

## 2. Role of Non-State Actors in Security: The Case of The Western Nigeria Security Network.

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### Abstract

Security is a critical issue to sustainable development, good governance, and economic growth. Hence, the UN-SDGs recognise security as a cross-cutting issue around the globe. The research aimed to explore and analyse security fields focusing on Nigeria where crime control and security governance have been highly politicised. It is set within the international literature on nodal security governance to explore the network of security actors to political elites and the role of the political class in shaping the institutions of security to achieve the UN-SDGs. The research was guided by two key organising concepts: the governmentality theory of Foucault (2009) and the field-analytic method of Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992). The emergence, exigence, and prominence of Western Nigeria Security Networks validated the theoretical and empirical framework of the study. The narrative habitus of the nature and position of WNSN reflecting the respondents' views on the quality arrangement and positioning in terms of performance, finance and equipment are still ongoing and cannot be delineated. Finally, some preliminary observations based on the findings are concisely outlined.

**Keywords:** Non-state Security, Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), Security governance, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Introduction

Today, as a key determinant to sustainable development, good governance, and economic growth, security has become a desired goal for almost all nations around the globe. Hence, security has largely been non-state-centric since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. It has since no longer primarily concerned about the state and the protection of its territories against threats or external attacks but advanced to a more comprehensive and inclusive agenda that considers people as a major factor (Harel-Shalev & Wolberg, 2020). In the bargain, another legacy of the Cold War is the reckless flow of arms around the world, which are increasingly and freely available to private terrorist and criminal groups, as well as the easy transfer of technology for arms production and operation. Patently, these weapons were dispensed generously to allies and proxies, and today they proliferate around third-world countries (Magyar, 2003). The ruthless use of these pervasive weapons has escalated the long-lasting wars in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (IRC, 2022), and the endless terrorist attacks (Asadu, 2023) and violence of separatist movements (Nwangwu, 2023) in Nigeria as the weapons are more available than bread and candies on the street of African countries. UN-Security Council (2023) meetings coverage and press? The release revealed that most armed conflicts and crimes in Africa are largely initiated, sustained, and exacerbated by weapons, which also results in the destabilization of communities, states and sometimes regions. In addition, UN-Human Rights (2022) pointed out that armed conflicts are increasingly and severely combatted in highly populated areas, and so many of the casualties killed and injured by the weapons are

civilians, mostly women and children. In consequence, when social, commercial, infrastructural, cultural, educational, religious, and healthcare facilities are mangled, without doubt, there is a long-term impact on a wide range of human rights (Council of Europe, 2023; UN-Security Council, 2021). On the grounds of this, the world has witnessed a much broader range of security threats and risks compared to the past. These security challenges and risks are intimately interconnected and in consequence, the circumstances in a particular region can grievously impact the circumstances in other regions. Simultaneously, nearly all the current challenges and risks in one region of the world are largely common to the adjacent regions, or we could simply assert that also in many outlying regions. This solely highlights the complexity of the contemporary international security domain (Ivancik *et al.*, 2014).

Putting it as it is, security has witnessed several conceptual shifts, but a definite starting point for understanding the term security is to query: “What is security?” (von Boemcken & Schetter, 2016). Rubenstein (2017) posited that security as a term is an ambiguous concept that has no generally adopted definition as there is no specific consensus regarding its meaning to meet every age and phase; and undeniably, security is murkily difficult in 'scope as well as in definition'. There are fundamental assumptions that those who use the term security most are 'state-centric', the realist school of political philosophy; therefore, the nation-state is the primary actor while its citizens and allies are the primary objects of concern. Harel-Shalev & Wolberg (2020) insisted that security is more than the right to live without fear of crime and even beyond the security of tenure or security from disasters and other social, economic, and cultural factors that affect the security of individuals. Nyborg and Nawab (2021) asserted that security is safety from threat and attack, a neologism that is applied differently to the strand of psychology, public safety, defence, and military matters; and can be simply viewed as a state of being secured, a freedom from apprehension, a confidence of safety, and a freedom from danger. In Buzan (1984), Bodunde *et al.*, (2014), Nilsson & González-Marín (2019); Chonka *et al.* (2023)'s view, security is concerned with freedom from risk, fear, tension, maltreatment, or attack on individuals as a people or group and as well as their valuable qualities. In the same view, William (2008) aligned that security is the capacity of a nation-state to provide assurance and protection against any element of insecurity which undermines 'the survival of human beings' and the state. Relating to the needs of African nations, Hirsch Ballin *et al.* (2020) opined that security means resisting all forms of threats that can hinder a nation's survival - including external aggression, challenges of economic, political, social, and cultural deprivations - relating the challenges of political development and good governance facing the countries. Resting on human ideas, culture and perceptions of reality, the term security earns different values. It means different things to different people across states, regions, or continents at different times; and can be used in various ways, including the defence, political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors.

Notwithstanding the views held about the term security, numerous scholars such as Buzan (1984), Harel-Shalev & Wolberg (2020), Hirsch Ballin *et al.* (2020), Nyborg & Nawab (2021) consented that the challenges of security are largely justified by the stability and predictability of the nation-states, and the sustainability of state economic development and peace. Therefore, the fear of insecurity precipitately ignites the pursuit of security by nation-states; and without an iota of doubt, nearly all nations around the globe chunk a colossal proportion of their budgets into security and defence (Ballester, 2013; SIPRI, 2022). The assertions on security and development stability can best be summed up in the collective views of the Council of The European Union (2008) in the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy and Giovannetti's (2023)'s note on Security-

Development Nexus that 'there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace.' Threats to life, health, freedom, wealth, and human rights undermine development. In essence, if security is comprehensibly ambiguous, complex, controversial, diverse, and largely related to serious and sensitive political issues and other diverse perspectives, therefore understanding the concept of security is surely an intellectual exercise that searches and generates the necessary conditions of security, as identification of such conditions presupposes a concept of security.

As it is, no place is seemingly secured in Nigeria. The nasty circumstance has grown to a scale that Nigerians, precisely the government and security actors, are bewildered and at the loss of the idea of effective measures to be taken in controlling or averting the menace of insecurity in the country. Overtly, the issue of security threats in Nigeria has persistently become worrisome and pervasive that scholars in the field of security attributed the circumstance to 'the apathy and nonchalance of the government and inefficiency of the security agencies (Wilson, 2018; Wilson, 2020; ONSA, 2020) while others ascribed it to lack of enabling legislations and potent counterstrategy to combat the deteriorating security condition (Robert-Okah, 2014; Akpan, 2018; Onuoha, 2019). On the issue of insecurity, Nigeria is the most severely affected country in Africa. Insecurity has attained a deteriorating scale in nearly all states in Nigeria (Aboderin & Okenyodo, 2017). The country has been combatting unprecedented security problems over the past two decades, ranging from criminalities such as pipeline vandalism, hostage-taking and kidnapping for ransom to ethnoreligious threats in the forms of riots, demonstrations, agitations for resource sharing and control by the Niger Delta militants, herdsmen attacks and violent extremism epitomised in the Boko Haram insurgency that is ongoing in the north-east of the country (Aboderin & Okenyodo, 2017; Akpan, 2018; Amaize *et al.*, 2019). The growing trend of insecurity consequently poses serious challenges to economic development as it significantly affects foreign direct investment (FDI) coupled with poverty and unemployment which result in a cycle of violence. Drawing from the end-of-the-year report of the Institute for Economics and Peace, the country was ranked 143 out of 163 countries worldwide and scored 2.725 in the 2022 Global Peace Index (IEP, 2022), indicating a very low level of peace due to incidents of violence, insecurity, and criminality. With a strength of more than 350,000 men and women, the NPF is expected to cover all 36 Nigerian states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Interpol, 2021). Tackling Nigeria's security challenges will unequivocally become impossible for this number of police officers. Hence, the need for non-state security providers becomes imperative.

The key gap in this study is the failure of the formal state policing actor (NPF) to provide a formidable security of lives and properties for Nigerians. Empirical evidence has convincingly demonstrated that formal state policing actors have not wolfed down the contributions of non-state security actors to safety provision. Conversely, non-state provision of safety is growingly becoming a prevalent character of contemporary policing. While there is some work on security governance in South Africa (Froestad and Shearing, 2012) and Nigeria (Inyang and Abraham, 2013; Kwaja *et al.*, 2017; Momodu, 2020; Kwaja, 2020; Nwokolo, 2020) little is known about the application of the International Political Sociologist perspective to governance of security (see: Rose *et al.*, 2009; Rose & Miller, 2010; Merlingen, 2011; Froestad and Shearing, 2012; Froestad *et al.*, 2015; Schuilenburg, 2015; Bigo, 2016; Devroe *et al.* 2017; Whelan, 2017; Whelan & Dupont, 2017; Rolfe, 2018; Bowden, 2019; Berg & Shearing, 2020; Busse, 2021) in post-colonial Nigeria. So far, so good, none of the existing works of literature has researched on Nigeria's security challenge or the WNSN using the concept of security governance generated

from the work of Foucault and Bourdieu as largely used and promoted by International Political Sociologists such as Johnston & Shearing (2003), Dupont (2004), Wood and Dupont (2006), Wood & Shearing (2007), Rose *et al.* (2009), Rose & Miller (2010), Merlingen (2011), Froestad & Shearing (2012), Froestad *et al.* (2015), Schuilenburg (2015), Bigo (2016), Devroe *et al.* (2017), Whelan (2017), Whelan and Dupont (2017), Rolfe (2018), Bowden (2019), Berg & Shearing (2020) and Busse (2021). Security governance is a newly emerged theoretical and analytical technique applied to explain the paradigm shift in transatlantic security policy from a state-centred approach to one that examines the sophisticated networks of state and non-state actors to solve security challenges from global to regional and individual levels, and from traditional military security to the newly rising non-military security production and provision (Krahmann, 2003; Krahmann, 2005; Liao, 2013).

## Research Design and Methodology

The study applied a mixed-method research strategy to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. The field analytic method (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) was used to identify the distribution of economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993) combined with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) (Rahman and Mukhtadir, 2021, Pandian *et al.*, 2022; Karamurugan and Govindarajan, 2023). Hence, this study determined the security field positions and the strategies and dynamics of position-taking. It utilised in-depth interviews with the key security actors (formal state and non-state security actors) to identify the role of political intervention in shaping the field.

1. Analysis of Secondary Data Sources. This study employed the process of secondary analysis that will (a) develop the research questions, (b) identify the dataset and (c) evaluate the dataset to provide answers to the following questions: How do security fields form in the post-colonial context on the continent of Africa? What is the form of networked security governance in these contexts? What role does the politicisation of security fields play in the distribution of symbolic capital? How does this complicate the model of security governance developed by Whelan and Dupont (2017), and Bowden (2019)? The practice of using secondary data in research to save both time and money (Crossman, 2020), and as well avoid unnecessary duplication of research effort (Johnston, 2014).

2. The Online Survey of Security Actors was designed and analysed to provide insights into security producers and providers including state and non-state security actors e.g., the political actors (executive and legislators), security experts (police commissioners and WNSN commandants), security scholars (students, researchers, and lecturer in security field) and traditional rulers. Respondents were asked what security actors they had engaged with; why they engaged them; and asked about the quality arrangement of the non-state security network. The data enabled the classification of respondents into distinct security positions using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) (Rahman and Mukhtadir, 2021; Pandian *et al.*, 2022; Karamurugan and Govindarajan, 2023) to model field relations (Bourdieu, 1984). The survey allowed the categorization of distinct security habitus that will be then explored qualitatively. The categories also assisted in shaping the sampling strategy for the qualitative inquiry.

3. In-depth interviews with a sample of 20 key actors in the security field in Nigeria were conducted, in which a sample of participants reflected the main categories of respondents in the survey. The interviews are used to access narrative habitus (Sandberg and Fleetwood, 2017) and will be designed and analysed to explore security as a field understanding together with the deeper level dispositions within the habitus. The qualitative analysis of



this data is currently ongoing at the time of presenting the study for conferencing.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Here is the theoretical background of the study that illustrates the logic behind the transformation of the political field of security from state-centric to non-state-centric. I approach this study from the development of two opposite trends. The first approach concerns the growing involvement of non-state actors in the governance of security in both internal and national security. The second approach concerns the position occupied and the role played by state security actors in the governance of security both internal and national security. The expansion of the security field can be understood by using a broad, eclectic conceptual palette. This includes the theory of securitization, the concept of security governance through Foucault's theory of governmentality, Bourdieu's theory of field, habitus and capital, and the concept of security networks. Securitization is a process in which objects and values become framed as security issues by some actors and thereby get an elevated status as both important and urgent to manage (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). Security governance means that the complexity of the new threats, the weakening of the state monopoly on the provision of security and the rise of cost-efficiency as a legitimising mechanism advance geographical and functional specialisation among state and non-state actors to minimise the cost of providing national and international security (Krahmann, 2005; Liao, 2013; Schuilenburg, 2015). Criminologists are employing Bourdieu's theory to work by mobilizing and deploying the concepts of the field (Shammas and Sandberg 2016), social capital (Ilan 2013), cultural capital (Sandberg 2008), and habitus (Fleetwood 2016; Sandberg and Fleetwood 2017) to solve real research problems. Network theories, concepts, and approaches have been applied to a broad array of crime and security challenges as well as governmental responses to these issues. However, this rapid growth of network research has been accompanied by differing conceptions about what a network is and what network perspectives are (Bright and Whelan, 2022). The police are a body of officers representing the civil authority of the government. Police are typically responsible for maintaining public order and safety, enforcing the law, and preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal activities (Kelling *et al.*, 2021). Therefore “policing” is the government competency that is used to improve the living conditions of the people. Nearly everything falls within the realm of the police. Police position and role cannot be neglected in the governance of national security networks. Unequivocally, it appears neither possible nor desirable to govern many of the new security challenges tormenting the globe by controlling the national border or the use of force (Amicelle *et al.*, 2017; Nøkleberg, 2023), hence the need to consider the non-state security actor.

In today's world of security, non-state actors play a crucial role in national and international security programmes. Largely, they contribute positively to the security and stability of countries that adopt non-state security provisions as a component in their strategic policy approach to security. No gainsaying, non-state security actors have gained prominence in the security policy areas in significant ways. Hence, this study aims to develop a clearer view of the roles and influence of non-state actors. In particular, the researcher will elaborate on the interactions between state and non-state actors, whilst acknowledging that the relative power and influence of State and non-state actors cannot always be easily estimated. Not until the 21st century the security world was solely dominated by states. Notwithstanding its years of existence, no doubt, anywhere in the world, non-state security actors are performing exceedingly well.

## Literature Review

Here, the study discussed relevant works of literature on this topic in context. It critically analysed, evaluated, and synthesised literature on the subject to give a clear picture of the current knowledge base of this study.

### Security and Sustainable Development.

Security and sustainable development are two crucial concepts that are intimately intertwined and interdependent. They play significant roles in fashioning the well-being of states' economies and governance. Security and sustainable development give prominence to new challenges for research and policy (Granit *et al.*, 2015). Security deals with the protection of individuals, communities, and nations from threats, risks, and harm (Hirsch Ballin *et al.*, 2020). Traditionally, security has been associated with military and defence measures to safeguard against external threats such as armed conflicts, terrorism, and aggression (Newman, 2010). However, the concept of security has evolved to encompass a broader range of areas, which include human security, environmental security, economic security, cybersecurity, and food security (Newman, 2010; Babu, 2016; Hirsch Ballin *et al.*, 2020). Sustainable development is concerned with the "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (IISD, 2023 and Imperatives, 1987, page: 16). Sustainable development is mainly guided by three crucial pillars, including economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability (Purvis *et al.*, 2018; Berrone *et al.*, 2023). Gaines (2006) illuminated that sustainable development reconstitutes diverse social, economic, and political factors fashioning environmental conditions and environmental governance, which were conspicuously absent from the conventional analysis of environmental scarcity and violent conflict. For good measure, the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development also explicitly initiate a broader conception of security (Mensah and Casadevall, 2019). Coming into this view, Berrone *et al.* (2023) noted that researching the nexus between security and sustainable development, without doubt, illuminates learning to broader, more complex, and ultimately more meaningful ties between personal security and development. This brings to the mastery of the conceptually powerful notions of human security concerning states and peoples.

Hence, security and sustainable development are intimately related and mutually strengthening. A secure state, both in terms of traditional security and other dimensions such as health, education, and economic stability, is crucial for attaining sustainable development goals (Mensah and Casadevall, 2019). Conversely, sustainable development contributes to building a more secure world by addressing the root causes of conflicts and instability (Peters and Peters, 2021). Some key points to consider in their relationship are conflict prevention, societal resilience, inclusive participation and growth, environmental protection, and global cooperation. Seemingly, sustainable development initiatives framed with security can help address the underlying causes of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and resource scarcity, reducing the likelihood of violence and instability (Mensah and Casadevall, 2019; Peters and Peters, 2021). In short, security and sustainable development are intently intertwined concepts that require a holistic and integrated approach to address complex challenges facing the world today. By prioritizing both security and sustainability, the state can work towards a safer, more prosperous, and resilient future for all humanity.

### Security and Good Governance

Security and good governance are intensely interconnected and mutually reinforcing concepts that play a pivotal role in ensuring stability, prosperity, and the welfare of states (Fjäder, 2014). Security, in this context, means the

protection of individuals, communities, and nations from various threats and risks, both internal and external. These threats can include armed conflict, terrorism, crime, economic instability, environmental degradation, and public health emergencies. Consequently, security measures will aim to prevent, manage, and respond to the challenges to maintain peace, stability, and the rule of law (Alam *et al.*, 2022). Good governance indicates a set of principles and practices that advance effective, accountable, transparent, and inclusive decision-making processes within governments and institutions (Bundschuh-Riesender, 2008). It involves fostering an environment where public resources are managed efficiently, the rule of law is upheld, human rights are respected, and the interests of all citizens are taken into consideration (Carothers and Brechenmacher, 2014). It is keenly essential to ensure that governments are responsive to the needs of their citizens and that they can effectively address challenges and provide public services (Meetika, 2009). Relating briefly to the two concepts, good governance establishes the rule of law, ensuring that laws are applied fairly and consistently. This creates a stable and predictable environment that enhances security by deterring criminal activities and preventing abuse of power (Seifi *et al.*, 2021). The Human Rights Council has identified the following as the key attributes of good governance: transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation, and responsiveness (UN-OHCHR, 2023). Inclusive governance mostly encourages citizen participation in decision-making processes; and when people have a voice in their government and can influence policies, they are more likely to support and cooperate with security measures (Bundschuh-Riesender, 2008; Carothers and Brechenmacher, 2014). In addition, good governance guarantees respect for human rights, which is not only ethically important but also largely contributes to social cohesion and security (Bundschuh-Riesender, 2008; Seifi *et al.*, 2021; UN-OHCHR, 2023). Succinctly, the connection between security and good governance is equally intertwined with the connection between security and sustainable development. Good governance offers the framework and practices that enable governments to effectively address security challenges, while security measures also contribute to creating an environment conducive to good governance by ensuring stability and protection of citizens' rights.

### **Security and Economic Growth.**

Security and economic growth are firmly interconnected, and their connection is requisite for the overall welfare and development of the states (Retter *et al.*, 2020). A secure nation fosters conditions that are conducive to economic growth, while economic growth, in turn, contributes to improved security (Asghari, 2017; Denoon, 2001). Security as a prerequisite for economic growth, a secure state with low levels of crime, political stability, and absence of conflict is a key condition for businesses to operate and for investments to take place. Certainly, investors are more likely to commit resources in stable states (Rebić and Antić, 2021). Considering investments and investors, a secure state attracts both domestic and foreign investments. Investors are more willing to invest when they believe their investments are protected and will yield returns without significant risks (Du *et al.*, 2022; Rebić and Antić, 2021). Secure and stable international relations and trade promote the movement of goods and services, fostering trade relationships and economic cooperation between a nation and the outside world (Denoon, 2001). Regarding infrastructure development, security is necessary for the construction and maintenance of critical infrastructure such as transportation networks, energy facilities, and communication systems (Du *et al.*, 2022; Rebić & Antić, 2021). Seemingly, economic growth leads to increased employment opportunities, poverty reduction, a rise in government revenue, and improvements in social services. Some scholars (Denoon, 2001; Ajibola, 2016; Asghari, 2017; Retter *et al.*, 2020; Rebić and Antić, 2021; Du *et al.*,

2022) shared a common view that security and economic growth create a positive feedback loop. Retter *et al.* (2020) pointed out that a growing economy provides governments with resources to invest in security measures, which in turn, enhances stability and creates a favourable environment for further economic growth. Economic growth leads to improved living standards, which reduces the motivation and motive for criminal activities and social unrest. As a matter of challenges and trade-offs, however, Yusuf and Mohd (2022); Rebić and Antić (2021); and Ajibola (2016) indicated that it is crucial to note that while security and economic growth are mostly positively correlated, there can be instances where conflicts, insecurity, or imbalances in economic development may adversely affect this relationship. In some situations, rapid economic growth without proper distribution of benefits can lead to inequalities, social tensions, and potential security risks. Economic growth, if not well-managed, can cause negative effect on nations security. For instance, the OECD (2004) pointed out that “growth in air, rail, road, and marine transport can increase the risk of security breaches that facilitate robbery, organised smuggling,” and many other noxious crimes in some countries around the world such as Nigeria (Yusuf and Mohd, 2022; Ajibola, 2016; Rebić and Antić, 2021).

In a nutshell, security and economic growth are mutually enabling factors. Manifestly, a secure state is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth, as it stimulates investment, trade, and development. Simultaneously, economic growth can contribute to improved security by providing jobs, reducing poverty, and enabling governments to invest in security-related infrastructure and services. Mostly, reaching a balance between security and economic growth is essential for building stable and prosperous nations.

### **Current State of the SDGs 2030: the Security in Sustainable Development Goal 16.**

Imperatively, sustainable development cannot be without peace and security; and peace and security will assuredly be at risk without sustainable development (UNDESA and IDLO 2019). Sustainable Development Goal 16 is mostly about promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels of the societies. People everywhere should be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives regardless of their ethnicity, faith, or sexual orientation (UN-SDG, 2023). Among the 10 policy targets of SDG 16, 'Peaceful societies' through security and safety largely remains the most prominent key term, the utmost talk-about in the fora of researchers and policymakers, since peaceful societies are the foundation of sustainable development, good governance, and economic growth (ECA, 2021). Understanding the situational status of SDG 16 concerning each of its targets, a swift grasp of 'Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021: Extended Report – Goal 16' revealed that there was a 5.7% fall in the global homicide rate, a 61% drop over five years in armed conflict, and inclusive institutions at all levels, which meant a significant shift from micro-to macro-organizational focus. Evidently, the general goals of SDG 16 are reinforced by several specific targets, especially “Target 16.a”, which seeks to “Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.” Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, remains the third most violent region in the world and is showing a slightly significant fall in peacefulness in the last years, with a full 40% of people in the region feeling less safe today compared to five years ago. Regarding justice and democracy, Africa has significantly gained some democratic states, including Benin, Gambia, and Nigeria, with hybrid and authoritarian regimes in Ethiopia and



Sudan. However, these African countries are battling diverse threats and risks to date. Talking about striving towards achieving the objectives of SDGs, African countries have actively adopted SDGs 2030 as their essential pursuit, which has earned them relative clout in an international forum. This adoption was proportional to the interest in governance as reflected across the continent, such as the 2007 adoption of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the inclusion of governance in the foremost objectives of Agenda 2063 of the African Union (African Union, 2014; Cling *et al.*, 2018). Reflecting on this, Cling *et al.* (2018) contended that the interest demonstrated by few African leaders in the topic of governance as documented in many global reports and journals is nothing but a smokescreen to divert attention from the weak institutions in the African countries. On the other hand, China, India, and Russia were the most reticent countries to SDGs 2030; and they found themselves increasingly isolated, to the extent that they grumpily complied with the majority, especially by the change in position of African countries. The continent of Africa actively supported SDG 2030 and was therefore able to tip the scale in its favour like Brazil.

On a wider scale, the SDGs Report for the year 2023 revealed that the impacts of the climate crisis, the war in Ukraine, a weak global economy, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have expressly demonstrated weaknesses and hindrances towards the progress of SDG 2030. In essence, the report sternly warned that while lack of progress is universal, it is the world's poorest and most vulnerable people and states that are facing the worst effects of these unpleasant global challenges. It also revealed areas that need urgent and rapid action to rescue the SDGs to deliver significant headway for people and the planet by the year 2030 (UN-SDG, 2023). Consequently, the most disturbing question is: how realistic is the SDGs 2030 in less than 7 years to the deadline? The comment of António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the realisation and attainment of Sustainable Development Goals Objectives intimately replied to the one-million-dollar question when, on 25 April 2023 in New York, remarked to launch the Special Edition of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) Progress Report that “Unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda will become an epitaph for a world that might have been” (Guterres, 2023). The report revealed that more than half the world would be left behind; only 12% of the SDG targets are on track. Progress on 50% is weak and insufficient. Worst of all, we have stalled or gone into reverse on more than 30 per cent of the SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic and the triple crisis of climate, biodiversity and pollution are deepening a devastating impact, escalated by the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine; the population of people living in abject poverty today is higher than it was 4 years ago. In short, only 30% of all countries will attain SDG 1 on poverty by 2030. The report specifically mentioned neither peaceful and inclusive societies nor security (UN-DESA, 2023).

### **Overview of the WNSN (Amotekun)**

The prevalent kidnapping on the highways, farmland invasion of herdsmen, bank robbery and other menaces involving criminals from the Northwest in the Southwest geopolitical region of Nigeria (Aboderin & Okenyodo, 2017) and the failure of the NPF (the state-owned security actor) to secure lives and properties specifically in the region and the nation in general impetrated the urgent need and establishment of the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN) code-named as “Amotekun.” The widespread protests over deadly conflicts between Fulani herders and local farmers and kidnappings growingly involving criminals from the Northwest triggered the action of governors of the six states (Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun, and Osun) in the region to marshal the

security network on 9 January 2020, to protect their states (Feyisipo, 2020; David and Oyedele, 2020; Olubade and Ogunnoiki, 2020; EASO, 2021). Amotekun was coined as a Yoruba word and the name of a gallant wide cat called a leopard. The Yoruba well-liked myth has it that Amotekun (the leopard) symbolically denotes strength, perseverance, ambition, independence, toughness, patience, wisdom, and fearlessness. As a fearless creature, Amotekun is famously known for its unique hunting tactics as well as its capacity and capability to defend its territories from intruders in the jungle. Hence, the Southwest formed WNSN as a regional security outfit to consist of the vigilante group, security experts and other Yoruba socio-cultural groups participating in local security (e.g., local hunters, Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and "Agbekoya"), from each state of the zone (David and Oyedele, 2020; Obado-Joel, 2020), to complement the efforts of formal security agencies, which include Nigeria Police Force (NPF), NSCDC, and other state security institutions in tackling security threats in the region (Obado-Joel, 2020).

The security outfit was formed after a series of meetings by all the six state governors at the regional security summit held in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria in June 2019 through the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria Commission (DAWN) (Feyisipo, 2020; David and Oyedele, 2020). Many works of literature such as Obado-Joel (2020); Olayiwola (2020); Feyisipo (2020); EASO (2021) submitted to the view that this development is the key strength of WNSN. At the same time, Obado-Joel (2020) pointed out that the strength of Amotekun is conceivably its primary weakness because it derives its power from the collective cultural identity among the six states and their shared grievance against incessant attacks and killings perpetrated by the nomadic herdsmen from Northwest. Nevertheless, as a strength, the collective identity reinforcing WNSN may be a force for advantage or disadvantage. Western Nigeria Security Network aims to complement the efforts of the NPF and NSCDC as a regional security network with units in each state (EASO, 2021). The local government organ coordinates the activities in its specific jurisdiction and as well relates to the state commands while each state command relates to the regional command in the same order. The control centre in Ibadan, Oyo state is the regional command headquarters while the operational base is in Gbogun, Osun state, and they both function closely with the Developmental Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission, which gives administrative supervision for the security network. In each state of the region, the Commissioner of Police supervises the pursuit of security by each state's command. Security Trust Fund is readily provided by the six states to foot the bill of the regional security agency, which the Commissioner of Police supervises. According to WNSN's formational framework, each state is expected to recruit the number of officials they can maintain (David and Oyedele, 2020). Certain features of Amotekun, however, have distinguished the security network from other non-state security providers in Nigeria, such as the CJTF, the Kano State Hisbah Corps (KSHC), the Ebonyi State "Neighborhood Watch Group" (ESNWG) and many more. To this day, the WNSN remains the first and best of its kind (Obado-Joel, 2020).

### **Role of WNSN in security provision in the Southwest region of Nigeria**

The Western Nigerian Security Network, commonly known as "Amotekun," is a regional security outfit established by the Southwest Governors of Nigeria to combat security challenges in the region (Odewale and Lamidi, 2020). WNSN was officially launched in January 2020 and established to complement the efforts of existing state-owned security agencies in the region (Olushola and Adeleke, 2020). Its formation came in response to increasing security risks and threats, such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and farmer-herder

conflicts, affecting the safety and well-being of residents in the Southwest region (Out and Apeh, 2022), which consists of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, and Ondo. From its inception till date, WNSN as a non-state security actor, has been ably performing the following key roles and functions in providing security to reduce the risks and threats in the region, by extension in Nigeria:

**(a). Community Policing and Intelligence Gathering:** WNSN engages in community policing by collaborating closely with local communities to gather intelligence about criminal activities and threats (Osoteku, 2023). Their presence in communities enhances trust and communication, making it easier to identify potential security risks (Awojobi, 2022). Its operatives are often drawn from local communities and have a better understanding of the social dynamics and security challenges in their respective areas. This enables them to establish trust and work closely with residents to identify and address security concerns (Osoteku, 2023).

**(b). Vigilance, Surveillance, and Rapid Response to Emergencies:** Amotekun provides a rapid response to emergencies, such as kidnappings and robberies (Awojobi, 2022). Their agility and local knowledge allow them to respond quickly and effectively to incidents, potentially preventing escalation (Odeyinka, 2021). Amotekun's vigilance and surveillance activities, which include patrols and intelligence gathering have helped in the early detection of security threats and criminal activities (Awojobi, 2022; Ezinwa and Dayil, 2020).

**(c). Counter-Kidnapping, Anti-Cattle Rustling, and Protection of Rural Areas and Farmlands:** WNSN addresses the challenges of farmer-herder conflicts by patrolling rural areas and farmlands to prevent clashes between farmers and herders (Aderayo and Olusola, 2022). This contributes to agricultural productivity and reduces tensions. The security outfit largely focuses on providing security in rural and remote areas where criminal activities like kidnapping, armed robbery, and cattle rustling are prevalent (Otu and Apeh, 2022). Hence, its presence helps in deterring criminal elements and responding quickly to incidents. Given the prevalence of kidnapping and cattle rustling in the region, Amotekun focuses on countering these specific crimes. They work to rescue kidnapped victims and recover stolen livestock (Aderayo and Olusola, 2022; Oluro and Oluwasuji, 2021).

**(d). Complementing Law Enforcement:** WNSN (Amotekun) serves as a complementary security structure to existing law enforcement agencies, such as the police (Ajiboye, 2023; Oikhala, 2022). While it does not have the same level of authority or power as the police, it assists in maintaining law and order, especially in rural and underserved areas where police presence is mostly limited (Oikhala, 2022). WNSN collaborates with existing formal security agencies like the police, military, and Department of State Services (DSS) to conduct joint operations. These partnerships enhance the overall security architecture of the region (Ajiboye, 2023; Awojobi, 2022). Joint operations with formal security agencies turn out to be hugely an essential function of WNSN.

**(e). Protection of Economic Activities, Border Patrol, and Inter-State Security:** By ensuring the safety of businesses and economic activities, WNSN (Amotekun) contributes to the overall economic growth and development of the region (Nnabuihe *et al.*, 2023; Walker & Igwe, 2023). The security outfit contributes to border security and addresses criminal activities that might cross state boundaries (Walker and Igwe, 2023; Odewale & Lamidi, 2020). Southwest region shares borders with other states and geopolitical zones.

**(f). Youth Empowerment:** Western Nigeria Security Network has provided employment opportunities for many youths in the region, reducing youth unemployment and engaging young people in constructive activities (Mou, 2023; David and Oyedele, 2020). WNSN provides training to its personnel and equips them with the

necessary skills to handle various security challenges professionally and efficiently (Osoteku, 2023). The security network not only provides training and skill development but also provides rare employment opportunities.

**(g). Conflict Resolution and Mediation:** In addition to law enforcement functions, WNSN also engages in conflict resolution and mediation efforts to address community disputes and tensions (Akinselure, 2023; Obado-Joel, 2020). WNSN officials mediate disputes and conflicts at the community level, which results in reducing tensions and preventing conflicts from escalating into violence (Akinselure, 2023).

**(g). Other Sundry functions:** During emergencies, Amotekun is often called upon to provide support, such as during natural disasters or communal crises. Their rapid response saves lives and property all the time (Agbaje *et al.*, 2022). In urban areas, WNSN personnel sometimes assist with traffic control and road safety measures, helping to reduce congestion and improve road safety (Adepegba *et al.*, 2021). In terms of public awareness and education, WNSN also engages in campaigning and helping communities become more aware of security risks and how to protect themselves (Nnabuihe *et al.*, 2023). While the security outfit engages in public awareness campaigns to educate residents about security measures and the importance of vigilance, in consequence, this empowers individuals and communities to take ownership of their safety. The presence of Amotekun fosters public confidence in the ability of local authorities to address security concerns (Osoteku, 2023; Mou, 2023). This can improve citizens' sense of safety and well-being.

In essence, the WNSN plays a crucial role in combatting security challenges in the southwest. Its community-oriented approach, knowledge of local dynamics, and collaboration with formal security agencies contributed to the overall safety and stability of the region.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The data presented for analysis are sourced from the online survey conducted by the researcher with 515 participants within one month in August 2022. The following variables are analysed: complementing state-owned security apparatus; weakening state-owned security actors; and supporting the objectives of SDG 16 through security provision and inclusion. The statistical software package of SPSS was employed to perform data analysis and processing. A descriptive statistical approach was adopted for processing and analysing the data. The research adopted univariate analysis to explore each variable in a data set, separately. It practically and solely employed measures of frequency distribution for the quantitative data gathered by intensely applying (a) Nominal scale (b) Ordinal scale and (c) Interval scale in the process and analysis.

Considering the demography of the Online Survey, 515 respondents were recorded within a month, before the deadline. After data cleaning, 434 respondents were certified valid for analysis. Data revealed that the participants were key stakeholders with in-depth knowledge of security provision, precisely in Nigeria; 78.1% of respondents had a very high level of security knowledge. Relating to education qualification, 88.3% of respondents had high qualifications (ranging from bachelor's degree, and master's degree to PhD). Respondents' gender revealed: male 68.7%, Female 28.8%, and prefer-not-to-say 2.5%. On active age of the respondents, 89.5% of the respondents fell into the category of active age of 25 to 64 years; and ages 25-34 produced the highest of respondents of 29.5%. Employment status data show that 78.1% of respondents are actively engaged, 63.8% are in full-time employment and 14.3% are students. Here, descriptive statistics for the analysed variables are shown in Tables 1 and 2; Frequency in Table 3.



## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ONLINE SURVEY DATA

### Table 1: Response Rate - TOTAL DATA

	Questionnaires Administered	Questionnaires Returned & Valid	Filled Percentage (%)
Respondents	515	434	84.27

Note: After Data cleaning, the Total Data considered is 434.

### Table 2: Descriptive Statistics - DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. D
A Nigerian living in Nigeria	434	1	1	1.00	.000
Gender	434	1	3	1.34	.525
Age Group	434	1	6	3.28	1.303
Age (Above 18 years)	434	1	1	1.00	.000
Highest Educational Qualification?	434	1	7	4.53	1.098
Employment Status	434	1	5	1.96	1.492
Occupational Role	434	1	4	2.77	1.036
Consent Box	434	1	1	1.00	.000
Level of knowledge of the range of security providers in the region.	434	1	5	1.80	.871
Frequency of engagement with the security actors?	434	1	5	1.90	.922
Between state and non-state security, which security actor do you engage more with?	434	1	2	1.40	.491
Volunteer to participate in Neighborhood Watch and attending community meetings	434	1	3	1.95	.727
Serve on a Citizen Advisory Board	434	1	3	2.47	.778
Compliment	434	1	3	2.12	.743
Complain	434	1	3	2.38	.592
Participate in Security Initiatives, Projects, and Programs	434	1	3	1.65	.638
Participating in law enforcement surveys	434	1	3	1.64	.634
Volunteer to participate in Neighborhood Watch and attending community meetings	434	1	3	1.58	.722
Serve on a Citizen Advisory Board	434	1	3	2.23	.874
Compliment	434	1	3	1.76	.674
Complain	434	1	3	2.76	.518
Participate in Security Initiatives, Projects, and Programs	434	1	3	1.46	.641
Participating in law enforcement surveys	434	1	3	1.47	.656
Among Non-State Security actors, which do you engage more with?	434	1	3	1.17	.453
Ekiti State Command	434	0	5	1.26	.864
Ogun State Command	434	0	5	1.95	.982
Ondo State Command	434	0	5	4.37	1.512
Osun State Command	434	0	5	2.55	1.010
Oyo State Command	434	0	5	3.65	1.025
Ekiti State Command	434	0	5	1.32	.876
Ogun State Command	434	0	5	1.94	1.014
Ondo State Command	434	0	5	4.34	1.548
Osun State Command	434	0	5	2.52	.992
Oyo State Command	434	0	5	3.56	1.188
Ekiti State Command	434	0	5	1.27	.841
Ogun State Command	434	0	5	1.94	1.007
Ondo State Command	434	0	5	4.36	1.515

Osun State Command	434	0	5	2.54	.985
Oyo State Command	434	0	5	3.59	1.166
In terms of INFORMATION SHARING within the security networks, the WNSN is ranked?	434	1	5	1.61	.862
In your view, how has the State Executives MANAGED the WNSN?	434	1	5	1.65	.825
How will you rate the role of State Legislators in the FORMATION and REGULATION/GOVERNANCE of WNSN?	434	1	5	1.64	.846
In your experience, how do you rate the role of State Police Commissioners in the Operational Supervision of WNSN in the region?	434	1	5	1.66	.854
In your experience, do you regard the networking between The Police and WNSN officials as mutually beneficial?	434	1	4	1.35	.613
In your experience, do you regard the networking among the commands in WNSN as mutually beneficial?	434	1	4	1.31	.586
I regard WNSN officers' response to crime incident as?	434	1	5	1.55	.777
Do you think that WNSN as Security Networks in the Region	434	1	5	1.45	.676
In terms of crime controlling in the region, do you agree or disagree that WNSN is inevitable?	434	1	5	1.41	.695
The quality arrangement of WNSN is?	434	1	5	1.43	.757
Valid N (Listwise)	434				

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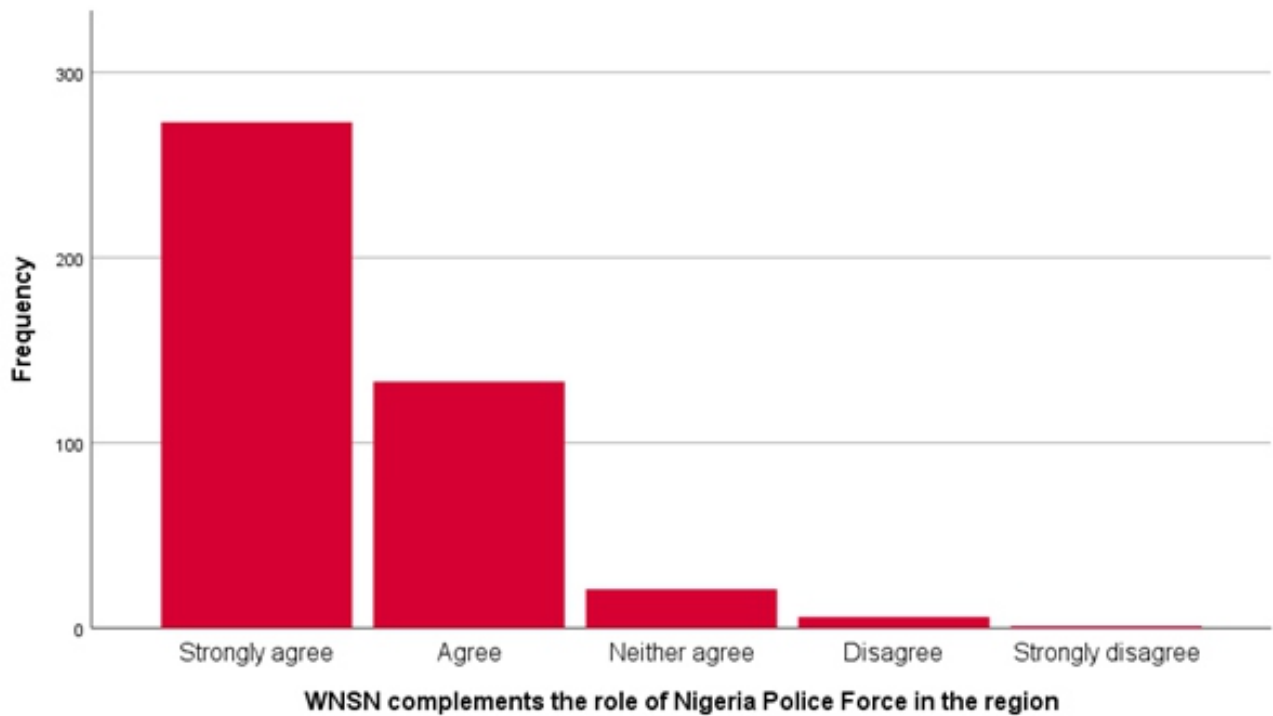
Employment Status				
Employed full-time	277	63.8	63.8	63.8
Employed Part-time	47	10.8	10.8	74.7
Unemployed	21	4.8	4.8	79.5
Retired	27	6.2	6.2	85.7
Student	62	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	434	100.0	100.0	
Occupational Role				
Political Actor	91	21.0	21.0	21.0
Traditional Ruler	21	4.8	4.8	25.8
Security Scholar	219	50.5	50.5	76.3
Security Expert	103	23.7	23.7	100.0
Total	434	100.0	100.0	

(a). Complementing state-owned security apparatus

**Table 4: WNSN as a Security Network in the region complements the role of the Nigeria Police Force.**

Variable	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	273	62.9	62.9
Agree	133	30.6	93.5
Neither agree	21	4.8	98.4
Disagree	6	1.4	99.8
Strongly disagree	1	.2	100
Total	434	100.0	

From Table 4 and Figure 1, 62.9% of respondents strongly agree that WNSN (Amotekun) is effectively and efficiently complementing the role of the Nigerian police force and other federal security apparatus in providing security in the Southwest region. Less than 2% of respondents disagree while less than 5% neither agree/nor disagree (neutral). The survey reveals that WNSN complements formal state-owned security actors, such as the Nigeria Police Force and other law enforcement agencies, especially in the areas of community-Based approach, and local intelligence and information sharing.



**Figure 1: WNSN Complementing the Role of Nigeria Police Force in the Region**

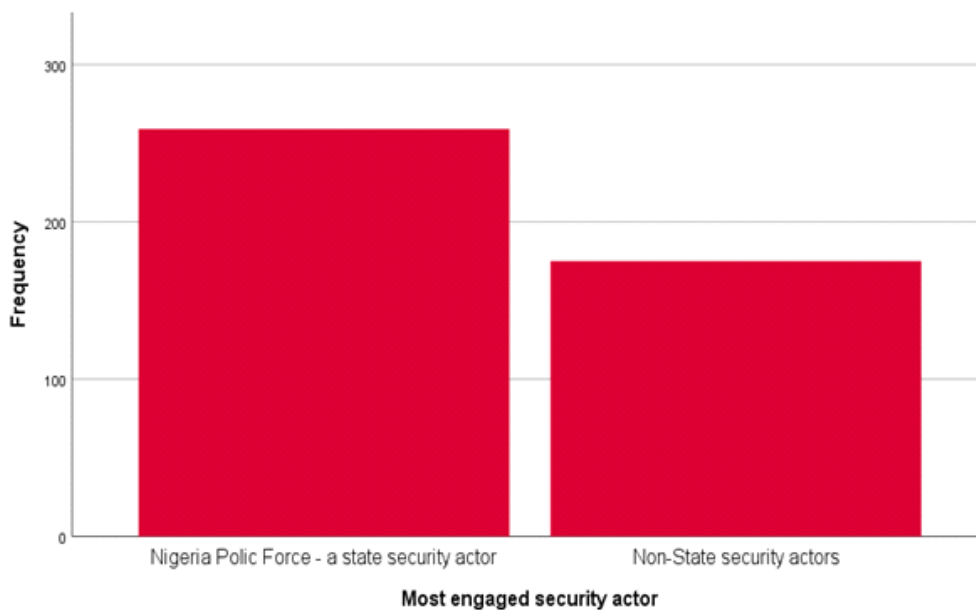
**(b). Weakening the state monopoly of security provision.**

**Table 5: Most engaged security actor (either State or non-state security)**

Variable	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Nigeria Police Force- a state security actor	259	59.7	59.7
Non-State security actors	175	40.3	100.0
Total	434	100.0	



The security network, WNSN as a non-state security actor in the Southwest region of Nigeria has shown the weakness of the formal security agencies of Nigeria. It has dampened the institutional capacity of the Nigeria security apparatus, calling into question the role and ability of the Nigeria Police to protect citizens' lives and property. From Table 5 and Figure 2, congruently, 40.3% of respondents from the survey claimed to engage more with non-state actors when asked the question: “Between state and non-state security, which security actor do you engage more with? Further down, the researcher asked another question: “among Non-State Security actors, which do you engage more with.” In response to this question, 86.4% engage more with WNSN (Amotekun) while 10.4% and 3.2% engage with vigilantes and others respectively, illustrated in the table and figure. This suggests that the police alone can no longer exterminate the numerous security threats and risks challenging the peace of the nation.



**Figure 2: Most Engaged Security Actor.**

(c). Supporting the objectives of SDG 16 by contributing to security provision and inclusion.

**Table 6: Perspective response to the level of mutual benefit of the network between the Police and WNSN officials.**

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes, very beneficial	312	71.9	71.9
Somewhat beneficial	94	21.7	93.5
Neutral	26	6.0	99.5
Not of any benefit	2	.5	100.0
Total	434	100.0	

As shown in Table 6 and Figure 3, 71.9% of the respondents indicate that, based on their experience, the networking between the Police and WNSN officials is mutually beneficial. 6% and less than 1% of the total respondents responded neutral and not of any benefit respectively. This suggests that the mutually beneficial relationship between the police and WNSN is a feature of 'inclusion' as clearly stated in the UN-SDG 16 to achieve peace and safety for the people of the Southwest region.

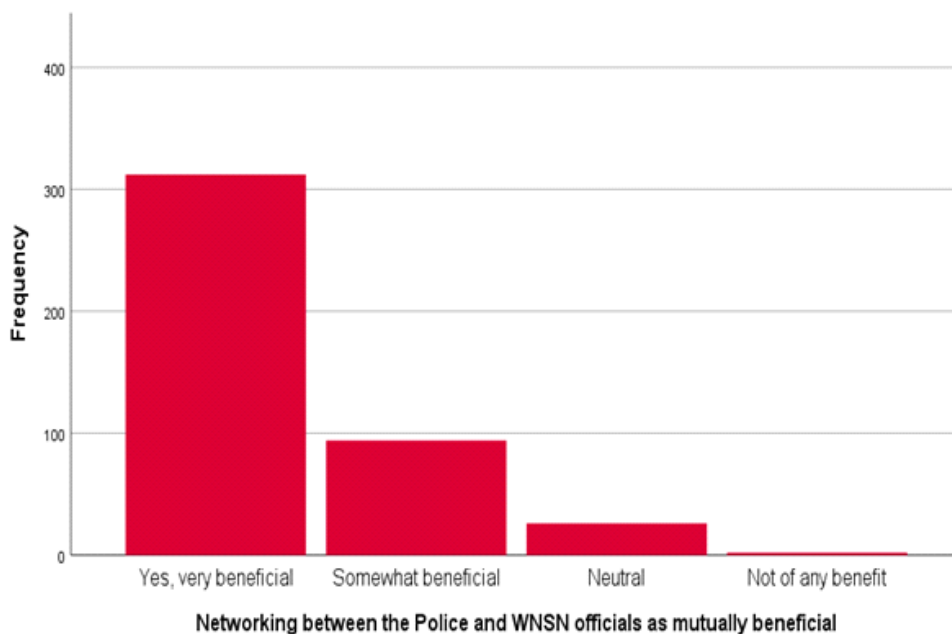


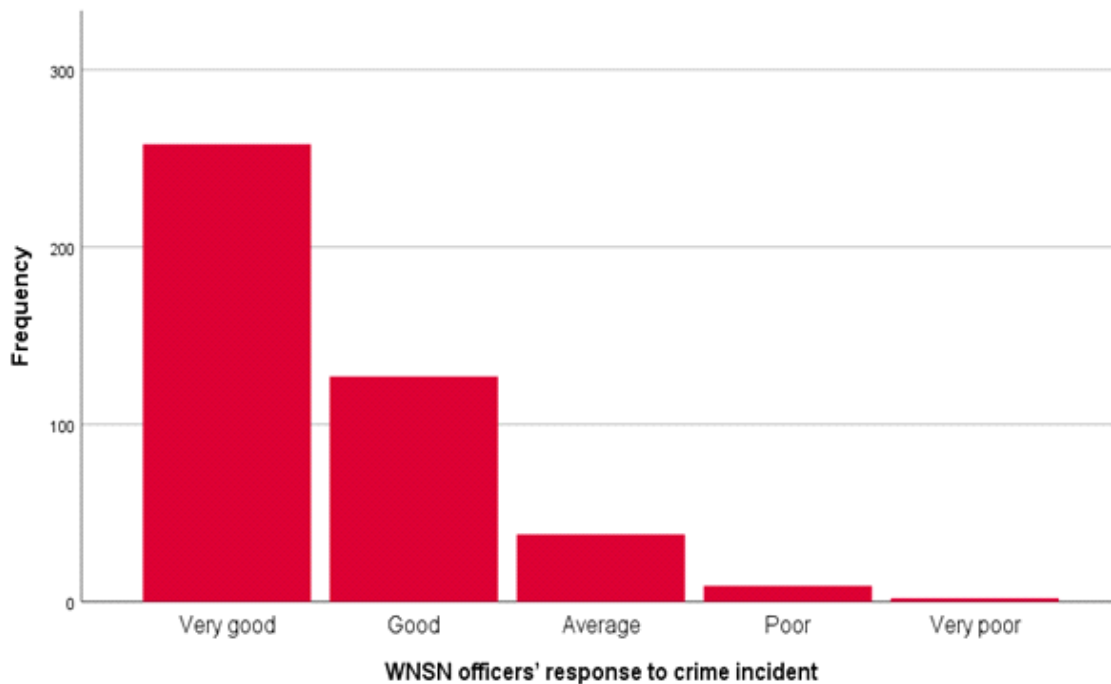
Figure 3: Chart showing the level of mutual benefit of the network between the Police and WNSN officials.

## (d). WNSN Officers' Response to Crime Incident.

**Table 7: WNSN Officers' response to crime incident.**

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very good	258	59.4	59.4
Good	127	29.3	88.7
Average	38	8.8	97.5
Poor	9	2.1	99.5
Very poor	2	.5	

When 434 respondents of the online survey were asked: how rapidly the WNSN officers respond to crime incidents, 88.7% (59.4%+29.3%) indicated that the WNSN officers respond rapidly to incidents while less than 3% indicated that their response is poor. Response to incidents is one of the major issues for all police (all security actors) because of its unique impact on victims as well as the community. It can be used to measure the race towards making UN-SDG 16 achievable. See Table 7 and Figure 4.

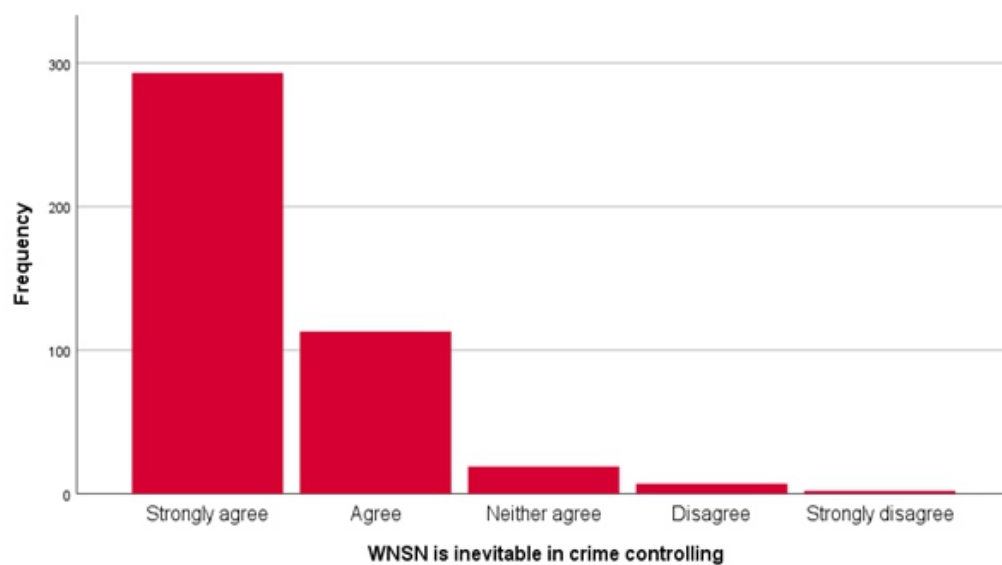
**Figure 4: WNSN Officers' Response to Crime Incident**

(e). Crime Controlling and Advancing the Cause of Peace in the region.

**Table 8: WNSM is inevitable in terms of crime control in the region**

Variable	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	293	67.5	67.5
Agree	113	26.0	93.5
Neither agree	19	4.4	97.9
Disagree	7	1.6	99.5
Strongly disagree	2	.5	100.0
Total	434	100.0	

In terms of crime controlling and advancing the cause of peace in the region, when respondents were asked if they agree or disagree that WNSN is inevitable, 93.5% majority (67.5% + 26.0) of the respondents emphatically indicated they “strongly agree” and “agree” that WNSN is mostly inevitable in building more peaceful Nigeria to attain the objectives of UN-SDG 16. The table and figure derived from the online survey are depicted in the table and figure presented. Drawing from the data presented in Table 8 and Figure 5, it vividly shows that Table 1, 2 & 3 and Figures 1, 2, and 3 substantially demonstrate that the emergence, exigence, and prominence of WNSN largely support the realisation of the objectives of UN-SDG 16 in Nigeria. It also opines that the Nigeria Police Force alone can no longer exterminate the innumerable security threats and risks that challenge the unity and sovereignty of the



**Figure 5: WNSM is inevitable in terms of crime control in the region.**



## Findings and Conclusion

In short, drawing from the data presentation and analysis, the WNSN is efficiently complementing the role of NPF and other agencies in the Southwest. The WNSN is actively weakening the state monopoly of security provision. People engage more with the non-state security outfit than other security apparatus in the region. WNSN is actively supporting the objectives of SDG 16 through security provision and inclusion. The WNSN is mostly inevitable in building a more peaceful Southwest. The WNSN officials respond rapidly to incidents, and the networking between the Police and WNSN officials is mutually beneficial. In overall, the WNSN has played a crucial role in enhancing security provision in the region. Its community-oriented approach, knowledge of local dynamics, and collaboration with state-owned security agencies have contributed to the overall safety and stability of the region.

## Conclusion

The emergence, exigence, prominence, and role of WNSN as a key player in the regional effort to combat threats and risks, especially kidnapping in southwest Nigeria have been articulated in this article. According to the findings, WNSN has validated the theoretical and empirical framework of the study of non-state security actors. WNSN, as an institution in southwest Nigeria, effectively and efficiently complements the role of formal state-owned security actors, including the NPF, SSS, NSCDC and other law enforcement agencies. WNSN is weakening the state monopoly of security provision in Nigeria. The importance and performance of WNSN, within a short period of its existence, have given rise to similar security networks in other states in Nigeria such as the Katsina State security outfit. As UN-SDG 16 significantly promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provides access to justice for all and builds effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, WNSN functionally supports the objectives of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2030.

In a nutshell, Western Nigeria Security Network is largely validating the position of security experts of the International Political Sociologists who have reinforced the benefits of adopting the concepts of security governance as a means of combatting insecurity through the partnership between the state-owned security actors and the non-state security actors, in both Global North and Global South. This study has demonstrated that the partnership of state and non-state security providers, as a new perspective to security challenges, is rapidly and significantly contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, specifically in areas of peacekeeping, security, and social inclusion, simply coded UN-SDG 16. Considerably, some limitations are accrued to the adoption of this security approach notwithstanding that the involvement of the non-state security actors in security provision has been largely influencing the achievement of several UN-Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in regions where the state institutions are weak or ill-performing, such as the NPF in Nigeria. However, their strengths outweigh their limitations. Seemingly, non-state security actors (NSAs), WNSN as a good case study, play a significant role in contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16. In conclusion, non-state security actors are more than complementing the state security actors, they are weakening the state monopoly of security provision at the speed of light.

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