



ELECTIONS AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN NIGERIA



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A publication of the Department of Political Science,
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ISBN: 978-978-785-962-9

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CHAPTER SIX ELECTION MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

Nigeria has experienced significant challenges in managing security during election periods, resulting in violence and instability that have undermined the credibility and integrity of its democratic process. This chapter examines the relationship between elections and security management in Nigeria, with a focus on the 2023 general elections. From the lens of institutional theory, the chapter analyzes the role of security agencies, including the police and other sister security agencies, in ensuring the safety and security of voters, electoral officers candidates, and other stakeholders. It was observed that the 2023 general election was not free from electoral violence, voter intimidation, low voter turnout, and vote buying because the emphasis has always been on the quantity of security personnel deployed for election management rather than their conduct in maintaining election

security. Therefore, future elections could be well managed and secured when there is synergy among security agencies, full legalization of technology in the electoral system, and provision of adequate political education for the electorates by relevant stakeholders.

Introduction

The management of elections and the provision of security during electoral processes are critical aspects of sustaining a functional democracy. However, in many societies, including Nigeria, there is a high potential for violence during election periods; arising from political, economic, and social dimensions. Consequently, election security plans, particularly in developing economies, must consider the specific roles of security agencies tasked with safeguarding voters, candidates, election officials, observers, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, these security agencies are responsible for ensuring the safety of both sensitive and non-sensitive election materials, as well as preventing manipulations that may compromise the integrity of the electoral process. However, the effectiveness of security agencies in fulfilling their duties during elections largely depends on their functional autonomy from political struggles and class interests within society. If security personnel are influenced by these factors, their operational effectiveness in upholding the constitution and ensuring the credibility of elections may be compromised. In some cases, they may even intimidate or dissuade citizens from freely participating in the electoral process. Consequently, the duties of security agencies during elections are influenced by complex political and socio-economic factors.

The role of security agencies in electoral processes varies from one country to another; shaped by political history, legal traditions, and socio-cultural backgrounds. While some countries have extensive and precise legal provisions, others have more general regulations supplemented by specific measures enacted during election periods. In countries of the Northern Hemisphere, elections are routine, and armed security agencies are not typically involved, as the focus is on preventing electoral fraud and subverting the process. However, in many African countries and other emerging economies, securing the election environment necessitates the deployment and visible presence

of armed security agencies. In Nigeria for instance, the security agencies – police and sister agencies have multifaceted roles to play during elections ranging from ensuring the physical security of the electoral process to safeguarding against any form of electoral fraud and misconduct. Thus, their effectiveness is crucial for upholding the democratic principle of free and fair elections

The 2023 general election marked twenty-four years of unbroken democracy, the longest democratic dispensation in the history of the country. Like previous elections in the fourth republic huge number of security personnel was deployed for the election. According to the then Inspector General of Police, Usman Alkali Baba, a total number of four hundred and twenty-five thousand, one hundred and six security personnel (310,973 from the Nigerian police, 51,000 from the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence, 21,000 from the Federal Road Safety Corps, 11,336 from the Nigerian Correctional Service, 9,447 from National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, 350 from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, and 21,000 from Nigeria Immigration Service as well as the members of armed forces) Channels, 2023. This shows that the role expected to be played by the security personnel is fundamental to the successful conduct of a violence-free 2023 general election.

Be that as it may, election insecurity has become a persistent feature of election administration in Nigeria. While previous analyses have shed light on the partisan role of security personnel in election administration and the challenges of deploying them on election duties, there remains a need for a systematic examination of the interplay between the deployment and control of security personnel during elections and the issue of election security. Therefore, this study aims to explore the roles of security agencies and their efforts in ensuring election security in Nigeria using the 2023 general elections as a reference case.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed in this study is institutional theory, which provides a valuable lens through which to analyze the relationship between elections and security management in Nigeria. The institutional theory focuses on the role of formal and informal rules, regulations, and norms in shaping the behaviour of

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individuals and organizations within a specific context (Scott, 2008). By applying this framework, we can gain insights into the dynamics between security agencies, political actors, and societal forces and understand how institutional factors influence election management and security in Nigeria.

Within institutional theory, formal institutions encompass the explicit rules, regulations, and legal frameworks that govern the behavior of security agencies during elections. Scholars such as Hounkpe and Gueye (2010) argue that legal provisions play a significant role in shaping the role and responsibilities of security agencies in electoral processes. In Nigeria, the Police Act, Criminal Code, Police Service Commission Guidelines, and the Electoral Act define the scope of the police's involvement in ensuring election security (Oyadiran and Toyin, 2015). These formal institutions set the parameters for the actions and behaviours of security personnel during elections, shaping their role in safeguarding voters, candidates, and election materials.

Moreover, the institutional theory also considers informal institutions, including social norms, cultural practices, and power dynamics, which can influence the behaviour and decisions of security agencies. Ajala and Muller (2019) argue that the influence of political struggles and class interests on security agencies' actions during elections is an essential aspect to consider. They highlight how security agencies may be influenced by political actors or align themselves with certain class interests, which can affect their functional autonomy and impartiality. Consequently, the operational effectiveness of security agencies in upholding the Constitution and ensuring the credibility of elections may be compromised (Cummings, 2019).

The interplay between formal and informal institutions in Nigeria's electoral processes is crucial to understanding election management and security problems. Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart (2010) and CLEEN (2010) highlight that the police in Nigeria have not only failed to adequately perform their election duties but have also become central elements in the security challenges associated with elections. This suggests that the institutional factors at play, including the alignment of security agencies with political struggles and the influence of power dynamics, have contributed to election insecurity and compromised the integrity of the democratic process.

Election Management

Election management encompasses the intricate processes, activities, and institutional structures involved in the meticulous planning, organization, and execution of elections. It encompasses a series of stages, ranging from pre-election preparations to post-election procedures, all aimed at ensuring the efficient and seamless administration of the electoral process. Election management is a crucial aspect of the democratic system, as it ensures the smooth conduct of elections and upholds the principles of representation, political equality, and the right to choose leaders. In a democratic system, elections serve as the means for citizens to exercise their political will and make decisions on the candidates they deem suitable for public office (Ademola, 2021). The conduct of elections should guarantee freedom, fairness, and credibility by ensuring that voters are not subjected to intimidation, harassment, or coercion. Free and fair elections require the security of voters, electoral officers, and ad-hoc staff of the electoral management body.

By providing a secure environment, electoral management bodies, such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria, play a crucial role in managing the electoral process and ensuring its integrity. An impartial and independent electoral commission is essential to carrying out election management functions without bias or favouritism, thereby upholding transparency and decency in elections (Ekundayo, 2014). During the pre-election phase, critical tasks such as voter registration, candidate nomination, and voter education take place. Voter registration plays a pivotal role in establishing an accurate and up-to-date electoral roll, enabling eligible citizens to exercise their right to vote (Ajala and Muller, 2019). Candidate nomination processes allow individuals or political parties to present their candidacies for various positions, shaping the composition of the electoral field. Additionally, voter education initiatives aim to inform and enlighten the electorate about their rights, responsibilities, and the intricacies of the voting process itself.

The foundation of election management lies within the framework of electoral laws and regulations. These legal instruments delineate the procedures for conducting elections, encompassing timelines, eligibility criteria, campaign finance regulations, and mechanisms for dispute resolution. The existence of clear and

transparent electoral laws (when properly implemented by an electoral body) contributes not only to the integrity and credibility of the electoral process but also ensures that elections are conducted fairly and in adherence to democratic principles. This is why electoral laws such as the 2022 Electoral Act assign the responsibility of coordinating, supervising, and administering elections to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The law requires the body to serve as the overarching authority ensuring that all aspects of the electoral process adhere to legal requirements, guiding election officials, and effectively resolving any disputes that may arise. The independence and impartiality of the electoral commission are vital in cultivating public trust in the administration of elections.

The set-up and management of polling stations and the logistical aspects associated with election management are fundamental considerations. Adequate infrastructure, suitable equipment, and properly trained personnel are essential for the smooth and efficient conduct of voting. The strategic placement, accessibility, and arrangement of polling stations are crucial in facilitating broad voter participation. Meticulous logistical planning, including the secure transportation of election materials, further contributes to the credibility and integrity of the electoral process.

Another integral component of election management is the accurate and transparent tabulation of votes and the timely reporting of results. This process necessitates the implementation of robust data collection, collation, and verification mechanisms. The transparency and integrity of result tabulation and reporting procedures significantly influence the acceptance and legitimacy of election outcomes. Scholars, such as Ajala and Muller (2019), emphasize the critical role of effective election management systems in ensuring the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections. A well-managed electoral process upholds democratic principles, promotes inclusivity, and enables citizens to exercise their right to vote in a transparent and accountable manner.

Security Problems

Security problems in the context of elections refer to the challenges and threats that undermine the safety, stability, and integrity of the electoral process. These problems arise from various sources,

including political, economic, and social dimensions of a society. The successful management of security in elections is crucial to ensuring a peaceful and conducive environment for voters, candidates, election officials, observers, and other stakeholders involved in the electoral process. According to Hounkpe and Gueye (2010), the role of security agencies in electoral processes varies across countries, influenced by factors such as political history, legal tradition, and socio-cultural background. In some countries, election environments are relatively secure, with routine elections that do not require extensive deployment of armed security personnel. However, in many African countries and other emerging economies, ensuring election security becomes a necessity due to the prevalence of electoral violence and other security challenges (Olurode and Hammanga, 2013).

In Nigeria, the protection of voters, election materials, officials, and the preservation of lawful and orderly electoral processes are vital for the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections (Oyadiran and Toyin, 2015). The responsibility for providing proper security during elections rests on security agencies, particularly the police, as outlined in the Police Act, the Criminal Code (1990), the Police Service Commission guidelines (2003), and the 2022 Electoral Act. However, despite the existence of comprehensive legal frameworks, the performance of security agencies during elections in Nigeria has often been inadequate, leading to election insecurity and undermining the credibility of the electoral process (CLEEN, 2010; Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010).

As per Section 14 (2) (b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), the primary goals of the state are the welfare and security of the populace. Ensuring security and well-being is a shared responsibility among both government and non-government entities (Akpan, 2017). Security has become a critical issue in the face of uncertainties and threats, as people yearn for stability and dependability amidst rapid changes and complexities. However, the term "security" lacks a universally agreed-upon definition and remains a contested concept (Boemcken and Schetter, 2023.). Some define security as the absence of threats to life, livelihood, and human rights within a sovereign nation (Ndubuisi-Okolo, Anigbuogu, 2019). Security can be seen as a public good that fosters sustainable human development, regional and international

peace, and stability (Hussein, Gnisci, and Wanjiru, 2004). Different perspectives, such as realism and the human security approach, view security in various ways, ranging from military measures to addressing all political, economic, and social concerns that threaten a safe life (Akpan, 2017). The understanding of security has evolved, particularly in the context of election security, which has become a significant aspect of political science. Election security focuses on safeguarding human and material resources during the electoral process to ensure free, fair, and credible elections (Olurode, 2013; Bawa, 2013).

Key elements of election security include protecting participants (voters, candidates, election staff, observers), election materials, and information. The effectiveness of election security relies on reliable technology, proper coordination among security forces, and efficient policing (Olurode and Hammanga, 2013). Election security encompasses physical protection, privacy, and a secure environment for voters to cast their ballots without fear (Onyekpere, 2013). Election insecurity, on the other hand, refers to the lack of protection, threat, risk, and ambiguity that leaves individuals vulnerable to hazards and uncertainties (Ndubuisi-Okolo and Anigbuogu, 2019). Achieving a durable and entrenched democratic rule necessitates a well-secured electoral process with the active involvement of INEC, political parties, election observers, the media, and security agencies (Mediayanose, 2018).

Historical Overview of Election-Related Security Problems in Nigeria

Nigeria has faced significant challenges relating to election-related security throughout its history, particularly in the present Fourth Republic. These security problems have undermined the credibility, fairness, and integrity of the electoral process, posing threats to democracy and national stability. The inability of the Nigerian authorities to address past election-related abuses threatens the safe conduct of the 2023 general election (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

One of the major election-related security problems ahead of the 2023 general election was mass rigging and the snatching of ballot boxes. Unscrupulous individuals and political actors manipulate the electoral process to ensure favourable outcomes, compromising the

will of the electorate. Such practices undermine the integrity of elections and erode public trust in the democratic system. For instance, it was reported that electoral materials were snatched by unknown persons at the RAC centre in Okrika LGA in Rivers State which led to no voting in Ward 06, 07, 08, and 09 of the local government (YIAGA, 2019).

Another prevalent issue in Nigeria's electoral history is the falsification of election results. Electoral officers and party agents have been involved in tampering with results, inflating figures, and altering the outcome of elections. This manipulation undermines the legitimacy of electoral outcomes and fuels public discontent (Omotola, 2011). Election-related violence and insecurity have been persistent challenges in Nigeria. Political opponents are often targeted through acts of kidnapping, assassination, and physical violence. Electoral officers and ad-hoc staff have also been victims of violence. Supporters of political parties and security agents have sometimes been involved in perpetrating these acts, exacerbating the atmosphere of insecurity and fear during elections (Omotola, 2011; Osaghae, 2020).

Nigeria has witnessed several instances of post-election violence, most notably the 2011 post-election crisis. The "do or die" mentality and the perception of elections as a winner-takes-all contest contributes to violent confrontations and resistance. These outbreaks of violence further destabilize the electoral process and pose significant threats to peace and stability in the country. The inadequate provision of security during elections has been a recurrent issue. Insufficient security personnel, coordination gaps among security agencies, and the improper deployment of security personnel have hampered the effectiveness of election security measures (Obi, 2022; Ibeanu, 2019). This has created an environment conducive to electoral malpractices and violence. Socioeconomic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and inequitable distribution of wealth have also contributed to election-related security problems in Nigeria. Desperation and frustration resulting from these factors can drive individuals and groups to engage in criminal activities and violent behavior during elections (Obi, 2022; Ibeanu, 2019).

Role of Security Agencies (Police and other security agencies) in Election Security

Security agencies such as the police, military, NDLEA, Nigeria Correctional Service, NSCDC, EFCC, and other sister security agencies play a critical role in ensuring election security in Nigeria. Their primary responsibility is to uphold law and order, protect lives and property, and create a safe and secure environment for the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections. Security agencies are tasked with maintaining public order before, during, and after elections. They are responsible for preventing and managing conflicts, violence, and any disruptions that may arise during the electoral process. By ensuring peace and stability, they instill confidence in voters and stakeholders (Isike, 2021). Although the Nigeria police has the primary responsibility of ensuring internal security and maintenance of law and order is often assisted, because of its small size, by other security agencies in election security. They ensure the safety of voters, election officials, and materials. Their presence helps deter incidents such as ballot box snatching, voter intimidation, and other forms of electoral malpractice. By providing a secure environment, they enable voters to exercise their democratic rights without fear (Isike, 2021; Adeyemi, 2020).

Managing large crowds and maintaining order at polling stations and election-related events is another vital role of security agencies. They are responsible for crowd control and to ensure a peaceful and conducive atmosphere during the electoral process. Their efforts contribute to the smooth conduct of elections (Isike, 2021). Moreover, security agencies are at the forefront of preventing and responding to election-related crimes. They are tasked with identifying and addressing acts of violence, intimidation, voter suppression, and any attempt to disrupt the electoral process. Collaborating with relevant agencies, they investigate and apprehend individuals involved in electoral offenses to ensure accountability and deterrence (Adeyemi, 2020). Security agencies provide support and intelligence to assist in risk assessment, threat identification, and the development of security strategies for elections. This collaboration enhances the overall security and integrity of the electoral process (Isike, 2021).

It should be noted, however, that post-election reports from observers and relevant electoral stakeholders on the performance of security agencies during elections in Nigeria have been unsatisfactory. This was the case in the 2019 general election when the INEC chairman, Prof Mohmoud Yakubu, lamented on poor conduct of the security personnel particularly in the areas of synergy, coordination, and collaboration among various security agencies (Premium Times, 2020). The police itself has been a central element contributing to the security problems associated with Nigeria's electoral history. Numerous organizations that monitored previous elections consistently reported that security forces, particularly the police, collaborated with and protected the ruling party; TMG, 2003; EC 2007, International Republican Institute/National Democratic Institute, 2019;

For example, during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the conduct of security personnel came under scrutiny by the National Human Rights Commission. The Commission's report, as cited in Shankyula (2023), revealed instances of indifference among security personnel towards electoral offenses such as multiple voting, underaged voting, impersonation, and ballot box snatching in several states. Troubling incidents were documented, including a police officer watching passively as ballot boxes were being stuffed by a political party in Rivers State, collusion between Nigeria Police Force officers, party agents, and electoral officers to rig elections and intimidate voters in Ibadan, Oyo State, and the involvement of a Nigerian Police Force officer named Festus Eze in thumb printing ballot papers for a political party in Anambra State (Shankyula, 2023).

The effectiveness of security agencies in providing election security in Nigeria has been compromised by corruption and political influence. The prevalence of corruption within the police force makes it susceptible to compromise and bribery from wealthy politicians seeking to manipulate voting outcomes in favour of their preferred candidates (Chukwuma, 2023; Idowu, 2023; National Democratic Institute, 2023). The authority and power vested in security personnel, along with their access to firearms, have been exploited to intimidate the population and, in extreme cases, disrupt constitutionally protected rights and activities, such as opposition campaigns or rallies (Alemika, 2019 as cited in Oni, Chidozie and Agbude, 2023).

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Similarly, the European Union Election Observation Mission (2023) reported that the performance of security personnel in upholding their statutory duty of ensuring law and order and guaranteeing a credible electoral process in Nigeria has been consistently poor and unsatisfactory. Their presence at polling stations has increasingly raised doubts about their commitment to protecting the votes of the masses.

Election Management and Security Challenges during the 2023 General Elections

The 2023 general elections in Nigeria were marred by significant election security challenges which had a profound impact on the overall conduct and credibility of the electoral process. Despite the significance of the presidential election, provisional data indicated a record-low voter turnout of 26.72%. The same was recorded in many state governorship elections such as 15.66% in Rivers, 18.00% in Abia, 18.92% in Lagos, and 40.61% (the highest) from Jigawa state. This was unlike in 2019 and 2015, where some states had over 50% voter turnout. The prevailing insecurity issues leading up to the election greatly contributed to this decline in voter participation. INEC reported over 134 attacks on its offices or personnel during the pre-election period (Gavin, 2023). The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which deployed approximately 240 election observers, declared the elections largely peaceful. However, it criticized the inadequate planning and lack of transparency, though these factors did not impact the outcome. The ECOWAS called upon opposition leaders to promote peace and address any grievances they may have through constitutional means.

Several key issues emerged that undermined the integrity of the 2023 general elections. Firstly, the voter registration process faced numerous obstacles and shortcomings. There were reports of logistical difficulties, technical glitches, and inadequate voter education, insufficient staffing at polling stations leading to a flawed voter registration exercise (EU EOM Report, 2023). These challenges which were admitted by INEC (Vanguard, 2023) resulted in the delay of voting, exclusion of eligible voters, irregularities in the voter roll, and allegations of voter suppression. These issues not only disrupted the

voting process but also raised concerns about the fairness and efficiency of the elections.

Moreover, the role of security agencies during the 2023 elections came under scrutiny. There were allegations of bias, partisanship, and collusion with political actors. Security personnel were accused of intimidating opposition candidates and supporters, suppressing opposition rallies, and engaging in acts of violence. Such actions eroded public trust in the impartiality and professionalism of security agencies, creating an environment of fear and intimidation. The elections also witnessed a significant increase in electoral violence and disruptions. Incidents of clashes between rival political factions, attacks on candidates and supporters, and destruction of property were reported. Cumulatively, 24 persons were reportedly killed while 238 violence was recorded (Punch, 2023). According to Kimpact Development Initiative, 98 of the total violence occurred during the presidential election while 140 were reported during the governorship elections. These acts of violence not only threatened the safety and security of citizens but also hindered the free expression of political choices, undermining the democratic process.

The pre-election period was marred by incidents of electoral violence. In the twelve months preceding the election, more than 200 violent events involving party members and supporters were recorded, resulting in nearly 100 reported fatalities (Serwat and Carboni, 2023). These figures were consistent with previous election years, with over 150 events and more than 100 reported deaths between 2018 and 2019, as well as an estimated 115 events and over 90 deaths between 2014 and 2015. The Niger Delta and the South East regions experienced the highest incidents of violence against INEC offices and staff in the lead-up to the 2023 elections (Serwat and Carboni, 2023).

Additionally, the management of the collation and announcement of election results faced challenges. Delays in the collation process, technical irregularities, and lack of transparency in result transmission raised doubts about the accuracy and credibility of the final outcomes. This fuelled suspicions and heightened tensions among political actors and the general public. For instance, the presidential elections were conducted in Nigeria on February 25, 2023, resulting in the victory of Bola Tinubu, the candidate of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party. With 36% of the votes, Tinubu

emerged as the winner after a highly competitive election, defeating his closest rivals. The announcement of the final results by the Independent Nigerian Election Commission (INEC) took place on March 1, following a lengthy and tumultuous counting process that lasted nearly four days.

INEC, as the agency responsible for managing elections in Nigeria, holds primary responsibility for agenda setting, planning, and strategic coordination related to election security. The Commission has consistently demonstrated a proactive approach to defining the framework for managing election security, aiming to ensure smooth and credible electoral processes (Anyanya, 2013). However, the failure to effectively execute security measures during the 2023 general elections and post-election phases has had far-reaching consequences, resulting in contentious and litigious election outcomes with 3,959 petitions filed (EU EOM Report, 2023).

Ensuring election security is of paramount importance in Nigeria's current democratic system, as it remains the most significant threat to the integrity of the electoral process. Safeguarding elections requires comprehensive attention to all phases: pre-election, election day, and post-election. A sincere election management body must focus on critical aspects such as fostering stakeholder trust, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of election technology, educating voters and key participants on security matters, and establishing a robust legal framework that promotes professional management, impartiality, and inclusivity (Smith, 2023).

Nigeria's political leadership has made various attempts to address electoral irregularities by establishing electoral bodies and enacting legislation aimed at ensuring free and fair elections. Unfortunately, these reforms have fallen short of expectations and have, in some cases, exacerbated the situation. Electoral flaws, particularly electoral violence, continue to plague the political landscape, casting doubts on the credibility and legitimacy of the electoral process (Johnson, 2023).

Also, another election problem that marred the 2023 general election was the incidence of vote buying which found its way into the electoral process despite the policy of currency redesign that aimed to curb this menace during the election. Both politicians (voter buyers) and some electorates (vote sellers) were ready to go into the transaction. This was

part of the post-election report of notable election observers like the European Union and YIAGA Africa. The European Union noted that little attention was paid to this recurrent electoral problem of vote buying and as such rife during the 2023 election. YIAGA Africa confirmed 15 cases of vote buying and bribery across eight states in governorship elections (Premium Times, 2023)

Conclusion

One of the major issues that have characterized the electoral process in Nigeria is the election insecurity which has largely impacted negatively on democratic integrity and political legitimacy in the country. As a way of curbing this problem, deployment of security agencies such as the Nigeria police and other sister agencies has become an electoral tradition in the country particularly in the current political dispensation. It is noted here that the ultimate aim of deploying these security personnel is to arrest the situation of electoral fraud and violence, particularly in the 2023 general election. However, despite this, the country's presidential election recorded its all-time low voter turnout of 26.7%; the election, just like the previous ones, was not free from voter intimidation, logistic difficulties, electoral violence across geopolitical zones, and more importantly problem of vote buying. Thus, it is observed that while effort and emphasis were made on much deployment of the security personnel, there is less emphasis on the proper conduct of these security men in ensuring election security. Until this is done, election security cannot be guaranteed.

Recommendations

In light of the problematic issues revealed in the chapter, it is recommended that policymakers and election management bodies in Nigeria consider strengthening the legal framework governing elections as it is essential to ensure transparency, fairness, and accountability. This can be achieved by enacting laws that address emerging challenges and promote inclusive participation. Also, there is a need to foster stakeholder engagement and build trust, initiatives should be undertaken to encourage the active involvement of all citizens in the electoral process. This can be achieved through

dialogue, consultation, and collaboration with political parties, civil society organizations, and community leaders.

Not only that, investing in robust and secure election technology systems is crucial to ensure the accurate capture and counting of votes. This requires leveraging advanced technologies, implementing rigorous testing and certification processes, and establishing safeguards against manipulation and fraud. Moreover, there is an urgent need to strengthen the role of security agencies in ensuring peaceful and secure elections, comprehensive training and capacity building should be provided to security personnel involved in election operations. This training should focus on professionalism, neutrality, human rights, conflict resolution, and crowd management.

In addition, effective coordination and collaboration between security agencies, election management bodies, and relevant stakeholders should be fostered. This can be achieved by establishing communication channels, sharing intelligence, and developing joint operational plans to enhance overall security during elections. Clear protocols and mechanisms should be established to address electoral violence promptly and hold perpetrators accountable. This involves strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies, establishing specialized units for election-related offenses, and ensuring the swift and fair adjudication of cases.

Moreover, addressing the root causes of electoral violence requires promoting civic education and awareness campaigns that foster a culture of peaceful participation in elections. These initiatives should emphasize the importance of dialogue, tolerance, and non-violent means of expressing grievances. Socio-economic and political grievances that contribute to electoral violence should be addressed through inclusive governance, equitable resource allocation, and the implementation of responsive policies that cater to the needs and aspirations of all segments of society.

To sum up, encouraging the active involvement of civil society organizations, community leaders, and religious institutions is crucial in promoting peaceful elections and resolving conflicts. Their engagement can facilitate dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation processes at the grassroots level. By implementing these recommendations and continuing research efforts, Nigeria can make significant progress in improving election management and security.

These measures will strengthen democratic institutions, enhance the credibility of elections, and foster a peaceful and inclusive political environment for the benefit of the nation and its citizens.

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