

THE POLITICS OF SECURITY AGENCIES' CONTROL AND ELECTION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The role of security agencies in the conduct of elections in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. As a post-colonial state, Nigeria inherited the arbitrary character of the colonial governments and thus employed it in the context of political power struggle. Both the ruling party and opposition parties resort to violence in order to win elections, thus the indispensability of security agencies in the conduct of elections.. In fact, the challenge of election management is the conduct of credible election that is devoid of rancour and acrimony. There is of course avalanche of scholarly works on the role of security agencies in curbing election violence, protection of election officials and materials, and enhancing election management; yet there had not been any systematic effort to investigate the politics of security personnel control and the conduct of free and fair elections. Specifically the paper interrogates the nexus between the use of power of incumbency over security agencies and election management. It abstracted the basic assumption emanating from the Marxiam theory of the post-colonial state as its theoretical framework of analysis. The paper found that though the role of security is paramount in the conduct of elections, yet it is always used as an instrument by the ruling party for election benefits. This paper therefore recommended for electronic voting where the security agencies will have little or no role to play in determining the outcome of election results.

Keywords: election management, electronic voting, politics, security agencies

Introduction

Election remains the most viable method of transferring powers from one government to another democratic government. However, election in Nigeria, rather than being a political asset and a legitimizing force, has become a political liability. Security challenges and manipulation of institutions by the party in power pose threat to the conduct of credible election in Nigeria. Where the security agents for example, prove incapable of ensuring maximum security in polling booths, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials are rendered incapable of conducting free and fair election especially in the face of very desperate party agents. In 2015, the general elections (National Assembly and Presidential) and the State elections (Governorship and

House of Assembly) earlier scheduled for February 14 and February 28 2015 respectively by INEC were rescheduled to March 28 and April 11, 2015 respectively by INEC on the ground of lack of security. In response to this, Jega (2015) remarked that:

the conduct of elections in a country like Nigeria is invariably a collective venture that involves not just the Election Management Body (EMB), but also a diverse range of stakeholders, notably security agencies, political parties and their candidates, voters, as well as interest groups, such as the civil society organizations and the media. To guarantee successful conduct of elections, there are things that are wholly the responsibility of the EMB. But there are other things critical for the success of elections, which fall outside the control of the EMB... but as I mentioned earlier, there are some other variables equally crucial for successful conduct of the 2015 general elections that are outside the control of INEC. One important variable is security for the elections

Security agencies to a large extent, guarantee success or failure of any election. Events during the build up to elections raise public fear about the safety and security of those participating in the electoral processes. This anxiety is usually heightened by the apparent misuse of security agencies to facilitate victory. Ordinarily, security forces are supposed to be seen as national symbols and are actually expected to act as such by being impartial in their civil-military relations. The forces are agents and servants of the civil society. When the security forces so act, it enhances the reposition of confidence in them and thereby they are truly seen as impartial non-political state machinery, which derives funding from the people's taxes. Contrarily, the political use of the forces by the ruling party may ignite lack of public confidence in the security forces and thereby merely seen by a large section of the public and opposition parties as tools of oppression, marginalization and dishonesty in the hands of the ruling elite.

In a related view, proper management of electoral commission is very essential in the conduct of credible election. While a high level of educational qualification is essential in appointment into the management of the commission, a lot more has to do with effective and efficiency in the management of the commission. Igbuzor (2010), noted that there was no doubt that INEC occupies a central place in the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, and that it was for this reason that INEC has been described as the main agent in Nigeria. Unfortunately, he noted that INEC has not performed its roles and responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner in the past.

Conceptual Clarifications

Security Agencies

Security agencies play tremendous roles in ensuring successful elections. Security agencies such as the Nigeria Police, Army, Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), among others directly or indirectly play important roles to ensure safety of lives and property before, during and after elections. It is submitted that due to the nature of military training, the army is not ideal for use for the purposes of providing security during elections. The remaining security agencies listed above are better suited for provision of security during election period. Security agency mainly focuses on the wellbeing of the

people in a country, but duties of security agencies are more complex during the election period. A major component of electoral practice is electoral security which has to do with the process of protecting electoral stakeholders and officials, electoral materials, information, facilities or events.

The work of security agencies do not start on the election day, their works begin during the registration of voters and electioneering campaign of all the political parties. Special trainings must be organized to mentally and physically equip security officials for electoral security. Essentially in an electoral exercise, security agencies must curb any form of physical harm, intimidation, blackmail, verbal abuse, violent demonstration, psychological manipulation, or other coercive tactics aimed at exploiting, disrupting, determining, hastening, delaying, reversing, or otherwise influencing an electoral process and its outcome. According to FRN (2007), the primary role of security operatives including the Police and other voluntary organizations in elections is to protect the integrity of the electoral processes, and of the participants, institutions and outcome through:

1. Safeguarding the security of lives and property of citizens during the electoral process;
2. Ensuring the safety of electoral officers before, during and after elections;
3. Providing security for candidates during rallies, congresses, conventions, electioneering campaigns and elections;
4. Ensuring and preserving a free, fair, safe and lawful atmosphere for campaigning by all parties and candidates without discrimination;
5. Maintaining peaceful conditions, law and order around the polling and counting centers;
6. Providing security for electoral officials at the voting and counting centers;
7. Ensuring the security of all electoral materials at the voting centers and during transportation; and
8. Ensuring the security of all electoral material, personnel and citizens during registration of voters, update, revision and any other electoral event.

Election Management

Credible elections are not possible without effective electoral management (Mozaffar and Schedler, 2002). According to Agbaje and Adejumbi (2006) election management involves the interaction of constitutional, legal and institutional rules and organizational practices that determine the basic rules for election procedures and electoral competition; organize campaigns, voter registration, and election day tallies, and resolve disputes and certify results. Besides, election management “is the organization and conduct of elections to elective public (political) office by an electoral body” (Jinadu, 1997).

Electoral Management Board (EMB) of Nigerian called the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is established by section 153(f) of the 1999 constitution as amended is saddled with the responsibility of organizing general elections into the offices of the President, National Assembly, Governors and State Houses of Assembly. This means that election is a process and not an event. It involves both rules and structures. The process involves the rules procedures and activities relating to among others, the establishment of electoral bodies, the appointment of their members, the registration of voters, the nomination of candidates, balloting, counting of the ballots, the declaration of

results, the selection and training of electoral officials, constituency delimitation, voter education and in some cases, registration of political parties and supervision of party nomination congresses (Jinadu, 1997).

Similarly, Igbuzor (2010), noted that there was no doubt that INEC occupies a central place in the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, and that it was for this reason that INEC has been described as the main agent in Nigeria.. To him, examination and interpretation of elections should be all-embracing to include legal and constitutional architecture and activities that take place before, during and after election. In his words, election as a process involves the participation of the people in the act of electing their leaders and their participation in governance. Elections are not necessarily about election-day activities, although it forms an important component. It encompasses activities before, during and after elections. This includes the legal and constitutional framework of elections; the registration of political parties; party campaigns; the activities of security agencies and the government in power. It also involves the authenticity and genuineness of the voter's register. In view of the above features, the election process is a series of actions that produce something or that lead to a particular result or outcome. Usually, it is complex and cumbersome process especially in developing countries like Nigeria with rudimentary development of political structures and institutions as well as low political culture.

Electronic Voting (E- Voting)

Voting procedures play a significant role in the conduct of free and fair elections in a democratic society. It converts voters' preferences into a political mandate which in turn forms the basis for policy-making. As a process that allows a group of individuals to choose between a numbers of options, often voting systems are based on the concept of majority rule or plurality. Nevertheless, anonymity of a voter's ballot must be preserved to guarantee the voter's safety and free from manipulating result. In this regard, Kohno et al (2004) opined that voting systems must be transparent and comprehensible enough that voters and candidates can readily accept the results.

Voting over the ages have included casting pebbles in turns, the division of crowds into groups, or balloting with shells, disks or written papers. In more recent times, some countries developed lever-operated machines, computer-readable punched cards, voting in enclosed cubicles at polling stations, and placing voting papers in locked or tamper-proof boxes to ensure security but not always with success, however. In order to prevent multiple voting, electors in some countries have their names crossed off electoral rolls when they vote, while others are required to have their fingers marked with slow-perishing ink (Smith, 2002). Each of these procedures creates risks of fraud, abuse and mistake. Grabosky (1989),noted that some of the alleged problems include multiple voting, voting in the names of deceased or absent individuals, abuse of the postal voting system, and tampering with ballot papers either by changing the marks on ballot papers, substituting fraudulent papers for legitimate ones, destroying papers, or adding additional papers to ballot boxes.

Consequent upon the above and quest for credible election, some countries have to adopt new technology called electronic voting (e-voting) in the electoral process. E-voting denotes voting pattern in which voter's choice is expressed and collected using the electronic means. It seems that the traditional one become less efficient regarding its longer waiting time. E-voting encompasses online voting which gives a large opportunity

to vote from any point where Internet access is available such as home, school, office or even shopping mall. Using online voting can reduce the time people need to vote. This means that citizen can vote without waste of time and to avoid long queue of voter which was identified as the biggest problem of every election. Citizens can vote without going to the polls and may be this is the efficient way to encourage people's participation on Election Day (Inuwa et al, 2015)

Newer and more improved trends in voting are showing that a greater number of developed nations are beginning to choose e-voting systems over manual voting systems due to their convenience and the ease which they offer voters and election officials (Gefen et al., 2005; Awad and Ernst, 2011. E-voting is used to replace the manual parts of the electoral process to make it more efficient and effective. In view of this, International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2011), posits that electronic voting is often seen as a tool for making the electoral process more efficient and for increasing trust in its management. Properly implemented, e-voting solutions can increase the security of the ballot, speed up the process of results and make voting easier.

Theoretical Exposition

We employed the theory of the post colonial state to analysis the nature of the Nigerian state, its security operatives and the Electoral Management Body (EMB) in the struggle for acquisition of political power. The central theme of this theoretical framework is that the state is an instrument of class domination and its apparatuses are the instruments for primitive accumulation of capital by the same dominant class. Nigerian state is not class neutral but immersed in constant class struggle within and between the various institutional groups that make it a reality (Nwoke & Omoweh, 2006).

The inability of the security agencies and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct credible election in Nigeria can be better located in the character of the post-colonial state inscribed in the genetic code of weak institutions, primitive accumulation of capital and the use of state power for personal interest and glorification. The tendency to use the state as a means of capital accumulation reinforced the intensity of furious political competition among and between the ruling classes. Consequently, elections in Nigeria have witnessed several security lapses. Most times, these security agencies are well funded and well equipped by the Nigeria government in order to enhance their performances during elections but they still don't achieve the aim to which they were called.

For a country to conduct credible elections, adequate securities must be put in place. A politically impartial and peaceful polling environment that guarantees the quality of service rendered by electoral officials must be put in place. Voters should not be afraid to come forward and cast their votes for candidates of their choice. It is only when these are done, that the credibility and the outcomes of elections will not be called to question.

Nigerian society is said to have a rich tradition of struggle for democracy, experience has indicated that such struggle has failed to produce an enduring democratic rule. Several factors account for this. As argued by, Ogundiya & Baba (2003) that any systematic consideration of democratic governance in Nigeria or its blossom would need to come to terms with the challenges and dilemmas of economic underdevelopment, poverty, weak institutional structures, corruption, problem of political legitimacy occasioned by disputes

arising from electoral processes, ethnic based conflict, religious bigotry, prodigious nature of the elite and more embracing the nature of the Nigerian state.

The character of the Nigerian state is such that while the citizens obliquely cast their votes, the political class and the political parties have different intentions. At times, party agents had to do the voting on behalf of voters while in other places, security agents assist those who could not identify the symbol of the parties they intend to vote for. The massive electoral frauds so demoralized the public that today, local government elections are selection by the incumbent governor. Aroused by this, Etannibi et al (2009) assert that the activities of the colonial master. appeared to have eroded away the responsibility of the police by subjugating the thinking and activities of the colonial police under the ruling lords. Today, it is somewhat difficult to detach the police from the ruling party. The Nigeria police are largely neglected owing to what they called "unequal socio-economic opportunities" among citizens. Thus, the first ten years of transitional democracy after a prolonged military incursion into the Nigerian democratic setting witnessed perceived and real increase in violent crime and disorder.

At some point thugs of a certain party had to disperse voters and thumb print in the presence of the security agents. In another instance, voting stops in a polling station after only three people has voted (Egbokare, 2007). Arguably, in Nigeria, the fear of election is the beginning of political wisdom. To this effect, it is often the case that at the highest point of election times, the Nigerians look at it with trepidation. This perhaps prompted Adekanye's counsel that election periods in Nigeria should be declared as state of emergency and that the military should be charged with the conduct and administration of election (Adekanya, 1989).

Discussion and Analysis

The zenith of the control of the security agencies by the ruling party is palpably in the manner they are heavily redeployed and armed in states hostile to the ruling party. Various experiences with competitive electoral politics in Nigeria have brought the worst in political thuggery and brigandage, unmediated and unrestrained violence, characterized by wanton destruction of lives and property. Before now, it was mainly carried out by the masses in angry protest and reaction to election rigging or it was mainly carried out by party thugs. But nowadays, godfathers, governors, local government chairmen and candidates for legislative houses recruit thugs, and assassins armed-with sophisticated weapons who would terrorize and unleashed harm on their opponents as to have a field in manipulating and rigging elections. Consequently, the ruling party usually makes use of the state securities to stand the danger and the threats from these groups during election.

Deployment of security agencies during election in Nigeria

Akinuotu & Adepegba (2019) in Punch noted that ahead of the February 16 elections, the Police Service Commission has approved the redeployment of 37 commissioners of police for the 36 states of the federation and the Federal capital Territory, Abuja. He remarked that the posting, however, did not go down well with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) that described it as a ploy to use the police to rig the elections in favour of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). Though, he also noted that the APC has debunked allegations by the CUPP and the PDP that the police hierarchy had compromised police posting for the purpose of providing security in its favour.

In the 14th July, 2018 gubernatorial election in Ekiti state, Nwankwo (2018) noted that with the employment of 30,000 police operatives, 19,997 NSCDC personnel, surveillance vehicles, sniffer dogs and many soldiers, one would expect that the election will be devoid of any form of malpractice. While the poll was generally peaceful, the police dispersed the opposition party, PDP supporters in a campaign venue, and arrested many of the party's leaders days before the election. The deployment, the police said, also included 10 Armoured Personnel vehicles, Police Mobile Force Units, Counter Terrorism Unit, Force Criminal and Investigation Department and the sniffer dogs section. As if not enough, the force stated that other security and safety agencies who are members of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on election security in the state would complement the Nigeria Police during the election. Ekiti state before the election was under the leadership of PDP. The then governor, His Excellency Ayodele Fayose arguably was radical and critically opposing the APC led administration. Overtime, he criticized President Muhammadu Buhari for pretending to fight corruption while people connected to his (Buhari) administration have robbed the country blind.

Ugwu. & Onu (2016) posit that one major issue emerging from the governorship elections conducted in Ekiti and Osun States of Nigeria is the presence of heavy security forces during their conduct. Platoons of security operatives, including military officers, were drafted to lock down the states shortly before, during and immediately after the elections with immediate consequences on peoples' rights and freedom. Members of the opposition were specifically targeted. However, Olurode (2013) succinctly put that the deployment of security personnel in Nigeria is influenced by criteria that are both objective and subjective and it is not only done arbitrarily or haphazardly but also politics intrudes into the process. The attitude of those who were deployed could subvert the very purpose of their deployment. There had been cases where security personnel on election duties were found to have colluded to undermine the electoral processes. Bello (2015) in response to the accusation leveled against the PDP by the APC in 2014 governorship election in Ekiti state that brought in Fayose, argued that the basis on which the APC is agitating for the exclusion of soldiers from the election, by sponsoring court cases, is patently dubious and untenable. The reason that the APC and its leaders do not want soldiers deployed is to be able to intimidate voters and unleash violence on the polity once they lose the elections. They know that it would be far more difficult for them to do that when soldiers are on the streets. Deji-Folunile (2018) asserts thus:

The Ekiti state governorship election can perhaps rank as the most anticipated since the Muhammadu Buhari-led administration came to power in May, 2015. This is so for many reasons. Firstly, Ekiti is the only state in the South West states as the nation prepares for the general election in 2019. Secondly, the governorship candidate of the ruling All Progressives Congress in the election, Dr. Kayode Fyemi, is a former governor of the state who lost to the incumbent governor, Ayodele Fayose, in 2014... So, now that the pendulum has swung in favour of APC with the party having the federal might to offer all the required support for its candidate, Fayemi is believed to stand a better chance.

In a related development, Usman (2019) in pmnewsnigeria revealed that the Rivers state Police Command says it is deploying 15,544 police personnel for the Governorship and State House of Assembly Elections billed for Saturday. It will be complemented by other security agencies to cover and protect the 23 Local Government Areas. He noted that 319 wards and 4,442 polling units and 2,424 voting points would be covered by police personnel deployed for election duties in Rivers. Hence, "There will be an outer perimeter deployment of armed men to guard against infiltration and hijack of the process by hoodlums or persons that want to foment trouble." He said special attention would be on Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) offices in the state. Despite the deployment of huge security personnel, over 30 persons lost their lives during the 2019 elections in River state

Guardians of Social Order

The central objective of the security agents is to provide security, or at least, a social and psychological feeling of security, for a majority of citizens, in a majority of places, and for most of the time. And this central objective is a summary of sub-objectives, which are prerequisites to that of security: to prevent, control and combat criminality and by whoever; to maintain public order and peace; to render assistance and service to all citizens needing or requiring security; and to symbolize the government and always be seen to be always upholding the rule of law.

During election, they should also exhibit high level of professionalism in electoral processes and call to order contravention of any of these prohibited laws guiding the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Every security agents on electoral duty should adhere and enforce electoral laws which includes prohibited activities as contained in part VIII of the Electoral Act, 2006. These involve among others, obstruction of registration of voters (Section 124 Electoral Act 2006) destruction or forging of nomination papers (Section 125 Electoral Act 2006), disorderly behavior at political meetings (Section 126 Electoral Act 2006), improper use of voters cards (Section 127 Electoral Act 2006), improper use vehicles (Section 128 Electoral Act 2006), impersonation and voting when not qualified (Section 129 Electoral Act 2006), dereliction of duty (Section 130 Electoral Act 2006) bribery and corruption (Section 131 Electoral Act 2006), voting by unregistered person (Section 132 Electoral Act 2006), disorderly conduct of elections (Section 133 Electoral Act 2006) treating (Section 134 Electoral Act 2006), and undue influence (Section 135 Electoral Act 2006).

Considering the fact that the security agencies are government officials most proximate to crime, temporarily and procedurally, and are the leading figures in crime prevention/control and in law enforcement process, their honesty, integrity and observance of procedural laws in handling offenders and non-offenders have deep implications for the citizen's perception of fairness and justice and for the degree of respect the average citizen has for the law. Again, being highly visible (compared to courts or prisons) and being the primary or main government authorities legally authorize) to use force on citizens, their behaviours affect the citizens' opinion about government. However, when the above translates into their ordinary meaning, the value and worth of a security agent can be determined by the amount and quality of protection it offers the citizens as a whole and, the degree of confidence and co-operation it enjoys from the average citizen. This goes to confirm that if security operatives can effectively

police democracy and reduce the spate of killings and assassinations, the quality of elections held shall improve tremendously.

According to Cranor (2011) the role of the security agencies in election is to maintain public order and to create, by means of effective policing a favourable climate in which democratic election can take place. This is a very crucial role. By maintaining law and order and guaranteeing public safety, they ensure that voters can attend or follow the campaigns and rallies so that candidates and their supporters are able to reach the voters and convey to them their visions and programmes. The voters will be positioned to decide, who, amongst the candidates, is suitable for them to elect; and in so doing, make an informed choice among the options they are presented. However, when the police are loyal to the ruler and refuse to be accountable to the people, the police is accused of being used by politicians to carry out electoral malpractices and to harass and intimidate opponents. The loss of confidence in the security operatives by the political opposition makes some candidates to hire private security forces to serve as counter pose to the national security outfits.

As bodies, that preserve and fortify the prevailing social order and catalysts for its change, when a social order is oppressive, exploitative and unjust as it is the case in Nigeria, the security operatives often preserve the system by suppressing and defusing political activities to suite the whims and caprices of the ruling elites. This public perception of partisan security operatives raises questions in the polity about the neutrality and the preparedness of the police to guarantee the safety and security of the electorates during elections. Often, the ruling class involves in the field operations. They personally participate in political crises while under the protection of the state security.

Challenges of Security Agencies in Electoral Process

During registration, the security agencies are expected to provide security for the materials and officials connected with the exercise as well as avert crises that might arise during the period to ensure that the voter's registration is hitch free. However, in most cases, security operatives are rarely seen in registration centres and thus registration officers were left to fill up the names of their choice irrespective of age qualification.

The security agencies have a vital role to play in the successful screening and clearing of political office aspirants through furnishing the Electoral Commissions with available records to assist and determine correctly the eligibility of prospective candidates (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2007). The nomination of candidates' pre-2007 presidential poll was the most abused procedures of the electoral process by any standard. To identify candidates for nomination, some parties organized party primaries, while some did not. Most of these primaries were sham and no internal democracy of political parties. Many aggrieved party activists were normally 'settled with large sums of money to accept a bad situation. The police who were supposed to make some arrests during this period of 'settlement' were themselves culprits and collaborators (Etannibi, 2009).

Again, the security personnel are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring adequate security coverage to enhance peaceful conduct of such congresses and conventions. There is no disputing the fact that most of the congresses held by political parties were almost disrupted by aggressive and violent party members and their supporters if not for the presence of heavy security. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the security agencies to ensure that campaigns and rallies are regulated to ensure law and order. The Public Order

Act empowers the police to issue permits for such rallies, campaigns, meetings and processions. The Act mandates all political parties or groups intending to hold rallies, campaigns or procession to apply to the State Commissioner of Police for a permit. The application, which shall be submitted not less than 48 hours before the date and time of such meetings, should indicate the venue, time, date and routes to be taken in the case of a procession. The approval of such an application should be obtained in not less than 24 hours before such meetings, rallies or campaigns take place.

However, political parties freely organized rallies and meetings in various parts of the country. The more popular parties, All Progressive Party (APC) and Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) enjoy a lot of media coverage. But in terms of proper conduct of the political parties and their followers, not much monitoring is done by INEC to sanction the parties for use of violent threats, abusive, slanderous or hate speech or keeping private militia groups. It must be stressed however, that in exercising its constitutional role, the police often arrest some propagators of campaign violence, but most of them are rarely prosecuted owing to political pressure and influence on the police

In section 85 of the Electoral Act, 2006 prescribe punishment for bearing or carrying missiles unlawfully in a political rally/voting centre. Section 98 (2) states thus: A person, who, while present at a political rally or processing or voting centre, has with him any offensive weapon or missiles otherwise than in pursuance of a lawful duty is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine of N100,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of 2 years or both(Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006). However, the letters of these laws did not guarantee the police's ability to meet with these challenges posed by these quasi-military organizations. Political big wigs and money bags rely very heavily on these organizations to rig elections and perpetrate electoral fraud during elections.

The quasi-military organizations usually are sophisticated and armed with modern equipment that could easily disarm some security agencies. Because the securities are no match to the nefarious activities of these groups, the securities become collaborators and assist them in electoral fraud. Human Rights Watch had observed that instead of guaranteeing citizen's basic right to vote freely, Nigerian government (represented by the police) and electoral officers actively colluded in the fraud and violence that marred the presidential polls in some areas. In other areas, officials closed their eyes to human rights abuses committed by supporters of the ruling party and others (Takirambudde, 2007).

Consequently, in 2007 presidential polls, the Transmission Monitoring Group had to call for a re-run of the presidential polls, while European Union observers documented massive irregularities, and said that, the process "cannot be considered to have been credible". According to Oyadiran & Olorungbemi (2015), the teams from the US National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute both said that the process "failed the Nigerian People. No doubt the above is an indictment on the Nigerian police charged with promoting security that would have guaranteed credible elections as it affected the April 2007 presidential poll.

Moreover, the securities have to collaborate with INEC to ensure security of the electoral materials, the officials and peaceful conduct of elections at all centres including the collation of results. On such occasions too, enhance security arrangement be made at various INEC offices to avoid attacks and fire outbreak that usually cause serious and huge damage to the commission.. Recently, there were cases of fire outbreak that gulped

INEC offices especially in Anambra and Plateau states in which a number of Permanent Voter Cards and Smart Card Readers were burnt.

At times, police officers posted out for election duty far away from their base are not provided with logistics in terms of vehicles to take them to voting venue. The implication of this arrangement is that, police officer on that election duty is at the mercy of politicians who are ever financially equipped to provide logistics for the police officer. What this means, is that the police who is normally saddled with the responsibility to maintain law and order at the voting centre will do the biddings of his/her benefactor. Oyadiran & Olorungbemi (2015) noted that during elections, the securities often compromise their official roles, pitch tents with politicians, particularly money bags of the ruling party, and play such negative roles that serious concern to the public, the government, the citizens and human rights groups in the country.

Though sometimes authorities embarked on workshop and/seminar to enlighten its personnel on their roles and responsibilities in elections. Intensive drills and training are given to them to forestall electoral malpractices. Some relevant publications are also made available for the organization's personnel (Odekunle, 2004). As a result, expectation is to enable them brace up to the reality of their responsibilities in democratic consolidation. But regrettably, they do not always conduct their activities in this manner. And this is a serious challenge in the light of the nation's history of inconclusive elections. On the part of the government, there is however, need to make available sufficient funds well ahead of time for the procurement and deployment of necessary logistics such as more bullet proof vests, helmets, arms and ammunition, to enhance the quality of the force to deal effectively with cases of insecurity in any part of the country during the electioneering period

Issues and Challenges of the Electoral Management Board

There is consistent disregard to the election procedure as provided for in the Electoral Acts. Voting, counting, security, announcement of results and declaration of winner all fall short of the rules. Commencement of elections in polling booths in Nigeria is 8.00am. But in some cases, polling materials arrive at noon due to one reason or the other which are attributable to ineffectiveness of the management body (Egbokare, 2007). In this situation, party operatives enjoy a field day in some polling stations dictating to the polling staff. While these activities are going, the security operatives often close their eyes to these activities and bargain the future of Nigerians on the platter of naira. Ideally, securities should report late arrival of materials and secure the process at any time. But the securities do abandon their roles at this juncture, hence posing a serious challenge to the electoral process.

Again, there is no uniform procedures and arrangement for voting except that voters are allowed to vote on producing their voter identity card, otherwise referred to as Permanent Voter Card (PVC). Sometimes people who had lost their cards relied on the decision of the presiding officer to vote or not to vote. In most cases, party agents, securities and other non-INEC officials take over the register to check the names of voters. On such occasions, the securities neglect their roles to take on a more 'lucrative' clerical job of verification of voters' name for a price. Party agents and other security operatives openly interfere with the secrecy of the ballot. Voters sometimes are influenced by party agents or the security personnel to thumb print their ballot papers.

Presiding officers are often helpless since majority did not understand the notion of secret ballot.

Some voters seemed not to have found anything wrong with the loss of ballot secrecy in the voting process. Moreover, gunmen usually appear at polling stations and amidst shooting to scatter voters, carter away ballot boxes and unused ballot papers. Some of the items are usually found in the houses of politicians (Oyadiran & Olorungbemi, 2015). At this level, the security operatives lack the capacity to curtail the level of irregularities. Little wonder President Mohamadiu Buhari prior to the general elections gave a standing order to the security agencies to be ruthless to any thug snatching ballot box. Ballot box stuffing is also a serious problem. Apart from the gross fraud perpetrated on polling day, ruling party supporters and hired thugs target members of the opposition for arrest and intimidation. Many opposition supporters and officials are usually detained without charge. In some areas, however, the spate of killing of security officers, party activists and ordinary people during election is pathetic.

Worrisome still, the management is faced with logistic and operational challenges. Indeed, managing 91 political parties and 23,316 candidates for whom votes will be cast in 119,973 polling units by over 84 million voters is certainly astounding (INEC,2019). The commission also noted that the net effect of these is that there is usually roughly a one-month window for the Commission to print ballot papers and result sheets and either fly or transport them to several destinations until they finally get to each polling unit. Unfortunately, a week to the presidential election, INEC alarmed that flights within the country have been adversely affected by bad weather and consequently hindered delivering of materials to some locations. INEC also faced what may well be attempts to sabotage its preparations, which include serious fire incidents in three of its offices in Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area of Abia State, Quan Pan Local Government Area of Plateau State and its Anambra State Office at Awka (INEC, 2019). In view of these, INEC had to postpone the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly elections scheduled for February, 16 and March 2 respectively to February 23 and March 9, 2019.

Findings

This study has drawn the linkages between the security agencies and the Election Management in the conduct of credible elections. Arising from our investigation, we arrived at the following findings.

1. The role of the security agencies during elections is germane However, the extent to which there efforts yield the desired results remains doubtful as they have been arbitrarily controlled by the incumbency.
2. The state power is a means and an end. The use of the security personnel in favour of the incumbency never allows a level playing ground during elections.
3. The capture of state power inevitably is a matter of life and death. Hence, recurring violence during elections in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The Theoretical significance of this paper offered a new insight into the character of Nigerian state, control of the security agencies and election management. And we conclude that over the years, elections in Nigeria assume the character of warfare and violence as politics is seen as a conduit pipe for primitive accumulation of wealth. Consequently, there is inordinate ambition of the ruling party to win elections at all costs

and the determination of the incumbent to impose their loyalists and close ties on key positions. It is also noteworthy that the security agencies are usually under the grip of the ruling party. The executives at the state and federal levels are the chief security officers who often consolidate their power through these agencies. Thus, once you are a member of a ruling party, your sins, if any, are forgiven otherwise you are condemned.

Recommendations

It is against this backdrop that we recommend that:

1. Nigeria should adopt electronic-voting where the security agencies will have little or no role to play and as such reduce to the barest minimum the chances of being used in favour of the ruling party. E- voting ensures credible election and guarantee public trust and confidence. It also saves time and more accuracy as human errors are excluded. It also prevents human intervention capable of disrupting the exercise and ensures secrecy of voting.
2. There must be strictly adherence to the principles of the Rule of law. All must be equal before the law. There must be a level playing ground to all parties
3. There should be a reform that would make political offices less attractive. Legislative functions should be on a part time bases. Salaries and allowances (especially security allowances of the executives should be reduced drastically.

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