



**THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
OF NIGERIA IN PROVIDING SECURITY
BEFORE DURING AND AFTER THE FEBRUARY
2015 ELECTIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

- ❖ *Electoral violence can best be described as any harm or threat of harm to any person or property involved in the election process, or associated with the election process during the election period*
- ❖ *In many third world countries, where the process of democratic election can be described as work in progress, election security becomes a very important part of the election process*
- ❖ *Access to power in most third world countries is highly sought after because the state has overwhelming control of resources, consequently, the struggle to gain access to power and through that to state resource is usually achieved with tremendous competition and determination to overcome all obstacles.*

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

- ❖ *Nigeria's attempts at conducting free, fair and credible elections dates back to 1959, when the general elections were conducted under the supervision of the then colonial master, Great Britain*
- ❖ *Before then, there have been elections in the North, West and Eastern Regions, from 1952-1954, to choose members of the Regional Houses of Assembly. The 1959 elections, though conducted under British rule were not without its problems*
- ❖ *There were reports of tampering with electoral documents and the exercise of undue influence by the colonial masters. But these reported short comings were localized as the outcome of the elections was as predicted*

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

- ❖ *The NPC won most of the seats in the North with NEPU, the opposition party, as well as, the smaller parties making very few inroads*
- ❖ *It was the same pattern in the West where the Action group was dominant and in the East where the NCNC was the key political party*
- ❖ *Electoral violence during the 1959 elections was localized and limited*
- ❖ *This may largely be due to the lack of modern means of communication, such as mobile phones, and text messages, and in particular, the limited coverage of the press which often did not have nationwide reportage of electoral violence.*
- ❖ *But it was common knowledge that the use of thugs by politicians to intimidate political opponents was rampant.*



ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

- ❖ *The next election after the 1959 was the 1963 general elections and the 1964 election into the Western House of Assembly, which had been dissolved earlier by the Federal Government due to political differences among members of the Action group, the dominant party in the Western Region*
- ❖ *The political differences resulted in the spilt within the Action Group and the creation of the National Democratic Party (NDP) led by Chief Ladoke Akintola, whose party was in opposition to the Action Group, led by Obafemi Awolowo*
- ❖ *The Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was established at the time to conduct the Federal and Regional election in 1963 and 1964 respectively*



ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

- ❖ *The controversy surrounding the 1964 Western Region election generated region-wide violence, which claimed many lives and properties and it was given as one of the main reasons for the first military coup in Nigeria, in January 1966*
- ❖ *Since then, and as a result of the military rule in the country, there were no nationwide elections until 1979, when Alhaji Shehu Shagari won the Presidential election as the candidate of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) At the time, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) which was established in 1978 organised and conducted the 1979 and 1983 general elections. It was later dissolved by the regime of General Muhammadu Buhari on 31st December, 1983*
- ❖ *Both the 1979 and 1983 elections experienced some limited amount of controversy and electoral violence, but such violence was localized and quickly brought under control by the military*



ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

- ❖ *In 1987, the General Ibrahim Babangida regime established the National Electoral Commission (NEC) headed by Professor Humphrey Nwosu, with mandate of overseeing the transition from military to civil regime. NEC conducted the general elections into all elective offices which included the presidential, national, state and local governments' elections in 1993*
- ❖ *In December 1993 when the late General Sani Abacha became Head of State, NEC was dissolved and replaced by the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON). NECON conducted the 1996 Local Government and National Assembly elections. Incidence of violence was very limited at these elections*
- ❖ *The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established by the administration of General Abdulsalami Abubakar in 1998. Since then it has conducted four presidential elections in 1999, 2003 and 2007, under the former INEC Chairmen Dr. Maurice Iwu and 2011 elections under the current Chairman, Prof. Attahiru Jega*

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

- ❖ *Almost all the elections in Nigeria have been associated with some level of violence. The worst is the 1964 Western Region elections probably followed by the 2011 post-election violence*

- ❖ *The reasons for violence associated with elections vary from one election to the other and from location to location, but in general, the following reasons have been adduced by political commentators for electoral violence in Nigeria during past elections*
 - *Shoddy preparation in terms of inadequate logistics which gives the electorate the impression that there is official collusion by the electoral body*

 - *Specifically, lapses such as non-registration of qualified electorates and denial of opportunity to many people to vote.*

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

- *Hooliganism and thuggery by supporters of political parties calculated at disenfranchising opposition supporters from voting*
- *Snatching of ballot boxes at polling units*
- *Alteration of election results*
- *Announcement of results different from those collated at polling units*
- *Announcement of results by one of the contenders, especially, if he is the incumbent, with access to media outlets and power of coercion, before conclusion of the election*
- *Perception by the public of efforts by security agencies to favour one group of politicians against the other*



ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

- *Frustration that a particular political party or candidate supported by some groups did not emerge victorious*
- *Deliberate sponsor of violence through thuggery and vandalism of property to create an atmosphere of fear and lawlessness*
- *There are many other reasons that have been cited by electoral commentators in the past.*



THE 2011 ELECTIONS

- ❖ *Among all the elections held so far in Nigeria, the 2011 general elections would stand out as the most meticulously planned and executed. At every election, the role of the electoral body, INEC in the case of Nigeria, since 2011, is key to the success of the election*

- ❖ *The largely successful election in 2011 can be said to be due to the following reasons*
 - *The pronouncements and actions of the executive arm of government. This was positive and a new development, as INEC was given a free hand to organize elections without interference in its operation and conduct of elections*

 - *The competence and professionalism exhibited by INEC staff, under the leadership of the INEC chairman Prof. Attahiru Jega.*



THE 2011 ELECTIONS

- *The desire of majority of Nigerians to see a credible election conducted after the debacle of the 2007 elections, especially, when Ghana was known to have successfully carried out her own general elections, a situation that was given as reason why President Obama skipped Nigeria in favour of Ghana during his 3-nation visit to Africa*
- *The institution of Inter Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) by INEC which provided the platform, for the first time, for election officials and security agencies to jointly map out strategies to ensure a violence free election*
- *The ICCES created opportunities for institutionalization of operational orders and re-strategising on the part of the Police and other security agencies in terms of Code and Conduct during election. This Code of Conduct was strictly adhered to at many polling units, thereby creating a smooth and conducive atmosphere for electorates to vote during the 2011 elections.*

NECESSITY FOR SECURITY AT ELECTION

- ❖ *Security is indispensable to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections from provision of basic security to voters at political party rallies and campaigns to ensuring that result form are protected, the whole electoral process is circumscribed by security considerations*
- ❖ *In view of the large scale of general elections in Nigeria, the number of people involved, election materials that need to be moved, difficulty of terrain to be transverse, as well as, physical locations that need to be protected, such operation is bound to be complex*
- ❖ *It presents logistics and planning challenges that require a wide range of stakeholders' processes, locations, and issues in time and space*



NECESSITY FOR SECURITY AT ELECTION

- ❖ *Security is critical for the protection of the electoral staff, voters, candidates, agents, parties, civil society organisations, domestic and international observers as well as personnel of security agencies*
- ❖ *Security is critical in the protection of electoral personnel, and processes, in ensuring that voters exercise their civic duties without fear or hindrance, in creating a level playing field for all political parties and candidates to canvass for support of the electorate and in maintaining overall integrity of the democratic and electoral process*
- ❖ *The significance of electoral security is crucial for creating the proper environment which electoral staff require to carry out their duties; for voters to freely and safely go to their polling units to vote and for candidates and political parties to organize rallies and campaigns, and for other numerous stakeholders to discharge their responsibilities under the Constitution and the Electoral Act of Nigeria*

FUNCTIONS OF THE INEC'S INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON ELECTION SECURITY

- ❖ *Many Nigerian political commentators have argued that there is no need for security agencies to be involved in the electoral process, as it is in many advanced countries*
- ❖ *It was felt that security agents pose more problems to the electoral process in the discharge of their duties. What has to be borne in mind is that, the sophistication and internalization of the democratic principle in western societies or more mature democracies has not yet been achieved in many developing democratic societies*
- ❖ *Consequently, security agencies have a greater role to play to provide security in such environment. What is paramount is to ensure that the comportment and professionalism of security agencies deployed for electoral duties meet a certain minimum standard, acceptable to the generality of the people*

FUNCTIONS OF THE INEC'S INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON ELECTION SECURITY

- ❖ *To address the above in Nigeria, the INEC came up with a novel idea of the Inter- Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) since 2010*
- ❖ *The ICCES deliberations and decisions have been largely responsible for the smooth conduct of elections in a peaceful and conducive atmosphere. Currently, electoral challenges in Nigeria are no longer due to actions of security agencies but to other factors which will be examined later*
- ❖ *There are about 17 Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) constituting the ICCES, these are*
- ❖ *The Office of the National Security Adviser, Ministry of Police Affairs, Nigeria Police Force, Police Service Commission, Ministry of Interior, Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Prisons Service, Nigeria Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigeria Air force, State Security Service, National Intelligence Agency, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Nigeria Customs Service, Federal Road Safety Corps, Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps, Federal Fire Service and National Youth Service Corps*

FUNCTIONS OF THE INEC'S INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON ELECTION SECURITY

- ❖ *The INEC team to the ICCES is led by the INEC Chairman, who is also the chairman of the ICCES at the Federal Level*
- ❖ *It consists of INEC National Commissioners and INEC directors as well as INEC officers connected with election security*
- ❖ *The general format of the ICCES meetings is to review past elections, towards lessons learnt, discussion of forth coming elections, to prepare a general plan for all the security challenges anticipated at such election*
- ❖ *All security issues are deliberated upon and strategies for combating security challenges are formulated towards having a violence free election. Security agencies would before each election, provide to the ICCES a security assessment, location of hot spots, as well as steps taken to deal with identified hot spots*

FUNCTIONS OF THE INEC'S INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON ELECTION SECURITY

- ❖ *Issues concerning distribution of electoral materials, security of polling units, security of personnel, measure to avoid late arrival of electoral materials, the behavior and utterances of politicians, capable of heating up the political process, accessibility of remote locations, these are all examined and solutions provided for them*
- ❖ *Each security agency provides an operational plan, which is jointly reviewed by ICCES and sometimes amended to ensure the best results are achieved.*



BEFORE ELECTIONS

- ❖ *The ICCES structure at the Federal level is replicated at the state and local government level. At the state level, the Resident Electoral Commissioner or the Commissioner of Police may chair the state ICCES and security problems peculiar to that particular state are deliberated upon with focus on taking pro-active measures to combating them*
 - ❖ *Where there are issues beyond the competence of the states to resolve, such issues are referred to the headquarters. Similarly, every single security agency, including the INEC headquarters, are expected to brief their representatives or heads of security agencies at the state level about important decisions taken at the Headquarters (ABUJA) ICCES*
 - ❖ *As election security is an internal security matter, the Nigeria Police has been designated the lead agency to coordinate operations and plans of all other security agencies, before, during and after the elections*
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DURING ELECTIONS

- ❖ *On the day of the election, all the security agencies are deployed as specified in the Operational Order and they are guided by the Code of Conduct, which defines their actions, functions and deployment of every personnel of the agency on the day of election*
- ❖ *Since 2011, security agencies have largely abided by the Operational Order and Code of Conduct*
- ❖ *The main reason responsible for the new attitude and professionalism of security agencies at elections is the coordination and synergy achieved through the platform of the ICCES*



AFTER ELECTIONS

- ❖ *Based on the 2011 experience, security agencies are now aware that the outcome of elections may not go down well with losing political parties and some segment of the electorate, as a result, such people could undertake some violent reactions, not necessarily because the electoral process was flawed, but as a result of frustration, defeat and disappointment, on the day of election or few days after the election*
- ❖ *Whoever poses a risk to peace and good public order is dealt with accordingly to the law*
- ❖ *Since 2011, the conduct of security agencies at elections has improved tremendously to the extent that members of the public have come to appreciate and rely on their performance before, during and after elections*
- ❖ *The discussion and decisions of the ICCES under the Chairmanship of the INEC chairman at the Federal level has contributed significantly to this success.*



SECURITY CHALLENGES

- ❖ *Despite the success of ICCES and the security agencies since 2011, there still remain some security challenges; these can be summarized as:*
 - *Behaviour / utterances of politicians who are bent on winning by any means possible*
 - *Late deployment of electoral materials to polling units on election day. This problem has gotten better from one election to the other*
 - *Instigation or hiring of youths to constitute public nuisance at some locations. This problem is not of a generalized nature but still persists in some areas*
 - *Inaccessible riverine areas and remote locations, where adequate security may also not be available, and where electoral materials arrive late*
 - *Use of the courts or judicial process to scuttle the electoral process to the extent that sometimes it is not clear a day or two to the elections who has been cleared to contest.*

COORDINATING ROLE OF THE NSA'S OFFICE

- ❖ *The National Security Adviser to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has the role, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, of coordinating activities of the various security agencies and is also charged with the responsibility of advising the president on matters relating to security in general, as well as matters relating to the security agencies in particular*
- ❖ *There are formal organs established under the constitution and by legislative Acts, to strengthen and formalize harmonious working relations and decisions making among security and intelligence agencies*
- ❖ *Apart from the Constitution, the National Security Agencies Decree of 1986 and the NSA Instrument Nos 2, which amended the NSA Instrument No 1, dated 23rd May 1999 are some of the legislation that gives the National Security Adviser the power and authority of coordinating activities of the security agencies*

COORDINATING ROLE OF THE NSA'S OFFICE

- *Election security is regarded in Nigeria as a major aspect of security agencies operations and functions. This is the main reason why the INEC Chairman invited the NSA to co-chair at the inauguration of the ICCES.*
- *The INEC chairman understands the importance of security at elections as he indicated that “securing election remains a challenge of election administration in Nigeria and INEC is ready and desirous to partner with relevant agencies of government to adequately secure the process in order to ensure free, fair and credible election in 2011 and beyond”*
- *Before any major election, members of the ICCES, which is co-chaired by the NSA, represented by his Director of Policy and Strategy, meet regularly to strategize on the best way to ensure security of the electoral process as well as provide necessary support and guidance to security agencies. If there are areas of concern, such areas are dealt with well ahead of the election*
- *Since 2011, this process has worked very smoothly, even beyond all expectations, to the satisfaction of INEC and all the security agencies. Numerous Newspaper reports, when reviewing the performance of the security agencies, before, during and after elections, have paid glowing tribute to the conduct and professionalism of security agencies at various elections*



SECURING THE 2015 ELECTIONS

- ❖ *In general, since 2011, and the conduct of gubernatorial and other elections, election security has improved from one election to the other, especially in the areas of securing as well as all aspects of the electoral process*
- ❖ *Several gubernatorial, State Assemblies and Federal Constituency elections have been held since 2011, such as the Kogi, Edo, Ondo, Anambra, and Ekiti elections*
- ❖ *While it is easier to manage and provide security during the conduct of a single state election, than in a general election, when the electorates have to cast their votes all over the country, the experiences gathered at the state elections have helped security agencies to fine-tune their strategies in preparation for the 2015 elections*



SECURING THE 2015 ELECTIONS

- ❖ *Nigeria has the unenviable problem of mass media pessimism and sometimes, member of the public unwittingly follow such lead by speculating without concrete proof, that there would be violence at a particular election because such election was too close to call based on the heated political atmosphere of the electoral campaign*
- ❖ *As it has turned out, over and over again, the various doomsday predictions of violence never occurred, rather, elections in Nigeria have been progressively peaceful*
- ❖ *The current general assessment of the security agencies in Nigeria is that, the 2015 election will be peaceful, free, fair and credible*
- ❖ *INEC's introduction of permanent voters' card has solved one significant headache in the past, which was multiple registration, along with the problem of those who would not find their names on the voters register*
- ❖ *The permanent voters card and other innovations introduced by INEC over the years, especially between 2011 till date, as well as the experiences acquired by the security agencies, under the coordination of the Office of the National Security Adviser, would go a long way at ensuring an orderly and peaceful conduct as well as professional management of the 2015 general elections*

CONCLUSION

- ❖ *The conduct of elections is an important element of modern day representative democracy*
- ❖ *It provides the institutional framework through which electorates in a country choose their representatives for different positions of governance, and allows different interest groups within a state to realize their claims to power through peaceful means*
- ❖ *The assumptions of the utility of elections often fail when the security of an election is inadequate or fails completely*
- ❖ *The consequence of such failure impacts negatively on the legitimacy of governments in many nations within and outside Africa*

CONCLUSION

- ❖ *In Nigeria, especially since 2011, efforts have been made, especially by INEC and the security agencies under the coordination of the Office of the National Security Adviser to find solutions to security challenges that have confronted previous elections*
- ❖ *The Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) has adequate provisions which guarantee security of elections in Nigeria. The provision of the Electoral Act are supplementary to penal laws of Nigeria, including criminal code of southern states of Nigeria and the Penal code of Northern states of Nigeria*
- ❖ *Election security cannot be isolated from the general security environment and socio-economic milieu within which elections are conducted*
- ❖ *The primary responsibility for the conduct of security operations is not that of INEC which has little or no operational control over security agencies deployed during elections*



CONCLUSION

- ❖ *This is where the establishment of the ICCES is useful and has created synergy between INEC and security agencies*
- ❖ *The ICCES has been able to conduct nationwide vulnerability assessment and has developed comprehensive strategies for supporting plans and procedures to guide and support INEC operations*
- ❖ *From the experiences gathered in recent gubernatorial elections across Nigeria INEC and the security agencies are well positioned ever than before to ensure a free, fair and credible election*
- ❖ *The Office of the National Security Adviser has worked closely with INEC, using various instrumentality of government to improve on the peaceful conduct of elections and is poised to ensure that the 2015 general elections is conducted in an orderly and peaceful atmosphere, through the enhanced professionalism and well crafted operational plans of all the relevant security agencies in Nigeria*



