ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF UNKNOWN GUNMEN IN THE SOUTH EAST

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Abstract

Research Problem: *The activities of Unknown Gunmen (UGM) in Nigeria's South-East region have led to loss of lives and properties, destruction of infrastructure and government facilities, posing a significant threat to the overall development of the region. Despite the severity of this security challenge, there is limited systematic documentation of its specific economic implications. This study addresses this gap by specifically examining the nature of UGM activities and their economic impacts on the South-East region.*

Methods/Theory: *The study used a qualitative research design, utilising documentary method and secondary sources including journals, newspapers, government documents, and reports. Data analysis was done thematically using logical reasoning. The study is anchored on Structural Functionalism Theory, which sees society as a system of interconnected parts whose dysfunction (like security failure) undermines overall stability and development.*

Results: *The research revealed that UGM activities had significant negative impacts on the economic development in the South-East, Nigeria; which include: disruption of business and commercial activities; high rate of poverty and reduction of household income; food insecurity and disruption of agricultural activities; disengagement of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); and substantial loss of government revenue.*

Conclusion: *The paper concludes that UGM activities have led a serious impediment to economic development in the South-East region. The security failure, viewed through the lens of Structural Functionalism, has destabilised the regional system by disrupting the economic subsystem that is essential for overall societal equilibrium and development.*

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *This paper contributes to the literature by providing systematic empirical evidence of the economic implications of UGM activities, including detailed tables showing attack patterns, business disruption data, and price increases of food items. In addition, the study advances understanding of the security-economy nexus in Nigeria's South-East and offers a comprehensive framework for analysing*

the relationship between insecurity and economic development.
Recommendations: *The paper recommends: strengthening of security agencies; identification and prosecution of sponsors of Unknown Gunmen; adoption of political solutions through dialogue with IPOB and stakeholders; implementation of effective community policing; respect for fundamental human rights in security operations; and promotion of good governance through equitable development policies to address grievances and marginalisation.*

1. Introduction

The attainment of sustainable development in any society depends largely on the existence of a secure environment in which people are protected from threats to their lives, properties, and general well-being. A high level of security therefore guarantees or provides the foundation necessary for promoting development across various sectors of society. This is because security is the pillar where every aspect of development can be realized and sustained (Austin-Egole et al, 2022a). That is why Stewart (2004 as cited in Austin-Egole et al, 2022a, p.1) noted that there is a relationship between security and development which involve three types of connection: (a) the immediate impact of security/insecurity on well-being and consequently development achievement (or how security forms part of the definition of development); (b) the way that insecurity affects (non-security) elements of development and economic growth or the security instrumental role; and (c) the way development affects security or the development instrumental role.

The concept of insecurity implies a situation of threat to lives and properties, existence of danger, hazard, uncertainty, crisis or violent conflict, lack of protection, food insecurity or scarcity, lack of basic needs of lives, instability etc. Insecurity in aspect of violent conflict undermines development of any state or society because it contributes to loss of infrastructure, undermines human development, lack of government revenue, loss of lives and properties, etc.

Provision of security is the reason for the emergence of state or government. Therefore, the main purpose of government is the security and welfare of the people. This warrants the government to establish and maintain several security forces or structures for realization of national defence and security (Onuoha & Egbo, 2022). For any government to be functional or any state termed as a strong state, it must possess the capability to effectively protect lives and properties of its citizens. That is why McGrew (1988 as cited in Austin-Egole et al, 2022, p. 2) posits that "the security of a nation hangs on two important pillars which are (1) maintenance and protection of the socio-economic order in the face of internal and external threats and (2) the promotion of a preferred international order, which minimizes the threat to core values and interests as well as to the domestic order."

The South-eastern Nigeria is one of the six geo-political zones of Nigeria which comprise of five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The South-east geo-political zone is the smallest geo-political zones in terms of land size, population and number of states (South-East Nigeria, 2024, Onuoha & Egbo, 2020). It has the land size of 29,388km2 and 11,347 sqmi with population of 16,395, 555 citizens (based on 2006 population census) which is currently estimated about 36,000,000 people, around 18% of Nigeria total population (South-East Nigeria, 2024; Onuoha & Egbo, 2022). Furthermore, it is bordered by River Niger on the west, Niger Delta on the south, North-central to the North and the

Cross-River on the east (South-East Nigeria, 2024). It is predominantly inhibited by Igbo speaking ethnic group. The economy of the South-East is mainly on agriculture, commercial and trading activities and home to several industrial and commercial hubs mainly in areas like Aba, Nnewi and Onitsha. However, this region has been in recent time confronted with security challenges.

Despite the security challenges in Nigeria, the South-Eastern Nigeria has been generally seen or referred as the most peaceful regions in Nigeria. However, in recent time, the South-Eastern Nigeria has been confronted with several security challenges that posed that are threat to national development. These challenges are: kidnapping; Fulani herdsmen attack or farmer-Fulani herdsmen clash/conflict; the clash between Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and security forces and recently the activities of the Unknown-Gunmen (UGM) (Ogunade et al, 2022). Record has shown that between January 2021 and June 2023, over 1,884 people were killed in the South-East region (Amnesty International, 2025). Among all these security challenges, the activities of Unknown-Gunmen have been the major concern to citizens and government of the state which has paralyzed the development and activities in the region.

The emergence of the Unknown-Gunmen (UGM) has created another dimension of security challenge in South-East Nigeria and Nigeria at large. The Unknown-Gunmen (UGM) activities can be traced or become dominant in public domain in the year 2021 when leader of IPOB was arrested which subsequently followed the sit-at-home order as a protest against the trial of its leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu (Ogunode et al., 2022; Onuoha & Egbo, 2022). However, the Unknown Gunmen has gone beyond IPOB security outfit (Eastern Security Network) to include unknown violent group either sponsored by politicians or government officials to achieve their political or selfish interest (Onuoha & Egbo, 2022). The Unknown Gunmen activities focus on destruction of infrastructure, attack on security forces and government infrastructure or facilities, kidnapping and assassination of government officials, sporadic shootings and prison break. Furthermore, Mmahi and Sarkinnoma (2025) noted that the tactics of Unknown Gunmen include random shooting, kidnapping, mutilation, jailbreak and homicides. These activities pose much sense of worries to the inhabitants of South-East, Nigeria which is a threat to all aspect of development.

While some researches by Onuoha and Egbo (2022), Nwangwu (2023), and Akinyetun et al. (2023) have examined the emergence and nature of UGM activities, and while others like Austin-Egole et al. (2022a) and Obioji (2024) have explored the socio-economic impacts of insecurity in specific areas, there remains a gap in systematic documentation of the comprehensive economic implications of UGM activities across the entire South-East region. Specifically, existing studies have not provided detailed empirical evidence of the magnitude of economic losses, the disruption of business activities, the impact on food security, and the loss of government revenue across all five South-East states. This study addresses this gap by providing systematic documentation of UGM attacks and their economic consequences from 2021 to 2025." The central research problem this study tends to addresses is: what is the nature of Unknown Gunmen activities in Nigeria's South-East region, and how have these activities undermined the region's economic development? To address this gap, the study pursues three specific objectives:

i. To identify several notable attacks of Unknown Gunmen in the South-East.

ii. To examine the impact of Unknown Gunmen activities on economic development in the South-East Nigeria

iii. To proffer suitable measures to adequately address the security challenge of Unknown Gunmen in the South-East Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Security

The concept of security can be defined in several ways. Security can be defined as protection against war, violence and danger. It can also mean the presence of peace. Security is a situation where peoples' lives and properties are protected against any attack, danger or harm. "Security is the absence of threats to stability, national cohesion, peace and development" (Ijioma & Ibeh, 2023, p. 98). In addition, Igbuzor (2011 as cited in Ikyase & Namo, 2018, p. 162) defined security as "the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions."

Okolie and Nnamani (2017) explained that in objective sense security means safety from threats, anxiety and danger, while in subjective and psychological sense, security implies the extent of absence of fear that threat, anxiety or danger will occur. According to Nwolise (2006 as cited in Austin-Egole et al, 2022a)

> Security is a comprehensive condition that recommends: the safety of a territory by a network of armed forces; the sovereignty of the state which must be assured by a democratic and nationalistic government and protected by the military, police and the people themselves; safety of the people from not only external attacks but also from catastrophic consequences of domestic disruptions such as hunger, unemployment, starvation, homelessness, ignorance, diseases, environmental degradation, pollution and other socio-economic injustices (p. 43).

Ogugua and Okoli (2023) posit that definition of security is approached from two aspects namely: contemporary and traditional. The contemporary aspect of security sees security as everything as security matter, while the traditional aspect, looks at state actors and their military capabilities towards realizing national security. Based on the contemporary approach, security involves five dimensions: human, environment, national, transnational and trans-cultural security (Ogugua & Okoli, 2023). Furthermore, Ikyase and Namo (2018, p. 163) view security as "stability and continuity of livelihood (stable and steady income), predictability of daily life (knowing what to expect), protection from crime (feeling safe), and freedom from psychological harm (safety or protection from emotional stress)."

In this paper, we see security as a situation where the lives and properties of citizens or people in a locality are protected from danger or attacks, where infrastructures are protected and citizens are from psychological harm or fear.

Insecurity

Insecurity means a situation where there is threat to lives and properties. According to Onuoha (2022 as cited in Onuoha & Egbo, 2022) insecurity "is the outbreak, prevalence or persistence of man-made or natural events, forces and activities that portends to undermine order, stability, safety and security of individual, community, corporate, national, regional, continental and global levels" (p.85). Insecurity can also mean feeling of anxiety or fear, situation of not being protected, absence of safety, presence of danger, harm, hazard, violation of human rights. Furthermore, Belard (2005 as cited in Austin-Egole et al, 2022a, p. 4) sees insecurity as the "state of fear or anger, or anxiety due to the absence of or lack of

protection of lives and properties. Insecurity is a feeling of fear of the unknown and also being unable to protect the lives and properties of the citizens." In addition, insecurity can mean a situation of violent conflict or war, danger, hazards etc that pose challenge to lives, properties and physical infrastructure.

Onuoha et al. (2020) see insecurity from two perspectives namely: (i) insecurity as the state of being open to danger or threat of danger which is susceptible to harm and injury. (ii) insecurity as state of being exposed to risk or anxiety where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced. In addition, Austin-Egole et al (2022a) characterized insecurity as lack of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, state of doubt, instability, etc. Omonijo et al. (2017 as cited in Austin-Egole et al, 2022a) view the sources of insecurity to include (1) violent conflict – homicide, law breaking, massacre, confrontation, assassination, terrorism etc and (2) non-violent conflict which involves food insecurity, economy, health, personal, community, political and environmental insecurity.

Unknown Gunmen

The concept of Unknown Gunmen is difficult to conceptualize or define as a result of the perspectives of school of thought regards its creation or emergence. One school of thought sees UGM as IPOB creation, another sees UGM as government creation while and other school of thought view UGM as politicians' creation (Onuoha & Egbo, 2022). The Unknown Gunmen can be seen as sectional violence taking place in the south-east of Nigeria (Akinyetun et al, 2023). According to former governor of Ebonyi state, Dave Umahi (cited in Akinyetun et al, 2023, p.18) "the Unknown Gunmen are not really Unknown Gunmen, they are our young men and women who will defend our land tomorrow." Furthermore, Akinyetun et al. (2023, p.19) see Unknown Gunmen as "criminal elements without clear objectives but with the penchant to cause mayhem and threaten national security." This is collaborated with the statement by Anambra state governor, Charles Soludo that Unknown Gunmen are not known as they claimed to be but yet to be exposed because they were being pampered by landlords and other stakeholders" (Akinyetun et al, 2023, p.19).

According to Onyishi et al. (2023) the Unknown Gunmen are unidentified gunmen that attacks and focuses more on government structures and employees. Furthermore, Onyema and Princewill (2023, p. 268) viewed that the term Unknown Gunmen is such "as form of politicized violence used by ideological groups, political elites and criminal elements in order to achieve their political and social objectives .... is an element of psychological terror as people are yet to fathom the ideological leaning of these dare-devil in the south-east region." Unknown gunmen could also represent enigmatic or anonymous individuals who carry out actions with unclear motives or purposes (Ilodigwe & Uzor, 2024). According to Nwangwu (2022 as cited in Ilodigwe & Uzor, 2024)

Unknown gunmen refer to individuals who carry out violent actions, such as assassinations or acts of terrorism, for political or ideological motives. Their identities and affiliations may be unknown to the public or difficult to ascertain, making them "unknown" in the context of their motives (p. 140).

In this study, we see the Unknown Gunmen as violent or armed group that are not identified which are either linked to IPOB, sponsored by government officials and politicians with the major intention to attack security agencies and government officials or politician and destroy government infrastructures. This action posed a threat or psychological fear on the inhabitants. The Unknown Gunmen uses the tactics of sporadic shooting, abduction, arson, maiming, jailbreak

and extrajudicial killing (Akinyetun et al., 2023).

2.2 Empirical Review

In this section, we reviewed some empirical studies related to the study. Ilodigwe and Uzor (2024) examine the effect of the activities of UGM on the profitability and growth of large, medium, small and micro businesses with focus in Onitsha main market, Anambra state. The study utilized both questionnaire and interview for data collection; the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage) and thematic analysis. The study revealed that the activities of UGM have negative impact on the growth of businesses and led to decrease in profit of the large, medium, small and micro businesses in Onitsha main market.

The study conducted by Ejirefe et al. (2026) examined the impact of insecurity on socio-economic development in North-East and South-East. The study utilized the secondary sources of data for gathering data; and the thematic analysis was used for data analysis. The study revealed that the activities of terrorist groups in the North East and insecurity (mainly IPOB) in the South East have undermined the socio-economic development of both regions. This is evident destruction of properties, poor quality of education, reduction of business activities and increase in poverty. The study recommends strengthening of security agencies and constructive dialogue.

In another research, Obilor and Awogu (2024) studied the activities of the UGM and market women in Orlu local government, Imo State, Nigeria with emphasis on socio-economic impact. The data were collected through questionnaire; and the data were analyzed using percentage method. The study observed that the activities of UGM has negatively affected the socio-economic activities of market women in selected towns of Orlu local government. Also, the found out that lack of information, inadequate response by security agencies, lack of public support, poverty etc are factors undermining the fight against UGM. The study suggested for collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations for eradication of poverty and unemployment.

Chimezie (2025) looked at the insecurity challenges in the Southeast Nigeria with particular reference to IPOB and the UGM activities. With the adoption of qualitative research approach, the study revealed that grievances experienced by the people have contributed to the increase in insecurity in the South East region. In addition, the activities of IPOB and UGM have contribute to food insecurity, loss of lives and properties, decline in economic activities, increased security spending and emergence of non-state actors and erosion of state authority. The study recommended for constitutional review, promotion of economic equity and establishment of regional security platform.

Austin-Egole et al (2022a) examined insecurity and the pauperization of residents of Owerri in Imo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design and utilized questionnaires and interviews for data collection. The study covered Owerri Municipal, Owerri North, and Owerri West Local Government Areas. The research employed simple percentages to analyze the descriptive data and the chi-square statistic to test the hypothesis. Also, the thematic analysis was used for the analysis of data generated from interview. The findings revealed that insecurity adversely affected economic activities in Owerri, and insecurity negatively affected their income earnings. Furthermore, insecurity contributed to increases in commodity prices, which reduces purchasing power and worsening the living conditions of the residents. The chi-square result (χ^2 = 366.15, df = 4) led the researchers to reject the

null hypothesis and conclude that insecurity significantly causes the pauperization of residents of Owerri. The researchers recommended that government should address insecurity and poverty simultaneously, strengthen dialogue and conflict-resolution mechanisms, and engage scholars, security experts, and other relevant stakeholders in developing sustainable solutions. The study therefore established that insecurity and poverty have a cyclical relationship, whereby insecurity reduces economic opportunities and incomes, while poverty and deprivation can in turn contribute to further insecurity.

Austin-Egole et al. (2022b) examine the insecurity and the socio-economic living standard of residents in Orlu, Imo state, Nigeria. The study aimed to investigate the nature and consequences of rising insecurity, and its impact on the socio-economic living standards of the residents of Orlu, Imo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design, collecting primary data through questionnaires and interviews administered to residents in Orlu. The data were analyzed using simple percentages, and hypotheses were tested using Chi-Square analysis. The study revealed that severe insecurity adversely impacted the living standards of the local population in Orlu. Also, insecurity led to the closure of businesses, cessation of open-market operations, loss of household income, and hindered access to basic healthcare, education, and overall human capacity development.

Another empirical study was conducted by the Amnesty International (2025), which studied the attacks and unlawful killings in the South Eastern Nigeria. The study collected data through interview and secondary sources like articles and official documents. The study revealed that the UGM are prevalent in the conduct of random assaults across the South East as opposed to a coordinated and calculated attacks; the enforcement of sit-at-home order has led to human rights abuses; and the several attacks by the UGM, Cult groups, IPOB etc. on security agencies and residents have led to dead of thousand of people in the region.

Obona (2023) examined the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Sit-at-Home Order and its Socio-Economic Implications on South East Nigeria with focus on Ebonyi State. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to select six communities from three Local Government Areas representing the three senatorial zones of Ebonyi State. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed by utilizing percentages and Chi-square statistics. The study revealed that the IPOB sit-at-home order had significant negative effects on farming, commercial and social activities in Ebonyi State. The study recommended for effective engagement of dialogue with the different groups and factions of IPOB to understand the socio-economic consequences of the sit-at-home order and encourage its cancellation.

The study by Asogwa and Ochie (2023) adopted a survey design covering the five Southeast states. Data were gathered by using the questionnaire instrument. The data were analysed using percentages, mean, standard deviation and chi-square. The findings revealed that the sit-at-home order had a negative effect on productive assets and economic activities and FDI in the region. The study further established that insecurity, fear, restrictions on movement and destruction of property had discouraged traders, customers and investors from conducting business in the region. The study recommended that government become more responsive and proactive in security issues, mainly through improved intelligence gathering and timely security intervention.

3. Materials and Methods

The study utilized the qualitative research design. Data were collected through documentary method by relying on secondary sources like journals, newspapers/magazines, government documents etc. The data sourced were selected based on the following criteria: (i) publication date from 2015 to 2025 to reflect pre-UGM baseline and the UGM period; (ii) geographic focus on Nigeria's South-East region (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo states); (iii) thematic discussion of UGM activities and economic implications; and (iv) publication in peer-reviewed journals, government documents, reputable newspapers, or institutional reports.

The data were analyzed qualitatively using thematic method and logical reasoning. Thematic analysis was conducted with the following steps: (i) familiarisation with the data through repeated reading and careful examination of sources gathered for the study; (ii) initial codes were generated from recurring issues and patterns identified in the data, including attacks on security personnel and facilities, destruction of public infrastructure, disruption of business activities, food insecurity, and loss of government revenue (iii) the identified codes were organized into broader analytical themes that reflected the major objectives of the study, mainly the nature and activities of Unknown Gunmen (UGM), and their economic implications. (iv) reviewing themes against the data to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness; (v) defining and naming themes; and (vi) the themes were integrated into a coherent narrative analysis, through which the findings were interpreted in relation to the objectives of the study.

The scope of the study is based on geography and time frame. The geographical scope of the study is limited to the five states that constitute the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, namely Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. In terms of temporal coverage, the study focuses on the period from 2021 to 2025. This period is considered relevant because it corresponds with the intensification and widespread manifestation of activities of Unknown Gunmen across various parts of the South-East during the period under investigation.

4. Theoretical Framework

This research adopted the structural functionalism theory as the framework for analysis.

Structural Functionalism Theory

The theory of structural functionalism is traced to the works of August Comte and was expanded by Durkheim who view society as an organism, a system of action which involves parts of the system that interact (Ijioma et al, 2022; Akankpo et al., 2024). The structural functionalist theory maintained that society is a system that consists of several parts or subsystems that have roles or functions to play for the maintenance of equilibrium and stability. Furthermore, the failure of one subsystem or parts to function effectively or dysfunctioning of one subsystem will undermine the stability and equilibrium of whole parts or systems. This approach views security as a complex system whose parts of subsystem work together to promote solidarity and stability (Ijioma et al, 2022).

This theory has the following tenets or assumptions:

i. Society is made up of interconnected parts

ii. The interconnected parts have role to play for the stability and equilibrium of the society.

iii. The interconnected parts work together to maintain balance or social equilibrium.

iv. Each part influences and is influenced by other parts.

v. The elements/parts of the society are functional if they contribute to social stability and dysfunctional if they undermine social stability.

vi. Each part cannot be understood in isolation until it is explained in relation to other parts (Onyekwere & Azubuike, 2021).

Application of the theory to the study

This theory is relevant for this study because it will help us to explain that the failure of security which is part or element of the system in Nigeria and South-east Nigeria in particular has undermine the stability and equilibrium in South-east Nigeria. Nigeria and Southeast geo-political zone is a system that has several subsystem or elements like: security, economy, political, educational etc elements which have functions or roles for the development or stability of the region. Therefore, the failure of each subsystem to perform its functions will destabilize the south-east region.

The south-east region of Nigeria has witnessed security failures or challenges most especially the emergence of Unknown Gunmen. The inability of government to prevent the activities of Unknown Gunmen has posed a threat to the survival or stability of the region. The Unknown Gunmen activities have contributed to loss of lives and properties, undermined economic or commercial activities, food security, contribute to poverty and posed a challenge to general development of the region.

This study draws on Structural Functionalism to explain the systemic consequences of security failure, but also incorporates insights from political economy to understand the interests that sustain UGM activities. In the South-East context, the dysfunction of the security subsystem is not merely accidental; it is sustained by the interests of politicians who benefit from instability, government officials who may be complicit, and the economic opportunities created by violence. Addressing the UGM challenge therefore requires not just strengthening security but also addressing the political and economic incentives that sustain insecurity.

5. Perspectives on Emergence of Unknown Gunmen in the South-East Nigeria

The Unknown-Gunmen (UGM) activities became dominant in public domain in the year 2021 when leader of IPOB was arrested which subsequently followed the sit-at-home order as a protest against the trial of its leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu (Ogunode et al., 2022; Onuoha & Egbo, 2022).

The emergence of unknown gunmen in the South-East has been a subject of debate. There are three perspectives that explain the emergence and continued operations of UGM which are: Government creature, IPOB creature and Politician creature (Onuoha & Egbo, 2022). Looking at the Government creature of Unknown Gunmen, this perspective maintained that the UGM is created or formed by Nigerian government or security agencies to denigrate and implicate IPOB. According to Akpan (2021 as cited in Onuoha & Egbo, 2022)

> The unknown gunmen were a creation of the Nigeria security agencies. All destruction in our territory (Biafra land) was politically motivated and carried out by security agents recruited and nicknamed unknown gunmen are DSS personnel, army and public personnel set up to implicate IPOB and ESN (p. 91)

This school of thought sees the operation of Unknown Gunmen as sponsored by government officials and the evidence to this

claim was the incidence of the invasion of correctional centre in Owerri Imo State by Unknown Gunmen on 5th April 2021 where 1,844 inmates were released. The operation was successful as a result of the poor or inability of Nigeria security forces to respond while actually located very close to the correctional centre. The UGM operated for about two hours without response from security officials despite that the Imo State Government House, Nigeria Police Command are very close (about 200 metres) to the incidence (Onuoha & Egbo, 2022).

In aspect of IPOB creations, this perspective hold that the emergence of UGM is traced to when IPOB established its security outfit/wing called Eastern Security Network (ESN) on December 12, 2020. IPOB claimed that the formation of ESN was to protect the inhabitant of South-Eastern Nigeria against Fulani or armed herders' attacks. This perspective sees the UGM as part of the ESN that was formed by IPOB. The formation of ESN necessitated the response of Nigerian government by deploying the security forces (military) to invade some forests in the South-East where ESN members were alleged to be camping (Nwangwu, 2022). This led to conflict or violent clash between the ESN and Nigerian military in which several lives were lost and billions of naira worth of properties destroyed (Nwangwu, 2022). After the clash between ESN and Nigeria military/security forces, the South-Eastern states experienced several attacks by unidentified gunmen known as Unknown Gunmen. Based on this, the school of thought now see Unknown Gunmen as a part of the ESN created by IPOB which has been responsible for destruction of government facilities, attack on security forces and government official and citizens. However, the IPOB has denied the allegation that IPOB has link with the unidentified Gunmen (Onuoha & Egbo, 2022).

Based on the perspective on politician creature of UGM, the school of thought claims that the emergence or rise of UGM was caused or formed by some political masters entangled in unconscionable power struggle or political war in order to achieve their selfish interest. The typical example is the case or incidence in Imo State and Anambra State (Onuoha & Egbo, 2022). This is in line with the statement of Duru et al. (2021 as cited in Onuoha & Egbo, 2022)

> In Owerri recently, the Police fought with some gunmen and killed one of them only to discover that the person they killed was a DSS officer and not IPOB. Remember Owerri prison affair where those who wanted to blame IPOB changed their mind and said 70 percent of the people were not from the South-East (p.92)

According to Ijeoma et al. (2022, p.107)

> This was preceded by the internal wrangling in the APC between former Governor Rochas Okorocha and the current governor, Hope Uzodimma on who had stronger claim to flag-of the party. This made the nature of insecurity more dangerous. In fact, the high point of insecurity was the nefarious activities of the unknown gunmen allegedly sponsored by the political key actors. This was obvious in the unprecedented attacks on the Police Headquarters and Correctional Centre in Owerri...

The above statements indicate that the concept of unknown gunmen is not only as a result of the IPOB creation, it also can be explained as caused by the creation of government and politicians. The three perspectives on UGM emergence are not mutually exclusive. It is possible that UGM activities are sustained by a combination of IPOB-affiliated elements, government-sponsored actors seeking to discredit IPOB, and politicians using violence for electoral or

commercial advantage. These perspectives help explain why UGM activities have proven so difficult to address: the phenomenon is not a single entity but a collection of actors with different motivations and sponsors.

6. Notable Attacks of Unknown Gunmen in the South-east region of Nigeria

The total number of people killed, infrastructures and properties destroyed by the UGM in the South east is difficult to identify and most of the victims may never get justice (Ugwu, 2023). The table below shows some of the attacks or operations carried out by the UGM in the South east region of Nigeria from 2021 to 2024

Table 1: Selected Attacks by Unknown Gunmen from 2021 to 2024

Year	State	Number of Incidences / Attacks	Number of Dead	Number Injured	Number of Abduction
2021	Abia	11	17	Nil	Nil
	Anambra	8	7	2	2
	Ebonyi	7	13	Nil	Nil
	Enugu	7	14	Nil	Nil
	Imo	12	11	12	Nil
2022	Abia	6	10	4	12
	Anambra	9	28	Many, Not Specified	3
	Ebonyi	6	13	Nil	Nil
	Enugu	4	7	Nil	Nil
	Imo	17	43	6	1
2023	Abia	6	9	Nil	9
	Anambra	9	33	Many Not Specified	16
	Ebonyi	1	Nil	1	Nil
	Enugu	6	7	Nil	Nil
	Imo	22	45	6	22
2024	Abia	4	22	1	Nil
	Anambra	11	59	Nil	Nil
	Ebonyi	1	1	Nil	Nil
	Enugu	3	7	Nil	Nil
	Imo	14	41	Nil	6

Source: Ugwu (2024); Obianeri (2024); Nwangwu (2022); Ugwuoke (2023); Onyema and Princewill (2023); Ugwu (2023); Ihegwuruike (2024), Amnesty International (2025), Adeniyi (2025) and Compiled by the Author

Note: See the appendix for detailed information.

From the above table, it shows that despite the efforts of government to counter insecurity, the UGM still carries out good number of successful attacks in the South eastern Nigeria. According to Ugwu (2024) like in other years in recent times the deadly attack in 2023 did not reduce in the South east despite the responses by Nigerian Security agencies.

From the above table, Imo State recorded the highest number of incidents, with attacks occurring every year from 2021 to 2024. It

recorded high incident in 2022 (17), 2023 (22), and 2024 (14). The table indicates 22 incidents for Imo in 2023, including killings, abductions and attacks on public facilities. In addition, Anambra State recorded the highest number of deaths in 2024, with at least 59 recorded deaths from the listed incidents. Several attacks occurred in October 2024, including incidents involving 10, 16, 6 and 3 deaths.

Furthermore, Imo had substantial abduction incidents, particularly in 2023, when the table records 19 ad-hoc INEC staff abducted, two operators abducted, and a traditional ruler kidnapped and killed, among others. Destruction of facilities and properties were particularly prominent in Abia, Imo and Ebonyi. Examples include the burning of police stations and government offices, houses, vehicles, markets and palaces.

The above table reveals several patterns:

(i) All five South-East states have been affected, but Imo and Anambra states appear to have experienced the highest number of attacks. The data therefore indicate that Imo and Anambra were the most severely affected states in terms of recorded fatalities during the later years, while Abia and Imo experienced substantial abduction incidents, particularly in 2022–2023. Ebonyi experienced particularly notable physical destruction in 2021, while destruction of public institutions, police facilities, markets, houses, vehicles and other properties continued throughout the period. Top of Form

(ii) The methods used by the UGM include sporadic shootings, arson, kidnapping, jailbreak, and extrajudicial killings (See the appendix below)

(iii) The attacks have resulted in significant loss of lives, with the above table recording 387 deaths. This is in support of report by Amnesty International (2025) documenting over 1,884 deaths between January 2021 and June 2023.

7. Economic implications of Unknown Gunmen activities in the South-East Nigeria

The activities of Unknown Gunmen have posed strong challenge to the development of south-east region. The economic impacts of the activities of Unknown Gunmen in the south-east region are as follows:

i. Poverty/Low Income: The activities of the Unknown Gunmen posed a challenge to the income level of its citizens which leads to high rate of poverty level (Ogba et al, 2023; Ibekwe, 2024). The enforcement of sit-at-home and attacks on citizens most times frustrate the inhabitant to engage in business or commercial activities thereby reducing their access to income. The research conducted by Asogwa and Ochie (2023) indicated that 78% and 21% of the respondents they studied viewed that the sit-at-home order reduces households income level in the south-east region. In addition, Austin-Egole et al (2022b) conducted a study on insecurity and the socio-economic living standard of people in Orlu, Imo State, Nigeria. It revealed that 92.1% of the respondents agreed that insecurity/security challenge has adversely affected the income. According to a respondent interviewed “No market opens on Mondays so we do not earn any kind of income on Mondays. This has affected our business money because we still cater for our needs with them even on those days we don’t make an earning from sales” (cited in Austin-Egole et al, 2022b, p.12).

In another research by Austin-Egole et al. (2022a) interviewed an Akara seller in Owerri West LGA, Nigeria who stated that “due to insecurity situation, I no longer do business in the evenings because as early as 6pm you hardly find anyone on the streets ... This has greatly affected my daily earning, causing me to eat into my business money and living in a very poor state.” Furthermore, Alozie (2021 as cited in Austin-Egole, 2022a) observed the area of Okporo Orlu, Imo State, Nigeria, noted

that about 20 shops were destroyed as a result of insecurity which has undermined the means of earnings of the inhabitants/people. Furthermore, the empirical study conducted by Obilor and Awogu (2024) revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that the activities of UGM has increased the rate of poverty among market women in Imo State.

ii. Challenge to Business/Commercial Activities: The activities of the Unknown Gunmen through its attacks and forcing of the sit-at-home order has gone a long way to cripple or disrupt the business/commercial operations in the south-east regions (Anazado et al, 2023; Chukuwu et al, 2023; Obona, 2023; Obilor & Awogu, 2024; Obioji, 2024; Ilodigwe & Uzor, 2024). Disruption of the business or commercial activities has not only undermined the operations of business but also cripple their level of revenue generation leading to losses in business in the region. The research conducted by Chukuwu et al. (2023) revealed that majority of the respondents or people viewed that the insecurity and sit-at-home has undermined economic/business activities in area of transportation, hospitality industry, artisans, blue-collar formal sector workers, white-collar formal sector workers etc. According to a respondent interviewed by the Austin-Egole et al. (2022b):

> Every Monday since June of this year (2021) has been observed as mandatory IPOB stay at home. No business activity takes place on those days. The whole place seems like a dead zone without any human or vehicular movements. Businesses that attempted to open on those days have had their business attacked and burnt off. On some other days that we venture out to do our businesses, we encounter shoot-outs between "Unknown Gunmen" and the security operatives which leaves us running for safety... (p. 50).

Furthermore, Anazodo et al (2023) identified the business experiences of some Rental services in Imo, Enugu and Anambra state. The study shows that the Rental services have declined in their business operation since the emergence of Unknown Gunmen. The business experiences of some rental services from 2019-2022 are seen in the table below:

Table 2: Business activities of some Rental services from 2019-2022

S/N	Name of Rental Services	Total no of days rental activities were carried out	2019	2021	2022
1	Mama Muna Nnobi	218	218	148	77
2	Exceptional Awka	218	200	120	40
3	Frank Pat Onitsha	218	205	110	67
4	Cally P Atta Njaba	218	212	180	32
5	Akudo Rental Nenwi Enugu	218	210	114	32

Source: Anazodo et al (2023)

The above table shows that in 2019, all the identified rental services operated fully but experienced decline in operations in 2021 (which is the year Unknown Gunmen and sit-at-home order started) and further experienced huge and worse decline in operations/services in 2022.

In addition, it is evident that some major transport companies like ABC Transport Ltd, The Young Shall Grow Transports, God is Good Transport, Peace Mass and other large scale business like Dangote Group of Companies, banking sectors, eateries etc. have been compelled not to function on Monday or risk being attacked by IPOB and Unknown Gunmen (Okoroafor et al, 2023). According to Okoroafor et al (2023, pp. 22-23)

> The fear generated by this supposed vicious order cannot be over-emphasized. In fact, it is now no longer fear but extreme phobia, which has crippled inter-city movements and hampered trade, commerce and human interaction significantly. Markets and places of exchange of goods and services have been shut down or attacked as a result of enforcing the sit-at-home order... Many private transporters have been attacked enroute to major cities where people do businesses, including along Owerri-Onitsha route, Aba-Owerri, Enugu-Abakaliki Owerri-Umuahia and Okigwe axis.

The above is in collaboration with the view of Okoroafor and Nwokorobia (2023) that intra-city and inter-city movement of business people, transporters, artisans, commuters etc. has drastically reduced leading to shut down of some business and partial operation of some business which is a challenge to economic progress in the south-east region. In addition, the study conducted by Ilodigwe and Uzor (2024) revealed that the activities of the UGM have perceived negative impact on the growth and profitability of large, medium, small and micro business in Onitsha Main market, Anambra state, Nigeria. One of the respondents interviewed stated that "it is very clear that the impact of UGM activities is hurting businesses in Anambra State. The rate at which people carry out their business activities is high affected by the activities of these people and their activities have also hindered a lot of business that would have sprung up" (Ilodigwe & Uzor, 2024, p. 149). Boniface (2025, p. 13) also stated that "the consistent pattern of market closures, extortion, and public fear attributable to unknown gunmen strongly supports negative effects on trade, small businesses, and regional economic viability."

The disruption of business and commercial activities has contributed to loss of revenue of business in the affected areas. According to Trade Union leader in Anambra state, Chief Nwankwo, we lose an average of N25 billion in Onitsha and I believe we also lose a lot in Aba, Nnewi and other cities (Mbanusi, 2023). Furthermore, it was revealed that the insecurity and sit-at-home order have made the customers of businessmen or traders to divert businesses to Lagos for fear of being attacked by IPOB or Unknown Gunmen (Mbanusi, 2023). In similar vein, it shows that the south-east region experiences significant losses on Mondays which is estimated trading loss of N700 billion to N3 trillion and also revealed that transporters lose about N10 billion for each sit-at-home (Ogba et al., 2023). Furthermore, it indicated that artisans lost between N655 billion and N3.8 trillion within 24 months (Mbanusi, 2023). Also, the study of Obioji (2024) noted that the UGM activities have led to closure of businesses and relocation of businesses out of the South East. A respondent interviewed in the study of Ilodigwe and Uzor (2024) viewed that:

> The countless sit-at-homes and weekly Monday sit at homes with heavy threats around it has contributed to great losses in business in Onitsha main market. Losing a whole day in one of the biggest markets in Africa is a big deal and the loss traders incure as a result of these sit-at-homes and fear of UGM have really affected the overall income of the market (p. 152).

iii. Issues of Food Insecurity: The security challenge by the activities of Unknown Gunmen has contributed to the food insecurity in the southeast region of Nigeria (Obioji, 2024; Alita, 2023; Mbanusi, 2023; Austin-Egole, 2022). The security challenges (as a result of threat to comply sit-at-home and attacks on lives and properties) had led to closure or late opening of markets, businesses and commercial activities. This incidence makes farmers and businessmen to find it difficult to access goods and agricultural

products leading to high rate of prices of goods and services in the region. The activities of Unknown Gunmen towards enforcing sit-at-home order have contributes to food insecurity in area of disruption of supply chain, market closure, reduction of agricultural productivity, increase in food prices and challenges in food storage and preservation in the southeast region (Alita, 2023). Furthermore, the study of Alita (2023) in Ebonyi State from 2020 to 2022 revealed that since the insecurity situation most especially the forceful enforcement of sit-at-home had led to increase in prices of major food items in Ebonyi State. Below are the prices of major food items before and during the forceful enforcement of sit-at-home order in Ebonyi State.

Table 3: Prices of major food items from 2020 to 2022

S/N	Food Items	2020	2021	2022	Percentage increase between 2021-2022
1	1kg of Tomato	N215	N342.25	N445.12	30%
2	1kg of Rice	N225	N417.00	N519.22	14%
3	1kg of Beans	N180	N397.04	N789.74	13.14%
4	1kg of Beef	N1,100	N1,768.14.25	N2,199.37	24.39%
5	1kg of Palm oil	N320	N709.50	N927.34	30%
6	Vegetable Oil	N650	N812.94	N1,073.39	32.35%

Source: Alita (2023).

The above table implies that as the emergence of Unknown Gunmen in the southeast and its enforcement of sit-at-home order, has contributes to rises of food items. The rise of attack or threat by Unknown Gunmen, the higher the food insecurity and prices in the region. Furthermore, the research conducted by Obona (2023) observed that there were significant negative impacts of sit-at-home order on agricultural activities in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This was evident where 46.75% and 41.56% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that insecurity has significant effect on agricultural activities in Ebonyi State.

The study of Obioji (2024) indicated that the respondents sampled argued that the activities of UGM has led to significant destruction and burning of goods and commodities. The research conducted in Owerri by Austin-Egole et al (2022) revealed that majority of the respondents (97.6%) agreed that insecurity situation has resulted in increased price of commodities in Owerri West LGA, Nigeria. According to a respondent interviewed in Imo State University, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria:

> the insecurity in Owerri has caused hike in prices of goods attributable to the fact that movement is restricted so goods don't come into town as before causing the traders to pay more to be able to have the goods and in turn increase the prices of the goods to make up for all additional expenses. Salaries are now no longer enough to take care of expenses. (Austin-Egole et al, 2022a, p.51).

Other respondents interviewed in Orlu, Imo State Nigeria, stated that:

> The increase in prices of commodities is caused by a lack of products. People are afraid to leave their home to the farm to get produce for sale. Due to insecurity, most transporters have boycotted major routes connecting the volatile areas and those who risk driving through those route increases their fares. The market women increase the price of the goods to reflect the additional money paid on transport so that they can make a profit. Thus, the prices of goods just

keep rising (Austin-Egole et al, 2022a, p.13).

iv. Frustration of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): Security challenge is a threat to the rise of FDI in any society. The decline in FDI is ascribed to several violent conflicts in Nigeria where the forceful enforcement of sit-at-home order has added to existing long list (Ozibo & Okafor, 2022). The research conducted by Ozibo and Okafor (2022) indicated that insecurity issues and the sit-at-home order has undermined the growth of FDI in the southeast Nigeria. The study revealed that sit-at-home order has disrupted technological transfer through FDI inflow, reduced market size and disrupted abilities of businesses to repatriate profits. Furthermore, Ogba et al (2023, p.138) noted that the forceful sit-at-home order "stifles FDI, leading to negative implications for businesses and tourism in the area. Investors are reluctant to invest in regions where the confidence in investment protection is notably low. Therefore, the fear of Unknown Gunmen activities has not only frustrated local business and commercial activities but has the potential to reduce the prospect of FDI in the southeastern Nigeria. In addition, Okoye (2021 as cited in Chukwu, et al, 2023) noted that insecurity has inflicted a terrible blow on the trade, investments, investors and investees in the southeast zone. The activities of Unknown Gunmen mainly in enforcing sit-at-home had made customers or businessmen to look for other regions to source for goods and services (Chukwu et al, 2023)

v. Loss/Reduction of Government Revenue: The challenge of adequate generation of revenue for the government of southeastern Nigeria can also be attributed to issue of insecurity most especially the attacks of Unknown Gunmen (Obioji, 2024; Chukwu, 2023 et al.; Ogba et al, 2023; Ibekwe, 2024). The Unknown Gunmen violent attacks on the security officials, government officials and citizens has gone a long way to disrupt business and commercial activities in major market in the southeast region which has negatively affected government revenue. The reduction in business and commercial activities has led to reduction sales of goods and services, income and profit of business which in turn contributed to loss or reduction of government revenue. According to Mmahi and Sarkinnoma (2025, p. 140)

> The violence in the southeast, which is a source of discouragement for investors, implies that the governments of the region may not collect the amount of taxes they would have collected if the region were peaceful. Similar, tourists are likely to avoid the south-east for fear of being killed by the UGM. In that case, the revenue of the government would further reduce.

Chukwu et al (2023, p. 64) noted that "the southeast Nigeria region loses money on every sit-at-home day in terms of internally generated revenue (IGR)." The former governor of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, Dave Umahi noted that the economy of Ebonyi state loses over N10 billion every time people observed sit-at-home. He further stated that from August 9th 2021 to October 3rd 2022, Ebonyi state lost about N610 billion (Chukwu et al, 2023). In addition, report by the Cable (2022 as cited in Ogba et al, 2023) shows that the sit-at-home order has made Nigerian government to lose estimated revenue of $1 billion every week. The governor of Anambra State, Chukwuma Soludo noted that Anambra state always loses N19.6 billion every week which amount to N4.618 trillion in 52 weeks (Ogba et al, 2023).

8. Conclusion

The activities of Unknown Gunmen in the southeast region have been a major security concern which needs urgent attention. The study has observed the Unknown Gunmen has engaged in the destruction of government

properties and infrastructure, attacks on government officials, politicians, security agencies and the entire citizens in the southeast. The Unknown Gunmen whether government or politically sponsored or IPOB sponsored has contributed to negative implication on the economy of the southeast like: loss of income, increase in poverty rate, reduction of business or commercial activities, loss of government revenue, frustration of FDI and increase in level of food insecurity.

The economic implications are interconnected. Business disruption leads to loss of income, which contributes to poverty. Poverty and food insecurity create grievances that may fuel further violence. The loss of government revenue reduces the capacity of the state to address security challenges, allowing violence to persist. The frustration of FDI reduces economic opportunities, reinforcing the cycle of poverty and insecurity.

Viewed through the lens of Structural Functionalism, the economic implications identified above demonstrate how the dysfunction of the security subsystem has destabilised other subsystems of the South-East regional system. The disruption of business activities (economic subsystem) has led to poverty (social welfare subsystem) and food insecurity (agricultural subsystem), while the loss of government revenue (fiscal subsystem) has undermined the capacity of the state to address the security challenge, creating a vicious cycle of dysfunction.

The impact of the activities of the UGM in the South East, Nigeria indicates that if urgent steps or measures are not taken, the security situation of the region and Nigeria at large will worsen. Therefore, adequate measures need to be in place to effectively combat the activities of Unknown Gunmen and any other security challenges that pose threat to the development of the southeastern Nigeria.

9. Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations were made:

i. Strengthening of security agencies is necessary for combating the activities of Unknown Gunmen in the southeast region. This can be done by provision of sophisticated weapons or equipment, training and development of security personnel for enhancement of their skills and abilities for intelligence gathering. Surveillance and other measures for combating any violent groups.

ii. There is need for effective community policing. Hence the Unknown Gunmen claimed to be unknown, the utilization of community policing will help the security agencies and government to be able to identify the operation of the violent group called Unknown Gunmen.

iii. There is urgent need to understand and identify the various sponsors and groups of Unknown Gunmen. This will enable the government and its security agencies to combat the operation of Unknown Gunmen. The issue of Unknown Gunmen is not only a creation of IPOB, it is also a creation of politicians or government officials. Better understanding of Unknown Gunmen emergence will go a long way to address the security challenge of Unknown Gunmen.

iv. Adequate effort is needed by the government to adopt political solution towards resolving the issue of Unknown Gunmen. There is need to engage in dialogue with IPOB and other relevant stakeholders towards addressing the grievances in the southeast region.

v. There is need for the security agencies to adopt measures that will not violate fundamental human rights towards dealing the members of separatist

movement (IPOB). The violation of human rights of the members of IPOB has generated violent conflict between Nigerian government or security agencies and the IPOB and emergence of IPOB as a violent group.

vi. Good governance is imperative for resolving or addressing the challenge posed by Unknown Gunmen. The government of southeast and Nigeria at large, should formulate and implement policies and programmes for development and ensure equal opportunities among citizens. This will reduce grievances, frustration and perceived marginalization of citizen in the southeast Nigeria.

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Appendix

Table 4: List of some attacks by Unknown Gunmen in the South-eastern region from 2021 to 2025

S/N	Date	Nature of Attacks/Casualties	Locations
1	January 8, 2021	3 police officers killed	Onueke Police Station in Ezza South LGA
2	February 1, 2021	1 police officer killed	Omoba Police Station, Abia
3	February 23, 2021	2 police officers killed	Abaji Police Station, Aba, Abia State
4	February 24, 2021	1 police officer killed	Ekwulobia, Anambra state
5	February 24, 2021	1 police officer killed	Osisioma Ngwa, Abia state
6	February 25, 2021	1 police officer was wounded	Aboh Mbaise, Imo state
7	February 26, 2021	A police station was razed down	Aboh Mbaise Divisional Police Station, Imo state
8	March 1, 2021	A police station was attacked	Iboko Police Station, Izei LGA, Ebonyi
9	March 9, 2021	A police station was burnt	Isinweke Police Station, Ihitte/Uboma LGA Imo state.
10	March 18, 2021	1 police officer killed and two police officers injured	Okacha Junction, Neni, Anambra state.
11	March 20, 2021	Divisional Police Headquarter was attacked	Isiala Mbano, Imo State
12	March 23, 2021	Eleven people killed	Aba, Abia State
13	March 24, 2021	3 police officers killed & 1 person kidnapped	A town hall meeting in Isuofia, Aguata, Anambra state.
14	April 5, 2021	Imo State Police Command Headquarters was razed down and 1844 inmates from the correctional services were freed.	Attack of correctional facility in Owerri, Imo state & Imo state Police Command.
15	April 12, 2021	Four persons killed and seven houses set ablaze	Ogahukwu LGA, Ebonyi State
16	April 12, 2021	Four people killed and seven houses burnt	Ohaukwu LGA, Ebonyi State
17	April 19, 2021	Police state was razed down	Uzunkoli Police Station, Bende LGA, Abia State.
18.	April 21, 2021	Two Police officers were killed and a police station was burnt	Adani Police Station, Uzo-Uwani LGA, Enugu State
19.	April 27, 2021	One Naval Officer was killed and two injured	Enamel Ware Junction, Onitisha-Owerri high way
20	April 28, 2021	Motorcycles and cars were set ablaze and release of some suspect under detention	Nkporo Police Station, Ohafia LGA, Abia State
21.	May 1, 2021	One police officer was killed	Abamege police station, Ohaozara LGA Ebonyi State
22	May 6, 2021	The office of the National Law and Enforcement Agency (NLDEA) was set ablaze	Amaekpu, Ohafia, Abia State
23	May 6, 2021	One police officer was killed. Also some Administrative buildings in the Police station was razed down	Obiozara Police Station, Ohazara LGA, Ebonyi State
24	May 9, 2021	A police station attacked	Trademore Estate in Ubani, Abia State
25	May 9, 2021	INEC office set ablaze	Ohafia LGA, Abia State
26	May 12, 2021	Suspected criminals were freed, two	Bende Divisional Police Station, Bende

		vehicles and three motorcycles were razed down	LGA, Abia State.
27	May 13, 2021	INEC office burnt	Udenu LGA, Enugu State
28	May 16, 2021	INEC office attacked	Enugu State Headquarters
29	May 17, 2021	Police station was set ablaze and two police men were killed	Apumiri Ubakala Divisional Police Station, Umuahia South LGA, Abia State
30	May 18, 2021	Three INEC offices attacked	Ebonyi State: Ezza North, Izzi LGAs
31	May 23, 2021	INEC office attacked	Igboeze South LGA, Enugu State
32	May 23, 2021	INEC office attacked	Anambra State Headquarters
33	May 23, 2021	INEC office attacked	Ahiazu Mbaise LGA, Imo State
34	May 25, 2021	Four police officers were killed and a police station ablaze	Iwollo Police Division, Ezeagu LGA, Enugu State.
35	May 30, 2021	INEC office attacked	Njaba LGA, Imo State
36	June 6, 2021	1 person killed	Ubulu-Ihejiofor in Oru West LGA, Imo State
37	July 21, 2021	A police checkpoint was attacked and 6 police officers were killed	Enugu State
38	August 8, 2021	Gunmen killed and burnt four commuters.	Nkwogu community in Aboh Mbaise LGA, Imo State
39	August 16, 2021	gunmen killed a police officer, and four oil workers sustained gunshot injuries	Assa community in Ohaji/Egbema LGA, Imo State
40	September 10, 2021	A traditional Ruler and his driver were killed	Otuocha, Anambra State
41	27 Sept , 2021	Attack on APC Campaign	Uruagu, Nnewi, Anambra State
42	23 Sept, 2021	Two police officers were killed	Police checkpoint in Nachi, Oji River LGA, Enugu State
43	October 12, 2021	Attack on Govenor Obiano's convey on APGA rally	Ihiala LGA, Anambra State
44	October 19, 2021	Three traditional rulers killed and many injured	Stakeholders meeting at Nnenasa, Njaba LGA, Imo State
45	November 11, 2021	One person abducted	Awka South LGA, Anambra State
46	December 12, 2021	Two traditional rulers were killed and their palaces burnt	Okigwe LGA, Imo State
47	January 10, 2022	A security Operative killed	Abakaliki, Ebonyi State
48	Jan. 19, 2022	2 killed	Enugu South LGA, Enugu State
49	February 15, 2022	Nine people killed	Ukwa West LGA, Abia State
50	February 21, 2022	Two persons killed and two abducted	Okija, Ihiala LGA, Anambra State
51	April 14, 2022	I killed	Ihitte Uboma LGA, Imo State
52	April 17, 2022	Several people killed as a result of Gun battle between gunmen and soldiers	Ihioma Community, Orlu LGA, Imo State
53	May 5, 2022	2 killed	Anaocha LGA, Anambra State
54	May 6, 2022	1 police officer killed	Agwa Community, Oguta LGA, Imo State
55	May 15, 2022	A legislator in Anambra State House of Assembly was abducted and killed	Nnobi Road, Anambra State
56	May 16, 2022	Headquarters of Idemili North LGA was burnt	Idemili North LGA, Anambra State
57	May 16, 2022	Seven students abducted	Okigwe-Uturu Road, Abia State
58	May 22, 2022	11 people killed	Orumba North LGA, Anambra State
59	May 29, 2022	Three persons abducted	Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway, Umunneochi LGA, Abia State
60	June 16, 2022	Gunmen killed five family members	Umuebele-Okporo community in Orlu, Imo State

61	June 22, 2022	1 killed	Ukpor, Nnewi South LGA, Anambra State
62	July 17, 2022	7 killed	Awomamma, Oru East LGA, Imo State
63	July 24, 2022	Several travelers abducted	Lokpanta Community, Umunneochi LGA, Abia State
64	July 27, 2022	Four persons injured	Ntigha Junction, Umuahia, Abia State
65	August 3, 2022	7 local security guards were killed and two injured.	Umuafom, Orogwe Community, Owerri West LGA, Imo State
66	August 13, 2022	Two police officers killed	Izombe, Oguta LGA, Imo State
67	August 16, 2022	A commercial motorcyclist was killed.	Ogbaku Junction, Mbaitolu LGA, Imo State
68	August 17, 2022	A police officer killed on a checkpoint	Enugu-Abakaliki Expressway, Ebonyi State.
69	August 17, 2022	A soldier killed	Ebem Community, Ohafia LGA, Abia State
70	August 24, 2022	3 killed	Hotel at Isu, Onicha LGA, Ebonyi State
71	August 29, 2022	One hotelier and three guest in a hotel were killed	Galaxy Hotel, Isu community, Onicha LGA of Ebonyi State
72	September 9, 2022	A traditional ruler abducted	Isiala Umudi Community, Nkwere LGA, Imo State
73	September 11, 2022	2 policemen and 2 civilian killed	Anambra State
74	September 11, 2022	Senator Ifeanyi Uba convey was attacked where some were killed and injured	Enugwu-ukwu, Njikoka LGA, Anambra State
75	September 27, 2022	Some soldiers and police officers killed	Obeagu-Amodu, Enugu South LGA of Enugu State
76	September 28, 2022	Four Army officers and one civilian killed	Umunze Community, Orumba South LGA, Anambra State
77	October 8, 2022	1 killed	Igbo-Eze South LGA, Enugu State
78	October 10, 2022	Two police officer killed	Akokwa/Arondizogu/Ikperora/Okigwe road, Imo State
79	October 10, 2022	Ezza North local government Headquarters set ablazed	Ezza North LGA,
80	November 14, 2022	A traditional ruler and two persons killed	Obudi, Agwa, Oguta LGA, Imo State
81	November 14, 2022	Two persons injured	Mgbala Agwa Community, Oguta LGA, Imo State
82	Nov. 18, 2022	2 killed	Nkpokolo Achi, Oji River LGA, Enugu State
83	December 9, 2022	Four persons killed	Umunachi, Isiala Mbano LGA, Imo State
84	December 9, 2022	Four persons killed	Umuna, Onuimo LGA, Imo State
85	December 9, 2022	One person killed and one person injured	Ubomiri Community, Mbaitoli LGA, Imo State
86	December 10, 2022	Four killed and a police vehicle set ablaze	Nwakpu Market, Ikwo LGA, Ebonyi State
87	December 12, 2022	Labour party candidate for Onuimo state constituency killed and properties destroyed	Onuimo, Imo State
88	December 12, 2022	Attack on INEC Office, one person killed and one injured	Owerri, Imo State
89	January 2, 2023	Gunmen attacked the convoy of Ikedi Ohakim, a former governor of Imo state	Oriagu community in Ehime Mbano LGA, Imo State

		and burnt four police officers to death	
90	10 January 2023	Gunmen killed three passengers in a commercial tricycle	Arondizuogu in Ideato North LGA, Imo State
91	14 January 2023	Three persons Killed	Umukegwu Community, Akokwa, Ideato North LGA, Imo State
92	January 20, 2023	One person killed	Ideato North LGA, Imo State
93	February 1, 2023	INEC office bombed	Ojoto Community, Idemili South LGA, Imo State
94	February 14, 2023	15 NYSC members were abducted	Ihiala, Anambra State
95	February 17, 2023	Three persons killed	Faulks Road, Aba, Abia State
96	February 19, 2023	Three police officers killed and Police station set ablaze	Idemili North LGA, Imo State
97	February 19, 2023	Six persons killed	Oyi LGA, Anambra State
98	February 20, 2023	Three police officers killed during attack at Awada Police Divisional Headquarters	Obosi, Idemili North LGA, Anambra State
99	Feb. 22, 2023	The Labour Party Senatorial Candidate (Oyibo Chukwu) was killed	Amechi Awkunanaw, Enugu South LGA, Enugu State.
100	February 25, 2023	One person killed	Orlu, Imo State
101	March 13, 2023	Three personnels of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps were killed	Obiangwu Community, Ngor Okpala LGA, Imo State
102	March 18, 2023	19 ad-hoc INEC staff were abducted	Ideato South LGA, Imo State
103	March 26, 2023	Two police officers killed	Kenyatta Road, Enugu, Enugu State
104	April 8, 2023	Military Van attacked	Aba, Abia State
105	April 21, 2023	Four policemen and two persons were killed	Okpala Junction, Ngor Okpala LGA, Imo State
106	April 26, 2023	Former Governorship aspirants (Dons Ude) of APGA was killed	Enugu State
107	May 16, 2023	Five United States Consulate officials and two police officers were killed	Along Atani-Osamala Road in Ogburu LGA, Anambra State
108	May 25, 2023	Traditional ruler of Orsu Obodo was killed	Izombe, Oguta LGA, Imo State
109	May 25, 2023	Traditional Prime Minister of Mgbele	Mgbele, Oguta LGA, Imo State
110	June 2, 2023	One person injured and two vehicles burnt	Ohaozara LGA, Ebonyi State
111	June 3, 2023	A priest was abducted	Nnewi, Anambra State
112	June 22, 2023	A member of Central Neighbourhood Watch killed	Igboeze North LGA, Enugu State
113	June 23, 2023	Two persons killed and nine persons kidnapped	Umuahia South LGA, Abia State
114	June 30, 2023	A supermarket and pharmacy operator abducted	Owerri, Imo State
115	7 July 2023	Gunmen enforcing the IPOB's sit-at-home order burnt a market and razed vehicles and goods	Amaraku in Isiala Mbano, Imo State
116	July 16, 2023	Former lawmaker representing Eha-Ulo ward, Nsukka LGA was killed	Umualoji, Ehalumona Community, Nsukka LGA, Enugu State
117	July 17, 2023	The traditional ruler of Ezuhu Umuamadi Nguru Community	Aboh Mbaise LGA, Imo State
118	July 19, 2023	Gunmen killed three persons	Orogwe, Ndegwu and Irete Communities, Owerri West LGA, Imo State

119	July 26, 2023	Two police officers killed	Abia State
120	August 1, 2023	Seven people killed and six persons injured	Orogwe, Owerri West LGA, Imo State
121	August 13, 2023	A palace set ablaze	Ndianiche Arondizuogu Community, Ideato North LGA, Imo State
122	September 13, 2023	A chieftain of Labour Party (Maduka) Abia State was beheaded	Amelechi, Akpukpa, Isuikwuato LGA, Abia State
123	September 19, 2023	Six security operatives killed	Aba branch, Oriagu, Ehime Mbano, Imo State
124	October 27, 2023	A vigilante operative killed	Osisioma Ngwa LGA, Abia State
125	November 23, 2023	Ward chairman of PDP in Imo State was killed	Ezinihitte Mbaise LGA, Imo State
126	November 26, 2023	Traditional ruler of Otulu Community was kidnapped and killed	Otulu Community, Ezinihitte Mbaise LGA, Imo State.
127	November 27, 2023	Two police officers killed	Ahiara Junction, Ahiazu Mbaise, Imo State
128	November 28, 2023	Four persons killed	Aguluzigbo Community, Anaocha LGA, Anambra State
129	December 11, 2023	Seven persons killed and many injured	Oba, Idemili South LGA, Anambra State
130	Dec. 24, 2023	The traditional ruler of Akutara was killed	Adani, Uzo Uwani LGA OF Enugu State
131	December 28, 2023	Four persons killed	Uga Junction, Aguata LGA, Anambra State
132	December 29, 2023	Two persons killed	Uga Community, Aguata LGA, Anambra State
133	January 12, 2024	Gunmen attacked a Correctional farm settlement and killed a police officer.	Umualomoke Community, Okigwe LGA, Imo State
134	March 5, 2024	5 persons killed	Ejemekuru, Oguta LGA, Imo State
135	March 8, 2024	Five persons killed	Ohaji/Egbema LGA, Imo State
136	April 9, 2024	A lawyer was killed	Orodo Community, Mbaitoli LGA, Imo State
137	April 11, 2024	One police officer killed	Ishieke Enugu-Abakaliki Expressway, Ebonyi State
138	May 11, 2024	Three police officers and a Federal Road Safety Corps official killed	Nsukka LGA and Udemu LGA, Enugu State
139	May 11, 2024	A police officer and one FRSC official killed	Enugu State
140	May 30, 2024	11 people were killed (5 soldiers and 6 civilians) and 1 injured	Aba, Abia State
141	June 11, 2024	Two police officers and one killed	Akabor, Ikeduru LGA, Imo State
142	June 24, 2024	Six people killed	Ama Hausa in Garki, Okigwe LGA, Imo State.
143	June 29, 2024	Four police officers and one person were killed	Owerri, Imo State
141	July 21, 2024	6 killed	Aba, Abia State
142	July 30, 2024	One person killed and Imo State Waste Management Agency was set ablaze	Nkwo Orji Market, Owerri North LGA, Imo State
143	August 3, 2024	8 community leaders killed	Umucheke Okwe, Onuimo LGA, Imo State
144	September 3, 2024	A police man killed	Divisional Police Station in Oba, Idemili South LGA, Anambra State.
145	September 3, 2024	A police officer was killed and a section	Obowo LGA, Imo State

		of police station burnt	
146	September 9, 2024	Four persons were abducted	Umuanunu Obinze, Owerri West LGA, Imo State
147	September 14, 2024	The chairman of Ogbete Main Market Traders Association killed	Enugu State
148	September 16, 2024	2 police officers killed	Umunze Police Station, Aguata LGA, Anambra State
149	October 6, 2024	Five persons killed	Nawfia Community, Njikoka LGA, Anambra State
150	October 8, 2024	SuperSport Crew members and policeman killed	Ihiala-Orlu Road, Anambra State.
151	October 8, 2024	Several persons were killed	Ehime Mbano LGA, Imo State
152	October 18, 2024	Five persons killed	Idemili North LGA and Dunukofia LGA, Anambra State
153	October 19, 2024	10 people killed	Nibo Community, Awka South LGA, Anambra State
154	October 20, 2024	16 people killed	Ndobo Community, Awka South LGA, Anambra State
155	October 24, 2024	6 killed	Close to main gate of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa, Anambra
156	October 24, 2024	3 killed	Witness Garden, Akwa, Anambra
157	November 5, 2024	A catholic priest abducted	Obollo Community, Isiala Mbano LGA, Imo State
158	November 11, 2024	3 Soldiers Killed	Ekenobizi Umuopara, Umuahia, Abia State
159	November 13, 2024	Two soldiers killed	Ekenobizi, Abia State
160	November 18, 2024	Four vigilantes killed	Abate Town, Aguta LGA, Anambra State
161	November 18, 2024	Five persons killed	Abatete, Abagana and Ukpo Communities, Anambra State
162	December 5, 2024	Editor of News Agency of Nigeria was abducted	Owerri, Imo State
163	February 2, 2025	10 people killed, Houses burnt and properties destroyed	Ishielu LGA, Ebonyi State
164	May 8, 2025	Gunmen ambushed travellers, set over 20 vehicles and trucks ablaze and at least 30 people were killed	Okigwe–Owerri Road, Imo State
165	June 20, 2025	10–13 people killed	Orumba South LGA, Anambra State
166	July, 2025	Coordinated night attack on three communities (Umualaoma, Ndiakuwata and Ndi-Ejezie) led to the killing of 7 persons	Arondizuogu. Ideato North LGA, Imo State
167	July 10, 2025	At least 3 people killed	Aguata and Orumba North LGAs, Anambra State
168	August 2025	About 14 people killed	Ivo LGA, Ebonyi State

Source: Ugwu (2024); Obianeri (2024); Nwangwu (2023); Ugwuoke (2023); Onyema and Princewill (2023); Ugwu (2023); Ihegwuruike (2024), Amnesty International (2025), Adeniyi (2025)