

SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THEIR STRATEGIC IMPACTS ON TRADE AND COMMERCE IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria is an integral part of the country's economic landscape due to its large trade and commercial activities. However, security challenges such as insurgencies and organized crimes have impacted the economic prospects of the region adversely. This paper examines the security challenges and their impacts on trade and commerce in the South-East. The study is based on a qualitative approach, employing in-depth interviews with stakeholders in the region and key informants including political, cultural and business leaders, as well as opinion leaders and opinion formers. It used the instrument of SWOTs framework to interrogate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of the region in line with trade and commerce. The results indicate that the security challenges have had a negative impact on trade and commerce in the region. Chief among these effects include; threats to business operations, cost of doing business due to security dispute; disruption of supply chains and essential services, and reduced trust between government and the governed. The study further reveals that insurgencies are the major security challenges facing the South-East region. It is recommended that the indigenes should look inward and nip in the bud these security threats that have become cancerous to commerce, that the federal and state governments of Nigeria should strengthen security measures particularly in rural areas, so as to reduce these threats and enhance the safety of businesses, business owners, transactors, and personnel. Additionally, there is a need to promote dialogue and collaboration among the various groups in the region so as to promote peace, security and stability for trade and commerce to prosper.

Keywords: Security, Trade, Commerce, SWOTs framework, and South-east Nigeria.

Introduction

The South East region as an integral part of Nigeria is one of the six geopolitical zones. It is made up of five states; namely, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states with eighty-five Local Government Areas (LGAs), and population of over twenty million people dwelling in over fourteen commercial cities and large towns. Its entire landmass is 29,558km² less than Kogi state with a land area of 29,833 km² (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, NBC, 2020). As a trade-oriented people, most businesses have moved from retailing to commerce levels thereby boosting supply-chain transactions. The region is also known for preponderance of micro, small, and medium indigenous industries that are into manufacturing, fabrication, and agro-allied produce. Agriculture the chief occupation that precedes trade and commerce thrives as well in the zone because of its arable land. The food and cash crops grown in the zone include oil-palm, rubber, cocoa, yam, cassava, rice, maize, etc. Endowed with strategic solid minerals and natural resources, South East region has crude oil, natural gas, bauxite, iron ore, sand stone, lignite, kaoline, clay, coal, tin, columbite, etc. (Emegha, 2014). With these potentials the zone is well positioned to attract investments in textiles, agro-allied industries, industrial materials and enhance commerce yet lags behind. This decline or lag in trade and commerce activities is owing to terror and panic in the entire region caused

by herders-farmers conflict in states like Enugu and Ebonyi, and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) declared Monday sit-at-home order that started in August 9th 2021 to pressurize the Federal Government to release Nnamdi Kanu. Since the declaration, the sit-at-home order was violently enforced that it has caused a diminishing return on the economic and social activities and development of the region.

Citizens residing within this zone are experiencing untold economic hardships and customers from other zones like South-South and South-West and beyond who patronize clusters of businesses in the South-East have to seek security-in-flight. Similarly, the commercialization of organized crimes (UNDP, 2021, Nwakanma, 2023), like kidnapping for ransom which have gained currency in the region too and confronted with military and police repression (Sampson, 2014) have chased away business owners, stagnated trade, diminished quarterly turn-over, and return on investment. States' Legislative Assemblies in the region have enacted legislation since 2009 with severe punitive prescriptions yet the scourge of kidnapping and other organized crimes has not only survived these containment measures but increased and seemingly assumed the status of an institutionalized source of income for criminally minded youths. As Wolferm Lacher (2013) has argued, talk of an alleged ideological inclinations for separatist movements most times diverts attention from the much profound problems that allowed non-state groups to thrive in regions around the globe. Evidences from commercial cities and towns like Aba and Ohafia in Abia state, Nnewi, Ekwulobia, Oba and Onitsha in Anambra State, Abakaliki and Afikpo in Ebonyi state, Enugu and Nsukka in Enugu State, and Okigwe, Orlu and Owerri in Imo state confirmed that agitation for self-determination and proliferation of violence to enforce same are at best isolating communities, and cities in the South East from engaging in central state processes and creating disincentives to support the strengthening of trade and commerce. As a known standard, a central objective and responsibility of most governments across the world is to create wealth and improve the living condition of citizens. In Nigeria however, ethnic animosities have been strongly present (Crowder, 1978, Ki-Moon, 2015) to the extent that instead of ethnicity to be a passing phase of national and economic development it has since been getting reinforced as the struggle for the country's political space and resources continues to assume basically an ethnic character. Thus, the South East population is feeling antagonized within a country which is located on top of a "fault-line" (Santos, 2015) between two highly evangelized and deeply entrenched religious beliefs. The antagonism has reached the stage of hardening ethnic identities especially in the South East since the state has not been able to protect communities. In trying to provide in-built protection mechanisms against incursions from other ethnic identities, new regional outfits in the process of curbing and solving too many things at a time have clashed in interest aggregation, increase tensions, and feeding new hostilities and disruption of businesses in the South-East. This has led to what Soludo (2023) described as "headless mob" that spares nothing in the intra governance affairs of the region. Understanding how these insecurity challenges impact trade and commerce have thus become critical to creating conditions for the region to meet many of its potentials in the comity of regions in Southern Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS/MODEL OF ANALYSIS

Concept formation aims at general applicability but generalization is a difficult art at any time, particularly when dealing with group character. Thus, the preceding concepts will reflect at the peculiarity of the South East region in application.

SECURITY/INSECURITY

Security thus can be defined as the stability and continuity of livelihood- that is stable and steady income, predictability of daily life- that is knowing what to expect, protection from crime- that is feeling safe, freedom from psychological harm- that is safety or protection from emotional stress which results from the assurance of knowing that one is wanted, accepted, loved, and protected in one's community or neighbourhood and by people around. As noted by Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) the above definition is structured in four dimensions viz economic, psychological, social, and political dimensions. It could be stated that insecurity therefore is an antithesis of security. However, the conceptualization of security problems in South East Nigeria are subject to two kinds of approaches- "geographical and geopolitical" (Ghebabi, 2007). And by extension a duality of state and societal security (Ole, Morten, Pierre, & Buzan, 1993). From Ghebabi's position, the former represents the five states in the region whose membership now constitute the region and the later constitute the major zones that reflects the six geopolitical settings bonding with the Nigerian state of which South East is one of them. Standing on this nexus, it can be portrayed as a zone that implements a comprehensive security programme of the federating units. The baskets of the geopolitical setting are conceived as forming an interdependent and indivisible package that required the maintenance of peace to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Emegha, 2022). Expected benefits of such setting according to Morgan (2013) include greater cooperation plus less conflict and war. The structure of political loyalty among the regions to the center generally has been the opposite thus affecting the indivisible package that requires the maintenance of peace to the protection of lives and property (Huntington, 2002). The intra-civilizational and ethnopolitical clashes has been dominated by the conflict between the Muslim Fulani-Hausa in the north and Christian tribes in the south, frequent riots and coups and one major war (Huntington, 2002). This internal condition based on the contradiction between societal and state power to control security has engendered what Jackson (2013) called lack of 'stateness', with the failure to establish a monopoly on the instruments of violence. As such, the enveloping porosity from the center has led the region to what Roe (2010) termed as "threats to societal identity and security". Societal security therefore was first conceptualized by Buzan in people, state, and fear and defined as the sustainable development of traditional patterns of culture and national identities of a nation (Buzan, 1991).

Ole et al (1993) mentioned above suggested that 'societal security' had become increasingly important vis-à-vis concerns over state sovereignty in contemporary times. The key to this reconceptualization was the notion of survival. While state security is concerned with threats to its sovereignty—if a state loses its sovereignty,—societal security is concerned with threats to its identity—if a society loses its identity. States can thus be made insecure through threats to the societies and vice-verse. This relates to those instances where a state's programme of homogenization comes into conflict with the strong identity of one or more of its major or minority groups. One good instance that fits into the challenges of South East security as conceptualized is that during the 1990s the 'Romanianess' of the Romanian state was compromised as the large Hungarian minority in Transylvania region of the country further asserted its 'Hungarianess'. Put differently, the more secure in terms of identity these societies are, the less secure the state containing them may feel. For Ole (1993) and his collaborators, in this manner traditional security analysis that reflects the state had created 'an excessive concern with state stability', and thus had increasingly removed any sense of the "security" of societies in their own right'. South East Nigeria falls into the conceptualization and in an attempt to solve old insecurities has created new threats and further fallen deep into more threatening challenges.

TRADE/TRADING

Trade is generally defined as the buying and selling or exchange of goods and services for money. Trade is as old as the existence of the South East region because from coast to coast, village group to village group one form of trading to another exist (Afigbo, 2006). Originally, European traders and consuls insisted on referring to the system of trade in the Bight of Biafra as one of barter (Jones, 1956). Technically speaking they were wrong. There is no evidence that the system of trade in this region was carried on by barter and in the time of the slave trade if not earlier there were not one but a number of different Europeans and Native currencies recognized on the Slave Coast and the Oil Rivers (Jones, 1970). Trading is the breath of life among the Igbo (Green, 1963). If agriculture was the basic occupation of the Igbo, trading is a close second. In context, Smith (1851) quoted in Jones (1963) notes that one might almost say that whereas farming was/is of necessity, trade is not only of necessity but also for pleasure. Their markets are one of the main features in their lives. They provide a meeting point for the discussion of common business and for the dissemination of news; they are a social event where the spice of gossip, the recreation of dancing and the zest of bargain relieve the almost continuous toil of hoeing, planting, weeding, and harvesting throughout the year (Hodder & Ukwu, 1969).

The vigour with which bargaining and haggling are conducted is evidence of the prestige attached to successful commercial enterprise with the Igbos (Ogbuagu, 2006). A stranger going round to a number of Igbo markets is apt to have the impression that thousands of people are buying and selling minute quantities of the same things but in fact the markets are to a certain extent specialized in the sense that one is reputed good for meat or livestock, another for pots, another for yam and so on (Onyemelukwe, 1971). As a way economic survival and profession, specialization is a long feature of trading in South East. The apprenticeship system involved in trade and trading is largely responsible for the domination of many lines of business by specific towns and village groups nevertheless the pattern is becoming more diversified today. For instance, at Aba, Igbos from Nkwere and other parts of Orlu specialize in tobacco trade while those from Edda, Item, and Ohafia areas specialize in textiles, including singlets and ready-made gowns. Also, Abiriba traders control textile and clothing trade at Umuahia; while Awka and Nnewi traders are dominate in Onitsha. In Nsukka and Abakaliki, the trading communities come mainly from Onicha-Igboeze, Awka, and Orlu areas, whereas the trading communities in the central Igbo uplands are drawn from the immediate hinterland (Onokala, 2002).

Several writers such as Hodder (1965), Bohannan and Dalton (1962), Hill (1963), and Onokala (2002) have noted that a striking feature of the trading environment of the South East is the movement from periodic viz; Eke-Oka, Orié-Agu, Afor-Owutu, and Otu-Nkwo which holds at intervals to daily sector trading. This is accompanied with the growth of lock-up stores and shops which indicate the selectivity in the kind of goods displayed in them. For example, Onitsha has Ochanja and Ose markets, Enugu has Ogbete, and Kenyatta market while Aba has Ahia- Ohuru or new market, Ekeoha market etc. Outside the region, Ismail, Oloyede, Hunkuyi, Bassey, Umo, and Alade (2021) have reported on how Igbo traders control critical sectors in 31 states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in a multiple survey in Abuja, Kano, Jalingo, Yenagoa, Uyo, Lagos, etc. This is a pointer to the industry of a people and a strategic counter to the difficulty the region faces down home in that which it cannot be dispensed.

COMMERCE/BUSINESS

Conceptually, nearly every business transaction is a form of commerce; purchasing food items at Ose market in Onitsha, buying clothing materials at Aba and selling them in a store at Enugu etc. Thus, Anyanwu (2006) defined commerce as the conduction of trade of goods and services. On a more technical level, Strategic Market Assessment SMA (2019) conceived commerce to include all those activities which are necessary for maintaining the free flow of goods and services from the producer to the ultimate consumer. In line with the above, The Economic Times (2023), defined commerce as the exchange of goods and services on a large scale. It can also be defined as the exchange of goods and services between businesses. At this juncture, it is important to note that “commerce” and “business” are different. Commerce is only about how things are bought and sold. It has nothing much to do with how or what a company or manufacturer makes. Mcknight and Chervany (2014) as such defined commerce as the type of business that focuses on getting goods and services to the people rather than making those goods and services.

Thus, unregulated commerce might not be in the interest of the population. Following Mcknight and Chervany's position one can say that a transaction is the buying or selling of a single item. On the other hand, commerce is all of the buying and selling of that thing in an economy. The mode of achieving commerce therefore, includes trade-internal and external, wholesale and retail trade, import, export and entrepot. It also includes transport, banking, warehousing etc. Commerce helps trade grow and raises people's living standard.

SWOTs Framework of Analysis

SWOTs is the acronym of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and a strategic thinking tool of analysis that has found utility in today's competitive societies and challenging globe (Aja, 2023). Again, Mitroff (2006) says it is a general technique that finds application across diverse management and social sciences activities, but it is particularly appropriate to early stages of strategic thinking and planning. Performing a SWOT analysis involves identifying and recording the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats concerning a task surrounding an individual, group, or organization. The analysis typically takes into account internal resources and capabilities and factors external to the group (Schrager, 2006). The checklist for SWOTs according to Wells (2006) entails: (a) establishing the objectives that maybe narrow or wide, general or specific—anything from getting group or citizens to understand, think about, and be more involved in the business to rethinking a strategy, or even rethinking the direction of an action or pursuit, (b) evaluate listed ideas against objectives and existing environment—is the ideas clearly evaluated thereby marching with the objectives, on the other hand, is the ideas and objectives encourage an atmosphere conducive to the uninhibited strategic activities free from blame or intimidations. In line with the above, Mayo (2008) has expressed that SWOT analysis is not a blame-laying exercise or scapegoat process in solving problems. As such, Aja (2023) opined that SWOT as a framework of analysis is foremost a tool for fact-finding, rather than a fault-finding one that has the prospect of inviting standard scientific-empirical approach for socio-political and security challenges in a complicated globe.

Applicability of the Framework

The framework is suitable to the study of security challenges to trade and commerce in the South East Nigeria in the sense that it captures the strengths and opportunities that exist in the business practices embedded in the social strategic setting of the region and how organized crimes, threats of Mondays sit-at-home that has ran continuously since September, 2021 till date and intimidation of enforcing same by hoodlums with the threats and killings associated with it has weakened and crippled businesses, commerce and trade in the zone under study since 2021-2022.

Analytical Assessment on the Strategic Impact of Insecurity on Trade and Commerce

The discrepancies between ends which can rarely be quantified creates risk. At its core, risk arises when ends and means are not in consonance. Thus, the threats of insecurity in the South East are evolutionary. It has been incremental from the very time IPOB was designated as a terrorist group in 2017 even up till 2022. While the 2019 COVID-19 lockdown brought the fear of crime closer home with its attendant effects on trade in the zone, the introduction of the sit-at-home order by the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra to put pressure on the Nigerian government to release its leader, Nnamdi Kanu, who is standing trial before Federal High Court Abuja, for treason and terrorism, has made the south east a “ghost region” (Ugwu, 2022). The shutting down of all businesses and staying at home on such days Kanu appears in court and every Monday by residents both civil servants and traders, businessmen is mainly out of fear of attacks. To drive home its threat of enforcement, a group of masked gunmen have from time-to-time in different states of the region released video clips in which they claimed responsibility for the Monday sit-at-home order. This has also come with occasioned attacks on security operatives and public infrastructure and extra-judicial killings regardless of counter orders from the same group. The group's strategy, calculation and coordination of the end and the means is now excess and as harmful as deficient to the entire region.

In an analysis of insecurity in the region, the preceding trend of activities will be presented in tables to show the dilemma of attacks on humans and infrastructure.

Table 1:

| OCTOBER 2020-JUNE 2021 | POLICEMEN | MILITARY MEN | OTHER SECURITY AGENCIES KILLED |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 175 security operatives killed in south east. | 128 police men | 37 | 10 |
| Police Station/Formations Attacked /Burnt 164 | Firearms Carted Away 396 | Ammunition Carted Away 17, 738 | 168 vehicles destroyed |
| Attacks on Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) attacked at Umuahia/Owerri | | | |
| Nigerian Correctional Services (NCOS) attacked at Owerri, Imo State | 1,841 inmates escaped | | |
| Attacks on INEC facilities | 18 logistical vehicles burnt | | |

Sources: <https://www.thecable.ng>, <https://guardian.ng>

The above table is a tabulated illustration of the nature of insecurity in southeast Nigeria as it touches both security operatives and civilians. The trend is frustrating to trade and commerce as can be seen or witnessed within and among the states.

Table 2

| Gruesome Killings of Traditional Leaders/Known Personalities | State | Date |
|---|--------------|-------------|
| Obi 1 Of Okwudor Autonomous Community Imo State, Eze E. AnayochukwuDurueburuo | Imo | 19/10/2021 |
| Eze Sampson Osunwa of Ihebineowerre Autonomous Community. | Imo | 19/10/2021 |
| Dr. Chike Akunyili and eight others. | Anambra | 28/9/2021 |
| Alhaji Ahmed Gulak | Imo | 30/5/2021 |
| Eze Christopher Ewa, traditional rural of Umuezekoha autonomous community. | Ebonyi | 27/2/2023 |
| Anthony Nwokorie an INEC official killed at Ihitte | Imo | 14/4/2022 |
| Okechukwu Okoye representing Aguata 2 AHAS | Anambra | |
| Eze Ignatius Asor traditional ruler of Obudi Agwa, oguta | Imo | 21/5/2022 |

Sources: www.premiumtimesng.com

The above table shows the murder of known individual in the states in region.

Table 3 on Markets closed on Mondays in the Region

| Some of the major Markets that are shut every Monday | State |
|---|--------------|
| Main Market Onitsha | Anambra |
| Nkwo Nnewi | Anambra |
| New Parts Nkpor | Anambra |
| Bridge Market Onithsa | Anambra |
| Building Material Market Ogidi | Anambra |
| Relief Market Ogbaru | Anambra |
| Ariaria International Market Aba | Abia |
| Ekeoha Shopping Center Aba | Abia |
| Ohia Ohuru Market Aba | Abia |
| Cemetery Road Market Aba | Abia |
| OgbaeteMarket | Enugu |

Sources: Author's compilation May, 2023

From the empirical evidences presented above, it is obvious that the commercial strength of the south east region has been decimated. In retrospect, the south east has hundreds of large and medium scale industries let alone markets at Onitsha, Aba, Nnewi, Enugu, Umuahia, Afikpo, Abakaliki, Ekwulobia, etc. Where they still exist, work or transact, they function in a very minimal capacity. For the fact that 'no person in any culture likes to be bullied, and no person likes living in fear because of his or her ideas are different, (Obama, 2006), the conditions upon which freedom through agitations is asked for is very traumatic and confirms what Herskovits (1941) calls "Igbo tendency of despondency". In many parts of the New World, with a tradition of suicide as a way out of difficulties, it has been noted that in Haiti there is this old saying that "Ibos pend cor a yo" meaning the Ibo hang themselves" is still current (Herskovits, 1941:36). The level of insecurity has affected all the known indexes of commerce in the region and the inhibiting factors are much more internally caused rather than externally generated. For records, between August 9th 2021 when the sit-at-home order started to December 19th 2022, there exist seventy-one (71) Mondays that markets have closed down. Banking which is a "convergent sequence" (Umezuruike, 1992) of trade, commerce, and business have not functioned optimally. Besides, logistics and transportation that aid transactions and supply chains are in jeopardy too.

Following from the above, lots and parks like Milverton Avenue Aba, Upper Iweka Onitsha, Holy ghost Enugu, Egbu/Mbaise road Owerri and Central Park opposite international market Abakaliki where luxury buses and other commercial vehicles load are ghost of itself on Mondays. Transporters and drivers both commercial and private who try to risk travels or supplies could either be killed, kidnapped or got their vehicles burnt. According to International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR, 2023), on 11th April, 2021 two persons, a Toyota Sienna, and a truck were set ablaze at Ahiara Junction Mbaise, on September 2021 a bus driver was set ablaze inside his bus for violating the sit-at-home order after his passengers were asked to alight from the bus at Oboma Nguru Mbaise Imo state. From the same report, on October 21st 2022 fifteen (15) shops and over ten (10) vehicles were burnt at Amorka community in Ihiala Local Government Area, Anambra state. The timeline of chaotic situations is not abating but rather continuing even in the current year 2023. On January 2, 2023, heavily armed gunmen attacked the convoy of former governor of Imo state, and killed four of his police details at Ehime Mbano Local Government Area of the state. As reported by The SUN Newspaper on 9th January 2023, on the same day stated above the President-General of Obosi Community in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Ike Okolo, was shot dead by gunmen inside his sport utility vehicle in a petrol station. In a related manner, assailants killed four persons in a compound in Nodu Okpuno, near Awka, Anambra State. On January 5th 2023, hoodlums struct at Uli community in Ihiala burnt the Anambra State Vigilante Service (AVS) office in the town and killed a number of the security outfit workers. On 11th May, 2023 commercial vehicles and several keke were burnt at Onitsha by enforcers of sit-at-home order even though it was on Thursday. On 16th May 2023, gunmen attacked a U.S. convey and killed two local consulate staff and two policemen who were on humanitarian field visit at Ogbaru Anambra State. These attacks are doubly traumatic and have caused brutal social and economic impact on trade, traders and businessmen.

INTERVIEWEE RESPONSES ACROSS THE STATES

The agonies of insecurity are better experienced than imagined, while the frustrations on businesses is killing, the impact on trade has cost the south east economy over \$10.3 billion in 2020 alone (Oladipo, 2021). According to Kasie Ezebinagu a market leader at Ogbete Main Market, Enugu State, in an interview with Premium Times reporter on 17th May, 2022 stated that before the insecurity started in fullscale, he usually took bank loans to run his stockfish business and make eighty percent (80%) of the

bank loan from sales, but the last time he secured a loan, he did not record enough sales to repay it. He stated “we are going down every day” shaking his head in despair. In a related interview with the same reporter, Caleb Johnson a provision seller at Uzoakoli Market in Bende Local Government Area of Abia State says he does not open his shop on Mondays and other sit-at-home days because traders always scamper for cover or safety at alarm that gunmen and militants were coming for traders who opened for business on such days. For him, there is usually fear of attacks among traders, besides you would not even see people to transact with because the roads are usually dry and empty. Onyeike a GSM phone dealer at the Oriendu Market Ovim, Isiukwuato local Government Area of Abia State told Premium Times that “faced with biting hardship, traders a times open for businesses in the evening of sit-at-home days to assuage their economic woes, but Mr. Onyeike does not join in the risky venture of opening at all for fear of being shot at by gunmen”.

Mrs. Emeka a shop owner at Ariaria International Market, Aba, Abia State says she neither open for business nor go out of her compound since some gunmen attacked traders sometime ago when they opened for business. Mr. Collins a businessman at International Market, Orlu, Imo State said forced holidays have stifled businesses in the southeast that those who secured loans to grow their businesses face the risks of repayment default and liquidation. At Douglas Market Owerri, Imo State, Mr. Opara who sells computers in the market says he loses between one hundred to one hundred and fifty thousand naira on such day traders are asked to stay at home. However, some traders open on Sundays to make up for their losses but the practice offends his faith as a Christian. Mr. Nwibo a phone accessories dealer in International Market, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State said although market leadership usually open the market for business on Mondays, many residents avoid the market and buyers from other states like Benue and Cross River do not come but rather go to safer zones outside the region. At Main Market Onitsha Anambra State, Mr. Kenneth the leader of Onitsha Market Traders Union said unknown elements frustrated his efforts to open markets on Mondays when death threats from unknown persons forced him to abandon the idea of mobilizing traders for businesses on Mondays in collaboration with the state government.

For Mr. Zwalle Nanbol a senior operations manager at Management Sciences for Health, Abuja, said his trip from Thomia Major park Balyasa State to Awka Anambra State was disrupted on May 8th, 2023 because no vehicle was going to the southeast on the excuse and fear that it was a sit-at-home day. The responses above compress trade and commercial initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The surveys on the impact of insecurity above indicate that southeast has the good reputation for trade craft as an internal strength for businesses but in the weakness of insecurity as an eternal element caused by weak national political regulatory clashes between a good number of contemporary age-set who did not witness the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. These two groups contest ownership of southeast landmass, control of its activities to an extent. The state group is identically endowed with management of organized violence which the challengers (Nonstate groups) mostly lack but have shown relative capacity in guerrilla and insurgent attacks. Personalities who are culturally grounded with older Igbo institutions like the Igbo State Union of the late 1940s and 1950s and its values of unity are at internal tension with newer generations to discuss for peace and stability. As a result of threats of insecurity and constant bloodbaths traders and trading companies have been confronted with lost business opportunities with additional costs relating to transportations and handling declining daily. These “frictional” and unresolved issues make trade more expensive and reduce transactional flows in the region. Thus, the

aggregate impacts are that mobility of people and goods-a useful indication of merchandize is low. Motor vehicle movement and air passenger traffic are reduced thereby leading to closure of micro businesses. As reported by Anudu (2023) from 9th August 2021 to 19th December 2022 southeast has lost 71 days staying at home and lost nominal revenue of #5.375 trillion equivalent to \$12.215 billion. Besides if the region stays home for another 52 Mondays in the year 2023 not counting other days of declarations the region will be losing #4.618 trillion which is equivalent to \$10.495 billion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The grievances of a marginalized region that cannot be addressed through the mainstream media or existing political or judicial processes has led to retail insurgency, wholesale suicide and large-scale economic and commercial destruction. The strategic skirmishes, tactical propagandizing, with its enlisted loyal enforcers has led to a blowback strategy, thus the paper recommends the following;

- (a) That the south east as a trade-oriented region in Nigeria should not through enduring crisis of disunity destroy trade which is its strength so as to justify not what Herskovits (1941) termed “Igbo tendency of despondency” which in this case is suicidal.
- (b) That various groups in the region should strategically probe beyond appearances dialogue together and fish out those who do not understand that trade, commerce and insecurity do not align and deal with such threats.
- (c) That the Federal Government should treat issues of insecurity both societal and state securities especially in the rural areas with urgency because down playing either of them impact on the economy of regions and the Nigerian state at large.

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