

ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL POLICING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper assessed the roles of the Police in securing the electoral process in Nigeria. The general conclusion drawn from the study, which relied on secondary sources of information is that electoral policing is a crucial aspect of electoral process in Nigeria and the Police have recorded relative achievements in securing the process from intense violence. However, optimal effectiveness of Nigeria police in electoral security management is being curtailed by many challenges, which included corruption, poor operational equipment, inadequate infrastructure, poor intelligence gathering, lack of adequate knowledge of areas of operation and proliferation of illegal weapons. These challenges need to be addressed towards peaceful conduct of elections in Nigeria.

Introduction

Elections are critical foundations of democratic governance and an avenue for competing for political power. First, electoral contest serves as Primary Avenue of making political choice and a credible platform for determining the winners and the losers between two or more contestants in an election (Raji, 2016). The freedom to choose leaders in an open political atmosphere, which allows the participating political parties to sell their manifestoes to attract popular votes, is what distinguishes democracy from dictatorship (Williams, 1999). Apart from serving as a formal expression of people's preference for a particular government or candidates, election symbolizes popular sovereignty and the expression of the opinion of the people as a social contract pact between the state and the governed who are the ultimate decider of who holds political authorities. In some cases, peace agreements for countries emerging from armed conflict provide a time-frame for elections in a bid to obtain legitimacy for those that wins power while also providing an opening for former belligerents to transform themselves into a more formal political parties and positive political actors that embraces ballot rather than bullet to make their voices heard in the political space. With such a central role in the democratic process, election is one of the most important elements in the conception and practice of liberal democracy (Thomson, 2011).

In spite of its centrality to democracy, many electoral contests in Africa are characterized by violence, which have ultimately led to lost of many lives and property. Violence has characterised electoral process in many African countries with obvious negative effects on democratic consolidation and political stability. According to Amnesty International (2008), violent struggle for power, even in states which do not descend into armed conflict, still remains a worrisome component of political life in Africa. There was electoral violence in Nigeria in 1966, 2003, 2007 and 2011, there was in Lesotho in 1998 and 2007, Kenya in 2007, Democratic Republic of Congo in 2011, Zimbabwe in 2008 and Cote D'ivoire in 2010 (Japhet, 2009). In Nigeria in particular, the 2011 post election violence claimed more than 2,000 lives and property worth about #6 billion. In Bauchi and Niger States alone, there were 520 deaths, 157 churches, 46 mosques, 1,435 houses, 78 and 219 cars and motorcycles respectively burnt with about 21,500 people internally displaced during the crisis after the announcement of former President Goodluck Jonathan as the winner of the 2011 presidential election (Babalola, 2011).

What the above statistics have demonstrated is that the political history of Nigeria is replete with all forms of electoral violence, with their obvious effects on peace and security. Electoral violence has played a major role in undermining Nigeria's quest for establishing a democratic polity and has become part of the political culture in Nigeria, which is always violence ridden. Electoral violence affects the credibility of the electoral system, the democratic system and the rule of law. The nature, extent and magnitude of violence and rigging associated with elections in Nigeria are posing a serious threat to the national quest for stable democratic transition, as well as the attainment of the long term goal of consolidated democracy.

The inability of Nigeria to hold a peaceful general election in the past has been source of concern to stakeholders in the country. This problem can be partly linked to poor policing of elections by the management bodies. As noted by Oyadiran and Olorungbemi (2015), policing of elections by security agencies occupies a significant and strategic position in the electoral process. The primary goal of

electoral policing is to ensure safety and political space that could promote credible elections. To a very large extent, the success or failure of any elections is dependent on the conduct and performance of the police on election duty. Since the risk of violence is present in virtually all elections globally, events during the build up to elections raised public fear about the safety and security of those participating in the process as voters, election officials, and even among candidates and political party agents. It is therefore very essential that police officers on election duty display the highest level of integrity, neutrality, professionalism and sense of duty in order to reassure the voters that their safety and security are guaranteed. However, absence of adequate security or politically impartial and peaceful policing environment has affected many elections in Nigeria. This negative trend in electoral policing has questioned the credibility of many elections in the country. Thus, most elections in Nigeria have been characterized by varying degrees of violence, intimidation fraud and resulting cynicism on the part of citizens towards electoral process. In the past, the police have been accused of being used by politicians to intimidate opponent and to rig elections rather than secure the process. It is against this backdrop that this paper captures the roles, achievements and the challenges of the Nigeria police in electoral policing. Though there are other security agencies like the Army, State Security Services, Immigrations, Security and Civil Defense that are saddled with the security management of elections in Nigeria, this paper sticks with the Nigeria police who has the primary responsibility of policing the electoral process in the country.

Operational Definition of Terms

Election: This is a democratic contest for political power in order to gain formal legitimacy to utilize such power. In democratic societies, election empowers ordinary citizens to choose among contestants for political offices and promote popular participation in governance.

Policing: This is a people-driven security arrangement which ensures the security of people's lives, property and the protection of the totality of their environment.

Electoral Policing: The protection of the electoral process in order to guarantee the safety of electoral personnel, electoral infrastructure, the electorate and everything associated with electoral operations. It is a measure taken to contain threats emanating from electoral violence or other unlawful acts targeted at successful conduct of elections.

Review of Related Literature

Conducting free, fair and violence-free election in Nigeria has become a serious perennial problem in Nigeria (Ishola, 2010). Thus, the conduct of elections in the country since the general elections of 1954 had been characterized by more by violence, which ultimately undermines free and fair elections in Nigeria's political landscape. The studies that have linked electoral policing with the conduct of elections in Nigeria are mainly found in the reports of various election observation and monitoring projects by a number of local and international organizations. These organizations include the European Union (EU), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and International Organization for Sustainable Development (IOSD), the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), and the CLEEN Foundation, among others (CLEEN Foundation, 2010), amongst others.

As argued by the TMG (2003), even though security forces are required to play the crucial roles of guaranteeing the safety and security of the electorates and provide a neutral political environment free of intimidation during democratic elections, the agency has not performed optimally in this direction due to many factors. One of such factors according to the author is the saddling of electoral policing responsibilities on other security agencies apart from the Nigeria police, which has brought about confusion in command structure and promoted inter agency rivalry in the electoral process. In Nigeria, the police force is facing many challenges ranging from negative public image, corruption, low morale, lack of equipment/facilities to rapidly changing social values which tend to encourage increase in electoral crime rates (Aremu, 2009; Effiong, 2004). These factors shows that the police in Nigeria is working in a very harsh and hostile environment which is inimical to effective security of lives and property and credible management of the electoral process. Thus, it is argued that with the support of community policing citizens will receive some necessary security trainings and in the process ensure effective community participation in security management during elections. Community policing is critical to effective security and political participation in a democracy. This is evident in USA, Britain and South Africa where promotion of community policing has assisted tremendously in creating consciousness and awareness among members of the police force in electoral security management.

Bolaji (2009) argued that the police is not only central to individual self- political actualization, but is also instrumental to safeguarding his political aspirations by protecting him from all forms of political intimidations .As posited by the author, the ability of the police to perform this role and to rid the society

of criminal activities from the political space is what is considered as democratic policing .

According to Akinolu (2004), criminality is part and parcel of human nature and society. It is therefore not unexpected that a society, especially that at a low level of development tends to experience an upsurge in the rate of violent crimes, including politically motivated killings, the use of illegal weapons, ethnic and religious clashes, amongst others. What is however disturbing is that the police, who should curtail acts of political criminality, seem overwhelmed by the phenomenon in many under developed societies.

Nigeria as a nation is highly segmented into the lower, middle and upper classes with structural imbalances with the distribution of the national wealth, thus leading to agitation and counter agitation for resource and political control at all cost. Such intense agitation has raise the temper and tempo of political struggle, which sometimes are beyond the control of security agencies.

Alemika (2009) corroborated Akinolu's position by alluding that increase in violent crime and delinquency has become a common feature of many developing countries in political transition because of the inadequate capacity of the state to adequately respond to the socio-political needs of their citizens and due largely to inequitable distribution of the limited resources accruing to those states. Raji (2011) linked ineffective policing of the electoral space to the non- demobilization and dismantling of repressive security apparatus used by previous authoritarian regimes during the military rules in controlling crime and subduing the populace in the face of unequal socio-economic opportunities brought about by corruption and economic liberalization programmes by many of such military regimes. Etannibi (2010) blamed weak electoral policing in Nigeria on the pattern of colonial policing in the country in which the colonial police under the were oriented to protect and support the colonial government against indigenous people .It is therefore somewhat difficult to detach the loyalty of the contemporary Nigeria police force from the ruling party that indirectly fund and controls it. What has been distilled from this brief review is that elections in Nigeria, rather than being a political asset and a legitimizing force, have become a political liability, a source of instability and violence. According to Albert (2007) different forms of experiences with competitive elections in Nigeria, have enthroned worst political thuggery and brigandage, unmediated and unrestrained violence that are characterized by wanton destruction of lives and property.

Thus, the past seventeen years of transitional democracy, after a prolonged military incursion into the Nigerian democratic setting have witnessed perceived and real increase in political crime and electoral disorder, so much that safety and security issues have been largely undermined within the period. However, scholar's comments dwelt very little on actionable solutions to weak electoral policing in Nigeria and focused heavily on police depreciating capability in electoral management, a gap this paper intends to bridge.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Social Conflict theory as is theoretical foundation. According to Karl Marx, who is the major proponent of social conflict theory, changes are generated on the basis of "contradictions" within the social system which stem from the social relations of production or the economic base of the society. The social conflict theorists thus argued that the main cause of social conflict is the class struggle particularly between the working class (proletariats) and the ruling class (bourgeoisie). Inevitably, the totality of these relations (struggles and conflicts) constitute the economic structure of the society which further determine the "character of the political, legal, cultural and religions relations and institution of the society" (Akuol, 2011:17).

With reference to this study, the theory suggests that the problems of electoral security and general law and order are mere reflections of the nature of the inherent in- balance economic system, with fierce contest for political power by different segments and interests in Nigeria to determine the distribution of the collective wealth of the nation in relation to who gets what, how and how much. This theory perceives social problems such as electoral violence, inequity, poverty, exploitation, marginalization, amongst others, as veritable sources of social conflict. It argues that electoral conflicts occur largely because of the exploitative and unjust nature of man. To the Marxists, the police is not necessarily created to serve the "society" or the "people" but the dominant economic interest of a powerful minority". This position portrays the police as a repressive force. Thus, with reference to this study, policing constitutes part of the measures and actions taken by the society to regulate societal relations in order to conformity to the norms and societal values for law and order.

The Police and Election Security in Nigeria

The Nigerian police have the constitutional mandate of enthroning an elected government in Nigeria under a free and fair electoral atmosphere (Oyadiran and Olorungbemi, 2015). Thus, the success or

failure of any elections is dependent on the conduct and performance of police officers on election duty. The police role in electoral security is very central because many pre-elections political programmes of activity often generate public concern about the security of lives and property of those participating in the process as voters, election officials, and contestants. This anxiety is quite genuine owing to the unfavorable historical context of election management in Nigeria which borders on sustained turbulent records of transitions from one civilian government to another. The police officers on election duty has the primary roles of exhibiting the highest level of impartiality, transparency and honesty while providing protection for the electoral process in order to assure the voters of their safety. The role of the police in the electoral process as highlighted above is expected to bring about credibility to the electoral process.

The protection of lives, voters, electoral materials and officials and the preservation of lawful and orderly electoral processes are also the primary duty of the police during the conduct of elections. The police thus have a crucial responsibility to provide optimal security at the time of elections to enable citizen elect their leaders under a peaceful atmosphere devoid of fear, coercion, intimidation and violence.

The police provide security at the polling stations and collation centers to ensure that voting, counting of ballots, collation, and declaration of results are conducted without any disturbance and in adherence to relevant electoral laws. The police are empowered to take necessary measure to prevent violence or any activities that could threaten to disrupt the elections. Similarly, the police are mandated to ensure the safety and security of all election materials, by escorting and guarding the materials, as appropriate. They are equally to protect election officials at the polling stations and collection centres.

The police may also arrest, on the instruction of the presiding officer or other INEC officials, or any person(s) causing any disturbance or preventing the smooth conduct of proceedings at the polling stations and collation centers. The police is to accompany the presiding officers to deliver the election results, ballot boxes and other election materials safely, and as appropriate. When the police perform the aforementioned roles, security of the ballot papers and the ballot boxes and indeed, credibility of the elections are then guaranteed (Oyadiran and Olorungbemi, 2015).

Under the electoral act (2010) Policing elections follows certain principles for its effectiveness and achieving the desired goals. Accordingly:

- i. The police are guided to conforming to appropriate principles, rules, code of ethics and laws governing police duties, especially in relation to crowd control and the use firearms. They are also expected to perform their duties without fear or favor. Police officers are also expected to maintain impartiality, and eschew partnership or discrimination between the ruling and non-ruling parties.
- ii. The police must desire and use proactive methods to prevent fraud, coercion, intimidation, or other manipulation or violence 'so that the use of force and firearms by the police can be avoided or be minimized to the greatest degree possible during elections. Furthermore, the police shall not take measures that would frighten citizens from voting. They should also not conduct themselves in ways that will give the impression among the voters that they are under obligation to vote for any particular party or candidate.
- iii. The police require effective intelligence information throughout the campaign period, preceding voting, in order to be able to appreciate threats to free and fair elections in different parts of the country, and devise measures to prevent breakdown of law and order as the days of voting counting and announcement of election results (Federal Republic of Nigeria; 2007).

The conduct of elections is usually politically charged. The sensitivities of the police are bound to be high, with different people supporting different parties. The way and manner a police officer handles a situation is liable to be interpreted differently by people of different political persuasions. Police officers on election duty must always strive to be fair to all, avoid conducts that could be seen as inimical to the success of the elections. An officer's action, if viewed as excessive or unfair, could lead to serious election related trouble. Each person who witnesses the response to a given situation forms an opinion of the officers, the agency that deployed him/her, and the elections. In addition, there are also persons on the lookout for any opportunity or excuse to cause trouble. Police officers on election duty must never provide such people with an opportunity to generate hostilities and cause the elections in their duty station to fail.

Every police officer on election duty is obliged to file a written report at the end of his or her duty period. The report will include among others, an account of any and every incident that required police intervention at the polling centre and any other incidents that, in the judgment of the reporting officer, shall be brought to the attention of his superior authorities. This way, the police are effectively policing elections (Jega, 2011).

What has been distilled from the above discourse is that the Nigeria police have the following responsibility in electoral management:

- a. safeguarding the security of the lives and property of citizens during campaign, voting and after voting;
- b. ensuring the safety of electoral officers before, during and after elections;
- c. providing security for key politicians during campaign;
- d. ensuring and preserving a free, fair and safe atmosphere for election campaign by all parties and politicians, without discrimination;
- e. maintaining peaceful conditions, law and order around the polling and counting centres;
- f. ensuring the security of sensitive election materials at voting and counting centers and during transportation (Alemika, 2007).
- g. sustaining interactive session with political class with a view to resolving inter and intra party disputes;
- h. monitoring the activities on print and electronic media;
- i. Identifying political party thugs so as to frustrate their activities, amongst others.

To be able to carry the above stated functions, Police Officers on election duties must be alert in carrying out their duties in relationship to any electoral process. They also need to be proactive to be able to prevent incidents that could lead to disruption of voting or other legally permitted electoral activities before it happens. A police on any election duty must be courteous, approachable and accessible to the voters and other citizens who may need their assistance. He must also demonstrate high level of professional conduct and must adequately be taken care of by the Police Authority and its men on any election duties. The police on electoral duties are obliged to be fair and, if necessary firm to all persons within his protective jurisdictions without discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender, religion, political opinion, national origin, property, birth or other status such as disability Bolaji (2011).

In addition to the foregoing Police Officer on any Election duties must ensure that the use of force during election is only strictly necessary and such force should always be proportional to lawful objectives. They are also expected to wear identification tags in bold print, for easy identification by voters, monitors and other observers.

For a police officer to be adjudged as very competent and be included in any election duty he or she must have the following knowledge in addition to his career training :

- i. Knowledge of the basic code of conducts guiding election policing, which Nigeria is signatory to.
- ii. Knowledgeable about the electoral laws.
- iii. Must not be a novice of the provisions of Human Rights Declarations , Covenants and Conventions on electoral matters.
- iv. Must be able to communicate his security threat analysis of an election to his superior in clear language without sending wrong signals while also having the ability to report such analysis both orally and in writing.

Strategic Management Technique of Electoral Policing in Nigeria

Nigeria has a slightly complex electoral policing system arising from its practice of three-tier federalism. The 1999 Constitution primarily put the security management of election primarily on the Nigeria Police and other security agencies. The role of security agents in the country revolves around the maintenance of social order, especially in the protection and preservation of national security. Security agencies have the responsibility for policing election and thereby contributing to democratic sustenance in the country.

Nigeria security agencies comprise of the Armed Forces-Army, Air Force and Navy, the Nigeria Police Force, State Security Service, National Intelligence Agency, Defence Intelligence Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigerian Prisons Service, National Drug Law and Enforcement Agency, Federal Road Safety Commission, Federal Fire Service and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (Karim,2014).

The first security institutions involved in electoral policing in Nigeria are the intelligence services. Intelligence services which covers internal, external and military proactively collect the following data: finger prints of all political office holders, profile of all electoral violence suspects, assets and liabilities of all political officers and public servants, the dossier for watch listed politicians, thugs, vetting reports of all political appointees and other public functionaries, data on deportees, diplomats, political thugs, militants, political parties, organizations, civil society groups and their leadership, data on arms and ammunitions, internally displaced persons and refugees & flash points (Karim and Albert, 2011).

On the receipt of intelligence report regarding electoral threats, the immediate action agencies are the security agencies. They are to investigate and possibly prosecute identified electoral offenders. In addition, they obtain data on arsonists, terrorists, insurgents, kidnappers, cultists, arms and ammunitions, crime flash points, profile including bio-data of suspects, footage from Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) currently installed and used in Abuja, Ilorin, Lagos among other cities. The Nigerian Immigration Service sees to all international border posts (sea, land and air), including the 1497 illegal routes and the officially and legally identified ports, they procure details of all migrants and emigrants into the country, profile of all Nigerians, with international passports, diplomatic and other standard travel document like Emergency Travel Certificates and ECOWAS passports as well as details of foreigners and where they concentrate including work permits issued to them. Nigerian Prison service avails the list of electoral violators and convicts in its custody (Karim and Albert, 2011).

The last line of action in electoral policing is the involvement of the military, which is occasioned when there is indiscriminate use of illegitimate fire arms and ammunitions with the resultant loss of lives and destruction of property before, during and after elections. In the event of any break down of law and order with the above stated magnitude or tending towards that degree of vandalism and loss of lives, the state governors through a letter formally request the President who is the commander in chief of the armed forces to deploy the military to that part of the affected state provided that the State Commissioner of Police also admits that the police can no longer cope with the prevailing situation. The President is also expected to convoke the National Security Council meeting where the Minister of Defence would be directed to induct the military formations in the affected states to assist the police in quelling the civil unrest after the National Assembly had been notified. (Karim, 2014a).

Consequently, the Minister of Defense is expected to direct the service chiefs of the military formations in the affected areas to quell the political riot. Thus, all the affected military formations are expected to contribute troops, equipment and machineries to frontally arrest the deteriorating electoral situation in conjunction with the police who are constitutionally empowered to address internal strife. In addition, the military may be involved in the management of internally displaced persons and provision of essential facilities like bridges, potable water, health care, distribution of food and other essentials including electoral materials and personnel.

Furthermore, the effort to ensure peaceful conduct of elections in Nigeria through electoral policing has led to the establishment of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES). This policing measure in the management of election was being used before 2011 elections. The INEC introduced the new policing strategy for effective management of election in 2011. According to Jega (2012), the ICCES was the quintessence of synergy between the electoral management body and the security sector, and has emerged as a best practice that other EMBs are desirous of establishing. ICCES was therefore a new approach to the containment of electoral insecurity. ICCES as a consultative platform, was designed to increase the level of consultation, coordination, harmonization and managed decentralization of election security/risk management. It is an advisory body to support INEC to ensure effective security around elections, which is critical to the conduct of free, fair and credible 2011 elections and beyond.

It is important to note that the strength of ICCES included that the security agencies on the ground were expected to provide the plans and, therefore, the template for evaluating their performance. This approach is different from the old practice whereby security agencies in the States were unwilling to accept responsibility for failure because they were made to implement essentially "hand down" plans. The table below shows the sixteen participating security and quasi-security agencies in ICCES.

1	Office of the National Security Adviser	9	Nigeria Police Force
2	Police Service Commission	10	Ministry of Police Affairs* now defunct.
3	Nigerian Airforce	11	Nigerian Navy
4	Nigerian Army	12	State Security Service
5	National Intelligence Agency	13	Nigeria Customs Service
6	Nigeria Immigration Service	14	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
7	Federal Road Safety Corps	15	Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps
8	Nigerian Prisons Service	16	National Youth Service Corps

Source: Jega, A. M. (2012) "The Electoral Process and Security Sector Synergy." A paper presented to EIMC 6 Participants of Institute of Security Studies (ISS), Abuja on August, 21.

Jega (2012) further identified the following responsibilities of ICCES:

1. Coordinate the design of a comprehensive election security management system for INEC.
2. Develop locally focused plans for providing security before, during and after elections.
3. Harmonize the training and deployment of security personnel on election duties.
4. Assess existing security threats across the country that have implications for elections and produce a red, amber and green electoral security map for the country, which shall be regularly updated.
5. Advise INEC on rapid response to security threats around elections, including voter registration.
6. Ensure a reduction in transaction costs to INEC of dealing with individual security agencies on issues of elections.
7. Evaluate the performance of security agencies on election duties and recommend improvements and sanctions, where necessary.
8. Harmonize the election budgets of security agencies and source funding commonly, if possible.

Achievements and Challenges of Electoral Policing in Nigeria

The Nigeria police have recorded reasonable number of achievements in electoral policing. Such achievements cover the pre-election, elections and post election policing duties. The police have provided security to the electoral stakeholders and election materials during voter registration. Such stakeholders for which the police provide security cover include the officiating personnel from the National Electoral Commissions, the voters and media teams as well as sensitive registration materials. They have also provided protection for political contestants and party supporters during campaign rallies. Such protection has provided a level playing ground for all the participating political parties and their supporters to canvass for votes under a secured political atmosphere, even in the domain of their political opponents. The police protect domestic and foreign election observers in discharging their duties without intimidation. Their involvement in the electoral process under a secured environment has increased the credibility of their report on the electoral process. The presence of the police at the polling booths allows the voters to carry out their civic responsibility of voting without fear of intimidation by political thugs and thus encourage large turn out of voters in many instances. The police often protect declared results and escort those results from their polling units to the collation centers. They are also there at the collation centers to secure the results. The police provide security for frontline political contestants and thus prevent them from being attacked by their political opponents. A secured electoral environment encourages overwhelming media coverage of such election since the journalist only work optimally under a peaceful atmosphere. Such favorable environment encourages balance reportage of political events. Police has been used to prevent and even disperse political violence arising from inter and intra party political crises and thus safeguarding the political space from violent agitation, especially amongst members of rival political party supporters. Many democratic institutions have been bedeviled by one form of crisis or the other and the police have been invited to enforce peace. The National Assembly and States House of Assembly have been involved in political violence, in which the police were drafted to curtail such crises. The Nigeria Police are saddled with the responsibilities of securing the court premises when election matters are being heard and they also secure and protect court exhibit from being hijacked by hoodlums. In recent time, the Nigeria police have spread their security tentacles into securing the online websites of the electoral commissions from being hacked by criminals. From curtailing disorderly behaviors at political meeting to prosecution of electoral offenders, the Nigeria police has achieved reasonably well in electoral policing.

In spite of these relative achievements, electoral policing in Nigeria is not without challenges, which affect peaceful conduct of elections. The efforts of the Nigerian police at providing effective electoral policing are inhibited by corruption, poor equipment, inadequate infrastructure, poor intelligence gathering, lack of adequate knowledge of areas of operation and operational order, proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons, lack of proper training of electoral security, inter-agency rivalry among personnel “high-handedness” of the security agents at political campaigns, amongst others.

According to the TMG (2013), the police along other security agencies had been used by politicians to intimidate opponents and to rig elections, lead to loss of confidence in the security forces by opposition parties during elections. The police were also blamed for many cases of electoral violence either for doing too little or engaging in bribery and corruption during elections (Albert, 2007). The police sometime maltreat people during elections. In some cases, they persecute members of the opposition parties against agents of political incumbents.

Conclusion

The general conclusion drawn from this study is that electoral policing is a crucial aspect of the electoral process in Nigeria. The Nigeria police have recorded relative achievements in electoral policing in the

country. However, the effectiveness of the security agencies in Nigeria has been marred by various challenges as highlighted above.

Recommendations

Deriving from the foregoing discussion, it is imperative to make the following recommendations for effective electoral policing in Nigeria and Africa in general. There should be serious retraining towards attitudinal change and professional efficiency and proficiency among both the rank and file and other officer cadre of the police personnel in charge of electoral policing.

Corruption should be eliminated among the security agencies and election management bodies towards effective electoral policing and peaceful conduct of election. The Federal Government should as a matter of urgency equip the police with ultra modern arms and ammunitions as well as security gadgets. Both the Federal and State Government should steadily increase logistic funding for the police during election and there should be massive injection of funds into the police force so that operational and logistics equipment can be acquired for effective policing in Nigeria.

The police should be enlightened and re-oriented with a view to improving security before, during and after elections towards an impartial electoral policing .

The Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) should ensure an even playing ground, with all sense of neutrality in order to reduce insecurity and tension in the electoral process. There should be regular interaction amongst between the police and other security agencies so as to engender collaboration as well as eliminate inter-service rivalry in electoral policing. This could be achieved through regular meetings not only at the top echelon or mess/sporting activities but at lectures, symposia with the venue being rotated among all the security services. The above suggestion could promote credible and optimal electoral policing in Nigeria. If the above recommendations are implemented, it could promote credible and optimal electoral policing in Nigeria.

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