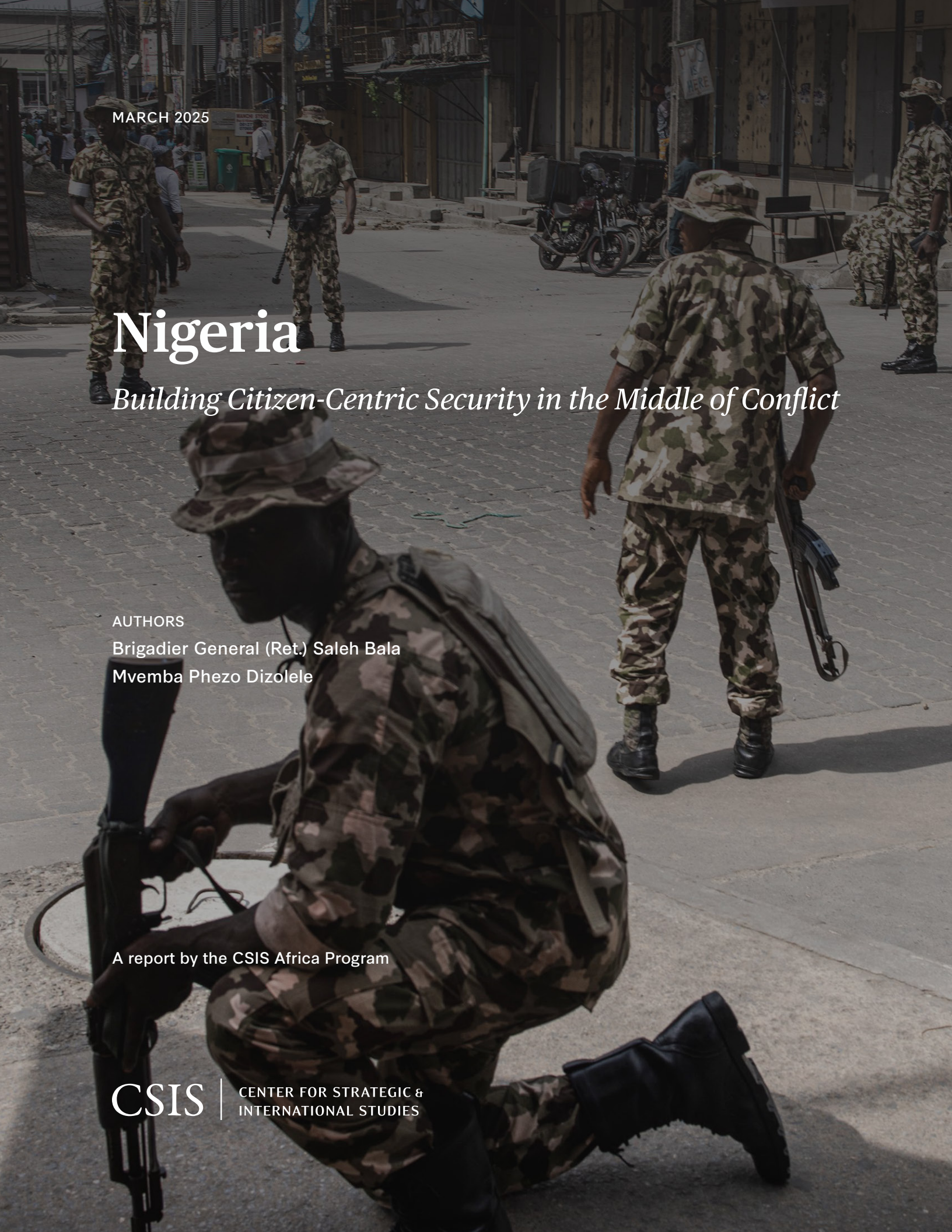




MARCH 2025

Nigeria

Building Citizen-Centric Security in the Middle of Conflict

AUTHORS

Brigadier General (Ret.) Saleh Bala
Mvemba Phezo Dizolele

A report by the CSIS Africa Program

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CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Center for Strategic & International Studies
1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-887-0200 | www.csis.org

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Introduction

As is often the case with vast and complex subjects like civil-military relations (CMR), a challenge lies in the diversity of definitions. These definitions build around and expand an array of concepts and principles, including the relative power distribution between the government and the armed forces of a country, democratic civilian control of the defense and security institutions, and the civilian oversight of these institutions. While these are important principles and functions that determine effective CMR, research gathered from different experiences shows that there is no universally accepted normative definition of CMR, only descriptive positionings. However, the principal common interest in all situations is that democratic civil authority holds constitutional supremacy over the military. The military, in this case, is used as a generic term to refer to the Nigeria's armed forces, the police, and intelligence services.

Nigeria's security and justice sector is multidimensional in nature and has a major hand in the country's stability and economic development. With more than 236 million people, Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and a regional power striving to be an anchor for peace and stability in West Africa. Endowed with large oil and natural gas reserves, Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer and the continent's second-largest economy after South Africa. Nigeria, however, has faced several challenges over the years, including military coups, bad governance, a sluggish economy, insurgency, and banditry, and a complex history with long-lasting consequences, which continue to hinder the realization of its potential.

This report is based on field research conducted in Abuja, Nigeria, in March 2024. At the request of the interviewees, their comments have been kept anonymous. During this study, the researchers

met with a broad cross section of civil society leaders representing youth, women, and various ethnic and regional groups, current and former politicians, independent journalists, local political analysts and academics, military officers, foreign diplomats, and representatives of international organizations based in Abuja. Many respondents were not originally from Abuja but shared their experiences and observations of CMR across Nigeria, particularly since the resumption of civil democratic rule in 1999.

The respondents answered six main questions (see below) to help assess the circumstances and prevailing standing of CMR. The questions were chosen to understand CMR from a definitional position, the state of relations between defense and security institutions and the civilian population, whether civilians identify with defense and security institutions, and what initiatives exist to foster stronger relations and trust between the defense and security institutions. Other questions explored avenues that allow conversations with and inputs from civilian society organizations (CSOs) on security and law and order, as well as how foreign security assistance can help foster strong CMR in ways that meet the aspirations of Nigerian citizens.

Respondents to the survey were asked the following questions:

1. What is the state of relations between defense and security institutions and the civilian populations?
2. How would you describe civil-military/security relations?
3. Do the civilians identify with defense and security institutions?
4. What initiatives exist to foster stronger relations and relationships of trust between the defense/security institutions and civilian populations?
5. What avenues, if any, are there to allow conversations with and input from civil society organizations in matter of security and law and order?
6. How can foreign security assistance help foster stronger civil-military relations in ways that address the aspirations of civilians as end-users of security/defense services?

Nigeria's security challenges include the herdsmen-farmers conflict along the Sahel, the Boko Haram insurgency, and banditry in the Niger Delta, which disrupts oil companies' operations and the day-to-day lives of local communities. These challenges matter not just for regional stability and economic development but also because they reverberate beyond West Africa. The United States has paid sustained attention to developments in Nigeria, as terrorism knows no borders and often targets the United States. On the ground in Nigeria, these security challenges determine, in large measure, relations between defense and security institutions and civilian populations.

By extension, CMR has also affected relations between the United States and Nigeria, which experienced a lull in 2021 after the U.S. Congress acted on reports of human rights abuses committed by the Nigerian defense and security forces during counterinsurgency operations against Boko Haram.¹ Drawing on the Leahy Laws, which prohibit the extension of U.S. security assistance to countries where “gross violations of internationally recognized human rights” have been alleged, the United States barred sales, donations of lethal equipment, and even combat-related training for personnel and units that do not pass the human rights compliance standards of the Departments of Defense and State.² Leahy Laws offer an important tool for holding partner military and paramilitary forces in check.

Nigeria Today

Security Challenges and Popular Expectations

The vast country known today as Nigeria emerged from the 1914 merger of the then Northern and Southern Protectorates of the colonial British territories. It covers an area of about 923,768 square kilometers (roughly 356,668 square miles). The country provides citizenship to a growing population composed of three major language groups: the Hausas in the north, the Yorubas in the west, and the Igbos in the east. Additionally, there are over 300 distinct ethno-linguistic groups of various sizes.

Islam and Christianity are the two main religions and form the spiritual pillar for Nigerians. Religion also defines the political landscape and social dynamics in the dominantly Muslim north and Christian south. The central belt, covering the Niger-Benue River Valley, comprises about an equal mix of Christian and Muslim communities. While poor governance and corruption are considered driving factors for crime and violence, Nigeria is a tinderbox with a mixture of ethnic, religious, and elite identity exclusion and deprivation, as well as a bloated and ever-growing youth bulge and rising unemployment. Some analysts attribute the current political contradictions and tensions in Nigeria to historic ethno-religious suspicions and distrust that stem from the self-serving political engineering of the British colonial administrations. The British configuration of Nigeria, which was based on that country's own exploitative economic interests, did not consider the strong and ancient ethnic groupings and affiliations of the region's various peoples. Direct and indirect results of the colonial endeavor include a war of secession, military coups, and regional, ethnic, and religious divides and fault lines that undermine national cohesion. Today, various ethnic and regional groups call for a sovereign national conference to debate and address these experiences, with a view to reconfiguring present-day Nigeria as constitutionally represented.

Between Nigeria's independence in 1960 and 1999, the country experienced a tumultuous period marked by seven military coups, a civil war (1967-1970), and transitions between military and civilian rule, with four civilian governments, culminating in the establishment of a new democratic government in 1999. Since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has experienced a renewed tide of expectations for development, safety, and security in line with the promises of a democratic culture which guarantees human liberty and rights, rule of law, transparency, and accountability for both the governing and the governed.

Nigerians are known for their confidence, industriousness, and boldness, all of which was dampened during the years of military governments. The republican character of Nigerians is evidenced in the history of their struggle for democracy against the number of military regimes that intermittently ruled the nation for a cumulative 36 years before the current 24 years of sustained civil democratic rule. Certainly, while celebrating the success of wresting political power from the military, the response to the challenges to Nigeria's peace, security, and stability has fallen short of the standard expected by both proponents and opponents of democracy.

While the preexisting challenges of criminal and social malaises have festered, some have indeed escalated into protracted violence with cross-border and international reach since the return to democracy in 1999. This violence stems from 14 years of Islamist Boko Haram/Islamic State's West Africa Province terrorism, which has occupied the North East geopolitical zone and co-opted the pre-independence nationwide herders-farmers land-resource-based conflict. These conflicts fuel the emergent, extremely violent, and rising criminal rural banditry and kidnapping for ransom in the North West and North Central geopolitical zones.

Meanwhile, the cultism and violent separatist agitations in the South East zone have combined with the well-recorded Niger Delta oil resource and environmental degradation, as well as freedom fighting.³ These agitators have also adopted kidnapping for ransom to finance their operations. Successive civilian governments have struggled to make a difference by confronting the massive development and economic stability challenges at the heart of these violent acts. Civilian administrations have been unable to provide alternative ways of dealing with civil agitations and societal deviances other than deploying forces in response to even the slightest forms of individual, group, or community agitation.

Some analysts argue that where threats of military-grade violence challenge Nigeria and its succeeding civilian governments, it should be met with force.⁴ Countering this argument, proponents of the development approach insist that when human needs are addressed in a sustainable manner, ensuring inclusivity, justice, openness, transparency, and accountability, the situation will not only be mitigated but could even be eliminated.⁵ They contend that political leaders' commitment to guarantee and promote the well-being and rights of individuals and communities will reduce the tendency to embrace or resort to radicalism or extremism and the escalation of violence by communities taking up arms against each other.

Today, given these dynamics, mistrust and suspicion exist among Nigerians. Despite this general view, however, some citizens see the relationship between the military and civilians as progressive.

In the words of a conflict resolution expert, “The relationship between the military and the civilian population in Nigeria has been moving in the progressive direction in the sense that the presence of the military gives the air of discipline, order, and security.”⁶

The State of Civil-Military Relations

The relationship between defense and security institutions and the civilian population is cordial. Still, it can be better in the sense that the expectations are huge in terms of what the civilian population expects security institutions to do.⁷ But matching the resources—manpower, logistics, technology, and infrastructure—with the task is not easy. One possible solution is for civilians to lower their exceedingly high expectations of what is possible, doable, and attainable.

The respondents shared a broad spectrum of their understanding of CMR, ranging from normative to descriptive definitions. As one respondent explained it, for some, the impression of CMR is the “absence of the military in the public space and their total withdrawal to the barracks.”⁸ For others who espouse the normative approach, the respondent continued, CMR is a situation where “the military unequivocally subordinates itself to democratic civil authority and control.”⁹ Attempts to seek clarity from other respondents only yielded impressions of the lingering general apathy among a segment of the urban elites whose bitter experience with military rule has led to a yearning for the military to be leashed by civil authority. This oversight would ensure that the military plays a clear, limited role in governance, restricted to its constitutional mandate of use of force or force posturing for national defense.

For now, the armed forces are called up through a constitutional process to support civil authority in maintaining law and order or during national emergencies. They lend their requisite capabilities to mandated institutions for quick recovery and stability in humanitarian crises. In situations of extreme civil unrest and violence, the military is called to assist or take over from the Nigeria Police

Force, which has primary constitutional responsibility for internal law and order. In interviews, many analysts and CSOs insisted that after the military has been called up in these situations, it should immediately hand control back to the police once the violence has been subdued.

Reflecting on this matter, a Nigerian senator serving in the Senate Committee on Army said that the military has subjected itself to civilian rule for the past 24 years. “And during those years, the military-civilian relationship has been a journey of trying to mend issues of the past and trying to gain the trust of the people,” he said.¹⁰ When asked whether the existing pervasive military presence in situations that would otherwise be handled by the police should be stopped, the senator said, “The issue of internal security has made the military closer to the people. The issues that are to be handled by the police are being handled by the military . . . because the police have not been able to perform . . . effectively . . . the military has been doing police duties for over 14 years.”¹¹

There is, however, much debate within the police and military over whether the military has taken over the job of the police and feels comfortable operating in internal security roles.¹² The debate extends to whether the military is assuming these roles due to the weakness of the police, and if the types and levels of ongoing armed threats exceed the capacity of the Nigeria Police Force as it is currently configured, armed, equipped, trained, and motivated. Some analysts view the police as simply more comfortable performing softer duties, such as light urban patrols and VIP protection, rather than confronting situations involving violence and the likely loss of life¹³. Others argue that the military accepts the internal operations duties because of the financial gains that come from budgetary and non-budgetary allocations.

The core of the Nigeria’s CRM issue is a critical coordination, collaboration, and communication deficit between the military and civilian population, which must be addressed with a comprehensive review and implementation of reforms across the broad security and justice sectors. These reforms should be laws that address the gross weakness of the Nigerian Police Force and enforce its dedication to its constitutional role of providing internal security for the citizens and their properties. Unfortunately, evidence has shown that in most areas, citizens are currently more comfortable with the military than with the police, who they consider weak, ineffective, corrupt, and mostly repressive.

Additionally, as one analyst argued, the influx of military personnel into cities and acting in internal operations has resulted in increased cases of misconduct, tarnishing the military’s reputation with civilians. The analyst continued, “One of the things that [has] affected civil-military relations is the police. Over time, the military and the police are seen as the same. Bribery used to be a thing of the police until it became a thing of the well-trained military.”¹⁴

Civil-Military Relations

Obstacles and Initiatives

Nigeria is not a monolith. In some communities, the military is seen as the enemy; in others, people still welcome the military as an assurance that they will be protected. However, these are not linear relationships, and nuance is needed in every situation.¹⁵

Many citizens perceive the military as shrouded in mystery: They see that it is operating, but not how or why. A trust and communication deficit stems from security issues being addressed in ways that do not alleviate citizens' concerns. Even if matters were handled correctly, the lack of communication leaves Nigerians unaware of the reasoning and strategies employed by the military. Effective strategic communication can increase the trust coefficient between the military and the people.

Others hold a misconception that “the military might seem like they are for me, but they are not for me.”¹⁶ They believe the military works for the protection of certain segments and classes of society, not everyone. In contrast, the relationship between civil society and the police is seen as inevitable because the police are needed in all spheres of life and are members of the community. The police officers assigned to communities must work closely with citizens to maintain a peaceful and safe environment.¹⁷

Obstacles to Civil-Military Relations

According to a university professor, the perception of the military varies by region. In certain communities, such as Plateau State in the North Central zone, citizens see the military as their enemy working with the “other side” in the context of communal conflicts.¹⁸ In some Niger Delta

communities, the military is seen as an extension of Shell Petroleum, and not as fellow citizens.¹⁹ The same feeling is held in Imo State in the South East zone of Nigeria, exacerbated by the actions of vigilante groups created by Imo state to work with the military. Furthermore, said the professor, there are informal armed outfits that appear to be affiliated with the military and abuse civilians' rights. At some point, different regions began to clamor for the establishment of paramilitary groups: In the northern part of the country, for example, unchecked banditry has led to an increase in civilian vigilante groups among communities.²⁰ The population views these groups and the military as one and the same.²¹

In the South East zone, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) separatists enforce a weekly Monday sit-at-home order on the citizens to pressure the Nigerian government to release their detained leader. Although some citizens do not agree with the order, and fear the violence of the IPOB, it would be unthinkable to align with the military. The local population views the armed forces as foreigners coming to their country.²² As such, community members that may feel that the military is there to help them cannot show it or say it aloud for fear of becoming a threat to, or victims of, the agitators.²³

When involved in civil issues, the military does its best to try and resolve conflicts. But particularly in cases of procedural abuse and abuse of laws of the land, military involvement can actually worsen the situation.²⁴ "People generally trust the uniform out of respect. . . . How do you lose respect? By getting involved in what you are not supposed to," said a security analyst.²⁵ This view is reinforced by the experience of many Nigerians.

Another security analyst said, "In the North East, there is a stronger sense of ownership and identity [with the military]. People identify with the military as theirs" due to the Boko Haram counterinsurgency.²⁶ The military came in and helped stabilize the environment. After the initial bad blood between the military and community vigilante groups, things improved when the two parties launched the Civilian Joint Task Force.²⁷

Those in the South-South and South East zones of Nigeria do not have this sense of ownership of the military. The relationship has soured for contemporary and historical reasons. For example, the people in the South-South, a major oil-producing region, view soldiers and police as agents of the unfair central government that takes oil away from their region and gives the revenue to other parts of the country.²⁸ In terms of Nigeria's history, there has been a recurrence of military involvement in civilian spaces due to a series of coups and aftermaths. That alone has bred other issues that have led to mistrust.²⁹

In the end, the military and the police, as well as the security sector in general, are seen as the face of the government. These key actors are affected by the trust deficit with the government and democratic process as well as the legacy of the former military regime.³⁰ There is, however, a generation that did not experience life under a military regime. That generation seems to think that the military is the savior of the situation in which Nigerians currently find themselves.³¹

Initiatives to Improve Civil-Military Relations

The police and the military have undertaken initiatives to improve CMR. The armed forces have created a civil-military department that seeks to win the people's hearts and minds through a range of activities, including building hospitals, organizing medical outreach, and revamping roads and buildings.³² In the last couple of years, the military has employed lawyers to reinforce the civil-military desk. Some practical conversations are ongoing in terms of making the defense and security institutions respect the law.³³

But even within improvements, major challenges exist. The civil-military desk is located within the army's barracks, complicating civilian will to report abuses of power. For this initiative to yield the anticipated results, civil-military desks should be moved outside the barracks to allow civilians easy access. At the institutional level, the National Human Rights Commission has periodic dialogues with the military, which have helped mitigate issues that are brewing by providing information from the state offices to address concerns at that level quickly.³⁴ Additionally, due to the level of dis- and misinformation on social media, the military is also making an effort to counter false narratives. However, there is a certain level of mistrust regarding whatever the military publishes. By effectively addressing issues and demonstrating positive progress, success stories of military accomplishments can significantly improve CMR.³⁵

All police stations now have a human rights desk, which is focused on handling complaints about the police from community members. The goal is for anyone with genuine grievances to be able to meet the police. This approach is intended to build the community's faith in the police, boost the relationship between the police and the community, and burnish the image of the police. One of the goals of the human rights desk is to assure community members that their complaints will be heard and that they do not need to take the law into their own hands. Ultimately, the intent is to build trust between the police and the community.

The military has also implemented the West African Social Activities program at the grassroots and battalion levels. Organizers design these events and activities as opportunities for the soldiers and the local community to mix with military commanders. Local communities are invited to these gatherings. The program also helps build relationships across ethnic lines within the barracks. For instance, dance groups from all parts of the country participate in these activities to help bridge the Christian-Muslim, north-south gap.³⁶

Civilian Oversight of Defense and Security Institutions

Legislative oversight is an important CMR component. In democracies, the legislature directly protects citizens' rights, approves executive spending through traditional oversight powers over the military, and polices the executive branch. The Nigerian National Assembly has often lacked the capacity to understand the intricacies of Nigerian military and paramilitary procurement and use of defense and security institutions.³⁷ The high turnover rate of legislators, who often lack the institutional knowledge to conduct comprehensive oversight, exacerbates the deficit in appropriate civilian control, as well as checks on the executive branch. This limited oversight can lead to the potential misuse of military equipment or training for purposes that undermine human rights or democratic processes.

Legislators cannot monitor the wide-ranging and complex areas of security and justice alone. Oversight of the pertinent institutions and the promotion and implementation of effective CMR require the involvement of various segments of society. Such an endeavor would benefit from input from academics, activists, analysts, journalists, and other civil society stakeholders. These stakeholders need training and expertise to undertake the oversight. Above all, the success of CMR depends on informed citizen engagement. Deepening democratic accountability is key to helping citizens understand their rights, privileges, obligations, and role in a democratic society. Security agencies also need help understanding their responsibilities under a democratic system and their loyalty to the constitution.

Accordingly, the military runs educational programs with CSOs on the law of armed conflict.³⁸ This is important, as the lingering tension and suspicion of the military toward CSOs have not lessened

over the years. The possibility of CSOs becoming real partners with the military has yet to be fully explored.

A security analyst revealed that any time representatives of CSOs and the military are in the same room, the military representatives do not speak. This behavior can be traced back to the military era when civil society confronted the military because politicians and political parties had been banned.³⁹ Some of the CSOs present today can trace their history to the military dictatorship of Sani Abacha between 1993 and 1998 and the transition to democracy in 1999. From the military's perspective, there is long-standing discomfort about how critical and unrealistic CSOs can be in their expectations of the military. On the side of the CSOs, there is an entrenched suspicion that the military is still interested in seizing power.⁴⁰ Civil society is not homogeneous, and some CSOs speak up in support of the military. A few nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs do more than speak up and partner with the armed forces, for example, engaging in projects supporting the widows and children of fallen soldiers.⁴¹

There is a great need for more organized investment in the relations between defense and security institutions and civilians. CSOs specializing in CMR should receive support to study security institutions and their structures to better understand their makeups and mandates and help them perform better and build sustainable CMR. CSOs require this expertise to carry out adequate oversight. This process should also map out a way to channel and transfer the skills of security professionals to civilians. For instance, retired senior officers can be afforded opportunities to teach courses in universities, or could serve as advisers to CSOs working in CMR and the security and justice sector. It is important that defense and security institutions be demystified among the civilian population, a critical step in creating an environment where sound and progressive rule of law binds civilians and the military.

Another initiative that would help demystify defense and security institutions and advance CMR in the long run is granting civilian professionals, including civil servants and CSO actors, more access to defense-learning institutions. This could be accomplished by continuing with and expanding existing training opportunities. There are several non-kinetic courses at defense colleges that would benefit civilian stakeholders. Similarly, security and defense professionals would need to attend civilian courses and workshops on topics such as human rights and due process, which serve as the foundation of CMR. The knowledge gained from these training courses and the awareness of best-practice approaches to these challenges would remove critical blocks in the effort to bridge the trust deficit between security and defense institutions and civilian stakeholders.⁴²

Ultimately, the suspicion and mistrust between security institutions and the civilian population will remain unless concerted efforts are undertaken to change this reality. Thus, strategic communications are necessary to educate citizens on how the military functions. This knowledge will foster understanding and harmony between the military and citizens. This is the first step to building trust across the civilian population and an essential requirement for the population's psychosocial support to military personnel.⁴³

Recommendations

For Nigerian Authorities:

While kinetic solutions to the protracted military-grade challenges in Nigeria need to be evaluated decisively, the Nigerian government has recognized the importance of a people-centric, nonviolent model. The government has introduced several non-kinetic approaches to address the push-pull factors of the problem. Known as “the soft approach” to counterterrorism, anti-radicalism, and preventing and countering violent extremism, this strategy forms a component of the National Counterterrorism Strategy.⁴⁴ Introduced in 2016, the strategy is buttressed by other nonmilitary-led strategies and policies that include the Anti-Money Laundering and Combatting the Financing of Terrorism Policy and the National Cyber Security Policy.⁴⁵ Still, the operationalization and implementation of these strategies have faced challenges such as sectoral understanding, adoption, and the translation of principles to operations due to institutional culture-change constraints, as well as budgetary limitations and procurement challenges. Accordingly, Nigerian political leaders should consider the following steps to ensure that citizens are at the center of the country’s security policies:

- **Strengthen governance.** Implement robust anti-corruption measures to enhance transparency and accountability within the security sector, including the best opportunities offered by U.S. security assistance.
- **Improve public communication.** The government and its forces should increase their efforts in public communication on security operations, particularly when clashes occur with local communities.

- **Enhance training to improve human rights compliance.** Enhance granular adherence to human rights principles in all security operations to build trust and legitimacy. This must start by furthering the established curriculum for security services on the necessary attitudes toward national security objectives and operatives.
- **Improve quality of legislative oversight.** The quality of legislative oversight of the security sector by legislators and their staff needs to be improved, including the research and institutional knowledge on which they rely, bearing in mind the high churn rate of legislators.
- **Reduce suspicion of NGOs in security policy and strategy formulation and reviews.** Local and international NGOs have the capacity to assist with strengthening the Nigerian security sector's governance architecture in both policy development enunciation and review. The government should make efforts to be more open and friendly to them. At the same time, the NGOs should obtain a better understanding of the challenges faced by the security forces in terms of time commitment, resources, and welfare. Both sides should see themselves as partners in the community of practice.
- **Increase the size of the Nigeria Police Force and its funding.** The Nigerian government will need to refocus attention on the Nigeria Police Force through a comprehensive reform program to address recruitment, funding, equipment, and training, all of which should be aimed at improving the service. The government should strive to make the Nigeria Police Force more professional and people-service oriented, with the aim of reducing the presence of the military in public spaces. The devolution of policing to various levels of government and even autonomous specialist sectors of government institutions should be considered.
- **Boost local capacities.** Invest in local industries to produce essential military equipment and reduce dependency on external assistance.

For U.S. Policymakers:

It is important to build cooperation between partners as they pursue their common and different interests. In the security and justice sectors, security assistance sensitivities related to sovereignty and local political interests, as well as the response of security agencies to change, are particularly delicate issues when foreign states or organizations are involved. It is critical that a concerted dialogue is maintained to enable both parties to understand and appreciate each other's needs and capabilities while prioritizing national ownership of programs. The Nigerian government and its forces strive to internalize the democratic culture in their service to the people. This is evident in the number of programs, laws, and codes regularly enunciated, enforced, and overseen by appropriate and constitutionally mandated institutions. However, more support is required to quicken and strengthen these efforts through international partnerships.

Nigeria will need U.S. support to fulfill its security priorities beyond non-kinetic capacity building. This also applies to enabling security and defense institutions to conform to human rights and citizen-centric laws and best practices. Unless the current multidimensional security threats

confronting Nigeria are substantially defeated, guaranteeing enduring and sustainable peace and stability, it will be difficult to build a people-centric security apparatus. Physical security is not only a development function and a factor for progress, but also a critical democratic good. With this in mind, the United States should consider the following:

- **Adopt holistic approaches.** Incorporate nonmilitary solutions into security assistance programs, such as economic and governance support. A shift in U.S. thinking to consider non-kinetic support as strategic and capable of achieving desired outcomes is critical.
- **Increase transparency.** Ensure that security assistance initiatives are transparent and accountable to avoid misuse of resources. Several funding budgets for security assistance are currently administered by both the Department of Defense and State, and there is additional funding for other security assistance-like support. It would be useful to harmonize these sources of funding in a way that is mindful of the local context of politics and threats. Transparency and interrelation are not the same as centralization. It must be understood that Nigeria has its national objectives, strategic reservations, and options and choices.
- **Support human rights organizations in providing oversight of security support assistance.** Human rights organizations and think tanks that emphasize a citizen-centric and human-rights-centered approach to security issues will act as a check on the use of security support assistance and provide a useful, ground-level feedback mechanism. Training and monitoring by responsible and capable CSOs should be considered an integral component of security support assistance.
- **Foster multilateral collaboration.** Engage international partners such as the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union to provide coordinated and comprehensive support to Nigeria's security sector as a part of the strategic self-interest of these international partners. This partnership will add robustness to security assistance, particularly from the United States, which is currently missing.

Nigeria is caught in a vortex of bad governance, a sluggish economy, insurgency, and banditry that has eroded the country's potential. Restoring the required fundamentals for peace, security, and stability will take years of sustained security assistance. However, the pursuit of people-centric security will not be achieved without effective CMR.

About the Authors

Brigadier General (Ret.) Saleh Bala is a nonresident senior associate in the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He is the chief executive officer of White Ink Consult, a private defense and security research, strategic communications, and training consultancy firm based in Abuja, Nigeria, and founder of the White Ink Institute for Strategy Education and Research (WISER) in Abuja. WISER is focused on capacity-building at executive and middle cadre levels on security governance strategy and national security policy. Bala is also a nonresident senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He holds a bachelor's degree in literature from the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria (1982); a master's degree in international peace studies from the University for Peace, San Jose, Costa Rica (2006); and a master's in national security strategy from the National Defense University, National War College, Washington, D.C. (2009). He is a distinguished honor graduate of the U.S. Special Forces Detachment Officers Qualification Course (1991) from the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; an alumnus of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in Sanremo, Italy, International Refugee Law Course (2010); and a member of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law's Training Advisory Group. Bala is a resource associate of the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS) at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., and the Africa Institute for Strategic and Security Studies, Alexandria, Virginia. He has been working extensively with ACSS in the areas of sensitization and capacity development for formulation of national security strategies for African nations, as well as on the development of national preventing and countering violence strategies across Africa.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele is a senior fellow and director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He is also a lecturer in African studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Prior to joining CSIS, he was the Africa senior adviser at the International Republican Institute. Previously, he served as the course coordinator for Central and Southern Africa at the United States' Foreign Service Institute. He was a Peter J. Duignan distinguished visiting fellow and a national fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. Dizolele has testified before both chambers of the U.S. Congress, as well as at the UN Security Council. He has served as an international election monitor and delegate in several countries, including Nigeria, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he was embedded with UN peacekeepers in Ituri and South Kivu provinces as a reporter. Dizolele's analyses have been published in the *Journal of Democracy*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek International*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The New Republic*, *Forbes*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and other publications. A frequent commentator on African affairs, he has been a guest analyst on PBS's *NewsHour* and *Foreign Exchange*; NPR's *Tell Me More*, *On Point*, and the *Diane Rehm Show*; BBC's *World News Update*; and Al Jazeera's *The Stream*, *NewsHour*, and *Inside Story*. Dizolele holds an international MBA and an MPP from the University of Chicago. He is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. He is fluent in French, Norwegian, Spanish, Swahili, Kikongo, and Lingala, and proficient in Danish and Swedish. He is the author of the forthcoming biography, *Mobutu: The Rise and Fall of the Leopard King* (Random House).

Endnotes

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