

Policyweekly

Accelerating State Security Trust Funds for Addressing Insecurity in the Southeast



Policy Recommendations

- 1 The State Security Trust Funds (SSTFs) should be used to fund early warning mechanisms.
- 2 The SSTFs should dedicate funds to combating information dislocation perpetrated by criminal elements across the state.
- 3 There is a need for the state governments to work with independent experts to establish baseline data on the security indicators the SSTFs wish to address.
- 4 There is a need for the Southeast regional security framework to be reinvigorated through contributions from the SSTFs of the five Southeast states.
- 5 It is crucial for state governments to ensure a cordial working relationship between federal security agencies and local vigilantes within the various states.

Introduction

State Security Trust Funds (SSTFs) have mushroomed across the Southeast in the last two years, with governments launching new frameworks for SSTFs. In [February 2024](#), Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State inaugurated the Enugu SSTF, followed by a [media launch](#) of the 20 billion naira Enugu SSTF in October 2024. Earlier in the year, Governor Alex Otti of Abia State approved the constitution of the State Security Advisory Board and SSTF for Abia State. Similarly, in [June 2022](#), the Anambra SSTF was launched in Lagos by Governor Chukwuma C. Soludo of Anambra. SSTFs are not entirely new in the Southeast, but these recent efforts by the current governors are parts of attempts to resuscitate and strengthen the SSTFs already existing in some states. For instance, in Anambra State, Peter Obi-led administration had set up Anambra SSTF and passed the Anambra SSTF Law as far back as [2010](#). In Abia State, Governor Okezie Ikpeazu's administration made various attempts to bolster the Abia SSTF, and in 2021, the [Abia State Security Fund](#) and the Security Support

and Residents' Card were officially launched. What is clear is that previous attempts to bolster security provisioning in the Southeast through SSTFs did not yield the desired result, leading some of the SSTFs to suffer attrition. The poor funding of security agencies, particularly the local state-owned vigilante, undermines efforts at combating insecurity in the Southeast. On Monday, November 18th, 2024, at least [four personnel](#) of the Anambra State Vigilante Service were killed by 'unknown gunmen' in various locations in Anambra State. The broad daylight killing of these vigilantes attests to the inferior firepower of the vigilantes compared with that of the criminals. Similarly, despite the efforts of the Enugu State Government to provide local policing through the [Forest Guards](#), kidnapping for ransom has remained a regular occurrence in parts of the state, particularly the [Ugwogo-Opi-Nsukka](#) road, which has become a nightmare for travellers.

The new race towards resuscitating the SSTFs is part of state governments' response to the rising insecurity in the Southeast. Thus, some states have visited the [Lagos SSTF](#) – the first to be established in Nigeria – for peer learning. The new SSTFs appear to be built on a broad theory of change based on four core assumptions: a). funds will be raised from the government, organised private sector and individuals; b). such funds, managed by a board and financial experts not controlled by the state government, will be deployed to fund state security architecture in the areas of capacity building and purchase of operational equipment; c). the strengthened security architecture will be well positioned to combat insecurity mainly through kinetic interventions; d). Insecurity will be reduced as a result of increased funding, capacity, and firepower of security agencies. While these SSTFs and the theory of change on which they are built present opportunities for addressing the insecurity in the Southeast, the dynamics and complexities of the insecurity in the Southeast threaten the expected outcome of the utility of these SSTFs for effective security provisioning. This edition of the Nextier SPD policy weekly assesses the threats to the SSTFs being activated across the Southeast and advocates for a nuanced model of SSTFs built around the localised security challenges of the Southeast.

Dynamics of Insecurity and Nature of Response by State Governments in the Southeast

The current spate of insecurity in the Southeast is not new. The insecurity has only taken a new dimension. Within the past three decades, the southeast region has witnessed various episodes of insecurity manifesting in various forms. Each episode attracted various forms of localised response from the state governments to complement the traditional federal government response, which focuses mainly on the militarisation of the region. The state governments' response has focused on establishing and arming local vigilantes and other private security agencies to tackle insecurity. In the late 1990s, some of the commercial cities like Onitsha and Aba experienced a wave of insecurity where notorious robbery and armed gang known as the [Mafia](#) caused mayhem in the cities by robbing traders and inhabitants of these cities and their environs. In response to this security challenge across the Southeast between 1997 and 1999, the state governments invited the [Bakassi Boys](#) – a group created in 1998 by Aba traders to protect themselves from armed robbers – to form local vigilante groups in the states. The poor management of the Bakassi Boys led to the collapse of the vigilante group following its involvement in various atrocities, including extrajudicial killings, leading to public outcry against the group.

Since 2012, the Southeast region has started experiencing different forms of security challenges, which are not entirely new but have continued to resurge and escalate in the region. These forms of insecurity include increased herdsmen attacks on agrarian communities, separatist agitation, and criminality by organised groups taking advantage of separatist agitation to cause mayhem and kidnapping for ransom. In response to these emerging security challenges, the Southeast state governments took several measures, including strengthening the local policing architecture, such as the vigilante groups in the state, creating the regional security framework - Ebube Agu composed of vigilante groups across the five Southeast states. While the Ebube Agu atrophied, the state-level

vigilantes have remained operational. Aside from funding the local vigilantes, the state governments have continued supporting the federal security agencies operating within the state with operational equipment. However, the current level of security framework in the states remains inadequate in addressing the security threats facing them. In order to sustain funding for the level of security provisioning required to meet the current security challenges, states in the Southeast have embraced the idea of SSTFs as a more sustainable finance model for funding security provisioning.

Assessing the Utility of the Fund for Addressing Insecurity in the Southeast

Broadly, SSTFs are part of a neoliberal approach to governance where the government sheds parts of its responsibility of security funding by partnering with private entities to fund security provisioning. Moreover, it introduces a business model that ensures funds mobilised are appropriately invested in mutually beneficial ways to the government and its private partners. However, the SSTFs do not address insecurity, and the effective application of the SSTFs matters. Hence, the utility of the SSTFs in addressing insecurity in the Southeast is assessed using the SWOT framework. Regarding the strengths of the SSTFs, the reliance on diversified funding sources from multiple stakeholders outside the normal sources for funding the state budget is a major strength of the SSTFs. Diversified funding sources will enable the state to overcome the budgetary constraint on security provisioning. For instance, the Enugu SSTF estimates to mobilise [13 billion naira](#) or 65% of the 20 billion naira targeted for Enugu SSTF outside the state purse. The implication of multi-actor participation in funding security provisioning is that, aside from non-state funding, fresh ideas about security provisioning will be presented on the table. Proper investment of the funds will also catalyse multiplier effects as interests on invested funds become capitalised, thereby growing the funds.

In terms of the weaknesses of the SSTFs, the current idea on which some SSTFs are anchored basically reinforces the idea of a

kinetic approach to security provisioning. Yet, while the use of the kinetic approach has been effective in decimating armed robbers and criminal groups, it does not seem to be effective in addressing the security challenges associated with violent agitation in the Southeast. More so, given that the local policing agencies under the state have limits on the extent of arms they can use and the nature of operations they can embark on, the objectives of the SSTFs in the area of properly equipping the security agencies controlled by the states with sophisticated ammunition may not be actualised. Again, given Nigeria's centralised federal structure in which state governments have little or no control over the operations and strategies of federal security agencies, supporting the federal security agencies with SSTFs may not translate to improved security provisioning in the states. The reason is that what the state government considers a security threat may not be considered by the federal government as constituting sufficient national security threats warranting the deployment of troops. For instance, while some state governments may consider some activities of herdsmen as a threat, the federal government may not consider such activities as a threat. It becomes clear that where force is required to enforce state laws like the open grazing laws, the state government may not be able to mobilise the required security agency to enforce such laws, even if it has all the resources in the SSTF.

The major opportunity arising from the SSTFs is to build the capacity of security personnel and equip the agencies with cutting-edge security infrastructure, thereby better positioning the security agencies to address insecurity in the state. More so, with private sector participation, there will be more demand for transparency on the use of the SSTFs for security provisioning.

In terms of threats to the SSTFs, their utility is threatened by their state-specific nature. Many criminal gangs hibernate at the border towns of the states, making it possible for them to adopt a guerrilla warfare strategy of attacking one state and moving to another state. A recent [publication](#) of Nextier SPD showed the existence of a belt of insecurity across the Southeast, which criminal networks exploit to operate across the region. Thus, given the absence of a regional security arrangement

among the Southeast states, each state in the Southeast is as weak as the weakest state. Irrespective of how any state has deployed its SSTF to fight insecurity, it is exposed to the contagious effects of insecurity in the neighbouring state, which has not effectively deployed any framework to address insecurity. A sustainable SSTF is expected to live beyond the life of the administration that launched it. However, the fund itself is threatened by political transition. Much as there is a Board of Trustees and enabling law, a new administration may amend the law and alter the BOT composition for self-serving interest. When this happens, funds may be misappropriated, and non-state partners may end their funding support.

Looking Ahead – Accelerating the SSTFs for Addressing Insecurity in the Southeast

In order to revitalise the existing SSTFs and accelerate the utility of new SSTFs in addressing insecurity in the Southeast, the following measures are recommended:

1. SSTFs to fund state-specific early warning mechanisms: The SSTFs should be used to fund early warning mechanisms. The early warning mechanism will involve establishing a platform for community engagement for intelligence gathering and sharing. Such a platform will enable security agencies to obtain credible information from the communities and also share information with communities on imminent security threats.
2. Dealing with information dislocation: some of the violent separatist agitators thrive on using fake news to create tension and for recruitment purposes. The SSTFs should dedicate funds to combating information dislocation perpetrated by criminal elements across the state. To this end, functional websites and social media handles must be activated for information dissemination and countering information dislocation.
3. Emplace baseline data on insecurity and evaluation framework: Mechanisms should be put in place to monitor the SSTFs' outcomes and efficiency. To this

end, the state governments should work with independent experts to establish baseline data on the security indicators the SSTFs wish to address. Baseline, mid-line, and end-line evaluations should also be carried out at appropriate times to monitor progress.

4. Southeast regional security framework with financial obligation for each state: states without functional SSTFs should be encouraged to do so. The southeast regional security framework, such as the Ebube Agu, should be reinvigorated through contributions from the SSTFs of the five Southeast states.
5. Enhance the relationship between federal security agencies and local vigilantes: The state governments should ensure a cordial working relationship between federal security agencies and local vigilantes within the various states. The SSTFs should also support regular interactive sessions between the federal security agencies and the local vigilantes to build understanding and camaraderie among them.
6. Investment in new and modern security technologies: Regional investments in new technologies, such as drones and CCTV Cameras along major border roads and communication equipment. This should be supported by the officers' proper training and security officers' insurance.

Conclusion

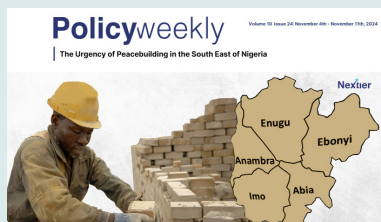
The race towards resuscitating SSTFs and establishing new ones in the Southeast is informed by the increasing insecurity in the region, and the neoliberal approach to security provisioning favours a public-private partnership model for security funding. The SSTFs in the Southeast present many opportunities, yet there are threats to the effective application of the SSTFs for addressing the insecurity in the region. There is a need to accelerate the SSTFs for addressing insecurity in the region through a nuanced model of SSTFs that supports the implementation of soft approaches rather than all-out kinetic approaches to insecurity.

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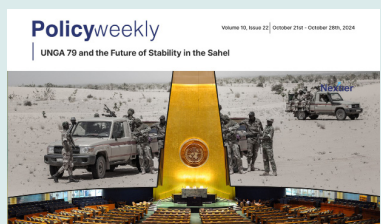
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The Sahel has become an essential theatre of operation for foreign influence. Russia and China, responding to strategic and economic interests, have used misinformation and disinformation to extend their influence at the expense of, or in rivalry with, Western powers,



UNGA 79 and the Future of Stability in the Sahel

The 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA79), held in September 2024, is remarkable in many ways, two of which are important for Africa. The first remarkable significance of UNGA79 is the adoption of the Pact for the Future as an outcome document of



Local Government Elections: Issues of Autonomy, Service Values and Politics

The high-wire politics around local government elections in Nigeria since the reaffirmation of local government financial autonomy by the Supreme Court on July 11, 2024, points to fundamental questions about the value of local government first, as a legitimate service-providing entity



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Healthcare delivery and the system remain one sector in development that is often significantly impacted during violent conflicts such as wars and armed conflicts. In many instances, during violent conflicts or prolonged wars, health facilities are often targeted, either