

## **An Analysis of Election Stakeholders and the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

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The paper examines election stakeholders and the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Politics in Nigeria can be difficult. This is because the many parties involved in elections have very distinct interests, objectives, and aspirations, and as a result, their actions and attitudes during elections are very diverse. Despite the significant obstacles, there are numerous electoral stakeholders who play different roles in the elections in Nigeria. Documentary research techniques were used to gather the study's data, which was then presented, analyzed, and evaluated using descriptive analysis. The results demonstrate that the credibility of the electoral processes, which results from the various roles election stakeholders play throughout elections, is the biggest threat to democracy in Nigeria. Election stakeholders are culpable in the complicity of contributing to incredible political and electoral processes in the country. The paper, therefore, recommends that major stakeholders should strive to ensure that the political processes are credible for elections in Nigeria, while it concludes that election stakeholders have a duty to ensure that their involvement in the political processes should help to institute credible elections, deepen democracy and enhance political stability.

**Keywords:** *Analysis, Election stakeholders, 2019 General election, Nigeria, Political processes*

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### **Background to the Study**

The involvement of a large number of electoral stakeholders is a common point of controversy during elections, both within and outside the country. Experts and scholars have recently given their thoughts on the role of electoral stakeholders in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, which took place on February 23 and March 9, 2019 (Ajala and Muller, 2019; **Ameh and Adepegba, 2019**; Centre for Democracy and Development, 2019; Sule, 2019; Paki and Inokoba, 2020). With the benefit of hindsight, the introduction of elective principles for the first time in the Clifford's Constitution of 1922 signaled the emergence of democratic elections in Nigeria and it has been taken place continuously until the country gained independence in 1960 from British colonial rule. In the post-independence era, democratic elections have been on in the First Republic (1963-1966) and during the Second Republic (1979-1983), Nigeria abandoned the parliamentary system of government and changed to the presidential system. During the Third Republic (1992-1993), which lasted only two years, the presidential system of government was also adopted. The process of re-democratization began with the establishment of the Fourth Republic, when the nation once more became a democracy on May 29, 1999, and the 2019 general election is the sixth. Despite the fact that the first, second and third republics and democracies were abruptly put to an end by military interventions characterized by the willful violation and repression of the people's political, economic, and social rights, the process has continued ever since.

The depiction of electoral stakeholders in Nigeria for the 2019 general elections is both relevant to and a strength of this study. The primary goal of this article is to provide an overview of the key electoral stakeholders that were involved in Nigeria's general elections in 2019. The paper is divided into five sections to help it accomplish its goal. After the introduction, the methodology comes. The conceptual and literature reviews is in section three, and sections four explore and analyze the role of stakeholders in the 2019 general election in Nigeria. Finally, the paper is concluded with some recommendations.

### **Methodology**

Documentary research methods (DRM) were used to gather the study's data. Documentary research techniques involve examining documents that contain data on the phenomena being studied (Bailey, 1994). Documentary research methods are the techniques used to categorize, investigate, interpret, and identify the limitations of physical sources, most often written documents, whether in the public or private domain (personal papers, business records, state archives, communications, or legislation) (Payne and Payne, 2004: 61). It is the practice of using third parties to back up claims or arguments in academic writing. Every discipline that heavily relies on the study of documents, such as business, anthropology, communications, economics, education, medicine, political science, social work, and sociology, uses the DRM. The use of documentary sources in social science research cannot be overlooked. This is due to the fact that it is equally as effective, and sometimes even more economical than social surveys, in-depth interviews, and participant observation (Ahmed, 2010).

The DRM entails gathering information from a variety of sources, including institutional memoranda and reports, census publications, government announcements and proceedings, diaries, and countless more textual, visual, and pictorial materials in various forms, among others (Bailey, 1994, Payne and Payne, 2004; Ahmed, 2010). According to Judd et al. (1991: 289), DRM shares the following three traits: Documentary studies frequently require ingenuity in converting existing records into quantifiable indices of some general concepts. Documentary studies are particularly susceptible to alternative interpretations for natural events and their effects. They entirely rely on analyses of data collected for purposes other than those of particular studies in social relations.

According to Balihar (2007), there are two types of analyses that can be used to evaluate materials in documentary research: quantitative and qualitative (or both). Therefore, the data was presented, analyzed and interpreted using the descriptive analysis and the results indicated that election stakeholders such INEC (tenured and ad hoc staff), CSOs, security forces, political parties, candidates and the electorates have been performing various election roles in Nigeria, though not without challenges.

### **Conceptual and Literature Review**

As the name implies, election stakeholders refer to persons or organizations that have legitimate interest in an election. They are the active participants in the electoral process. Elections take place in a political environment. It has been observed that there are many stakeholders in the political environment where elections take place in any country. These include the government in power (the executive, legislature and judiciary), the electoral umpire (tenured and ad hoc staff), security forces, the press, political parties, candidates, voters and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (domestic and international). The election stakeholders perform various roles and responsibilities in the electoral process, especially in the 2019 general election in Nigeria, which is the focus of this work.

Similarly, in Jega (2014) estimation, election stakeholders (i.e. candidates, parties, parties' affiliates, interest groups, government, and civil society) are responsible for undertaking the following functions in the electoral process: Mobilization of citizens to participate by registering and voting on election day as well as protecting their mandate; Oversight of the electoral process; Support for the process through working with the election management bodies; Making demands for improvements from the election management bodies; Spreading certain values and expectations that are supportive of the democratic and electoral processes; Information dissemination; Gate keeping functions; Conflict management; and Driving electoral reforms.

In Nigeria, elections are held at the federal, state, and local government levels to select the individuals who will exercise the executive and legislative branches of government. The presidential, senatorial, federal House of Representatives, governorship, state house of assembly, chairmanship, and councillorship are the several electoral offices that are up for election under the 1999 Constitution (as modified). According to Nigerian law, elections for the positions of President, Senator, the Federal House of Representatives, Governor,

and State House of Assembly are all included in the term "General Elections," with the exception of Chairman and Councilor seats. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a federal government agency, oversees the conduct of the nation's general elections, while the electoral commissions run by the state governments oversee chairmanship and councilor elections.

There's no denying that every election in Nigeria highlights the distinct perspectives of the participants. One of the fundamental tenets of democracy, it has been remarked, is the holding of free and fair elections. This is due to the fact that elections give voters the chance to assert the constitutionally attributed sovereignty they have over those in charge of using the country's executive and legislative authorities. Voting for the political party and candidates of their choice based on their clearly stated ideas is possible for citizens in a democratic society through free and fair elections (Alemika, 2011).

Elections are pivotal events in a democracy and take on greater significance when held in a setting that promotes freedom, justice, inclusion, participation, competition, and legitimacy. Only then will it be possible for elections to be conducted by a neutral body, for political opponents and parties to be treated fairly by law enforcement, the armed forces, and the courts, for all candidates to have access to the media, and for electoral districts and rules to not unfairly disadvantage the opposition. The main advantages for both the electorate and the election administrator are that it protects against fraud for the electorate and lowers administrative expenses for the election administrator (Diamond, 2008).

However, democratic elections in Nigeria are in varying degrees marred by a number of issues, including, but not limited to, missing names of some registered voters, voter intimidation and disenfranchisement, multiple and underage voting, snatching or destroying ballot boxes, miscomputation and falsification of results. Poor electoral systems encourage election-related violence, which has long-lasting effects of diminishing the public's trust and confidence in the democratic process (Alemika 2011).

The relevance of political parties in contemporary liberal democratic tradition cannot be over emphasized because they provide useful and valuable role in election. This is because political parties can be differentiated from other associations with key elements such as; playing party politics, nominating candidates, organizing political campaigns, competing in elections, forming and running government if election is won, exercising political power in all its ramifications, especially in public policy determination, use of the coercive apparatuses of the state and management of national resources, and serving as opposition voice when not in power (Nwolise (2018). There is no doubt that political parties are crucial stakeholders in democracy and for the health of governing procedures. In order to be effective in furthering the process of democratic development, meaningful assistance must be provided by all stakeholders (Jega, 2014).

The political climate in Nigeria underwent a significant change as well, as it was marked by political assassinations and other acts of violence as well as opposition parties' disruption of political protests (Oddih, 2007). The political parties, however, has adopted a strategy of securing electoral victory at all costs. This is due to the fact that the majority of elections in Nigeria are typically marred by electoral violence, electoral manipulation, rigging, thugs, intimidation of the opposition, and the manipulation of the electoral process by strong politicians, electoral, and government officials. As a result, politicians are more desperate and daring in political power contests, act with greater recklessness and avarice, and oppose more intensely and often replace others (Electoral Reform Committee Report, 2008). Additionally, some politicians with power in the government may call for the unlawful arrest and detention of their opponents on or before the election day in an effort to win the election by any means (Osinakachukwu and Jawan, 2011).

As a result of vote-buying, godfatherism, bribery, corruption, overspending, violations of electoral laws, and other anomalies, it has been noted that the Nigerian election process and its outcome have taken on a monetary dimension (Sule, et al, 2018). In Nigeria, politics has been turned into a business enterprise for self-serving purposes and individual wealth creation. Politicians buy and influence religious leaders in order to affect voters' opinions in favor of their political ideologies (Sule et al. 2018; Sule, 2019).

Electoral malpractices take place before, during and after election. Similarly, Ibrahim (2007) documented fifteen forms of electoral fraud perpetrated by certain election stakeholders in Nigerian politics such as: falsifying election results; illegal printing of voter cards; illegal possession of ballot boxes; stuffing of ballot boxes; unauthorized thumb printing on ballots; voting for minors Illegal printing of forms used to gather and announce election results; Illegal compilation of separate voter lists; Compilation of false names on voter lists; deliberate withholding of electoral supplies from particular regions; results being made public in locations where no elections were held; announcement of election results without authorization; candidates, agents, and voters being harassed; altering the list of election officials and Figure inflation and box switching. Since election participants have turned into "stake holders of electoral malpractices," these kinds of electoral irregularities are nothing new in Nigerian politics.

Despite the observed concerns and shortcomings of election in Nigeria, it has continued to be relevant in the democratic tradition of the country by fulfilling the role of recruitment and circulation of political office holders in every four years and the 2019 general election is the sixth in succession in the Fourth Republic, having held earlier in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015, with many stakeholders involved actively.

### **Stakeholders and the 2019 General Election**

Elections take place in a political setting that is made up of numerous stakeholders. During elections in Nigeria, the electoral stakeholders play a variety of roles. These include the current government (the executive, legislature, and judiciary), the electoral body, the INEC (tenured and ad hoc staff), security forces, the press, political parties,

candidates, voters, and CSOs (domestic and international) that are involved in many activities during the electoral process. The following is a discussion and analysis of the many activities that election stakeholders participated in during the 2019 general elections:

(a) **The Electorates**

The electorates are very important election stakeholders. Electorate refers to the elective people that vote their representatives to occupy elective positions in every election. The promise of positions, money, racial, religious, or other preferences are occasionally used as justification for voting decisions.

The electorates in Nigeria are faced with many challenges. For instance, the credibility of the number of electorates in the country is quite challenging in every election, with communities, wards, local government areas, states and even ethnic groups and important personalities putting in concerted efforts to influence the voters' register into their favour. They achieve this by bribing those with the responsibility to register voters or delineate electoral constituencies. Due to the fact that high numbers confer electoral advantages on the beholders; there is rivalry between major political actors to increase their numbers in the voters' register. This led to the inclusion of fictitious names of electorates in the INEC's voters' register. One can only imagine how credible an election conducted with voters' register filled with fictitious names could be.

For instance, according to the INEC timeline for the 2019 general elections, there were 14,551,482 more registered voters than in the last election, for a total of 84,004,084 voters across the nation's 119,973 polling units in 8,809 wards. Out of the total number of registered voters, 72,775,502 (86.63%) picked up their personal voter cards (PVCs), whereas 11,228,582 (13.37%) went uncollected. The trend of voters' registration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic shows that in 1999 a total of 57,938,945 (48.5%) out of 119.3m population, in 2003 a total of 60,823,022 (45.7%) out of 139.1m population, in 2007 a total of 61,566,648 (41.9%) out of 147m people, in 2011 a total of 73,528,040 (45.1%) out of 162.9m people, in 2015 a total of 67,422,005 (38.3%) out of 181.2m people and in 2019 a total of 84m (42.9%) out of 195.9m population (Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), 2019).

For the previous 20 years, the trend in the proportion of registered voters to the total population has generally been downward. Voters' discontent and disillusionment with the political system when democratic governance failed to bring about the benefits associated with democracy, such as increased living standards, may be one reason for this fall in the number of registered voters as a percentage of the total population. Another factor contributing to the reduction in voter registration may be the high prevalence of electoral violence seen during various election phases in prior years.

Once more, the credibility of the elections was questioned, especially those in 2003 and 2007, which are regarded as some of the worst elections in the Fourth Republic (CDD, 2019). However, the number of voters who are registered to vote has climbed by 14.7

million between 2015 and 2019 alone, or 25.4% more than in the previous election year. This increase can be attributable to increased voter education and mobilization efforts by political parties, CSOs, INEC, and other important players (CDD, 2019). However, it's possible that some political gladiators promoted the rise in voter registration in order to give themselves some perceived political advantages during elections.

Another issue about the electorates is the number of persons that voted in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Put differently, what was the situation of voters' turn out, especially during the presidential election? Interestingly, voters' registration is different from voters' turn out during election. In 1999, 30,280,052 votes were cast, representing 52.3% of eligible voters, according to the history of voter turnout in Nigerian presidential elections. The number of legal votes was 29,848,441 and the number of invalid votes was 431,611, making up 98.6% and 1.4% of the total votes cast, respectively. Voter turnout increased to 69.1% in 2003, with 42,018,735 registered voters actually casting ballots, 39,480,489 of which were valid, and 2,538,246, which were invalid. 2003 saw a 16.8% rise in participation. According to the data that was available, 57.4% of the electorate – 35,419,262 people – voted in 2007. The voter turnout decreased by 11.04% as a result. In the 2011 presidential election, only 39,469,484 people cast ballots, with 38,209,978 of them being valid and 1,259,506 being invalid. This further decreased the voter participation to 53.7%. This represents a decrease of 4.36%. The same thing happened in 2015, when just 29,432,083 voters, or 43.6 percent of the registered voters, showed up to vote. There were 28,587,564 legal votes cast that year, compared to 844,519 invalid ones. The decrease was 10.1%.

However, it was found that a significant portion of registered voters had not cast ballots in prior elections after analyzing official documents that were downloaded from the INEC website. The causes of this tendency and the effects it will have on the nation's democracy have been explained in a number of ways. The anxiety about violence is a major deterrent to eligible voters casting ballots on election-day. Ongoing insurgency surprisingly resulted in greater voter turnout for the general elections in certain afflicted states, including Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, Sokoto, Bauchi, and others, that were the target of attacks by Boko Haram and herdsmen. Other tumultuous states in the nation include Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers, and the middle belt states where frequent attacks by herdsmen occurred. Additionally, there are armed robberies and kidnappings for ransom all around the nation. Elections were held in the nation in the midst of this pervasive unease. The integrity of the elections and the ability of certain voters to cast ballots were damaged, as in previous elections, by INEC's logistical difficulties, its workforce (regular and ad hoc), corruption, and misconduct by political parties. This led to indifference among voters (Orjime, 2019).

Did votes count during elections? Electoral malpractices tend to undermine voters and their votes in election. The greatest culprits in electoral malpractices are political parties and their respective candidates, INEC staff and security personnel that employ different forms of oppressive mechanisms in order to secure votes during election. For instance,

during presidential elections in Nigeria, it was common sight to see thugs being used to violently intimidate electorates, stuffing of ballot boxes, rigging and falsification of election results in connivance with INEC officials and security operatives (Ibrahim, 2007; Osinakachukwu and Jawan, 2011; CDD, 2019; Orjime, 2019).

Presently, Nigerians are asking for the appropriateness of Vice-Chancellors of universities and other categories of lecturers used as ad hoc staff by INEC during elections in the country as those involved in falsification of election results are going unpunished, while they punish and dismiss students involved in examination malpractices in their various universities (Okoye, 2013). However, it was observed that after the 2019 general elections INEC attempted to prosecute lecturers involved in electoral malpractices (Akpan-Nsok, 2020; Ndidi, 2020). It is common knowledge that political parties and their candidates appropriate fund to bribe officials performing election duties. These sharp practices tend to undermine the electorates and their votes during elections in Nigeria.

**(b) The Independent National Electoral Commission**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution established the INEC, which was given the responsibility of holding elections for the positions of President, Vice President, Senators and Representatives in the National Assembly, as well as for Governors, Deputy Governors, and members of State Houses of Assembly. Its duties consist of: organizing, conducting, and overseeing the elections for the President and Vice President, the Governor and Deputy Governor of each state, and members of the Senate, House of Representatives, and House of Assembly; registering political parties in accordance with the National Assembly's act and the provisions of this Constitution; keeping an eye on how the political parties are set up and run, including their finances, conventions, congresses, and primary elections; arranging for an annual audit and investigation of the money and accounts of political parties, as well as the publication of a report on that audit and inspection for the benefit of the general public; Arranging and conducting the registration of persons qualified to vote, as well as preparing, maintaining, and revising the register of voters for the purpose of any election under this Constitution; observing political campaigns and establishing guidelines to direct political parties; ensuring that all newly elected and returning officers take and swear to uphold the legal oath of office; and, as necessary, transferring any of its authority to any resident electoral commissioners (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Additionally, the INEC is in charge of conducting referenda if necessary, encouraging knowledge of fair democratic election procedures, and offering voter and civic education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

The President of the Federation appoints the chairperson of INEC and the twelve members of the National Electoral Commission, subject to Senate confirmation. On the other hand, it is more difficult to get rid of the chairperson. According to the Constitution, the President must receive the backing of a two-thirds majority of senators in order to be removed from office (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Additionally, the Constitution provided for the appointment of Resident Electoral Commissioners, to whom INEC may delegate any of its responsibilities, in each of the 36 member states of the federation as well



as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). A Resident Electoral Commissioner's appointment used to be a presidential prerogative. A Resident Electoral Commissioner must now get Senate confirmation before being appointed by the president (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) (as amended).

Due to an amendment to the Nigerian Constitution that permits INEC to be funded from the Consolidated Revenue, the issue of tampering with and the legitimacy of prior elections have been all but erased. This put INEC on an equal footing with the National Assembly and the courts in terms of funding. The INEC's schedule of political events for Nigeria's general elections in 2019 is notable since it reveals that the ban on political campaigning was removed in November 2018 and that other events were scheduled. The governorship, Houses of Assembly, and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Area Council elections that were originally scheduled to take place on March 1 and the presidential and national assembly elections that were originally scheduled to take place on February 16 have been moved up by one week to take place on February 23 and March 9, respectively. The general elections were abruptly postponed, and it was said that this diminished voter faith in the INEC, leading to claims of improper meddling in the process (Ameh and Adepegba, 2019).

The Constitution stipulated a specific time period in which elections must be held and from which departure was forbidden; therefore, the postponements by INEC were, nevertheless, within the bounds of the law. The INEC was required to hold presidential elections by the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution not later than thirty days before the last occupant of that office's term of office expired and not earlier than sixty days. A presidential election must now be held "not sooner than one hundred fifty days and not later than one hundred and one hundred thirty days before the expiration of the term of office of the last holder of that office," according to additional Constitutional revisions. INEC has the authority to set or postpone an election date within this time.

Like previous elections in the country, the 2019 general elections brought some of INEC's weaknesses to the fore like its inability to educate the electorates about the importance of voting and how to vote, especially the use of smart card readers and inability to prosecute electoral offenders. The implication was that there were cases of electoral malpractices occasioned by the inability of illiterate voters to use their PVCs and failure of the smart card readers. Additionally, it was noted that there were numerous fatalities during the 2019 general elections as a result of logistical errors, delays, malfeasance, irregular votes, and violence. Due to more invalid ballots than the margin of victory for the top candidate, INEC ruled the election inconclusive in seven states. The PDP, the main opposition party, was in the lead in five of these states (CDD, 2019; Orjime, 2019).

**(c) Civil Society Organizations**

Notably, the CSOs have been monitoring elections in Nigeria and giving their verdicts, irrespective of the fact that the electoral processes are more often than not contentious, assessed the performers of INEC in the 2019 general elections. In the election, INEC

reportedly accredited 120 domestic and 36 international civil society organizations. Diplomatic missions from twelve countries in Nigeria, including Australia, Benin, the United Kingdom, Cameroon, Canada, Egypt, France, Japan, Korea, Poland, Sudan, and the United States, have been accredited as international observers for the 2019 elections. The African Bar Association, the African Parliament of Civil Society, the African Union, the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commission (ECONEC), the European Union, Giz (German International Agency), the International Human Rights Commission, the International Peace Commission (IPC), the Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO), and the Organization of Islam are among the foreign or international observer missions. On the other hand, the Action Aid Nigeria, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Future Leaders Global Initiative, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Orientation Agency, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), the Police Service Commission, and the Society for Peace and Conflict Resolution were among the domestic election monitors (Paki and Inokoba, 2020).

The “CSOs are involved in monitoring the activities of other stakeholders, helps in stabilizing democracy, enhances voters' confidence in the electoral process, monitoring and validation of election, enhances the integrity of the electoral process, and mediation in electoral conflicts / disputes” (Paki and Inokoba, 2020: 285). However, in playing their defined roles in the 2019 general elections, CSOs were greatly challenged with lack of capacity, inadequate fund, the rural nature of organization, lack of national spread, bribery and corruption and personal enrichment, government patronage, the urban and elite nature of CSOs activities, lack of unity, (Paki and Inokoba, 2020, Odeh, 2012).

Civil society organization monitors said the hijacking of election materials, and incidents of abduction, assault, and harassment of election officials by persons in military uniform (Wilmot, 2019). It was reported that YIAGBA AFRICA – a CSO leading THE Watch the Vote Campaign – conducted a parallel vote tabulation exercise and confirmed shortly after the results were announced that the figure were correct (CDD, 2019; Orjime, 2019).

On the other hand, the joint election observation mission of the National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute of Nigeria found that the 2019 general elections fell short of the 2015 election benchmark. This was due to the fact that the country's political leaders, their allies, and thugs orchestrated operations during the election that were tainted by electoral fraud and functioned with impunity that fell short of international standards. This was demonstrated by the fact that political thugs who used violence and other improper behavior to obstruct or influence voting made up the vast majority of those detained during the 2019 elections, as opposed to the political elites who sponsored them (Ameh and Adepegba, 2019).

#### (d) **Security Agencies**

Elections are supposed to be conducted in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility, and

observance of law and order. This coupled with the fact that incidents of violence occur during elections, security agencies in Nigeria have played important role in election management. The pre-election phase, the electoral phase (the actual voting stage), and the post-election phase are all parts of the three phases of the election that security services play (Hounkpe and Gueye, 2010). It goes without saying that there were numerous security issues throughout Nigeria during the various election phases, including farmer-pastoralist conflicts in the North-Central region, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, cattle rustling and banditry in the North-West, sporadic episodes of agitation over resource control in the South-South region, and incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, and terrorism elsewhere. Security agencies face an uphill battle in addressing these issues

Some of the problems that security agencies face, such as insufficient fund, poor logistical planning, ineffective inter-agency communication, and a capacity gap, made the situation worse. Inadequate numbers of police officers are another issue. The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has 370,000 employees, falling short of the 222 police officers per 1000 population target set by the UN. It has resulted in a glaringly inadequate ratio of 3 police officers per polling unit for the 119,973 polling places across the entire nation (Arowolo, 2019). It is noteworthy that the NPF is charged with the primary responsibility of preserving law and order, which implicitly includes carrying out election security obligations. However, the NP was supported by the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and, in extreme circumstances, the armed forces (army, navy, and air force) and other paramilitary units in the nation to carry out election duties. This is largely due to constitutional requirements, a lack of personnel, and security peculiarities in the country.

The most notable of these elections were the governorship elections in Edo and Ondo States in 2012, Anambra State in 2013, the governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun States in 2014, and the heavily militarized general elections in 2015. These elections were held recently in various parts of the country, and they provided a window into the current state of insecurity prior to the 2019 election (Olaniyan and Amao, 2015). During the regimes of the two political parties that had seized power at the presidency following the restoration of democracy in 1999, militarization of elections has been a recurrent theme in Nigeria's elections during the past ten years (Okechukwu, et al, 2019). The Osun state by-election for governor in August 2018 was not an exception, as it was characterized by a significant militarization of the state that scared away voters. In a by-election that was only held in two local government districts of Osun state, there were more troops and police personnel present than there were electors. It was also noted that the security teams deployed had armored tanks and other powerful weapons, and that the security staff occasionally fired into the air. This was perceived as an attempt by the Federal Government to scare the political opposition because they were unaware of the intense security. During the election, recalcitrant members of the opposition parties were either harassed or forcibly detained and denied the right to vote (Ajala and Muller, 2019).

Through Festus Okoye, the National Commissioner and Chairman of the commission's Information and Voter Education Committee, the commission also voiced its displeasure with the role that soldiers and armed gangs played in Rivers State. Okoye revealed that the invasion of election centers by soldiers and armed gangs led to the intimidation and illegal detention of election officials, disrupting the collation process. As a result, the committee condemned the actions of some troops and armed gangs in Rivers State that sought to obstruct the collation process and the will of the people (Okoye, 2013).

It was reported that at least 58 people died since the presidential election began and about 600 deaths since political campaigns commenced in November 2018 (Wilmot, 2019), with Rivers State alone accounting for 28 victims (Olokor, 2019). A political system that condones death of such a large number of people due to elections, interference and inclusive elections need an overhaul. There were signs of clear interference by political actors and security agents. Olokor (2019) stated that during the most recent governorship election, which was held on March 9, 2019, in Rivers state, even the country's electoral umpire, the INEC, confirmed that military and armed gangs were employed to intimidate and wrongfully arrest its personnel.

(e). **Political Parties**

On October 19, 1998, the INEC gave nine political parties provisional approval to run in the December local government elections as Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 drew near. The Alliance for Democracy (AD), the All Peoples Party (APP), the Democratic Advancement Movement (DAM), the Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), the National Solidarity Movement (NSM), the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), and the United Peoples Party (UPP) are some of the parties (Obiyan, 1999). Only three political parties—the AD, the APP, and the PDP—were recognized and registered for the 1999 general election after so many political organizations submitted applications. The PDP, which had more national support than the AD and the APP after the 1999 election, went on to win the presidential election (Okolie and Odum, 2018).

The PDP dominated Nigeria's political landscape between 1999 and 2015. The consolidation of the four largest opposition parties—the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), and a division of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)—into the All Progressives Congress (APC) in time for the general election of 2015 significantly undermined the incumbent party's position of dominance. The merger is indicative of the opposition's ambition to oust the PDP, the then ruling party at the national level. Later, a PDP section that split off joined the APC. In the general elections of 2015, just 28 parties participated, and only 14 of those fielded presidential candidates (Nwolise, 2018).

However, only 72 presidential candidates and an additional 72 vice presidential candidates ran for office in the 2019 general elections. Additionally, 1,904 candidates ran for 109 Senate seats and 4,680 candidates ran for 360 House of Representatives seats out of

the 91 political parties that took part in the election. In the governorship elections, a total of 2,412 candidates ran for governor and deputy governor, and a total of 14,583 people ran for the 991 State House of Assembly constituency seats (Sule, 2019). As a result, there were roughly 23,723 candidates that ran for political office in Nigeria during the 2019 general elections. Candidates who ran for council in the FCT are not included in these numbers.

Nigeria's 2019 presidential elections featured contests from the two major political parties. Both the APC, which has been in office since 2015, and the PDP, which ruled from 1999 to 2015, were these. The incumbent president, General Muhammadu Buhari, the APC candidate, and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the PDP candidate, engaged in a fiercely contested presidential election in 2019. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar received 41.2 percent of the vote, while General Muhammadu Buhari received 55.6 percent, making him the winner of the presidential election.

A large number of the 91 registered political parties that ran candidates in the 2019 general elections were unable to field candidates for the various elected positions. Political parties that lack the resources and a national presence to run in elections in the nation raise serious concerns. The legislature allotted funds for a significant number of political parties in the nation, including some that lacked the ability to recruit people to run for elected office under their platforms, and the electoral umpire has budgeted and made arrangements for them, including those parties. It is flawed to have an election system that permits the establishment of so many political parties and candidates, especially when the majority of these parties and candidates are essentially unable to gain any office. It is a gigantic waste on the national purse when you consider the enormous financial arrangements that are made to provide for the minor political parties.

Political parties in Nigeria were known to lack clear ideas, which led to a lack of internal democracy and illegitimate elections throughout the Fourth Republic. Internal elections in political parties had several characteristics that were contrary to all accepted democratic principles, such as godfatherism, imposition of candidates, excessive monetary support of the electoral process, and internal strife. Internal party disputes have negative effects on Nigeria's democracy, including the exodus of disgruntled party members to other organizations, distrust, hostility, and disobedience among party members, lack of credibility, and a negative public perception of political organizations (Ajala and Muller, 2019; Ameh and Adepegba, 2019; Sule, 2019).

In Nigerian politics, there is also the issue of incumbents, and impunity in party politics refers to the quest for political dominance that results in unfavorable rivalries between political parties. The Fourth Republic's pervasive instances of political thuggery pose a threat to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. It is generally accepted among academics that thugs were most likely employed, maintained, and armed by dishonest politicians in order to carry out the most political deceit. A party becomes obsolete in its role as a middleman for leadership recruiting, training, and presenting candidates in

unison with numbers when the influence of a godfather, stalwart, assassin, thug, and election rigging enthrone is used to choose leaders rather than a public election (Nwolise, 2018) The fact that there have been numerous electoral crises and acts of political violence since 1999 has important implications for Nigeria's political parties.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Election stakeholders have been seen carrying out a variety of tasks in preparation for Nigeria's general election in 2019. However, many forms of fraud, deception, and violence committed by election participants have been a hallmark of elections in Nigeria. The 2019 general election was reported to have been marred by irregularities, corruption, electoral violence, and the manipulation of the electoral process by some stakeholders in some parts of the country, which frequently resulted in electoral disputes; as with previous elections in the nation, this prevented the election from being free, fair, and credible. A number of election participants, including some voters, INEC officials, security personnel, political parties, and their candidates, engaged in electoral malpractice during the 2019 general elections, which damaged the integrity of the Nigerian electoral system. Nigerian elections continue to face significant obstacles because of this.

Therefore, it is anticipated that election stakeholders' adherence to the following recommendations will be helpful in improving future elections in the country:

1. The electorates should endeavor to ensure that their votes count during elections and take decisive steps to stop other stakeholders from engaging in electoral malpractices.
2. The INEC should maintain its impartiality in elections, try to reduce the propensity of its staff to engage in election fraud and ensure prosecution of defaulters.
3. The CSOs should continue to monitor elections in Nigeria and give their verdicts notwithstanding the contentious nature of election in the country.
4. The security agencies should ensure that their personnel behave impartially during elections and subject defaulters to diligent prosecution.
5. The political parties in Nigeria should imbibe ideology, internal democracy, transparency and accountability in order to avoid discord and court cases among its members.

In conclusion, it is the unbiased submission of this paper that election stakeholders have a duty to ensure that their involvement in the political processes should help to institute credible elections, deepen democracy and enhance political stability in the country.

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