

## The Roles of the Nigerian Army in the 2019 Presidential Elections in Kano, Lagos and Rivers States

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### Abstract

An election cannot be judged as fair, free and credible, unless some agents of democracy like Electoral Institutes, Electorates, Security agents, Media, and Civil Society Organizations lived up to expectation. Elections in Nigeria is considered “a do or die” affair, it is dangerously laced with acrimony, brigandage and malfeasance; thus, Election Security has been a major challenge to stakeholders. Existing studies have drawn linkages between security agents and general elections in Nigeria; but this study investigates the roles of the Nigerian Army in up-scaling electoral fraud in the 2019 Presidential Elections in Kano, Lagos and Rivers States. These States were chosen, considering their huge and unique demographic variables, commercial hubs, and strategic economic significance. The securitization theory was employed as theoretical framework for analysis, while Qualitative data provides great insights on the problematique through secondary resources. The paper argued that, though the security agents tried in some areas in the elections; the Army compromised in the areas studied, hence the electoral irregularities that ensued. Lastly, it was suggested, inter-alia, that an electoral reform is sine-qua-non, to ensure stakeholders work assiduously to sanitize processes of elections in Nigeria; the Army must be neutral in discharging its duties if it must provide security in elections, especially in circumstances where incumbency factor exist.

**Keywords:** *Security Agencies, Securitization of Election, Kano, Lagos & Rivers States*

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### **Background to the Study**

Globally, Democracy has gained ascendancy as the best form of government that has a greater capacity of promoting development (Ibaba, 2013). A major appeal of democracy is its emphasis on popular citizen's participation; their objective according to Okoko, (2019) is to reinforce the necessary link between popular preferences and public policy. As such, it is asserted that, the selection of political representatives by citizens in free, fair and credible elections in combination with universal suffrage, arguably remains the most essential feature of modern democracy. Election involves competition amongst political parties and candidates for control of state institutions and power. Representative democracy requires that elections are open, competitive, free and fair. Elections serve the function of the legitimization of the exercise of political authority. Politicians, who desire and aspire to control, and exercise legitimate political power in a democratic setting, know that it is practically impossible to get political power except through elections.

Election promotes accountability, transparency, frugality, in management of national resources, commitment to national development objectives, and the actualization of aspirations of the people (Ibaba, 2010). Elections make leaders conscious of the need to retain their political mandates in the face of competition, and in comparison with the era of military regimes, have led to an improvement of citizens' participation in the choice of leaders. However, Okoko (2019) posited that this seems not to be the case in Nigeria, as it has been argued that from independence, elections in Nigeria have been marked with widespread irregularities and undemocratic practices. It should be noted that one of the root causes of the bloody civil war was the way elections were conducted and the grievances that arose from the first general and regional elections in the country. The 1964 federal elections in Nigeria and the 1965 Western elections were characterized by widespread electoral malpractices and as such gave rise to political tensions and violence of great magnitude that ultimately contributed to the first military coup in Nigeria in January, 1966 (Ciroma, 1988).

It was noted that the greatest challenges of the Nigerian first republic were centred on elections, struggle for power, and issues of ethnic domination (Dudley, 1973). Similarly, the political crisis that rocked the Action Group, (a political party in the then Western region), and the attendant treason trial of its leaders, were all connected with electoral malfeasance. Thus, it is a truism that elections which supposed to serve as vehicle for qualitative governance, led Nigeria to a massive wastage of human asset, and material resources in a fruitless war. However, over the years, the idea which presents elections as indispensable prerequisites for democratic practice and its role in entrenching good governance with /through election; it has been observed that in contemporary Nigeria, elections are the fossil of politics. Once they give democracy a huge boost, now they cause colossal problems. The Electoral system in Nigeria is a bastion for business; it is a force of competition in which groups manipulates to outwit each other in their quest for political power.

Thus, election in this context is no longer the basis for seeking to serve the people, but the elites' strategic structure for ascendancy to political power which is a vehicle for the control and the distribution of scarce resources and for primitive accumulation by deprivation. Thus, the

country's electoral process has been described as a tortuous path of contradictions, discords and collaborations which has tremendously affected national unity and security. To make issues worst, the security agents, particularly the Army, saddled with the responsibility of securing the electoral processes often compromised for the highest bidder, and aid electoral brigandage and malfeasance.

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria was the most expensive election ever organized in the political history of the country. It incurred an additional N69 billion than the 2015 elections; yet popular sources affirmed that the elections were freight with irregularities (Gidado, 2019). There is no denial that the 2019 general elections in Nigeria was fraught with monumental irregularities, was grossly rigged and notoriously violent, and therefore, not free, fair, credible and acceptable. We saw, read and watch it in local and international newspapers, radio and televisions; and the international observers came, saw and wrote what they observed the European Union Observer Mission, (2019), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), (2019) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), (2019) Reports on the election under review dismissed it as corrupt and fraudulent, and hugely indicted the Independent National Electoral Commission INEC, the Security agencies, particularly the Army, and the political parties for their ignoble roles in undermining the credibility of the Presidential 2019 polls (Ibuchukwu, 2019). This position was the same with the local observers, and indeed most honest Nigerian citizens. In this stead, election security is therefore critical for the success of elections and democratic consolidation in the country, hence, the *raison detre* for the deployment of security forces or agents in elections. However, the *modus-operandi* of the personnel of security agents, particularly, the Army, deployed before, during and after elections in Nigeria always have unintended outcomes, that influences the elections negatively (Centre For Social Justice in Nigeria (CSJN), 2019).

It is within this context, that this paper examined how security agents, particularly the Army, encouraged and facilitated electoral fraud through securitization of election in the areas studied. In the process of determining these issues, the paper schematizes an architectural foundation for election security system in Nigeria. The dispositions of certain paradigms involved which are inter-related and inter-connected can be properly comprehended within the frameworks of political parties, godfatherism, money politics, vote-commoditization, sponsored electoral violence, ballot snatching and stuffing, and the politicization of security agents for securitization of elections. As Africa's most populous country with the largest economy, and biggest democracy, Nigeria is a bellwether for the continent, thus, elections in the country must be deeply competitive, fair, free and credible. Stakeholders must work collectively to institute democratic reforms that will sanitize electoral processes in tandem with global best practices.

## **Conceptual Issues**

### **The 2019 Presidential Elections**

The 2019 Presidential election was held concurrently with the National Assembly, Governorship and State Assemblies' polls. The election was adjudged to be the most expensive poll ever organized by the Electoral Management Body in Nigeria. According to Gidado

(2019), the election incurred an additional cost of sixty-nine billion Naira than the 2015 elections. At the eve of the commencement of the election, the INEC Chairman, Professor Mahmoud Yakubu summoned a stakeholders' press conference to postpone the election to the following week. He cited delay in delivery of election materials and the deployment of staff to the nooks and crannies of the country as principal reasons for the postponement. Many electorates who traveled to their home towns for the election were disappointed over the postponement barely six hours to the commencement of the exercise. Eventually, when the election was finally conducted, there were recorded incidences of sponsored electoral violence, ballot snatchings and stuffing, and vote commoditization (vote-buying), by the two leading political parties, the APC, and the PDP. Vote-buying by politicians and their agents (military and civilians) which took centre-stage in political sphere, is the act of exchanging votes for money and other material items between politicians, their agents and the electorates.

Similarly, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) was also accused of vote-buying with its Trader Moni economic intervention policy. The Nigeria's Head of Transparency International (TI), Mr. Auwal Rafsanjani, in a media chat posited that such initiative was not a part and parcel of the Manifesto of the ruling APC., and it is not in the Nigerian Constitution. He bluntly stated that “the allegation by many Nigerians that the Trader Moni was clearly a case of vote buying using public funds, and that this goes contrary to the spirit and letters of the Nigerian Constitution, and to having a fair, free, and credible elections” (TI, 2019). Responding to the accusations, Laolu Akande, the spokesman of the Vice President, Yemi Osibanjo, flatly denied the allegations, saying that Trader Moni was not an act of vote buying, but rather a means to empower petty traders. He said, “it will be an absurdity to call Trader Moni vote-buying. You can see it for yourself that this is a welfare programme that has affected millions of lives positively” (Gidado, 2019).

Meanwhile, another dimension of the election was the militarization of the electoral processes, mostly in the opposition's stronghold. This was also reported as one of the shortcomings of the 2019 Presidential election. The militarization of the election processes was against valid subsisting Court judgments that prohibited the use of the Military (Army) for election purposes. Series of video clips trended online which captured soldiers, men of the Nigerian Army overrunning the homes of State officials, like in Rivers State where the ruling party is the PDP. Many INEC officials have also lamented the besieging of collations centres by the army, disrupting election process and charting away of sensitive election materials. These acts were condemned by both local and international election observers. This prompted the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Yusufu Tukur Buratai, to set up a Panel of inquiry to investigate the role of the military in the 2019 elections. It is over a year now since the panel was inaugurated, its report has not been made public, drawing inferences from certain quarters that that the army really compromised in the 2019 Presidential elections, securitizing the exercise for the ruling APC (TI, 2020).

Another seemingly worrisome electoral malpractices, was the deployment of political thugs to polling units in places perceived to be “disadvantaged areas”, to disrupt peaceful electoral processes, and carryout all manners of electoral misconducts under military cover, in favour of

the highest bidder. However, some stakeholders involved in observing and monitoring the elections, said the elections were largely peaceful, and conducive atmosphere was provided for the conduct of the election; thus, by implication, the 2019 presidential election was to a large extent fair, free and credible (The African Union (AU), 2019).

### **Security Agents in Nigeria**

These are the various security agents in Nigeria, which works in synergy to provide physical security on land, sea, and air; to protect the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the Nigerian States. These security agents also combined efforts to safe-guard lives and properties within Nigeria; and during elections, they also work collectively to secure lives property and material before, during and after elections. The role of the security agents in elections is fundamentally to maintain law and order, and to ensure that elections are free, fair and credible, in tandem with global best practices. These security agents include the Army, Air force, Navy, Police, Civil Defense Corps, Customs, Immigrations, the National Drug Law Agency, and the Federal Road Safety Corps, to mentioned but a few (NDI, 2019).

### **Elections**

The most profound instrument of participation in modern democratic governance is election. In this vein, election has almost become synonymous with democracy. This agrees with the paradigm that, the founding pillars of any democratic political system, whether considered fragile or established, remain undoubtedly elections (Okoko,2019). Election serves a means of participation of the citizens in the establishment of a social contract as power is sourced from the people. In this context, free, fair and credible elections enable citizens to install governments and to remove inefficient governments; this serves as an incentive for political leaders to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people (Diamond, 2004). It has also been argued that the pattern and nature of leadership succession offered by elections provides the opportunity for the prediction of the stability of the political system and the mobilization of the citizens for development (Ibaba, 2010).

The crucial place occupied by elections in democratic governance can perhaps be best appreciated when one considers Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 which inter-alia states thus: The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures(Article 21 (3), UDHR).It is therefore significant that elections provide a platform for citizens to periodically express their will and establish a social contract. However, it is paramount to emphasize for notation that the instrumentality of election is not an end in itself but a means to the enthronement of a disciplined, patriotic and honest leadership capable of driving development. However, in Nigeria, the way elections are conducted, the perceptions and the value system surrounding elections, on the one hand, and the strength of the democratic institution, on the other hand, is fundamentally responsible for the governance deficit experienced in Nigeria. however, election has been criticized, that it only succeeded in providing citizens with a chance to choose representatives who would make policies on their behalf while it fails to incorporate the citizens into the policy making and implementation process.



Consequently, it has been posited that it provides the people with right to vote, and not right to speak. This especially true where there is evident disconnects between popular opinion and policy outcomes of governments. Nevertheless, election with all its imperfections is still the preferred criterion for the establishment of a social contract in a democratic state. Election in itself is not bad but it is the way it is conducted, the dominant culture and the strength of democratic institutions in the society that determine the turn of elections which in turn determines whether or not elections are able to promote good governance. Discerning from the above, it can be stated without fear of contradiction that a country that is characterized by a culture of violence would most likely have violent elections.

### **Political Parties**

Political Parties are part of the structures that are referred to as “Migrated social structures or formations” which were transplanted from Europe to Africa devoid of the moral content and ethics that sustained them in Europe (Ekeh, 1980). Soanes (2001), defined Political Party, as an organized political group that puts forward candidates to be elected for government. Edmund Burke, a political party analyst, defined political party as a body of men united for the promotion of their joint endeavours, the national interest, upon some particular principles which they are all agreed' Burke, cited in Appadorai, (1968). From Plato to Aristotle, to Marx, political theory has concerned itself/put its energies on the type of governance that best has the capacity to pursue public good and how to install such a government. In as much as people have incompatible interests, they can only achieve their individual interests in association with others.

Consequently, men are compelled according to Okoko (2019) to live in a collectivity Across literature, theory and global best practices, political scientists, political analysts, writers, and commentators are agreed on the fact that political parties are not only significant, relevance and inevitable in the electoral process, but inevitable in the running of democracies. Some scholars are of the view that it is unthinkable to operate democracy without political parties. Appadorai (1968) opined that political party is more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit, have distinctive aims and opinions on the leading political questions of controversy in the State, and who by acting together as a political unit, seek to obtain control of the government. Epstein 1967 defines political party as any group seeking votes under a recognizable label', while for Downs 1957 a political party is a “team of men and women seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a competitive election”.

Yusuf & Othman (2016) are of the view that a political party is an association of people who have common interests, that organize themselves to nominate candidates for elective offices, compete in and run for elections, with the aim of forming and controlling government and determining public policy. For Salihu (1962) a political party is a system of interdependent activities characterized by a high degree of rational direction of behavior towards ends that are objects of common acknowledgements and expectations”. Some electoral systems represent one party, two parties, and multi-party systems; the party that won the election is called the 'ruling party', while other parties formed the 'opposition parties'. In the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, thirty political parties contested for various elective positions. It is debatable in

Nigeria if contemporary political party members jointly promote the national interest or they concentrate on party interests or even personal interests. The lack of conference/accord between party interests and national interests generate national crisis, instability and retard development. Political party no doubt plays critical roles in the selection of candidates to contest elections for political offices. Therefore, it is important that internal democracy in the political parties remains very crucial to democratic governance. In most underdeveloped democracies, internal political party democracy is lacking. Candidates are selected on the basis of patron client relationship, bribery and corruption, and god-father-son connections. Consequently, it is only those with resources, connections and power that are opportune to contest elections. As such, credible candidates are isolated from the process.

### **Electoral Violence**

Encyclopedia of Social Sciences defines Electoral violence as all sort of physical and psychological aggressions, conflicts and crisis orchestrated before (pre), during (at) and after (post) elections. In simple term, it is election induced or related violence. Since independence, most of the elections in Nigeria have been occasioned with certain degrees of violence. Elections are characterized by wide spread violence, intimidation, killings and various forms of rigging in favour of a preferred candidate or party (Ele, 2013). Privileged or wealthy politicians have continued to use financial or other inducements to pay their way through vote commoditization, ballot box snatching and stuffing. This ugly scenario has led to the emergence of unpopular candidates and a high level of political alienation among the average Nigerian electorates.

Election violence is one of the barometers associated with leadership legitimacy crisis and bad governance in the country. It has constituted a bane in the Nigerian electoral process and democratic consolidation. The institutions that supposed to ensure the conduct of free, fair and credible elections such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Tribunals, the Security Agencies and even the Judiciary have continued to compromise the process and to demonstrate partiality in favour of the ruling party or preferred candidates. This led Oni (2014) to observe that elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic may be best described as precarious, a situation that has occasioned apathy in many elections in the country. Electoral context in Nigeria has been reduced to the battle of the strongest, and the survival of the fittest. The state has more or less become a tool or machinery in the hands of the political Elites and their cronies who use the instrumentality of power to attain sectional and particularistic interests and objectives. Elections in Nigeria have become a do or die affair as politicians adopt both covert and overt means to impose themselves on the vulnerable electorates.

Ashiru (2009), captured this aptly when he opined that, "Apart from the violent nature of our electoral competition, the contestants for the state power also try to undo or outdo one another using all shades of electoral malpractices such as recruiting the juvenile to vote, detaching ballot booklets, duplicating ballot papers, vandalizing voting materials, stuffing of ballot boxes, and outright intimidation of opponents as well as falsification of electoral results". Political violence has persisted and has been changing dimensions in Nigeria due to the

insatiable quest by Nigerian politicians and their supporters to win elections at all cost. As a result, several lives have been lost to political violence in Nigeria and millions of properties destroyed. The fair and intimidation that even come from some state security operatives on election days have resulted to high level of alienation and the often very low turnout of voters during elections as earlier mentioned.

### **The Securitization of Elections**

Election security is a situation where electoral malpractices, fraud and violence are extinguished, it is rife where security agents are deployed to handle the security of election materials and to ensure that what the State decides is what that counts. The primary objective is on the safety of the security agencies and their ability to ensure that they quench and quell any reaction against election conducts, and delivers election results as determined by the State apparatus (Weaver, 2004). The wave of democratization which began in Europe, arrived the shores of the African continent between the late 1950s and early 1990s; since then most countries in the continent opted for the establishment of multiparty democratic systems based on the rule of law. They also chose election as the main method for selecting their fellow citizens to represent them in the daily management of affairs in their countries. While it is true that remarkable progress has been made, it is also true that when it comes to the organization of peaceful, fair free and equitable elections, it is no yet 'Uhuru'. Since election remains the leading notable sources of conflicts in these counties, the issues of securitization of elections is certainly part of the outstanding problems which the new democracies including Nigeria, must resolve if they really want to improve the quality of their electoral process and consolidate democratic governance (IRI, 2019). The issue of security during the implementation of the electoral process poses major problems to new democracies like Nigeria. Infact Security problems can come up in all the stages of election, that is pre-electoral, electoral, and post-electoral phases. The mode of involving the security agents, particularly, the Army, and how they carry out their duties are part of the possible sources of insecurity and peace during elections; this is so, because the military personnel deliberately interfere in elections one way or the other (USIP, 2019). Since elections will always beget conflicts, particularly in Nigeria; if the Army is to be involved in the electoral process, they should be involved in such a way that they do not become a source of bias in the electoral process, given its intimidating nature and the potential violence inherent in its personnel.

Political parties and leaders are elected on the basis of their Ideologies and promises, thus, it is expected that a political party that failed to meet its campaign promises ought to be voted out of office. However, when this is not done, it is alleged that the security agents that securitizes the election, and the Election Management Body and its Staff have compromised the electoral process (NDI, 2019). In such circumstance, the notion is that the security agents were contracted by the 'Powers that be' to erupt electoral fraud and deliver results. Election has critical implications for attaining political objectives, the contenders for political power are desperate to retain or gain office, without which their chances for 'primitive accumulation' would be jeopardized. Hence, People killed, and were killed in the fight to gain or retain office for themselves and for their Principals. Thus, most often, they engineer violence and thuggery before, during and after the elections to influence outcomes. Due to the Electoral fraud,



violence and brigandage that have become inherent in Nigeria's electoral process; the 2019 Presidential elections also suffered from such 'baptism' (Maxwell, 2019; CLEEN Foundation, 2019; EU-COM, 2019). Thus, the barbarism and brigandage that ensued before, during and after the 2019 Presidential Elections in some areas in Kano, Lagos and Rivers States could adequately fit into the Scenarios of the Hobbesian State of nature, where life is... nasty, brutish and shot (Hobbes, 1685).

Supposedly, electoral security defines the liberty and freedom for citizens to exercise their voting rights without intimidation, and to license strong institutional basis upon which electorates or voters build their confidence, given the adequacy of democratic space for free, fair and credible elections, or being rob of their mandates to decide who governs them. However, in the context of this paper; Securitization of elections is about the siege mentality for electoral irregularities during elections, where some citizens' were intimidated, brutalized, killed, disenfranchised, framed-up and jailed by hired political thugs and security agents, particularly, some personnel of the Army, with a sole objective of delivering election results to their Principals.

#### **Theoretical Foundation for Analysis**

The paper adopts the theory of Securitization; the major proponents of the theory are Buzan (1991), Ole Weaver (2004), Jaap de Wilde (2004) and others. The fundamental thrust of the theory is that security does not entail military action (alone) but involves a spillover from the social, economic and environmental conditions of the society. Securitization according to Weaver and Wilde (2004) is a process of oriented conception of security which stands in contrast to or juxtaposes materialist approach of Classical security studies. The Classical approach of security focuses on the material disposition of the threat including distribution of power, military capabilities and polarity, whereas securitization examines how a certain phenomenon is transformed by an actor into a matter of security for primordial interests or in order to allow for the use of extraordinary measures. The theory argues that security is an illocutionary act that solely utters a non-security issue to become one (Weaver, 2004). Securitization studies aims to explicate who securitizes (securitizing Actors), on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what realistic outcomes and under what conditions or circumstances.

A referral object could be State (Military), territorial integrity, national sovereignty, or an ideology of political parties, national economics (political and economic), collective identities or individuals and groups as well as issues in areas that possesses legitimate claim to survival and whose existence is threatened. A Securitizing actor articulates an already politicized issue as an existential threat, in the reference of this paper, the APC Vs the PDP activities in the areas under reference. In response to the nature of the threat, the securitizing Actor asserts that it has to adopt extraordinary means that goes beyond the ordinary norms in political domain (Buzan et al (1998)). The Actors can be the Government, Army, Political Elites or Civil Society groups. Thus, Securitization is seen as an extreme version of politicization.

The relevance of the theory to this study can never be over-emphasized, the 2019 Presidential election in the areas of the study was ridden with violence, it was a pertinent security issue, many people lost their lives, and both public and private properties were destroyed. The referent and non-state actors in their quests to gain advantage over each other raised security threats and fanned embers of discord which degenerated into violence in the elections. Hence, these areas were threatened and there were need for extraordinary interventions, thus the Army was deployed, and it perpetrated apolitical actions which affects the credibility of some of the election results in those States.

The Securitization theory has been critiqued, scholars found it limited in the view that it can be abused to legitimize and empower the role of the Army in civil electoral processes in nascent or emerging democracies, it was also noted that the political elites can manipulate securitization acts to undermine democratic processes, impose martial laws, detain political opponents, and the undue increase of military expenditures and budgets.

### **Methodology**

The study appropriated the basic tenets of the Qualitative method of data collection; thus, documentary data from Secondary sources provides immense insights on the Problematique. The data obtained were descriptively presented and analyzed for easy comprehension.

**Election Security:** The Role of the Nigerian Army in Kano, Lagos and Rivers States During The 2019 Presidential Elections: Executive Paraphrase

### **Preamble**

Election in Nigeria always begets violence, there are attitudes and behaviours of key stakeholders in the electoral process, starting from the Executives, Election Management Body (INEC), its officials, adhoc staff, electorates, candidates, political-godfathers, political parties, the media, judiciary, civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders that fillip controversies, disagreements and conflicts before, during and after elections. Thus, security agents are required to securitize the electoral process. This is the thesis for the invitation of the security forces in the electoral process. While many stakeholders have welcomed the involvement of the security agents in ensuring peace and order during elections, majority of them have deplored the involvement of the military, particularly the Army in the electoral process in Nigeria because of its bias and partisanship in favour of the incumbents at national and sub-national levels. Local and international sources have reported preponderance cases where the Army had served as veritable tool or agent of intimidation through heavy handedness during elections. This was the case in point in Nigeria during the 2019 Presidential elections in the aforementioned States which the narratives below tried to expatiate.

### **Kano State**

Kano State is in North Western Geo-political zone of Nigeria; it has 44 Local Government Areas (LGAs) or sub-national units. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), (2019) put its population at 13.4 million. Kano is the only northern State with highest internally Generated

Revenue (IGR) in the country with a Gross Domestic Product GDP of 12.39 billion dollars, and a per capita of 1,399 U.S. Dollars. It remains the richest northern state in the country (NBS, 2019). Hence, in every election in Nigeria, registered political parties strive to win and govern the state in view of its strategic-ness in determining overall outcomes of sub-national and national electoral contests (Transparency International (TI), 2019).

The 2019 Presidential election was a case in point; the two major political parties with prominent figures and large followers in the state, the APC and the PDP had a keen contest. Certain segments of election observers and monitoring groups were of the view that the elections in the State were marked with violence in Kano metropolis, Danbatta, Madobi, Wudil and Kumbotso. The security agents, particularly the Army were accused of harassing, intimidating and brutalizing electorates of the opposition party, to securitize the electoral processes and eventual victory for the incumbent, and ruling party. This process concurs with the tenets of our theoretical framework which explains or describes Securitization of elections for primordial motives. Thus, the followers of the opposing parties became bestial, hence the political violence that erupted in the aforementioned area, and beyond. Local and international Election Observers, the Civil Liberty Organization (CLO) and the Transparency International (TI) were unanimous on the matter, they condemned the electoral violence, and blamed the security forces for bi-partisanship (TI, 2019). However, at the end of the process, and the All Progressive Congress (APC) was declared the winner.

The coalition of Civil Society Organizations on Human Rights and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria, also spoke on the role of security forces or agents in the Presidential elections across the 36 States of the Federation. Maxwell (2019), the Executive Director said in Kano as in Lagos and Rivers States, there were violent incidences orchestrated by security Agents in some Local Governments to facilitate electoral fraud in the 2019 Presidential elections. This violence and brigandage according to him laid credence to the declaration of the outcomes of the elections in these frontline States by some Stakeholders as “not fair, free and credible”, the result of this pronouncement was the leadership legitimacy crisis that ensued, and progressed to the domain of the judiciary for adjudication. Similarly, some Civil Society Groups, like Democracy and Good Governance (DGG), (2019) Community for Popular Participation in Nigeria (CPPN) (2019) and Election Monitoring Group in Nigeria (EMGN) (2019), admitted that there were electoral malpractices induced by some security Agents in the 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria, but according to them, these are not enough reasons to discredit the entire election results (EMGN, 2019).

Thus, conclusively in the case of Kano State, as were the cases in the other frontline States studied, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) upheld the results of the 2019 Presidential Elections in the State, and argued that the election was fair, free and credible. However, drawing credence from the reports of most local and international Elections monitors and observers, it can be reached that the processes before, during and after the 2019 Presidential Elections in Kano State were in the parlance of our theoretical framework, securitized, using the power of incumbency (CLO, 2019, TI, 2019).

## **Lagos State**

Lagos State is the richest state in Nigeria at present, it has 20 LGAs; by the reports of the NBS (2019), its population stood at 23 Million, making it the largest City in Africa. Its population growth has a rate of about 600,000 per annum, with a density of approximately 4,193 persons per square metres. It has a monthly IGR of about 34 billion, however, it estimates that its monthly IGR will hit 73.8 billion naira in 2020 (NBS, 2020; and Lagos State 2020 Budget). The State is chosen as one of our case studies because of its massive population, great economic potentials, humungous wealth, strategic importance as a littoral state, and being a viable commercial hub. Thus, in every election in Nigeria, registered political parties strive to win and control the state at national and sub-national electoral contests. During the 2019 Presidential elections, not everything went on well in Lagos. There were recorded cases of ugly scenes where security agents compromised, and the outcome were massive electoral malfeasance in locations where the State structure or the ruling political party felt it will record low vote (CSO, 2019). It was also alleged that the god-father of Lagos politics, a former State governor incentivized many electorates and security agents, particularly the Army, to assiduously work for the victory of his party and candidates (political sons and daughters). It was also alleged that on the eve of the Presidential election, a bullion van was seen escorted into his compound by the personnel of the Nigerian army. The content of the bullion van is believed to be millions of naira for the commoditization of votes.

The practical demonstrations of electoral irregularities were observed at Oshodi, Aja, Lekki, Mushin, Ojo, Alaba, Okokomaiko, Kirikiri, Ajegunle, Mile-Two, Berger, Tin-Can Island, Apapa, Ajeromi, Oyedeji and Ezeagwu etc. These areas are mainly populated by non-indigenes of South-East and South-South extractions; it was believed most of them would vote for the PDP candidate, the Atiku/Obi ticket. As a result, 'Identity Politics' was played out; there were sponsored violence to disrupt elections, and to facilitate ballot snatching and stuffing in favour of the godfather's party and candidates. PDP Officials alleged that the security agencies and some political thugs violently disrupted voting processes, destroyed and in some cases snatched ballot boxes. They referred to the 'Demola saga' at Okota, shown on a national television, who under security cover, violently disrupted voting processes in some polling units, destroying ballot boxes, and tearing ballot papers, while some military and police personnel stood some metres away. It was also reported that Asiwaju, the god fathers of Lagos Politics, a Chieftain of the All Progressive Congress (APC), and a former governor of the State, whose wife is a serving Senator on the platform of APC had bullion van come into his private residence with millions of naira on the eve of the Presidential election, allegedly to induce electorates to vote for party's candidates at sub-national and national levels (TI, 2019). It was also reported that most residents of Ojo and Alaba, near Alaba International Market, in Ojo local government of Lagos State were prevented by military personnel from the Ojo Military Cantonment from performing their franchise on the pretext of security reasons, because of their avid loyalty to the PDP, an opposition Political Party (CLO, 2019). The above scenarios vividly explained the intricacies of the 2019 Presidential elections in Lagos State, which agrees with the basic assumptions of the securitization theory adopted for the study.

## **Rivers State**

Rivers State is the second state after Bayelsa, below the sea level in Nigeria, it has 23 LGAs; by the 2006 National Census, Rivers State has a population of 7, 533, 924, making the State the sixth most populous state in country. Rivers is the second richest state in the country after Lagos. This oil producing State provides bulk of the funds that propels the economy of the FRN, it is one of the largest commercial hubs in the country. This underscores why each political party in Nigeria strives to win the state in any electoral contest. In Rivers State, previous elections have been characterized with violence, thus, the concern that the 2019 Presidential elections will be marred by violence between the supporters of the State Governor Nyesome Wike of the PDP, and the supporters of the APC represented, by Rotimi Ameachi, the Minister of Transport, came to reality (USIP, 2019). There are Militia groups in the State, while some are loyal to PDP, others are loyal to the APC. This has been the pattern of alliances of gang leaders in the State since the inauguration of the Forth Republic. Thus, militia leaders and their foot soldiers engage in gang wars majorly on the streets of Port-Harcourt, using automatic weapons, explosive, machetes, and broken bottles; destroying public and private properties and, maiming and killing several people for the securitization of elections which is a lucrative business for the Militia groups.

The election induced violence spread to other Rivers State Communities like a wild fire, under the command structure of the militia leaders who have been financially inspired, activated and motivated by prominent Politicians in the state. The renowned militant leaders, who are normally “Contracted” for the business of securitization of elections, are Asari-Dokubo, Ateke Tom, Sabama George and Tompolo amongst others. The 2019 Presidential election in the state was not different; Militia gangs hired by Rivers State politicians to securitize elections, engaged in brutal contest for illegitimate business and space (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2019). In the worst affected communities like Bodo, Okrika, Ogbogoro, and Diobu etc cult gangs loyal to the APC and PDP carried out a reign of terror before, during and after the elections. The Coalition of Civil Society Organization on Human Rights and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria, Maxwell (2019) which monitored the 2019 Presidential election in the State observed that electoral violence was sponsored in areas predominantly populated by electorates who are loyal to the incumbent Governor of the State, Nyesom Wike (CLEEN Foundation, 2019).

There were also escalation of electoral violence in the following areas, Abonnema, Ahoada West, Akuku-Toru, Andoni West, Asari-Toru, Bonny, Khana and Gokana Local Governments of the State; where it was alleged, some gunmen suspected to be thugs hired by politicians resisted harassment by the personnel of the Nigerian Army, and engaged in violence, which led to the death of several political thugs, many innocent electorates two civilians and some personnel of the Nigerian Army (USIP, 2019). It was reported that the Army also engaged some people loyal to an opposition party in Southern Ijaw Local Government neighbouring Bayelsa, and arrested several people. In a related development, the residence of Kalakama, Okirika, Ikwerre, Nyokhana, Bolo and Omoku blamed the Army and officers of the Special Anti-Rubbery Squad (SARS) for hijacking and diverting electoral materials meant for their areas, hence violence ensued between the youths and the Army



which led to the death of several people and to the destruction of properties worth millions of Naira (IRI, 2019). The Niger Delta Civil Society Coalition (NDCSC), 2019 also alleged of the military obstruction of electoral processes in Tai and Eleme LGAs which resulted to the killings of innocent electorates, and to the burning and destruction of valuable properties worth billions of naira. Thus, the group called on President Buhari to immediately put an end to the killings and arson in Rivers State, and to the INEC to disqualify the election results from those areas (European Union Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM), 2019).

Summarily, the point is that in Rivers State as it were in Kano and Lagos States, it was widely reported that, personnel of the Army and other security agents deliberately engineered violence in areas where the opposition political parties, have greatest number of followers. The political objectives were amongst others, to scare voters, caused apathy and facilitate electoral irregularities to the vantage of the ruling parties at sub-national and national levels (Wike, 2019; NDCSC, 2019; EU-EOM, 2019). Thus, in this circumstance, security of elections could also mean efforts rendered by security agents, particularly, the Army to defend, protect, maintain, sustain and perpetuates the interests of those who put them as garrison of elections (Buzan, 1991). This underscores the ability of the ruling party to use the power of incumbency to cow the 'security party' of the State to submit to its biddings through sponsored violence and electoral fraud (USIP, 2019). The point here is that, the issue of security during elections depends largely, on the governing authority of a State to regulate the behavior and attitudes of the Security agents, particularly, the personnel of the Nigerian Army, as to whether to provoke electoral malpractices and violence, or to ensure free, fair and credible elections for the stabilization of the electoral process. What was largely observed during the 2019 Presidential Elections, points to the direction that the security agents, particularly, the Army, perpetuate regime security by being violent and weird in the defense of those with 'Power, Influence, and Authority', as expatiated with secondary data above in the areas studied.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Securitization of election, Election security and electoral security focuses on integrated study of elections in a holistic manner to extinguish electoral malfeasance and/or irregularities, and to guarantee and consolidate democratic universal conduct. The challenge of securitizing elections and election management in developing economies is a daunting task. Nevertheless, the processes and outcomes of the 2015 Presidential elections have shown that where the political will exist, the Nation can rise above issues like social dichotomies, the lack of internal democracies in political parties, vote commoditization, the snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes, electoral terrorism and militancy to produce or manage elections that are fair, free, credible and generally acceptable.

Thus, it is worth stating straightaway that this paper is an advocacy against the use of military (Army) in the electoral process in Nigeria, this concurs with the norm in old or well developed democracies where elections do not generate conflicts and much less require the involvement of the military to deal with or ensure security during elections. However, because of some peculiarities in developing democracies, like insecurity, electoral violence, and irregularities etc., which compels the need for the Army to securitize the electoral process, the Army must be

properly oriented and reminded on the “Rules of Engagements”, to forestall any bias and partisanship. This is how we can maximize the involvement of the Army in the electoral process, while reducing the disadvantages to the barest minimum; otherwise, the time is ripe or mature to keep the army far away from our electoral process.

The attitudes and behaviours of all key stakeholders in the electoral process, starting from the electorates, candidates, political-godfathers, political parties, the media, judiciary, civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders that fillip controversies, disagreements and conflicts before, during and after elections must also be checkmated with punitive sanctions vide relevant legislation in the Electoral Act (Yoroms, 2017). Thus, the agitations and clamor for electoral reforms, and the establishment of Election Offences' Tribunal to deal decisively with those apprehended in election irregularities to deter the rising flame of electoral malfeasance is germane.

Moving forward, Principal stakeholders in Nigeria must work assiduously to make the Army very neutral in discharging its duties if it must provide security in elections, particularly in situations where incumbency factor exists; this will improve the electoral process, accelerates democratic consolidation, and subordinate security agents, particularly, the Army to the rule of law, and democratic control, in a Civil-Military Relations.

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