

**RETHINKING REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN NIGERIA:
GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY, AND THE IMPERATIVE OF CITIZEN-CENTRIC
ALERT SYSTEMS FOR NATION BUILDING**

Barrister Adebayo Akinade, dfisn

Deputy President & Chief Executive,

Institute of Security Nigeria

Unilagconsult Building, Second Floor, Room 210

University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria

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

Phone: 08022771818

ABSTRACT

This position paper analyzes the state of regional security architecture in Nigeria using recent public discourses on South-West insecurity and the absence of a National Citizens' Alert System. It argues that Nigeria's persistent insecurity reflects a governance and statecraft deficit rooted in weak democratic accountability, politicization of security votes, and the absence of real-time, citizen-centric early warning systems. Regional security outfits such as Amotekun are situated within the framework of plural policing, good governance, and nation building. The paper contends that democracy, unity, and progress can serve as vehicles for socio-economic development only when security is de-politicized, intelligence-led, and anchored on Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution. It recommends institutional reforms, technology deployment, and the immediate activation of a National Citizens' Alert System as critical pillars for safeguarding democracy, territorial integrity, and national unity.

Keywords: Regional Security Architecture, Amotekun, Good Governance, Statecraft, Nation Building, National Citizens' Alert System, Democracy, Nigeria

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 14(2)(b), declares that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.” Twenty-five years into the Fourth Republic, the delivery of this fundamental objective remains uneven across regions. The South-West, historically recognized for civic consciousness, educational advancement, and economic productivity, has experienced a surge in kidnapping, banditry, and the occupation of ungoverned forest reserves by criminal networks.

This paper draws on two recent public interventions:

1. The June 2026 interview of Brig.-Gen. Kunle Togun (retd.), former Deputy Director-General of the State Security Service and ex-Chairman of Oyo State Amotekun Corps, alleging politicization of security governance and operational gaps in regional security architecture.
2. The advocacy by Ven. Samson Kunle Popoola for a National Citizens’ Alert System to provide real-time emergency information to citizens.

Adopting a governance and statecraft perspective, this paper examines how weak democratic accountability, absence of intelligence-led planning, and lack of citizen-centric alert systems undermine nation building, unity, and socio-economic progress. It argues that sustainable security in Nigeria requires institutional reform, professionalization of regional security outfits, and technology-driven citizen empowerment.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Security as a Public Good and Constitutional Mandate

Security is the foundation upon which all other rights rest. Without the guarantee of life and property, democratic freedoms and economic development cannot flourish. The constitutional designation of security as the “primary purpose of government” imposes a fiduciary duty on all tiers of government to prioritize threat prevention and response.

2.2 Good Governance and Statecraft

Good governance is defined by transparency, accountability, rule of law, responsiveness, and equity. Statecraft refers to the strategic deployment of state resources to achieve national objectives. The politicization of security votes and the neglect of professional threat analyses represent failures of statecraft that erode public trust and weaken democratic institutions.

2.3 Plural Policing and Regional Security Architecture

Nigeria’s security challenges exceed the capacity of centralized policing. Plural policing, as articulated in Akinade 2004 and 2023, recognizes the legitimate role of state, community, and private security actors operating under a coordinated framework. Regional outfits like Amotekun embody the principle of subsidiarity — delivering security closer to the people. Their effectiveness, however, depends on legal clarity, professional training, inter-agency cooperation, and oversight.

2.4 Democracy, Unity, and Progress as Vehicles for Development

Democracy provides legitimacy through representation and accountability. Unity ensures social cohesion across ethnic and regional lines. Progress denotes measurable improvements in welfare and infrastructure. Together, they form the tripod on which socio-economic development rests. When security governance is treated as a political tool rather than a public service, this tripod collapses.

3.0 SECURITY DYNAMICS IN THE SOUTH-WEST: ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Threat Landscape and Vulnerable Terrains

The South-West faces threats from kidnapping gangs, banditry, and transnational criminal networks operating from forest reserves. Key vulnerable areas include Oyo National Park, which extends into Kwara, Ogbomoso, Igboho, Igbeti, Saki, and Atisbo; and Opara Forest Reserve in Saki, covering over 250,000 hectares and extending into Ibarapa. These “ungoverned spaces” provide cover for criminal logistics, hostage detention, and movement of illicit arms. Recent incidents on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway and the Oriire school abduction underscore the operational reach of these networks.

3.2 Amotekun Corps: Capacity and Operational Gaps

Amotekun was established to complement conventional security agencies through community intelligence and rapid response. However, operational gaps persist:

1. Training and Doctrine: Reports of short-duration training without adequate fieldcraft, patrol, and ambush tactics reduce operational effectiveness.
2. Deployment Strategy: Static positioning of vehicles on highways, rather than dynamic patrols guided by intelligence, limits deterrence and response capability.
3. Institutional Oversight: Discrepancies between board-led recruitment and discipline as stipulated by law, and commandant-led practice, create accountability gaps.

3.3 Governance and Accountability Deficit

Allegations that threat analyses submitted to state executives since 2014 received no actionable response, while security votes continue to be disbursed, point to a governance deficit. Security governance must be evidence-based, auditable, and linked to measurable outcomes. The absence of feedback loops between security advisors and political executives weakens democratic oversight.

4.0 THE IMPERATIVE OF A NATIONAL CITIZENS’ ALERT SYSTEM

4.1 Global Precedent and Rationale

Jurisdictions including Canada, the United States, Japan, and Kenya operate national emergency alert systems that deliver real-time warnings via mobile networks, radio, and television. These systems have proven effective in reducing casualties during kidnappings, terrorist incidents, and natural disasters. Nigeria’s reliance on traditional communication channels during emergencies creates information asymmetry that endangers citizens.

4.2 Proposed Architecture

A Nigerian National Citizens’ Alert System should integrate:

1. Mobile Network Operators for Cell Broadcast and emergency SMS.
2. National Broadcasting Commission to mandate radio and television broadcast interruptions for Level 1 threats.

3. Internet and Social Media Platforms managed by NEMA, NPF, and state emergency agencies for verified information dissemination.
4. Authorized Issuing Agencies including NEMA, NPF, DSS, and state emergency management agencies, operating under strict verification protocols.
5. State and Local Government Emergency Centres for geo-targeted alerts.

Alerts must be categorized by severity, urgency, and geographic relevance to prevent alarm fatigue and maintain public trust.

4.3 Legal and Accountability Safeguards

The system requires a dedicated legal framework specifying authorized issuers, verification procedures, and penalties for misuse. Oversight by the National Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations will ensure compliance and prevent political abuse.

4.4 Contribution to Democracy and National Unity

By providing verified, timely information, an alert system empowers citizens to make informed decisions about their safety. It reduces the spread of misinformation during crises and reinforces the social contract between government and governed — a critical element of democratic legitimacy and national cohesion.

5.0 GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY, AND NATION BUILDING: CLOSING THE GAP

5.1 Measuring Democracy Beyond Elections

Democracy is not sustained by periodic elections alone. It is validated by the state's capacity to deliver public goods, particularly security. When citizens lose lives due to delayed or absent warnings, democratic legitimacy is diminished.

5.2 Unity and Progress as Operational Principles

National unity cannot be achieved through rhetoric. It requires shared institutions and infrastructure that serve all citizens equitably. Progress demands a shift from reactive security responses to predictive, intelligence-led strategies that leverage data, technology, and community participation.

5.3 Preventive Statecraft

Political leaders must adopt preventive statecraft: acting on professional threat analyses before crises occur. The South-West Governors' Forum should function as a regional security council with a dedicated secretariat for intelligence sharing, joint operations, and performance monitoring.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Independent Audit and Reporting: The South-West Governors' Forum should commission an independent audit of all threat analyses submitted since 2014 and publish an implementation status report within 60 days.
2. Amotekun Professionalization: Harmonize training, recruitment, and operational doctrine across the six South-West states. Establish a minimum 12-week training curriculum covering intelligence, patrol, ambush, hostage rescue, and human rights. Institute of Security Nigeria can provide technical support.
3. National Citizens' Alert System Legislation: The National Assembly should expedite legislation mandating Cell Broadcast technology and NBC broadcast override for emergency alerts.

4. Forest Reserve Governance: Establish a joint federal-state task force to reclaim, map, and monitor forest reserves using drones, satellite imagery, and community-based forest rangers.
5. Civic Security Education: Integrate security literacy into civic education curricula, promoting “See Something, Say Something” as a civic duty.
6. Ethical Public Discourse: Security analysis and policy must focus on criminal behavior and operational failures, not ethnic profiling, to preserve national unity and constitutional values.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Nigeria’s security challenge is fundamentally a challenge of governance and statecraft. Regional security architecture such as Amotekun can only succeed when supported by democratic accountability, professional standards, and modern technology. A National Citizens’ Alert System is no longer a policy option but a democratic necessity in 2026.

Unity and progress must move from political slogans to operational principles that guide resource allocation and citizen engagement. As affirmed in constitutional and scholarly literature, security is too important to be left to a single agency and too urgent to be subjected to political considerations. The path to a secure, united, and progressive Nigeria requires immediate institutional reform, transparent governance, and the activation of systems that place citizen safety at the center of statecraft.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Overview of Major Forest Reserves in Oyo and Oke-Ogun Axis

Appendix B: Draft Outline of Clauses for National Citizens’ Alert System Bill

Appendix C: Proposed Curriculum Modules for Amotekun Professional Training

Appendix D: Selected Publications by the Author

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