

**INTEGRATING FISCAL FEDERALISM, STATE POLICING AND RELIGIOUS LAW
REFORM INTO NIGERIA’S SECURITY ARCHITECTURE:
A CONFLICT-SENSITIVE ROADMAP FOR “PROJECT TRUE FEDERATION”**

Barrister Adebayo Akinade, dfisn

Deputy President & Chief Executive,
Institute of Security Nigeria

Email: bayoakinade77@gmail.com / bayoakinade@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

The “Project True Federation” proposal circulating since May 2026 outlines a redesign of Nigeria’s political structure: devolution of policing, prisons, minerals, railways, electricity and VAT; restriction of Sharia criminal jurisdiction; and a new revenue formula. This paper treats the proposal as a policy scenario and provides a 36-month roadmap for consideration and implementation that minimizes the risk of political, ethnic and sectarian crisis. Drawing on constitutional law, comparative federalism, plural policing theory, and the published work of Barrister Adebayo Akinade, the paper argues that devolution can strengthen security and cohesion if sequenced with legal safeguards, fiscal transition mechanisms, harmonized standards, and broad elite consensus.

Keywords: Fiscal Federalism, State Policing, Sharia Law Reform, Conflict Prevention, Plural Policing, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Nigeria's security and governance deficits are linked to excessive centralization, fiscal dependence of states, and unresolved tensions between secular constitutionalism and religious law. The "Project True Federation" scenario seeks to address these through simultaneous devolution and reform. This paper does not endorse or reject the proposal. It analyzes legal feasibility, political feasibility, and operational feasibility, and provides a roadmap designed to prevent the elite capture, inter-state disputes, and sectarian violence that have derailed past reforms.

2. Methodology and Scope

The analysis uses doctrinal legal analysis of the 1999 Constitution, policy analysis of devolution models, and conflict-sensitive program management frameworks. It integrates empirical insights from Akinade's eight monographs on security, governance, communication, and conflict prevention.

3. The "Project True Federation" Scenario: Key Provisions

1. Name change to "United States of Nigeria".
2. Devolution of policing, prisons, minerals, railways, electricity, VAT to states.
3. Sharia criminal jurisdiction restricted to civil, marital, inheritance, customary matters; Hisbah dissolved.
4. Revenue formula: 50% derivation, 20% federal pool, 30% national administration.
5. Governors empowered to establish state police and license minerals.

4. Constitutional and Legal Analysis

Section 9(2) of the 1999 Constitution requires 2/3 of NASS and 24 state assemblies for alteration of the Exclusive List. Items listed are currently exclusive. Restricting Sharia criminal jurisdiction aligns with the pre-1999 position in most northern states and would likely survive judicial review if done by amendment, as Section 10 prohibits state religion and Section 38 guarantees freedom of religion. Name change requires alteration of Section 2.

5. Security Implications of Devolution

Opportunities: State police can improve response time, local intelligence, and accountability if properly regulated.

Risks: Partisan use by governors, uneven standards, cross-border crime, conflict between state and federal forces.

Mitigation: Establish a National Policing Standards Council, joint operations protocols, and retain a federal investigative reserve force for 24 months.

Akinade's Security Operations, Crime Prevention and Good Governance demonstrates that localized policing reduces crime when supported by clear command protocols and civilian oversight. Without those, decentralization increases abuse and fragmentation.

6. Fiscal Federalism: Revenue, VAT and Resource Control

The 50-20-30 formula increases derivation but risks horizontal inequality. A Fiscal Transition Fund and equalization grants are needed to prevent service collapse in low-IGR states. VAT administration requires a harmonized IT system and dispute resolution mechanism. Akinade's analysis of social coercion and sustainable development shows that sudden fiscal shocks without equalization trigger violent contestation.

7. Religious Law Reform: Balancing Section 10, 38 and 39

Any reform must avoid violating freedom of religion while upholding constitutional supremacy. Restricting Sharia criminal jurisdiction to civil matters and transferring policing to state police operating under national standards addresses both concerns. Hisbah officers should be retrained as community mediators and integrated into Community Security Integration Boards.

Akinade's Communal Conflict and Violence argues that identity-based conflicts escalate when state responses are seen as targeting religious identity rather than criminal conduct. Interfaith dialogue and joint communiqués reduce mobilization risk.

8. Comparative Lessons

USA: Dual sovereignty policing with federal standards via DOJ Civil Rights Division.

Canada: Provincial policing with RCMP federal role and fiscal equalization.

India: Concurrent policing list with central paramilitary reserve.

South Africa: Cooperative governance and intergovernmental fiscal relations.

These cases show that devolution succeeds when accompanied by national standards, fiscal buffers, and intergovernmental dispute mechanisms.

9. Conflict Risks and Early Warning Indicators

Risks include elite capture, sectarian mobilization, inter-state resource disputes, and police partisanship. Early warning indicators include hate speech spikes, legislative deadlock, and violent protests. Akinade's work on communal conflict emphasizes that early mediation by traditional rulers prevents escalation.

10. Principles for Conflict-Sensitive Implementation

1. Do no harm
2. Inclusivity
3. Sequencing
4. Transparency
5. Safeguards and exit ramps

These principles are drawn from Akinade's Managing Strategic Security in Statecraft which argues that reform fails when operational capacity lags legal authority.

11. Phase 1: Consensus Building and Legal Drafting [Months 0-9]

- National Constitutional Dialogue with governors, traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil society.
- Technical drafting committee with AGF, legal scholars, state AGs.
- Pre-draft public hearings in all 6 geopolitical zones.

Akinade's Security Culture, Diplomacy and Communication Skills in International Relations provides the framework for managing public affairs and preventing misinformation during this phase.

12. Phase 2: Transitional Institutions and Standards Harmonization [Months 9-18]

- Establish National Policing Standards Council, Fiscal Transition Authority, Intergovernmental Dispute Resolution Tribunal.
- Model laws for state police, mineral licensing, VAT administration.
- Training and certification of state police recruits.

This mirrors the “strategic security management” sequence in Akinade’s 2019 work.

13. Phase 3: Rollout of State Policing and Revenue Systems [Months 18-30]

- Staggered rollout based on readiness assessments.
- Parallel federal reserve force for 24 months.
- Dual VAT system with federal-state interoperability.

Akinade’s Security Operations, Crime Prevention and Good Governance shows that staggered rollout reduces system shock and allows correction. Effective joint operations require standardized communication protocols across federal and state agencies to prevent operational conflict, as outlined in Akinade’s Communications in Security and Law Enforcement Operations.

Documentation standards are critical when devolving policing powers, as poor records undermine prosecution and public trust. Akinade’s Communication Skills in Security Documentation in Law Enforcement sets the standard for incident reporting and chain of custody required for new state police forces.

14. Phase 4: Monitoring, Adjudication and Adjustment [Months 30-36]

- Independent evaluation by NBS, Auditor-General, civil society.
- Adjust fiscal formula and policing standards based on data.
- Sunset clauses for transitional institutions.

This reflects Akinade’s argument that sustainable reform requires continuous evaluation and adjustment.

15. Role of Civil Society, Traditional Institutions and Media

Traditional institutions mediate religious and ethnic concerns. Media must be engaged to counter misinformation. Civil society monitors implementation and files public interest litigation where needed.

Akinade’s Communications in Security and Law Enforcement Operations provides the framework for inter-agency communication and managing public information during constitutional reform.

16. Fiscal Transition Fund and Equalization Mechanism

Seeded with 2% of federal share for 5 years. Managed by independent board. Formula based on population, landmass, HDI, and security burden.

17. Accountability and Anti-Corruption Safeguards

State police subject to Police Service Commission, ICPC, and civilian oversight boards. Mineral licensing on EITI standard. Real-time fiscal dashboards prevent leakage.

Akinade’s Communication Skills in Security Documentation in Law Enforcement establishes the documentation standards necessary for accountability and evidence admissibility in devolved policing systems.

18. Communication and Peace Education Programme

Based on Legal and Forensic Issues in Elections and Peace Education:

1. National Peace Education Curriculum inserted into NYSC, secondary schools, and police training.
2. Media Engagement Protocol for public officials.
3. Community Town Halls in 774 LGAs facilitated by traditional rulers and ISN-certified mediators.

19. Risk Mitigation & Contingency Planning

Risk	Mitigation	Contingency
------	------------	-------------

Sectarian violence	Interfaith Forum, Hisbah transition,	rapid mediation	Federal	peacekeeping reserve force on standby
--------------------	--------------------------------------	-----------------	---------	---------------------------------------

State police abuse	Civilian oversight boards, ICPC jurisdiction	Suspension of certification,	reversion to federal policing
--------------------	--	------------------------------	-------------------------------

Fiscal shock	Transition Fund, equalization grants	Federal backstop for 12 months
--------------	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------

Legal challenges	Pre-emptive AGF opinions, test cases	Legislative correction within 90 days
------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

20. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Framework

Indicators: Crime clearance rate, public trust in police, inter-state incidents, state IGR growth, VAT compliance, intergroup trust index.

Evaluation: Independent evaluation at M18 and M36 by NBS and external academic consortium. Results published and used to adjust policy.

21. Recommendations

1. Do not rush: Allow 12 months for consensus before first reading.
2. Bundle reforms: Link devolution with anti-corruption and fiscal transparency measures.
3. Protect rights: Explicit constitutional clauses protecting freedom of religion and non-discrimination.
4. Build capacity first: No state police without certified training and oversight.
5. Use data: Trigger adjustments based on crime rates, revenue performance, and public trust surveys.

22. Conclusion

“Project True Federation” addresses real structural deficits. Without sequencing, safeguards, and consensus, it risks exacerbating the crises it seeks to solve. A conflict-sensitive, phased implementation can turn devolution into a driver of security, accountability, and national cohesion. The frameworks in Akinade’s published work provide the theoretical and practical tools to achieve this.

References

- Akinade, A. (2007). Security operations, crime prevention and good governance: Patterns and trends. Institute of Security Nigeria.
- Akinade, A. (2008a). National security, social coercion and sustainable development: Panacea to conflict, violence and xenophobia. Institute of Security Nigeria.
- Akinade, A. (2008b). Security culture, diplomacy and communication skills in international relations. Institute of Security Nigeria.
- Akinade, A. (2009). Communal conflict and violence: Response, resolution and prevention. Institute of Security Nigeria.
- Akinade, A. (2018). Contemporary security issues on governance and statecraft. Institute of Security Nigeria.
- Akinade, A. (2019). Managing strategic security in statecraft, public affairs and foreign relations. Institute of Security Nigeria.
- Akinade, A. (2025a). Communications in security and law enforcement operations. Institute of Security Nigeria.
- Akinade, A. (2025b). Communication skills in security documentation in law enforcement. Institute of Security Nigeria.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1999, as amended). Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Watts, R. L. (2008). Comparing Federal Systems. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- International Crisis Group. (2022). Preventing Violent Conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Draft clauses for devolution of policing and VAT
- Appendix B: Model State Policing Standards Act
- Appendix C: Fiscal Transition Fund governance structure
- Appendix D: Conflict-sensitive implementation checklist
- Appendix E: Stakeholder mapping and engagement plan

Barrister Adebayo Akinade, dfisn

Deputy President & Chief Executive
Institute of Security Nigeria