CAMPAIGN ON TRANSITION FROM STATE-CENTRIC SECURITY TO INDIVIDUALISTIC PROTECTION IN NIGERIA*

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Abstract

The persistent insecurity in Nigeria has exposed the inadequacies of a predominantly state-centric security architecture that prioritizes regime stability over the protection of citizens. Contemporary security challenges, ranging from terrorism and banditry to police brutality, communal conflicts, and digital threats, demonstrate that threats have become increasingly diffused, non-state driven, and proximate to individuals rather than the state. This shift necessitates a reconceptualization of Nigeria's security paradigm. This paper examines the urgent need for a transition from a state-centric model of security, rooted in traditional notions of sovereignty and territorial protection, to an individualistic protection framework that places the safety, rights, and dignity of the individual at the centre of security governance. The study evaluates constitutional provisions, national security institutions, and current policy practices, highlighting structural gaps that undermine the protection of citizens. It also interrogates human security theory, which expands the meaning of security to include political, economic, social, environmental, health, and community well-being, arguing that Nigeria's complex security landscape demands a holistic, people-focused response. Through a review of normative international standards and comparative practices from democratic jurisdictions, the paper demonstrates that safeguarding individuals enhances state stability rather than undermining it. The abstract concludes by proposing a comprehensive campaign framework for Nigeria's transition, emphasizing legal reforms, human-rights–based policing, community participation, accountability mechanisms, and socio-economic interventions as critical pillars for strengthening individual security and rebuilding public trust in state institutions. This paradigm shift, it argues, is essential for achieving sustainable peace, democratic legitimacy, and inclusive national development.

Keywords: Human rights, Individualistic, Nigeria, Protection, Security, State-centric.

1.0 Introduction

Security discourse in Nigeria has historically revolved around the protection, preservation, and survival of the state rather than the security of the individual citizen. This approach reflects the classical Westphalian doctrine that conceptualizes security as the defence of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and governmental authority against internal and external threats.[1] In Nigeria, this state-centric security paradigm has shaped constitutional mandates, security institutions, and national policy frameworks since independence.[2] However, the persistence, and escalation, of threats such

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Morgenthau, H. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Knopf, 1948.

[2] Adebajo, A. "The Nigerian State and Security Governance." *African Security Review* 22(3), 2013.

as terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, secessionist violence, police brutality, cyber threats, communal conflicts, and economic deprivation demonstrates that security challenges in the 21st century have become increasingly multidimensional and people-centred.[3] The state-centric model has proven inadequate for addressing these non-traditional and dispersed threats, many of which directly harm individuals rather than the state as a political entity.[4]

The shift from traditional security to human security has become a global trend since the 1994 Human Development Report, which profoundly expanded the meaning of security from military defence to the protection of individuals' freedoms and well-being.[5] Human security emphasizes "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" as the foundations of holistic development and democratic stability.[6] Nigeria's complex insecurity landscape demonstrates the necessity of this shift, as threats to individuals, whether from state actors, non-state armed groups, structural poverty, public health crises, or environmental degradation. now pose equal or greater danger to national cohesion than conventional military threats.[7] Consequently, transitioning toward an individualistic protection model is not merely a normative aspiration; it is a strategic necessity for national survival in a rapidly evolving security environment.[8]

Furthermore, many of Nigeria's security failures stem from the inability of existing institutions to sufficiently protect individuals from violence and rights violations. The militarization of internal security, excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies, and the absence of strong accountability mechanisms have resulted in widespread public mistrust in state institutions.[9] The #EndSARS movement of 2020 exemplified a national rejection of state-centric coercion and a demand for rights-based, citizen-focused security governance.[10] Such democratic awakening highlights not only societal frustration but also the incompatibility between Nigeria's current security architecture and the expectations of a modern, rights-conscious population.[11]

Equally important is the growing recognition that individual security and state security are not mutually exclusive. In fact, a secure population enhances political stability, legitimacy, and

[3] Campbell, J. *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.

[4] Ezeani, E. "Rethinking Security in Africa." *Journal of Security Studies*, 2018.

[5] UNDP. *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*.

[6] Gasper, D. "Human Security: A Thematic Review." *UNESCO Journal of Peace*, 2005.

[7] Okoli, A. & Ugwu, U. "Insurgency and Human Security in Nigeria." *African Journal of Political Science*, 2019.

[8] Acharya, A. "Human Security: East versus West." *International Journal*, 2001.

[9] Ojewale, O. "Policing and Public Trust in Nigeria." *Crisis Group Africa Report*, 2021.

[10] Amnesty International. *Nigeria: Time to Reform SARS*, 2020.

[11] Nwagu, L. "Citizenship and Police Accountability." *Nigerian Journal of Criminology*, 2022.

economic productivity.[12] International best practices in democratic societies demonstrate that effective security governance is anchored in constitutionalism, protection of civil liberties, community participation, transparent policing, and preventive mechanisms that address root causes of violence.[13] Aligning Nigeria's security practices with these global standards requires a substantive paradigm shift, one that redefines the role of the state not as the sole referent of security, but as the guarantor of individual safety and dignity.[14]

This study therefore explores the conceptual, legal, institutional, and practical dimensions of the transition from state-centric security to individualistic protection in Nigeria. It evaluates constitutional provisions, human rights norms, national security institutions, and international standards to propose a comprehensive framework for restructuring Nigeria's security governance. The central argument of the paper is that sustainable peace, democratic legitimacy, and inclusive development can only be achieved when the individual, not the state, becomes the primary referent of security policy.[15]

2.0 Background To The Study

The evolution of security governance in Nigeria is deeply rooted in the colonial and post-colonial structures that prioritized the protection of the ruling authority rather than the safety and welfare of the populace. During colonial administration, security institutions such as the Native Authority Police and other paramilitary forces were primarily created to protect British imperial interests and suppress local resistance.[16] This institutional legacy persisted after independence, as Nigeria retained a centralized, militarized, and state-focused security architecture that emphasized regime preservation, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity.[17] Consequently, the Nigerian state inherited a security system that viewed the citizenry more as subjects to be controlled than stakeholders to be protected.[18]

This historical orientation became even more entrenched during prolonged periods of military rule between 1966 and 1999, when national security was conflated with regime security. Military regimes institutionalized coercive security practices, expanded the powers of security agencies, and suppressed civic liberties under the guise of maintaining national unity.[19] These developments

[12] Sen, A. *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

[13] Bayley, D. *Democratic Policing*, Oxford, OUP, 2001.

[14] UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right to Security of the Person*, 2013.

[15] Falana, F. "Human Rights and National Security in Nigeria." *Lagos Law Review*, 2021.

[16] Tamuno, T. *The Police in Modern Nigeria*, University of Ibadan Press, 1970.

[17] Ayoade, J.A. "The Federal Character Principle and Security Structures in Nigeria." *Journal of African Political Studies*, 2015.

[18] Ochonu, M. "Colonial Policing and the Foundations of Authoritarian Security." *African Studies Review*, 2018.

[19] Osaghae, E. "The Military, Security, and Governance in Nigeria." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 1998.

entrenched a culture of state-centricism, where the government's stability was prioritized over human rights, social welfare, and individual safety.[20] Even after the transition to democracy in

1999, the security apparatus retained much of its authoritarian character, resulting in limited structural reforms to align national security priorities with democratic and human rights standards.[21]

Contemporary insecurity in Nigeria further exposes the limitations of a state-centric model. Nigeria faces a spectrum of threats, Boko Haram terrorism, banditry, kidnapping-for-ransom, farmer-herder conflicts, armed robbery, environmental degradation, separatist agitations, cybercrime, ritual killings, and widespread police brutality, that disproportionately target individuals and communities rather than the state as a political entity.[22] These threats are multidimensional, decentralized, and embedded within socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, weak institutions, corruption, climate change, and youth disenfranchisement.[23] The complexity of the security landscape shows that traditional state-centric approaches, driven by military force and top-down security strategies, are ill-equipped to address the root causes of violence or protect individuals from direct harm.[24]

Additionally, the inadequacy of Nigeria's state-centric security framework is evident in persistent governance failures, including underfunded police structures, poor intelligence coordination, weak accountability mechanisms, and human rights violations perpetrated by security agencies.[25] Public trust in security institutions has sharply declined due to unlawful arrests, extrajudicial killings, extortion, and systemic corruption within the police and military.[26] These challenges demonstrate that the existing model not only fails to protect individuals but often directly threatens their safety, reinforcing the argument for a paradigm shift toward a people-centred security approach.[27]

The global shift toward human security further underscores the need for Nigeria to embrace an individualistic protection model. Since the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the concept of human security in 1994, scholars and policymakers have advocated for a broader security framework that emphasizes economic, social, political, environmental, health, and community well-being as integral components of national stability.[28] Human security positions the individual, not the state, as the primary referent of security, stressing the importance of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" as prerequisites for sustainable development.[29] Countries that

[20] Ibeanu, O. "State Power and Insecurity in Nigeria." *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 2007.

[21] Fagbadebo, O. "Democracy and Security Sector Reform in Nigeria." *African Security Review*, 2019.

[22] Campbell, J. *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.

[23] International Crisis Group. *Nigeria's Multiple Security Challenges*, 2021.

[24] Ezeani, E. "Rethinking Security in Africa." *Journal of Security Studies*, 2018.

[25] CLEEN Foundation. *Public Safety and Security in Nigeria*, 2020.

[26] Amnesty International. *Nigeria: Time to End Impunity for Police Brutality*, 2020.

[27] Nwagu, L. "Citizenship and Police Accountability." *Nigerian Journal of Criminology*, 2022.

[28] UNDP. *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*.

[29] Sen, A. *Development as Freedom* (*supra*).

have integrated this model have strengthened democratic governance, improved human rights standards, and enhanced resilience against both internal and external threats.[30]

For Nigeria, transitioning to an individualistic protection model is essential not only for safeguarding citizens' lives but also for promoting democratic legitimacy, social cohesion, and long-term national development. The #EndSARS protests of 2020 illustrate a growing public demand for rights-based, citizen-focused security governance. The movement brought national attention to police brutality, structural violence, and the urgent need for reforms that prioritize individual protection over state coercion.[31] This societal awakening highlights an undeniable truth: Nigeria can no longer rely on a security system that views the state as the sole referent of protection. A transformation toward an individual-centric security paradigm is necessary to rebuild public trust, ensure accountability, and respond effectively to contemporary security challenges.[32]

This study therefore situates the call for transition within historical, institutional, and normative contexts, examining how Nigeria can shift from state-centricism to a comprehensive model of individualistic protection that aligns with global human security standards while addressing the country's unique socio-political realities.[33]

3.0 Statement Of The Problem

Despite Nigeria's constitutional commitment to the security and welfare of its people, the country continues to operate a predominantly state-centric security architecture that prioritizes regime protection, territorial sovereignty, and the preservation of governmental authority over the safety and well-being of individual citizens.[34] This misalignment between constitutional ideals and practical reality has created a persistent gap in Nigeria's security governance structure, resulting in widespread insecurity, human rights violations, and a diminishing public trust in state institutions.[35] The central problem lies in the fact that the security apparatus, military, police, intelligence agencies, and paramilitary institutions, continues to treat the state as the primary referent object of security, despite the reality that most contemporary threats disproportionately impact individuals and communities rather than the state itself.[36]

Nigeria's state-centric security model has proven ineffective in confronting emerging threats such as terrorism, banditry, kidnapping-for-ransom, separatist agitations, cybercrime, environmental insecurity, and communal violence.[37] These threats are inherently decentralized, asymmetrical, and

[30] Paris, R. "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?" *International Security*, 2001.

[31] Tapscott, R. "#EndSARS and the Future of Security Governance in Nigeria." *African Affairs*, 2021.

[32] Falana, F. "Human Rights and Security Reform in Nigeria." *Lagos Law Review*, 2021.

[33] Acharya, A. "Human Security: A Framework for Policy Reform." *International Journal*, 2001.

[34] Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), s. 14(2)(b).

[35] Ibeanu, O. "State Power and Insecurity in Nigeria." *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 2007.

[36] Ayoade, J. "Security Sector Governance in Nigeria." *African Security Review*, 2015.

[37] Campbell, J. *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.

people-focused, rendering traditional militarized responses insufficient.[38] The continued reliance on force-based approaches, often without corresponding preventive, developmental, or human rights–based strategies, exacerbates insecurity by failing to address the socio-economic and political root causes of violence. As a result, citizens remain exposed to existential threats while the security system remains fixated on protecting governmental authority.

Additionally, the security institutions themselves have increasingly become sources of insecurity. The police and military have been implicated in unlawful arrests, extrajudicial killings, torture, extortion, enforced disappearances, and other systemic abuses that undermine citizens' trust and violate constitutional guarantees of dignity and liberty. The #EndSARS protests of 2020 brought global attention to these abuses, demonstrating that security agencies often act contrary to their mandate of public protection. The prevalence of impunity within these institutions further intensifies public fear and alienation, as accountability mechanisms remain weak, slow, or ineffective.[39]

A significant part of the problem stems from the absence of a coherent human security framework within Nigeria's national security policy. Nigeria has not sufficiently integrated principles that prioritize the protection of individuals' economic, health, environmental, political, and community well-being as part of the security agenda.[40] This gap contributes to policy fragmentation, uncoordinated responses, and a failure to adopt preventive measures that address human deprivation, inequality, unemployment, and governance failures, all of which fuel insecurity.[41]

Equally troubling is the constitutional and institutional ambiguity surrounding the roles of various security organs, particularly the police and military. Overlapping mandates, poor intelligence coordination, weak capacity, underfunding, and corruption have collectively undermined the ability of these institutions to protect individuals effectively.[42] The centralization of policing under federal control further limits responsiveness to local security needs, leaving communities vulnerable and underserved.[43]

Consequently, Nigeria faces a multidimensional security crisis driven not only by violent actors but also by an outdated security paradigm that fails to prioritize the individual as the primary

[38] Ezeani, E. "Rethinking Security in Africa." *Journal of Security Studies*, 2018

[39] Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Time to End Impunity for Police Brutality*, 2020; Tapscott, R. "#EndSARS and the Crisis of Policing in Nigeria." *African Affairs*, 2021; CLEEN Foundation, *Public Safety and Security in Nigeria*, 2020.

[40] UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*.

[41] Sen, A. *Development as Freedom* (*supra*).

[42] Onuoha, F. "Security Governance and Coordination in Nigeria." *Brookings Africa Security Brief*, 2019.

[43] Olaniyan, K. "Decentralizing Policing in Nigeria: A Constitutional Imperative." *Lagos Law Review*, 2020.

beneficiary of security governance. The absence of a transition toward an individualistic protection model has resulted in a cycle of insecurity, state repression, socio-economic stagnation, and

democratic fragility.[44] Unless Nigeria reforms its security architecture to reflect human security principles, protects individual rights, and strengthens accountability mechanisms, the country will remain unable to provide meaningful safety for its population or achieve long-term stability and development.[45]

4.0 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is anchored on the need to examine the transition from a state-centric security paradigm to an individualistic protection model within the Nigerian security governance context. To clarify the conceptual dimensions of this discourse, the framework examines the central concepts of *security*, *state-centricism*, *human security*, *individualistic protection*, and *citizen-centred governance*. These concepts illuminate the theoretical and operational foundations required for redefining Nigeria's security priorities.

4.1. Concept of Security

Security is traditionally defined as the protection of a state's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and institutions from external or internal threats.[46] This classical definition, derived from realist political theory, treats the state as the primary referent of security, thereby emphasizing military defence and coercive capabilities.[47] However, contemporary scholarship argues that security is multidimensional and must encompass political, economic, social, environmental, and personal well-being[3]. This expanded understanding forms the basis for moving away from narrow militaristic interpretations toward broader, people-centred approaches.

4.2. State-Centric Security (State-Centricism)

State-centricism conceptualizes security as primarily concerned with safeguarding the state rather than individuals. Under this framework, security institutions are designed to protect governmental authority, regime stability, and national sovereignty.[48] In Nigeria, state-centric security is reflected in the concentration of power within federal institutions, military-led internal operations, the prioritization of regime survival, and the persistent neglect of citizen welfare.[49] This approach reinforces authoritarian tendencies, militarization, and a coercive policing culture.[50] The conceptual flaw of state-centricism is that it assumes the security of the state automatically translates into the

[44] Falana, F. "Human Rights and National Security in Nigeria." (supra).

[45] Paris, R. "Human Security and Policy Reform." *International Security*, 2001.

[46] Wolfers, A. "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol" *Political Science Quarterly*, 1952.

[47] Morgenthau, H. *Politics Among Nations*, New York, Knopf, 1948.

[48] Baldwin, D. "The Concept of Security." *Review of International Studies*, 1997.

[49] Ayoade, J. "Security Sector Governance in Nigeria." *African Security Review*, 2015.

[50] Osaghae, E. "The Nigerian State and Authoritarian Security Practices." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 1998; Alemika, E. "Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria." *Cleen Foundation Monograph Series*, 2010.

security of citizens, a notion disproven by Nigeria's persistent insecurity and human rights violations.[51]

4.3. Human Security Concept

Human security emerged as a counterpoint to state-centricism. First articulated in the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report, it expands the definition of security to include "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want".[52] Human security conceptualizes the individual, not the state, as the core beneficiary of security efforts.[53] It encompasses seven interrelated dimensions: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security.[54] Within the Nigerian context, this framework is essential as most security threats, such as poverty, unemployment, terrorism, banditry, police brutality, and environmental degradation, directly impact individuals rather than the state as an abstract entity.

4.4. Individualistic Protection

Individualistic protection refers to a security model that prioritizes the rights, safety, and dignity of each citizen. It situates security within the framework of human rights, constitutionalism, accountability, and democratic governance.[55] This concept asserts that security policies must be designed around the vulnerabilities of individuals and communities, rather than the survival instincts of the state.[56] In practice, it includes elements such as community policing, human-rights–based policing, legal accountability, socio-economic safeguards, and participatory governance. Nigeria's increasing exposure to asymmetric and people-targeted threats makes individualistic protection an urgent conceptual alternative to the failing state-centric model.[57]

4.5. Citizen-Centred Governance

Citizen-centred governance provides the normative basis for individualistic protection. It emphasizes participatory decision-making, transparency, social justice, and the active involvement of citizens in shaping security priorities.[58] It moves away from hierarchical governance structures toward inclusive models where communities, civil society, and subnational institutions contribute meaningfully to security delivery.[59] In Nigeria, where mistrust of security institutions is

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[51] Campbell, J. *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink* (*supra*).

[52] UNDP. *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*.

[53] Alkire, S. "A Conceptual Framework for Human Security." *CRISE Working Paper*, 2003.

[54] King, G. & Murray, C. "Rethinking Human Security." *Political Science Quarterly*, 2001.

[55] International Crisis Group. *Nigeria's Security Challenges*, 2021.

[56] Sen, A. *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1999; Paris, R. "Human Security and Security Governance Reform." *International Security*, 2001.

[57] Bayley, D. *Democratic Policing*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

[58] Gaventa, J. *Power and Participation in Governance*, Zed Books, 2007.

[59] Kirsch, R. "Community-Based Approaches to Security." *Journal of Peacebuilding*, 2018.

widespread, citizen-centred governance is vital for rebuilding legitimacy, strengthening social cohesion, and restoring public confidence in the state.[60]

4.6. Integrative Conceptual Framework for the Study

The conceptual framework of this study integrates these perspectives to argue that Nigeria's transition from state-centric security to an individualistic protection model requires a redefinition of the referent object of security, an expansion of security governance beyond coercive institutions, and the adoption of human security principles in policy formulation. The integration of human security and citizen-centred governance provides a holistic approach that aligns with democratic values, global security standards, and Nigeria's pressing need to protect its population from both violent and structural threats. This conceptual framework therefore serves as the foundation for analyzing Nigeria's current security architecture and proposing innovative strategies for reform.

5.0 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study draws on three interrelated theories: Human Security Theory**,** Social Contract Theory, and Democratic Governance Theory. These theories offer conceptual explanations for why security should transition from a state-centric model to an individualistic protection paradigm within the Nigerian context. Together, they provide the analytical foundation for understanding security as a people-centred obligation rooted in human rights, democratic accountability, and state responsibility.

5.1 **Human Security Theory**

Human Security Theory emerged as a paradigm shift from traditional, state-focused conceptions of security toward a model that centres on the protection of individuals from critical and pervasive threats.[61] First articulated in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report*, the theory emphasizes two central freedoms: freedom from fear (protection from violence) and freedom from want (protection from deprivation).[62] Human security broadens the scope of security to include economic, health, environmental, food, political, and personal dimensions.

Within the Nigerian context, Human Security Theory is particularly relevant due to the predominance of people-focused threats such as terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, police brutality, environmental degradation, poverty, and communal conflicts.[63] These threats undermine individual well-being and highlight the inadequacy of a security framework built solely on military strength and state survival. Human security therefore provides a compelling theoretical foundation for

[60] Acharya, A. "Human Security: A Framework for Policy Reform." *International Journal*, 2001.

[61] King, G. & Murray, C. "Rethinking Human Security." *Political Science Quarterly*, 2001.

[62] UNDP. *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*

[63] International Crisis Group. *Nigeria's Security Challenges*, 2021.

shifting Nigeria's security priorities from protecting state institutions to safeguarding the lives and dignity of citizens.[64]

5.1 Social Contract Theory

Social Contract Theory, primarily associated with philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, offers a normative justification for the state's responsibility to protect individuals.[65] According to Locke, individuals surrender certain freedoms to the state in exchange for protection of their natural rights, life, liberty, and property. When the state fails to protect these fundamental rights, or becomes a source of harm, it violates the social contract.

In Nigeria, widespread human rights violations, systemic police brutality, and persistent insecurity demonstrate a breakdown in the social contract between citizens and the state.[66] For many communities, the state has become either absent or predatory, creating conditions where non-state actors, vigilantes, ethnic militias, insurgents, step in to fill the protection void.[67] Social Contract Theory therefore frames the need for security reform as a moral and political obligation rooted in the fundamental purpose of governance: the protection of the individual.[68] This theory supports the argument that a transition to an individualistic protection model is essential for restoring legitimacy and rebuilding trust in Nigeria's security institutions.

5.3. Democratic Governance Theory

Democratic Governance Theory emphasizes accountability, rule of law, participation, transparency, and responsiveness as essential elements of effective public administration.[69] In democratic societies, security governance is expected to be subject to civilian oversight, constitutional limitations, and respect for human rights.[70] The theory argues that security institutions must align with democratic values to maintain legitimacy and prevent abuses of power. Nigeria's security architecture exhibits several characteristics inconsistent with democratic governance, including militarized policing, weak accountability mechanisms, excessive centralization, and frequent violations of civil liberties.[71] These challenges demonstrate the tension between Nigeria's state-centric security model and the principles of democratic governance. A shift toward an individualistic protection framework aligns with democratic governance by prioritizing citizen participation, decentralization, community policing, transparency, and respect for human rights.[72] The theory therefore underscores that sustainable security cannot be achieved through coercion but through inclusive, participatory, and rights-based governance structures.

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[64] Sen, A. *Development as Freedom* (*supra*); Hobbes, T. *Leviathan* (1651).

[65] Hobbes, T., *Leviathan* (1651); Locke, J. *Two Treatises of Government* (1689); Rousseau, J-J. *The Social Contract* (1762).

[66] Amnesty International. *Nigeria: Impunity for Human Rights Violations*, 2020.

[67] Akinwale, A. "Non-State Security Providers in Nigeria." *African Affairs,* 2010.

[68] Fagbadebo, O. "Governance and Social Contract in Nigeria." *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 2019.

[69] Beetham, D. *Democracy and Human Rights*, Polity Press, 1999.

[70] Bayley, D. *Democratic Policing* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

[71] Alemika, E. "Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria." *Cleen Foundation Monograph,* 2010.

[72] Olaniyan, K. "Decentralizing Policing in Nigeria." *Lagos Law Review,* 2020.

5.4 Integrative Theoretical Perspective

Synthesizing these three theories provides a holistic framework for examining Nigeria's security transition. Human Security Theory highlights the need to prioritize individuals as the central focus of security policy; Social Contract Theory underscores the ethical and political obligation of the state to protect its citizens; and Democratic Governance Theory provides the normative principles for ensuring transparency, accountability, and public participation in security management.[73] Together, these theories justify the transition from state-centricism to individualistic protection not only as a practical necessity but as a theoretical imperative rooted in democratic values, human rights, and the foundational purpose of the state.

6.0 Literature Review

The transition from a state-centric security paradigm to an individualized, human-focused protection model has been widely examined within contemporary security studies. Early scholarly writings on traditional security emphasized the primacy of the state as the referent object, rooted in realist assumptions that national security is synonymous with territorial integrity and military capability.[74] Realist scholars such as Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz maintained that the survival of the state remains paramount, and security institutions must, therefore, be designed to protect state sovereignty.[75] This orthodox understanding significantly shaped post-independence African security frameworks, including Nigeria's, where state preservation and regime security dominated national security policy formulation.[76]

However, the emergence of intrastate conflicts, terrorism, and globalized human rights norms from the late twentieth century challenged the sufficiency of this traditional model. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 1994 Human Development Report marked a paradigmatic shift by introducing the concept of *human security*, identifying individuals, not states, as the primary beneficiaries of security arrangements.[77] Scholars such as Sabina Alkire, Roland Paris, and King & Murray have expanded this approach, arguing that security must encompass freedom from fear, freedom from want, and the protection of human dignity.[78] The human security paradigm has since been applied to fragile democracies, where the mismatch between state power and citizen protection is most evident.

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[73] Acharya, A. "Human Security and Policy Reform." *International Journal*, 2001.

[74] Morgenthau, H., *Politics Among Nations*, New York, Knopf, 1948, 12.

[75] Waltz, K., *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley, 1979, 88.

[76] Hutchful, E, "Security Sector Reform in Africa," *Afr. Security Rev.* 12(4) (2003), 5.

[77] UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*, New York, UNDP, 1994, 24.

[78] Sabina Alkire, "A Conceptual Framework for Human Security," *Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity* (2003); Roland Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?" *Intl Security* 26(2) (2001), 87.

In the Nigerian context, literature consistently highlights a disconnect between state security institutions and the lived insecurity of citizens. Aiyede asserts that the Nigerian security

architecture has historically been designed to protect political elites and maintain regime continuity rather than safeguard the populace.[79] Similarly, Abdu and Umar argue that entrenched structural violence, weak institutions, and the militarization of internal security operations have rendered citizens vulnerable, thereby undermining democratic consolidation.[80] The persistence of Boko Haram terrorism, herder–farmer conflicts, kidnappings, and police brutality further underscores the limitations of Nigeria's state-centric security apparatus.[81] The #EndSARS movement, widely analyzed by scholars such as Odinkalu, Ume, and Amnesty International, highlights systemic abuses within the security sector and reinforces the growing demand for a rights-based, people-focused security model.

Comparative literature also provides insight into how other jurisdictions have transitioned toward individual security. For instance, Canada's community policing framework, South Africa's constitutionalized human security model, and the Scandinavian emphasis on welfare-security integration demonstrate practical approaches to centering security around citizens.[82] These examples show that individual-centric security does not weaken the state; rather, it strengthens legitimacy, enhances public trust, and promotes long-term stability.

Theoretical contributions further demonstrate that human security, when implemented through comprehensive policy reforms, can address the multidimensional nature of insecurity. Booth's critical security studies perspectives argue that emancipation is the true measure of security, meaning that individuals become secure when they are free from oppressive structures, including state repression.[83] Likewise, proponents of democratic governance and security sector reform (SSR), such as Cawthra, Nathan, and Bryden, maintain that effective security governance requires transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.[84]

Despite the rich theoretical discussions, scholars note a persistent gap between rhetorical commitments to human security and practical implementation in African states. In Nigeria, Omede and Ewoh point to institutional inertia, politicization of security agencies, and inadequate legal frameworks as barriers to adopting an individualized security model.[85] Similarly, scholars on

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[79] King & Murray, "Rethinking Human Security," *Political Science Quarterly* 116(4) (2002): 585–610; Aiyede, A., "The Political Economy of Security in Nigeria," *Nigerian Journal of Public Policy* 15(2) (2018): 33.

[80] Abdu & Umar, *Mass Violence and Insecurity in Northern Nigeria*, Zaria, ABU Press, 2017, 41.

[81] Onuoha, F., "The Resurgence of Boko Haram," *Africa Res. Bulletin* 52(2) (2015), 20

[82] Odinkalu, C., "#EndSARS and the Crisis of Nigerian Policing," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 13(3) (2021): 454; Bayley, D., *Police for the Future*, Oxford University Press, 1994, 101; South African Constitution (1996), Chapter 11.

[83] Ball, N. & Goor, L., "Promoting Conflict Prevention in Fragile States," Clingendael Institute , N.Report (2008), 14; Booth, K., "Security and Emancipation," *Review of International Studies* 17(4) (1991): 313.

[84] Cawthra, M. & Nathan, G., *Security Governance in Africa*, Unisa Press, 2007, 62.

[85] Andrew Omede & Andrew Ewoh, "Challenges of Human Security in Nigeria," *International Journal of Politics* 8(1) (2019): 29.

constitutional law argue that while the 1999 Constitution recognizes the security and welfare of the people as the primary purpose of government, existing laws and practices remain heavily skewed toward protecting the state rather than citizens.

Overall, the literature reveals that the movement toward individualized security is both a normative and practical necessity for Nigeria. However, the country's transition remains hampered by structural, legal, and institutional challenges that require deliberate reform. The growing body of scholarship provides a strong foundation for rethinking security governance, but also underscores the urgency of developing actionable strategies for operationalizing individual-focused security within Nigeria's democratic framework.

7.0 Legal Framework

The legal foundation for transitioning from a state-centric security model to an individualized protection paradigm in Nigeria is embedded in constitutional, statutory, regional, and international instruments. These legal sources collectively define the scope of state obligations, the rights of individuals, and the mechanisms through which security and human rights are to be protected.

7.1. Constitutional Framework

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) is the supreme law governing security and human rights obligations. Section 14(2)(b) expressly states that *"the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government,"* signalling a clear normative prioritization of individual well-being over mere state preservation.[86] Despite its status as part of the non-justiciable Fundamental Objectives, scholars argue that this provision imposes a significant moral and political duty on state institutions to design security systems that centre the citizen.[87]

Furthermore, Chapter IV of the Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, including the right to life (section 33), dignity of the human person (section 34), personal liberty (section 35), fair hearing (section 36), freedom of movement (section 41), and freedom from discrimination (section 42).[88] These rights serve as the legal basis for an individualized security model. In *Fawehinmi v. Abacha*, the Supreme Court affirmed the primacy of constitutional rights, holding that the state cannot invoke national security to justify unlawful violations of individual liberties.[89]

7.2. Statutory and Institutional Framework

7.2.1 . Nigeria Police Act 2020

The Nigeria Police Act 2020 represents a key statutory reform aimed at enhancing people-focused security. Section 4 mandates the Police to protect the rights and freedom of every person,

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[86] Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), s. 14(2)(b).

[87] Nwabueze, B. O., *Constitutional Democracy in Africa*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 2003, 54.

[88] Nigerian Constitution 1999, ss. 33–42.

[89] *Gani Fawehinmi v. Sani Abacha* (2000) 6 NWLR (Pt. 660) 228.

emphasizing community partnership, accountability, and respect for human rights. Section 5 further redefines police functions to include proactive community safety, crime prevention through engagement, and non-lethal operations, reflecting a shift away from militarized policing.

7.2.2. Armed Forces Act

The Armed Forces Act Cap A20 LFN 2004 establishes the military's role in defending territorial integrity (section 217(2)(a)) but permits internal engagement only when necessary to suppress insurrection, restore order, or assist civil authorities (section 217(2)(c)).[90] This limitation underscores the constitutional preference for civilian-led security, consistent with an individualized protection model.

7.2.3. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Act

The National Human Rights Commission Act of 2010 strengthens mechanisms for human protection by granting the NHRC powers to investigate human rights violations, recommend prosecutions, and advise the government on human-rights–based security policies. This institutional mechanism is central to ensuring accountability in state security operations.

7.3. Regional Legal Instruments

Nigeria is bound by several African regional human rights instruments that prioritize individual security:

7.3.1. African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

Domesticated through the African Charter Act (Cap A9 LFN 2004), the Charter guarantees rights to life, personal integrity, liberty, and security (Articles 4–6), which are enforceable in Nigerian courts. In *Abacha v. Fawehinmi*, the Supreme Court confirmed that the ACHPR has the status of a domestic statute and prevails where it offers higher protection than conflicting laws.[91] This judgment reinforces the centrality of human rights in Nigerian security governance.

7.3.2. ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001)

The ECOWAS Protocol obligates member states to promote democratic governance, human rights, and transparent security institutions (Articles 1–2).[92] The ECOWAS Court of Justice has jurisdiction to hear individual complaints against member states, a mechanism increasingly utilized by Nigerians seeking redress for security-related violations.

7.4. International Legal Framework

Nigeria's international obligations further support the transition toward individualized security:

[90] Armed Forces Act Cap A20 LFN 2004, s. 217.

[91] *Abacha v. Fawehinmi* (2000) 6 NWLR (Pt. 660) 231.

[92] ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), Arts. 1–2.

7.4.1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Nigeria's ratification of the ICCPR (1966) imposes binding obligations to protect rights to life (Article 6), liberty and security (Article 9), and freedom from torture (Article 7).[93] The UN Human Rights Committee has consistently emphasized that states must not invoke national security to justify arbitrary use of force or suppression of civil liberties.[94]

7.4.2. Convention Against Torture (CAT)

Nigeria ratified CAT in 2001, requiring it to prohibit torture and ensure accountability for security agency abuses.[95] This obligation aligns with domestic calls for rights-based policing and an end to impunity within security institutions.

7.4.3. UN Human Security Normative Framework

The UN's 1994 Human Development Report and subsequent UN General Assembly resolutions articulate the global normative basis for redefining security around individuals[17]. Although soft law, these standards strongly influence national policy reform and provide normative grounds for a people-centered security policy in Nigeria.

7.5. Judicial Interpretation and Case Law

Nigerian courts have progressively affirmed individual rights in the context of security operations. In *Inspector General of Police v. ANPP*, the Court of Appeal held that the state cannot criminalize peaceful assembly under the guise of preserving public order.[96] In *Odafe v. Attorney General of the Federation*, the Federal High Court ruled that deteriorating prison conditions violated the right to dignity, thus establishing precedent for rights-based security governance in custodial contexts.[97] These decisions collectively reinforce the judiciary's role in safeguarding individualized security.

8.0 Findings

This study reveals several critical insights regarding Nigeria's ongoing debate on transitioning from a state-centric security framework to an individualized protection model.

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8.1. Nigeria's Current Security Architecture Remains Predominantly State-Centric

The analysis shows that despite constitutional provisions recognizing the security and welfare of the people as the primary purpose of government, Nigeria's security institutions continue to prioritize regime protection, territorial integrity, and elite interests. The dominance of military involvement in internal security, persistent reliance on force-based strategies, and the politicization

[93] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Arts. 6–9.

[94] UNHRC General Comment No. 31 (2004), para. 6.

[95] Convention Against Torture (1984), Arts. 2–4.

[96] *IGP v. ANPP* (2008) 12 WRN 65.

[97] *Odafe & Ors v. Attorney-General of the Federation* (2004) AHRLR 205.

of security agencies illustrate the state-centric posture. This has contributed to systemic inefficiencies and limited responsiveness to citizen-level insecurities.

8.2. There Is a Significant Gap Between Constitutional Rights and Practical Protection of Individuals

Although the 1999 Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, including life, liberty, movement, dignity, and security of person, the implementation of these rights remains weak. Frequent reports of police brutality, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, and abuses by military personnel reveal a striking gap between legal frameworks and practical reality. This gap underscores the inadequacy of current mechanisms for holding security actors accountable.

8.3. Human Security Challenges in Nigeria Are Multidimensional and Extend Beyond Traditional Threats

Findings indicate that threats to security in Nigeria today are no longer limited to insurgency or territorial aggression. They include socio-economic deprivation, unemployment, poverty, food insecurity, health vulnerabilities, gender-based violence, and environmental threats. These conditions demonstrate that human security deficits are at the core of Nigeria's insecurity, validating the need for a people-centered security paradigm.

8.4. Legal and Institutional Frameworks Exist but Are Underutilized

Nigeria has a broad legal architecture that supports individualized security—such as the Police Act 2020, NHRC Act, African Charter (domesticated), and international human rights treaties. However, weak implementation, institutional inefficiencies, political interference, and poor funding hinder their effectiveness. Agencies mandated to protect human rights lack sufficient autonomy, resources, and enforcement capacity.

8.5. Community Trust in State Security Institutions Is Low

Empirical and scholarly evidence shows widespread distrust of the Nigerian Police Force, military, and related agencies. This distrust stems from long-standing patterns of abuse, corruption, impunity, and failure to respond adequately to community-level threats. Movements such as #EndSARS highlight the deep disconnect between citizens and security providers, confirming that state-centric policies have not translated into citizen security.

8.6. International and Regional Human Rights Frameworks Strongly Support a Transition

Nigeria's participation in international and regional human rights regimes establishes obligations to safeguard individuals. Instruments like the ICCPR, African Charter, and ECOWAS Court mechanisms empower individuals and demand state accountability. These frameworks support a shift toward individualized protection and provide normative justification for reforming Nigeria's security governance.

8.7. Individual-Centric Security Improves National Stability and Democratic Legitimacy

Evidence from comparative jurisdictions demonstrates that prioritizing citizens enhances public trust, promotes rule of law, and leads to long-term stability. In countries where community policing,

human-rights–based security reforms, and welfare-security integration have been implemented, security outcomes significantly improved. This reinforces the finding that protecting individuals does not weaken the state but strengthens its legitimacy.

8.8. Structural Constraints Hinder Transition Efforts

The study identifies several structural obstacles:
insufficient policy coherence; weak inter-agency coordination; lack of operational accountability; entrenched militarization of internal security; poor civilian oversight; inadequate training on human rights-based policing; limited community engagement mechanisms.

Without addressing these constraints, adopting an individualized security model will remain rhetorical rather than transformative.

8.9. The Need for a Comprehensive Campaign Framework Is Evident

The findings confirm that transitioning to an individualized protection paradigm requires a deliberate, multi-level campaign. This includes legal reforms, public sensitization, institutional restructuring, human rights training, community involvement, and socio-economic development strategies. The campaign must also adopt a holistic approach that recognizes security as deeply interconnected with governance, development, justice, and societal welfare.

9.0 Conclusion

This study has examined the imperative of transitioning Nigeria's security framework from a state-centric paradigm to an individualized, people-centered protection model. The findings reveal that despite the constitutional mandate that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government, Nigeria's current security architecture remains overwhelmingly state-centric, emphasizing regime protection, territorial integrity, and elite interests over the safety and dignity of individual citizens. This orientation has contributed to widespread insecurity, systemic human rights abuses, and declining public trust in state institutions.

The review of legal instruments, including the Nigerian Constitution, the Nigeria Police Act 2020, the Armed Forces Act, the National Human Rights Commission Act, and Nigeria's obligations under regional and international human rights treaties, indicates that a robust framework exists to support individual-centric security. However, weak implementation, political interference, institutional inefficiency, and entrenched militarization of internal security undermine the effectiveness of these legal mechanisms. Consequently, there is a disconnect between the normative principles enshrined in law and the lived experiences of Nigerian citizens, who continue to face threats from terrorism, banditry, kidnappings, communal violence, police brutality, and socio-economic deprivation.

The study also demonstrates that adopting an individualized protection model aligns with both human security theory and democratic governance principles. Prioritizing citizens' safety, rights, and well-being not only addresses multidimensional security threats but also strengthens state legitimacy, promotes accountability, and enhances social cohesion. Comparative evidence from other jurisdictions confirms that citizen-centered security reforms, such as community policing,

human-rights–based approaches, and integrated welfare-security policies, can effectively reduce insecurity while fostering democratic consolidation.

In conclusion, Nigeria's transition to a people-centered security framework is both a legal and moral imperative. Achieving this transformation requires a comprehensive, multi-dimensional campaign involving legislative reform, institutional restructuring, capacity building, public sensitization, and active community participation. Failure to realign security priorities toward the protection of individuals will perpetuate cycles of violence, erode democratic institutions, and undermine national development. Therefore, a deliberate and sustained shift toward individualized protection is essential for ensuring that the Nigerian state fulfills its primary purpose: safeguarding the lives, dignity, and welfare of its citizens.

10. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to facilitate Nigeria's transition from a state-centric security framework to an individualized, people-centered protection model:

1. Legal and Policy Reforms

1. Strengthen Implementation of Constitutional Mandates: The federal and state governments should operationalize Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution, ensuring that security policies prioritize the protection and welfare of citizens.
2. Review and Harmonize Security Legislation: Laws such as the Nigeria Police Act 2020, Armed Forces Act, and NHRC Act should be reviewed to eliminate overlaps, ambiguities, and provisions that inadvertently reinforce militarized or coercive practices.
3. Domesticate and Enforce International Human Rights Standards: Nigeria should ensure full compliance with the ICCPR, Convention Against Torture, and regional instruments such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to create binding obligations on state security actors.

2. Institutional Reforms

i. Restructure Security Agencies**:** Security institutions should adopt organizational reforms that prioritize human rights, accountability, and community engagement. This includes establishing independent oversight bodies with adequate autonomy and enforcement powers.
ii. Capacity Building and Training: Police, military, and paramilitary personnel should receive regular training on human-rights–based security practices, conflict resolution, and community policing[5].
iii. Decentralize Security Operations: Empower local government authorities and community-based security initiatives to complement federal agencies, improving responsiveness to local threats[6].

3. Accountability and Transparency

1. Strengthen Oversight Mechanisms: Parliamentary committees, independent human rights commissions, and judicial review bodies should be empowered to investigate and sanction human rights violations by security agents.
2. Enforce Anti-Corruption Measures: Systemic corruption within security agencies undermines individual protection. Transparent auditing, internal investigations, and strict disciplinary measures must be implemented.
3. Promote Judicial Access for Citizens: Citizens must have accessible and affordable legal recourse against abuses by security actors, ensuring protection of rights and remedies for violations.

4. Community Engagement and Public Participation

1. Institutionalize Community Policing: Develop sustainable community policing models that involve citizens in safety planning, intelligence gathering, and conflict prevention[10].
2. Public Awareness Campaigns: Educate citizens on their rights, security responsibilities, and avenues for reporting abuses, fostering cooperation and trust between communities and security agencies.
3. Engage Civil Society Organizations: NGOs, human rights groups, and academic institutions should be actively involved in policy formulation, monitoring, and advocacy for citizen-centered security.

5. Socio-Economic Interventions

1. Address Root Causes of Insecurity: Implement policies targeting unemployment, poverty, inequality, and social deprivation, which are significant drivers of crime and insecurity.
2. Integrate Welfare and Security Policies: Security strategies should include health, education, housing, and social protection programs to reduce vulnerability and promote human security.

6. Technology and Data-Driven Approaches

1. Develop a National Security Database: Utilize data analytics, geographic information systems (GIS), and early-warning systems to proactively respond to threats affecting individuals and communities.
2. Digitalize Public Complaint Mechanisms: Create accessible digital platforms for citizens to report abuses, misconduct, or threats in real time, enhancing accountability and responsiveness.

7. International Cooperation and Benchmarking

1. Adopt Best Practices from Other Jurisdictions: Nigeria should learn from countries with successful human security models, including community policing, rights-based security reforms, and welfare-security integration.

2. **Participate in Regional Security Frameworks**: Actively engage with ECOWAS and African Union human rights and security initiatives to strengthen legal compliance, capacity building, and cross-border cooperation.