

## Security Agencies and the Challenges of Election Management in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Election security is vital for achieving orderly, efficient and effective election management, which can only be attained by the role's security agencies play during elections. Ordinarily, security agencies are supposed to deploy their personnel during elections to work in conjunction with the election management bodies, especially the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other election stakeholders to ensure hitch-free elections. However, the ability of security agencies in Nigeria to perform their responsibilities during election in effective and efficient manner, without infringing on the basic human rights of the electorates still have not been met. This has led many interested scholarly discussions by writers, commentators and analysts that tend to question the role of security agencies in election security management. Like previous elections, the circumstances remained the same throughout Nigeria's general elections in 2019. Hence, this paper interrogates security agencies and the challenges of election management in the general elections in Nigeria in 2019. The Ex-post Facto research design was used in this paper because the event had already happened when the study was conducted. Findings revealed that in Nigeria security agencies are greatly challenged in the performance of election security duties. These include the general insecurity, dearth of personnel or personnel shortfalls, incompetence, lack of independence and professionalism, negative attitude of the political class, corruption, and deployment of the military for election and the proliferation of vigilante groups. In conclusion, the paper advocates that there is a need for major reform and development, and thus it asks the government and other stakeholders to make a sincere, determined commitment to making sure that sufficient election security is achievable.

**Keywords:** *Election, Election security, Election management, Security agencies, 2019 General elections, Nigeria.*

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### **Background to the Study**

With the increasing insecurity in Nigeria, especially during elections, it is apt to be acquainted with the roles played by security agencies in election and the challenges they faced while performing such internal security responsibilities. The experiences of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria followed an emerging pattern of earlier elections, which relates to the increasing mobilization and deployment of security agencies and their agents to perform election responsibilities across the whole country. Ordinarily, election duties fall under the constitutional responsibility of the police, but recent elections in the country had witnessed the deployment of many personnel of various security agencies such as military and para-military organizations. The military's participation in civil election duties has become more worrisome to many Nigerians, especially members of opposition political parties, scholarly writers, analysts and the international community have questioned the rationale behind such gesture (Hounkpe and Gueye, 2010; Jega, 2012a; Olurode and Hammanga, 2013; Afolabi, 2018).

Notably, the Nigerian military has a reputation for being partisan, openly meddling in politics to remove legitimately elected governments in the nation through coups. Again, the involvement of the military in election duties has led to militarization of elections, which has grave implications for democracy in the country. But for the conduct of a free, fair, and credible election, effective and efficient functioning of security is a sine qua non (Olorude and Jega, 2011; Igini, 2013; Olutola and Olutola, 2019).

The significance of a discourse on security agencies and the challenges of election management in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria cannot, therefore, be overemphasized. This is so that candidates and political parties can hold rallies and campaigns, and other election stakeholders can fulfill their obligations in accordance with the country's constitutional provisions. Security agencies and their agents are essential for establishing the enabling environment that allows the electoral processes to take place without hindrance. However, in discharging their duties, members of security agencies have been involved in violation of the rule of law and fundamental human rights such as freedom of speech, movement and demonstration, which are essential ingredients of democracy. Also, security agents are known for their intolerant, especially the military and their presence in the vicinity of polling stations across the country is a threat to the political and psychological orientations of the electorates (Hounkpe and Gueye, 2010; Bassey, 2019).

Consequently, this paper investigates the functions of security organizations and the challenges of election management in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The paper poses four research questions, thus:

- (1) What is the link between democracy, election and security?
- (2) What role did security agencies and their agents play in the electoral process?
- (3) What is the relationship between security agencies and the election management body?
- (4) What were the challenges of the involvement of security agencies in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria?

The goals of this paper are to discuss the relationship between democracy, elections, and security; to examine the role that security agencies and their agents play in the electoral process; to determine the relationship between security agencies and election management bodies; and to look into the difficulties that security agencies faced during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. In order to achieve these objectives, therefore, the paper is divided into nine parts. The next is the research methodology, while the third part is conceptualizing security agencies. The fourth part is literature review. Democracy, election and security are discussed in part five, while the roles of security agencies in the electoral process are in part six. Security agencies and the election management body are in part seven, while the challenges of security agencies in managing the 2019 general elections in Nigeria are in part eight. Finally, the paper ends with conclusion and recommendations. The limitation of the paper, however, is that it is able to discuss only some of the challenges of security agencies in the 2019 general elections.

### **Methodology**

This study used an ex-post facto research design. This was as a result of the study being conducted after the incident under study had already taken place. The secondary source materials' documentary evidence was employed as the basis for a qualitative data collection technique. Therefore, data was obtained from books, journal articles, conference papers, reports, magazines and newspapers. The information obtained was analyzed using descriptive and narrative methods, and the results indicated that security agencies have been involved in election management in Nigeria and performed various security responsibilities during the 2019 general election. However, security agencies faced several challenges such as general insecurity, personnel shortfalls, competence, independence and professionalism, corruption, etc.

### **Conceptualizing Security Agencies**

A security agency is a governmental institution that undertakes intelligence operations for the internal security of a country, according to Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. They primarily participate in internal intelligence operations and frequently engage in counterintelligence to thwart foreign intelligence activities by other nations. Domestic covert operations are used by security agencies to exert political control in a nation. These operations include monitoring, infiltrating, and disrupting dissident groups, attempting to discredit prominent dissidents in public, and even assassination or extrajudicial detention and execution. Any nation's security forces are subject to judicial, legislative, and executive accountability restrictions.

In Nigeria various security agencies and their personnel are involved in conducting internal security operations, which also include to plan and coordinate security of elections. In particular, the Nigerian internal security system includes military groups like the Nigeria Army (NA), the Nigeria Navy (NN) and the Nigeria Air Force (NAF) and other para-military organizations such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Department of State Security (DSS), the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS), Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), National

Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) as well as other armed paramilitary security organizations tasked with providing internal security, and armed non-state actors like vigilante groups. These organizations have been involved in election security responsibilities in Nigeria. Security agencies have been known to have performed their roles, including election security management since the beginning of elections in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

There is a wealth of material on election security and the responsibilities that security agencies performed in the elections in Nigeria. In fact, there have been a lot of articles written about election security in Nigeria, especially since the start of the fourth republic in 1999, that have emphasized the importance of an effective and efficient security system as a requirement for the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections in any democratic setting (Olorude and Jega, 2011; Igini, 2013; Olutola and Olutola, 2019).

Election security, according to Igini (2013), is essential for maintaining the credibility of voters, election officials, election materials, candidates, election monitors/observers, and other stakeholders involved in the process. To put it in another way, election security refers to protecting the electoral process, which includes making sure that the election, election materials, election workers, voters, and other election stakeholders, as well as the election environment, are all secured. Adequate security enhances the free movement of persons and election materials, which enhances the credibility of the electoral process (Jega, 2012b). However, with the introduction of democratic elections in the fourth republic, security forces and their agents have come under criticism for some of the violent and fraudulent tactics that characterized the conduct of elections. These accusations have persisted with each new election (Hounkpe and Gueye, 2010; Jinadu, 2011; Igini, 2013; Akpan, 2017; Olutola and Olutola, 2019).

According to a 2010 study by Hounkpe and Gueye on the role of security forces in the electoral process in six West African nations, including Nigeria, there are three stages in the electoral process: the pre-electoral, electoral, and post-electoral phases. The authors noted that the issue of election security comes up at all stages of the electoral process and how it is managed determines the success or otherwise of elections in any country. Additionally, it has been asserted that the presence of security forces is required to uphold peace and order in Nigeria by ensuring fair, credible, and widely accepted elections (Hounkpe and Gueye 2010; Jega, 2012a; Olorode and Hammanga, 2013; Afolabi, 2018). This demonstrates the value of security organizations, security personnel, and their involvement in the political process. Additionally, security agencies are mandated by the constitution to uphold law and order in different facets of the nation's national security architecture, which implicitly includes safeguarding the electoral process.

### **Democracy, Election and Security**

As a political concept, democracy places a high value on the fundamental human rights of its constituents, as well as the rule of law, the right to prosperity, information flow, and the freedom to choose between opposing political ideologies (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1992). It

is a form of governance in which the people have the authority to make decisions either directly or through representatives they elect. (Appadorai, 1975). The majority rule, free, fair, and regular elections, as well as competition, participation, the rule of law, and basic human rights are its key components.

Although, democracy emerged about 750 B.C in the Greek City-States, it was Britain that handed down its version of democratic framework to Nigeria during colonialism. Since the adoption of the Clifford's Constitution of 1922 where elective principles were introduced for the first time in the British Colony, which came to be known as Nigeria, it has imbibed democratic elections as a means of circulation of political office holders. Though Nigeria abandoned the Westminster democratic tradition it inherited from Britain during the first republic for the American Presidential System of Government in the second, third and fourth republics, elections are fundamental to democracy in Nigeria.

The modern democratic tradition relies heavily on elections to govern political institutions. The most essential component of modern representative democracy may be elections. The process of electing political office holders by a nation's electorates is institutionalized. In other words, elections serve as a mechanism for electorates to select their representative for a range of government positions. Depending on the democratic tradition, elections serve a variety of functions in society, including mobilization, governmental responsibility, and political choice. It makes the smooth transfer of political power from one civilian administration to another possible, and at the same time, elections support the legitimacy of already-elected governments. This increases the likelihood of political stability, peace, progress, and continuity in governance. The right of the rulers to rule could again be demonstrated through election as a channel of legitimacy. However, when elections are marred by rigging, stealing and stuffing ballot boxes, intimidation, violence, and other forms of electoral malpractice, it calls into question the basic foundations of democracy, elections, and security.

Security is necessary for the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections, and consequently for democracy (Jega, 2012c). Elections can be a peaceful struggle for political influence even if they are by their very nature contentious processes. This is only feasible if important players choose to play politics by the book. It is not the case in Nigerian politics, where it is viewed as a do-or-die situation. Politics in the presidential system is seen as a zero-sum-game, where a winner takes all. It makes political parties, politicians and candidates vying for elective offices determined to win at all cost. This caused the deployment of criminals, rioting, killings, ballot snatching, rigging, and general brigandage to occur prior to, during, and after elections, necessitating the involvement of more security agencies and personnel (Afolabi, 2018).

### **The Role of Security Agencies in the Electoral Process**

The involvement of security organizations during elections is a crucial and essential measure for ensuring the security of the voting process. The role of security agencies in the electoral process is multifaceted; they take on many different tasks throughout the voting process. The safety of people and property, election materials, participants in the process, authorities, and institutions is the responsibility of security agencies at every stage of the process. By doing

this, the electoral process' integrity is guaranteed. In addition to maintaining the security of the voting process at all times, security agencies may also participate, if necessary, in the solution of specific logistical issues. Additionally, the functions of security services can be divided into three categories: stand-by functions, dynamic functions, and static functions (such as the protection of buildings and the transfer of electoral materials) (i.e. stand-by forces that can be mobilized at any time, if need be). Each of the three phases of the electoral process can be used to assess the duties of the security forces during elections (Hounkpe and Gueye, 2010).

It should be noted that the use of security services occurs over a wide range of time periods, including those leading up to elections, when candidates and their supporters require protection during voter registration, candidate registration, and election campaigns. During the election period, which is the second part, the actual voting occurs. During this time, security organizations protect delicate election materials, enable the unhindered movement of persons and goods, guarantee voter security, monitor polling locations and collation centers, and support the process' overall integrity. Finally, in order to maintain peace and security throughout the immediate aftermath of the election, they must prevent the law from being broken as a result of violence or subversive action (IDEA, 2015; Arowolo, 2019). The security agencies carry out the goals that election security in any nation aims to achieve, including physical security of buildings and materials, personal security of voters, candidates, and representatives of political parties, as well as security of information, computers, software, and election communication systems (Hounkpe and Gueye, 2010).

### **Security Agencies and the Election Management Body**

The INEC is the agency in charge of overseeing elections in Nigeria and is given constitutional authority to handle all necessary tasks. Election security, which is also one of the key components of managing elections, is carried out under INEC's supervision. The INEC has been performing its duties since its establishment in 1998 and has conducted six general elections in Nigeria's fourth republic (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019).

With the aim of ensuring a credible and secure electoral process free from bribery and violence, the INEC established the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) in 2010. The ICCES is made up of election officials and security agencies like the police, military, DSS, and other stakeholders. Regular meetings and consultations prior to elections are required by INEC in order to fulfill the committee's objectives, allaying concerns of political parties, candidates, and other election stakeholders over the safety of the nation's electoral system (INEC, 2020).

At the national, state, and local government levels in Nigeria, the ICCES has offered a platform with representatives of election managers and security agencies. The ICCES provided opportunity for operational orders to be institutionalized and for the security agencies to rethink their election-related conduct codes. Many polling units firmly enforced this code of behavior, resulting in a convenient and peaceful environment for voters to cast their ballots during elections. Despite this laudable gesture, subsequent general elections in the

country in 2011, 2015 and 2019 have continued to experience pockets of insecurity. However, security agencies and their agents must maintain neutrality and non-interference in domestic politics, ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination for all citizens, uphold and obey the rule of law, use non-violent means first and use force only when absolutely necessary, and remain accountable to the civilian government and the people (IDEA, 2015).

Additionally, the INEC held regular meetings with the media, political parties, civil society organizations, and government departments and agencies like the National Population Commission (NPopC), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corruption Practices Commission (ICPC), National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), and Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) (NigComSat). This is in addition to interactive sessions with traditional rulers and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) at the national, state and LGA levels as well as collaboration with the international community and development partners such as the European Center for Electoral Support (ECES), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others. These engagements and interactive sessions proved valuable to the conduct of the elections and allay security concerns during the 2019 general elections (INEC, 2020).

### **Challenges of Security Agencies in the 2019 General Elections**

There were significant risks to Nigeria's security agencies during the 2019 general election due to the tense and difficult environment in which it was held. These are covered under the broad sub-heading that is below, as follows:

#### **a. General Insecurity**

Numerous security issues exist in Nigeria as the general election of 2019 draws near. These issues include, but are not limited to, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, farmer-pastoralist conflicts in the North-Central region, cattle rustling and banditry in the North-West, sporadic episodes of agitation over resource control in the South-South to stop the exploitation of the resources within their zone, and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the O'dua People's Congress (OPC) agitations for Oduduwa Republic in the South-west and incidents of kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery elsewhere, security agencies face an uphill task to provide security of lives and property, combine with election security (Ibrahim, Saliu and Okolie, 2018).

The military and other security agencies are involved in numerous internal security operations simultaneously across Nigeria to maintain law and order, including Operation Lafiya Dole, Operation Crackdown, Operation Gama Aiki, and Operation Safe Corridor in the north-east; Operation Save Haven and Operation "Ayem Akpatuma" in the north-central; and Operation Sara Daji and Operation Harbin Kunama in the north-west (Mou, 2018). The nation's security services have almost been run out of capacity because of these internal security activities. Millions of people have been compelled to migrate and modify their ways of life as a result of the security issues in their local settlements. Additionally, the lack of employment possibilities for young people and insufficient funding for infrastructure improvements in the areas of

power, health, and education are further deteriorating the outlook for the nation's citizens in terms of both the economy and society. The issue is made worse by the dominant governments' (federal, state, and local) incapacity to start major reforms in the way people live by putting in place long-term solutions to their problems (Sule, Adamu and Sambo, 2020).

Similar to this, the CLEEN Foundation (2019) conducted an analysis of Nigeria's security situation in advance of the general election. The results showed that the security threats are dispersed across the nation as follows: 11 out of the country's 36 states were at risk for potential security threats, and 22 states were in the "red zone." Godfatherism and money politics, violent campaigns, hate speech, insurgency, ethno-religious conflicts, political thuggery, political Party rivalry, illegal armed groups, paralyzed security agencies, media incitement, and an electoral body that is obviously unprepared were among the specific security threats across all the flashpoints identified. In turn, the United States Institute for Peace (2019) noted that social and economic inequality, racial and religious divisions, structural weaknesses, corruption, insecurity, and intra- and inter-party conflicts are indications of the potential risk for violence in the process ahead of the conduct of the 2019 general election.

General elections in Nigeria's fourth republic, however, have specific characteristics, including the electoral body's complicity and complacency in compromising the standard of the electoral conduct, ethnicity, religious exploitation, regional manipulation, violence and political thuggery by ethnic and regional militias, rigging, malpractices, money politics, vote buying, bribery and corruption, violation of electoral rules and regulations, and inadequate preparation leading to post-election violence (Sule, Sani, and Mat, 2018).

**b. Dearth of Personnel or Personnel Shortfalls**

In Nigeria, the NPF is lacking in staff. To handle both routine security operations and election-related duties at once, the police are understaffed. The UN recommends 222 police officers per 1000 inhabitants in order to secure and defend the nation's growing population, while Nigeria is claimed to only boast of having roughly 370,000 police officers. 119,973 polling units across the entire nation are scheduled to be covered by the police during elections, resulting in a woefully insufficient ratio of 3 police officers per polling unit. As a result, the country needs 359,919 police just to handle election-related duties (Arowolo, 2019).

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria required a large-scale operation, similar to other elections. Given the number of people involved, the election materials that needed to be moved, the challenging terrain that needed to be traversed, as well as the physical locations that needed to be protected, such an operation is inescapably complex. It is significant to note that during the 2019 general elections, nearly 400,000 security people were employed to safeguard Election Day activities. The INEC must also complete some amount of training in order to fulfill this need (INEC, 2020:57). This has led to the drafting of agents of other security agencies such as the NA, the NN, the NAF, the DSS, the NSCDC, the NPS, the NCS, the NIS, the NDLEA and all other fire arms bearing agencies of the state to join the NPF to perform election duties in the country.



**c. Incompetence, Lack of Independence and Professionalism**

The issue of incompetence, lack of independence and professionalism of election security managers has been a concern to members of the opposition parties, analysts, the general public and the international community in virtually all past elections in the country and the 2019 general election was not different. According to INEC (2020), the perception of partisanship of some security personnel has remained a recurring decimal in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. This is because the professional conduct of security personnel is crucial to electoral service delivery. The electoral process was smooth in some states, but not so in others. Some of the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) complained of bitter experiences in the hands of the security officials posted to their states. There were cases of high level of over zealousness on the part of some security personnel leading to serious altercations between them and INEC officials (INEC, 2020).

Furthermore, the INEC (2020:90) that reviewed the 2019 general elections identified the following challenges:

- i. Level of violence at some Collation Centres was high and appeared to have overstretched the security personnel.
- ii. The constant redeployment of crucial officers, like Commissioners of Police (CPs) and Divisional Police Officers, on the eve of elections (DPOs).
- iii. Refusal of security personnel posted to PUs to sign their names in the INEC PU Booklet.
- iv. Election officials' training did not place enough emphasis on security awareness. The majority of the officials lacked the information necessary to act appropriately in situations involving imminent danger.
- v. Security officials were thinly deployed to PUs in remote areas. This has led to many PUs in such locations being used by politicians with sinister intentions.
- vi. In some States, security personnel distanced themselves from the PUs on Election Day and never gave the needed security cover to men and materials deployed for the election.
- vii. Inconclusive investigation and lack of prosecution of electoral offenders promote impunity and lawlessness. Most of the security personnel were even unaware of what constitutes offence or security breach on Election Day.
- viii. Lack of security coverage in some areas due to risk factors such as difficult terrain, insurgency and other criminal activities.
- ix. Security personnel were often stranded after elections as no adequate provisions were made for their transportation.

**d. Negative Attitude of the Political Class**

Security agencies have experienced issues with the political class's unfavorable attitude during the 2019 general election. On October 10, 2018, at the ICC in Abuja, the nomination process for the 2019 general election (which includes the FCT Area Council elections) began. With 91 political parties fielding candidates for the elections, it was a busy procedure. For a total of 1,558 elective posts, 24,353 candidates were supported by political parties. This included 29 Governorship elections, 109 Senatorial Districts, 68 Area Council districts in the Federal

Capital Territory, 991 State constituencies, 360 Federal constituencies, and one national Presidential seat (INEC, 2020).

In certain states, the process of nominating candidates for election was contentious and violent, notably among the two largest political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Due to this, the APC was unable to field candidates in the states of Rivers and Zamfara for the elections for the governor, House Assembly, and National Assembly. Because political rivalry is viewed as a zero-sum game, there is resentment in the electoral process. Elections are, therefore, life or death for the political elite, especially those who are part of the ruling parties, since they seek the aid of security services and their operatives to win elections at any costs.

#### **e. Corruption**

There are claims that Nigeria is incredibly corrupt. For many years, corruption has had a widespread influence on Nigeria's public life, becoming the standard rather than the exception. This has had an impact on the nation's election system as well. The buying of delegates during the party primaries, vote buying, bribery of election officials, security services, and agents, violation of the electoral process, as well as other anomalies and misconduct, were all examples of electoral corruption (Sule et al, 2018). These corruption-related issues were apparent during the 2019 presidential election.

It was noted that candidates bought delegates' votes during the party primaries in an effort to win the nomination for the party's presidential candidate. For instance, contestants for the governorship paid each delegate a payment ranging from N100,000 to N200,000 to buy their votes (Sule, 2019). There have been documented instances of contestants in the PDP presidential primary buying each delegate vote for \$1,000, \$2,000, or even \$5,000 from other candidates (Sule, 2019). Each governor in the APC was allegedly asked to contribute N250 million to the event during the party's national conference, which was used to elect President Muhammadu Buhari as its flag bearer (Abati, 2018).

On Election Day, major political parties set aside huge sums of money to buy votes of the electorates. The amount for vote buying ranges from the sum of N500, N1000 and N10, 000 depending on the competitiveness of a particular election. Similarly, political parties set aside money to settle heads of security agencies, security agents, the media and other election stakeholders in order for them not to intervene or report electoral fraud during elections. In the 2019 general election, it was observed that major political parties bribed security agents at the polling unit with amounts of money ranging from N5, 000 and N10, 000 each.

#### **f. Deployment of the Military for Elections**

The military presence during Nigerian elections has been one of the main issues that has sparked outrage and criticism in the fourth republic. As was already mentioned, different security agencies have been heavily involved in participating in the general elections due to NPF staffing shortages. Sadly, this has consistently been the case for elections that do not involve the entire nation, particularly the governorship elections in the states of Edo and Ondo

in 2012, Anambra in 2013, Ekiti and Osun in 2014 (Olaniyan and Amao, 2015), Edo and Ondo in 2016, Anambra in 2017, Ekiti and Osun in 2018, etc. The Nigerian federal government sent a sizable contingent of soldiers and other security personnel to these states to help and ensure a peaceful election process because these elections were held in isolation and might normally have been secured by the local police. In each of these elections, prominent members of the opposition parties were retaliated against and prevented from attending their party's rallies and election-day by soldiers and other security personnel in commando-styled operations, particularly when the ruling party at the center had an interest in the election's outcome.

For instance, there was a significant security presence during the 2014 gubernatorial elections in Osun State, with a 73,000-strong security contingent sent to oversee security concerns during the poll (Olaniyan and Amao, 2015). This necessitates the difficult duties of securing personnel and equipment for the 2011 general election in Nigeria, as well as the requirement for the deployment of armed forces, leading (Jega, 2012:1) to assert that "election in Nigeria is equivalent to war." A major problem with the deployment of the military during elections in Nigeria is that it leads to militarization of elections. Militarization of elections in Nigeria's fourth republic is a major challenge not only to security agencies, but to the electorates, survival and consolidation of democracy in the country. The same scenario has come to play out in the 2019 general election with high deployment of military personnel. According to Gueye and Hounkpe (2010), one of the primary causes of violence and instability during elections in Nigeria can be attributed to the way security personnel are involved and how they carry out their tasks while taking part in the electoral process.

According to Oyeyipo and Oluku (2019), one of the observers of the 2019 elections, Integrity Friends for Truth and Peace Initiative (TIFPI), noted in their preliminary reports on the elections that there was alleged military-affiliated involvement and interference in elections in the states of Imo, Rivers, Zamfara, Kaduna, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Kogi, Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, and Ogun, as well as the observing group also made note of the possibility of the use of phony soldiers and the penetration of some security forces. However, militarization of the 2019 general election was intense in the governorship election held on March 9, 2019, in Rivers State than any other place. This was because the APC was unable to field any candidate for the election due to internal wrangling and has to sponsor the African Alliance (AA) candidates and tried fruitlessly to maximize its control of federal establishments to perpetuate its ambition of winning the state through proxy. While the APC mobilized armed forces to rig the election, the PDP mobilized armed local vigilantes in order to stop the onslaught of the APC and the military. The effect of the confrontation was disastrous. It was documented that out of the 58 people that died in the presidential and governorship elections in Nigeria, the Rivers State alone accounts for 28 victims.

As stated by Olorokor (2019), even the country's electoral arbiter, the INEC, acknowledged that military and armed gangs were deployed to intimidate and illegally detain its personnel during the governorship election in Rivers state. Festus Okoye, the INEC's National Commissioner and Chairman of the Information and Voter Education Committee, expressed his displeasure

with the role that soldiers and armed gangs played in Rivers State. Okoye said that the invasion of election centers by soldiers and armed gangs led to the intimidation and illegal detention of election officials, which disrupted the collation process. The Commission subsequently condemned the role that some troops and armed gangs in Rivers State played in sabotaging the collation process and attempting to subvert the will of the people.

In a press release, the United Labour Congress (ULC) reportedly stated that the 2019 general election was a harvest of blood due to the deaths, a desecration of the ballot, and a desecration of democracy that had the potential to undermine the very foundation of our existence as a democratic nation Bassey (2019). The majority of the time, the will of the majority as stated by the ballot was thwarted because it was a complete rape of democracy and an embarrassing fraud.

The use of the military, police, and other security forces improperly in the conduct of the elections was also mentioned in the declaration as one of the election's most terrifying experiences. Additionally, we witnessed instances of widespread cooperation between the military and politicians to rig elections in favor of their preferred candidates, the use of the military to intimidate rival candidates and their supporters, and ultimately the forced collation and announcement of results that seriously jeopardized the integrity of the electoral process. However, in response to the accusations, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai, the then chief of the army staff, stated that the military upheld its commitment to ensure that her troops were honest during the election. Furthermore, he noted that while the 23rd February poll was not fully free from rigging, it was not the military's fault. The Nigerian Army's commendable performance in the 2019 general election, coupled with the threat posed by insurgents and the extreme desperation frequently displayed by politicians, which frequently results in violence, according to the Army Chief, may have just secured the military a new responsibility in election administration in Nigeria (Chukwudi, 2019).

**g. Proliferation of Vigilante Groups**

An important phenomenon in Nigerian politics is the emergence of non-state armed actors i.e. vigilante groups, that provides private security for individuals and organizations. Notably, a vigilante group is a self-appointed group of citizens who enforce the law in their neighborhood without being authorized by the law. Typically, they do this because they believe the legal and law enforcement systems fall short in terms of providing security and safeguarding lives and property.

As they were present during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, vigilantes are not a recent phenomenon in Nigeria. Today's Nigeria is a country with a high crime rate, and vigilante groups have emerged as a result of the police's inability to stop the rising crime and criminality and their reputation for being corrupt and ineffective (Yahaya, and Bello, 2019). The Nigerian constitution gives the federal government control over policing duties while excluding states and local governments, which furthers the alienation of the populace caused by conventional law enforcement structures. As a result, there has been an ongoing demand for the right to execute policing duties by other levels of government. Even though vigilante group members

occasionally break the law and administer justice as they see fit, recent events in Nigeria have given vigilante organizations a greater degree of relevance.

In addition, there are numerous such crime fighting neighbourhood watch outfits across Nigeria and politicians and other prominent people in the country enlists their services in not only crime control, but also as check on the excesses of members of security forces. Vigilante groups help politicians to win election as thugs; major political parties in Nigeria always make financial provisions for such groups during election. For instance, in the 2019 governorship election, Nyesom Wike, the incumbent governor of Rivers State, recruited armed vigilante groups to prevent the APC and the military from hijacking and rigging the poll in favor of the AA candidates. Consequently, there were a significant number of casualties in that election. Because of this, traditional security services and their staff faced a serious difficulty in managing election security in Nigeria from non-state armed players like vigilante groups (Bassey, 2019; Chukwudi, 2019; Olorok, 2019).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The issues of managing the 2019 general elections in Nigeria and the role of security services were highlighted in this paper. The results demonstrate that security is necessary for the holding of free, fair, and legitimate elections, and consequently for democracy. It was also made known that the security services and their agents in Nigeria were in charge of ensuring the safety of people, their property, election supplies, officials, voters, and the institutions engaged in the process at all times during the voting process. The paper also demonstrated that one of the key elements of election administration, election security, is carried out in coordination with security services under the direction of INEC.

The paper concluded by pointing out that security agencies faced numerous difficulties in carrying out their responsibilities for election security during the 2019 general election, including general insecurity, personnel shortages, incompetence, a lack of independence and professionalism, a negative attitude toward the political class, corruption, the use of the military for elections, and the growth of vigilante groups. Therefore, there is room for major progress and a positive shift, and it recommends that the government and other stakeholders make a true, intentional, and resolute commitment to easing the obstacles of election security. Likewise, government should fulfill its obligations to protect people and property, not delegate this duty to rival institutions, and provide the police with appropriate resources to carry out their traditional duties to the public.

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