

Insecurity in Imo State Nigeria: A Diagnosis of the Causes, Enablers and Pathways to Sustainable Peace in the State

Amadi, C. J., Ph.D ¹, Ohaeri, C. S., Ph.D ², Maduka, P. C ³
^{1,2,3} Department of Public Administration
Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria



DOI : <https://doi.org/10.61796/ijss.v3i2.138>



Sections Info

Article history:

Submitted: March 07, 2026
Final Revised: April 26, 2026
Accepted: May 04, 2026
Published: June 20, 2026

Keywords:

Insecurity
Security
Peace
Diagnosis
Causes
Enablers
Pathways
Sustainable peace

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study diagnoses the security situation in Imo State, identifying the causes and enabling factors that sustains insecurity in parts of the state since 2020. The study was motivated by the need to complement government efforts in peace building and security, which is currently yielding positive results in the areas of dislodging criminal elements from previously occupied communities and hideouts, resettlement of residents who had abandoned their communities and rebuilding infrastructure in various communities destroyed by insecurity, armed banditry and criminality. **Method:** The methodology of the study was qualitative, using thematic analysis of relevant aspects of the research study. The study was anchored on the Human Security Theory by Mahbub ul Haq. **Results:** The study identified the causes of insecurity from four schools of thought, namely political, secessionist, opportunistic and sociological schools of thought. Six key enablers were identified, which are community connivance, fear factor, failure of statutory state security agents, existence of ungoverned spaces, ideological enablers and the criminal economy of insecurity. **Novelty:** The study therefore, recommended, among others, a multi stakeholders' approach that will involve the Government, the People and the use of Technology (GPT approach).

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, Imo State Nigeria has been the epicenter of insecurity in the southern parts of the country. Before the year 2020, Imo State was regarded as the most peaceful state in the region in terms of violence per capita [1]. Owerri, the capital city used to be well known for its hospitality and entertainment potentials. The Imo State capital city can be said to be one of Nigeria's versions of New York City "that never sleeps," after Lagos and Abuja, constituting itself as the entertainment and hospitality capital of the South East region and a beehive of nightlife activities [2], [3].

However, the peace and tranquility that Imo and South East Nigeria are known for appears to be eroding owing to several factors. Aside from the menace of armed robbery and kidnapping that is almost commonplace in many parts of the country, the activities of organized non-state actors led by the militia wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) known as the Eastern Security Network (ESN) have contributed significantly to aggravating the security situation in the state. Some people believe that the insecurity in Imo State is politically motivated. According to people in this school of thought, the assailants and their political sponsors hide under the guise of the volatility in the state to perpetrate their heinous crimes to make the state ungovernable [4], [2].

In a 2021 May Day broadcast by Hope Uzodinma, the Governor of Imo State, he blamed political opponents for the insecurity, claiming that it was as a result of his refusal to share state resources to the political class, opting instead to deploy the resources of the state to enhance the overall welfare of the people of Imo State [5]. From 2021 to 2024, many parts of Imo State experienced security challenges on a massive scale. Communities experienced constant attacks from armed non-state actors with links to separatist agitators [6]. Orsu and Okigwe local government areas were prime examples, as non-state armed groups made these areas their prime targets and operational bases. As a result, these areas witnessed more frequent attacks on civilians and security formations. Police and military formations were abandoned as a result of frequent attacks. This led to the displacement of many community dwellers, especially young people. The attendant consequences were that these communities became partially deserted, economic activities were almost grounded, and social activities became almost nonexistent [2].

Recent government efforts on improving security appear to be yielding positive results. The State Governor in January 2026 inaugurated community security outfits for the 305 electoral wards and the 27 local government areas in the state, pooling together 7,000 personnel to form the state vigilance services [7]. An upscaled intervention and combat effort from the Nigerian Police and the military appears to have contributed to the displacement of many of the assailants from their previously safe hideouts, thereby weakening their operational capabilities and creating safer environments for community dwellers. The situation also provides the incentive for community rehabilitation and reintegration [8]. Despite these efforts, it appears that the ideological grounds that made some communities a safe haven for the assailants still hold in these areas. Many communities still observe sit-at-home on Mondays and other designated days like May 30 every year, a practice that was brutally enforced by non-state actors at the height of their reign of terror in Imo State and parts of South East Nigeria. Thus, while the combat approach appears to be yielding positive results, the ideological framework remains unaddressed. In view of the foregoing, this present study attempts a proper diagnosis of the causes and enablers of the wave of insecurity in the state in a bid to fashion out pathways to sustainable peace in the Eastern Heartland state.

Statement of the Problem

While it might seem as if calm is returning to Imo State, many communities in Okigwe and Orlu zones are yet to return to full normalcy. Orsu Ihiteukwa in Orsu Local Government Area and parts of Ihube in Okigwe Local Government Area are recovering, albeit slowly, from the insecurity. Some people have argued that the level of carnage, bloodshed, and cannibalism experienced in Imo State particularly and the South-East region in general is alien to Igbo culture [9]. An Igbo sociopolitical organization, Igboekulie, in 2021 cautioned that Igbos are known for hard work, enterprise, healthy competition, love for education, and a communal culture of mutual support. According to the group, as reported by Victor, the anarchy and killings currently experienced in the South-East region are not in the DNA of the Igbo [9].

At the height of the challenges, the dimension of insecurity in Imo State escalated to attacks on security agents, killing of prominent individuals, kidnapping, attacks on security formations, prison breaks, and attacks on other public and private buildings, as well as random drive-by shootings in broad daylight [10]. The April 2021 attack on the Correctional Centre in Owerri, in which more than 1,800 inmates reportedly escaped, appeared to be one of the most notable manifestations of insecurity that attracted national and international attention to the state [4], [6].

The persistent nature of insecurity in Imo State particularly and the South-East in general has been attributed to several factors. A major factor is the ideological belief that the Igbo are being marginalized and thus secession is the solution. This narrative appears to have provided the atmosphere for a thriving criminal enterprise, as criminal elements exploit these narratives and grievances to advance their criminal activities [2], [11]. In addition, socioeconomic factors like unemployment, poverty and weak state institution combine with the rising fear in the hearts of a people that have been repeatedly failed by their governments to create enabling environment for insecurity and criminality in the state. All of these provides the motivation for this present study.

Conceptual Clarifications: Security and Insecurity

The idea of security connotes the absence of danger, a threat to danger, or physical harm. According to Adebayo, security can be said to be a measure put in place to ensure peaceful co-existence and eliminate, as much as possible, all forms of threats and danger [12]. Security for an individual can be physical, social, economic, or emotional. Also, there are other aspects of security such as environmental security, energy security, cyber security, food security, and national security among others. The nature and character of security are interwoven in the sense that a security challenge in one area tends to affect other areas. For instance, economic or financial insecurity has emotional effects on individuals. A man who cannot provide for his basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter will go through emotional stress and is also physically exposed to hunger and danger. This supports the saying that “a hungry man is an angry man.”

For this study, however, the emphasis is on physical security, which when aggregated among individuals and households leads to improved security at the national (country) or subnational (state, regional, or local government) level. Other components of national security include the protection of territorial integrity, preservation of human life, and the elimination of fear from the hearts and minds of citizens. Physical security involves protection and restriction of unauthorized access to individuals or their personal effects. It includes protection from physical harm, assault, battery, and death, as well as safeguarding physical freedom. Physical security is essential because it enhances freedom of movement, expression, thought, conscience, religion, and the ability to pursue economic interests. Governments worldwide invest heavily in the security of lives and properties as a baseline for achieving a stable, peaceful, and prosperous society.

The heavy financial expenditure of governments across the world on security demonstrates the importance of eliminating insecurity. Insecurity exists when the elements of physical security are absent. Ndubuisi-Okolo and Anigbuogu define

insecurity as a state of palpable anxiety, fear, and uncertainty that envelops citizens due to factors such as failure of state security apparatus, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, increase in crime and criminality, terrorism, and banditry among others [13].

Achumba, Ighomeroho, and Akpor [14] define insecurity from two perspectives. First, insecurity is seen as a state of being open or subject to danger or threat, where danger refers to the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury [14]. The subsequent viewpoint identifies insecurity as a state of being visible to risk or anxiety. Anxiety in this case, is an unclear but unpleasant emotion that is experienced in the expectation of some possible misfortune. Insecurity therefore depicts a feeling of uncertainty and realization of being exposed to harmful situations.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Human Security Theory as introduced and developed by Mahbub ul Haq in 1994 and first published in the 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) [15]. Haq (as cited in UNDP, 1994) challenged traditional views of security in international relations that placed emphasis mainly on military capabilities and territorial integrity. According to him, human beings should be the epicenter of any discussion on security. His conceptualization represented a paradigm shift from military-centered security to human welfare-centered security. According to the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), security should be understood as:

“Safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression and protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life” [15]. The Human Security Theory is based on several fundamental assumptions:

1. Human beings as the epicenter of security: This assumption departs from traditional views of security and focuses on individuals and communities as the primary victims and beneficiaries of security. Security exists only when people are free from fear, threat, or danger [15].
2. Security is multidimensional: The theory argues that security threats extend beyond military attacks and territorial invasion to include economic deprivation, environmental degradation, political oppression, food shortages, and limited economic opportunities.
3. Prevention is a better form of protection: Haq emphasized that preventive measures are more effective in guaranteeing security than military intervention. This supports the need for addressing ideological and socioeconomic inequalities rather than relying only on force.
4. Security and development are interdependent: The theory posits that sustainable development cannot be achieved in an insecure environment, as insecurity produces negative social and economic consequences.

The postulations of the theory explain insecurity as a product of multiple interacting variables rather than purely physical threats of violence. Although the theory has been criticized for its broad scope [16]. It provides a multidimensional framework for understanding insecurity. The implication is that achieving sustainable peace requires

more than military operations and must address structural and social conditions that enable violence and insecurity [16].

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research design based on a comparative thematic analysis was employed to determine causes enabling factors and pathways of sustainable peace in Imo State Nigeria. This paper is grounded heavily on the Human Security Theory, which offers a more comprehensive lens through which insecurity can be examined beyond traditional military-focused paradigms by focusing on people, community and human well-being. The data was sourced only from secondary sources comprising of peer-reviewed journal articles, government publications, policy documents, reports of international organizations, newspaper publications (for criminal cases), security reports and other relevant pieces of credible academic literature on insecurity. [8] separatist movements,[9] organized crime,[10] governance[11] and peacebuilding in Nigeria. Thus, systematic document reviews were carried out to filter common themes, theoretical basis and empirical discussions regarding the changing nature of security in Imo State since 2020. These materials were then analyzed thematically through determining appropriateness (code) and synthesis of relatedness into major analytical themes. Four main causal dimensions of insecurity—the political, secessionist, opportunistic and sociological schools of thought—were identified, compared across six principal enabling factors: community collusion; fears; institutional breakdowns; ungoverned spaces; ideological narratives/quo vadis justiciaries (criminal economy of violence). The results were interpreted in the light of Human Security Theory to delineate the nexus among structural vulnerabilities, governance deficits and chronic insecurity. For greater analytical validity, information was cross-validated with scholarly and institutional sources to reinforce that the interpretations were consistent, credible and valid. This multi-research methodology afforded a better understanding of the diverse causative factors of insecurity and also allowed for practical evidence-based policy recommendations that can foster sustainable peace, institutional strengthening, community participation and long term security sector governance in Imo State and other similar conflict affected areas.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Diagnosing the Causes of Insecurity in Imo State, Nigeria

A critical analysis of the recent efforts by the Imo state government will reveal that the intervention appears narrow as it focuses on the violent aspects of the security situation in the state. Understanding the root causes have also proven complex because of diverse analysis and varied scholarly interpretations on the subject. The lack of consensus on this subject has led the researchers to focus on four broad schools of thought which are; the political school, the secessionist school, the opportunistic school, and the sociological school of thought.

a. The Political School of Thought: One explanation for the persistence of insecurity in Imo State is rooted in politics and the struggle for power. Those who subscribe to this perspective argue that the violence experienced in the state cannot be separated from the intense competition among political actors and the quest for access to power and state resources. According to this view, some politicians and their allies exploit periods of instability to weaken opponents, settle political scores, or advance partisan interests.

This line of thinking became more pronounced following allegations by some political officeholders that certain individuals were sponsoring acts of violence with the intention of making the state difficult to govern. Although there is limited empirical evidence directly linking political elites to specific violent incidents, studies on Nigeria's political history suggest that the use of armed groups and violent networks as instruments of political competition is not entirely new [17], [18]. In many cases, groups initially created or supported for political purposes eventually evolve into autonomous criminal organizations beyond the control of their sponsors.

Furthermore, the high premium placed on political power in Nigeria, coupled with weak institutions, elite fragmentation, and patronage politics, has created an environment in which violent competition can flourish. These institutional weaknesses have been identified as factors that undermine state authority and contribute to insecurity [4].

b. The Secessionist School of Thought

Another widely held view attributes the insecurity in Imo State to the resurgence of separatist agitations in the South-East. Proponents of this perspective argue that feelings of political exclusion and economic marginalization among some segments of the Igbo population have strengthened demands for self-determination and renewed calls for the restoration of Biafra.

The revival of Biafra nationalism after 2015 and the subsequent establishment of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in 2020 heightened tensions between separatist groups and the Nigerian state. The confrontations that followed between security agencies and armed actors contributed to an escalation of violence across the region. Imo State became one of the epicenters of these conflicts, with attacks on police formations and the 2021 attack on the Owerri Correctional Centre drawing national attention. Although separatist groups have denied involvement in some of these incidents, security agencies have consistently linked many of the attacks to separatist elements [4]. Scholars, however, maintain that while grievances relating to marginalization are real and deeply felt by many people in the region, the increasing militarization of the agitation created opportunities for criminal elements to infiltrate and exploit the movement for their own interests [2], [11].

c. The Opportunistic School of Thought: A third explanation views the insecurity in Imo State primarily as a manifestation of organized criminality rather than ideology. Supporters of this position argue that criminal groups have taken advantage of the confusion created by separatist agitations and the general breakdown of law and order

to pursue economic gains through kidnapping, armed robbery, extortion, and other illegal activities.

According to the International Crisis Group, the instability in the South-East has provided fertile ground for criminal networks that capitalize on the prevailing uncertainty [4]. Similarly, SBM Intelligence observed that the lines separating political violence from organized crime have become increasingly blurred [19]. As a result, many violent incidents may have less to do with ideology and more to do with the financial benefits associated with criminal activities. From this standpoint, insecurity persists because violence has become profitable for certain actors, while the capacity of the state to maintain its monopoly over the legitimate use of force has been weakened.

d. The Sociological School of Thought

The sociological perspective explains insecurity largely in terms of broader social and economic conditions. Adherents of this school argue that poverty, unemployment, inequality, social exclusion, and weak institutions create an environment in which violence and criminality are more likely to thrive. This position is consistent with Human Security Theory advanced by Mahbub ul Haq, which emphasizes that threats to human security extend beyond military conflict to include deprivation, poverty, and social marginalization [15]. Likewise, the Frustration-Aggression hypothesis developed by Dollard et al. suggests that when individuals are unable to achieve their aspirations due to persistent deprivation, feelings of frustration may manifest in aggressive and anti-social behaviour [20].

Nigeria's socioeconomic challenges, including widespread youth unemployment, declining public trust in institutions, and weak governance structures, have been identified as important contributors to insecurity [21]. In the case of Imo State, economic hardship, perceptions of injustice, and declining confidence in state institutions have created conditions that make vulnerable individuals susceptible to recruitment into criminal networks and armed groups. Consequently, insecurity is viewed not simply as a political or ideological problem, but also as a reflection of deeper developmental and structural deficiencies.

Although these four schools of thought offer different explanations, they should not be seen as competing or mutually exclusive perspectives. Rather, they provide complementary insights into a complex and multidimensional problem. The insecurity experienced in Imo State appears to be driven by the interaction of political rivalries, separatist agitations, organized criminal activities, and longstanding socioeconomic challenges.

Diagnosing the Enabling Factors that Drive Insecurity in Imo State, Nigeria

Understanding the causes of insecurity alone does not sufficiently explain why violent conflicts and criminality have persisted in Imo State. Beyond the underlying causes are several enabling factors that create an environment in which insecurity thrives and reproduces itself. These factors serve as catalysts that facilitate the activities of armed groups, criminal networks, and other non-state actors. They include community connivance, fear among the populace, perceived failures of security agencies, the

existence of ungoverned spaces, ideological narratives surrounding marginalization, and the emergence of a criminal economy that incentivizes violence.

a. **Community Connivance and Local Support Networks:** One of the major issues in contemporary security studies is the extent to which local populations facilitate or obstruct efforts by security agencies to combat insecurity. Community support, whether active or passive, often determines the success or failure of counterinsurgency operations. According to Kalyvas, armed groups derive their strength not only from weapons but also from the support, cooperation, and silence of local communities [22]. In the case of Imo State, allegations have frequently been made by security agencies that some communities provide intelligence, shelter, logistics, and concealment for armed groups operating in forests and remote areas. Conversely, local communities have accused security agents of indiscriminate arrests, harassment, and human rights violations, leading to distrust and reluctance to cooperate with law enforcement agencies [4]. This mutual suspicion has undermined intelligence gathering and weakened community policing efforts.

Moreover, kinship ties, ethnic solidarity, fear of reprisals, and sympathy for separatist ideologies have contributed to varying degrees of tolerance towards armed actors in some communities. Such tacit support does not necessarily imply ideological commitment but may represent a survival strategy in contexts where state authority is weak [11]. Consequently, effective security management in Imo State requires rebuilding trust between communities and security agencies through community engagement and people-centred policing.

b. **Fear Factor and the Culture of Silence:** Fear constitutes one of the most powerful enablers of insecurity. In conflict environments, fear often creates a culture of silence in which citizens become unwilling to provide information to security agencies. According to Kalyvas (2006), armed groups derive their strength not only from weapons but also from the support, cooperation, and silence of local communities [22]. In the case of Imo State, allegations have frequently been made by security agencies that some communities provide intelligence, shelter, logistics, and concealment for armed groups operating in forests and remote areas. Conversely, local communities have accused security agents of indiscriminate arrests, harassment, and human rights violations, leading to distrust and reluctance to cooperate with law enforcement agencies [4]. This mutual suspicion has undermined intelligence gathering and weakened community policing efforts.

Moreover, kinship ties, ethnic solidarity, fear of reprisals, and sympathy for separatist ideologies have contributed to varying degrees of tolerance towards armed actors in some communities. Such tacit support does not necessarily imply ideological commitment but may represent a survival strategy in contexts where state authority is weak [11]. Fear has also affected economic and social life. Residents have altered their daily routines, reduced commercial activities, and limited movement, thereby creating conditions in which insecurity becomes self-perpetuating.

c. **Failure of State Security Agencies:** Another factor frequently identified in the literature is the inability of state institutions to effectively guarantee public safety. Weber

argued that the modern state derives legitimacy from its monopoly over the legitimate use of force [23]. When the state is unable to exercise this function effectively, alternative centres of authority and violence tend to emerge. Critics of Nigeria's security architecture have pointed to inadequate manpower, poor intelligence gathering, insufficient logistics, corruption, and inter-agency rivalry as factors undermining the effectiveness of security operations [14]. In Imo State, repeated attacks on police stations and correctional facilities between 2021 and 2023 exposed vulnerabilities in the state's security infrastructure [4]. Furthermore, allegations of excessive use of force and human rights abuses have strained relations between communities and security agencies, thereby limiting intelligence sharing and weakening counterinsurgency efforts. Perceived state failure may encourage citizens to seek alternative forms of protection and may embolden criminal groups to challenge state authority.

d. Existence of Ungoverned Spaces: Security scholars increasingly recognize ungoverned spaces as important facilitators of insurgency and organized crime. Ungoverned spaces refer to geographical areas where state authority is weak, absent, or difficult to enforce [24]. Imo State contains dense forests, difficult terrains, and rural hinterlands that have at various times provided hideouts for armed groups. Communities around Orsu, Njaba, and parts of Okigwe have experienced prolonged insecurity partly because these geographical features make surveillance and military operations difficult [4]. The existence of such spaces enables armed groups to establish camps, evade security operations, and maintain logistical networks. Weak infrastructure, poor road networks, and limited state presence further compound these challenges.

e. Ideological Enabler: The Marginalization Narrative: One of the most contentious issues in the South-East concerns the perception that the Igbo people have been politically and economically marginalized since the end of the Nigerian Civil War. This perception has been cited by separatist groups as justification for self-determination and secession. Scholars acknowledge that grievances relating to representation, infrastructure, and political inclusion are genuine concerns among sections of the population [2]. However, while perceptions of marginalization may explain the appeal of separatist ideologies, they do not necessarily justify violence. International Crisis Group observed that criminal elements have exploited these grievances to recruit supporters and legitimize violence [4]. From the perspective of Human Security Theory, unresolved grievances and feelings of exclusion constitute threats to human security because they undermine social cohesion and trust in state institutions [15].

f. Thriving Criminal Enterprise and the Economics of Violence

Another important enabling factor is the emergence of a criminal economy that rewards violence. Scholars of political economy argue that conflicts often become self-sustaining when criminal activities generate financial benefits for participants [25]. In Imo State, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, armed robbery, illegal taxation, and related crimes have become lucrative enterprises. According to SBM Intelligence, insecurity in the South-East has created alternative economic systems in which armed groups and criminal networks derive substantial financial gains from violence [19]. The profitability

of these activities provides incentives for recruitment and contributes to the persistence of insecurity.

International Crisis Group similarly observed that the boundaries between ideological agitation and organized crime have become increasingly blurred in the South-East. Consequently, some actors who initially embraced political causes may have transitioned into purely criminal enterprises motivated by economic gain [4].

These enabling factors are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Fear discourages citizens from cooperating with security agencies; weak institutions and ungoverned spaces provide operational advantages for armed groups; ideological narratives create legitimacy and sympathy for violence; while criminal enterprises supply financial incentives that sustain insecurity. Therefore, insecurity in Imo State cannot be understood solely in terms of armed confrontation. Rather, it is sustained by a complex interaction of social, political, economic, geographical, and institutional factors.

Way Forward: Pathways to Sustainable Peace in Imo State

Achieving sustainable peace in Imo State requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond military responses and addresses the political, socioeconomic, institutional, and ideological factors that have contributed to insecurity. The following recommendations provide practical pathways towards lasting peace and stability:

1. **Strengthening Community-Based Security and Intelligence Gathering:** The government should deepen community policing and strengthen collaboration between security agencies, traditional institutions, religious leaders, and local vigilante groups. Building trust between communities and security agencies will improve intelligence gathering and enhance early warning mechanisms capable of preventing violent attacks. The inauguration of the community vigilance services is a step in this direction. However, a more robust framework that will incorporate the use of technology in intelligence gathering will further improve public confidence. The study therefore, recommends a multi stakeholders' approach that will involve the Government, the People and the use of Technology (GPT approach).
2. **Addressing Socioeconomic Drivers of Insecurity:** While the government is doing a lot to empower the youths through digital skill acquisition and other forms of empowerment programmes, these frameworks should be institutionalized so that it endures and not die at the end of the administration that initiated them.
3. **Promoting Inclusiveness and Dialogue:** Government at all levels should promote inclusiveness and constructive dialogue with aggrieved groups and stakeholders. This will help to address genuine grievances and reduce feelings of alienation and marginalization that often fuel separatist sentiments. Constructive dialogue by the government and regular civic education and engagements with the citizens will also help to counter violent narratives and promote peaceful coexistence in the Nigerian society.

4. Eliminating Ungoverned Spaces and Rehabilitating Conflict-Affected Communities: Government should improve infrastructure and state presence in remote communities while simultaneously rehabilitating conflict-affected areas. The reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, resettlement of displaced persons, and restoration of economic activities will encourage the return of normal community life.
5. Combating the Criminal Economy: Government should dismantle the financial networks that sustain kidnapping, arms trafficking, extortion, and other illicit activities. This requires stronger intelligence capabilities, financial surveillance, border security, and effective prosecution of criminal actors and their sponsors.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Sustainable peace in Imo State cannot be achieved through force alone. **Implication:** Lasting peace requires a combination of effective security measures, inclusive governance, economic empowerment, institutional reforms, community participation, and reconciliation. **Limitation:** Addressing both the immediate manifestations and the structural drivers of insecurity will not only restore public confidence and social cohesion. **Future Research:** Future research should further examine how effective security measures, inclusive governance, economic empowerment, institutional reforms, community participation, and reconciliation can be integrated to lay the foundation for enduring peace and development in the Eastern Heartland of Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- [1] Fund for Peace (FFP), *Conflict Bulletin: Imo State*, 2018.
- [2] C. Nwangwu, "Neo-Biafra separatist agitations, state repression and insecurity in South-East Nigeria," *Society*, vol. 60, no. 1, pp. 40–53, 2023.
- [3] A. C. Okoli and F. N. Okpaleke, "Banditry and crisis of public safety in Nigeria: Issues in national security strategies," *European Scientific Journal*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 350–362, 2014.
- [4] International Crisis Group, *Managing the Rising Tide of Insecurity in South-East Nigeria*, Africa Report No. 308, 2022.
- [5] C. Okeoma, "Opposition sponsoring militants to make Imo ungovernable – Uzodinma," *Punch Newspapers*, 2021.
- [6] Amnesty International, *Nigeria: At least 115 people killed by security forces in four months in country's Southeast*, 2021.
- [7] S. Elemba, "Imo inaugurates 7000 personnel for state vigilance services," *This Day / BusinessDay*, 2026.
- [8] C. Ogugbuaja, "Imo Commissioner of Police assures residents of improved security in 2026," *The Guardian Nigeria*, 2026.
- [9] A. Victor, "South-East insecurity: Anarchy, killing not in Igbo DNA," *Vanguard Newspaper*, 2021.
- [10] SBM Intelligence, *The Economics of Insecurity in South-East Nigeria*, Lagos: SBM Intelligence, 2023.

- [11] C. C. Ezeibe, C. N. Oguonu, and E. N. Ezeibe, "Neo-Biafra separatist agitations, state repression and insecurity in South-East Nigeria," *Cogent Social Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2022.
- [12] A. Adebayo, "Elections and Nigeria's national security," in *Democratic Elections and Nigeria's National Security*, I. O. Albert et al., Eds. Ibadan: John Archers, 2021.
- [13] P. Ndubuisi-Okolo and T. Anigbuogu, "Insecurity in Nigeria: The implication for industrialization and sustainable development," *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management*, vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 7-16, 2024.
- [14] O. C. Onuoha, "Boko Haram: Nigeria's extremist Islamic sect," *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 2012.
- [15] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- [16] R. Paris, "Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air?" *International Security*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 87-102, 2001.
- [17] I. O. Albert, "Reconceptualising electoral violence in Nigeria," in *Elections and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria*, 2007.
- [18] A. Ikelegbe, "The economy of conflict in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 208-234, 2005.
- [19] SBM Intelligence, *The Economics of Insecurity in South-East Nigeria*, 2023. (merged duplicate retained once)
- [20] J. Dollard, L. Doob, N. Miller, O. Mowrer, and R. Sears, *Frustration and Aggression*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939.
- [21] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2021/2022: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives*, New York: UNDP, 2022.
- [22] S. N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- [23] M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1947.
- [24] A. L. Clunan and H. A. Trinkunas, *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, Stanford University Press, 2010.
- [25] P. Collier, V. L. Elliott, H. Hegre, A. Hoeffler, M. Reynal-Querol, and N. Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003.

* **Amadi, C. J., Ph.D. (Corresponding Author)**

Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria
Email: chidimmaa038@gmail.com

Ohaeri, C. S., Ph.D.

Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

Maduka, P. C.

Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria
