

OPERATIONALISING MULTI-LEVEL POLICING TO ADDRESS INSECURITY IN ANAMBRA STATE, SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides for the existence of only one police – the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). However, several deficits have greatly inhibited the capacity of this highly centralised institution to maintain internal security. Escalating attacks and killings by violent non-state actors in Nigeria have overwhelmed the capacity of the NPF. Amidst growing insecurity, some governors, civil society organisations and opinion leaders have repeatedly called for the establishment of State Police to nip insecurity in the bud. This article critically interrogates the dynamics of policing and security governance in Nigeria with a particular focus on Anambra State and the broader South East region. Anchored on the Multi-Level Governance (MLG) Theory, the study adopted a qualitative method of data collection, relying on secondary sources such as scholarly publications, policy documents, and official reports to analyse the subject. It addresses a critical gap in Nigeria's policing literature by examining the feasibility of multi-level policing in Anambra State, highlighting its potential to overcome the limitations of Nigeria's centralised police structure in tackling evolving security threats. The article explores the critical issues surrounding the operationalisation of a multi-level policing framework, analysing its advantages for enhancing localised responses to security threats. It further proposes strategic pathways for implementing multi-level policing in Anambra, including political will, legislative reforms, community engagement, and capacity building. The article concludes that while challenges exist, a carefully designed and effectively operationalised multi-level policing system could strengthen security governance in Anambra and serve as a model for Nigeria's broader policing reforms.

Introduction

Section 214 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides for the existence of only one police – the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). With exclusive jurisdiction across Nigeria, this highly centralised institution relies on its staff strength of about 371,800 personnel to provide security for a population of over 220 million people from more than 300 ethnic groups with over 500 languages (Green, 2023). However, deficits such as manpower shortages, inadequate funding, poor remuneration, dearth of modern equipment, weak accountability mechanism and pervasive corruption, among other factors, have greatly inhibited the capacity of the Police to maintain internal security (Agbibo, 2013; Akinyetun, 2016; Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi 2019; Kwaja, 2020; Iran Press, 2022). This is evidenced by increasing loss of lives, wanton destruction of property and growing population displacement as a result of escalating attacks and killings by

violent non-state actors such as terrorists, bandits, separatist agitators, armed herdsmen, violent cult groups, militants, and kidnappers, among others.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), no fewer than 614,937 people were killed nationwide between May 2023 and April 2024. The report also documented that 2,235,954 Nigerians were kidnapped and a total of N2,231,772,563,507 (\$1,438,040,707.01) was paid in ransom (Shuaibu, Isamotu & Martins, 2024; Adeniyi, 2025). The violence in Nigeria continues unabated into 2025. In June 2025 alone, at least 272 people lost their lives in a series of brutal attacks across different states (West Africa Weekly, 2025). The huge loss of lives underscores the speed and scale with which violent security threats have evolved in recent times in Nigeria, overwhelming the capacity of the Police and other security agencies. The inability of the NPF and other security forces to effectively tackle these threats has prompted renewed calls for a policing model in Nigeria such as the decentralisation of policing and the creation of State Police to enable the practice of multi-level policing (Otu, 2012; Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2023; Igabor & Okunmahie, 2024; Okojie & Iyere, 2025).

Amidst growing insecurity, some governors, civil society organisations and opinion leaders have repeatedly called for the establishment of State Police to nip insecurity in the bud (Igwe, 2022). In 2020, for instance, a commentator quipped that “Nigeria's past, present and even the future, makes the establishment and operation of a Federal, State and Local Government Policing or Law Enforcement un-debatably mandatory!” (Orunbon, 2020, para. 1). Similarly, on 29 November 2021, then Ekiti State Governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi, posited that nothing can stop multi-level policing in Nigeria: “As the Chairman of the Nigerian Governors' Forum, I don't know of any state governor who is not in support of policing being devolved to local levels. There must be multi-level policing. It is an idea whose time has come” (cited in Wahab, 2021, para. 5).

In the recent past, the call to decentralise policing in Nigeria to allow the creation of state police has been a bone of contention between some states and federal government because of fear that some governors may misuse the police for personnel and political ambition (Omipidan, 2024; Oyero, 2024; Owolabi, 2024). However, the recent deterioration of security in Nigeria has spurred a noticeable shift in the positions of some key stakeholders at federal and state level. A development of prominent significance occurred on 15 February 2024, when President Bola Tinubu approved the setting up of a committee comprising state governors and representatives of the federal government to explore the modalities for the establishment of state police as part of measures to check the rising wave of insecurity in the country (Elumoye, 2024).

In reality, some states, such as Anambra State, had established quasi security outfits in the form of regional security networks, and vigilante groups that have co-existed with the NPF. For instance, Anambra state is reportedly the worst hit state by insecurity in the South East zone between 2015 and 2023. In a bid to tackle rising insecurity, Governor Charles Chukwuma Soludo signed the Anambra State Homeland Security Law (Agun'echemba Law) in January 2025. The law created a complementary security outfit called *Agun'echemba* (“sentinel at the gate”), and launched Operation Udo Ga-Achi (“peace shall reign”) as a coordinated response to atrocities threatening peace and stability in Anambra State (Onyekamuo, 2025). Persistent insecurity amidst the

existence of quasi-security outfits in Anambra state underscores the imperative of critically reflecting on the potential and prospects of multi-level policing for effective security provisioning in Nigeria (Sun, 2022; Obianeri, 2024; Ugwu, 2024).

The existence and activities of informal policing outfits in several states of the federation are complementing, if not complicating, the policing landscape in Nigeria (Thisday, 2020). Yet their limited formalisation and weak operational alignment with the highly centralised policing architecture perpetuate blind spots in policing in a multi-ethnic setting. Thus, the need for a formalised and robust multi-level policing model in Nigeria is increasingly being advocated. This article addresses a critical gap in Nigeria's policing literature by examining the feasibility of multi-level policing in Anambra State, highlighting its potential to overcome the limitations of Nigeria's centralised police structure in tackling evolving security threats.

The article proceeds as follows. Following this introduction, the next section provides a conceptual foundation through clarifications of key terms. The next two sections contain the theoretical framework and methodology, respectively. Thereafter, it examines the structure, mandate, and challenges of Nigeria's current police architecture, situating the discussion within the broader context of security provisioning. This was followed by a discussion on the trends and patterns of insecurity, first across the South East and subsequently in Anambra State, with empirical evidence highlighting the scale and dynamics of the problem. Attention then shifts to the institutional, political, and socio-cultural obstacles to reform, before exploring the potential advantages of adopting a multi-level policing framework. This was followed by a reflection on some practical strategies for operationalising such a system in any State in Nigeria, with Anambra in focus. The article concludes by underscoring the urgency of reform and offering strategic recommendations for strengthening security governance.

Conceptual Clarification

This study revolves around several concepts, but the term 'multi-level policing' is so pivotal that it merits clarification. The concept of multi-level policing has been widely used by politicians, academics, media practitioners, security officials and policymakers but seldom defined. To understand what multi-level policing means, it is logical to begin with the concept of policing.

The act of policing has always been necessary in societies for the preservation of order, safety and social relations (Oyakhire, 2010). Yet there is no single definition that is generally agreed upon, as the term is used with many different meanings in mind. An understanding of policing that is ubiquitous presents it as “the role played by the Police in protecting the property and wellbeing of the citizens in a given country” (Johnson, 2013, p.72). The Police is generally regarded as a body of officers representing the civil authority of government typically charged with the responsibility of maintaining public order and safety, enforcing the law, and preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal activities. Indeed, the primary role of the Police is policing, which entails securing compliance with existing laws and conformity with precepts of social order. But the Police is indeed not the only agency involved in policing, as other institutions or agency are involved in policing in a society.

Hence, scholars have criticised this understanding of policing as being too restrictive. There is now a broader understanding of the term as encapsulating the process of ensuring compliance with the law in all its aspects. As argued by Johnson (2019, p.234), “it should be apparent that ensuring such compliance can never be achieved by the police alone. Policing may encompass more agencies and entities than just the police”. Seen in this way, policing may be performed by several different professional organisations: public police forces, private security agencies, the military, and government agencies with various surveillance and investigative powers (Brodeur, 2020).

Notwithstanding the analytic utility of this broad definition of policing, we are persuaded to apply the idea of policing to “all organised activity and services provided by statutory and non-statutory institutions that seek to ensure and maintain law, order and security in each society” (Lar, 2018, p.178). It encompasses measures and actions taken by a variety of institutions and groups (both formal and informal) in society to regulate social relations and practices in order to secure the safety of members of the community and the integrity of valuable assets as well as conformity to the norms and values of society (Alemika, 2009; Onuoha, Iroezumuo, & Onuoha, 2022).

Thus, statutory state agencies as well as non-state actors such as private security companies and vigilantes are involved in policing. The common feature among all the different actors involved in policing is the commitment to regulate social relations and practices in order to maintain order or resolve problematic situations. Such situations are characterised by two features: their potential for harm and the need to solve them urgently before they develop that potential. As a result, policing has always been and remains a diverse spectrum of preventive, deterrent, and investigative activities carried out by a variety of actors (Schwartz, 2015, p.6).

Synthesising from the above insights, multi-level policing can be defined as a law enforcement approach where multiple levels of government (e.g., federal, state, and local) work together to maintain public safety and address security concerns. This approach recognises that different levels of government have distinct roles and responsibilities in policing, and emphasises collaboration and coordination among them to effectively combat crime and maintain order. In multi-level policing systems, each level of government may have its own law enforcement agencies with specific jurisdictions and areas of focus, but they work together to achieve common goals and objectives. This approach often involves sharing resources, information, and expertise to address complex security challenges and ensure comprehensive provision of policing services. Having clarified the meaning and scope of multi-level policing, it is pertinent to anchor this understanding within an appropriate theoretical lens that explains its dynamics and relevance to the Nigerian context of security crisis and demand for police reform.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Multi-Level Governance (MLG) Theory. This theory emerged from studies on European integration. It was advanced by scholars such as Marks (1993) and

Hooghe & Marks (2001; 2003). As implied by the term “multilevel,” the concept of MLG encompasses a complex network of state and non-state actors operating across various tiers of authority, including the local, national, and global levels. As Saito-Jensen (2015) puts it: “according to MLG theory, states are no longer the monopolising or even necessarily central actors of policymaking. Instead, the power of government is increasingly shaped by and shared between actors operating at multiple levels” (p.2).

The MLG theory explains how authority and policymaking are dispersed across multiple interconnected layers—supranational, national, and subnational levels. Its core assumption is that complex governance problems, such as insecurity, are best addressed through shared authority and coordination among diverse actors across different governance tiers. This approach views governance as a continuous system where power is shared and reconfigured, enabling collaboration, the sharing of expertise, and more effective policy implementation across different scales (Panke & Stapel, 2018).

The MLG theory assumes a shift from a state-centric model to one where governance is shared among multiple actors. It emphasises networked and negotiated decision-making across various government levels and focuses on interactions and overlapping relationships within governance systems, recognising their complexity and adaptability. The theory recognises the role of non-state and informal actors in complementing formal institutions.

The theory is sometimes criticised for being too abstract and normatively biased toward decentralisation, without accounting for capacity gaps and accountability challenges at lower levels of government (Panke & Stapel, 2024). Some argue that MLG theory cannot easily be applied beyond Europe (Sbragia, 2010). Notwithstanding, Panke and Stapel (2024) have demonstrated that the MLG approach can be usefully applied to “federal systems where power is shared between a federal government and one or more subnational levels” (p.418). Such a federal system features a well-arranged, limited number of geographically bounded units, where boundaries are durable, and units do not intersect on the same level (Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

Thus, the MLG theory is particularly relevant to the context of Nigeria's security crisis. The MLG theory explains how collaboration among federal, state, and local authorities—as well as vigilante and community-based outfits—can produce a layered and adaptive policing system. From this theoretical standpoint, multi-level policing is not merely a call for constitutional reform, but a practical governance innovation that integrates formal and informal security mechanisms to address complex insecurity in a federal system.

Methodology

The study adopted a documentary method of data collection, which entails extracting and synthesising relevant information from existing records and publications to arrive at evidence-based conclusions (Payne & Payne, 2004; Mogalakwe, 2006). This method was considered appropriate because it enables a critical examination of secondary data sources to generate insights into complex governance and security issues. Accordingly, the study relied on materials

such as journal articles, policy documents, official reports, textbooks, newspapers, magazines, internet sources, and institutional publications related to policing and security governance in Nigeria. To complement this, data mining was conducted using the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) dataset on political violence in Nigeria. Based on a variety of sources, ACLED collects data on reported conflict events around the world and provides publicly available event-based datasets (<https://acleddata.com/conflict-data>). The ACLED database, which captures real-time information on the location, date, actors, fatalities, and type of all reported violent and protest events globally, was used to isolate and analyse data specific to the South East zone between 2013 and 2023. The combined qualitative and data-driven approach provided empirical grounding for understanding the trends, patterns, and implications of insecurity within Anambra State and the broader region.

Current Police Architecture and Security Provisioning in Nigeria

The history of the Nigerian police harks back to 1891, during the colonial period. Between 1930 and 1966, Nigeria operated a dual form of policing. The NPF which came into existence in 1930 coexisted with Local Administration Police Forces (LAPF) in Local Government Areas in Western Nigeria and the Native Authorities Police (NAP) in Northern Nigeria (Alemika, 1993). The dual Police System which involves multiplicity of local forces and a national police force continued until 1966. Following the first Military coup d'etat on 15 January 1966, the military government in March 1966 empanelled a Working Party on Nigeria Police, Local Government Police, Native Authority Police and Prisons. The Panel examined, among others, the feasibility of the unification of the Nigeria Police, Local Government Police and Native Authority Police. The Working Party after extensive work and consultations recommended that that unification was feasible and should be adopted by the Federation. The Federal Government accepted this recommendation. As a result, the local police forces were disbanded and their qualified personnel absorbed by the NPF.

The LAPFs were disbanded because many of their members were not qualified, poorly trained, behaved badly and constituted instruments of oppression and brutalisation of opponents in the hands of traditional rulers, local government officials and politicians (Rotimi, 1993). The criticism of the NAP system regarding its handling of opposition politicians in the 1950s, allegations of widespread human right abuses and other excesses of its personnel in support of the ruling party in Nigeria prompted a loud outcry which eventually led to their disbandment.

Successive Nigerian Constitutions since 1979 provided for Nigeria the existence of the NPF only. The 1999 Constitution has provisions for the NPF, Police Council and the Police Service Commission. Section 214 (1) provides expressly that *“there shall be a Police Force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section, no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof”* (Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, 1999). However, the centralised structure of the Police has been a subject of debate among those who insist that the practice of proper federalism is key to Nigeria's

democratisation process and that the existence of symbols of unitarism such as the NPF amount to a contradiction in terms and serves as a source of tensions and stresses in the polity (Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2023).

The establishment, organisation, control, command and management of the Nigeria Police Force are governed by legislations (Nigeria Police Act 2020) and the 1999 Constitution. Section 4 of the Police Act provides that the Police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crimes, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of lives and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are charged and shall perform such Military duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required. Nigeria now maintains a centralised policing system embodied in the NPF. Each of the 36 States is served by a Command of the Police. As at 2023, the NPF personnel strength is just over 370,000 in a country of about 226.2 million people.

Consequently, questions have been raised about the capacity of the NPF as presently structured and constituted to discharge its duties. In the last decade, there have been more strident calls for police reform or the introduction of State Police (Akinyetun, 2016; Ayorinde & Ariguzo, 2020). The source of contention is the contradiction inherent in the Constitution regarding the centralisation of policing system in a supposedly federal structure. The 1999 Constitution stands on the principle that Nigeria is a federation, however it contains many provisions such as Section 214(1) which fit perfectly into the mould of unitarism. Section 215 (1-3) vests the authority for the control of the Police Force in the President, the Police Council and the Police Service Commission. The Inspector General of Police (IGP) is an appointee of the President, and since State Commissioners of Police (CP) also take directives from the IGP, all orders for police function in the Federation derive from that central authority.

Yet, section 215 (4) introduces a point of intergovernmental friction when it states that a State Governor may give instructions to the state CP “with respect to the maintenance and securing of public safety and public order within the state as he may consider necessary”. However, it robs the Governor of real executive control over the CP and issues of security in the state, as the succeeding paragraph enters a caveat that to carry out such directions, the state CP should request that the matter be referred to the President or any Minister with appropriate authority. The reality therefore is that although Governors are described as the Chief Security officers of their states, they have no powers to direct the police or any security agency to act (Uzoka, 2024).

Familiarity with the policing landscape in Nigeria will reveal several key observations. First, the operation of policing in Nigeria is built on illogicality: the imposition of a highly centralised policing architecture in a supposedly multi-ethnic federal structure. As provided in Section 214 (1) of the 1999 Constitution, there will be only one Police for 36 States (with 774 Local Government Areas - LGA) of the federation as recognised in Part 1 of the First Schedule of the Constitution. This centralised Police is expected to provide security in one of the world's most ethno-culturally diverse countries. Nigeria is home to more than 300 ethnic groups, with over 500 languages and many distinct religious and regional differences (Green, 2023).

Second, Nigeria is lightly policed demographically speaking. It is among the many African states with a police-to-population ratio of less than one hundred officers per one hundred thousand people. Experts on policing contend that the United Nations (UN) recommended one police personnel to 450 citizens ratio (1:450). However, Nigeria has a police-citizen ratio of 1:650. Recently, the IGP, Olukayode Egbetokun, posited that insufficient manpower is hindering the agency's efforts to tackle crime, proposing that the NPF need an extra 190,000 personnel to effectively man the country (Shehu, 2023).

Third, there is obvious class appropriation of police personnel in the country. This is evidenced by the glaring uneven distribution of available manpower along class line. Reports suggest two-thirds of police officers are assigned to very important personality (VIP) security duties, and some influential figures pay hefty sums for dedicated police details assigned to homes, offices, and as mobile escorts (Punch, 2025). With insecurity growing in Nigeria, police protection and services have gone for the highest bidder. An overwhelming number of the available manpower is deployed to protecting prominent people or VIPs rather than strategic deployment to ensure safer environment in the country.

Fourth, and as a corollary to the above, Nigeria operates a geographically lopsided police deployment. As insecurity hits the country, the gap between the population's needs for security and the ability of the State to provide it has widened. Spatially, urban areas such as Lagos, Port Harcourt and Enugu are subject to heavy albeit ineffective policing, while rural areas are left to their own devices. The Police are hardly visible and accessible to the ordinary Nigerians and various rural communities in time of need because of the lopsided personnel deployment (Ewepu, 2024). Worse still, the conduct of the available police officers deployed to provide public safety is oriented more to extortionate and predatory policing rather than public and protective policing.

It is against the backdrop of this constitutional contradiction, coupled with the deterioration of internal security situation in the last decade that the call for state police resonates. Perhaps a clear indication of the lack of confidence in the capacity of the NPF to provide internal security is the rise, activism and proliferation of vigilante groups beginning in the early 1990s: the Oodua People's Congress in the South West, the Bakassi Boys in the South East, the Egbesu boys and the Meinbutsu in the South South, the APC, Yandaba, and the Sharia Implementation task Forces in the North. Many of these groups emerged originally as self-determination but later metamorphosed into local militias providing physical security and acting as alternate law enforcement agencies. Already, a semblance of state police organisations currently operate in some states performing limited law enforcement functions. With the growing concerns about the poor security situation across the country, the relevance of multi-level policing has resurfaced.

Recent Trends and Patterns of Insecurity in the South East Region

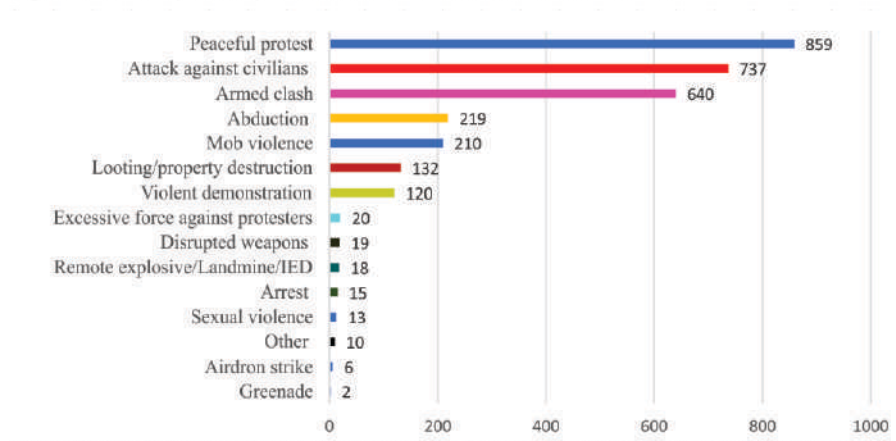
The South East region, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states, has particularly in recent years witnessed an upsurge in criminality. The region has witnessed

various episodes of security crisis or criminality in the past but not in the manner and scale recorded since 2020. Before 2021, the region was known for the hustle and bustle associated with commercial activities. There were cases of security challenges manifesting as chieftaincy tussles, intercommunal squabbles, intermittent non-violent separatist struggles, cult wars, political assassinations and armed robbery amongst others. The security challenges in the region at that time necessitated the formation of several vigilante groups to complement the efforts of the Nigeria police. The dominant vigilante group created in the region at that time was the Bakassi Boys. The group which operated particularly in the late 1990s and early 2000s, emerged in response to rising crime rates, including incidents of armed robbery, assassinations and ritual killings in the region (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Beginning from 2012, the region witnessed the resurgence of separatist agitation, spearheaded by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), under the leadership of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Initially, IPOB employed a combination of grassroots activism, media outreach, legal advocacy, and international lobbying to advance its agenda and raise awareness about the plight of the Igbo people in southeastern Nigeria (Ibeanu, Orji & Iwuamadi, 2016). However, with Kanu's first arrest in October 2015, and his rearrest in June 2021, the region has continued to witness security challenges on a scale never witnessed before.

A development of notable significance in the trajectory of insecurity in the region was the launching of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in December 2020 by the IPOB. The IPOB disclosed that the ESN is a vigilante group it set up to protect civilians in the region from foreign invaders. High-handed military offensives targeted at crushing the ESN inflamed passions, with IPOB claiming it amounts to a declaration of war (Adebajo, 2023). This marked the beginning of a dark episode in the South East, as attacks on security personnel and some government facilities increased. Data from Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) indicate that between 2013 and 2023, a total of 3020 security incidents occurred in the South East (see Figure 1). Most of the security incidents are peaceful protests (859), attacks against civilians (737), armed clashes (640), and abductions (219).

Figure 1: Forms of Security Incidents in the South East Zone, 2013-2023

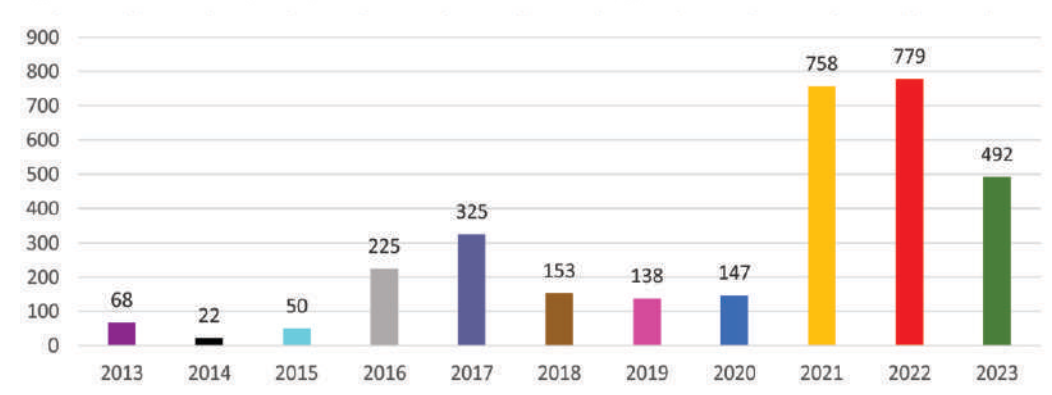


Source: Authors' compilation from ACLED

In response to the rearrest and incarceration of Kanu, IPOB declared the sit-at-home (SaH) order every Monday in the entire South East and every other day that Kanu will appear in court, to pressure the Nigerian government to release its detained leader (Ogunyale, 2023). The SaH directive has largely been championed by Simon Ekpa, the self-acclaimed disciple of Nnamdi Kanu (Eze, 2023). Since the SaH directive, IPOB has engaged in assassinations, kidnappings, lootings, destructions of people's property and unleashing of threats. Gunmen allegedly loyal to Ekpa carry out attacks on streets, local roads/highways, and market places across the region to enforce the order. For instance, on 12 July 2023, gunmen attacked market places in Ebonyi and Enugu states and set ablaze part of Orié Amaraku market, in Isiala Mbano Local Government Area (LGA) of Imo State, as well as buses and tricycles (Obianeri, 2024). Over 250 people have been reportedly killed as a result of the enforcement of the order since August 2021 (Vanguard, 2023).

Frequent imposition and brazen enforcement of SaH orders by IPOB added a dangerous mix to the security crisis in the region. Against this backdrop, the relatively calm region took a violent twist with frequent clashes between government forces and pro-Biafra supporters. As a result, the level of fatalities from security incidents in the region increased significantly, from 138 deaths in 2019 to 779 deaths in 2022, before declining to 492 in 2023 as shown in Figure 2. Overall, a total of 3157 died from some 3020 security incidents that occurred in the region between 2013 and 2023.

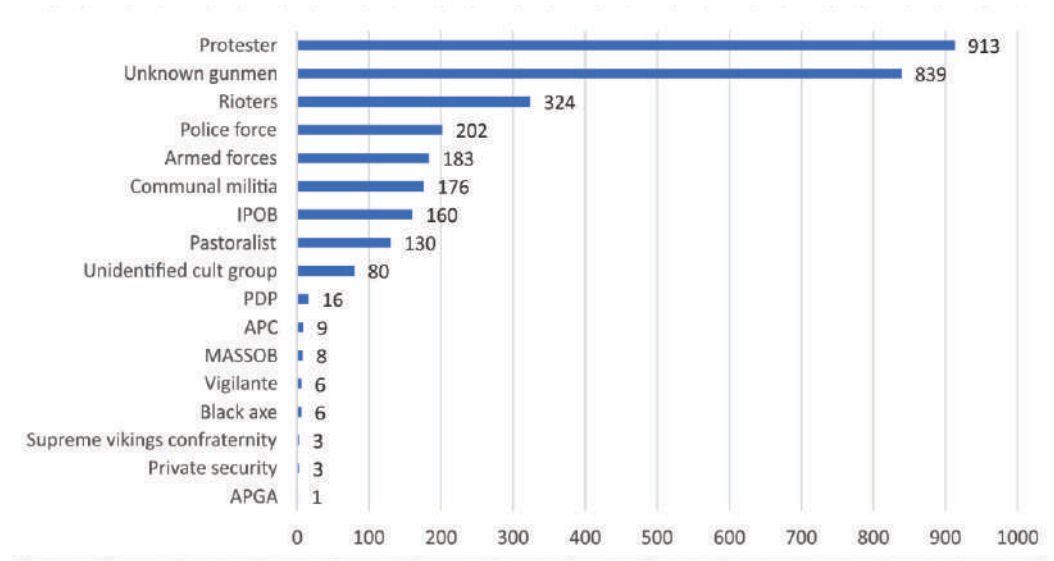
Figure 2: Trend Analysis of Fatalities in South East Nigeria, 2013 - 2023



Source: Author's compilation from ACLED

As indicated in Figure 3, security incidents attributed to protesters were the highest. But the bigger threat facing the region is the persistence of rampaging gunmen, who have been dubbed 'unknown gunmen' (UGM). The roving faceless group was responsible for 839 incidents recorded between 2013 and 2023 in the region. The UGM often target security personnel at their stations or checkpoints, killing them and burning their vehicles or duty posts. More than 20 police stations were attacked in parts of the South East in the first five months of 2021, with many police officers killed (Ojewale & Onuoha, 2022; Onuoha & Egbo, 2022).

Figure 3: State and non-state actors perpetrating violence in South East, 2013 - 2023



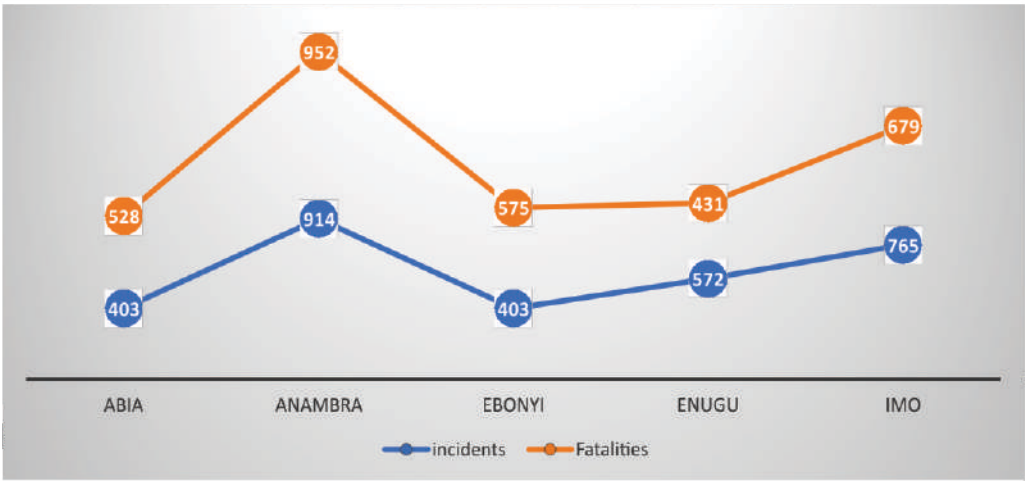
Source: Authors' compilation from ACLED

The insecurity situation was further compounded by the invasion of Owerri Custodial Centre on 5 April 2021 by UGM. The security breach resulted in the release of about 1,844 inmates by force (Akpan, 2021). With more criminals re-entering society, the region transformed into a hotbed of violence and criminality characterised by brutal killings by both state and non-state actors, kidnappings, and forced disappearance. Criminal activities have surged in the region in a scale that poses severe threat to security of life and property and the region's stability. Criminal elements have capitalised on the appalling security situation to increasingly engage in kidnappings, armed robberies, and other forms of violence. It is within this vortex of separatist agitations and associated militarised response that insecurity ballooned in the region, with Anambra state emerging as one of the hotspots of violence.

Recent Trends and Patterns of Insecurity in Anambra State

Anambra state is seriously affected by security challenges prevalent in the region. Available data indicate that a total of 3020 security incidents that occurred in the South East region between 2013 and 2023, resulting in the death of some 3157 people (see Figure 4). Anambra State had both the highest number of incidents (914) and fatalities (952) in the region, followed by Imo State.

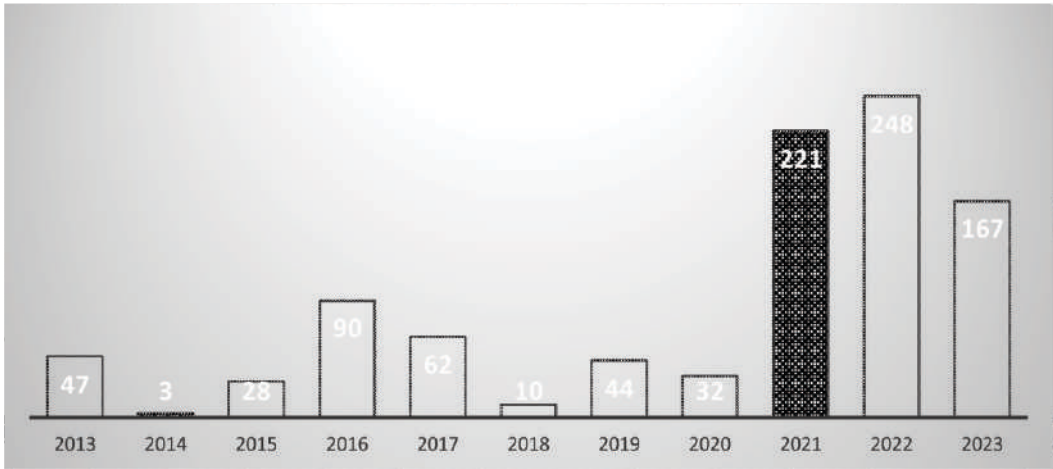
Figure 4: Incidents and Fatalities in South East Nigeria, 2013 - 2023



Source: Author’s compilation from ACLED

In recent times, the State has experienced communal clashes, political violence, criminal activities, farmer-herder conflicts, cultism, police brutality, extrajudicial killings, secessionist agitations, human trafficking, drug trafficking and ritual killing. As shown in figure 5, the state recorded 952 fatalities from security incidents between 2013 and 2023.

Figure 5: Trend analysis of fatalities in Anambra State, 2013 - 2023



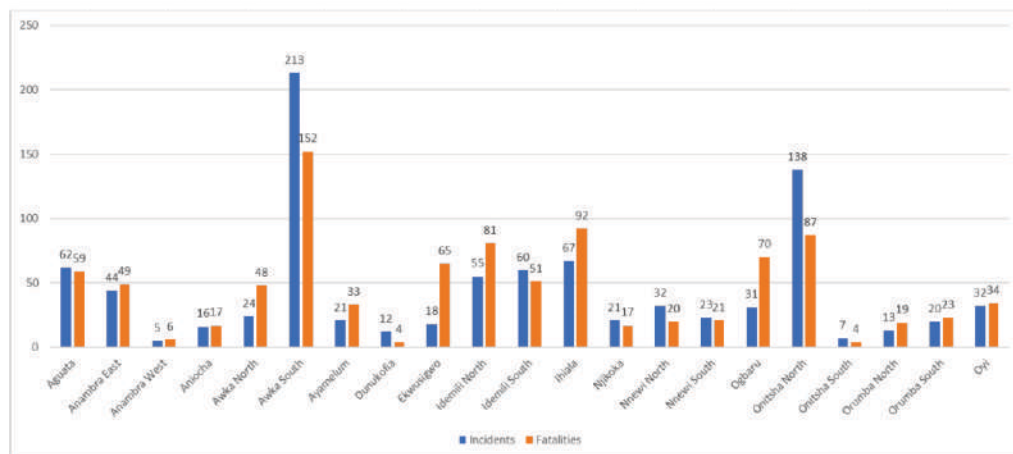
Source: Authors’ compilation from ACLED

The State has increasingly been confronted by attacks by UGM. For instance, on September 27, 2021, gunmen went on rampage on two locations in the State, killing two persons and wounding many at APC rally, and setting ablaze a car belonging to a leader of Governor Chukwuma Soludo group (Ujumadu, 2021). Also, on October 12, 2021, a group of armed men thwarted the scheduled campaign of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) in Ihiala Local Government Area of the state. The assailants were said to have stormed the area in the morning of that day, shooting sporadically in an attempt to make their way into Odoata Central School – the venue of the rally. Shortly after their arrival, they were engaged by a joint team of security operatives – comprising soldiers and policemen – drafted to the venue to prevent any form of breakdown of law and order. A soldier was killed during the shootout (Ajibola, 2021).

Also, Dr. Chike Akunyili, widower of late Prof. Dora Akunyili, was assassinated by gunmen, believed to be UGM, on September 29, 2021, while returning to Enugu from an event in Onitsha, Anambra State where his late wife was given a posthumous award (Okafor, 2021). In addition, IPOB's violent enforcement of SaH is very pronounced in Anambra State. This has particularly affected security of lives of residents in the state. For instance, in May 2022, militants reportedly associated with IPOB, murdered 14 civilians in a series of attacks in the state. Among the victims were a pregnant woman as well as children (Akinwotu, 2022).

Anambra State has also witnessed sporadic outbreaks of communal clashes between different communities over issues such as land disputes, chieftaincy tussles, and other communal tensions. These clashes have often resulted in loss of lives, destruction of property, and displacement of residents. Generally, the security challenges in the state, apart from claiming the lives of innocent people, have also brought enormous fear among its residents. Local government areas such as Awka South, Onitsha North, Ihiala, Idemili North and Idemili South, are the hotspots in terms of security incidents in the State (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Security incidents and fatalities in the LGAs of Anambra State, 2013 – 2023



Source: Authors' compilation from ACLED

Critical Issues in Operationalising Multi-Level Policing in Anambra State

The quest to operationalise multi-level policing in Anambra State, and indeed any state in Nigeria, will be confronted with some critical issues that demand serious attention. These include, among others, constitutional and legal provisions, delineation and jurisdiction, funding and sustainability, and recruitment and representation. These are discussed subsequently.

Constitutional Provisions: As earlier mentioned, Nigeria operates a peculiar form of federal system. Even though the 1999 Constitution envisions Nigeria as a federal system in principle, it equally sanctioned a policing framework that forbids the existence of State police. Therefore, the absence of a constitutional or legal provision allowing for the existence of state police is a key challenge to operationalising multi-level policing in Nigeria. The recent establishment of a Committee by the Federal Government to explore the introduction of State Police offers a notable prospect to the adoption of multi-level policing.

Geographic Delineation: A major challenge that confronts the introduction of multi-level policing in the State is the poor delineation of inter-state boundaries. The need for well-defined boundaries cannot be overemphasised particularly in a society like Nigeria where inter-state boundary dispute is rife and has resulted in violent clashes. For instance, no fewer than 676 Nigerians lost their lives in boundary-related conflicts between January 2018 and August 2022 (Ochojila, 2024). Currently, many states of the federation are involved in boundary disputes with their neighbours. In the northwest, disputes exist between Sokoto and Kebbi, Kebbi and Niger. In the North Central, there are boundary disputes between Benue/Nasarawa, Plateau/Taraba, Benue/Taraba and Kwara/Niger. The North East has disputes between Bauchi and Gombe states. Also, in the southwest, there are pending issues between Lagos/Ogun, Ogun/Oyo, Osun/Ondo and Osun/Oyo regarding interstate boundaries. There are also issues concerning the SouthSouth on Bayelsa/Rivers, Ondo/Edo, Benue/Cross River, Cross River/Ebonyi and Delta/Edo interstate boundaries. Similar disputes exist in the south-east concerning Abia/Cross River, Abia/Akwa-Ibom, Ebonyi/Benue, Anambra/Enugu, Ebonyi/Enugu and Kogi/Enugu interstate boundaries (Ochojila, 2024). As of January 2022, Kogi and Anambra were still embroiled in fierce legal battle over ownership of oil wells found in Ibaji and Aguleri (Admin, 2022). If inter-state boundaries are not properly marked out, cross-border crimes and inter-state clashes could escalate, leading to the inundation of courts with jurisdictional cases of improper arrest and trespasses. This may further compound internal security challenges in the face of very weak and struggling justice institutions in Nigeria like the NPF and the courts.

Operational Jurisdiction: The practice of multi-level policing following the introduction of State Police equally raises the issue of clear jurisdiction for the various level of policing in a federal polity: Federal, State, and local. Here, the issue borders on which crimes or offences will be handled by the Federal, State or local (community). This is why there must be a framework of delineated layered jurisdiction to enable States to work harmoniously in combating crime and insecurity when the perpetrators lie or operate across state borders. Take for examples where criminals commit crimes in one state and flee to another state or operate from a safe haven in a neighbouring state. The issue of multiple police jurisdiction in a federal system of government is a matter that needs to be addressed if multi-level policing is to be effective and friction-free.

Sustainable Funding: The differential in the level of economic viability of the constituting States in Nigeria or the LGAs of a State is a major issue in operationalising multi-level policing to achieve better security provisioning. The financial base of some of the States or LGAs is very weak, and this will invariably impact on the capacity of some States to successfully operate multi-level policing. Therefore, proper resourcing of the State Police or possible state-recognised vigilante groups at the LGA level in the form of provision of adequate equipment, patrol vehicles, arms and ammunition, uniform, boots, forensic and communication gadgets, and salaries and allowances of personnel cannot be compromised (Babalola, 2005). When states are allowed to introduce their respective State police without having the financial base to support same, the tendency is that the crime rates may increase if more people receive weapon handling training or gain access to arms but not properly remunerated. As at June 2023, for instance, no fewer than 34 outgoing, returning, and sitting governors left behind a huge burden of unpaid gratuities, while 27 of them were choked by unpaid multi-billion pension arrears (Vanguard, 2023). The inability of many states to pay workers' salaries, let alone gratuity to their pensioners, raises serious question about sustainable funding of State Police. In Anambra State, for instance, Governor Chukwuma Soludo owes N14 billion for pensions and gratuity as at June 2023. It is gratifying to know that he has pledged to liquidate them gradually. Since he assumed office, he has consistently been paying gratuity to all those who retire during his tenure, while also picking from the backlog of those who retired before he became governor (Vanguard, 2023). If Anambra state is contemplating operationalising multi-level policing, the issues of finding a mechanism for sustainable funding of the State Police, and to some degree vigilante groups that will operate at the LGA level will be crucial.

Inclusive Recruitment: Given Nigeria's diverse ethnic, religious and cultural background, how to evolve a robust and inclusive recruitment process for personnel of the respective State Police has assumed saliency. How will the personnel be recruited to be genuinely representative and reflective of the ethnic, tribal or religious composition of each state? And will each group have equal opportunity? These questions must be dispassionately addressed for the practice of multi-level policing to serve the cause of inclusive peace and sustainable security. While adopting State police will allow the States to recruit indigenes of the states or communities who are very familiar with the neighbourhoods and localities, lopsided recruitment could deepen a real or imagined sense of marginalisation among vulnerable groups.

Advantages of Multi-Level Policing Framework

The clamour for a decentralisation of the NPF to allow for the creation of state police in Nigeria holds out several prospects. These include entrenchment of true federalism, possible reduction in crime rate, and increased employment creation amongst others. These are discussed subsequently.

Entrenchment of True Federalism. The creation of state police will be a major step towards entrenching the practice of true and fiscal federalism and thereby pave way for the evolution of

an egalitarian society. The fear of disintegration of Nigeria and possible misuse of the state police by Governor or powerful local politicians are partly the reason for centralisation of the Nigerian police. However, decentralisation encourages specialisation and efficiency, as it allows States to evolve and maintain state police sufficient and suitable to confront security threats manifesting within the peculiar terrain of such a state. It is only through adherence to the dictates of federalism that each state of the federation can truly develop, as they compete in warding off crimes to prevent their territory becoming a den for criminals. The inherent peer-pressure that state police activate in a federal system could enhance overall internal security.

Reduction in Crime Rate. The practice of posting police officers to regions where they clearly do not understand the local language and environment and hence cannot interact easily with the local population constitutes an obstacle to effective policing and crime control. The introduction of state police will enhance the potential of posting people to areas and regions they know very well and feel attached to its security. This will make it easier for Police to gather intelligence and hence be more proactive in combating crime. Internal security in the area of law and order could be served better as different state governments more fully and severely take greater interest in protecting its people and property. This will lead to crime reduction and thereby enhance internal security.

Increased Employment Generation. The FGN has made a commitment to provide 250,000 jobs in 2011, but this effort is not enough considering the estimated 40 million unemployed youth in the labour market. State police systems hold the potential of serving as a major source of gainful employment for the teeming youth, as States will be allowed to recruit, train and fund the right size of personnel to effectively police its territory. Thus, gainful employment for jobless youth provided through state police is a bulwark against despair that underlies violent and criminal behaviours which undermine internal security.

Strategies for Operationalising Multi-Level Policing in Anambra State

Some of the proposed strategies to ensure the creation of state police in Nigeria for internal security include decentralisation; constitutional amendment, and new funding mechanism amongst others. They are discussed subsequently.

Push for Constitutional Amendment. The centrality of the control of the NPF is basically a constitutional provision which requires the amendment of the necessary sections of the Constitution before the devolution or decentralisation of policing functions and jurisdiction can be effectuated. Therefore, the introduction of state police should be preceded by an amendment of Sections 214 to 216 of the Constitution. The FGN in conjunction with the state and local governments should initiate a process of amendment of the relevant sections of the Constitution to provide for state police.

Support for the Decentralisation of the Police. There is the need to decentralise the Police such that the three tiers of government in Nigeria, namely local, state and federal, would share the

responsibility of law enforcement. In the new arrangement, the Local Government would take responsibility for municipal policing, the State for state police and Federal for federal offences and matters that cut across state boundaries. All federal agencies should have jurisdiction in all constituent parts of the federation. In other words, they should have concurrent jurisdiction with all local and state agencies in their respective territories. Where there is a conflict, the federal agency that has exclusive or concurrent jurisdiction over the subject matter prevails (Obi, 2000).

Development of a Robust Funding Mechanism. A new funding stream for the police can be introduced to make the dual police system effective and more independent, instead of depending on the federal government or occasional financial gestures from Governors, influential politicians or corporate bodies. Instead of having police unlawfully collecting N100 every day on the road, a new police tax can be introduced where every motorist, landlord, shop owners, and companies, among others, pay a certain amount monthly to this fund. A formula for fund allocation that allows for robust functioning of State Police or other informal policing unit within the State could be developed.

Conclusion

Across the world, States, strive to ensure that law, order, and stability are maintained within their territory. The maintenance of law and order as well as the protection of individual rights to life, liberty and of property by a State cannot be effectively achieved without certain form of policing. States, therefore, adopt and adapt policing frameworks that are best suited for their peculiar social, ethno-cultural and geographic configuration for effective security provisioning. This paper has examined the structural contradictions, operational weaknesses, and governance deficits inherent in Nigeria's centralised policing architecture, with specific reference to the worsening insecurity in Anambra State. The analysis showed that the NPF, with its limited manpower, poor resourcing, and centralised command structure, is ill-suited to address the complex and rapidly mutating security challenges confronting diverse communities across the federation. The persistence of violence, the proliferation of vigilante groups, and the creation of quasi-security formations such as the Anambra Homeland Security outfit all point to the inadequacy of the current model and the necessity of a more flexible and context-sensitive approach adapted around multi-level policing.

The structure and organisation of policing can vary from state to state and even within states, reflecting the diverse needs and priorities of different communities. Therefore, the operationalisation of multi-level policing, anchored in the establishment of State Police, is both timely and inevitable. While concerns about potential abuse by state governors, funding limitations, and jurisdictional conflicts are legitimate, they do not outweigh the urgent need to devolve policing powers in line with the principles of federalism and the realities of Nigeria's diverse ethno-cultural, social and geographic landscape. With appropriate constitutional amendments, robust oversight mechanisms, sustainable funding models, and inclusive recruitment practices, State Police can enhance intelligence gathering, improve response to local

security threats, and strengthen citizen trust in law enforcement. Successful operationalisation of a multi-level policing anchored on State Police will depend on political will, institutional safeguards, and genuine collaboration between federal, state, and local authorities. If carefully designed and effectively operationalised, a multi-level policing system could strengthen security governance in Anambra and serve as a model for Nigeria's broader policing reforms.

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