

**INSECURITY AND CRIME: A THREAT TO SOUTH-EAST OF NIGERIA  
DEEPLY ROOTED IN UNKNOWN GUNMEN**

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**Abstract**

*Youths have developed from respectful and developmental force to agents of societal vices and this has given rise to questions bothering on society stability, safety and welfare. To this effect, this paper explores the past, present and future impact of youth in a community life using South-East of Nigeria as a focus. Nigeria as a country has suffered an unimaginable and shocking acts of terrorism which has ripped it off of many democratic gains. Many economic activities are grounded partly because of this unrest as national and state budgetary allocations meant for other developmental projects are diverted to counter this deadly menace. Secondly, because of the reckless negligence, lip service paying, sabotagous and pretentious temperaments of Nigerian leaders in the direction of combating this dreadful demon called Unknown Gunmen to a halt. The welfare of its citizenry has continued to dwindle. Therefore, there is the need as a country to carefully and urgently mainstream into its governance certain democratic legislative tenets to save Nigerians from this inhumane assault which has held the country underdeveloped over six decades of its governance. It is with this in view that this study will attempt a review and find ways to salvaging this menace, so as to reduce the pangs of this dishonorable and monstrous act on the people. The fight against terrorism should not be treated subjectively, so as to bring culprits to book to serve as deterrent to others.*

**Keywords:** Insecurity, Crime, Terrorism, Youth And Unknown Gunmen

**Introduction**

Regular killings, beheading, shooting, kidnapping which exit in the South-East of Nigeria today is because of the existence of the so called Unknown Gunmen. The practice or habit of committing crimes by the Unknown Gunmen in the South-East of Nigeria leads to the condition of being threatening, especially physically, psychologically, emotionally or financially. Security and Crime has a great relationship in the sense that authoritative and multidisciplinary analysis between security and crime, addresses much of the confusion about its nature and meaning, clarifying its relevance to criminological analysis, and giving due attention to the interdisciplinary nature of the situation.

The Unknown Gunmen operating in the South-East are terrorists. They are also human beings which we see every day. The Unknown Gunmen started causing havoc in the South-East since the leader of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra, IPOB, had been arrested. They are terrorists and they are dealing with people seriously. "Unknown Gunmen (UGM) are now addressed as ỤMỤỌMA (nice people) in the South-East.

Several communities are beginning to witness the invasion of Unknown Gunmen, who go from house to house, even vigilante groups are disarm and attack seriously. To identify the invaders, some residents, who do not want to be seen as leaking information on the identity and operations of the UGM, prefer to discuss their activities in hushed tones, describing them as Ụmụ ọ ma (the nice People).

The obstacles and the high rate of death happening in the South-East Nigeria now are caused by the UGM. Everyone in the South-East of Nigeria is living in fear and in pain. To stop all these, the Igbo people should stop fighting for Biafra and focus on how to promote their economy and resources and also how to create more job opportunities for the youths. I believe by achieving this, Nigerian youths will be engaged in so many works which I believe that it will help them forget the practices of Unknown Gunmen.

### **History Of The Unknown Gunmen In South-East Of Nigeria**

The issue of the Unknown Gunmen in the South-East region of Nigeria started in the year 2021. There are two developments which took place simultaneously in Enugu capital of Enugu State and political headquarters of the South-East, the Nigerian Army launched a new military operation in the South-East. Tunde (2021) says; the operation, according to the Chief of Army Staff Lt. General Faruk Yahaya, will curb rising cases of insecurity in the zone. It hopes to tackle insurgency, kidnapping and rising banditry in the South-East, and check wanton killings and incineration of public facilities in the zone.

The second event was a meeting convened by governors of the South-East states, to explore political and operational solutions to the skyrocketing wave of insecurity and uncertainty in the region. Attended by four of the five governors in the zone with the abstention of Willie Obiano of Anambra State, the meeting also featured major political stakeholders and traditional rulers. They agreed to rejuvenate \*Ebubeagu\* a security initiative reminiscent of the \*Amotekun\* creation in the South-West, among others. The security outfit will draw its

membership from all the states in the South-East, to complement the efforts of regular intelligence and security services, operating in the zone.

The meeting also resolved to put an end to the frequent "sit at home" orders regularly imposed on the South-East people, by the self-styled Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), led by Nnamdi Kanu, who is being held by Nigerian's security. The sitting decried the humongous socioeconomic losses incurred by workers and business owners in the South-East, on each day the obnoxious sit at home order is enforced. The meeting equally reaffirmed the commitment of "Ndigbo" to the Saturday November 6, 2021 governorship election in Anambra and pledged to support the conduct of an incident free poll.

Few days after, a gun Smoke from the South-East was graciously spread all over the world on violence and bloodletting across the South-East of the country. This including Anambra, Imo and Enugu States, where people were being hunted like game on the streets of popular state capitals.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), founded by Nnamdi Kanu , is a currently active separatist movement. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, "The Federal Government, recalling the civil war, is bitterly opposed to Igbo separatism, as is most of the Igbo establishment. The government has long sought to defang the IPOB and silence Kanu, sometimes through illegal or quasi-legal methods". Since 2017, the IPOB is designated by the Nigerian government as a terrorist organization. Since August 2020, violence has been escalating between the IPOB and the Nigerian government. In August 2020, Nigerian police forces executed 21 IPOB members at a meeting, with two police officers dead and both siding accused each other of firing the first shot. Violence escalated during the following months, leading to a region- wide insurgency.

Advertisement invested with the unpleasant responsibility of doing a regularly updated headcount of casualties from faceless murderers and assassin led to sudden death of innocent souls. This ambush and calamity was done by the Unknown Gunmen across the states, in separate incidents. And that is how they are still attacking people till today.

The Unknown Gunmen equally take the life of Dr Chike Akunyili, husband of the late Professor Dora Akunyili, who was reportedly gunned down around Nkpor, the killing of Somadina Oforma, a member of the All Progressives Congress (APC), who was shot dead Tuesday September 28, 2021, while attending a meeting of the party at Uruagu, Nnewi North local government area

(LGA), of the state. APC flag bearer for the forthcoming election. The notoriety of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) over the years, and more recently the involvement of the nebulous Eastern Security Network (ESN), has had fingers of accusation being pointed in their direction, after each attack. This is in spite of the routine denials of both groups, of complicity, after each criminal incident. Radicalized and brainwashed by its leader, Nnamdi Kanu and his adherents, IPOB has, in recent weeks and months, functioned as an alternate, albeit self-styled leadership for the South-East states.

In the run-up to the recent commemoration of Nigeria's 61st Independence Day anniversary, IPOB legislated against the hoisting of the national flag on public buildings, in the entire South-East. Banks, Educational Institutions, Security facilities and so on, were placed under the order. For added effect, a sit-at-home was also proclaimed for then October 1, 2021 event. All this ugly situation continue till today.

### **The South-East Nigeria Security Network**

The Eastern Security Network is the paramilitary organization of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a pro- Biafra separatist movement.

According to Cable (2021) reviews that; the Nigerian government saw the ESN as a threat to its authority and deployed the army to locate and destroy the South-East Nigeria Security Network bases. In January 2021, intense fighting broke out in the town of Orlu, in Imo State. The military confrontation lasted for seven days, until South-East Security Network declared a unilateral ceasefire and both sides withdrew from the city. Shortly after the Orlu Crisis, IPOB gave all the governors of South-East Nigeria 14 days to ban open grazing, threatening to deploy the South-East Security Network to enforce a ban if the authorities did not do so. However, Uzodinma (2021) state that; the South-East Security Network did not wait for 14 days; a few days later, South-East Security Network operatives attacked a Fulani camp in Isuikwuato, Abia State, killing their livestock and burning down their houses. Following the raid, some governors responded by heeding the South-East Security Networks call and banning. The Nigerian government saw the South-East Security Network as a threat to its members suspected of attacking security personnel. The Ector ate asserting that they have finally brought the war upon the Biafran people. In response to the deaths of 20 security personnel in the region in early 2021 by Unknown Gunmen, including the destruction of three police stations, Nigerian forces raided an South-East Security Network camp in Aba, Abia State on the night of 23rd

March, 2021. The Nigerian force, numbering hundreds, captured the camp and claimed to have killed 16 South-East Security Network fighters. On 29th March, the Nigerian police reported arresting 16 South-East Security Network members suspected of attacking security personnel (Official 2021).

On April 5, 2021, at around 2am, a prison in Owerri , Imo State , was attacked by gunmen who used explosives to open the administrative buildings, and then opened the inmates' cells. The prison security fled, and 1844 inmates escaped. The Nigerian police blamed the attack on the Eastern Security Network (Guardian 2021).

### **Causes Of Insecurity And Crime In South-East Of Nigeria**

There is a dramatic increase in violence, terrorism and kidnapping in South-East of Nigeria today. Lawless sects are raising the tempo of their campaign in various parts of the country. We hear of series of bombings, shooting and killings, kidnappings, armed robbery, and so on. These take place from north to south, east to west and almost on daily basis. The phenomenon 'insecurity' has been extended to cover other spheres like economic, and political insecurity. In this paper, our concentration will treat the topic holistically - as it affects the life and property of the citizenry. Let us now examine the cause of this problem.

- 1. Unemployment:** - The rise in Crime wave in Nigeria since the mid-1990s was as a result of unemployment, economic decline, and social inequality, which are abetted by inefficient and corrupt police and customs forces. The idle minds became devil's workshop. These people are mostly youth, they are easily recruited into militant groups and trained in to rob, kill, kidnap, smuggle, hijack to mention but a few. Accurate unemployment rates are difficult to obtain and generally mean little in a society where many who work are marginally employed and where begging is a socially accepted occupation. According to statistics, a tenth of the country's young citizens are officially unemployed. Young people are overwhelmed by the high unemployment rate in Nigeria. Every year, universities make many graduates who were unfortunately thrown onto the job market with no prospect of job opportunities.

And this has lead a lot into criminal acts. Unfortunately, due to bad government decisions, our factories are still not reactivating. Due to the unemployment among Nigerians, young people are now negatively attracted to violent crimes.

2. **Wrong Political Ambition** – The desire for a political office not evil but to nurse negative reasons for that ambition can result to one doing anything to attain it. South Africa observed that “the current crisis which started in Bauchi and has engulfed other states in the north has elements of theocratic ambitions in it”. The perpetrators of the violent activities in parts of the country are operating with a hidden agenda. They have the intention of enthroning their own type of government which is selfish, criminal and unpatriotic as Nigerians. With such ambition they can try to make the country ungovernable or insecure. Electioneering - Election periods in the country seem to be the moment of serious security challenge. “While the major political characters intensify their efforts at winning the support of the Nigerian public, ordinary Nigerians are daily becoming more and more apprehensive about the security implications to the country before, during and after the elections. The general anxiety over the nation’s security is germane and should be a source of concern to the government
3. **Poverty:** The failure of Nigerian governments to fix the challenges of poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is a major contributor to the country’s insecurity and crime. When you have a poor population, you have a serious insecurity problem.
4. **Kidnapping:** This is another visible sign of insecurity in the country. The perpetrators of this crime do not spare anyone in this new wave of crime that seems to have supplanted armed robbery and other non-contact crimes. Since this act began in Nigeria, aged, children, male and female have been kidnapped for ransom. This has made life unbearable to the citizens. People now live in fear of falling victims to these criminals. Kidnapping is a kind of terrorism which is the use of violent acts to achieve political goals or to force a government to act.
5. **Bad Governance:** The increasing incidents of violent attacks are symptoms of weak, marginal or exploitative government systems in Nigeria. The government’s inability to provide public services and meet the basic needs of the masses has created a group of frustrated people who are easily classified as violent by any event.
6. **Weak Judiciary System:** The weakness of the Nigerian judiciary system creates uncertainty in Nigeria. People feel insecure when criminals are released. Many criminals have bought their freedom with money in the

country, the legal system has abandoned its people and released all kinds of atrocities.

7. **Corruption:** Corruption is already a part of life in the country and, unfortunately, is now part of Nigeria's economic problems, and public appropriation. It has gained popularity in our system of government. This creates financial insecurity which has exacerbated poverty, there is corruption in public office at all levels and this has created a lot of instability in our country.
8. **Poor Security System:** This is due to inadequate government security equipment in both weapons and training. It contributes to the poor disposition of the security personnel. In many cases, security officers tasked with certain security situations lack the experience and equipment to handle situations so that they will not arise.
9. **Porous Border:** Nigeria shares borders with Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. These borders are poorly secured by the Nigerian immigration and customs authorities. The porous nature of these borders has exacerbated the possible spread of terrorist activity in Nigeria. With terrorism in the country there will be no room for adequate development in our country especially, the South-East of Nigeria. The free flow of migrants from other countries to Nigeria through our unguarded borders allows criminals to enter the country without check.

#### **Solution to insecurity in South-East of Nigeria**

1. **Good Governance:** Good governance is the solution to Nigeria's insecurity challenge. Good governance is required, in which the government is accountable to the people. Good governance is a function of effectiveness, foresight, transparency, reliability and credible political leadership, the driving force of which is the improvement of the collective well-being of citizens through well-designed and effectively implemented economic policies and human development programs. The focus on people as the primary goal of governance. It is time to give up negative behavior and bad political tactics so that the country can have peace. We need to capitalize on demographic dividends by investing in health, education and livelihoods, especially for our young people. There is urgent need to draw a national development plan that require the three levels of government. There should be development projects in important sectors of national life all at the same time.

The authorities must additionally increase people's dwelling requirements with the aid of setting up greater facilities of entrepreneurship throughout the nation.

2. **Employment and Leadership development:** Nigeria must develop visionary leadership. Leadership positions should be for people who can convey to their people the idea of a common citizenship as a transcendent factor among all Nigerians, regardless of tribe, gender, religion, economic and social status that focuses on facts and pronouncements that will convincingly and positively affect all citizens of our nation.

The process of developing such leadership can be challenging, but our country desperately needs leaders with a national perspective and an eagerness to change the nation.

3. **Appropriate Education:** Education is a prerequisite for any form of development. Adequate education is the process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools and universities, to improve knowledge and develop skills.

This is very important for national development. It is time we know that education without skills is a disservice at the highest level. It is necessary to change our curriculum and reorganize our learning institutions even from elementary to tertiary education, the government needs to include skills acquisition as a central part of the academic curriculum. It must also provide students with the necessary opportunities to learn these skills.

4. **Elimination of Corruption:** It is the cause of inequality and the unequal distribution of the wealth of nations among their citizens. Corruption at all levels must be eliminated in such a way that equal rights apply to all and rights and privileges of people are not agreed upon based on bribery and tribe but on merit, defined in relation to their Character content, their mental efficiency where there will be no discrimination.

5. **Economic Development:** The country's economic productivity and opportunities for its citizens need to be improved. The challenge of insecurity in South-East of Nigeria can be solved by accelerating development in our country.

Development in this context is about creating an economy with societal relevance, an economic and physical infrastructure for business activity and industrial growth like in INNOSON GROUP, in order to create gainful employment, we need high-quality educational facilities and health care for the people.

6. **Solidified border security:** The federal government must face the immediate challenge of boundary porosity. The government should make concerted efforts to recruit, train and deploy adequately equipped customs and immigration personnel across borders. The government needs to invest in more effective security technologies, which will benefit border security. These technologies can include body cameras, smart license plate readers, smart vehicle underbody scanners, and more. Border guards, serving to secure the border, must have adequate access to these types of resources that enable them to do their jobs effectively.
7. **Improvement of the criminal justice system:** The judiciary should have developed time scales for cases at this stage in our development. There should have been a time to determine a cause; Time to close this case; and time to pass judgment. Hence, the government must ensure that criminal proceedings are successfully completed. Criminals will serve their full sentences, when convicted. Suspects are brought to justice earlier. Procedural documents must be available to lawyers and the public in digital form. Likewise, the procedure for filing a criminal complaint is to be simplified with greater consideration for the victims. There is a need to collect and monitor information so that law enforcement officers can be proactive and predict potential crimes with near perfect accuracy and not reactively. Government at all levels cannot compromise in enforcing the law. Law enforcement agencies must prevent and control behavior Unknown Gunmen that threatens life and property, protect constitutional guarantees such as freedom of expression and assembly, resolve conflicts between individuals or between citizens and their government, and identify problems that may become more serious to individuals or authorities.

## Recommendations

The researcher recommends that:

1. The government should provide employment to the youths and engaged them with skills. I believe if the youths are employed there won't be any problem of Unknown Gunmen.
2. If the government provide enough security and enough arm guards to the society, it will help in securing both lives and properties and also help in maintaining peace and order. The Unknown Gunmen won't attack anyone or destroy things.

3. Calling off strike will help to resolve the attack of the Unknown Gunmen because the students are very angry about this ongoing strike. Because the students are now angry they can GANG up to attack the government and even ASUU and there members.
4. There is no strong security in the South-East of Nigeria, a lot of blood are been shield all over South-East. Therefore, the researcher advice the government to provide enough security to the society.
5. When all these is done the researcher believe that the issue of Unknown Gunmen will disappear in the South-East of Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

The practice or habit of committing crimes by the Unknown Gunmen in the South-East of Nigeria leads to the condition of being threatening, especially physically, psychologically, emotionally or financially. Security and Crime has a great relationship in the sense that authoritative and multidisciplinary analysis between security and crime, addresses much of the confusion about its nature and meaning, clarifying its relevance to criminological analysis, and giving due attention to the interdisciplinary nature of the situation. In order to stop crime in Nigeria, it is very necessary that, a very strong and save security is provided in the South-East of Nigeria.

Security is everybody's business. You can always help the security agents to help you. Report all criminal activities of Unknown Gunmen to the security agents, so that insecurity will be a thing of the past in Nigeria.

Effective formulation and implementation of guidelines and programs that can address the basic causes of uncertainties in Nigeria is essential, particularly with regard to poverty; Unemployment, injustice, corruption, porous borders and the proliferation of small arms.

Therefore, efforts to combat insecurity can only be effective if there is a solid combination of legislative and judicial interference with government reforms that address some serious human security challenges facing a large majority of the population in the South-East of Nigeria.

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