

FROM FORCE TO PARTNERSHIP: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND INTERNAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines how Civil–Military Relations (CMR) shape Internal Security Management (ISM) in Plateau State, Nigeria. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach that includes survey data, key informant interviews and focus group discussions, this paper identifies trust, intelligence flow, professionalism, political neutrality and local security integration as core variables influencing ISM performance. Primary evidence from field interviews and secondary literature on OPSH, commissions of inquiry and community security initiatives are used to underpin the analysis. The findings show that widespread distrust, reactive communication practices and perceptions of impunity undermine intelligence-sharing and make military deployments largely reactive rather than preventive. The paper concluded that partnership in CMR enhances ISM better than use of force and recommended a conceptual framework to guide policy formulation. This is presented as: Trust → Intelligence → CMR → ISM Outcomes which offers policy prescriptions to institutionalize dialogue, strengthen accountability and integrate local security actors to enhance ISM.

Keywords

Civil-Military Relations; Internal Security Management; Plateau State; Trust; Intelligence; Local Security

Introduction

Nigeria’s security architecture is centrally organized. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) vests control of the armed forces in the President, who serves as Commander-in-Chief and exercises authority over military deployments. Similarly, the Nigeria Police Force remains a national institution under the Inspector General of Police, with state commands ultimately accountable to federal directives (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended 2023). This centralised security structure creates a tension between national coherence and localised security needs, especially in contexts like Plateau State where recurring violent attacks, identity contestations and resource-based conflicts demand more granular, community-sensitive approaches to ISM.

In this context, CMR plays a decisive role in determining whether security interventions translate into stability, legitimacy and community cooperation. Trust between civilians and security forces, the quality of communication and information flow, and perceptions of military professionalism all shape intelligence-sharing, operational effectiveness and the long-term prospects for preventive action. This study therefore investigates:

1. The influence of civil–military trust on internal security outcomes in Plateau State.
2. The ways in which communication practices and information flows shape intelligence and operations.
3. The extent to which professionalism, justice and political interference affect the effectiveness of CMR.

Literature review

CMR and ISM in Nigeria have been shaped by the country’s highly centralised security architecture. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria vests full command of the armed forces in the President, who serves as Commander-in-Chief and supervises deployment for defence and internal security (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999/2023). The Nigeria Police Force is similarly centralised under the Inspector General of Police, limiting the authority of State Governors and creating persistent debates about the effectiveness of federalised policing structures (Akinrinde & Adegboye, 2020). This centralisation has significant implications for CMR, particularly in conflict-affected regions such as Plateau State, where local security needs often outpace institutional responsiveness.

Empirical studies examining security operations in Plateau State highlight the complexity of managing internal security in a multiethnic and historically polarised environment. Ibrahim and Olasupo (2022), in their assessment of Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), which is christened, “Operation Enduring Peace”, find that while the joint military task force is responsive to emerging security threats such as banditry, kidnappings and farmer–herder violence, it remains constrained by manpower shortages, inadequate logistics and limited public cooperation. Similar concerns about institutional inefficiencies appear in earlier analyses of state security responses, such as Crisis Group’s (2012) observations that repeated commissions of inquiry suffer delayed implementation, weak political will and insufficient engagement with the structural roots of conflict.

The broader literature consistently underscores the sociohistorical foundations of insecurity in Plateau State. Higazi (2011, 2016, 2020) demonstrates that farmer–pastoralist conflict, religious violence and localised vigilantism are linked to competition over land, shifts in demographic composition and divergent threat narratives between identity groups. These studies illustrate how insecurity is reproduced not only through violent encounters but also through the absence of trust between communities and state security actors. Krause’s (2010) fieldwork reinforces this perspective, showing how local grievances, biased governance structures and contested citizenship claims fuel recurrent conflict.

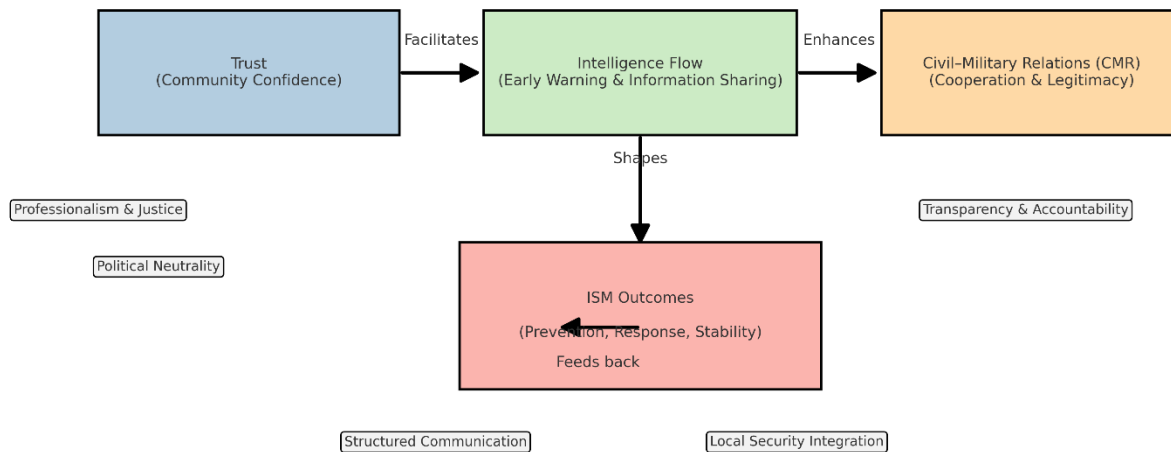
Other scholars have explored the role of non-state actors in complementing or contesting state-led security management. Chima and Alokpa (2015) show that NGOs contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding through community empowerment and humanitarian interventions, though their operations are often hindered by resource constraints and political interference. Hamman and Haruna (2018) extend the discussion by linking group solidarity to the escalation of farmer-pastoralist conflicts, arguing that cultural norms of collective action shape the intensity and duration of violence. These findings highlight the importance of understanding social identity dynamics in designing inclusive internal security strategies.

Research from other regions in Nigeria offers further insight into the structural drivers of conflict that bear relevance for Plateau State. Studies link human insecurity to weak governance institutions, impunity among security actors, and the deepening of economic and religious inequalities (Daniel & Jiwul, 2022; Enweonwu et al., 2021; Vesperoni & Yıldızparlak, 2019). Identity-based conflict remains a recurring theme, with GOĪTA (2011) and Joseph and Okpa (2018) emphasising how indigene-settler tensions, ethnic competition and inadequate conflict-prevention mechanisms have entrenched social fragmentation and heightened mistrust in state institutions. Similarly, Wika (2014) attributes the protracted Jos crisis to the colonial legacies of ethnic stratification and the politicisation of religious identities, a view reinforced by Akpanika (2017) and Liman (2017), who argue that unresolved historical narratives continue to drive conflict escalation.

Across these studies, several converging themes emerge. First, trust deficits between communities and security actors undermine intelligence sharing, legitimacy and operational effectiveness. Second, weak institutional oversight and centralised control hinder adaptive responses to local security challenges. Third, ethno-religious and resource-based grievances continue to shape conflict trajectories, necessitating more integrated and community-centred security frameworks. The literature reveals persistent knowledge gaps in understanding long-term impacts of violence and the effectiveness of multi-level security coordination. That improving ISM in Plateau State requires more than troop deployment; it demands rebuilding CMR.

Conceptual framework

Conceptual Framework: Trust → Intelligence → CMR → ISM Outcomes



The conceptual framework illustrates the pathways through which civil-military trust influences ISM in Plateau State. It begins with trust, which represents the confidence communities have in military actors. Trust functions as the foundation of the model because it determines whether civilians feel safe enough to cooperate. When trust is present, communities willingly provide information, report early warning signs, and engage with security personnel in ways that support proactive security management. Trust directly facilitates intelligence flow, which refers to early-warning signals and information sharing between civilians and the military. Without trusted

relationships, intelligence remains trapped within communities, weakening preventive action. Effective intelligence then enhances CMR by improving operational performance, strengthening legitimacy, and encouraging cooperative behavior between soldiers and civilians.

Improved CMR shapes ISM outcomes, which include the ability to prevent attacks, respond effectively to threats, and stabilise conflict-affected communities. Where CMR is strong, operations are timely, coordinated, and more likely to be perceived as fair. Conversely, poor relations contribute to delayed responses, operational misunderstandings, and contested legitimacy. These outcomes then feed back into the level of trust communities hold. Positive outcomes rebuild trust and reinforce intelligence sharing, while negative outcomes erode trust and reduce cooperation in future security operations.

The framework also incorporates moderating factors, professionalism, justice, political neutrality, structured communication, local security integration and accountability which influence the strength of each relationship. Together, the diagram emphasises that internal security is not simply a function of military deployment but a relational process in which trust, communication and legitimacy determine operational success.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive mixed-methods research design to enable a comprehensive examination of CMR and ISM in Plateau State. Mixed-methods research is appropriate for analysing complex social interactions because it integrates the statistical strengths of quantitative inquiry with the contextual depth of qualitative approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative component provided measurable patterns on trust, communication, intelligence sharing and perceptions of military professionalism, while the qualitative component offered nuanced insights into lived experiences and institutional dynamics shaping civil–military engagement. To address the objectives earlier stated, the study integrates primary field data with a targeted review of research on Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), now restructured as Operation Enduring Peace, alongside findings from commissions of inquiry, community narratives, local vigilante engagement and ongoing policy debates on federal, state and community-based security arrangements. This combined approach provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding how the shift from force to partnership can strengthen ISM in Plateau State.

The study population comprised residents, community leaders, women and youth groups, military personnel under Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), Police officers, operatives of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Local Government officials and Civil Society actors across six conflict-affected Local Government Areas (LGAs): Bassa, Riyom, Bokkos, Mangu, Shendam and Wase. These LGAs, with a combined projected population of 1,716,400 persons (Nigerian Population Commission, 2025), were selected due to their recurring conflict patterns and frequent civil–military interactions. Using Cochran's (1977) formula, a sample size of 384 respondents was determined and increased to 422 to account for non-response. Sampling followed a multi-stage approach, beginning with the selection of LGAs and wards with significant security concerns, followed by systematic sampling of households for the quantitative survey. Participants for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were purposively selected based on expertise, experience or leadership roles.

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and FGDs. Questionnaires were administered physically and via Google Forms, while interviews and FGDs allowed participants to elaborate on issues of trust, communication, accountability, intelligence flow and operational conduct. All qualitative interactions were conducted with informed consent and subsequently transcribed and anonymised. Secondary data were drawn from

government reports, policy documents, academic literature and media sources relevant to Civil–Military Relations and internal security in Plateau State.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 27, employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to summarise respondents’ characteristics and key variables. Qualitative data were analysed thematically using NVivo, following systematic coding and theme development to identify recurring patterns in perceptions and experiences. Triangulation of both data strands strengthened the reliability of the study and provided a holistic interpretation of the dynamics linking civil–military trust, communication practices, intelligence sharing and internal security outcomes in Plateau State.

Findings

The key findings of this study are as presented and discussed below:

1. Influence of civil-military trust on Internal Security Management in Plateau State

The findings demonstrate that civil-military trust is the central determinant of whether Internal Security Management succeeds or collapses. Trust emerges as the moral and operational foundation upon which intelligence-sharing, cooperation, and legitimacy of military intervention depend. Quantitative evidence from the study shows that more than 70% of civilian respondents perceive the military’s presence negatively, signaling a deep legitimacy crisis that undermines the effectiveness of security operations. As Civilian Key Informant #11 (CK11) captured poignantly, civilians “respect them but their presence creates fear... we perceive them as contributors to our problem instead of solving it,” underscoring how fear erodes willingness to collaborate with soldiers. Military officers, Military Key Informant #1 - Military Key Informant #6 (MK1 – MK6) acknowledged that their training emphasizes secrecy, which unintentionally intensifies civilian suspicion and reduces transparency in operations. This erosion of trust has direct operational consequences; respondents consistently identified distrust as the major obstacle to intelligence flow and early-warning mechanisms. MK3 explicitly linked trust to intelligence success, noting that Internal Security Management “is rooted in intelligence, and that intelligence can only be gotten from civilians through good CMR.” The evidence therefore indicates that civil–military trust is not merely an attitudinal variable but the core functional ingredient that shapes the legitimacy, responsiveness and preventive capability of ISM in Plateau State. Without rebuilding trust through fairness, communication and transparency, internal security efforts risk remaining reactive, fragile and unsustainable.

2. Civil-military communication practices and information flows in intelligence gathering and operational outcomes

The study shows that communication breakdowns lie at the heart of ineffective ISM Plateau State. Respondents consistently emphasized that poor communication - characterised by secrecy, limited dialogue, and absence of structured channels - stifles information exchange and weakens intelligence gathering. Over 83% of respondents identified “lack of trust and cooperation” as a major barrier to military operations, demonstrating that communication deficits are not accidental but structurally embedded in civil–military relations. Civilians recounted several instances of reprisals following the provision of information to the military, with CK2 observing that “when we give them information, they start mass arrests, even the informer is arrested,” a pattern that discourages future intelligence contributions. This creates an environment where early warning signs remain unreported, unmet, and ultimately unaddressed. The military respondents reinforced this linkage: MK3 asserted that preventive security hinges on intelligence, which itself relies on healthy civil–military communication. When communication collapses, operations become

reactive and belated, allowing attacks to occur “close to where soldiers are,” without timely intervention. The findings thus illustrate that communication is not an auxiliary feature of security management but a critical operational infrastructure. Where communication is weak, intelligence fails; where intelligence fails, security management becomes slow, contested, and ineffective. Effective ISM therefore requires institutionalised dialogue frameworks, protection for informants, and deliberate trust-building strategies that encourage civilians to participate in preventive security governance.

3. Impact of professionalism, justice and political interference on the effectiveness of civil-military relations in Internal Security Management

Professional conduct and perceptions of fairness emerged as decisive influences on whether CMR enhances or undermines ISM. Half of civilian respondents believed that the military colludes with perpetrators, while a third reported experiences of intimidation and harassment. CK6 described the military as “very unprofessional... they harass, torture, and maltreat civilians,” while Focus Group Discussion #8 noted perceptions of collusion and partiality. Such experiences erode the moral authority of the military and diminish public willingness to cooperate with security actors. Military officers did not dismiss these concerns; instead, they emphasised justice and accountability as central to rebuilding civilian trust. MK4 explained that “when there is justice, there will be peace naturally,” linking professional conduct to community cooperation. Beyond professionalism, political interference and identity-based loyalties also distort security operations. Civilians accused political actors of manipulating the military for partisan advantage, as Focus Group Discussion #2 (FGD2) argued that “political interferences and partial treatment of citizens have been the bane of insecurity.” Military respondents acknowledged that religious and ethnic identities complicate field operations, with Mk6 noting that such identities “influence internal security management,” even though soldiers strive to maintain neutrality. These distortions, political, ethnic and professional undermine operational integrity and weaken the social contract between communities and security institutions. Ultimately, the study shows that ISM improves significantly when professionalism, justice, and accountability guide military behaviour, as seen in communities that experienced stability under transparent and collaborative commanders (CK5). Thus, professionalism and justice are not abstract ideals but practical requirements for achieving sustainable security in Plateau State.

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the centrality of CMR in shaping the effectiveness of ISM in Plateau State, a position strongly supported by existing scholarship. In contexts characterised by protracted ethno-religious contestation, communal violence and farmer-herder conflicts, the military’s capacity to protect communities is inseparable from the quality of relationships it maintains with those communities. This aligns with the broader literature which emphasises that security effectiveness in fragile and conflict-prone societies depends less on coercive force and more on institutional legitimacy, cooperation and trust (Daniel & Jiwul, 2022; Enweonwu et al., 2021). Similarly, the literature review highlighted that improving ISM in Plateau State requires rebuilding CMR rather than merely increasing troop deployment.

1. Civil-military trust as the foundation of effective internal security management

The finding that civil-military trust constitutes the moral and operational foundation of ISM strongly corroborates earlier empirical studies. The observed legitimacy deficit, where over 70% of civilians perceive military presence negatively, reflects the trust gap identified in prior research. For instance, Ibrahim and Olasupo (2022) found that despite the responsiveness of Operation Safe Haven, its effectiveness is significantly constrained by limited public cooperation, a challenge

directly tied to distrust between civilians and military actors. This study's identification of trust as a "gateway variable" aligns with Krause's (2010) findings that local grievances and distrust in governance structures undermine cooperation with state security institutions. Similarly, Higazi's (2011, 2016, 2020) work demonstrates that recurring violence in Plateau State is sustained not only by material conflicts but also by deep-seated mistrust between communities and state actors. The current findings extend this argument by empirically showing how distrust directly disrupts intelligence flows and weakens preventive security capacity.

The role of organisational culture in reproducing mistrust, as noted in military testimonies, also resonates with broader critiques of centralised and militarised security frameworks in Nigeria. Akinrinde and Adegboye (2020) argue that highly centralised command structures often limit adaptability and local engagement, thereby widening the gap between security institutions and communities. In Plateau State, this manifests in the perception of military presence as a source of fear rather than protection, reinforcing Crisis Group's (2012) observation that weak engagement with local realities undermines the effectiveness of security interventions. Thus, the study substantiates existing scholarship by demonstrating that trust is not merely normative but operational, its absence transforms military interventions into reactive and force-dependent measures rather than proactive and intelligence-driven strategies.

2. Communication and intelligence flow as operational infrastructures

The study's emphasis on communication as the operational backbone of ISM finds strong support in existing literature. The breakdown in intelligence flow observed in this study mirrors findings by Ibrahim and Olasupo (2022), who identified poor community engagement and limited cooperation as key barriers to effective security operations in Plateau State. The reported fear of reprisals, indiscriminate arrests and suspicion of informants aligns with broader research linking human insecurity to institutional weaknesses and impunity among security actors (Enweonwu et al., 2021; Vesperoni & Yıldızparlak, 2019). These studies suggest that when civilians perceive security institutions as unjust or unpredictable, they withdraw from cooperation, thereby weakening intelligence networks, a dynamic clearly reflected in the present findings.

Furthermore, the study's identification of communication gaps as a structural failure resonates with the conceptual framework outlined in the literature review, which positions intelligence flow as a direct function of trust. The inability of communities to safely share information reinforces Higazi's (2020) argument that insecurity in Plateau State is perpetuated not only by violence itself but by the absence of reliable channels for conflict prevention. The observation that attacks often occur near military positions further supports Crisis Group's (2012) critique of Nigeria's reactive security architecture, where delayed responses are linked to weak intelligence systems and poor coordination. This study advances the literature by reframing communication not as a peripheral issue but as a core operational infrastructure that determines whether security interventions are preventive or merely reactive.

3. Professionalism, justice and political neutrality as conditions for legitimacy and cooperation

The findings on professionalism, justice and political neutrality reinforce and extend prior scholarship on the normative foundations of effective security governance. Reports of intimidation, harassment and perceived bias align with existing studies that link insecurity in Nigeria to impunity among security actors and weak institutional accountability (Daniel & Jiwul, 2022; Enweonwu et al., 2021). Such behaviours erode legitimacy and discourage civilian cooperation, thereby undermining ISM outcomes. The perception of bias and collusion also reflects the broader sociohistorical dynamics identified in the literature. Wika (2014), Akpanika

(2017) and Liman (2017) all emphasise that identity-based grievances and politicisation of ethnicity and religion continue to shape conflict dynamics in Plateau State. The present study builds on this by showing how perceived lack of neutrality among military personnel reinforces these grievances, deepening mistrust and conflict.

Political interference, as highlighted in the findings, further corroborates earlier studies on governance challenges in Nigeria's security sector. The manipulation of security processes by political actors reflects the weak institutional oversight and centralised control identified by Akinrinde and Adegboye (2020), which often compromise operational independence and effectiveness. Similarly, Crisis Group (2012) notes that weak political will and poor implementation of security reforms contribute to persistent instability. Importantly, the study's evidence that professional and community-oriented leadership can rebuild trust aligns with Chima and Alokpa's (2015) findings on the positive role of community engagement in peacebuilding. It also supports the conceptual framework's emphasis on professionalism, justice and accountability as moderating factors that strengthen CMR and improve ISM outcomes. In general, the findings demonstrate that professionalism and justice are not merely ethical ideals but functional necessities. Where they are present, they enhance legitimacy and cooperation; where they are absent, they reinforce distrust and undermine security effectiveness.

By linking empirical findings to existing literature, this study confirms and extends prior research in three significant ways. First, it provides strong empirical evidence that trust is the central determinant of effective ISM, reinforcing earlier theoretical claims about legitimacy and cooperation. Second, it reconceptualises communication as a critical operational infrastructure rather than a supplementary factor. Third, it demonstrates that professionalism and political neutrality are indispensable for sustaining civilian cooperation and institutional legitimacy. Therefore, the study deepens existing scholarship by showing that internal security in Plateau State is fundamentally relational. It is not the presence of the military alone that determines security outcomes, but the quality of interaction between the military and the communities they serve.

Implications for internal security management

Across all the three findings, a clear pattern emerges; ISM in Plateau State is fundamentally relational. The decisive variables, trust, communication, professionalism and neutrality are social and institutional rather than strictly tactical or material. This challenges dominant assumptions within Nigerian internal security strategy that equate increased troop deployments with improved security outcomes. Instead, the evidence suggests that effective ISM depends on transforming the military from an institution of force into an institution of partnership, capable of co-producing security with the communities it aims to protect.

The conceptual framework strongly reinforces that trust facilitates communication; communication enables intelligence; intelligence strengthens CMR; and effective CMR improves ISM outcomes, while outcomes themselves shape future trust. The findings show that this cycle currently functions in reverse in Plateau State due to distrust, poor communication and perceived injustice, trapping communities and security agencies in a self-reinforcing cycle of mutual suspicion and reactive operations. Breaking this cycle requires institutional reforms that prioritise transparency, structured dialogue, accountability mechanisms and community inclusion in security governance. Without these shifts, internal security operations will remain characterised by short-term responses, contested legitimacy and persistent vulnerabilities.

Implications for theory and practice

1. Theoretical implications

The study contributes to CMR and ISM scholarship by demonstrating that trust is not merely an attitudinal variable but a structural determinant of intelligence flow and operational legitimacy. The findings empirically validate relational security theory, which holds that coercive power alone cannot generate durable stability without reciprocal legitimacy from governed communities. The study further enriches civil–military partnership models by illustrating how communication practices function as operational infrastructures rather than soft relational add-ons. Additionally, it highlights the importance of professionalism and justice as mediating variables—linking institutional behaviour to community cooperation and security outcomes—an area underexplored in traditional military-centric security theories.

2. Practical implications

For practitioners, the study reveals that security effectiveness is contingent on the quality of social interactions between security forces and local populations. Training, operational procedures and deployment strategies must therefore prioritise relationship-building alongside tactical readiness. The findings suggest that reforms in communication, accountability and political neutrality will yield greater returns than simply increasing troop numbers. The conceptual framework developed which is, Trust → Communication/Intelligence → CMR Quality → ISM Outcomes, offers a practical tool for diagnosing weaknesses in security operations and designing interventions tailored to local contexts. Policymakers and security planners can utilise this framework to shift Plateau State’s ISM approach from reactive force deployment to preventive, intelligence-driven, community-partnered security governance.

Conclusion

This study examined the dynamics of CMR and their implications for ISM in Plateau State, demonstrating that trust, communication, professionalism and political neutrality are not peripheral considerations but central determinants of security outcomes. The evidence shows that the military’s effectiveness in conflict-affected communities depends largely on its social legitimacy and ability to function as a partner rather than a force imposed from above. High levels of civilian distrust—rooted in historical grievances, operational opacity and experiences of unprofessional conduct—significantly weaken intelligence sharing, undermine preventive action and sustain a cycle of reactive security operations. Poor communication structures further constrain early-warning systems, while perceptions of injustice and political interference erode the moral authority necessary for voluntary cooperation.

Taken together, the findings reveal that the crisis of internal security in Plateau State is as much relational as it is operational. Security interventions succeed where trust is nurtured, communication institutionalised and professionalism consistently demonstrated; they falter where coercion replaces partnership. Strengthening internal security therefore requires shifting from a force-dominant model to a collaborative, community-centred approach grounded in transparency, accountability and shared responsibility. As the study illustrates, the pathways to improved ISM lie in rebuilding civil–military relationships that support credible intelligence flows, legitimate interventions and long-term stability.

Policy recommendations

1. Strengthening civil-military trust to improve internal security management

To address the first objective, policies must prioritise rebuilding trust as the foundation of effective ISM. The military should adopt transparent operational practices, including publicly communicating mandates, rules of engagement and security intentions before major deployments.

Community liaison officers should be appointed in each conflict-affected LGA to serve as bridges between civilians and the military, ensuring predictability in conduct and reducing fear. Trust-building also requires fairness, impartiality and consistent engagement, including regular community visits, conflict-sensitivity training and respectful treatment of civilians at checkpoints. By making military behaviour intelligible, predictable and humane, the legitimacy deficit identified in the findings can be reversed, thereby stimulating cooperation and intelligence-sharing essential to ISM.

2. Enhancing civil-military communication and intelligence processes for effective operational outcomes

Aligned with the second objective, communication should be institutionalised through formalised, non-reactive dialogue mechanisms. Ward-level early-warning committees made up of youth leaders, women's representatives, traditional institutions and security personnel should meet regularly to exchange information and develop pre-emptive strategies. The military must also establish confidential reporting systems and guarantee informant protection protocols, eliminating the fear of reprisal highlighted by respondents. Improving real-time information flow requires joint communication centres linking soldiers, police, vigilantes, and community actors for rapid coordination. By strengthening upward and downward information flow, operations can shift from reactive to preventive, closing the communication gap that currently undermines intelligence quality and timeliness.

3. Promoting professionalism, justice and operational neutrality to strengthen civil-military relations

To achieve the third research objective, reforms must focus on professional conduct, accountability and insulating operations from political manipulation. The armed forces should implement robust accountability frameworks, including transparent complaint mechanisms and periodic public briefings on disciplinary actions taken against personnel who violate professional codes. Professional development should emphasise human-rights compliant operations, cultural competency, and conflict-sensitivity, ensuring that soldiers interact respectfully and impartially with diverse civilian groups. Furthermore, clear guidelines should be adopted to limit political interference in deployments, arrests or operational decisions, thus protecting the military's neutrality and credibility. Where justice is visibly upheld and professionalism is consistently demonstrated, community cooperation improves dramatically, strengthening both CMR and ISM effectiveness in Plateau State.

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