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Security Agencies and Civil Elections in Nigeria: A Study of the River State

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Abstract--This study examines the duty of the security agencies, particularly the personnel of the police force, soldiers, state security department (DSS) and members of the Nigerian civil Defence corps (NSCDC) civil elections in Nigeria. The study, thus, argued that the continued involvements of the security agencies in the conduct of civil election in the country posed two major challenges which include intimidation of voters and aiding of electoral malpractices, despite their pertinence in safeguarding the lives of the common electorate as well as ensuring smooth electoral exercises. The study questions whether there is necessity for the involvement of the security agencies, or should they be involved in civil elections, or why should they be involved, and what are the possible benefits accruing from their involvement in civil election in Nigeria with a focus on River State. To achieve this, the study adopted historical research design which is qualitative as well as explorative in nature. This implies that the study relied extensively on secondary source of data via literature survey of books, reports from dailies and periodicals, government official publications, conference papers, journal publications and internet sources. The study finds out that the involvement of the security agencies in the conduct of civil elections is not in tandem with accepted practices in advanced democracies. Also of pertinence is their conducts in 2019 general elections in Rivers State.

Keywords--civil election, democracy, Nigeria, river state, security agencies.

Introduction

Election, undeniably, is the process of selecting leaders in a Democratic setting where a lawful change of government is lawfully permitted (Johari, 2011). In the

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Nigerian context, elections have been taking place since 1922 and since that period, elections occurred until 1960 when the political independence was gained from Britain. After political independence, election happened in 1964 but the democratic regime changed into brief-lived due to bloody navy coup. In 1979, Nigeria dropped the parliamentary gadget of presidency and switched to presidential system. The third republic that did not take place in 1991 witness a clear change of power until in 1999 when the fourth republic began and stay as the longest democratic change of power in the history of Nigeria (Sule, et al., 2017). In the fourth republic, which covers the period between 1999 to the 2019, there have been seven electoral offices constitutionally recognized in the country and which include: the presidential, senatorial, federal House of representative, gubernatorial, state legislative house, chairmanship and councillorship elections (see Nigerian 1999 constitution as amended).

All of these electoral offices, the most captivating aspect in Nigeria politics are the presidential elections because of the election pattern and political attitude of the Nigeria electorate towards choosing their leaders in government. This makes the fight for the presidential seat very severe or strong, shambolic and frightening and sometimes to the extent that it threatened the unity of the country. To this end, argued that the culture of ethnic, religious and regional voting in the country was inherited from the nationalist during the colonial period and which has spillover to the present era and seems to be continuous (Sule et al., 2017). The role of the Security agencies including the army and the Nigeria police in the conduct of voting process in the country has received considerable attention in extant literature. While the army and the police have continued to be blamed for some infractions in the electoral process, little attention has been paid to the constitutional power of security agencies in the electoral processes. Hutchful (1997), and the Crisis Group have had to argue that democratic transition in this part of the world is problematic with democracy grossly bedeviled with flawed elections at all levels of government, and having more imposed leaders than duly elected politicians in positions of authority (Watch, 2007; Innocent, 1996; Ebegbulem, 2011).

It has however becomes the political culture in this part of the world to employ armed militias and youth gangs for the safeguard of the political elites, and to harass, intimidate opponents and voters alike, as well as snatch ballot boxes. For instance, the 2014 gubernatorial election that took place in Ekiti and Osun states respectively witnessed heavy presence of military men and women. Security operatives were present in strategic locations across the states. In Ekiti state 30,790 policemen, soldier, state security Department (DSS), officers and members of Nigerian civil Defence corps (NCDC) was deployed to the state a few days before the election while over 70,000 of the same agencies were actively involved in August 9, 2014 Osun state election (Obioha, 2016; Fayemi, 2012; Frank & Ukpere, 2012).

Like a war zone, the troops took their positions almost 100 meters from the entry point of the state, police officers and soldier's mounted in various check point with blood hound dogs sniffing for any likely breach of peace by supporters of the various political parties such large dispatch of security agencies has be differently demonstrated or view as militarisation of the state by the federation government

(Frank, 2014). Such was the case in the gubernatorial elections held in Bayelsa state on the 16th November, 2019 which saw the dethroned All Progress Congress (APC) Mr.

David Lyon as the winner before the judgement of the Apex court which declared the People's Democratic Party Senator Douye Diri as the governor elect of the state. There is also the Kogi state violent marred governorship election held also held on 16 November 2019 with heavy military presence in every segment of the state. Also significant, is the Edo state gubernatorial election that took place on 19 September 2020 (Mgba, 2017; Okotoni, 2017; Tenuche, 2010). Concerned by these developments, especially by the frequent presence of soldiers in states where elections are conducted, civil society network against corruption (CSNAC), network on police reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN) and journalist for democratic rights (JODER) jointly organized a save Nigeria's democracy roundtable, to provide a platform for civil society and other key stake holders of the Nigerian democracy project to come together and discuss critical issues bordering on the survival of democracy in Nigeria. But the continued presence of heavily armed security personnel during the recent bye-elections in some states of the federations is an indication that abolition of excessive use of security agencies during elections has not yet be respected by the Nigerian dominant and ruling parties of the APC and PDP.

The nature of the Problem The frequent use of the police, soldiers and other security outfits to suppress, dissent and intimidate opposition political party members in the country, though, not synonymous with only a single or political but to those dominant parties in a specific region or the dominant party is against democratic processes and principles in both advanced and developing democracies of the world (Blais, 2010; Chowdhury, 2004; Torgler, 2005). The abridgment of groups' fundamental right to exercise their freedom of expression, particularly, through peaceful assembly, protest and dissent has always been interrupted by excessive deployment of security personnel. All these inarguably portend coming disaster with respect to the security, integrity and credibility of the voting process and the survival of democracy in Nigeria. Alemika (2013), sees the police as the mirror with which the public view the intention and direction of government.

The military institution (Nigerian army) on the next hand, has functioned as a partisan organization where various act of election packaging learnt and electioneering overtures acquired, despite its instrumental role in sustaining democracy in the country. Bayo (1999), point out that a number of the military class and institutions also stood up to declare their stand, especially those who were retired by the previous government due to their tacit support for quest for the democratic governance in Nigeria, thus, the military institution presented itself and acted in most occasions as a false custodian of democratic principle and arrangement by initiating and implementing flawed elections for transition (Bobba & Coviello, 2007; Fidrmuc, 2003; Babatunde, & Qaim, 2010).

This is evident in Ekiti, Bayelsa, Edo, and River States general elections in 2019 and 2020 respectively In the affirmative Onuora (2019), has opines that in several occasions, erstwhile president Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic

Party (PDP) had previously acknowledged the military' support and loyalty to his administration. This is against the constitutional responsibilities of the security personnel despite the fact that their broad responsibility is to protect lives and properties, as well as the maintenance of peace and order, and protection the nation's territorial boundaries. All of these have bedeviled transition from one democratic.

This study therefore raise the questions as to why the general elections in Nigeria in the emerging Forth republic which began in May 1999 up to date is characterized by excessive deployment of security agencies, especially the police and the army. Why or the reason behind the continued infractions in the electoral process, and little attention has been paid to the constitutional power of security agencies in the electoral processes in the country. As is well known, some of the most durable civilian regimes, such as Kenya or Cameron, have been (and counted to be) particularly notorious for repressive and illegal use of military and special security unit (Hutchful, 1997). It has also been observed that democratic transitions in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in May 1999 are problematic. With regards to electioneering processes, the country's democracy has grossly been bedeviled with flawed elections at all levels of government, having more of imposed leaders than elected. Elections are conducted as a means of alternating power among the competing political gladiators, mostly in a violent manner that reflect desperation and barbarism in the country (Lynch et al., 2001; Okereke et al., 1998; Thumamo et al., 2012).

Military disengagement from elections, thus, represent an important first step towards credible democratic elections at all levels in the country, even if it does not equate with or immediately translate to civilian, democratic control. Demilitarization from this perspective involves more than the formal notion of military withdrawal from politics and the deconstruction of authoritarian and militaristic rules norms on the Objectives, other practices in the state and civil society (Adejumobi, 1999). This does not means that the military and other security outfit should be completely withdraw from participating in elections but they should be restricted to the distributions electoral materials.

This study therefore is posed to examine the constitutional role of the security agencies in Nigeria, as well as to ascertain whether their services were needed in civil elections as experience in Nigeria 2019 general election in Rivers State. And to answer the question as to whether the security agencies, including the army and police personnel impacted on the outcomes of the election. Most importantly, why should they be involved, and what are the possible benefits accruing from their involvement in civil election in Nigeria (Bankole et al., 2015; Suacana et al., 2016).

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine the duty of the security agencies, especially the Nigeria police and the army in civil election in Nigeria with a focus on River State. While the specific objectives are to:

- Examine whether the general or constitutional role of the security agencies in Nigeria applies to the conduct of voting process in Nigeria under the 2015 Electoral Act as amended.
- Ascertain whether the sending out of security outfits to River State impacted on the outcome of the election result from the state.
- Examine the reasons for the involvement of security agencies in the 2019 election in River state.
- To proffer policy options or recommendations that may ameliorate the excessive presence of security personnel in the conducts of general voting process in Nigeria, particularly in Rivers state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to provide direction to the study:

- Does the constitutional role of the Nigerian security personnel apply to the conduct of voting under the 2015 Electoral Act as amended?
- How has the involvement of security personnel in River state impacted on the state's elections?
- What are the reasons for the involvement of security personnel in the 2019 election in River State?
- What are the policy options or recommendations to ameliorate the excessive deployment of the security personnel in the conduct of voting in Nigeria?

Method

Method of the study the research design for this study is the historical design which is qualitative, explorative and analytical in nature. Historical research design is chosen because of its exposition to consistency. Historical design is a study in which researchers seek understanding by striving to establish concrete facts and to arrive at judgments concerning past events. This design therefore provides researchers thorough account and understanding of current events on the subject under study. Data collected from past events throw light on what happened, why they happened and their impacts on the current situations or events. Historical design is qualitative in nature because it helps in the following ways: first, in gathering of relevant data from already existing literature, and lastly, assist researchers in gathering of data in the areas of interest. This means that secondary source of data was reliably employed in gathering of literature for the study via survey of books, journal publications, government official documents, conference papers, internet materials, among others.

Literature Review

- Democracy and government in Nigeria in some third world and post communist states of the world, Democracy has been a mere event, ruin by so many kinds of bad government, offensive police and security outfits domineering local oligarchies, incompetent, and most significantly bottle neck bureaucracies, corrupt and inaccessible judiciaries, and venal ruling elites who are contemptuous of the supremacy of the law and accountable to no one but themselves.

Many persons in these countries especially the poor are thus members of the state only in name and have few chances of political participation (Diamond, 2008). Adetula (2011), contends that the weak governance environment in Africa is characterized by under developed institution of democratic accountability, and this situation presents an extraordinary high risk for democracy. House (2012), explains that the existence of certain flaws during the voting process does not immediately make a country not to qualify from being name an electoral Democracy.

A country cannot be an electoral Democracy if important authority for domestic decisions rest in the hand of an unelected power, whether a monarchy or an alien or global authority. Electoral democracy therefore is based on the principle of free and fair competition among alternative political parties, representing different policy programs, group of candidates and sector of society, so that citizens have a range of legit choices at the ballot box. If party organization are unduly constrained, then this retard the strength of citizens to voice out their demands, express their preference ,and hold leaders accountable (Norris, 2004).

Karl (2005), while expressing his view of electoral processes opines that we are witnessing regimes that have elections and tolerate some expressions of pluralism but violate other principle and procedures of democracy so severely that they have been called delegative, hybrid, and illiberal, semi-authoritarian, or contested autocracies and of course ,free and fair voting process are not enough. Diamond (2007), is of the view that there is the need for a strong and plural civil society that is supervising what government does, meticulously going through government Budget, Expenditures, and law making, raising questions and asking for reforms.

This noting or observation is further broaden or expanded by the United State agency for international development (USAID) in its evaluation of democracy and government in Nigeria particularly with respect to the oligarchy that unendingly holds Nigeria to ransom. Authoritarian leadership by an established oligarchy constitutes the major structural hurdles to deepening Democratic leadership in Nigeria. The oligarchs are composed of self-servicing politicians, business persons, political fixer, 'godfather', former military officers and elite bureaucrats who share a common interest in sustaining oligarchic power.

Even though the oligarchy clams to represent democratically based regional, professional and ethnic constituencies, their records fall far short of their clams. Electoral democracy will be of little use if it is not accompanied by reforms which improve people's lives (Motsamai, 2010). From the era of civil rule to the era of militarized democracy, it has been observed that the militarization of politics is not limited to situations of overt military intrusion into politics. For instant why the South African government remained formally civilian, both the politics and economy of South Africa became heavily militarized with the military and security and intelligence agencies exercising more institutionalized influence than in most so called military regimes. As is well known, some of the most durable civilian regimes, such as Kenya or Cameron, have been (and counted to be) particularly notorious for repressive and illegal use of military and special security unit (Hutchful, 1997).

It has also been observed that democratic transitions are problematic with regards to electioneering, the country's democracy has grossly been bedeviled with flawed elections at all levels of government, having more of imposed leaders than elected. Elections are conducted as a means of alternating power among the competing political gladiators, mostly in a violent manner that reflect desperation and barbarism. The Nigeria military which has come under severe criticisms locally and international for failing to contain the insurgencies of the Boko Haram and ISWAP in northeastern Nigeria, and banditry, Fulani-farmer conflict and armed robbery in the northwest, southwest and southeast regions of the country.

Consequently, apart from the deployment of security personnel during voting in Nigeria, there has been a marked increase in reports of human rights violations by the security forces in the country particularly under this dispensation in a report by the amnesty international titled: welcome to hell fire; torture and other ill-treatment in Nigeria, the organization describes the brutality in Nigeria as 'medieval witch-hunt'. Torture and other ill-treatment by Nigeria's police and military are pervasive, regular and usual throughout Nigeria, in the North in particular. Hundreds of men, women and children in police and military confinement across Nigeria are being subjected to a range of physical and mental torture or other ill-treatment. A large number have already died in custody (<http://www.amnesty.org>).

- Election Administration in Nigeria In this study, election administration is used to describe the different activities involved in election conduct which entails activities before the election started, during the process of the election and after the elections. It covers the election management bodies and current role and regulations that safeguard the voting process (Ajayi, 2007).

Though the legal instrument for election in Nigeria, such as the constitution of 1999 as amended, the electoral act of 2006, the electoral act of 2010 as amended and the 2015 electoral amendment act, entrusted the tasks of conducting elections to the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC). Provisions in some of these legal instruments, particularly the Electoral Act, (amendment), 2015 equally confer critical roles on security agencies in the electoral process. Against the background of the preceding, the duties of the security agencies, particularly the police encompass what they are require or expected to do before the election, during the process as well as after the elections.

Succinctly put, the duties of the police in the organization of elections, covers all the stages or phases of the election which include constituency delineation, denomination of candidates, campaign voting, vote counting, compilation of result and the announcement of result including the declaration of the winners. By implications, the police being the leading security agencies are needed to be energetically exhibit proactive and reactive effort towards public peace and safety (Ajayi, 2007). In other words, the police force are concerned with the safeguarding of environment where the election is expected to be conducted, the electorate who are to vote in an election, and the officials who are to hold the election including sensitive and non-sensitive material meant for the election are needed to be protected by the police and other security outfit when their services are required.

Concerning election administration in Nigeria, the responsibilities of the police are well captured in the constitution of 1999 as amended, the electoral act 2006, electoral amendment act 2010, the electoral amendment act 2015, including the various guide lines of the INEC and the police service commission. While the various electoral acts, stipulated the duties of the police, the commission of the police and INEC guides provided for what could be described as a code of conduct for police officers on election duties. They can also be subsumed under what [Hounkpe & Gueye \(2010\)](#), refers to as the behavioral, legitimacy, competence and resource requirement for meaningful involvement of security officers in the electoral process. This guide lines includes:

- The requirement that police on election duties be at alert and respond promptly to any incidence that could lead to disruption of voting and associated electoral process
- Approachability means that all police officer on election duties must be approachable to the voters who might need his assistance,
- Police officers must be conversant with the electoral law,
- Non-use of force by the officers of the police on election duties
- The need to communicate with superiors and commanders by police on duties and to write report on situations that might lead to breaking down of fundamental law and order,
- The police officer on election duty must be professional in his/her conduct and personal appearance, vii. Impartiality and fairness to all stake holders in the elections, and viii. The requirement that name and number tags of police officers must be bold for office identification and the need in partnership with other stakeholders to have credible elections ([Cleen, 2011](#)).

Empirical Review

The 2015 Electoral Act and the Police in Electoral Administration in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the electoral cycle is often marked by conflict and controversies. It is usually not uncommon to see those who have lost elections condemning the voting process and a time accusing the electoral empire and security agencies of conniving with the electoral opponent to manipulate the electoral outcome in favour of the ruling political party. In some cases, the intensity of conflict and high rate of insecurity challenges spawned by election outcome have resulted in the loss of life and property.

Regarding security agencies, allegations against the police and the army are usually in the realm of their failure to arrest and prosecute political thugs and other people who contravened electoral laws and disorganized the election process. Since the birth of Nigeria's fourth republic that took place in 1999, the neutrality of the police and the army specifically in the voting process has been called to question. The army and the police have been seen to be partisan and discriminating against opposition and colluding and conniving with ruling political parties to influence the result of election ([Cleen, 2011](#)).

For instance the 2014 Ekiti governorship polls, the 2016 Edo elections, the 2016 rivers state re-run election and the 2018 gubernatorial election in Ekiti and Osun

state were some of the elections that created the ugly picture of the Nigeria police for their alleged role in undermining the inviolability of the polls. A case in point was the 2016 re-run election in Rivers state in which following the publicity and condemnations that trailed the election, INEC set up an administrative inquiry to probe what transpired. In the reports security agencies were indicted. The police and other security outfit were seen to have compromised their neutrality and to have intentionally perverted the electoral process (Tobi et al., 2017).

In recent time, there was a repeat of this ugly scenario in some states of the federation in gubernatorial elections were held. Such was the case in the gubernatorial elections held in Bayelsa State on the 16th November, 2019 which saw the dethroned All Progress Congress (APC) Mr. David Lyon as the winner before the judgment of the Apex or supreme court which declared the People's Democratic Party Senator Douye Diri as the governor elect of the state. There is also the Kogi state violent marred governorship election held also held on 16 November 2019 with heavy military presence in every segment of the state. Also significant, is the gubernatorial election in Edo state held on 19 September 2020. We need to say that one of the critical requirements for effective election administration is the existence of clear electoral rules and guidelines not only for candidates and political parties but all stakeholders in clear terms what is expected from all stakeholders including the security agencies. In the Nigeria context, these laws and guidelines do not permit the police to act independently.

Even in the face of the abysmal performance of the Nigeria police force on electoral duties seen to have been on the increase, the amended electoral Act of 2015 seems to be defective in improving police proficiency and salvaging the poor public image of the force. To have a plausible electoral process, the Nigerian police ought to be at liberty to professionally determine when to be involved and the extent of involvement regarding providing security that is good enough for proper conduct of an election. In doing this, the police as the lead of the nation's internal security agency should be able to synergize with other security agencies to establish the relevant area which their engagement is feasible for purposes of providing enough security for the proper conduct of elections.

Ironically the electoral (amended) act 2015 principally states that notwithstanding of any other legislation and the purpose of protecting the vote, the commission shall be liable for asking for the sending out of important security officers needful for election or registration of electorate and shall place them in the way determine by the commission shall only ask for the sending out of the armed forces of Nigeria only for protecting the distribution and delivery of voting materials and safeguarding of the election officials. By implications, the police are not responsible for the determination and engagement of other security agencies, and yet, the police are the constitutional lead agency of National security of the country. Relying on the dictates of the independent national electoral commission(INEC),the provision of the electoral act, the onus of security provisions is vested on the independent National electoral commission (INEC) that decides whom to deploy, to where, and when. In doing this, it is expected to consult and make a request for the choice of security and their deployment. The amended Section 94 (4) states that notwithstanding: any provisions in the police act, the police order act, and any regulation made there under or any other law

that is against it, the duties of the Nigerian police force in political rallies, procession and meetings shall be limited to the provisions of enough security as provided in the sub section of this section. The electoral act, 2015 further states that, for the avoidance of doubt, no registered political party in Nigeria, its aspirant or candidate shall be avoided from holding rallies, processions or meeting at any time for the legal political purposes, and the police shall through an advisory manner resolve any conflict at time and location between and amongst parties where such surface. From the dictates of the amended electoral act, (amendment) 2015 stated above, more troubles were added to the Nigeria police whose conduct has become questionable over the years. The implication of this is that the power of securing the voting process in Nigeria does not squarely on the shoulder of the police force in Nigeria. In this instance, the police have lesser share responsibility than independent national electoral commission.

Worst still is the aspect of the electoral independent commission of the state (SIEC) that lives under the tutelage and sympathy of the state executive governor in Nigeria. This is the main reason in most states of the federation, the political party in power usually controls all the local government councils of the state and where a formidable opposition exists, political thugs are used in harassing and undermine the electoral process for the interest of the ruling party. [Alemika \(2013\)](#), describes the police as the mirror with which the public could view the intention and direction of government and that a country is useful when the policing system is effective, efficient and command public confidence. By and large, the security agencies including the police force are expected by all the relevant laws of the state to participate in the voting process conduct when their services are demanded by the electoral empire. The duty of the Nigerian Security Agencies in Civil Election in River State the Nigeria army has again clarified that its role in the general election of 2019 is purely assisting the civil authority and the police in providing security for the holding of the poll.

Although, this is in tandem with the dictates of the relevant electoral laws of the state of Nigeria which but require the security agencies to remain neutral in carrying out of their constitutional duties during and after voting in the country. When taking action to a report alleging over military participation in river state during the 2019 gubernatorial election by the United Kingdom (U.K), col.musa sagir, the army spokesperson stated this in a statement on Monday 11 march, 2019 expressed concerned over military participation in rivers state during the elections. Col. Musa said that the allegation was totally not on point, not true and therefore capable of miss-leading unsuspected mass of the public. He insist that there were no credible record of the army participation in election anywhere in Nigeria, before, during and after the voting exercise. Rather Musa noted that the recent records showed that the army has been internationally applauded by external and domestic elections observers for its duty in ensuring that the election conduct is peaceful.

Foreign interests are therefore enjoined to be mindful of interfering in our national internal affairs, especially when there is no credible evidence he said (please indicate or cite the source of this information) According to the army spokesperson, any accusation against the army must be confirmed from suitable quarters before getting into conclusions. Musa, however assure them again that

the army would deal with his personnel found to have go against the laws of the constitution of the land. The Nigeria army had on Sunday 17th march 2019 hold that intelligence at its disposal point out that some politicians disguise thugs with military uniform to impersonate its personnel during the election.

It further alleged that the thugs have been wrongly viewed and address as real military personnel on both social and mainstream media platform thereby bringing the army's reputation to disrepute. It posted pictures of false soldiers apprehended in Rivers, Imo and Abia states involved in election crimes on its whatsapp platform. The army said the politician used the recruited thugs dressed in military uniforms to harass and intimidate opponents. In some cases, as recounted, and as pointed out in diverse intelligence reports, hired thugs clothed in military fatigue hijacked ballots boxes and other elections materials.

Some INEC staffs were reportedly abducted by these thugs to unknown destinations and were made to sign already written results for the prefer candidates of the dominant party (please indicate or cite the source of this information) 3. Reasons for the Security Agencies Involvement in the 2019 Civil Election in River State, Nigeria the Nigeria army has said it intervened in the general election of 2019 because of lack of adequate policemen to man the polling booths. The army made the submission after meeting with a coalition of civil society organization to review the general election of 2019 with a view of fashioning out ways of improvement in subsequent elections held in the state in particular and the country in general.

TVC reports that the meeting was attended by the National commissioners of INEC, resident electoral commissioners, security outfits, politicians and civil society group or organizations with bias for the voting process. The meeting came up six weeks after the conclusion of Nigeria general elections. with more than seven hundred lawsuits already file across different courts and tribunals the election was discredited by both domestic and global observers for excessive deployment of security personnel to intimidate opposition party members and the general public. The aim was to take a second look at the conduct of all key actors and proffer ways of achieving a better outing in future elections (please cite the source of this information).

The INEC leadership acknowledge some error or mistake on its part but disturb itself about the high cost of voting process in Nigeria, tracing it to lack of trust .To the commission, spending as much as 189 billion naira on voting and printing of ballot papers outside Nigeria cannot be justified where there is reciprocal trust. Meanwhile, yiaga Africa had through its watching the vote (WTV) project send out 3906 Observers across all topical government areas in nigeria for the presidential election of 2019 using the pararel vote tabulation (PVT) methodology. The selection observers group is now taking steps to access the process in a bid to improve on it ahead of the Bayelsa and Kogi governorship elections that were already held in November 2019. The Chief of the Defense Staff (CDS), General Abayomi Gabriel Olonisakin, had earlier warned that the armed forces of the country and other security outfit would deal decisively with those planning to bring security rift before, during and after the general election of 2019.The CDS gave the warning after a meeting with head of security agencies on the

preparedness of the military to support the security services to ensure violence-free 2019 general elections.

This warning came following intelligence reports that some individual were importing military uniforms and arms to disrupt the peaceful election (please cite the source of this information). Furthermore, he pointed that the security agencies were aware of plans by mis-chiefmakers to illegally use military or paramilitary uniforms to impersonate law enforcement agencies to intimidate and harass members of the public. We are not inform of plans to unlawfully wear uniforms of military or even the paramilitary outfits to assume the identity of security and law enforcement agencies, unlawful possession and use of sophisticated weapons to intimidate and harrass members of the public and other acts likely to cause security rift.

Let me caution that military of Nigeria and other security outfit will not endure any act that is likely to bring about security rupture before ,during and after voting exercise and will deal conclusive with these act irrespective of those involve he said. The CDS further enjoined Nigerians to disregard the call to sit at home on the day of election being circulated by the indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) adding that the messages are hand work of mis-chief makers bent on scuttling the process the general election of 2019.He reiterated that the enforcement agencies of law would stay neutral as the armed forces code of conduct for voting has been given to personnel send out for election duties.

The CDS restated that personnel not deployed for election duties have been directed to steer clear of elections except in exercising their right to vote and appeal to Nigerians to adhere strictly to the restrictions on movement during elections. Violators of restrictions on moving around, irrespective of who you are will be arrested and detained. However this restriction does not pertain to those on voting security duties, domestic and global observers/supervisor and emergency and security service officers on approved or permitted duties only he said. Before the rescheduled date, defense headquarters also warned its personnel against fraternizing with any political party. The then acting director, defense information, Brigadier General John Agim, during a press conference briefing in Abuja, said the Nigeria military is not a government military but that of the Nigerians nation and would remain neutral, impartial and strictly adhere to expert code of conduct, before, during and after the general voting process. He mentioned earlier that the armed forces of the country would discharge its constitutional duties with zero tolerance to unprofessional conduct.

Contrary to some fears expressed by some Nigerians, he said the military was on ground when the opposition won and assure all of level playing ground. The defense headquarters has warned that all personnels, soldiers, ratings, air men and women of the Nigeria armed forces must stay apolitical and exhibit uncommon professionalism before, during and after the coming elections. The director however noted that the military personnel who wish to exercise civic responsibilities must appear at the polling units with multi devoid of any military accouterment.

He stated that the sending out of the military is to assist other securities agencies to ensure that no Nigerian is disenfranchised. The director further noted that all military commanders have been assigned to ensure enough security in their area of responsibility and directed to ensure strict adherence to rules of engagement. He said the commanders have been assign to arrest anyone in military uniforms who is not on crucial obligation adding that any civilian caught wearing military uniforms would be handle as a terrorist. He therefore caution such group of people to desist from such unselfishly devoted act. He would like to warn that anyone caught be they serving or even retired military officers or civilian irrespective of how highly respected will be arrested and handle in accordance with the prevailing laws of the land, he said in line with these commitments, the military engaged in election duties according to international best practices to enable citizens exercise their franchise.

This resulted in the high turnout of voters even in the states most ravaged by insurgency in the north east (please cite the source of this information). The general officer commanding 6 division, Nigeria Army (GOC) Port Harcourt Rivers State, Major General Jamil Sarham, marched governor Wike Nyesom's commissioner for urban development and physical planning, Dr. Onya Reason and the representative of Ahoada west constituency in rivers state house of Assembly, Nwanako Okpokiri, for rigging election in the state. Also paraded where the camp commandant of the government house, Port Harcourt, Oyoku Ifellea, police deputy superintendent (DSP). Major Akpoge Peter Obah of 6 Division in Nigerian army port Harcourt, and 31 others including police men, thugs and ad-hoc staffs of the (INEC) independent national electoral commission, In addition of two women were paraded after the election. All the 35 accused or suspects were handed to the deputy commissioner in charge of the (CID) criminal investigation department of the police command of rivers state, Kontagora Ahmed who stand in for the commissioner of police, Belel Usman, for prosecution.

The Assistant Director Public Relations of the (NYSC) National youth service in River State, Violet Appol- Ibizugbe also insisted that no corps member died in the state during the presidential and national assembly polls, contrary to insinuations making the round. Appolo-ibizugbe said, 'Rivers state NYSC management has been in undated with the rumours of the death of a corper during the last presidential and national assembly elections in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State on February 23, management wishes to point to the notice of the public that no corps member was killed before, during and after the voting exercise held on February 23rd. While we sympathize with the family of the late Mr. Sibisakiamachree, an INEC ad- hoc staff member, who unluckily died on her way back from voting duties in Degema local government area. We desire to present that she was not a corps and that NYSC rivers state did not lose any corps member during the February 23rd voting .The GOC also open up that alot of manipulation by political actors were seen in the division area of responsibility (AOR) covering Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Delta and Rivers state during the voting exercise.

He pointed out that the manipulation were usual in a democracy but emphasis that most disturbing and unsafe was the recruitment of political thugs by some desperate political actor to disrupt lawful national process for their monetary

benefits. Major General Sarham said equally of serious interest is the bold effort by the governor of rivers state, Barr. Wike Nyesom to consent security outfit, specifically soldiers of 6 division of the Nigerian Army with heavy monetary incentive to help him in his unlawful act of frustrating a free and fair voting process to his favour while blaming the Nigeria army and its command rank of bias daily. Following these circumstances surrounding the general election in River state, the Nigerian Army proffers some recommendations to INEC concerning the 2019 election in the state.

Precisely on Thursday 14th March 2019 in Abuja, the Nigerian Army urged the INEC independent National electoral commission to work towards using sciences and information technology to conduct subsequent elections in order to retard human interference. Chief of Army staff Lt. General Tukur Buratai, who was represented by Brig-Gen John Ochai, former Brigade Commander of 22 Army Brigade in Dikwa, Borno, made the call at an electoral reform round table in Abuja, speaking on the topic: Securing Nigeria voting, the army carryout an investigation into the problems point out by Nigerians. He said that it came to the decision that any officer found disobeying would be deal with accordingly adding that the claim of the militarization of the voting process was false.

I think it is going to the extreme to say that the elections were militarized because the military participation was based on constitutional provisions which empower the government to deploy the military in help of civil authority. Furthermore, the path to follow is science and technology and other creative methods by INEC to make it important to provide the type of security needful to protect our voting process for instance, if we adopt the electronic voting system, it will go a long way in retarding human involvement and remove people of polling unit on Election Day. The benefit is that, we will have more persons voting especially those abroad the issue of collation of results should also be carryout electronically.

That way, the respect placed on result sheets for which persons get killed would be diminished just like in Benue where thugs laid attack on the official bringing the results he said. The chief of army staff point out that if Nigerians voting process would be protected, technology was the way ahead, that more than 20 countries or states including Namibia were already practicing it .He advice INEC to start immediately to plan other creative methods ahead of the 2023 voting process thereby diminishing the activities of security agents in polls. Democracy, Electoral Practice and the Role for Security Agencies The reason of this aspect is to meticulously analyse the appropriate duties of the security, media and civil society organizations to the carrying of credible voting process which in turn will bring about true democracy. To begin with, it has been known all over the world that democracy is the best aspect of government .It is also generally held that elections are an important pillar of democracy. As explained above, election gives citizens choices of choosing among the contesting parties and candidate through voting. Under democracy, elections are supposed to be conducted to ensure that the winner reflects the purpose of the voters.

To accomplished this immense or huge task, the duty is of security is not submissive. Otive contend that the progress or setback of any election is based on the stakeholders performing their roles (Inec, political parties ,election observers,

media and security agencies).He bewail that the security outfit can make a difference in the results of voting. It is therefore germane that security personnel show the highest level of integrity, neutrality, professionalism as well as sense of roles.

The security of the lives of the masses, voters, voting materials and official and the preservation of constitutional and orderly voting processes are important for credible free and fair voting process. Securing of human life, electorate, voting materials and officials and the preservation of constitutional and orderly voting processes are important for credible free and fair voting process. Exactly the way, puts it security is necessary to the holding of free and fair and credible voting process. From the provision of the essential security to voters at political parties rallies and campaigns to ensuring that results forms are protected, the whole electoral processes is circumscribed by security considerations thus, without adequate security, there cannot be credible ,free and fair election.

Some of the duties of security in voting process are as follows: providing security for political candidates during rallies, congresses, conventions, electioneering campaigns and voting, protecting the lives and properties of citizens during the voting process ensuring and preserving a free, fair, safe and lawful environment for campaigning by all political parties and political candidates without discriminations; maintaining peaceful conditions, law, and order around voting arena collation; providing security for election officials at the election and counting centers, making sure of the protection of all electoral materials, personnel and citizens during registration of voters, update, revision and any other electoral events.

In addition, the duty of security is to ensure safety of voters, voting materials and electoral officers before, during and after electoral exercise. To point out the key lessons from this analysis, it's suitable to admit the duties of security elections. All parties concerned must carry out their roles efficiently ranging from police, military and other paramilitary corps. It is only a well secured electoral practice that can bring about consolidated democratic rules. In apparent, the lawful duties of security personnel in Nigeria during voting are quite important. Voting security in Nigeria is primarily taken care of by police.

In other words, the police are primarily faced with the duty of making sure that the masses exercise their election rights in an orderly manner with the aid of other paramilitary organizations. But it got to a level that military has to participate in this process. The participation of security men is now becoming more alarming. Since the situation has even degenerated to the level that hardly could Nigeria conduct any elections without the security men in Nigeria, what then could have led to this myopic view and what could be done to ameliorate these perturbing situations? The answer is not farfetched, security men generally, except few, have made themselves available for election rigging. Security personnel that are expected to maintain laws are breaching them with impurity at this precarious time (Olurode, 2013).

In most of the former elections, it is revealed that security men could not acquit themselves from usual scourge of corruption.one can even argue that police and

other security personnel can be easily pocketed by the political actors and most especially government in power. No wonder, it is famously held that he who plays the musical instrument, dictate the tune. In short corruption has been used to characterize the duty of the security personnel in voting in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper examined the military as an institution and its roles in civil elections in Nigeria (rivers state). The analysis gather the reality that the military (Nigerian army) has played both distractive and sustaining force in Nigerians democratization project. However history proved that the democratic principle and arrangement put in place by the military are usually faulty and inadequate for a viable democratic governance to thrive on. Election in the country is a battle of fists rather than a game of wits (Obodumu, 1992). Nigerian is the den of negative politicking (Diamond et al., 1997).

Alemika (2013), describe the police as the mirror with which the public could view the intention and direction of the government and that a country is useful when policing system is effective, efficient and command public confidence. It is therefore pertinent to underline the point that the police force of Nigeria should be given the free hands to operate maximally in civil election with the sense that, the Nigerian police should be deployed more in numbers than the Nigerian army in civil elections. The management of elections is the ultimate responsibility of the civilian authorities in democratic countries (Afolabi, 2018). It is the constitutional responsibility of the police force of Nigeria to saddle the affair of the civil elections in Nigeria Innocent. The Nigerian army should therefore not make a flawed of the Nigerian constitution on civil election matters as seen in Rivers state Nigeria in the 2019 general election. In most democratic countries, there is no role for the military foreseen around the ballot (Bayart, 1986). The protection of polling station is not the task of the armed forces but rather it is assigned to the police (Alemika, 2013).

Soldiers may play a subsidiary role if the need arises. However, in case of emergency, the military can engage in the safeguard of the democratic institutions and the constitutional order. This can be derived from the lawful provisions on emergency situations and the missions of the military as defined in the country under review. Otherwise the military as such are not entitled to deal with elections and should not be deployed more in number than the police as experience in rivers state Nigeria in 2019 election.

Recommendations

The following are policy measures that may impact on the smooth conduct of elections and measure to be adopted by INEC to enhance the security of voting in Nigeria, particularly in River state: INEC responsibility for election security could be captured in three main areas: agenda setting, planning and strategic coordination (Anyanya et al., 2013). This it has set in motion by setting up the inter agency consultative committee of election security. The deployment of ICCES during election has help to reduce the incidence of violence and brigandage.

Evidence from the Edo and Ekiti governorship elections corroborate the views of the respondent that this initiative by INEC has been a success in curbing insecurity. They averred that rather than wait for the election the ICCES should be developed into a strong institution that would engage in preventive security through intelligence gathering and this could be achieved by enlarging the scope by recruiting young university under graduate, commercial sex workers and members of the road transport workers, national union to help gather intelligence. They further said that such structures could be replicated at community levels so that issues of insecurity would be nipped in the bud. One of the respondents was of the view that if INEC invests on a sophisticated intelligence gathering through ICCES it would succeed in reducing serious security issues during elections by as much as 60%.

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