



Election security and its implications for strengthening democratic elections in Nigeria

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Abstract

Election security, no doubt, plays significant role in ensuring free, fair and credible elections across the world. As feasible as it is, over policing election may have implications on sustaining and strengthening democratic elections. This study, therefore, examines election security and its implications for strengthening democratic elections in Nigeria. This study adopted basically qualitative approach through the use of secondary data in its investigation. The findings show that the Nigerian government has not adhered to the practice of deploying security personnel for elections in Nigeria. Therefore, it is a continuation of politics by other means. Besides, deploying police and other security agencies may have the implications on democratic elections because it may lead to much spending on elections, low voters' turn out in an election, instilling fears among the electorates, exacerbating fatalism between the Police and the electorates which may increase electoral violence, taint on the integrity of election(s), imbibe the political culture of rigging election, etc. The paper recommends among others that there should be moderate deployment of security agencies in an election so as to reduce the cost expended in the electoral processes in Nigeria.

Keywords: Election security, election, over policing, credible elections, democracy.

Introduction

Election constitutes the core value of democracy across the world. It bestows upon the citizens the popular sovereignty to participate in the electoral process in a democratic setting. In exercising their franchise, citizens must be free from pressure, inappropriate influence and fear (Momkes, 2013). Therefore, election security is crucial for creating the proper environment in the conduct of an election in developing countries across the globe. Olurode (2013) confirms that security during election is very crucial in order to avert insecurity during the electoral process, especially in the Third World countries where democracy is emerging.

In view of this, most of the so-called developing countries are characterized by electoral violence in the conduct of elections which does not align with the ethos of democracy. They believe that election should be won through the process of force especially where election to power is highly priced. Thus, the struggle to gain access to power and to create resources has not only remained protracted but also become fierce. Therefore, security agencies, electoral bodies and stakeholders such as media, community leaders, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have a significant role to play in the task of securing the electoral environment from electoral fraud and violence.

Against the background of securing the electoral environment saturated with fraud and violence, most political systems of sub-Saharan Africa have been making effort to contain some factors that triggered disorder and violence during elections. A group of researchers conducted a study at the Nordic Africa Institute on the conflict, security and democratic transformation cluster in Uppsala, Sweden. Their findings reveal that ethnic divisions, weak checks and balances on executive power, informal patronage systems, poor governance, exclusive politics, socio-economic problem, fears of losing political power in states with highly concentrated power at the centre, election fraud, failed elections, and weak or manipulated institutions and institutional rules governing the electoral process are factors that exacerbated disorder and violence (Adolfo, Kovacs, Nystrom, & Utas, 2012).

As a result these, most governments across the world employ election security to establish free, fair and peaceful conducts of elections. The argument here lies on the fact that since elections are key to establishing a link between the leaders and the public, it must be credible to all the parties involved in the conduct of the electoral process so as to prevent any form of crisis in such political systems. The main reason is that the public and the stakeholders involved must accept the outcome of the results.

The history of the electoral process has shown that virtually all the past elections have been characterized by electoral violence and election rigging except that of the 1993 Presidential Election (Awopeju, 2011, Adekanye & Iyanda, 2011, Akanji, 2018). Akanji (2018: 83); which establishes that the administration of those past elections in Nigeria, especially from the time of independence in 1960, apart from the June 12 Election, has been obviously marked by

various forms of malpractices and violence. Such practices are revealed by Adekanye & Iyanda (2011) as “chicanery, fraud, political intimidation, and even coercion”. For these reasons, the deployment of security agencies such as Police, Military, State Security Service (SSS) and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) during the electoral processes has become imperative for proper election management by the government and the electoral umpire. Scholars such as Olurode (2011), Olurode (2013), Adekanye and Iyanda (2011), Quadri (2018), Akanji (2018) have emphasized that, in an unsecured global environment, election security in situations such as election management, security challenges in election, women participation vis-à-vis fault lines and mainstreaming exclusion, is important and feasible. However, study on policing election as regards the challenges and its implications on democratic elections in Nigeria have received little attention in the literature.

Therefore, the pertinent questions are the following: Is the government of Nigeria really sincere with the deployment of security personnel to ensure free, fair and credible elections? What are the challenges associated with the use of election security and its implications for strengthening democratic elections in Nigeria? These are the questions this paper seeks to interrogate.

The paper is divided into seven sections. The first section introduces the study, second section presents the explanation of election security, section three presents the methodology, and section four examines the theoretical framework of the study. Section five examines an overview of election security in the Nigeria’s fourth republic with a view to establishing whether government is sincere with the election security in Nigeria. Section six examines election security vis-à-vis the strengthening of democratic elections

in Nigeria while section seven concludes and makes recommendations.

Explaining Election Security

A number of definitions of election security have been offered by electoral scholars and institutions involved in the conduct of elections. Most of these definitions revolve around the protection of pre-election phase, election phase, and post-election phase. In the words of Olorode (2011: 7), “election security is the safety of electoral personnel, election materials and information, the electorates and a number of stakeholders involved in the electioneering process.” Similarly, Onyekpere (2013) conceptualizes it as ensuring that the integrity of the electoral process is safeguarded. The word “integrity” here means the consistency of actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations, and outcomes of the elections. In other words, election security refers to activities and processes involved in protecting the integrity of the electoral process from the perspective of the rule of law. Similarly but more elaborate, electoral security involves the ensuring of safety in the electoral process and to create a quiet and safe environment which will enable citizens to take part in the electoral process without fear or intimidation, before, during and after voting (UNOWA, 2009).

The definition given by IDEA (2009) is quite different from the ones given above. It examines electoral security in form of information that needs to be protected. According to IDEA (2009), it is the safety of information, computers, software and election communication information. It also refers to the absence of the use of force, intimidations, and harassments in the electoral process. In the context of this paper, electoral security is the deployment of security resources (Military, Police, SSS, Air Force, Immigration, and NSCDC) to ensure

free, fair and credible election, during and post-election phases.

Methodology

Qualitative research method was employed through the use of secondary data. The data were extracted from archive so as to examine relevant literature on election security and democratic elections. Other secondary data in the study included the data sourced from newspapers, relevant textbooks, journals, government and institutions’ publications, internet sources, etc.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is anchored on the decision-making approach. The intellectual roots of the decision-making approach lie in the doctrine of process analysis developed by Richard Snyder and his colleague Roseau at Princeton University (Varma, 1996). The theoretical stance states that the behaviour of the state is a reflection of the behaviour of the decision-makers who are the officials who act based on what is regarded as objective circumstances (Varma, 1996). This approach begins with the simple notion that all political actions are undertaken by concrete human beings, and that if we want to comprehend the dynamics of these actions, we should be prepared to view the world not only from our point of view but from the perspective of persons responsible for taking decisions.

The decision-makers here are identified as the stakeholders and the various institutions charged with election administration in Nigeria (the executive, the bureaucrats, the INEC and the security agencies). The approach which is a variant of process analysis is a useful method of getting behind the surface of announced policies by nation-states (e.g., Nigerian state) in an attempt to explain them (Perkins, 2005). The approach has become an appropriate framework for articulating the political implications of the application of the election security and the



strengthening of democratic elections in Nigeria because of some stakeholders who are involved in deploying security agencies to oversee election. This decision is executed by the relevant stakeholders who make the decision (of deploying security agencies) on behalf of the state.

Election security in the Nigeria's fourth republic: An overview

Election security is fascinating and it has its feasibilities. Despite this, the Nigeria's experience of the use of election security is a continuation of politics by other means. Examples abound in this regard. History has shown that the deployment of security personnel is meant to perpetrate election rigging by the ruling party. Olurode (2011) supports this in his opinion that the abuse of police power by the executive branch of government was most feasible in the 2003 and 2007 elections.

In 2003 general elections, the use of the military was no longer a speculation. The security agents were used to forcefully rigged elections. General Victor Malu confirmed that:

In 2003, the PDP rigged the elections with the help of the Military. What happened was that before the close of polls, a vehicle either from Government House or any of the official vehicle will arrive at the polling booth, with armed soldiers, Air Force, Immigration or Customs personnel, they will start to shoot in the air. There would be pandemonium, and the voters will run away. These armed people will collect all the polling materials, take them to whatever they wanted, do wherever they wanted with them before they will resurface many hours after ballot boxes have been already stuffed. That was my

personal experience in Benue State where I came from.

In 2007, President Olusegun Obasanjo gave a warning in the PDP campaign in Ogun State that the 2007 elections will be a "do or die affairs" for the PDP.(see Guardian, February 13, 2007). The Sahara Reporter (2007) affirms this when it asserts that "most deployment of police powers on the approach of elections has become an established patter. This was the case in the 2007 elections."The use of police officers further routinely harassed the local election observers that were accused of being funded by the opposition.

Also, findings of an impartial organization such as Commonwealth Observer Mission (2011) confirmed that the 2007 general elections were full of all sorts of snatching of ballot boxes under the nose of the security personnel. Besides, the Justice Uwais Report on Electoral Reforms (2008) affirmed that there was abuse of police powers in electoral activities. To further corroborate this, Adeyemi (2011) acknowledges that agents of desperate politicians hijacked ballot boxes, beat up uncompromising electoral officers, induced others and collaborated with security personnel to manipulate election results. Furthermore, the Reports of Observers deployed by the Transition Monitoring Group during the 2003 and 2007 elections contained numerous examples of violence at or around the polling stations attributed to the security agencies attached to politicians and public officials. In some cases, they arrived at polling units shooting at random to cause chaos and thereby facilitate the snatching of boxes after intimidating opponents (Alemika, 2011).

The gubernatorial elections in some states such as Ekiti (2014), Osun (2018), Ekiti (2018), Bayelsa and Kogi (2019) experienced some violation of election security. In 2014, a total of 18,000 policemen were deployed to

Ekiti to ensure free and fair election (Jimoh, 2018). Apart from policemen, Military and NSCDC personnel were also deployed. Despite the deployment of security personnel to the state, politics in the state turned into vote buying syndrome. Besides, the security personnel, no doubt, perpetrate violence during the electoral process.

The 2018 gubernatorial election in Ekiti State was described by Nnamdi (2018) as an “over policing” thus:

The pronouncement by the Police authority that it would deploy 30,000 police officers created its own tension raising doubts about the possibility of over policing if not over securitization of the election.

In comparing the number of police officers deployed for 2014 and 2018 in Ekiti State governorship elections, the deployment of 30,000 police officers in 2018 election is a sharp increase from the deployed 18,000 officers for the 2014 governorship election in the state. According to Jimoh (2018), 18,000 officers deployed in 2014 was over-militarized let alone 30,000 officers deployed for 2018 gubernatorial election in the state.

The Report further states that if five (5) policemen are to be adequate for each polling unit, Ekiti State with a 2,195 polling units should have a maximum of 10,975 security agents. An observation about the deployment here is that five (5) policemen in a polling unit is even outrageous. Then, how do we account for the remaining 19,025? Are they meant to police the collation centres? Even if they are, that number is much for the exercise unless the ruling party (APC) at the federal level intends to hijack the power from the PDP-led administration in the state. Evidences have shown that 2018 Ekiti gubernatorial election was characterized by vote buying under the nose of the security agents meant to prevent election rigging (Atoyebi, 2018; Akinkuotu, 2018; Johnson &

Akinrefon, 2018; Nwankwo, 2018). For example, Atoyebi (2018: 2) is of the opinion that “the just concluded governorship election in Ekiti State has exposed the new level of absurdity in the nation’s beleaguered democracy. He avers that:

...the outcome of the governorship poll in the state showed clearly that the INEC has no power over how free and fair an election will be. In fact, it underscored the weakness of INEC or the connivance of the body and security forces with buyers of votes and peddlers of the Permanent Voter Card (PVC).

The complacency and complicity of the security personnel and electoral umpire was revealed by Onuoha (2018) when he posited that:

The complacency and complicity of security agents and election officials add to the problem of vote buying. In order to seal the protection and loyalty, security agents are usually the first to be compromised by the political parties or candidates. Hence, vote buying often takes place in the presence of security agents who appear unable or unwilling or too compromised to deter such electoral offences.

In Osun State, Deputy Inspector General (DIG), eight (8) Commissioners of Police and 40,000 police officers were deployed for 2018 gubernatorial election in the state (Adepegba, 2018a). An average of four (4) policemen manned a polling unit with the complemented efforts of other security agencies such as Civil Defence, Nigeria Custom Service, Nigeria Prison Service, Nigeria Immigration Services, Federal Road Safety Commission and Department of State Security (DSS) to provide security during the election phase. Despite the provided security



personnel, the election was marred with vote buying and snatching of ballot boxes. The Police Service Commission (PSC) confirmed this through Mr. Ikechukwu Ani who submitted that “there were cases where the police officers were overwhelmed and ballot boxes snatched, inducements, and inability to stop discreet vote-buying” (Adepegba, 2018b). It is therefore embarrassing that the Nigeria Police that were deployed to prevent election violence were overwhelmed by the thugs breed by the politicians. The rhetorical question one needs to ask is that, why were they deployed to prevent electoral violence in the first instance when they could not ensure free, fair and credible election in the state? Therefore, this shows the level of incapability of the police involved in election security in Nigeria.

The Osun Gubernatorial Election eventually led to a re-run election due to the fact that no clear winner emerged between the candidates of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People Democratic Party (PDP), Mr. Gboyega Oyetola and Mr. Ademola Adeleke. The re-run was conducted in Ife North, Ife South, Orolu and Osogbo local government areas because of the pandemonium that occurred in the conduct of election. The re-run election conducted in four local government areas of Osun State depicted a heavy militarization of the state. The militarization (over policing) of the state intimidated the electorates. According to Ajala and Muller (2018), they gave the picture of militarization by submitting that:

The number of soldiers and police officers outnumbered the citizens that were to vote in the election. The security personnel were shooting into the air sporadically to intimidate the opposition parties. The ugly incident was that defiant members of opposition parties were either intimidated or forcefully

arrested during election and denied voting.

The questions to ask based on the above quotation are: Must election be won by all means? Is this a practice of democracy or “demo-crazy”? A situation whereby the deployed security agents outnumbered the electorates that want to cast their votes indicate that “demo-crazy” is at work and that election is a *winner-take-all* syndrome for the ruling party in the state.

Also in Kogi State, 35,000 police officers were deployed to ensure visibility policing of lives and property (Agency Report, Premium Times, 2019). The situation of Kogi 2018 election is even worse than that of Ekiti and Osun States. The police officers had arrived 5 days to election. This clearly depicts a situation of militarization of elections. Kogi State has 2, 548 polling units, and according to the Commissioner of Police in the State, 4 police officers manned each polling unit. Going by the calculation, the expected police officers that were supposed to be deployed to the State should be 10,192. Therefore, deploying of 35,000 police officers is outrageous and overpolicing. The implication of this is that an average of 13 to 14 policemen should be in a polling unit. Despite over-policing, there was evidence of vote buying under the nose of the security personnel, and the APC led government in the state used police helicopter to aid rigging in Kogi gubernatorial election (Akpoti, 2019). The worse scenario was the use of fake police officers by the politicians (Daka et. al, 2019). The IGP, having discovered the use of fake police or military officers by the politicians, explicitly declares thus while deploying police officers:

During the election, anybody you saw either in police or military uniform that did not carry the tag that had been given for the elections, that person was not a

genuine police officer or military officer or was not in an official duty (Daka et. al, 2019).

From the assertion of the IGP, how were fake policemen able to overwhelm the 35,000 policemen deployed to ensure violence free election in the state? The question is worrisome because the act of fake policemen has defeated the plan of conducting election in a violent free atmosphere. Despite the deployment of 35,000 police officers and other security agencies put in place, Bayelsa gubernatorial election was also full of violence and irregularities. In his assertion regarding the conduct of election, Governor Diepreye Dickson said that:

What happened in Bayelsa is one of the most brazen acts of distortion and rape of our democracy. What took place was not a democratic election. It was a military coup. It was the height of conspiracy by the federal government and security agencies to subvert the democratic rights of our people for the sole purpose of foisting the APC on the people.

In order to prove the role the security agencies played in foisting APC on the people, Governor Dickson tendered alleged video evidence on the election violence in Nembe Local Government area and some other parts of the state. One of the videos captured heavy shooting in Koluama in southern Ijaw, and the other video captured thumb-printing of ballot papers (Daka et. al, 2019).

The Governor's dissatisfaction with the conduct of election and his belief that the security agencies played a major role in undermining the process is expressed thus:

In entirety, what happened was the brazen connivance of security agents particularly the Nigerian Army with thugs, hijacked electoral

materials in most local government areas...the soldiers were deployed to Ogbia local government area and other parts of the state led by a lieutenant colonel to cart away electoral materials thereby undermining the process (Daka et. al, 2019).

The foregoing therefore suggest the following: one, the Nigerian government is not really sincere with the deployment of police in the conduct of elections. Two, the scenarios indicate overpolicing and militarization of elections. Three, the ruling party always used power of incumbency for electoral gain against the opposition parties. Four, security personnel are the stooges who collaborate with the ruling party to rig elections. Five, whosoever controls the security forces may have the advantage of winning the election in Nigeria.

These findings disagree with the decision making approach which states that the behaviour of the state is a reflection of the behaviour of the decision-makers who are the officials who act based on what is regarded as objective circumstances. Officials who want to make decision should be rational and not for selfish reason. This therefore suggests that decision makers in the course of election security in Nigeria are not sincere with the deployment of security personnel to police the electoral process.

For this reason, the study will examine election security and the strengthening of democratic election in Nigeria with a view to unearthing the implications of the use of electoral security in strengthening the democratic process in Nigeria.

Election security and the strengthening of democratic elections in Nigeria

This paper has presented the historical antecedents of the use of election security in Nigeria. The paper has adequately argued that when the security personnel undermine

the credibility of an organised election, then there is high possibility that both the electoral process and the election results have been tainted. Then, what are the implications of abusing of election security on sustaining and strengthening democratic elections in Nigeria?

First, the use of election security has implication on campaign movements. For example, in 2014, former President Goodluck Jonathan deployed soldiers to the border towns of Ekiti State and the entry points into Ekiti State so as to stop party stalwarts of the main opposition party (APC) from entering Ekiti to participate in the party campaign. Also, former Edo State Governor and now APC National Chairman, Comrade Adam Oshiomole was prevented by the powers that be in Abuja from flying from Benin, the Edo State capital, to Akure airport in Ondo State enroute to Ado-Ekiti. His plane was grounded and was denied take off rights by the aviation authorities citing orders from above (The Nigerian Voice, 2018). Campaigns are essential in a democracy. The quality of candidates greatly affects the election outcome. In the words of Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser & Vavreck (2016: 459), “the basic necessities of any campaign are a candidate, a message, and a way to inform voters about both.” But when the candidate is not allowed to pass the message to the electorates, the chance of winning the election is very slim because the candidate has been indirectly detached from the electorates. This may even compound the problem by pushing candidate(s) to drop out before the actual Election Day.

Two, the cost of election is another implication that needs to be considered if electoral processes are truncated or failed in the course of election security in Nigeria. The government would have to spend extra money on the re-run elections especially on election materials. The implication of this is

that, instead of strengthening democratic process, it undermines the electoral process most especially where elections were re-run in many parts of Nigeria. The basis of conducting a re-run is as a result of faulty electoral process or violence in some parts of the country. Therefore, faulty electoral processes require cost. Omotoso (2019: 42), arguing in line with the cost of election, submits that “the nature of electoral politics in the country is such that it is capital intensive.” For instance, from 1999 to 2018, the INEC had received N450 billion from the federal government as an electoral expenditure (Abdallah, 2018). The 2019 general elections were the most expensive polls in history. The President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) proposed N242.45 billion (equivalent of \$672.35 million at official exchange rate) to the National Assembly for the year’s election (Abdallah, 2018). Out of this, N190 billion (73.51%) was allocated to INEC while the remaining N52.45 billion (26.49%) was allocated to security agencies that would police the voting process. The use of the Military and the Police in an election requires cost. Therefore, government has to be careful in deploying security agencies in elections and ensure that elections do not lead to violence. The higher the number of the deployed security personnel, the more the cost will be. Hence, it makes the country spend more on electoral process (es) if the elections are not credible or if it is disrupted. In other words, over policing gulps a lot of the state resources that is supposed to be spent on citizens’ happiness and development of the state.

Three, the use of election security in a democratic election may make citizens to imbibe the political culture of rigging elections by the ruling party even if it may not be so. That is, they would have imbibed the culture that the result of election is already known before the conduct of election. In

other words, it may call the credibility of electoral processes into question. This makes the citizens to have the mind-set that the conduct of election is a scam by the ruling party, thereby making the citizens to bear in mind that their votes will not count even if they cast it. As a result, it affects participation greatly. In other words, militarization of elections may limit political participation in Nigeria as regards vote casting in the future democratic elections.

Four, the abusive use of security personnel may erode the legitimacy bestowed on a ruler by the people. Election is only credible if the outcome reflects the choices made by the citizens through their votes; but if it erodes the legitimacy of the people, it leads to legitimacy crisis, which can result in bad governance. Kolawole (1997) emphasizes the importance of legitimacy by saying that “it is the state of mind and not the question of perception. Legality follows the law while legitimacy is derived from the perception of an act.” The beauty of democracy is to bestow legitimacy on the ruler. When intimidation and the use of force in the pursuit of goals (to win election) are adopted, legitimacy crisis and bad governance are eminent. The candidate that wins election by the use of state security will have nothing but to rely on coercion to enforce compliance of the citizens.

Five, it compromises the integrity and credibility of elections which can lead to the mockery of democracy in Nigeria. One thing to note is that failed and fraudulent elections have plunged nations into spiralling violence and conflict. Therefore, international communities are interested in the conduct of election in Nigeria. They usually deploy international observers to monitor elections in Nigeria. A situation in which the conduct of election is not credible, it may make the Nigerian state to be mocked by the international community. The implication of

this on sustainable democracy is that it may lead to military take over due to inability to conduct free, fair and credible election in Nigeria. In countries such as Guinea Bissau and Mali, the coup d'état staged during and prior to the elections in April 2012 are examples of election-related incidents. These are examples for Nigeria. One of the reasons why military regimes truncate the civilian regimes in Nigeria is due to lack of major electoral administration. Instances in 1966 and 1983 showed the inability to conduct credible elections on the part of civilians. Major Kaduna gave a reason of failed democratic politics in 1966. In 1983, General Muhammadu Buhari affirmed that civilians are unable to conduct free, fair and credible elections, thus leading to the taking over of power by the military. The military takeover has the implication of truncating instead of strengthening and deepening of democratic elections.

Six, extant literature such as Olorode (2013), Olorode & Hammanga (2013) and Alemika (2011) show that election security instils fears and exacerbates fatalism between the police and the electorates. This situation may result in increase of electoral violence in Nigeria. The fact that militarization of election drives fear into the minds of the electorates who intend to exercise their popular sovereignty in a democratic election is an understatement. The presence of heavy security personnel “could erode environmental serenity and friendliness, and the presence of the police operational control may work against best practices in election security” (Olorode & Hammanga, 2013: 75-76). At times, their presence triggers electoral violence and even aggravates it in Nigeria. For instance, the people of Ekiti and Kogi States see the gubernatorial elections conducted in their states in 2018 and 2019 respectively as the militarization of elections. The fear that if electoral violence ensued, the

security personnel may shoot at the electorates, thereby leading to loss of lives. The fear of violence discourages people from voting. In a survey carried out by the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2003 elections revealed that the fear of violence prevented a significant proportion of the population from voting (Alemika, 2011). Besides, the survey carried out among adults by national representative sample in Nigeria revealed that 21% of the electorates in the nationally representative sample who did not vote during the 2003 stayed away because of the fear of violence.¹ The fact remains that security personnel drafted to secure elections do cause violence by intimidating voters, oppressing and victimizing political parties' members different from that of the government at the centre, displaying excessive force and conniving with politicians to perpetrate rigging during the electoral process. Therefore, elections are being hampered instead of strengthening democratic elections in the subsequent elections in Nigeria.

Seven, the abuse by election security may lead to low voters' turn out in the subsequent elections in Nigeria. Evidences have shown in gubernatorial or re-run elections in Kogi, Sokoto, Edo, and Adamawa about the deployment of security personnel relative to voters' turn out as ordered by the courts in 2012 affirm this. The table below gives an insight to low voters' turn out in elections of the concerned states.

S/N	State	Number of Security Personnel	Voters Turnout in %
1	Kogi	9,348	39
2	Adamawa	9,395	37
3	Bayelsa	6,142	75
4	Sokoto	10, 819	30
5	Cross River	8,207	40
6	Kebbi	8,774	58
7	Edo	9,233	39

(Source: Olorode, 2011)

From the table above, in Kogi and Edo States, a total of 9, 348 and 9,233 security personnel were deployed to monitor elections, and the percentage of voters' turnout in both states was 39%. Also, in Sokoto State, 10,819 security personnel were deployed; only 30% of the electorates came out to vote. In Adamawa, 9,395 police officers were deployed, and it experienced only 37% voters' turnout. The low percentages in these areas suggest that voters are scared or refuse to exercise their franchise due to large number of security personnel deployed to these states.

These findings disagree with the decision making approach as regards to deploying security agencies to oversee election in Nigeria. This is because the objective of deploying security in conduct of election is to ensure, free, fair and credible elections. Besides, most of the elections held indicate that the objective of election security is being thwarted by the government in power in Nigeria.

Conclusion and recommendations

This paper has been able to argue that the use of election security is fascinating but it has

¹ The survey of a national representative sample of 5040 adult (not less than or equal to 18 years of age).



been politicised in Nigeria. The deployment of security agencies must be moderate in the conduct of election. The deployment of security agencies can only become fascinating if the government in power is sincere about its objective. The main issue is that it is not the number of security personnel that matters but the independent, impartial and professional conduct of the officers while on the electoral duty. Furthermore, this paper has shown that whenever government attempts to deploy security agencies for elections, it is merely to prevent the opposition parties from having access to state power. Therefore, the paper has further argued that if the issue of election security is abused, it dampens instead of strengthening democratic elections in Nigeria. Given the danger of over policing or militarization in the conduct of election, there is urgent need to deliberately attempt the following strategies in order to strengthen Nigeria's democracy vis-à-vis election security.

First, the issue of over policing in an election should be discouraged by the citizens, media, human rights activists, international observers, international communities and civil society organisations. The electorates will have no faith in the conduct of election in Nigeria if it is militarized. The question one needs to ask is: *who guides the guardians?* The guardians are the security personnel deployed to police election; then who is to guide them in the electoral processes? The guardian may be ruthless in the course of conducting election; therefore, they should be guided through citizens' refusal to participate in the conduct of election. Besides, the media and other stakeholders should expose, through their reports, any act of election rigging that may happen, either through over policing or other means, at the polling centres.

Two, the security agents should be neutral in the conduct of electoral process in Nigeria. A

situation in which the police and other security agencies connive with the government in power to perpetrate election rigging, then the credibility of the election is already at stake. It makes the international community to stigmatize the Nigerian state due to flawed elections. This should be avoided in the conduct of election in Nigeria

Three, moderate deployment of police reduces the cost of election. There is need to reduce electoral expenses in Nigeria. It has been argued in this paper that the more the deployment of security operatives to the polling centre, the more the expenses that will be incurred from the government.

Four, government should avoid over policing in deploying security in the conduct of election in Nigeria. If the election is not militarized, it gives respect to the government in power and makes election free, fair and credible. All the parties involved will accept the electoral outcome and that deepens the democratic ethos in Nigeria. Besides, it makes citizens to have confidence that the environment is safe for casting their votes for the candidate of their choice without any fear or favour.

Five, the INEC should truly be independent from the executive in the conduct of election in Nigeria. A situation in which the INEC that is supposed to be the electoral umpire is manipulated and controlled by the powers that be, the credibility of election is at stake. Therefore, for INEC to conduct free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria, it has to be truly independent in performing its task.

Six, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and other security agencies involved in election security should be educated about the conduct of free, fair and credible election in Nigeria. They should be given proper orientation before their deployment and their allowances should be paid before the Election Day. This may possibly prevent them from being vulnerable to corruption

when carrying out their assignment on election security.

It is hoped however that if these strategies are put in place, and they are accomplished by political will, the Nigerian government will overcome the challenges of deploying security agencies to police election in Nigeria.

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