

INSURGENCY AND THE CHALLENGES OF POLICING IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA: A STUDY OF ANAMBRA STATE, 2020-2022

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Abstract

The separatist insurgency and armed herder assaults in south-east Nigeria, mainly, Anambra State, have reached a tipping point after the 2020 ENDSARS demonstration. Examining how security personnel overruns, kidnappings, and the gruesome deaths of police officers and civilians have left the Southeast afraid and scarred is the main objective of this research. The paper investigates the challenges that Nigerian police officers face in combating insecurity, such as cases of police brutality and the use of community policing by southeastern governors in collaboration with the police; and how the neglect of an already existing security network created by the separatist insurgency in the southeast has resulted in violent attacks against police security operatives in the region. The study relied on secondary sources of data and employed a qualitative approach to data collecting to collect accurately accessible document data. As a framework for analysis, the study used Karl Max's Conflict Theory. The study revealed that the federal government's perception of the police as a harsh repression and intimidation force used against separatist insurgency resulted in insurgent strategic armed attacks. This caused further holes in the security of the southeast, allowing anonymous gunmen to kill and shoot people. As a consequence, the report recommends that the Nigerian police force upgrade its security monitoring system, institutionalize community policing through appropriate regulations to minimize the use of unlawful force, and perform a structural evaluation of the Nigerian police.

Keywords: Separatist Insurgency, Community Policing, Police brutality.

Introduction

The police are an entity tasked with providing security or, at the very least, a socio-psychological sense of security to citizens. To that aim, policing implies an endeavour to preserve social order, whereas the police are founded as an institution to execute the law and maintain social order (Odeyemi and Obiyan 2018). Since Nigerian youths led by the #ENDSARS Movement took to the streets to protest widespread police brutality against citizens and demanded the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) be prosecuted for violating Nigerians' fundamental human rights, the country has faced increasing insecurity.

The situation is similar to the early 1970s post-civil war era, when all manner of crimes were committed against the state and its citizens, and security agencies are taking a 'wait and see' approach to the problem, which has sent thousands of Nigerians to untimely grave (The Guardian News Report, 2022). The same source claims that the security situation in Southeast, namely Anambra State, has gotten so bad that residents are instructed to lie down as soon as they hear gunfire and listen to determine where the shooting is happening to prevent being killed by stray bullets. Since the police force seemed to have entered a recession after the demonstration ended, some Nigerians have called on the government to implement a "no work, no pay" policy in response to this. They claimed that the IGP at the time did not provide the employees with the proper instructions to carry out the tasks for which they were paid. During these difficulties, community policing was established to reduce insecurity; however, the failure to properly institutionalize community policing in the southeast has led to an increase in insecurity. This is

because the security structure in the southeast is changing as a result of insurgent attacks and armed herder killings, as seen in other regions of Nigeria, including the South West.

As a consequence of the rebel group's dispute with the Nigerian Police Force over security issues, more security officers have been slain in the southeast. Several individuals were reportedly killed and their property was damaged as IPOB security forces clashed with police and military in Orlu, Imo state (Sahara Reporters, 2021). Another report claims that during the state's Supplementary Governorship Election, there was a mixture of confusion and fear in Anambra State's Ihiala Local Government Area as suspected members of the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) randomly engaged the police at various landmarks such as Ukpok and Osumoghu junction (Business Day News Report, 2021). Attacks by insurgents on the Nigerian police have severely damaged security in the southeast, especially in the state of Anambra, to the point that police security agents now roam around in dread without a uniform to hide their identity. This essay looks at the current problems with policing in the southeast, notably in Anambra State. It also examines the detrimental impacts of sociopsychological instability in Nigeria and how the Nigerian police force handled counterinsurgency attacks.

Statement of Problem

Insecurity has been a problem for the Nigerian Police, which has the exclusive role of police, throughout southeast Nigeria, notably in the Anambra region. There have been several instances of violent cult warfare, armed robbery, abduction, and electoral violence, among other things. According to Christopher (2022), Aguleri and Umuleri in particular have a history of brutal warfare and pervasive insecurity, as well as previously unheard-of levels of political turmoil and worry. These crises had an unavoidable impact on society, the economy, and many people's capacity for self-sufficiency. Due to a string of well-coordinated violent attacks against government structures, political gatherings, and security formations, it appears that the State is once again going through its worst moments. This deplorable scenario has not only resulted in the murders of security personnel but also endangered the tranquility of law-abiding citizens. However, the study's main focus is on the separatist insurgency in the southeast and the reasons why the Nigerian Police Force is ineffective in policing the region, especially Anambra state.

As a result, it is getting more and harder to administer the southeast of Nigeria. Due to structural flaws in the Nigerian Police Force, the police, an entity tasked with the primary duty of internal security, have been ineffective. Several Fulani-herder attacks on towns in the southeast before 2020 prompted the formation of IPOB's Eastern Security Network; this effort to establish a community policing organization resulted in a violent separatist rebellion. Threats of violence and feelings of insecurity in the southeast were further exacerbated by the governors of the southeast's construction of Ebube-Agu without adequate institutionalization and by their disregard for the complaints of the separatist IPOB.

In the Southeast, the response strategy to assist law enforcement has, ironically, resulted in heightened insecurity and the possibility of violent crime. The ENDSARS protest assaults on police stations, the theft of firearms and ammunition, and the rising availability of small arms and light weapons, notably in Anambra state, have culminated in many violent group attacks related to IPOB's ESN.

An important problematic issue to consider is how the federal government and the governments of the southeast states have failed to address these separatist insurgent groupings' complaints constructively. The southeast is starting to be known for insurgencies, and security has a significant impact on economic activity.

The broad objective is to examine the insurgency and its challenging impact on policing in southeast Nigeria, precisely Anambra State. The specific objectives are;

1. To trace notable factors reducing effective policing by the Nigerian Police Force in Anambra State
2. To examine security implications of separatist insurgency attacks in Anambra State

Separatist Insurgency

Although the Indigenous People of Biafra have been designated as a terrorist group, it is clear that the actions of IPOB security personnel known as the Eastern Security Network (ESN) between 2020 and 2022 more closely resembled a separatist insurgency than terrorist activity. The insurgency in Southeastern Nigeria is the name given by Wikipedia to the conflict between the Nigerian Army and the ESN, which also depicted the ESN's actions as an insurgency. According to the 2012 publication of the US Government's book "Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency," separatist insurgencies seek independence for a particular territory:³ There is a chance that the area in issue will occasionally cross current borders. Separatist Insurgency is thus one of the insurgent typologies. An insurgency is a bloody political conflict over the possession of people and assets. Insurgent groups often work toward a small number of shared objectives to challenge the government and boost their standing among the populace. Activists want to:

- Weaken the government's capacity to offer the populace security and essential services including justice, education, and utilities. An insurgent organization could make an effort to dethrone the government by offering citizens substitute services, or it can be content to depict the government as helpless
- Obtain the public's active or passive support. Not all support must or is likely to come from actual sympathizers; intimidation and fear can convince many others to cooperate.
- Provoke the government to perpetrate atrocities that turn unbiased citizens against the rebels and strengthen the allegiance of insurgent backers.
- Undermine foreign backing for the government and, if feasible, help the insurgency obtain international support.

According to Schwartzbaum (2013), separatist insurgents seek to raise the cost of control over a region to the point where the incumbent loses the political will to maintain the local status quo, where "status quo" can mean direct political control, rule without making any concessions to local leaders or maintaining the region's status as a part of the country.

One may argue that the heinous acts are aimed to thwart the federal government's political intentions in the southeast, especially in light of the Eastern Security Network activities and disputes with the Nigerian police force in Anambra State.

The ENDSARS protest and other police operations in the southeast have degraded the image of the Nigerian police, presenting them as the federal government's sole oppressive force employed to carry out its whims in defiance of public sentiment and goodwill.

The victimization of police personnel was a result of these distant circumstances, but because it was not recognized that these attacks would create insecurity, the state has seen many criminal prosecutions. Hoodlums allegedly attacked a Nigerian Police patrol unit in Ekwulobia on February 24, 2021, and a police roadblock in Neni, Anambra State, on March 18, 2021.

The event is alleged to have killed two police officers, and their patrol car was set on fire (BBC, 2021). Unidentified gunmen allegedly assaulted personnel of the Nigerian Navy and the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) in another incident (Abaenogbe, 2021).

The allegation that the Eastern Security Network was founded in response to Igbo worries that Muslim Fulani herdsmen are out to get them and are responsible for crimes against people and grazing on farmlands is convenient. The military and ESN fought for seven days before reaching an agreement and leaving the city. Soon after, IPOB vowed to impose a ban through the ESN unless the government gave all

governors in southeast Nigeria 14 days to do so.

The ESN, on the other hand, did not wait the required 14 days before attacking a Fulani camp in Isuikwuato, Abia State, demolishing their homes and murdering their animals. Following the raid, several governors heeded the ESN's call and declared open grazing illegal (Wikipedia Report). Although the ban on open grazing has reduced armed herdsmen attacks, Anambra's increased insecurity has made it difficult to fulfil Governor Willie Obiano's slogan, "Aku-rue Ulo," which approximately translates as "Investments of Anambra people should come home."

This economic philosophy was thought to be working since fresh investments from notable Anambra sons and daughters were sprouting up in various regions of the State and providing jobs for its citizens. However, reputable company investments can only prosper or flourish in a secure environment, and when this is not ensured, investors are more likely to go to another location (Onwuchekwe and Okoronta, 2022).

Community Policing:

Much academic research has been undertaken on community policing as a security strategy (crime control measures) and in response to logistic and security intelligence reports from community members. As a result, community policing is a policing method in which police officers collaborate with individuals to discover and resolve community issues. It is the consequence of conditions adopted by the police in search of a constructive strategy to reduce crime and enhance the quality of life in the area (Onuoha, Oli, & Ikezue, 2020).

Community policing as a concept was first formed in the United States in the 1960s to strengthen police-community connections and reduce crime fear (Cordner, 1999; Innes, 2003). It also offers a policing philosophy or crime control techniques based on the idea that neighbourhood cooperation and support may help control crime and lower fear, with neighbours assisting in the identification of suspects, the detention of vandals, and the reporting of issues to the police. Due to the ancient Igbo culture, for example, having this model in place where the age grades and masquerade society, among other tasks, discharged the job of law enforcement, community policing is neither exotic nor new to Africa (Okeke, 2013). Community policing in Nigeria, however, is based on the premise that there is a need for improved dialogue and comprehension between the people and the police. Community policing, according to Okeke (2013), is more successful in deterring crime and promoting more tolerant and liberal views toward offenders. He says that the community model of policing is not simply for uniform patrol or specific community policing units; rather, the potential advantages cannot be completely realized until there is general knowledge of that approach inside the police organization within the community.

The essence of community policing in Nigeria is also that police personnel must be a part of, not apart from, the communities they serve to fulfil the privileged position they occupy in society. In keeping with this, Siegel (2000) stated that rather than getting instructions from headquarters, local cops should be active in community decision-making.

It will combat crime and handle community concerns by bringing the police and the general people together.

The Nigerian Police Force's structural defect is caused by over-centralization, which is typical of the country's federal system.

It is a matter of controversy as calls to restructure Nigeria's federal system persist. Because of the way the police are organized, community policing is ineffective. State Governors do not give directions to state police commissioners; rather, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), who reports to the president, does so. The police's too-centralized organizational structure hinders its ability to engage with communities as it should. Despite more than 20 years of democratic governments, the police's present command structure was established by military governments before 1999 (Omole, 2020).

The nation-state's fundamental requirement for community policing is growing along with the problems posed by insecurity. As a result, the Western Security Network, also known as "Amotekun," was established in the southwest, the Eastern Security Network, a paramilitary branch of IPOB, was established, and the governors of the Southeastern United States established "Ebubeagu," in response to security concerns in the southeast. These are examples of community policing in action in response to security issues outside of the Nigerian police force's real field of responsibility.

Police Brutality:

Particularly in a nation that upholds democracy, police violence continues to be of concern since it runs against the principles of real democracy. The use of excessive and unreasonable force by law enforcement against a person or a group is referred to as police brutality. It is a grave breach of people's civil rights as well as an example of police misconduct.

Asphyxiation, beatings, killings, incorrect takedowns, and the unlawful use of Tasers are instances of police brutality, according to a 2023 Wikipedia report. Various police human rights violations have been labelled "police brutality" at times. This might include wrongful executions, torture, or the use of indiscriminate riot control methods during protests. In the worst-case scenario, unlawful use of force by law enforcement can result in a violation of a person's right to life. Torture or other forms of abuse may be regarded if the police force is disproportionate or unjustified. The use of unlawful force by law enforcement can violate the rights to equality, liberty, and security, as well as equal treatment under the law. When and how police can use force, particularly lethal force, international standards and conventions are fairly strict. The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (BPUFF) are the principal international treaties that govern police use of force.

International law states that police officers should never murder someone. This means that such force should be used only when it is necessary to defend oneself or others from imminent death or serious injury, and only when other de-escalation tactics are ineffective (Amnesty International, 2023). The Puppet Show magazine, a short-lived competitor to Punch, coined the phrase "police brutality" in Britain in the middle of the 19th century. They wrote:

They seldom commit an infraction that disgusts anybody besides the magistrates in a week. Boys are hurt by their aggressiveness, and ladies are offended by their roughness, yet when violence has been used, lying has been used to cover it up, and magisterial idiocy has gone unpunished. Additionally, one of our most "venerated institutions" is police violence. When the Chicago Tribune reported about the beating of a citizen who was being held at the Harrison Street Police Station, it was the first time the phrase had been used in American media (Wikipedia Report, 2023).

The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) demonstration in October 2022, with the hashtag #tag ENDSARS, was Nigeria's greatest historical outcry against police abuse. Nigerians feel deceived by the federal government when police killed innocent demonstrators, and the unlawful killings by police continued even after the rally.

In Nigeria, the continent's largest democracy, reports of police violence are commonplace. Two-thirds of its 200 million estimated residents are under the age of 30, and many of them have either personally dealt with police or know someone who has.

Beginning on October 8, 2020, young people all around the country went to the streets for days as the years of torture, deformity, and murder committed by the nation's security services accumulated. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a deviant police squad suspected of extrajudicial executions,

extortion, and kidnapping among other heinous acts, was the object of their rage. The demonstrations, which went by the hashtag #EndSARS, turned into a protracted push for the dissolution of the squad. On October 20 of that year, it went out after the military fired on unarmed protestors at the Lekki tollgates, a well-known landmark in Lagos's commercial centre.

Amnesty International reports that there were at least 12 fatalities and hundreds more injuries. The Nigerian military was judged to be responsible in a leaked report by an investigating panel appointed by the Lagos state administration, but the information was disregarded by the authorities (Aljazeera News Report, 2022).

Methodology

The majority of the study is qualitative. The study employed case study (document analysis) and exploratory research methodologies as a framework for data collection and analysis. The study focuses on Anambra State in the southeast geopolitical zone. The study relied on secondary data sources to arrive at its findings and conclusions, which included content analysis of news items, journal publications, web sources, reports from non-governmental organizations, and reports from the police public relations officer.

Theoretical Framework

Scholars have utilized several distinct theoretical frameworks to describe the problems of policing in Nigeria and worldwide as they strive to comprehend armed attacks on security officers and the sources of the weapons used in maintaining crime and violence. Some criminological theories have been used to explain the problem of police misbehaviour resulting in police brutality and violence against civilians.

This research, however, employs Karl Marx's conflict theory holistically, but especially from his sociological standpoint of conflict policing and police brutality, to investigate the problems of policing in light of attacks by separatist rebels.

The conflict hypothesis, first proposed by Karl Marx, holds that society is continuously at odds with one another for finite resources. Conflict theory holds that dominance and power, not agreement and compliance, maintain social order. According to conflict theory, wealthy and powerful people aim to maintain their dominance by whatever means necessary, most notably through oppressing the weak and defenceless.

The core idea of conflict theory is that individuals in society will struggle for the most money and power.

- It is possible to comprehend the four fundamental concepts of current conflict theory: competitiveness, revolution, structural injustice, and war. The following are the highlights:
Conflict theory focuses on the rivalry between social groupings over scarce resources.
- According to conflict theory, social and economic institutions serve as weapons in the class struggle to uphold inequality and the hegemony of the ruling class.
- According to the Marxist conflict theory, society is split along economic class lines, with the bourgeois ruling class and the proletariat working class.

Later modifications of conflict theory took into account the conflicts between several social, religious, and other types of organizations as well as different capitalist factions. Contrarily, conflict theory has made an effort to explain a wide range of social events, including wars, revolutions, poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence.

The majority of significant historical advances, including democracy and civil rights, are attributed to capitalist tactics to deceive the people rather than a desire for social order. The principles of social inequality, resource distribution, and conflicts between various socioeconomic strata form the foundation of conflict theory (Hayes, 2022). Conflict theory maintains that dominant groups in society utilize the law and its enforcement mechanisms to lessen risks to their interests posed by people they classify as dangerous, notably minorities and the poor, according to Petrocelli, Piquero, and Smith (2003). Marxist policing tactics consider the police to be an enemy force rather than an integral member of the community. This paradigm is supported by research from the 1980s when military-style police were visible in Northern Ireland and during the 1984–1985 miners' strike.

It also alludes to the fact that some neighbourhoods are designated as "no-go areas" for the police, so when they show up, they frequently arrive in huge numbers, armoured vehicles, or riot gear. This viewpoint contends that the police actively assist the ruling class while fighting against the interests of the working class they are charged with protecting. James Q. Wilson, Egon Bittner, Jerome H. Skolnick, Peter K. Manning, Herman Goldstein, Abraham Blumberg, and Arthur Niederhoffer were further conflict theorists in addition to Marx. In their journal articles, these scholars claimed that the police are a bureaucracy that serves as a tool of coercion.

They gathered evidence of previous and contemporary institutionalized police activity demonstrating their commitment to maintaining societal control through coercion and force. The researchers also provided evidence that, historically, the police have functioned to advance class interests in a capitalist economy. This is demonstrated by the use of force by police to disperse large-scale gatherings by individuals accusing the prevailing socioeconomic system of oppression. According to their research, some police operations are handled as agents of major political interests, undermining fair and democratic law enforcement (Das, 1983).

Theory Application

The issues of policing in Anambra state, namely southeast Nigeria, are best explained by conflict theory, which is based on Marx's sociological perspective of conflict policing and police brutality. Highlighting how the harsh repression of the ENDSARS demonstration worsened the public view of the Nigerian Police Force and how it increased operations of the separatist insurgency that resulted in the ongoing death of innocent police personnel. Marx's conflict theory is best understood in light of the conflict between the Nigerian Police Force, an agency that falls under the exclusive purview of the legislature and is thus subject to federal control, and the IPOB's Eastern Security Network operations in Anambra state and the entire southeast.

It is important to note that Article 2 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which states that Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is in direct conflict with IPOB's call for a referendum and full secession. Secession thus runs counter to the federal government's desire to preserve the integrity of Nigerian territory. As a result of the fighting, the security arrangement in the southeast has changed in many instances when IPOB's ESN engaged the Nigerian Police Force in armed combat. Consequently, it supports the conflict theory's underlying tenet of "competition and revolution."

However, Marx's sociological view on conflicting policing, which presents the police force as a repressive cohesive force that serves the interests of the ruling class, is the key component of Karl Marx's Conflict Theory that pertains to this research. During the ENDSARS demonstration in Nigeria and the Southeast, this was confirmed. What happened next was the violence of the NPF toward nonviolent, unarmed demonstrators. However, this led to the Separatist Insurgent IPOB believing that the NPF was a tool used to impose the interests of the ruling class and that confrontations and the murders of police

officers were an effort to fight oppression rather than an institution to uphold peace and social order. As a result, it may be inferred that the Separatist Insurgent Paramilitary ESN's armed strategic attacks on the NPF are based on the idea that they are being used as federal power to minimize the Public Interest Movement, which is more vital.

Discussion

It is impossible to assess the difficulties in police in Anambra State and the whole southeast in isolation from the difficulties in policing in the entire nation-state. However, this study focuses more on a few particular issues that make police in Anambra state difficult. It is necessary to first clarify that the centralization of police authority is the constitutional issue raised by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). Abah and Ofori (2019:30) claim:

The Nigerian centrally structured policing system has failed to achieve institutional unity, operational efficiency, and stability, making it hard to implement the ideals of justice, human life respect, and compassion for others in society. The politicization of the Nigerian police force has been proved to be a crucial cog in the machine of effective and efficient policing in Nigeria. Thus, the force has been impacted by the political climate in Nigeria, which has caused it to stray from its constitutional mission of safeguarding people and property in the nation and become nothing more than a weapon for advancing the political objectives of the ruling party. Decentralization is therefore necessary, and the persistent calls for the creation of state police are also due to the overbearing behaviour of senior officials in the Nigerian police as a result of the centralized power structure.

The discussion over restructuring and the need for community policing are direct responses to criticism of this concentration of power. The over-centralization of control, command, and operational systems and processes that characterized the operation of the Nigerian Police Force and the "one size fits all" approach to policing Nigeria has frequently been cited as obstacles to the achievement of the goal of security provisioning in the country by proponents of decentralization and restructuring in Nigeria. Decentralized policing will therefore necessitate cooperation and coordination between federal and federating unit authorities (Luqman and Oladejo, 2023). One of the key proponents of the agenda for the devolution of policing power and competence cut across all levels of Nigerian society to tackle the security challenge. When pushing for the formation of state police, former governor of Lagos State and current minister of labour and housing Babatunde Fashola was quoted as saying: Every state that has the authority to enact laws through its state legislature, state assembly, and high courts must also have the authority to enforce those laws and maintain public order (Aleyomi, 2013; referenced by Luqman and Oladejo, 2023).

This centralization issue has therefore led to the creation of community policing to aid in resolving security challenges in the southeast. However, the disregard for IPOB's proscription and ESN activities in defiance of the proscription may be used to assess the failure of policing in Anambra state and the broader southeast. Because of the conflict between ESN and Ebube Agu on the allegation that the eastern governors founded Ebube Agu to utilize it against the Secessionist Agenda of IPOB, the creation of "Ebube Agu" by the eastern governors and its improper institutionalization has made security problems in the southeast worse.

The proliferation of guns and the consequent increase in assaults by unknown shooters in the southeast state of Anambra were the main causative impacts. The fact that Anambra State, which controls one of Nigeria's major markets, has faced a difficult economic climate as a result of the divergence of IPOB's ESN and the activities of sympathizers is critical to this discussion.

Since Anambra State has been associated with separatist insurgent attacks, the IPOB's declaration of Monday as a "Sit-at-Home Day" to demand Nnamdi Kanu, the group's leader, be released has

significantly reduced trade activities in the state and the amount of business that other states and even nearby countries do business with Onitsha Main Market and Nnewi Market. The attack by IPOB supporters and other unidentified gunmen on security personnel implementing the sit-at-home order has increased unease. Panic and anxiety have been sparked by the burning of moving vehicles and the damage to businesses that disregarded the sit-at-home edict.

The IPOB's decision to declare Monday a "Sit-at-Home Day" to demand the release of Nnamdi Kanu, the group's leader, has significantly decreased trade activities in the state and the amount of business that other states and even nearby countries do with Onitsha Main Market and Nnewi Market. This is because Anambra State has been linked to separatist insurgent attacks. Unease has grown as a result of the attack on security officers enforcing the sit-at-home order by IPOB supporters and other unknown shooters. The destruction of companies that disobeyed the order to stay at home and the burning of moving automobiles have caused panic and worry.

Table 1

Date of attacks	Police Fatality	Locality	Local government area and state
8/1/2021	3 policemen died	Onueke Police station	Ezza South LGA, Ebonyi State
1/2/2021	1 policeman died	Omoba police station	Isiala Ngwa South, Abia State
4/2/2021	police state burnt	Police Div. Hqtrs Isu,	Onicha, Ebonyi State
5/2/2021	2 policemen died	Umulowo Police Division	Obowo LGA, Imo State
23/2/2021	2 policemen died	Abayi Divisional Police Headquarters Aba,	Abia State
25/2/2021	Police station burnt	Aboh Mbaise Divisional Police Headquarters,	Imo State
1/3/2021	Police station attacked	Iboko Div Police Station	Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State
9/3/2021	Police station burnt	Ihitte-Uboma LGA,	Imo State
18/3/2021	1 policeman died	Police Checkpoint Neni,	Anaocha LGA, Anambra state
19/3/2021	1 policeman died	Ekwulobia Police Station, Nanka,	Anambra State
22/3/2021	3 officers died	Abiriba Ohaofia LGA,	Abia State

Source: Luqman and Oladejo (2022) and authors' compilations.

The news reports of attacks on police stations and personnel between 2020 and 2022 in Anambra state and the southeast will be highlighted in the part that follows. A police officer was decapitated and burned to death by suspected hoodlums on Thursday during the #ENDSARS demonstration in Nnewi, Anambra State, according to The Nation News Report (Oct. 23, 2020). "On October 21, 2020, at around 11:30 p.m., hoodlums attacked Nnewi Police Station, set it on fire, and vandalized patrol vehicles and other exhibits under the guise of "ENDSARS" protesters. However, they were stopped from entering the armoury to take away weapons by the heavily armed police officers who were on duty. "In a similar manner, on October 22, 2020, between 3:30 am and 5 pm, a large group of hoodlums attacked the Nnewi Area Command, the 3-3 Division, the Ogbunike/Isiwulu, the Nnobi, and Itchy Divisions, as well as the Peoples Club Police Post. They burned police vehicles and set the facilities on fire while stealing exhibits that were kept at the Divisions. While three other officers suffered injuries of varying severity, one police officer was decapitated and burned to death. The wounded police officers were taken right away to the hospital for treatment, and they are doing well.

- The PM News Report (October 28, 2020) According to John Abang, the Anambra Commissioner of Police, "hoodlums burned 11 police stations, vandalized 6 and carted away motorcycles,

ammunitions, and other variables; 20 vehicles were razed, including an Armoured Personnel Carrier and Patrol Vehicles- these looting and wanton destruction of property was done by hoodlums under the guise of ENDSARS."

- The Cable News Network Report on January 8, 2023, it was reported that during the ENDSARS Protest in 2020, some suspected hoodlums set fire to the Umuchu Police Station in Aguata LGA, Anambra State.
- According to Sahara Reporters News Report (Feb. 20, 2023), on December 28, 2022, gunmen assaulted the police divisional headquarters in Ihiala LGA, Anambra State, with explosives.

According to Vanguard News Report (Feb. 18, 2023), the incident in June 2022 was highlighted after a similar incident of an attack on a police station happened in 2023. According to the report, in June 2022, gunmen attacked the Police Divisional Headquarters in Anaku, Anyamelum. While no one was killed in the event, three operational automobiles on the premises were set on fire. Furthermore, militants attacked a police roadblock in Aguata LGA in April 2022, wounding three officers.

According to a Daily Post News Report (November 8, 2022), gunmen stormed a police roadblock between the Ihiala-Uli axis in Ihiala LGA, Anambra state, at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, November 8, 2022. According to the Daily Post, all security officers disrobed and sought cover in nearby shrubbery and residences. The Onitsha-Owerri highway had been closed as of the time of writing. Anambra State Police Public Relations Officer Ikenga Tochukwu could not be reached for comment.

Table 2: Incidents of Gunmen Attacks on Police Stations in Southeast Nigeria in 2022, most cases suspected/attributed to IPOB's ESN.

Police Division/Station	Police fatality	State	Date Attacked
Isu Divisional headquarters	2 officers killed	Imo	20/2/2022
Ekwulobia police station	2 officers killed	Anambra	19/3/2022
Umuguma Div. Pol Hqtrs	2 officers killed	Imo	19/3/2022
Omuma Divisional headquarters	no casualty	Imo	20/3/2022
Otoko Divisional headquarters	no casualty	Imo	28/3/2022
Mbieri Divisional headquarters	no casualty	Imo	1/4/2022
Amichi Divisional headquarters	no casualty	Anambra	1/4/2022

Source: Daily Trust, 2022.

It is vital to highlight that the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has been noted to be psychologically and structurally remote from the people they are supposed to protect and does not share or become bound by the people's values, interests, and feelings. This situation stemmed from the Federal Police's colonial origins, which harmed the quality of those recruited into the force, as well as the type of training and orientation (brutal and oppressive) they received, all of which harmed how (negatively) they perceived and behaved toward people.

Nigerians were also distrustful of the police because of their bad opinion and treatment of them (Nwolise, 2012). In the same way, Nigeria's policing system has become political. Party politics hampered the formation of professional police units in the majority of Nigerian cities. Local political leaders recognized that controlling the police was a strategy for retaining political power while allowing criminal associates and political supporters to break the law with impunity (Idowe, 2013). This notion of inadequate training leading to severe brutality and police corruption exacerbated the ENDSARS Protest.

This must be overlooked while examining the recurring attacks on the NPF in Anambra state.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

The insurgent problem and policing problems in the southeast are just too many to be addressed in this study. However, certain key aspects are examined. If the federal and state governments continue to ignore the root reasons for insecurity in the region, the southeast of Nigeria, with Anambra state at the centre of this study, would gradually devolve into an ungoverned territory. A major remote reason is an inability to reconcile community policing, which has resulted in clashes and threats of clashes between the ESN and the Ebube-Agu Regional Security Networks, as well as poor institutionalization.

The police's legal/structural challenges, as well as their operations during the initial stage of the ENDSARS Protest, which met brutal resistance from police officers, were factors that escalated the Separatist Insurgent and unknown gunmen attacks to incapacitate the NPF in the region, as they are perceived as a federal government suppressive force. Anambra state's economic market and the southeast area are suffering as a result of insecurity. The IPOB's enforced sit-at-home disrupting economic activity is nothing more than self-immolation; and yet the Federal government anticipates a self-immolated result, which is nothing more than a fantasy.

The too-centralized police command structure has to be changed. The Nigerian Police Force needs a structural overhaul. Nigeria's inherited unitary and centralized structure is a holdover from colonial rule that is currently unproductive and must be abandoned. To perform successfully and efficiently, Nigerian police must be decentralized. Sections 214 and 215 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, which gave the president entire control over the police, must be rewritten for this to happen.

The police as an institution should be transferred from item 45 of Part 1 of the Second Schedule to the concurrent list in Part 2 of the Second Schedule to allow states to form state police within recognized criteria. As a result, adequate institutionalization of community police with suitable restrictions to avoid illegal use of force should be reflected. In addition, the Nigerian Police Force's security surveillance system in Anambra state, as well as the whole southeast, has to be improved. There should be technical advancements in security tracking systems, such as the use of drone technology and CCTV for surveillance, as well as the construction of a suitable database to monitor persons who have committed crimes and have a high likelihood of repeating such criminal activities.

Again, the police have significant challenges due to a lack of sufficient equipment and instruments. Personal guard tasks are performed by up to 40% of officers to safeguard so-called very important individuals (VIPs), who are public and private sector personalities. Regardless of the country's tiny police force, anybody who can afford to pay for their services is assigned to one. Due to a shortage of policemen, key policing activities face operational issues. As a result, this operational issue must be resolved.

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