of multiple stakeholders, inter-agency collaboration, and adaptability within policy frameworks. In the context of security governance, PIT suggests that effective responses to multi-dimensional threats require an integrated approach that accounts for local needs, regional capacities, and national priorities, fostering collaboration across various levels of government and society. PIT's core constructs include multi-level governance, policy coherence, and participatory engagement. Multi-level governance refers to the interaction and cooperation between different levels of government, such as federal, state, and local, in policymaking and implementation. In the context of security, this involves ensuring that the federal government's national security policies align with and support regional and local security initiatives, such as Amotekun. Policy coherence is the alignment of policies across sectors and government levels, ensuring they do not conflict but rather complement and support the government's broader strategic goals. Similarly, participatory engagement highlights the importance of involving local communities, civil society organisations, and other non-state actors in policymaking and implementation processes, which is particularly relevant for security policies that affect local populations (Adebanwi, 2012; Ojo & Olagunju, 2023). These constructs are crucial for understanding how security threats in South-West Nigeria, such as banditry, kidnapping, and farmer-herder conflicts, require an integrated policy approach. Given the decentralised nature of Nigeria's federal

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system, security initiatives like Amotekun must be effectively coordinated with federal security agencies like the Nigerian Police Force and the Nigerian Army. Furthermore, integrating community-based efforts and local knowledge into formal security structures can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of security policies.

One of the primary strengths of PIT is its ability to highlight the need for coordination and synergy among different government levels and sectors. In a country like Nigeria, where security challenges are diverse and multifaceted, the theory provides a robust framework for understanding how different actors, including local, state, and federal agencies, can collaborate to develop a cohesive, comprehensive security policy. For instance, Amotekun, a regional security initiative in South-West Nigeria, works alongside the Nigerian Police Force and other security agencies to address local security challenges. PIT possesses intrinsic insights for explaining how such initiatives can be integrated into the broader national security architecture, ensuring that they are not isolated but part of a larger, coordinated effort (Akinyemi & Adegoke, 2021).

Moreover, PIT emphasises adaptive policy design, an essential aspect in a dynamic security environment. As security threats evolve, PIT's emphasis on flexibility enables policymakers to adjust strategies and responses to emerging challenges. This is crucial for addressing the changing nature of security threats in South-West Nigeria, such as the increasing sophistication of cybercrime or the shifting dynamics of inter-communal violence (Salawu & Hassan, 2022). Also, the theory's focus on participatory governance resonates strongly with the Nigerian context, where local community involvement is critical for ensuring the legitimacy of security measures. Community engagement fosters trust, provides local insights, and ensures that policies are responsive to the specific needs of affected populations. As noted by Adedeji et al. (2021), integrating local security strategies has proven more effective in reducing crime and improving security, as communities are better positioned to identify and respond to threats.

Despite the valuable insights it offers, PIT is not without its limitations. One significant weakness is that the theory may oversimplify the challenges of intergovernmental coordination in highly polarised political environments. In Nigeria, political rivalries, party competition, and mistrust between federal and state governments can hinder effective policy integration. For example, the introduction of Amotekun faced significant opposition from federal authorities, who were concerned about the potential implications for national unity and control over security matters (Oladeji & Folami, 2020). PIT's emphasis on cooperation and collaboration might not adequately account for these political dynamics, which can impede the smooth integration of regional initiatives into national frameworks.

In addition, PIT's focus on policy coherence and alignment may underestimate the capacity constraints of local governments and regional security agencies. While integration and coherence are essential, states like Ondo and Oyo in the South-West region may lack the resources, manpower, and institutional capacity to fully implement sophisticated policy frameworks. In such cases, PIT's expectation of seamless coordination might be unrealistic, as local governments may struggle with limited resources or administrative capacity (Akinyemi & Adegoke, 2021). More so, PIT does not always account for informal power structures that shape policy outcomes, especially in developing democracies like Nigeria. These power structures, often based on ethnic, religious, or political allegiances, can influence the design and implementation of security policies. The inclusion of informal networks in security decision-making, though critical, is often overlooked in traditional policy integration models.

Despite its weaknesses, the policy integration theory is highly applicable to this study of emerging security threats in South-West Nigeria. The dynamic nature of the security landscape in the region, marked by growing communal violence, criminality, and the rise of non-state actors like Amotekun, necessitates an integrated approach that aligns local, regional, and national security responses. PIT's emphasis on multi-level governance offers a critical framework for understanding how the federal government, state governments, and local communities can collaborate to address these emerging threats. The theory can be used to understand how regional security initiatives like Amotekun can be integrated into the broader national security framework. Its emphasis on adaptive policy design is especially relevant in the Southwest region, where new and evolving threats, such as cybercrime and kidnapping, demand responsive, flexible policy frameworks. This integration requires coordination between various security actors, including federal security agencies, state-level security outfits, and local community leaders. The theory provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for examining how security policies in the region can be integrated and adapted to address emerging security threats. Therefore, it remains contextually relevant for unpacking the complexities of intergovernmental coordination, resource sharing, and community engagement for security governance in a highly atomised context such as Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilising a combination of document analysis and in-depth interviews with key informants to critically assess public policy responses to emerging security threats in South-West Nigeria. The choice of a qualitative approach stems from the need to explore the intricate, contextual, and institutional factors influencing security governance, which quantitative methods may inadequately capture (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed flexibility and depth in capturing

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participants' perspectives. Both face-to-face and remote interviews were conducted with 35 key stakeholders, including policymakers, security officials, members of regional security outfits such as Amotekun, and community leaders, in the last quarter of 2025 across the states of Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, and Ekiti. Participants were purposively sampled based on their roles and experiences in security policymaking and enforcement. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly adhered to in accordance with standard qualitative research protocols.

Secondary data were obtained through a rigorous review of government policy documents, legislative frameworks and security strategy reports between 2018 and 2024. Sources included official documents from the Western Nigeria Governors' Forum, Amotekun operational guidelines, and state security policies over the same period. Document analysis focused on identifying themes related to policy integration, multi-level governance, and community engagement. Data from interviews and documents were analysed thematically, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, contradictions, and policy gaps. Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility in handling complex qualitative data and its capacity to link empirical findings to theoretical constructs, particularly those within the policy integration theory (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This methodological combination ensures a comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of the security policy landscape in the southwest region of Nigeria, thereby strengthening the validity of the study's findings and recommendations.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the study's findings, based on an analysis of emerging security threats in South-West Nigeria and existing policy responses. The findings highlight the nature of the security challenges, the strengths and limitations of current policy frameworks, and the gaps that need to be filled to ensure a more integrated, coordinated, and adaptive security response. The findings are contextualised within the theoretical framework of policy integration theory, emphasising multi-level governance, policy coherence, and participatory engagement, as discussed earlier.

Nature of Emerging Security Threats in South-West Nigeria

Security threats in South-West Nigeria have evolved significantly over recent years, becoming more complex and difficult to address through traditional security measures. The region has witnessed a sharp increase in criminal activities, including banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, cybercrime, cultism, and political violence. As findings revealed, these emerging threats have exposed vulnerabilities in existing security structures and necessitate a coordinated policy response. One of

such threats is banditry and kidnapping. Banditry, characterised by armed robbery, abduction for ransom, and violent extortion, has surged in several Southwestern states, including Ondo, Ekiti, and Oyo (Oloruntoba & Adesina, 2022). The rise in kidnappings, particularly along highways and in rural areas, has exacerbated public insecurity. Victims are often targeted for ransom, and the financial rewards incentivise further criminal activities. Despite efforts by the Police and other security agencies, these crimes have persisted due to inadequate response systems and weak inter-agency coordination (Field Study, 2025).

Another emerging security threat in the region is herder-farmer conflicts. The long-standing herder-farmer conflicts have intensified in South-West Nigeria, contributing significantly to the region's security challenges. Land disputes, coupled with competition for grazing land and water sources, have resulted in violent confrontations between indigenous farmers and Fulani herders (Oladeji & Folami, 2020). These conflicts have led to loss of life, displacement, and the destruction of farmlands, thereby exacerbating food insecurity and local tensions (Field Study, 2025). The inability of traditional security forces to manage these conflicts has led to the rise of local security initiatives like Amotekun, which seeks to protect the region's people and properties.

Cybercrime: Cybercrime has also emerged as a new dimension of security threats in the South-West, with Lagos State being a major hotspot. The proliferation of online fraud, hacking, and digital extortion has led to the creation of dedicated cybercrime units within the Nigerian Police Force (Field Study, 2025). However, the growing scale of cybercrime continues to challenge the efficacy of law enforcement agencies (Salawu & Hassan, 2022). The inadequacy of state-centred responses to these threats further underscores the need for integrated and adaptive policies to address the complexities of cybercrime. Though not recent, political violence, especially during election seasons, remains a persistent challenge in the Southwest region. The use of violence by political actors to intimidate rivals, manipulate electoral outcomes, and consolidate power continues to undermine democratic governance in the region (Field Study, 2025). Although the federal government had often deployed the military and police during elections, their actions are often viewed as politically motivated, leading to distrust in security forces (Oloruntoba & Adesina, 2022).

Existing Policy Responses to Emerging Security Threats

The responses to these security challenges in South-West Nigeria have largely been fragmented, lacking coherence, and often ineffective due to weak inter-agency coordination and insufficient resources (Field Study, 2025). A closer examination of existing policy responses reveals both strengths and weaknesses in addressing the region's diverse security threats.

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Federal Government Response

The federal government's response to security threats in the southwest region has largely been state-centred, with the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Army, and the Department of State Services (DSS) playing primary roles. However, these institutions have been criticised for inefficiency, corruption, and insufficient resources to effectively manage the region's security challenges (Field Study, 2025). The security forces often rely on reactive rather than proactive measures, deploying troops or police in response to crises, rather than preventing them through intelligence gathering and community policing (Oloruntoba & Adesina, 2022). While federal security agencies have been involved in efforts to combat insurgency, organised crime, and electoral violence, their operations have often been perceived as politically motivated or ineffective. For example, during elections, the use of federal forces has led to accusations of partisanship, undermining trust in the security system (Field Study, 2025). Furthermore, the federal government's top-down approach often conflicts with regional initiatives like Amotekun, leading to coordination challenges and duplication of efforts.

State-level and Local Government Responses

At the state and local levels, various government policies have focused on community policing, intelligence gathering, and youth employment programmes. Some states have established youth empowerment initiatives to reduce unemployment and discourage youth involvement in criminal activities (Field Study, 2025). While these measures have had some success, they remain underfunded and lack the comprehensive reach required to address the growing security threats in the region. On a large scale, the most significant responses to security threats in Nigeria's Southwest region have been the creation of the Western Nigeria Security Network (Amotekun), as a regional security initiative to combat emerging threats to lives and property in the region's six states. As stated earlier, Amotekun was established in 2020 by the governors of the South-West states to tackle issues such as banditry, kidnapping, and the herder-farmer conflicts that had become prevalent in the region (Adedeji et al., 2021). The initiative sought to provide a regional solution to security problems by involving local communities, creating employment opportunities, and utilising local knowledge to tackle criminal activities.

The strength of Amotekun lies in its community-based approach and local engagement, which have made it more responsive to regional security dynamics. Unlike federal security agencies, which are often seen as distant and disconnected from local communities, Amotekun personnel are drawn from local populations, fostering trust and legitimacy (Field Study, 2025). Furthermore, Amotekun has demonstrated the capacity to adapt to emerging threats, such as the rise in

kidnappings, by focusing on intelligence gathering and crime prevention. However, Amotekun's weaknesses are notable. While the regional security network has made strides in addressing local security issues, it lacks formal legal backing and operational capacity to fully integrate with federal security frameworks (Oladeji & Folami, 2020). The lack of adequate resources, equipment, and training for Amotekun operatives limits its effectiveness, especially when confronted with well-armed and organised criminal groups (Field Study, 2025). Moreover, there has been considerable resistance from the federal government, which raised concerns about the legality of a regional security outfit operating outside the formal national security framework.

Gaps in the Existing Security Policy Framework

Despite the various policy responses discussed, several gaps remain in addressing the emerging security threats in South-West Nigeria. A key gap is the lack of integration between local, state, and federal security responses. While Amotekun has made strides in providing localised security, its inability to work seamlessly with federal security agencies undermines the overall effectiveness of the response. The federal government's reluctance to grant full operational autonomy to regional security outfits further complicates efforts to integrate policy (Field Study, 2025). Moreover, poor inter-agency coordination between security agencies at the state, regional, and federal levels continues to hamper effective responses. The lack of a central command structure to oversee security operations across the different levels of government results in duplicative efforts, misallocation of resources, and inefficient deployment of security forces (Akinyemi & Adegoke, 2021).

Also, there is a lack of comprehensive, adaptive policy frameworks capable of responding to rapidly evolving security threats in the region. Existing policies are often static, failing to anticipate new challenges such as cybercrime or urban terrorism, which require more flexible, technology-driven responses (Field Study, 2025). A more adaptive policy approach, as proposed by policy integration theory, is needed to ensure timely, effective, and sustainable responses to emerging threats. The findings of this study highlight the escalating and multifaceted security challenges facing the Southwest region of Nigeria and reveal that current policy responses are fragmented, incoherent, and often ineffective. While regional initiatives like Amotekun have shown promise, the lack of legal backing, resources, and coordination with federal agencies hinders their ability to address the full scope of security threats (Field Study, 2025). To effectively address the growing security challenges, Nigeria must move towards a more integrated, adaptive, and collaborative security framework that involves all levels of government and engages local communities. This study has demonstrated that a multi-level governance approach, as advocated by policy integration theory, can help foster coordination, coherence, and participation, ultimately leading to more sustainable and effective security policies in South-West Nigeria.

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Conclusion

This paper has critically examined the nature of emerging security threats in South-West Nigeria, the responses from various levels of government, and the policy frameworks that are put in place to address these challenges. The analysis has shown that the region faces complex, multifaceted security threats, including banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, cybercrime, and political violence (Field Study, 2025). These evolving threats have exposed significant gaps in the existing security structures, revealing that the responses are often fragmented, reactive, and insufficiently integrated. While both federal and state-level security agencies, as well as local initiatives such as Amotekun, have played essential roles, the lack of coordination between these bodies has been a major obstacle in effectively combating security challenges.

The findings indicate that despite the creation of Amotekun, which has attempted to address local security concerns by engaging regional forces and utilising local knowledge, its lack of full integration into the federal security framework limits its potential. Similarly, the federal government's state-centred approach, which primarily relies on the Nigerian Police, the Nigerian Army, and other federal agencies, remains insufficient, given the scale and evolving nature of security threats in the region. Moreover, the absence of a comprehensive, adaptive, and integrated policy framework further compounds these challenges. The existing policies are often reactive, fail to anticipate new security dynamics, and lack coherence across different levels of government (Field Study, 2025). Considering these findings, a more coordinated and integrated approach to security governance is needed in Nigeria's Southwest region. The challenges faced by the region call for a new direction in public policy that promotes collaboration among federal, state, and local security agencies and a stronger emphasis on local community involvement and adaptive responses. For these reasons, adopting sustainable strategies, including a convergent policy agenda, is pivotal for enhancing security in the region.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are proposed for immediate action to strengthen security governance in South-West Nigeria and enhance the effectiveness of policy responses to emerging security threats. One of the key findings of this study is the lack of effective coordination between federal, state, and local security agencies. The fragmentation of security efforts has led to duplicated efforts, inefficient use of resources, and ineffective responses to security threats. One of the best ways to address this is for both the federal and state governments to adopt a convergent policy agenda by establishing a central command structure that integrates federal and regional security initiatives, including

Amotekun. This coordination would ensure that resources are optimally allocated and that security agencies can act more swiftly and effectively. The establishment of an integrated security framework would also foster greater cooperation among agencies, ensuring that efforts are not undermined by jurisdictional conflicts. In the context of security governance in the region, this would mean adopting a multi-level governance approach that facilitates the coordination of policies, resources, and intelligence across the three tiers of government

The Western Nigeria Security Network (Amotekun) has proven to be an essential part of the regional security response, especially in combating local crimes like kidnapping and armed robbery. However, its operational limitations stemming from a lack of legal backing and insufficient resources have hampered its full potential. Therefore, it is crucial to institutionalise Amotekun within the legal framework of the country's security architecture by passing relevant laws that confer official status and enable it to function alongside federal security agencies. This would not only enhance its legitimacy but also enable it to access federal resources, training, and intelligence-sharing systems. For this reason, a sweeping constitutional reform that prioritises clearer provisions on the control, funding and management of the country's security architecture, and that must also define the boundaries of power and responsibilities between the levels of government in the federation, is proposed. By doing so, Amotekun could become a more formidable force in addressing security threats within the region.

A significant limitation of current security policies is the insufficient involvement of local communities in decision-making processes and security interventions. Local knowledge is essential for understanding the dynamics of criminal activities, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, security strategies should prioritise community policing, intelligence gathering, and collaboration with local leaders to improve information-sharing and reduce crime rates. Community-driven security programmes would foster trust between security agencies and local populations, which is crucial for successful crime prevention. Governments at all levels should invest in initiatives that empower local communities to take an active role in preventing and reporting crimes.

One of the recurring challenges in addressing security threats in the region is the inadequacy of security personnel in terms of training, equipment, and operational capabilities. Federal and state governments must allocate more resources to training and capacity building for security forces at all levels. This includes providing officers with the necessary skills to handle emerging threats such as cybercrime, organised crime, and insurgency. Also, law enforcement agencies must be equipped with modern technologies, such as drones, surveillance cameras, and data analytics tools, to improve their response times and effectiveness. In an era of rapid technological advancement, security agencies in the region must embrace technology-driven solutions to enhance their operations. Technologies such as big

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data, artificial intelligence, and geospatial mapping can play a crucial role in predicting and tracking criminal activity and improving coordination between agencies. Similarly, the use of social media and mobile applications to crowdsource security information from the public can enhance intelligence-gathering and improve citizen involvement in the fight against crime. Local governments should work with technology companies and security experts to develop digital tools that empower citizens and enhance security efforts.

The nature of security threats in the region has evolved rapidly in recent years, with cybercrime, insurgency, and political violence becoming more prevalent. However, existing security frameworks are often too rigid and reactive to address these emerging threats effectively. Security policies must be adaptive, incorporating new technological solutions, such as digital surveillance tools and cybercrime units, to deal with modern forms of criminal activity. More importantly, there should be greater emphasis on preventive measures, such as early warning systems and conflict resolution strategies, to identify and address potential threats before they escalate. Overall, the findings of this paper suggest a significant gap in the integration of security policies across governance levels, highlighting weaknesses in existing security policy responses. The proposals put forward have altogether accentuated the need for an integrated and coordinated response that involves all levels of government, security agencies, and local communities. These recommendations are designed to create a more effective, sustainable, and inclusive security governance framework that can address both the immediate and long-term challenges facing the region.

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