Politicization of the Security Agencies and its Implication on the Electoral Processes: 2019 General Elections in Perspective

Elechi, Felix Aja[1], Nwodom Destiny Uchennna[2] &Ohazuruike Kennedy[3]
[1&2]Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria
[3]Political Science and Diplomacy, Nile University, Abuja, Nigeria
Corresponding Author's E-mail: elechifeze2007@gmail.com;

Abstract
Since the return of democratic governance in Nigeria, elections have remained controversial and involve high levels of violence and other electoral malpractices. Hence, emphasis is placed on the need to provide adequate security in order to guarantee credible, free and fair elections. While previous studies have focused on the roles of security in the electoral processes, the implication of their roles (security agencies) have not been central to the existing debates. This paper examines the implications of politicizing the security agencies in the electoral process with special regards to the 2019 general elections. The paper employed a documentary analytical technique as our method of data collection, while qualitative descriptive method was used for the analysis. Anchoring our discuss on the structural functional theory, findings amongst others revealed that politicization of the security agencies by desperate politicians undermines the principles of credible, free and fair elections in the 2019 general elections; also the professional dispositions of some security agencies in the electoral process negates their role of maintenance of law and order which are an important tenets of the protection of lives and properties that enhances the need for credible and impartial electoral governance in Nigeria. The paper recommends amongst others that; security agencies need to be well trained on basic tenets of elections before their involvement in the electoral processes; politicians should avoid desperation and learn to play by the rules of the game; and all security agencies involved in the electoral malpractices should be punished according to the law so as to serve as deterrence to others.

Keywords: Democratic Governance, Electoral Process, Politicization of Security Agencies, Free and Fair Election

Introduction

Credible elections are, sine qua non for democratic governance, political stability and national development, hence the need for security of the electoral process. Elections are contests for legitimate power done within a political arena, and by their nature are confrontational and therefore require the assurance of adequate security to retain participants' confidence and commitment. Consequently security is integral to the electoral process. Evidence from the United Nations has shown that on a global scale that one in every five elections experiences some measure of violence (USAID, 2013) and this makes security in the electoral process an imperative especially in emerging democracies. For Hounkpe and Gueye (2010), the issue of election security comes up at all stages of the electoral process that is the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral phases. When security of the post electoral process was mismanaged as evidenced in the post-electoral violence of the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria many people were dismayed by the level of carnage and blamed INEC and government for not been proactive.

In the analysis of insecurity in the electoral process peoples' perception of the role of the security personnel is very crucial. Where they are perceived to perform with professional expertise the process is usually credible and devoid of conflict and violence. But in situations where stakeholders and the masses perceive them as partial arbiters, the process is deemed to be compromised and in most cases result in conflict and violence. Accordingly, to Lai, (2013) security is indispensable to conduct free, fair and credible election. From the provision of the basic security for voters at political party rallies and campaigns to ensuring that result forms are protected, the whole electoral process is circumscribed by security considerations. Thus, without adequate security, there cannot be free, fair and credible elections. Of significance is the fact that conflicts or violence resulting from insecurity do not stem from the electoral process but from the poor management of the process. It is so important that all the stakeholders in the electoral process namely political parties, candidates, voters, the election umpire and their staff and even the security personnel are involved. Some of the roles of security agents in election are: providing security for candidates during rallies, congress, conventions, electioneering campaigns and elections; safeguarding the lives and properties of citizens during the electoral process; ensuring and preserving a free, fair, safe and lawful atmosphere for campaigning by all parties and candidates without discrimination;

maintaining peaceful conditions, law and order around the polling and collation; providing security for electoral material at voting centre's during transportation etc. In summary, the role of security agents is to ensure safety of electorate, electoral materials and electoral officers before, during and after elections.

Since the return to democracy in May 1999, elections have been important events in Nigeria. In contrast to the political experience of the Nigerian state in the first and second republics (1960-6 and 1979-83 respectively) and the aborted third republic (1993), six consecutive elections have been successfully conducted since the fourth republic was born. These elections have aided the transfer of power from one civilian government to another across party affiliations, and, comparatively, deepened the space for effective participation of citizens in the democratic process. However, challenges abound. These challenges, which include massive rigging, electoral violence, the power of incumbency, voter apathy etc., have not advanced the conducting of regular elections in Nigeria to achieve the much-desired development prospects as well as move the country upward. One of the key electoral trends in Nigeria is the manner in which political actors, government agencies and citizens engage in election manipulations most in connivance with security agents who are constitutionally bound to protect the electoral processes.

The sheer logistics of elections in Nigeria requires that adequate security be put in place, from the period the process was declared open, to the movement of electoral materials, the deployment of staff, the manning of the polling booths to the movement of cast ballots to the collation centres. Including the protection of voters at the polling booths, the safety of the candidates, the party agents and even the media that cover the election, each of the processes requires strong presence of security personnel. Perhaps owing to the loss of lives after the 2011 general elections, the Nigerian government resulted to heavy deployment of security forces during elections as witnessed in the 2015 and 2019 general elections. According to (Jega, 2012), adequate security enhances the free movement of staff, voters, candidates, observers and other stakeholders thus ensuring the credibility of the process (Attoh, 2015).

Despite the efficacy of the above statement, elections in Nigeria continue to witness growing disappointments and apprehension due to the inability of the government through the many electoral management bodies that have been constituted over the years, to conduct peaceful,

free and fair, open elections whose results are widely accepted and respected across the country (Igbuzor, 2010; Osumah & Aghemelo, 2010, Ekweremadu, 2011).The security agencies that are supposed to be the guardian of the electoral process have been accused of being complicit through aiding and abetting the manipulation of the electoral process, as witnessed in the 2019 general elections.

Deriving from the above, the paper examined the implications of politicizing the security agencies in the electoral process with special regards to the 2019 general elections. The paper employed a documentary analytical technique as our method of data collection, while qualitative descriptive method was used for our analysis. Anchoring our discuss on the structural functional theory, the paper hypothesised that the involvement of the security agents in collusion with desperate politicians has seriously undermined the principles of credible, free and fair elections in the 2019 general elections. The paper is divided into seven sections namely; introduction, conceptual clarification and review of related literature, theoretical framework, electoral process in Nigeria's fourth republic, roles of security agencies in Nigeria election, inter-agency consultative committee on election security (ICCES), the security agencies and the conduct of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, complicity of law enforcement agencies in the conduct of the 2019 general elections, and conclusion and recommendations

Conceptual Clarifications

Election

Election is the most foundational element of modern day representative democracy. It is a means through which the electorates at periodic times choose their representatives into different positions of governance; it refers to institutionalized procedures for recruiting political office holders by the electorates of a country or groups. Thus, how a state arranges and conducts its elections is emblematic of the level of political development of that particular state. The institutional medium provided by elections also allows different interest groups within a state to stake and resolve their claims to power through peaceful means. It, therefore, determines the manner and methods by which changes in the social order may be brought about in a democratic society. Consequently, the procedures adopted must be recognised by law in order to give it legitimacy, thus, it is necessary that in conducting such

procedures it must be acceptable to those who participate, by being seen as fair and credible. These processes must take place under conditions that are peaceful and non- intimidating such that participation is without let or hindrance (Igini, 2013).

Heywood (1997:211) noted that; election is a device for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people "the electorate". This definition is in accord with the opinion advanced by the Nigeria Court of Appeal as "the process of choosing by popular votes a candidate for political office in a democratic system of government". Heywood (1997) submits that election aims to perform specific functions in any democratic setting. These include political recruitment, representation, making government, influencing policy, building legitimacy, shaping public opinion and helping to strengthen the elite. Given these essential functions of election in contemporary democratic states, it is logical to argue that election is not just an Election Day activity, though a crucial component. Rather, election encompasses political activities before, during and after the election days. This explains why the phenomenon of election in modern democracy is an institution rather than a mere terminal composition of an electoral committee (Ojo & Ademowo, 2015).

Electoral Processes

Electoral processes in Nigeria's fourth republic mirrored the historical context in which elections were conducted in the country. Since the conducting of elections in 1947 brought into being the Central Legislative Chamber, ethnicity and the regionalization of issues by the dominant political class, particularly the leaders of the three major ethnic groups3 (Ibid:49), dominated the political space. In the same vein, ethnic sentiments and mudslinging took the centre-stage of political campaigns in elections conducted in 1954 and 1959. The 1964 general elections saw a full display of all centrifugal forces which had reared their heads in the forties and fifties. According to Kirk-Greene (1971), the elections were "the most perilous display of brinkmanship" (Ibid: 51).It is also interesting to note that political parties that contested in the 1965, 1979 and 1983 elections had ethnic affiliations and were thus established to protect the political interests of their ethnic groups. However, this practice was addressed to some extent in the aborted third republic with the adoption of a two-party system4in the lead-up to the 1993 elections.

Security

In its broad sense, security is seen as an atmosphere of guaranteed protection, and the condition of feeling happy and safe from danger and harm. Security gives meaning to human existence in time perspective. Hence, Nwolise (2009) cited in (Ojo & Ademowo, 2015:.6) submits that the security of a person, identity group, nation, or the world is not only a sacred and strategic value, it is the utmost value. This is because unless one can be assured of his physical security or safety, everything else will be meaningless. Security is critical to the conduct of free and fair elections and it involves the provision of safety for voters and election management bodies (INEC) personnel, and extends to the management of logistics and coordination during elections. Security is critical for the protection of the electoral staff, voters, candidates, agents, parties, civil society organisations, domestic and international observers as well as personnel of security agencies. Security is critical in the protection of electoral personnel, and processes, in ensuring that voters exercise their civic duties without fear or hindrance, in creating a level playing field for all political parties and candidates to canvass for support of the electorate and in maintaining overall integrity of the democratic and electoral process (Jega, 2012).

Electoral Security

Thus, electoral security is all about securing the holistic integrity of the electoral process, especially now that elections are increasingly seen as a key component of peace-building process and a cornerstone of dynamic social interaction. Hence, electoral security must address protection from the physical, psychological and structural threats against the electorate and the citizenry at large, without undue consideration for party affiliation, ethnic sentiment, historical antecedent, religious divide, or any other form of social differences. The bottom line is that a political environment that is free from threat to electoral security is determined by ensuring that political parties and their candidates win in the scheme of power without jeopardizing the safety of rivals and the citizenry, and without distorting the sanctity of the electoral process (Ojo & Ademowo, 2015).

Electoral security has to do with the transparency of the whole of the electoral process; the independence of the electoral management body; the proper and adequate funding of the whole electoral process from an independent source; the electoral management body being free from unnecessary interference from both the government and other stakeholders within

the polity; the level of confidence the electorates have toward the whole electoral process; the observation and implementation of all the electoral laws that are guiding the whole process; the protection of lives and properties throughout the electoral process; and the high level of professional conduct displayed by the personnel of security agencies. Three kinds of electoral security are very crucial; first is the physical security which concerns securing facilities and materials. These include the electoral commission offices, registration and polling stations, political party offices, election observer offices, media organizations, ballot boxes, ballot papers (voted and un-voted), voters' register, computers and communication systems employed in voter registration and vote tabulation among others (USAID, 2010). The second is personal security. This concerns the protection of all electoral stakeholders, including candidates, voters, public officials, election workers, security forces, party agents, election observers and media representatives (Fischer, 2008). Personal security is very important because people can be victims of assassination, torture, sexual assault, strategic displacement, physical injury, blackmail or intimidation in attempts to influence their involvement and choices in an election. The third is electoral events. Events can be official in nature, such as voter registration programs or Election Day activities, but also associated events such as campaign rallies, debates, and political party and coalition meetings (Fischer, 2008; USAID, 2010; Oni, Chidozie & Agbude, 2013).

The significance of electoral security is crucial for creating the proper environment which electoral staff requires to carry out their duties; for voters to freely and safely go to their polling units to vote and for candidates and political parties to organize rallies and campaigns, and for other numerous stakeholders to discharge their responsibilities under the Constitution and the Electoral Act of Nigeria. Security is indispensable to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections. From the provision of basic security to voters at political party rallies and campaign grounds, to ensuring that result forms are protected, the whole electoral process is circumscribed by security considerations (Jega, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Fundamentally, structural-functional framework is a focal theory of the background/paradigm or General System theory of political analysis as propounded by Almond and Coleman (1960) and Almond and Powell (1966). Although the theory has its origin from sociology and

originating mainly in the writings of anthropologists like August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Malinowski and Radeliffe-Brown, and adopted in political science, especially in comparative politics by Gabriel Almond. Other prominent proponents of the theory are Parsons (1937, 1961); Merton (1957); Davis (1959); Evans-Pritchard (1940); Meyer Fortes (1945). Structural functional analysis is basically concerned with the phenomenon of system maintenance and regulation. The basic theoretical proposition of this approach is that all systems exist to perform functions through their structures.

The structural-functional derivative speaks of the political system as composed of several structures as patterns of action and resultant institutions with their assigned functions. A function, in this context, means, what Plato (quoted by Almond, & Powell, 1966) says, 'some purpose served with respect to the maintenance or perpetuation of the system', and a structure could be related to any set of related roles, including such concrete organisational structures as sovereign states and/or federal states. So the structural-functional analysis, Piano continues, involves the identification of a set of requisite or at least recurring functions in the kind of system under investigation. This is coupled with an attempt to determine the kinds of structures and their interrelations through which those functions are performed (Omodia, 2007). All political systems are therefore perceived to perform two basic functions –input and output functions. Input functions are political socialization, recruitment, interest articulation; interest aggregation; and political communication. While the output functions are rule making, rule application and rule adjudication. Structural-functional analysis will enable us to establish the relevance of the structures created by government to help maintain order in the whole system.

Structural-Functionalism as a theoretical framework is intended to explain the basis for the maintenance of order and stability in society and the relevant arrangement within the society, which maintain the social order and stability. In the formation of a structural functional framework, social processes and social mechanisms are the intervening variables. A complete description of a social system would include therefore, a treatment of the social structures, and various functions of these structures; and of the social processes and mechanisms that must be in operation if the structures are to satisfy certain functions (Almond & Powell, 1966). According to Almond & Powell, (1966:112), structural functional analysis:

> …is a distinguishable approach primarily because of the selective aspects of
> social reality that it seeks to describe largely in terms of structures, processes,
> mechanisms and functions. These four concepts are of particular importance to
> the laws and theories that are developed.

Structural functionalism is apt to this study because it explicitly defines the functionalities inherent in governmental institutions, such as the security agencies whose primary aim as stated in the constitution of any country is regime survival, the provision of security through the protection of lies and properties, the maintenance of law and order. And these institutions can be referred to as a system with structures and functions. The structural functional nature of the security agencies look at these institutions as structures which perform some certain functions such as the ones listed above.
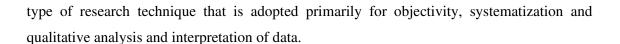
Anchoring the discuss of this paper on the structural functional theory brings to the fore the role of the security agencies such as the police, the Directorate of State Security (DSS) and the army in extreme case play in providing a conducive environment for the people to express the franchise in order to choose those who are supposed to govern them. To what extent has the security agencies been able to perform this constitutional duty, bearing in mind the security challenges encountered in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, especially, in an atmosphere where the security agents have been accused of complicity in the electoral process.

Methodology

The study employed a documentary analytical technique as our method of data collection, while qualitative descriptive method was used for the analysis. Documentary research design was employed in the study. Data were gathered from the documentary instruments especially from the secondary sources, through the review of relevant text, journals, official documents, newspaper, direct observations, media commentaries and scholarly writings on the Politicization of the Security Agencies and its Implication on the Electoral Processes: 2019 General Elections. The study employed content analytical method wherein data collected were analysed. This approach was germane because it helped the researchers to gain insight from the analysis of the subject matter. For clarity purposes, content analysis is the

type of research technique that is adopted primarily for objectivity, systematization and qualitative analysis and interpretation of data.

Electoral Process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Since the return to democracy in May 1999, elections have been important events in Nigeria. At the heart of the political transition, which produced the fourth republic, was the need to liberate the country from the long years of military rule irrespective of noticeable electoral flaws and irregularities in the process that birthed the republic (Omotola, 2010; Ojo, 2014). The misery of ethnic resentment that is typical of the electioneering process in Nigeria was avoided given that the two presidential candidates of political parties that contested were from the Yoruba ethnic group, in the south-west region.5Hence, electoral matters that arose from accusations and counter-accusations of rigging, which characterized the 1999 general elections, were amicably resolved by election tribunals. The 2003 and 2007 general elections followed the same pattern. The political atmosphere was relatively stable until 2011, when the playing of the regional card again re-emerged in the country's political processes. The death of President UmaruYar' Adua led his vice-president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, to assume the presidency. Jonathan completed the tenure and aspired to re-contest in the 2011 general elections. When this aspiration became known, the umbrella grouping the Northern Peoples Leaders Forum (NPFL) contended that the north had yet to finish its eight-year tenure and so pushed for the retention of zoning and the power-sharing arrangement with the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

In other words, the first security challenge facing electoral conduct in Nigeria is that of securing the men and materials for the election. As Jega further noted:

> In many ways election in Nigeria is akin to war. For one thing, mobilization by the election commission is massive, akin to preparations for a major war. The 2011 elections required the assemblage of close to a million poll workers, party workers, security personnel and election observers. The election entailed the acquisition of over 120,000 ballot boxes, printing of about 400 million ballot papers and managing a voter's roll of over 73 million entries. In fact, in the registration of voters that preceded the elections, the machines used in the exercise would have formed a chain of over eighty kilometres if placed end to end and the over 400,000 staff used in the exercise out-numbered the collective strength of the entire armed forces of the West African sub-region (Jega, 2012:1).

If securing men and material is challenging, securing the voters and the candidates in Nigeria is even more daunting, especially in a situation where both the politicians, the electoral management body and even the security agencies that are supposedly the guardian of the whole process, are all accomplices.

Roles of Security Agencies in Nigeria Election

To ensure that the conduct of the poll, collation and declaration of results are carried out without any disturbance or threat to peace, security agents shall:

- Provide security at the Polling Stations and collation centres to ensure that polling, counting of ballots, collation and declaration of results are conducted without breach of peace.

- Take necessary measures to prevent violence or any activity that can threaten or disrupt elections.

- Comply with any lawful directive issued by or under the authority of INEC.

- Ensure the safety and security of all election materials by escorting and guarding the materials as appropriate.

- Protect election officials at the polling stations and collation centres.

- Arrest, on the instruction of the Presiding Officer or other INEC officials, any person(s) causing any disturbance or preventing the smooth conduct of proceedings at the polling stations and collation centres.

- Ensuring that all security personnel are in the right places and, therefore, avoid role conflicts at all registration centres or polling stations.

- Mapping of areas where elections would be conducted in order to determine flashpoints, violent prone youth's places, polarized political group communities (INEC, 2011).

Having taken the above mentioned steps, the security agencies for elections must operationalise the goals of securing the electoral process by instituting a joint security strategy, training and deployment of security personnel after ensuring that a credible and reliable electoral system and process design is in place, and that effective statutes of deterrence are known to all role players, while also monitoring and coordinating security challenges involved during campaigns and rallies, by effectively using communication channels, and clarifying rules of engagement. Additionally, the established codes of conducts

for stakeholders were reviewed at meetings purposely convened for stakeholders to understand and appreciate what the laws are and what constitutes breaches and punishments (Igini, 2013).

There are three key security agencies involved in elections in Nigeria – the Nigerian Army, the Nigeria Police and the Department of State Services (DSS). In recent years, concerns have continued to mount about partisanship and politicization in the involvement of the Military, DSS and Police in elections. With recent past experiences and reports fears are deep that the involvement of the military, DSS and police in elections is fraught with the unofficial/unwritten role in elections of aiding the electoral victory of the incumbent governments by disrupting elections at opposition strongholds, delaying the delivery of ballot material to opposition strongholds, ignoring violence and intimidation of voters, and in some cases, being the instigators of violence and intimidation against voters, opposition members and their agents including arbitrary arrests and detention in the run up to elections and on election day. The Electoral Act 2010 (as amended in 2015) provides in Section 29 (3) as follows:

> Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law and for purposes of securing the vote, the Commission shall be responsible for requesting for the deployment of relevant security personnel necessary for elections or registration of voters and shall assign them in the manner determined by the Commission in consultation with the relevant security agencies.
> PROVIDED that the Commission shall only request for the deployment of the Nigerian Armed Forces only for the purpose of securing the distribution and delivery of election materials and protection of election officials.

The implication of this provision of the Electoral Act is that security agencies and personnel should not deploy for election security or duties unless requested by INEC. It is the responsibility of INEC to indicate the number of relevant security personnel that it needs the security agencies to provide for the elections. Indeed the said section 29(3) is explicit in stating that the Nigerian Army must not deploy for elections except and only for the purpose of securing the distribution and delivery of election materials and protection of election officials as may be requested by INEC. It means therefore that the practice by the Armed Forces of mounting checkpoints and roadblocks during elections may be illegal and needs to be halted. Furthermore, the safety and security of polling unit agents, INEC ad-hoc staff, party agents and voters will be the primary responsibility of the security agencies.

6.   Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES)

Events over the years have given rise to the need for security agencies to be involved in the electoral process, as it is in many advanced countries. In response to the rising challenge of electoral insecurity, INEC in 2011 collaborated with security agencies to establish the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) as the main framework for managing electoral security. ICCES was a new approach to the containment of electoral insecurity. As the name suggests, ICCES is a consultative platform, not a legal structure. It was designed to increase the level of consultation, coordination, and harmonization and managed decentralization of election security/risk management. It is an advisory body to support INEC to ensure effective security around elections, which is critical to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in 2011 and beyond. Through ICCES, INEC sought to give a greater role to security agencies to provide well-coordinated plans for securing elections. It was also intended to bring local perspectives of security agencies in the States into planning and implementing election security.

The ICCES deliberations and decisions have been largely responsible for the smooth conduct of elections in a peaceful and conducive atmosphere. There are about 18 Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) constituting the ICCES, these are. The Office of the National Security Adviser, Ministry of Police Affairs, Nigeria Police Force, Police Service Commission, Ministry of Interior, Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Prisons Service, Nigeria Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigeria Air force, State Security Service, National Intelligence Agency, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Nigeria Customs Service, Federal Road Safety Corps, Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps, Federal Fire Service and National Youth Service Corps. The INEC team to the ICCES is led by the INEC Chairman, who is also the chairman of the ICCES at the Federal Level. It consists of INEC National Commissioners and INEC directors as well as INEC officers connected with election security. The general format of the ICCES meetings is to review past elections, towards lessons learnt, discussion of forth coming elections, to prepare a general plan for all the security challenges anticipated at such election. All security issues are deliberated upon and strategies for combating security challenges are formulated towards having a violence free election. Security agencies would before each election, provide to the ICCES a security

assessment, location of hot spots, as well as steps taken to deal with identified hotspots (Laseinde, 2015).

Each security agency provides an operational plan, which is jointly reviewed by ICCES and sometimes amended to ensure the best results are achieved. The table below describe the specific task of ICCES which include to:

Table 1: Specific tasks of Some of ICCES Participating Agencies

S/No.	Agency	Specific Task
1	Office of the National Security Adviser	•Contact the Service Chiefs to assist INEC and get their buy in for ICCES •Increase security surveillance during registration/election •Coordinate the activities of ICCES •Monitor the performance of security agencies during voter registration and elections •Dissuade public officials from misusing security details attached to them for political ends
2	Ministry of Police Affairs	•Provide support to Police to perform their role during registration/election – vehicles, communication, etc
3	Nigeria Police Force	•Provide adequate personnel to man/keep order at polling units, registration area centres and other INEC facilities •Provide security for registration/election equipment and other materials during delivery, registration/election and retrieval. •Apprehend law breakers and prosecute them •Dissuade public officials from misusing police security details. •Bind over suspected trouble makers to keep the peace •Conduct pre-emptive raids on criminal hideouts •Work with recognized local/community security outfits to monitor illegal activities during the registration/election. •Enforce restriction on movement of persons that may be in force during registration/election.
4	Police Service Commission	•Monitor the registration/election process, particularly the performance of police officers on election duties. •Train police officers on conduct during elections •Develop a reward system for police officials who perform creditably during election. •Develop and share with the police a template for monitoring activities of police officers on election duties, including likely disciplinary and reward measures.
5	Nigerian Army	•Provide surveillance in the vicinities of registration/election areas as determined by engagement rules to be developed by ICCES •Assist in restricting movement during the registration / election exercise •Assist in protecting registration/election materials where police and other agencies are not able to do so •Establish as standby rapid deployment squads in all States in case of serious crisis •Assist in delivery of INEC materials where necessary •Assist in retrieving INEC registration/election equipment, materials and personnel after registration/election where necessary

		•Prepare to assist and evacuate civilians in the case of serious crisis
6	**Nigerian Navy**	•Increase surveillance of Nigeria's seaports and continental shelf during the elections •Assist in the deployment of INEC equipment and personnel where necessary. •Assist the Navy in restricting movement along waterways during the registration/election exercise •Assist in protecting registration/election equipment/materials where police and other agencies are not able to do so •Establish as standby rapid deployment squads in all States in case of serious crisis •Assist in delivery of INEC materials where necessary •Assist in retrieving INEC registration/election equipment, materials and personnel after registration/election where necessary •Prepare to assist and evacuate civilians in the case of serious crisis during registration / election
7	**Nigerian Air force**	•Increase surveillance of Nigeria's airspace and airports during the elections •Assist in the deployment of INEC equipment and personnel where necessary. •Assist in restricting movement along waterways during the registration/election exercise •Assist in protecting registration / election equipment / materials where police and other agencies are not able to do so •Establish as standby rapid deployment squads in all States in case of serious crisis •Assist in delivery of INEC materials where necessary •Assist in retrieving INEC registration/election equipment, materials and personnel after registration/election where necessary •Prepare to assist and evacuate civilians in the case of serious crisis
8	**State Security Service**	•Monitor the registration/election closely and alert INEC and other security agencies, especially in the framework of ICCES on security problems. •Develop a framework for sharing intelligence regularly with other agencies during the registration / election. •Enforce restriction on movement of persons that may be in force during registration/election.

Source: Jega, M. A. (2012).

The Electoral Process and Security Sector Synergy

To achieve these objectives, clear tasks are specified for each security agency while collective responsibilities and coordination are also made clear. Despite the success of ICCES and the security agencies since2011, there still remain security challenges; such as behaviour or utterances of politicians who are bent on winning by any means possible, and late deployment of electoral materials to polling units on election day. This problem has gotten better from one election to the other instigation or hiring of youths to constitute public nuisance at some locations. This problem is not of a generalized nature but still persists in

https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ajpas.v16i2.25

some states, areas and remote locations, where adequate security may also not be available, and where electoral materials tend to arrive late (Laseinde, 2015; Nkwede, Udeuhele, & Nwankwo, 2022).

The Security Agencies and the Conduct of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

There was extensive live coverage of Election Day in the electronic media, thereby increasing transparency of the process. However electoral transparency was limited by restrictions on journalists and observers by the security agents. In five states, journalists from respected media houses were obstructed from reporting in certain areas. Civil society groups reported that military and security agents denied citizen observers access to eight collation centres in three states, and that they were further denied access in a number of others by INEC personnel or threatening groups. EU observers were prevented from entering the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) office in Rivers, apparently by military personnel. On 10 March, INEC suspended all electoral processes in Rivers citing widespread violence and disruption to the elections (EU Election Observation Mission, 2019).

One of the major effects of the military involvement in the 2019 general elections was the wide spread apathy on the side of the Nigerian voters during the 2019 general election as was captured by Ohukosi (2019), the involvement of the military in the electoral process contributed to low voter turnout. Because of the precedent of aggression in Nigerian soldiers, most electorates declined interest to the extent that they did everything possible to avoid them. The evident are much clear as can be seen, out of the 72 million people that registered for the 2019 general elections; it is only the 35.6% that voted for the presidential election. The turnout is lower compared with the 44% that was recorded in 2015. Additionally, militarizing elections in Nigeria led to loss of life. In the 2019 general elections, soldiers allegedly killed people in River state (Okechukwu, Chukwuka & Chikwado, 2019). When soldiers are given too much room to participate in politics, there is a significant risk of untold consequences.

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria have once more raised the issue of the roles of the military should play during such event in the country. During the last general elections and the few others that took place in the past, the soldiers were called out from barracks spread in parts of the country. They came to the streets in their battle fatigue; they mounted roadblocks,

fully armed. Some of the soldiers reportedly went against the rules, came close to the polling areas. They reportedly beat up people. Some short into the air, while others hit human targets, in the process, several lives were lost in some states, in Rivers State to be precise, many indeed died, and the military was blamed for an unprofessional conducts. Some of the dastardly actions of the soldiers during the election were shown on the national television networks, but, in some cases, the soldiers swooped on cameraman from different media houses, seized their gadgets and even beat up the owners. The military indeed created a lot of fear among Nigerians during the elections as if the nation was in a war situation.

Also, a lot of Nigerians accused the presidency of deliberately drafted the military to aid the government to rig the election in favour of the president Buhari and the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). While the government and the INEC believe that the presence of the military was necessary to check possible terror attacks or situation that might pose as threat to peace, across section of Nigerians maintained that the police and the Civil Defence are enough for electoral duties. They believed that elections are civil matter and should not involve the military. According to Chief Mbaukwu Ukwechi, K. the secretary, Democratic Alternative (DA), Owerri North, Imo State, the military has no role to play during elections at all. They are meant to defend the nation's territorial integrity and regimented in the barracks. Ethelbert Amaechina Igwe, Chairman, Young Progressive Party (YPP) Onuimo L. G. A. Imo State; said: "in the just concluded elections the military disappointed Nigerians by indulging in professional misconduct" we have enough police personnel to handle our elections and the military should not be there. He further maintained that the military has no business being part of electoral process.

It could be this that made Omoigberale (2019) to state thus: "they were called out in the just concluded elections to assist the INEC in installing their master and law makers that will work with him and that they succeeded in achieving". But in the opinion of the executive chairman of the centre for anti-corruption and open leadership (CACOL) stated "it is not the Nigerian elections that elicited militarization. Given the circumstances the elections were conducted, the threats across the country, all hands had to be the deck to ensure that the elections were peaceful. Largely, if INEC and political parties had done that were expected of them, there was no reason to invite the military to man the polling units. Buts, political

parties did not allow internal democracy and INEC did do enough voter awareness during which all forms of violence, hate speeches, campaign of calumny should have been strongly campaigned against, and a very stern punishment put in place that any political party or aspirants found wanted: there is no gain saying that the integrity of the military is at stake and the current hierarchy of the military is to be hold responsible.

Stakeholders consulted by the EISA EOM, expressed fears of possible military deployment and the possible influence of the security agencies in the general elections. These fears were based on stakeholders' assessment of the role played by security agencies during the Ekiti and Osun State governorship elections where it was reported that security agencies obstructed the process and, in some cases, intimidated voters. The EISA EOM observed that there was no widespread military deployment across the country on Election Day except in the North East where the threat of terrorism remains high (EISA, 2019).

v. Investigate incidents of violence reported on Election Day and bring perpetrators to book

In Akwa-Ibom state, collating at polling unit, ward, and LGA level was disrupted by both armed state and non-state security actors. The worst example of this was the invasion of the Akwa-Ibom State North West senatorial district collation centre by Senator Akpabio and his security detail on 09 March, which disrupted the process and delayed the declaration of results of the Senatorial elections. There appeared to be broader interference in many electoral processes. For example, in Essien Udim, the brother of one of the senatorial candidates, who heads the anti-robbery unit of the Akwa-Ibom State Police command, was reported to have used a team of his men to intimidate potential voters away from voting. A similar scenario was seen in the ward of the APC Governorship candidate in Ikot Abasi, where armed security officers were seen moving from one polling unit to another to hijack election materials (Niger Delta Watch, 2019).

In Rivers, EU observers received multiple reports of military personnel confiscating election material and shutting down at least two LGA collation centres during the federal elections. Opposition parties, notably the PDP, criticised what they claimed was a partisan role played by the military which they alleged depressed turnout. The military emphasised its neutrality and constitutional role, encouraged the public to submit any complaints and evidence of misconduct for investigation, and also noted impersonators using their uniforms. EU

observers reported that some INEC staff referred to a lack of protection from security agencies, in particular noting that staff from other agencies such as customs and immigration, were insufficiently trained in crowd control (EU Election Observation Mission, 2019).

Military personnel were again reported preventing observers and party agents from gaining access to collation, with key personnel being escorted out of collation centres early in proceedings in some LGAs (such as in Asari Toru). Questions arose on the whereabouts of collation personnel when they had clearly left collation centres but had not arrived at the state collation office by the Sunday morning after polls. INEC staff later confirmed in post-election meetings that military personnel were screening those bringing results to the state office and redirecting them if they were not already' approved. It was the combination of this screening and personnel inside the state office that led to the unprecedented suspension of results collation in the state.

Both the national and state elections in Rivers State were severely disrupted, though with different aspects dominating the weekends of the Presidential and Governorship elections. Over the Presidential election weekend, violence was severe in some L G As, and the combined impact of this, and the outright disruption of collation, saw only677,000 votes cast, from an electorate of over three million people. It also led to the state recording the highest reported fatalities, nationally, over the weekend, including two soldiers and two ad hoc INEC staff. The election cycle in Rivers State saw military raids in November and cult violence in December, which continued over the Christmas period.

Rivers was exceptional in its record of violence against officials. While observers do not have a tally of injured election officials, two ad hoc staff were killed while travelling to collation centres—the only deaths of officials nationally in the first weekend polls. Two soldiers were killed in the same weekend in Abonnema, while two more were injured in a clash. Accounts are contested but this was alleged to have involved the convoy of the Rivers State Governor.

Table 2: Incidence of military involvement and electoral violence in 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

S/N	Location	No of victim/incident	Source
1.	Presidential/National Assembly Election	35 killed, across various polling stations in Rivers state.	Civil Liberty Organization (CLO)
2.	Abonema, Rivers State	2 killed, during the	Civil society organization

		gubernatorial election	
3.	INEC Office in Bori, Rivers State	2 soldiers beat party agents, during the gubernatorial election	Ebuzor (2019)
4.	Umodo/Umunwala Area of Owerri	Thugs assisted by soldiers killed an opposition party agents, during the gubernatorial election	Ebuzor (2019)
5.	Ajaokuta, Ijumu, Ogun State.	Thugs assisted by soldiers invaded polling units catered away the result sheet, during the presidential election/ national assembly election	Ebuzor (2019)
6.	INEC office at Aba, Road Port Harcourt	Soldier allegedly invaded the office, during the gubernatorial election	Ebonugwo and Kumolu (2019)
7.	Mile 2 Area of Lagos	A centre for Democracy and Development observer was arrested by soldiers, during the gubernatorial election	Centre for Democracy and Development
8.	Kastina State	20 people were abducted including INEC staff by unknown thugs during the presidential election	Centre for Democracy and Development
9.	Shendam L.G.A. of Plateau State, polling unit 15, ward o4	An election observers were abducted by political thugs, during the presidential election	Centre for Democracy and Development
10.	Akwa-Ibom State polling unit 2, AfahaNsit ward	Centre for Democracy and Development observer abducted by thugs and demanded for ransom, during the gubernatorial election	Centre for Democracy and Development.

Sources: Okechukwu, Chukwuka and Chikwado, 2019.

Complicity of Law Enforcement Agencies in the Conduct of the 2019 General Elections

Empirical evidence has shown that security agencies in Nigeria have failed to discharge their statutory responsibility with utmost sense of patriotism, commitment and impartiality. On many occasions, the law enforcement agents have been alleged of taking part in intensifying electoral violence in favour of particular party, parties and some candidates. For instance, during the 2003 general elections, the Transitional Monitoring Group in its final reports on the elections affirmed that:

There were … troubling reports of police complicity in electoral malpractices in some states, reluctance to intervene in glaring cases of electoral misconduct on the part of some party agents, inability to maintain law and order in some centres, which gave room to some hoodlums to unleash mayhem.

In corollary, the police service commission also confirmed that it was aware of allegation of improper conduct by some police officers, which included collusion with politicians to scare opponents from polling centres, and looking the other direction when electoral malpractices such as snatching of ballot boxes or carting away of election materials are being perpetrated by miscreants. The story have not change since then, evidences abound like in the case or the Rivers State re-run Senatorial election in 2016, where the security agencies was deployed to favour a particular candidate over the other. The legal mandate of the military is to assist INEC upon request with the securing and movement of election materials and the protection of election officials. The chief of army staff repeatedly emphasised that the role of the military was to support a civilian-led electoral process. The APC argued that the military were necessary for security, given the insufficiencies of the police and other unarmed civilian agencies at polling units. The PDP argued that "militarisation" of the election depressed turnout in some parts of the country, particularly in the South- South and South East zones. Beyond the overall issue of the effect of the military on voters, there were also more specific concerns about interference in the electoral process by military personnel, as noted by INEC and others in Rivers. On 10 March, EU observers and others were prevented from entering the state INEC office in Rivers, which was blockaded by soldiers. Civil society groups reported on 9 March that military and other security agents denied citizen observers access to eight collation centres in Akwa-Ibom, Rivers and Zamfara. Subsequent civil society statements also referred to militarization of the process and interference.

On 15 March, the Nigerian Army announced an investigative committee into allegations of misconduct by soldiers during the general elections. The committee, which reached out to various election observation missions, was due to report by 31 March. However at the time of writing this report, no public information on findings was available. Strained inter-institutional relations were evident in Rivers when the Sixth Division of the Army, the police and the governor each made accusatory statements about each other's actions. This

perpetuated concerns that institutions of the state were being used by opposing parties to further political interests of the incumbents at state and federal levels. As captured by Olokor (2019), even the nation's electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) admitted that soldiers were used to intimidate and unlawfully arrest its staff during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Rivers state through its National Commissioner and Chairman of information and voter Education committee, Festus Okoye who disclosed thus: "collation centres were invaded by some soldiers and armed gang resulting in the intimidation and unlawful arrest of election officials, thereby disrupting the collation process". The act was not only condemned by the electoral umpire and also by all and sundry for attempting to subvert the will of the masses. The act was also acknowledged by the Army Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Burati in reaction to the allegation said that the military kept to their promise of ensuring that her men were above board during the election (Chukwudi, 2019).However, many scholars and human rights activists argued that election is a civil matter that civil authority like police should play a role and not the military (Chukwudi, 2019).

Oyeyipo and Ohiku (2019) acknowledged the parliamentary dismay over the use of the military in the 2019 general elections when they captured the motion moved by the Hon. Patrick Asadu a house representative member representing Nsukka/Igbo-Eze South Federal Constituency of Enugu State. In the motion, he expressed disappointment over involvement of the military in the 2019 general election and called for probe of the militarization by the House. He argued that the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Burati directed commanders and soldiers on how to operate during the election without recourse to the relevant laws or the National Assembly and as an evidence referred to a Thisday Newspaper article of January 20, 2019, where the Chief of Staff was quoted to have said that Nigeria Army cannot disobey the order given by the President, "when President Muhammadu Buhari gave the shoot-to-kill ballot snatchers order" (Oyeyipo & Ohuku, 2019). In similar sense, Oyeyipo and Ohuku (2019) noted that one of the election observers integrity friends for Truth and Peace Initiative (TIFPI) in their preliminary reports on the elections observed that there was alleged involvement and interference by the soldiers and other security agencies in elections in Rivers, Imo, Zamfara, Akwa-Ibom, Edo, Kogi, Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Benue and Ogun.

Conclusion

A secure atmosphere is critical to a free, fair and competitive electoral process. Electoral staff need a safe working environment. Candidates need to be able to move about the country and to campaign freely, and voters need to be able to attend rallies and to vote without fear or intimidation. Having good physical security enables the Electoral Management Body (EMB) to administer the elections according to their operational plans in a logical and well-thought out manner, rather than reacting to events. Good security enables the freedom of movement for EMB staff and candidates that is so necessary for a free and credible electoral process. It also enables the safe and timely movement of valuable electoral assets and sensitive electoral materials to registration and polling sites. Good security, and an electoral climate without fear, can increase the participation of political parties, candidates and the voters. It also enables a more objective coverage of events by the media and easier circulation of voter education messages and materials.

The professional dispositions of some security agencies in the electoral process negates their role of maintenance of law and order which are an important tenets of the protection of lives and properties that enhances the need for credible and impartial electoral governance in Nigeria. The security agencies are ever quick to cite the fact that it is acting in aid to civil authority whatever the law; military colluding with politicians is counterproductive to the rule of law and democracy. Above all, it is disservice to the security agencies. Election approximates the democratic method, that process in which eligible adults enter the voting platform and cast their ballot and by so doing transferring their consent to constitute a legitimate government compromising that process in any way inherently delegitimizes the government that is the outcome of a rigged process. It should be emphasized that the military too as part of the citizenry are expected to vote in an elections but without open demonstration of partisanship as they reportedly did in some states during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Deriving from the above discourse, the paper proposed the following recommendations;

1. There is dear need to revisit the 2010 Electoral Act Amendment Bill, which contains provisions that restrain the military from meddling in the country's electoral process.

2. Electorates should be allowed to freely choose their preferred candidate without creating a false political environment by the government in power

3. The security agencies should be restricted to securing the whole electoral process by not being seen to be siding or helping a particular candidates over others

4. Men and women of Nigerian security should be reoriented on the need to abide by the oath which they swore which is to protective Nigeria and its citizens and not to protect Nigeria and some of its citizens.

5. The electoral body (INEC), security agencies and the judiciary should be insulated from partisan politics so as to discharge their statutory responsibilities with a deep sense of responsibility, commitment and patriotism, and without undue preference to any political party or any other groups or individuals within the polity.

6. The inter-agency body responsible for electoral security should work more transparently and inclusively with regular consultations with political parties, civil society groups and other stakeholders.

7. Security arrangements, general principles for rules of engagement, updates and complaints mechanisms should also be made public.

8. Clear delineation of the operational roles of different security agencies be established, with the military only involved at the request of INEC.

References

Albert, I.O. Marco, D &Adetula, V. (2007).*Perspectives on the 2003 Elections in Nigeria.* Abuja: IDASA Nigeria

Aina, O. (2006). Voter apathy Dangerous for Democracy.*The Punch*, 2006 Sept. 27. Pp. 7.

Anifowose, O. (2003). Election violence in war-ravaged societies: The case study of 2003 General Election in Nigeria.*The Journal of African and Asian Political Studies 2*(2):48-59.

Attoh, F. (2015).*Security and the 2015 Elections: Issues and Perspectives.* (No Publication Details).

Azeez, O. &Amao, O. B. (2015).Election as Warfare: Militarization of Elections and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria.*International Affairs Forum,* 70-81.

Chukwudi, J. (2019). Military's involvement in 2019 elections and the promise of neutrality, March 7, https://dailypost.ng/2019/03/07/militaryinvolvement-2019-electionpromises-neutrality.

EISA, (2019).2019 General Elections in Nigeria. Statement Issued in Abuja, 25 February

2019By His Excellency, Rupiah Banda, former President of the Republic of Zambia andLeader of the EISA Election Observer Mission.

Eke, O. A. (2019). Staggered Electoral Process and Economic Development in Nigeria: The Political Economy Approach.*IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), 24*(3.2), 71-86.

EU Election Observation Mission, (2019).Nigeria General Elections 2019: Second Preliminary Statement.Website: www.eueomnigeria2019.eu,Facebook: EUEOMNigeria19, Twitter:@EUEOMNigeria19

Heywood. A. (1997).*Politics.* London. Macmillan Press Ltd.

Hounkpe, M and Guoye, A. (2010). The role of security forces in the electoral process and the political disempowerment of the Nigeria women. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability, 3*(9), 1836-1847.

Hounkpe, M. and Gueye, A.B. (2010).*The Role of Security Forces in the Electoral Process: the case of six West African countries.* Abuja, Fredrich Ebert Stiftung

Igini, M. (2013). Election Security in Theory and Practice: Perspective of a Resident Electoral Commissioner. In Lai Olurode (Ed.), *Election Security In Nigeria: Matters Arising (43-62).* Abuja: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES).

Jega, M. A. (2015). Electoral Reforms in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects. Paper Presented at the First University of Abuja Public Lecture Series, Thursday October 29, 2015

Jega, M. A. (2012). The Electoral Process and Security Sector Synergy.A Paper Delivered to EIMC 6 Participants of Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Abuja on August 21, 2012.

Momoh, A. (2005) Biometric Voting Technology.

Niger Delta Watch (2019).*A civil society report on the conduct of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.* Port Harcourt: Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN)

Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (2019).*Threshold for the 2019 Nigeria Elections.* Abuja: Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC).

Nkwede, J. O., Udeuhele, G. I. and Nwankwo, O. U.(2022).Electoral Process and National Security in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of the 2015 and 2019 General Elections, *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences,* 27(6), Series 4, 27-32,

Ojo, O. M. &Ademowo, J. A. (2015). Electoral Security and Its Implications for Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies, 3*(9):5-14

Ojukwu, U. G., Mbah, C. C. &Maduekwe, V.C. (2019).Elections and Democratic Consolidation: A Study of2019 General Elections in Nigeria. *Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies, 6*(4), 53-64.

Okechukwu, A, Chukwuka, O. and Chikwado, C. (2019). Militarization, Electoral Violence and 2019 General Election in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publication, 9*(10), 2250-3153.

Okechukwu, E. Ugwu, C &Onu D. (2016). Implications of Militarizing Elections in Nigeria: The Ekiti and Osun State.*Journal of Security Studies and Global Politics, 1*(1), 19-28.

Olaniyan, A &Amao, B. (2015). Elections as warfare: Militarization of elections and the challenges of democratic institutions.*International Journal of Democratic Governance and International Forum Spring 3*(4) 70-81.

Olukor, F. (2019) Rivers Election: Soldiers, Armed gangs used to intimidate, arrest out staff. Available at https://punchng.com/rivers-election-soldiers-armed-gangs-used-to-intimidate-arrest-our-staff-says-INEC.

Olukosi, I. (2015). The Implications of Militarizing Nigerian elections. Available at https://gwen.com/2019/03/08/militarizingnigeria.

Onwuama, E. M. (2019). Politics and Governance: A Critique of the 2019Nigeria Presidential Election.*International Journal of Academic Research in Public Policy and Governance, 5*(1), 50-70.

Orji, N. (2015). Election perspective in African.*African Spectrum, 49*(3), 121-13.

Persons, T. (1952).*Positivism: The essential writings.* Lenzer, Gertrude, New Brunswick, NY: Transaction Publisher.

Spencer, H. (1930).*A renowned appreciation.* Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publication.

Sule, B. (21019). The 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria: An analysis of the voting pattern, issues and impact. *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space, 15*(2), 129-140.

The Commonwealth Observer Group, (2019). *NigeriaGeneral Elections.* Abuja: The Commonwealth Observer Group

USAID (2013). Best Practices in Electoral Security: A Guide for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Programming.

Uwa, O.G. and Ologunowa, C.S. (2011). Post-electoral violence in Nigerian: Lesson "for 2015" General Election, *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences 4*(1), 45-55.

Uyangoda, A. (2015). Militarizing state society and culture in Asia: Critical perspectives. *Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA) 21*(2) 1-16

Verjee, A., Kwaja, C. &Onubogu, O. (2018). Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Change, Continuity, Andthe Risks to Peace. Special Report No. 429 for the United States Institute of Peace