

MILITARIZATION OF 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN RIVERS STATE AND VOTERS' PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA: A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

BY

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Abstract

The paper investigated critically the implication of the militarization of 2019 presidential election on voters in Rivers State, and the appropriation of the Operation Crocodile Tear/Smile by the military for political gains by the incumbent politicians. The study adopted a documentary method in generating its data; and was analyzed using content analysis. The framework of analysis was anchored on the tout theory of politics. The findings of the study have significantly revealed that 2019 presidential election in Rivers state has disenfranchised and impinged on the voters' turnout during the election due to the anti-democratic actions of the security personnel before and during the election. Therefore, arising from the findings of the study, the paper recommended among others that there should be a clear distinction on the role of the security agencies and the functions performed by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and the voters should be re-educated that it is only the Civil Defense officers without guns or any other weapon, and duly stationed at the poll boots are allowed to man the conduct of election.

Keywords: Election, Incumbency, politics, security, Voter Education.

Introduction

It has been noted that for decades the contestation for political power in Africa has turned out to be as a rule of rough procedure. It shows up from accessible proof that savage battle for power has turned into the standard. Rough challenge for political power has in this way turned into a worthy implantation in the political procedure in conditions of Africa. For example, since the mid 1990s, contestation for power had turned savage in type of outfitted clash and even thoughtful war as in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo Democratic Republic, Rwanda and Somalia. In reality where contestation did not plummet into outfitted clash brutality remained an ineluctable part of the political procedure (Akwaya, 2013). The reasons for political brutality have been so various and complex that a few researchers have even contended that the very uniqueness of each contention resists exertion to detail cross-national speculations (Dar-Mehden, 1973).

Nigeria is not an exception in this violence as there have been pockets of violence in its political and electoral annals since its creation. Almost all her elections have witnessed some degree of violence ranging from thuggery, intimidations, ballot snatching and stuffing to even assassination of perceived opponents. The 2019 general election, which is the 6th general election led by the INEC in Nigeria's fourth republic had its time table distributed by INEC

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awhile before the race. The calendar charged to have the Presidential and national gathering races that day, trailed by the governorship, state places of get together/and FCT territory chamber cast a ballot, planned to happen over a fourteen day time span. Be that as it may, the 2019 race was defaced by INEC's very late delay of the presidential and national gathering race by seven days – from 16 to 23 February 2019 – referring to coordination challenges only hours before casting a ballot was expected to start. This singular act disrupted the INEC calendar which specified that presidential and national assembly elections would always be held on the third Saturday of February of every election year. This is the third consecutive time; INEC has postponed elections, having done so during the 2011 national assembly elections during voting, and ahead of the 2015 on security grounds. But notwithstanding the postponement and the well publicized assurances by the election umpire that it was ready to conduct the election on the new date, there were significant delays in the opening of polling units across the country when voting did get underway on 23 February.

Prior to the 2019 presidential election, there were several actions that pointed to the militarization of the election. Such actions include but not limited to the Federal Government flagged "Operation Python dance" in South Eastern states, "Operation Crocodile tear" in some South-South states. This is because South Eastern and South-South states were relatively peaceful at that moment unlike North East states with Boko-Hamam issues, North West with banditry cases and parts of North Central/Middle belt with herdsmen attack. Thus, if there should be military operations, they were more needed in the Northern parts that were already experiencing short supply of military personnel. Other indicators of militarization of the election in Rivers state include utterances by politicians that heat up the polity, suspension of CJN three weeks before the election, surge in repentant militants verbal threats to both the oil installations and Nigerian continual peaceful co-existence, increase in cult related activities in Rivers state, violent attacks during the campaign, fight between the two factions of APC in Rivers and presidential covert support for one, increase in military brutalities among others.

More so, election day was characterized by localized incidents of voter intimidation by the military, ballot box snatching/destruction and general voter apathy as the national voter turnout rate plummeted from 43.7% in 2015 to just 35.6% as opined by CDD Preliminary Report (2019). However, since 2003, voter turnout has progressively decreased in each electoral cycle. This is worrisome given the increase in the number of political parties (from 28 to 91), increase in voter registration (from 68,833,476 to 84,004,084), and increase in PVC collection rates (from 82.03% to 86.63%) between 2015 and 2019. The latter two at least suggest a renewed interest in the electoral process. According to Schedler (2002), in Nigeria, elections have become, to use phraseology, the 'menu of manipulation'. Since 1999 the outcomes of elections in the country have scarcely reflected the will of the voters owing to an avalanche of electoral malpractices (Oddih 2007, Ojo 2008, Bratton 2008, Ezeani 2005, Suberu 2007, Aluaigba 2009a). This nagging political phenomenon cast doubts on the evolution of a viable democracy in Nigeria.

However, while the violence that greeted the election was quite minimal in many states of the federation, Rivers state played host to one of the most violent electoral experience during the election. This violence has been fingered to have been engineered by the political gladiators in the state. It got worse since the state swerved party during the former administration as gladiators have been at logged ahead since ever. This is in addition to the

dense population of voters the state harbour in the country – the highest in the South-South geopolitical zone and 5th in the country (Atoyebi, 2019). But, beyond the casting of ballots and other forms of electoral participations, what happens during the voting, counting and tallying phase of the electoral cycle is critical to its overall success. Unhindered voters' participation is an important election activity that can increase or decrease its credibility. Vote buying, thuggery, fixed primaries, calculated disappointments, official unfortunate behavior, tallying station grabbing, spending plan delays, voter indifference, terrorizing, turnout, concealment, uncertain outcomes, remunerated authorities and numerous different difficulties have been noted as issues that undermine the credible elections in Nigeria.

However, the use of military during elections – which were hitherto alien – is one of the major challenges confronting Nigerian state, voters' participation and its democratic consolidation as the military from its training and exhibitions displays lack of sufficient will to be involved in elections processes. This is even as there has been constant allegation that Nigeria has no sufficient military personnel to confront the insurgency that has bedeviled the country for some while. Agreeing, the United States Agency for International Development supported report, Rivers state, not at all like numerous states had a portion of the most exceedingly awful occurrences influencing INEC authorities, with two specially appointed staff shot and slaughtered around the initiation of casting a ballot resemblance and a driver executed in another episode (Niger Delta Watch, 2019). The resemblance procedure saw tremendous weight on INEC authorities, and finished with the undoing of four full Local Government Area (LGA) vote tallies, and two that never at any point started. Approximately 942,368 voters altogether were influenced (generally 40% more than recorded as casting a ballot), thus the effect seems to have been a serious concealment of casting a ballot and decrease in votes checked. This without a doubt represents the exceptionally low turnout in Rivers.

There were several accounts, especially by INEC officials alleging that Rivers state was not only over-militarized during the election but that the military personnel (or men in military uniform) really hamper and undermine the election and its processes through intimidation, harassment, molestation, destruction of electoral materials and results and other forms of brutalities. This is the position of Edwin Enabo, HOD voter Education and publicity in Rivers state; Imaunyanfieter Mary, collection officer of Ikwerre Local Government Area among others. In view of the foregoing, the question is: "Does the "Operation Crocodile Smile" and other anti-democratic actions of the military affected the continual voters' education and impinged on the voters' turnout during the 2019 presidential election in Rivers State.

Interrogating the tout theory of politics and its application

While democratic states of the world have continued in the electoral actions that deepen their democracies and encourage voters' participation, African states and indeed Nigeria continue to regress. The involvement of the military for election duties in Nigeria has become worrisome and a subject of public debate. Arising from this, two schools of thoughts emerged. The proponents contend that the high level of security challenges during elections in Nigeria coupled with the weak capacity of the police, deployment of the military is a necessity. However, the opponents argue that deployment of the military during election is illegal, facilitates rigging and antidemocratic. Many theories have been used to explain why military

has been involved in politics and violence as characterized Nigeria elections. But in view of using indigenous solution for peculiar indigenous problem and the fact that no single classical political theory has sufficiently explained the abnormal behavior of Nigerian politicians for electoral gains, the Tout theory of politics as propounded by Onuoha, (2019) is considered germane for this paper. In his book entitled "*Nigeria's Democratic Experiment and Leadership Question: Interrogating the Tout Theory of Politics* " he tried to look from indigenous prism of the political behavior of Nigerian politician and why they behave the way they do.

The theory queried among others: why our leaders continued with revere culture of impunity, ballot box snatching, looting of public treasury, engaging in vote buying and disregard for rule of law and other anti-democratic activities. The theory noted among others that there are three psychological traits of an average tout: they are fearless, shameless, and ruthless. They fight for good reasons, bad reasons and for no reasons at all. These traits equally tally with that of a typical Nigerian politician: they are fearless, shameless and ruthless. Thus, a typical Nigeria politician is a tout. It further avows that these traits can be acquired by nature or nurture. The thrust of the theory is that there is circulation of touts in Nigeria politics classified under tout-tout, corporate tout, chief tout and supreme tout and they have been in charge of Nigeria political affairs since 1960 either as conservative or revolutionary touts.

In view of the foregoing, the innate character of a typical Nigerian politician hinges on actions that could maximize their votes whether inimical to subsequent elections or not. They employ all their tout antics, including recruiting their cronies – tout-tout and corporate touts – who are found in motor parks, unemployed/underemployed graduates in suits or in military uniform. They achieve their aim through brigandry actions of touts. They unleash unimaginable mayhem even to their people. Therefore, the militarization of Rivers state 2019 election is purely the tout way of grabbing political powers so as to be the determiner of who gets what, when and how. This paper has been able to look at the use of military for security during elections in Nigeria with emphasis on their action during the last 2019 presidential election in Rivers state. Besides acknowledging the military to be a tool of the ruling political parties, it further avows that their (military) negative actions have been sowing seed of political apathy to the electorate due to their anti-democratic activities. From the foregoing, it is obvious that democracy is under threat in Nigeria due to the malfeasant activities of civilian politician who has been conniving constantly with some unpatriotic military personnel to terrorized electorates during elections. Such activities has affected voters both physically and psychologically that they took solace in abhorring participating during elections. The military has continued to be deeply involved in politics from the backdoor. Its crescendo was the 2019 presidential election in Rivers state when the partisanship activities of military disrupt the smooth electoral processes in many Local Government Areas and lead to the halting as well as death of many voters and INEC officials. Such action do not only undermine democratic tenet but discourages peoples' faith in the process. Voters who ever had close shave with death or experienced any form of military brutality during election are psychological left with apathetic posture in subsequent elections. This is because many believe that the civic responsibility of voting is not worth sacrificing one's life.

The tout theory equally supports/exposes why such action has been surviving in Nigeria. And encourages sanity which hinges on sane minds evolutionary revolution to minimize or at best expunge such actions that has kept our democracy under threat. Thus, the paper is

not only valid but germane to building our nascent democracy. It further acknowledges that dimensions of military in politics are getting vast and modernized as coups have gone out of fashion. Yet, with their political collaborators, they are not only deeply into politics but are used as the official 'touts' for dirty jobs during elections. This has continued to soil their already threatened relationship with civilian populace who has continued to see them as the 'enemy of the people'. This conflictual relationship with civilian populace has equally continued to rub the military of easy intelligence gathering that would have been easier under a harmonious atmosphere. This is even as the country continues to battle series of attacks and insurgencies which requires lots of intelligence gathering.

Operation Crocodile Tears and its implication on the 2019 presidential election

In 2016, the Nigerian Army launched the first 'Operation Crocodile Smile' which according to them was done against the backdrop of militancy in the Niger Delta region. The operation never went down well as clashes between the military and militants increased until the operation was suspended. According to Akintayo(2016), while the INEC were preparing for the elections in 2018, the military re-launched the same 'Operation Crocodile Smile' which the Nigerian Army claimed was a military exercise aimed at restoring normalcy to the Niger Delta Areas. This operation comes with several dissents on the exact purpose of the mission; while the military and government claim the operation is to provide adequate security for residents and for the national asset situated there, the leading militant group – Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) – are alleging an act of genocide by the Nigerian government in the region.

The Operation Crocodile Smile, according to Nigerian Army Facebook and Twitter announcement of the exercise is the code name given by the Nigerian Army to that "field training exercise" in the Niger Delta area. The choice of the word 'crocodile' may have been informed by the peculiarity of the oil region, where the operation took place. Crocodiles are large aquatic reptiles which are well armoured with tough and scaly skin. They inhabit brackish and saltwater habitats including coastal mangrove wetlands, ponds, coves, creeks and canals; all these are the typical settings of the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria. However, the presence of the word 'Smile' seems very ironic, perhaps intended to douse the tension that the operation is likely to bring with it. Prior to the launch of the exercise, the Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Sani Kukasheka Usman, said that the aim of the exercise is to practice our Special Forces and other units of the Nigerian Army in Amphibious and Internal Security Operations in riverine environments, and also to check criminal activities like kidnapping, militancy, piracy and other forms of criminal activities in support of the civil authority.

In addition, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Tukur Buratai while addressing the troops during the flag-off of the operation in Spele, Delta state, said we are in Warri to flag-off this exercise in order to get our troops prepared for any eventuality. He continued by saying that we need to keep our country safe,... .we need to get our economy going without any interruption .What 'eventuality' was the COAS referring to: this was what many from the affected states kept asking as there were increase in herdsmen attacks in many parts of middle belt and increase in Boko Haram attacks in North East at that moment where greater military presence was more needed. However, about a fortnight ago, the Niger Delta Avengers reiterated their resolve to declare a Niger Delta Republic on the 1st of October if the Nigerian government fails to restructure the country. With this threat to the country's

sovereignty, the need for the Nigerian Army to be on a red alert was well expected. Two days after the beginning of the operation, the army in report on exercise crocodile smile is not about guns and boats published in their website described it as a military training “embarked upon by the Nigerian Army to train its Special Forces, formations and units located in the South-South geo-political zone of the country.” However, the rare presence of armed soldiers on the streets certainly says more than just military training as the continuous voters’ education and collection PVCs was still going on at that moment. Four days into the exercise, the military through its website published again what they term significant strides’ which they captioned “update on the Nigerian army training exercise crocodile smile. In the statement, the Army spokesperson said the troops are “making tremendous progress. According to the statement, the Army raided some suspected criminal hideouts in the creeks around Ajaosolo, Okogho, Opumani, and Obodo general area. In the process, they intercepted suspected illegal oil bunkerers and several items were recovered, including speedboats, illegally refined diesel oil, and other suspicious items. After an interrogation, the suspects were handed over to the Police. The exercise was further boosted as the troops received two more supporting weapons, Main Battle Tank, 2 Mine-Resistant, Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles and 3 Scorpion Tanks from the Headquarters of Nigerian Armour Corps.

However, these actions, observers said, heated the polity as it formed part of militarization process of the 2019 election and pinches the voters’ psyche towards shunning movements that could expose them to any danger. But the exercise didn’t go down well with the Niger Delta Avengers who in an open letter, called on President Buhari to stop presenting Nigeria as his personal property. The militants announced that they have ceased hostilities and that they expect a genuine and positive attitude towards their calls for the restructuring of the country.

The NDA group further assumed that “the people of the Niger Delta have been living here [the Niger Delta region] from time immemorial, so we have the secret of the terrain and survival of amphibious operations. No amount of troop surge and simulation exercises will make you win the oil war, you can only win battles. In that same letter, the militants accused Buhari of not listening to Nigerians, adding that the military is “about to carry out extrajudicial killings in the Niger Delta, in violation of article four of the Geneva Convention with Operation Crocodile Smile.” It is in this vein that the militants launched their counter operation tagged “Operation Crocodile Tears”. MarietuTenuche (2010), noted that the feature of democracy that has attracted various interests of groups and individuals across the globe is the opportunity it provides for citizens of a given State to among other things exercise their inalienable right to elect leaders of their choice in competitive, free, fair, and periodic elections. The paper avowed that the electoral process is regulated by acceptable rules and regulations that accord legitimacy to winners of elections and acceptability of results by the losers. Politics therefore is played as a game where winners automatically are accorded the legitimacy to rule and losers accept defeat. The alternative to this is to bypass the rules and regulations governing the electoral process thus creating anarchy. Politics then becomes warfare; competition is reduced to a battle predicated on a zero sum game, where winners take all and competitors are regarded as enemies to be eliminated. The leaders who emerge from controversial elections devote much of their time to seeking to secure legitimacy and may even resort to the use of force to suppress opposition to its power base thereby endangering political stability. Writing about 2007 general election, the paper maintained that

the April 2007 election was discredited both nationally and internationally as anything but free and fair. Specifically, Max Van Den Berg of the EU observer team said he was “bitterly disappointed by the elections and that the union had released ‘her’ toughest ever statement about an election”. The EU concluded that “any administration founded on this fraud cannot have legitimacy” This position is equally not too far from the final paper of the EU observers’ team for 2019 elections wherein they posited that:

Nigeria’s 2019 general elections were marked by severe operational and transparency shortcomings, electoral security problems, and low turnout.... However, the last-minute postponement of the elections put an undue burden on voters, results’ collation procedures were not sufficiently robust, and inadequate information was provided to the public. Fatalities Escalated and the role of security agencies became increasingly contentious. (*EU Nigeria Election final report, 2019*).

The International Republican Institute (IRI) pointed that the election “fell below the standard set by previous Nigerian elections and International standards witnessed by IRI around the world”. It observed that “The 2019 general elections fell significantly short of standards set in 2015. Citizens’ confidence in elections was shaken,” said Dr. Daniel Twining, IRI President (IRI Final Report 2019), While the National Democratic Institute on her part observed that “the exercise was marred by so much malpractice that it was unclear whether its outcome reflects the will of Nigerians”.

Voters’ participation, security challenges and politicians' excessiveness

There is no doubt that pre-election violence greeted the 2019 general election in Rivers state. Does the violence affect the voter’s turnout? Importantly, prior to the election, there was increase in cult-related activities (*Niger Delta Watch, 2019*), use of utterances that fuels violence by various political parties, verbal and violent attacks during campaigns and greater intimidation of many PDP chieftain by men of Nigeria military, including inversion of Commissioner for Education, Dr. Tamunosisi Gogo Jaja's home (Sahara reporters, 2019). These pre-election activities that heated the polity made some voters choose the path of outrightly dodging the election for safety sake. This is in addition to the suspension of the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Walter Onoghen just three weeks to the election which was fingered to have political undertone (CDD Report, 2019). To that end, while 43.65% voters’ turnout was recorded for 2015 election which saw a 10% decrease from the 2011 election; the figure of registered voters increased to 84,004,084 in 2019 but the percentage of voters dwindled 35.6%.

However, after the supreme court validation of lower court verdict which barred both the Chibuike Amechi and Magnus Abe’s faction of APC from fielding any candidate for the governorship election, the battle for the heart of Rivers was mainly channeled to the delivery of President Buhari by Amechi faction who had a tacit presidential nod to freely make use of the military personnel in the state. Thus, these politically created incidents helped violent-loving politician to reap votes they never merited. Ballot never arrived some local government, yet some of them had result. CDD received reports of incidents in which personnel from the security agencies were alleged to have intimidated collation officials. In other locations, there was no adequate security personnel required to guarantee the safety of officials and election

results. Also, there were reports of complicity of personnel of security agencies in disrupting the collation exercise.

According to an INEC official in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers state, personnel from the security forces invaded their office and snatched the results of the elections for the council. Before the results were snatched, the same security personnel had threatened the collation officials by shooting sporadically into the air. It was also reported by our observers in same Okrika LGA that during collation at the ward level, a team of soldiers led by an army officer suspended collation and ordered his men to take away all materials, including results being collated by election officials. The materials were carted away with nothing left for the electoral officer to present as evidence for the election. A similar incident was reported at Isiokpo, Ikwerre LGA - again in Rivers state - where according to our observers between 7pm and 8pm on election day the military forcibly entered the INEC Office at Isiokpo and walked out all the ad-hoc staff who were there to present their results to the collation officers. No collation took place. In Akwa Ibom, police officers threatened and assaulted some accredited party agents, election observers and journalists.

There were reports of violence during the 2019 presidential election were high in River state, and this has deepened the gamut of interrogation about the integrity of the process. Despite commitments by security agencies, and peace accord signed by political parties, aimed at ensuring credible and peaceful polls this was not the reality for many votes on 23 February. A breakdown of affected LGAs and the number of registered voters for each is provided by Stakeholder Democracy Network 3. There were 74,249 registered voters in Bonny Island LGA which saw no election conducted because of disruption at local government office in the morning of election day, largely caused by APC agents alleging that there was no genuine results sheets for the election. In Akuku Toru LGA, home to 106,563 registered voters, there was no election because of dispute in the morning of election day that led to clashes between local youth and the army in which one officer and six civilians were reported to have been killed. In Ikwerre, where 151,390 voters were registered, the election held but the INEC electoral officer reported that collation was disrupted by soldiers who came to the INEC office and forcibly ejected ad hoc staff and collation officers. She also alleges that she was held hostage and pressured to fabricate results.

In Okrika LGA, elections held but allegations surfaced that a military officer had taken materials from 4 wards potential disenfranchising a percentage of the 79,018 registered voters. In Emohua, a LGA with 124,080 registered voters, the ward collation units were moved to the INEC office to ensure the safety of election officials. Nonetheless clashes ensued between soldiers and armed militias leading to the death of one ad hoc staff. Furthermore, the Emohua LGA collation officer reported final results to the INEC state office despite knowing having seen him since 8pm on the day of the election. Ward collation officers confirmed that collation did not take place at ward level either. The military left more to be desired in their conduction during the election in River state. This position was supported by European observers team full report (2019) which noted that "Based on updated information available from media and other sources, during the campaign and the three election days observed, approximately 145 people were killed in election - related violence, 84 of which were in the South South zone. INEC reported attacks on its offices, and also fatalities, abductions and sexual assault against its officials. Beyond the overall issue of the effect of the military on voters, there were more

specific concerns about interference in the electoral process by military personnel, as noted by INEC and others in Rivers. On 10 March, EU observers and others were prevented from entering the state INEC office in Rivers, which was blockaded by soldiers. In addition, Imanwonyaralfeotore Mary, the INEC Returning Officer in charge of Ikwerre. Local Government Area in a video obtained from Scan News Nigeria, aired by Channels, AIT and TVC noted that:

Ikwerre Local Government has no result because collation was not done.....the collation officers were not allowed by military men to go to their local wards and for the collation, and the commission agreed that we should do the collation at the local government INEC office at Ikwerre and we sent messages to all our POs...as they were coming in one after the other, the collation officers were asked to identify their Pos.....at about 6:45pm when it started raining the process was halted. After that, few minutes between 8 and 7pm, the military invaded INEC office at Ikwerre, Isiokpo and walked out every adhoc staff that were there to present their results to their collation officers, at the process rain scattered all the materials for the election, at the end of the day, no collation was carried out

In furtherance to the above, another video alleged that the Army, Air force and Police hijacked collation process in Rivers state. According to Channels, the INEC HoD, Voters' education and publicity in Rivers state, Mr. Edwin Enabo in his statement a day after the presidential election posited as thus:

...throughout the elections, we had many report of insecurity, molestation, harassment, assault on our staff and Adhoc staff and destruction of electoral process throughout the state – all the Local Government Areas – with the consequent.....now our office is under siege by men in military uniform who have taken over the INEC office and they are stopping and screening people and clearing results before they enter office to the extent that up till now, no collation has been done. We don't understand where the people are deployed from. We are not accusing the Nigerian Army or Air force but what we say is: the people in the office here right now are wearing uniforms of the Army and Air force. So if they are not from them, we are calling on them to come and rectify the situation and allow our officers to enter with their result without molestation and harassment.

This allegation (the Nigerian Army or Airforce being the perpetrators) was never refuted by the Nigeria Army or the Airforce. These actions negate the Electoral Act. Section 29 of the Electoral Act states: "the Commission shall only request for the deployment of the Nigerian Armed Forces only for the purposes of securing the distribution and delivery of election materials and protection of election officials." Note equally that the Constitution, article 217, refers to the military "acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President, but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Politician tout display and other forms of anti-democratic brigandary have continued to pay in fourth republic Nigeria because ours still remain opportunistic democracy at best where toutocracy is gradually replacing democracy. The constant decline in voters' turnout in the midst of increase in registered voters is the manifestation of hope lost in the electoral processes by the electorate as well as a "yellow card" indication that the process is becoming unpopular. While the INEC seem to be going more technological in its electoral processes, sufficient improvement is yet to be seen. The unrestricted executive manipulation of judiciary, including politically induced removal of judges has continue to make the whole process vulnerable; this is in addition to allegation of corrupt judicial officers who more often than not sale their verdicts to the highest bidder. Thus, leaving the whole electoral process in shamble since mandate lost through ballot could be bought through court. More unfortunately, INEC officials are left to trigger happy military personnel, just as declared winner under duress" is gradually taking the center stage in our electoral lexicon: a typical feature toutocracy.

To dissuade military hostility and brutality during elections and rekindle the spirit of active participation in subsequent elections, the paper recommends that:

- There should be a clear distinction on the role of the security agencies and the functions performed by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Many at time, people will see the security agents stuffing electoral materials especially the sensitive ones.
- The voters should be noted that it is only the Civil Defense officers without guns or any other weapons that are duly stationed at the poll boots are allowed to man the conduct of election.
- There is dire need for total overhauling of INEC, and unbundle its work as it seems too loaded to be centralized.
- Voters' education should be incorporated into the schools curriculums, from primary to tertiary education.
- The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be encouraged to augment the INEC voters' education unit.
- The judiciary should beam its light on all parts of INEC, while its corrupt officials dealt with according to law. Laws that give swift but stiffer punishment should be enacted for erring electoral and security officers.

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