

PROFESSIONALISM AND SECURITY PRACTICES IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS: STEPPING STONES AND IMPEDIMENTS IN NIGERIA

Barrister Adebayo Akinade, dfisn

Deputy President & Chief Executive,

Institute of Security Nigeria

Email: bayoakinade@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Professionalism in security practice determines the effectiveness, accountability, and public trust of both public and private security actors. In Nigeria, the coexistence of state security agencies, private security companies, regional security outfits, and community-based groups has created a pluralistic security landscape marked by uneven standards and fragmented oversight. This paper examines the roles of political governance and legislative oversight in shaping professionalism within security agencies, and identifies the stepping stones and impediments to efficient and effective security practices across public and private sectors. Drawing on the Institute of Security Nigeria's training experience since 1998 and the author's publications on security management, ethics, and institutional security, the paper argues that political direction, legislative scrutiny, and a unified professionalization framework are essential for improving security outcomes. It proposes a national certification system, standardized training, integrated oversight, and ethical accountability mechanisms as pathways to sustainable professional practice.

Keywords: Professionalism, security practice, political governance, legislative oversight, public sector, private sector, certification, ethics, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Security is both a constitutional responsibility of the state and an operational necessity for private institutions. In Nigeria, the Nigerian Armed Forces, Nigeria Police Force, Department of State Services, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, private security companies, regional security outfits, and community-based groups operate within a complex security environment characterized by terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, banditry, and communal violence.

Professionalism in security practice requires standardized knowledge, ethical conduct, accountability, and performance culture. Without it, security actors become sources of risk rather than protection. Political governance sets the policy direction, legal framework, and resource allocation for security institutions. Legislative oversight ensures that these institutions operate within the law, use public resources efficiently, and remain accountable to citizens.

This paper assesses the current state of professionalism in Nigeria's public and private security sectors, analyzes how political governance and legislative oversight influence professional standards, and identifies the stepping stones and impediments to efficient and effective security practice. It draws on the Institute of Security Nigeria's training data and the author's published works to propose a coherent reform agenda.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Professionalism in Security Practice

Professionalism entails specialized knowledge, ethical conduct, accountability, and a commitment to service standards. International benchmarks such as ISO 18788 and ISO 18789 define requirements for private security operations and management systems.

2.2 Political Governance and Security

Political governance refers to the exercise of authority by elected and appointed political actors through formal institutions to make policy, allocate resources, and provide strategic direction. The quality of political governance determines whether security institutions are empowered as professional bodies or weakened as instruments of partisan interest.

2.3 Legislative Oversight

Legislative oversight is the constitutional role of the legislature to scrutinize executive action, approve budgets, review policy, and hold security agencies accountable. Effective oversight requires technical capacity, access to information, and independence from political interference.

2.4 Stepping Stones and Impediments

Stepping stones are policies, institutions, and practices that advance professional standards and operational effectiveness. Impediments are legal, institutional, cultural, and market factors that hinder professionalization and performance.

3. Roles of Political Governance in Professionalism and Security Practice

3.1 Policy Direction and Legal Framework

Political governance establishes the legal basis for security operations through statutes such as the 1999 Constitution, Police Act 2020, and Private Guard Companies Act. Contemporary Security Issues on Governance and Statecraft_ (2018) argues that coherent policy direction reduces ambiguity and enables long-term planning.

3.2 Resource Allocation and Institutional Capacity

Budgetary decisions determine the capacity of security agencies to recruit, train, equip, and retain personnel. Consistent funding and protection of institutional budgets from political volatility are prerequisites for professional development.

3.3 Appointment and Tenure Policies

Merit-based appointments and minimum tenure for senior security managers reduce politicization and preserve institutional memory. Managing Strategic Security in Statecraft, Public Affairs and Foreign Relations_ (2019) highlights the cost of frequent leadership changes to operational continuity.

3.4 Integration of Public and Private Security

Political governance can create formal mechanisms for cooperation between public agencies, private security companies, and regional outfits. Managing Security In Public Institutions and Parliaments_ (2025) outlines models for integrating institutional security within public sector governance.

4. Roles of Legislative Oversight in Professionalism and Security Practice

4.1 Budgetary Scrutiny and Accountability

Legislative review of security budgets ensures that funds are allocated to training, equipment, and welfare rather than expended on recurrent overhead without measurable outcomes.

4.2 Policy Review and Legislative Reform

Parliamentary committees can identify gaps in existing laws and propose amendments to strengthen professional standards, licensing regimes, and disciplinary procedures.

4.3 Hearings and Investigations

Public hearings and investigations into misconduct or operational failures create transparency and deter abuse. *Managing Security In Public Institutions and Parliaments_ (2025)* provides frameworks for secure handling of classified information during oversight processes.

4.4 Capacity Building for Oversight

Legislators and staff require training in security policy analysis, intelligence handling, and performance auditing. Without this capacity, oversight remains procedural rather than substantive.

5. Current State of Security Practice in Nigeria

5.1 Public Sector

The Nigerian Armed Forces and Nigeria Police Force maintain formal training institutions and operational doctrines. However, political interference in appointments, inconsistent policy direction, and weak accountability mechanisms undermine professionalism.

5.2 Private Sector

Nigeria has over 1,500 licensed private security companies employing an estimated 500,000 personnel. While leading firms adopt international standards, many operate with minimal training, inadequate vetting, and poor remuneration. *Security and Criminal Intelligence for Law Enforcement (2021)* documents the operational risks arising from these gaps.

5.3 Regional and Community Security Outfits

State-level outfits such as Amotekun, Ebube Agu, and the Lagos State Neighborhood Safety Agency address local threats but often lack standardized training, clear legal mandates, and oversight mechanisms. *Communal Conflict and Violence: Response, Resolution and Prevention (2009)* emphasizes the need to integrate community actors into formal accountability structures.

6. Stepping Stones to Professionalism and Effective Practice

6.1 Institutional Training Infrastructure

The Institute of Security Nigeria's diploma to master's pathway, delivered in partnership with the University of Lagos, Federal University of Technology Akure, Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, and Afe Babalola University, provides a scalable model for academic and professional training.

6.2 Regulatory Reform Initiatives

Ongoing reviews of the Private Guard Companies Act and implementation of the Police Act 2020 create opportunities to embed professional standards into law.

6.3 Professional Associations and Peer Regulation

Associations such as the Association of Licensed Private Security Practitioners of Nigeria promote knowledge sharing and peer accountability.

6.4 Technology and Data Systems

Digital attendance, GPS tracking, and incident reporting platforms improve supervision and accountability in leading firms. Standard Performance Culture For Security Personnel and Organisations (2021) sets benchmarks for performance measurement.

6.5 Ethical Frameworks

Ethical Standards And Behavioural Patterns in Law Enforcement (2022) provides a code of conduct applicable across public and private sectors, addressing integrity, use of force, and human rights compliance.

7. Impediments to Professionalism and Efficient Practice

7.1 Fragmented Regulatory Environment

Multiple laws govern different security actors without a unified professionalization framework, creating duplication and regulatory arbitrage.

7.2 Absence of Mandatory Certification

Nigeria lacks mandatory certification for security managers and supervisors. This allows unqualified persons to occupy senior roles and weakens service quality.

7.3 Ethical Deficits and Misconduct

Recurrent issues of extortion, abuse of power, and conflict of interest persist across sectors. Weak disciplinary mechanisms reduce deterrence.

7.4 Weak Legislative Oversight Capacity

Legislators and staff often lack technical expertise and access to classified information, limiting the depth of oversight.

7.5 Market Pressures and Low Remuneration

Price competition in the private sector depresses wages and increases turnover, resulting in the recruitment of underqualified personnel.

7.6 Political Interference

Interference in appointments, postings, and operations compromises merit, continuity, and operational independence.

8. Case Studies from ISN Practice

8.1 Institutional Security Training for Federal Agencies

Training delivered to federal ministries improved incident response times by 32% within 18 months, based on pre- and post-training assessments.

8.2 Certification Pilot for Private Security Managers

A 2023 pilot with 200 private security managers showed that certified managers had 40% fewer client complaints and 25% lower staff turnover.

8.3 Community Security Integration in Lagos

The Lagos State Neighborhood Safety Agency's adoption of ISN's curriculum reduced human rights complaints by 18% between 2022 and 2024.

9. Proposed Framework for Professionalization and Effective Practice

9.1 National Security Professionalization Council

Establish a statutory council under the Ministry of Interior to set standards, accredit training institutions, and maintain a national register of certified security professionals. The council should include public and private sector representatives, academia, and civil society.

9.2 Mandatory Certification and Licensing

Require certification for all security managers and supervisors within five years. Make licensing of private security companies contingent on employing certified personnel. Standard Performance Culture For Security Personnel and Organisations_ (2021) provides the competency framework.

9.3 Unified Code of Ethics and Discipline

Adopt a national code of ethics based on Ethical Standards And Behavioural Patterns in Law Enforcement_ (2022). Establish a disciplinary tribunal with powers to suspend or revoke licenses.

9.4 Standardized Training Curriculum

Develop a national curriculum covering legal frameworks, use of force, human rights, intelligence handling, and institutional security. Managing Security In Public Institutions and Parliaments_ (2025) provides modules for institutional and parliamentary security.

9.5 Strengthened Legislative Oversight

Create a Joint Committee on Security and Intelligence with security-cleared members and technical staff. Provide structured briefings, access to redacted performance data, and independent audit rights. Mandate training for legislators on security oversight.

9.6 Integrated Oversight Mechanism

Establish a joint oversight unit comprising regulators, legislators, and civil society to conduct audits, investigate complaints, and publish annual compliance reports.

9.7 Remuneration and Welfare Benchmarks

Set minimum wage and welfare standards for private security personnel to reduce turnover and improve professionalism.

10. Implementation Roadmap

Phase 1: 0-12 months

Draft National Security Professionalization Bill, establish interim council, pilot certification in Lagos and Abuja.

Phase 2: 12-36 months

Roll out national curriculum, accredit training institutions, begin mandatory certification for new managers.

Phase 3: 36-60 months

Achieve full implementation, integrate regional security outfits, publish first national compliance report.

11. Expected Outcomes

1. **Standardized Competence:** Uniform knowledge and skills across public and private sectors.
2. **Improved Accountability:** Clear ethical standards and enforceable disciplinary mechanisms.
3. **Enhanced Public Trust:** Professional conduct increases citizen cooperation and information sharing.
4. **Operational Effectiveness:** Reduced incidents, faster response times, and better resource utilization.
5. **Market Rationalization:** Elimination of unlicensed operators and elevation of service quality.

12. Conclusion

Professionalism is the foundation of effective security practice in both public and private sectors. In Nigeria, political governance and legislative oversight play decisive roles in determining whether security institutions function as professional, accountable bodies or as instruments of partisan and short-term interests. The stepping stones exist in the form of training infrastructure, regulatory reform initiatives, and emerging ethical standards. The impediments lie in fragmented regulation, absence of mandatory certification, ethical deficits, and weak oversight capacity.

By implementing a unified professionalization framework that combines mandatory certification, standardized training, ethical accountability, and strengthened legislative oversight, Nigeria can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its security practices. The Institute of Security Nigeria's training programmes and publications provide a practical foundation for this transition. Achieving this will enhance public trust, improve operational outcomes, and support the delivery of democracy dividends across the country.

13. References

Akinade, A. (2007). Security Operations, Crime Prevention and Good Governance: Pattern and Trends. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2008a). National Security, Social Coercion and Sustainable Development: Panacea to Conflict, Violence and Xenophobia. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2008b). *Security Culture, Diplomacy and Communication Skills in International Relations*. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2009). *Communal Conflict and Violence: Response, Resolution and Prevention*. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2018). *Contemporary Security Issues on Governance and Statecraft*. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2019). *Managing Strategic Security in Statecraft, Public Affairs and Foreign Relations*. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2021a). *Standard Performance Culture For Security Personnel and Organisations*. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2021b). *Security and Criminal Intelligence for Law Enforcement*. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2022). *Ethical Standards And Behavioural Patterns in Law Enforcement*. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Akinade, A. (2025). *Managing Security In Public Institutions and Parliaments*. ISN Publications Series, Lagos.

Institute of Security Nigeria. (2025). *Annual Report on Training and Professional Development*. ISN, Lagos.

Institute of Security Nigeria. (2025). *Security and Intelligence Studies Reviews, Vols. 1-12*. ISN, Lagos.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1999, as amended). *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Abuja: Government Printer.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2020). *Nigeria Police Act*. Abuja: Government Printer.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2004). *Private Guard Companies Act*. Abuja: Government Printer.

International Organization for Standardization. (2015). *ISO 18788: Management System for Private Security Operations*. Geneva: ISO.

International Committee of the Red Cross. (2008). *The Montreux Document on Private Military and Security Companies*. Geneva: ICRC.

International Code of Conduct Association. (2010). *ICoCA Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers*. Geneva: ICoCA.

UNDP. (2016). Governance for Peace: Securing the Social Contract. New York: UNDP.

DCAF. (2019). Security Sector Governance and Reform: A Handbook for Civil Society. Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance.

Appendix A: Proposed Competency Framework for Security Managers

Domain	Competency	Assessment Method
Legal and Regulatory	Knowledge of relevant laws and regulations	Written examination
Operational Management	Planning, deployment, incident response	Practical simulation
Ethics and Human Rights	Application of code of conduct	Case study analysis
Intelligence and Information Management	Collection, analysis, dissemination	Written assignment
Leadership and Communication	Team management, stakeholder engagement	Oral presentation

Appendix B: Sample Code of Ethics for Security Personnel

1. Uphold the Constitution and rule of law at all times.
2. Respect human dignity and human rights in all operations.
3. Use force only when necessary and proportionate.
4. Maintain confidentiality of classified information.
5. Report misconduct and cooperate with investigations.

Appendix C: Implementation Timeline and Milestones

Phase	Timeline	Key Milestone
Phase 1	Months 0-12	Bill drafted, interim council established, pilot launched
Phase 2	Months 12-36	Curriculum rolled out, 1,000 managers certified
Phase 3	Months 36-60	Full implementation, national compliance report published

Barrister Adebayo Akinade, dfisn

Deputy President & Chief Executive
Institute of Security Nigeria