Managing Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Democratic Republic: An Examination of the Roles of Security Agencies

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Abstract: The article examines how security agencies have handled election violence in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It makes the case that historically, there have been many violent incidents, fraud, willful property destruction, and murders during Nigerian elections. In light of this, this research uses a qualitative method to investigate the part played by security services in handling these electoral difficulties. Data was gathered from secondary sources and thematically analyzed. They indicated that election violence had been the main obstacle to Nigeria's democratic viability since the formation of the fourth republic, notwithstanding the adoption of electoral reforms. The research also showed that security forces in Nigeria are increasingly being called upon to provide electoral security, despite their various statutory and constitutional mandates. It comes to the conclusion that security agencies continue to be crucial in monitoring elections, upholding law and order, and protecting crucial election materials, venues, and counting centres, notwithstanding the difficulties connected with their engagement in election administration. Therefore, security forces are essential for the strengthening of democracy in Nigeria and the avoidance of violence in all forms.

Keywords: Elections, Security Agencies, Electoral Violence, Management, Nigeria.

Introduction

The institutionalization and development of democracy in a country are intrinsically linked to the effective conduct of free, fair, credible, and acceptable elections. This stems from the idea that in a democracy, it is the responsible people to choose a government and that elections are the institutional frameworks/arrangements by which individuals acquire the capacity to make decisions through a contest for the people's votes. As a result, elections are frequently seen as a method of regulating rivalry for political power through competition for votes. Elections are thus the essential pillars of democracy. Any particular nation's voting system is crucial in maintaining and shaping the political behavior of its people (Okolo, 2000). The way and manner elections are conducted in a country go a long way to determine the level of political culture, political participation, and good governance in that country. These assertions indicate the importance of a country's credible and transparent electoral system.

It has been determined that the election process is the best way for political leadership to develop in the modern world. As a result, many nations continually improve and alter their voting procedures to ensure proper political leadership emerges. However, the need to improve the election system in Nigeria keeps coming up. The electoral legislation governing the conduct of elections has been revised nearly after every election since the restoration to civil authority in 1999, which ushered in the fourth republic after several years of military dominance. These amendments led to the introduction of 2001, 2006, and 2010 electoral acts. However, there have been several difficulties with election administration from the 1999 general elections in Nigeria through the 2019 elections. It has also been shown that acts of violence, fraud, and animosity frequently mark Nigerian elections. The difficulties include, among other things, irregularities that cast doubt on the legitimacy of the entire electoral process; issues with the legal framework that impose restrictions on the electoral process; and the need for numerous organizations to fulfill their roles in order to guarantee a credible, accessible, and fair election. Because of the electoral system's lack of inclusivity, the electoral commissions' lack of independence, the drawn-out process of resolving election disputes, the irresponsible behavior of politicians and supporters that manifests in thuggery and violence, the absence of effective democratic institutions, and the monetization of politics (Adebayo, 2016). Therefore, in Nigeria's political system, money decides who runs and muffles votes and voices as godfathers openly admit to doing shady deals, financing or supporting races for godsons, and buying electoral success. The outcome of the challenges is that the citizens' votes are invalid. Election violence has been the main obstacle to Nigeria's democratic sustainability since the emergence of the fourth republic, despite the implementation of the electoral reforms overseen by Justice Uwais, who was tasked with making recommendations on how to bring sanity back to the country's electoral process.

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's election as civilian president of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in May 1999 was a contentious election resulting from defective political processes, intimidation, and outright brigandage, all of which worked to devalue the democratic process. Even though the administration has started some changes, its legitimacy has not improved because of the illegitimate elections. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) also won the presidential elections in 2003 and 2007, but the international community harshly criticized the results. However, the international community was generally benign and decided to accept the 1999 election results for the sake of democracy. Nevertheless, the election reports from both domestic and foreign observers highlighted several flaws that rendered the elections unsatisfactory (Agbu, 2016). This indicates that there must have been a problem

with the reform or other components that would have allowed Nigeria to have free and fair elections and become a real democratic nation. This study focuses on how security services might reduce election-related violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In addition to this introduction, the topics covered in this paper include the development of election violence, the shortcomings of electoral acts and reforms in Nigeria's fourth republic (from the general elections of 1999 to 2019), the causes of the pre, during, and post-election violence, and practical, realistic steps that can be taken moving forward to prevent violence in future general elections.

Definition of the Key Concepts

Election is the formal process of selecting a person for public office or accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting. It is essential to distinguish between the form and the substance of elections. In some cases, electoral forms are present, but the substance of an election is missing, as when voters do not have a free and genuine choice between at least two alternatives (Eulau, 2022). A crucial component of democratic government is elections. Democratic administration must be carried out through representatives because direct democracy is a type of government in which political choices are decided directly by the complete body of qualified citizens and are unworkable in the majority of contemporary cultures. Elections allow citizens to choose leaders and hold them responsible for their actions while in government. However, accountability can be harmed by elected officials who do not care if they are reelected or by a party or coalition that is so strong that voters have little to no choice among alternative candidates, parties, or policies due to historical factors or other factors.

Given that the first elections in Nigeria were held in 1922 and the 2007 general election is thought to have been the worst in history, electoral reforms must be implemented in the fourth republic as soon as possible.

Electoral Violence: There is no one definition of election-related violence, although there is a list of primary theories and justifications for it, most of which center on attempts to influence the outcome of the election (See Table 1):

Table 1. Definitions of Election-Related Violence

AUTHOR	DEFINITION
(Fischer 2002)	Any injury or threat of harm to any person or property participating in the election process, or the process itself, during the election period is referred to as electoral conflict and violence.
(Laakso, 2007)	Election-related violence is an activity to influence an election's outcome, either by tampering with the voting process and participation or opposing the validity of the results.
(Sisk, 2009)	Qualifies actions or threats, coercion, intimidation, or bodily injury committed to influencing an electoral process or resulting from political rivalry as election-related violence.
(Hoglund, 2009)	The time and motivation of electoral violence differ from other political violence. The temporal component has to do with election-related violence. The purpose of electoral violence is to sway voters and, by implication, the election results.
(Kehailia, 2014)	Based on the identities of the violent offenders and the causes of the violence, Kehailia identified eight groups, including: • State-on-State Electoral Violence (SSEV) • State on Party Electoral Violence (SPEV) • State on Voters Electoral Violence (SVEV) • Voters on State Electoral Violence (VSEV) • Voters on Voters Electoral Violence (VVEV) • Party on State Electoral Violence (PSEV) • Party on Voters Electoral Violence (PVEV) • Party on party Electoral Violence (PPEV)
(Bardal, 2016)	It suggests the right-based definition and concludes that electoral violence, a subtype of political violence, is a method of limiting and oppressing a person's or group's ability to engage in political institutions and processes through the use of coercion, pressure, or emotional, social, or economic force, in addition to physical and sexual harm. It may occur in the family, the larger community, online, through the media, or even be committed or tolerated by the state. It may also occur in public or in private.

Source: Authors Compilation

According to the UN, electoral violence is a type of political violence that "is frequently intended to affect an electoral result and, as a result, the allocation of political power." Physical violence, coercion, and intimidation are all forms of electoral violence. These violent acts can appear at any time during the various stages of the electoral cycle, but they also demonstrate that the political system has typically failed to strike a balance between conflicting political objectives.

Security Agencies: A security agency is a government institution that manages intelligence operations for a country's internal security. They are the domestic relatives of foreign intelligence organizations, and they frequently engage in counterintelligence activities to hinder the foreign intelligence endeavors of other nations. For instance, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is an external intelligence service that primarily gathers intelligence abroad. In contrast, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the internal intelligence, security, and law enforcement agency in the United States. MI5 and MI6 have a similar connection in the United Kingdom (Bamford, 2007).

Nigeria's security agencies are crucial to guaranteeing a fair and legitimate election; the nation's security organizations have distinct roles. These agencies consist of:

- *The Nigerian Armed Forces:* The Nigerian Army (NA), Nigerian Navy (NN), and Nigerian Airforce (NAF).
- *The Paramilitary Agencies:* The Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Nigerian Correction Service (NCS), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Federal Fire Service Nigeria (FFSN).
- *Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies:* The State State Service (SSS), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).

Free and fair elections depend on the safety and security of people and their possessions. In nations where conflict is prevalent, especially in fledgling democracies, security forces work to secure security at various phases of the election process. Delineation of constituencies, voter registration, party primaries and nominations, campaigning and rallies, an exhibition of the voter list, voting, voter counting, and proclamation of results, hearings, and decisions at tribunals are some of the crucial and violent steps of Nigerian elections. Election security has been provided by security personnel from many agencies since 1999. Even though they are the principal civil force, the police are primarily in charge of election-related activities. The high frequency and possibility of violence at all phases of the electoral process are directly linked to the growing engagement of various security services in election duties. However, using various security professionals has frequently been linked to misconduct by the ruling authorities, including intimidation, electoral fraud, cooperation with politicians to thwart free and fair elections, and ineffective problem-solving at polling places.

Theoretical Foundation
When discussing managing electoral violence, two significant theories come into play; the systems theory and the relative deprivation theory. The system theory explains the link between security forces as components of a system and elections. However, the relative deprivation theory offers a lens through which to view conflict and electoral violence.

Relative deprivation theory, as defined by social theorists and political scientists, postulates that people who believe they are being denied something that is regarded as essential in their society (such as money, rights, political voice, or status) will organize or join social movements aimed at obtaining those things. For instance, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, which had its roots in Black Americans' fight for social and legal equality with white Americans, had relative deprivation recognized as one of its reasons. Like heterosexual individuals, many homosexual people joined the same-sex marriage movement to have their marriages recognized by the law. In addition, relative deprivation has occasionally been implicated in the causes of social unrest episodes, including riots, looting, terrorism, and civil conflicts. Social movements of this kind and the disruptive behaviors accompanying them are frequently the results of complaints from individuals who believe they are being denied resources to which they are legally entitled (Longley, 2021).

Ted Robert Gurr, an American political science professor, is the originator of the relative deprivation theory. Gurr addresses the psychological frustration-aggression theory, which contends that the frustration-aggression mechanism is the primary source of the human potential for violence, as well as the reasons behind individuals engaging in political violence (riots, revolt, and coups), in his famous work "Why Men Rebel (1970)." Gurr contends that while anger and finally violence may not always follow from frustration, they frequently do when it is intense and sustained. To explain this idea, Gurr uses the concept of "relative deprivation," which refers to the gap between what individuals believe they deserve and what they can obtain. The degree and extent of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity, he continued, "variates substantially with the capacity for collective violence." (Gurr, 1970). A revolt is more likely to develop when a group of people or an individual feels unfairly disadvantaged compared to others, which is the primary cause of relative deprivation. Relative impoverishment predicts collective aggression by social groupings, much as dissatisfaction causes violent conduct on the part of an individual.

Systems theory, often known as social systems theory, is a branch of social science that studies how people and their views relate to society as a whole as a complex system of interconnected parts (e.g., a country). The social sciences have a long history of studying

society as a social system. The approach's intellectual roots may mainly be found in the works of 19th-century social scientists Herbert Spencer, an English sociologist and philosopher, and Émile Durkheim, a French social scientist. With significant implications for comprehending social order, systems theory also examines how society adapts to its environment by changing its structure. Systems theory emphasizes the limited ability to influence society since it highlights the complexity of social evolution. However, despite society's enormous complexity, social scientists may still appreciate the various adaptive alternatives of social systems (Gibson, 2019).

The following can be used to summarize the main ideas of systems theory: A system's components and interdependent interactions can be seen as a whole; A system can be regarded in terms of its connection with other systems and its boundaries; Systems are composed of sub-systems and a super-system; A system may be thought of as open or closed. A system engages in input, conversion, energy output, information exchange, and material exchange with its surroundings. A system often regenerates or modifies through information input from the environment. For example, the security system's performance must be connected with the effectiveness of the voting system and vice versa. The system theory emphasizes that an institution must function as a whole to include various sub-systems that work together to fulfill the organization's purpose. It considers an organization operational when each sub-system is valuable and practical. The way justifies that different components work together to uphold the efficiency criteria, which is considered essential to the organization's existence and the accomplishment of its objectives. David Easton put this argument out in 1965 to support his definition of politics as the authorized distributor of values.

According to the System Analysis of Political Life, the political system is a collection of human interactions that serve as an authoritative conduit for the distribution of values. Environment, input, conversion, output, and feedback were all introduced in Easton's political strategy, often known as the conversion process. The theory's primary goal is to demonstrate how a system's components are interdependent so that any malfunction in one of them impacts the entire system. The political system was essentially understood as transforming inputs into definable judgments. For the process of producing a feedback-authoritative conclusion, information, demand, and support are required. Demands are assertions about how values are distributed (Easton, 1965). According to him, support exists when the environment supports the system or is in its favor. The system generates output from a conclusive conclusion and includes a feedback procedure. The system adapts to its surroundings through feedback by altering its behavior and interest structure. Finally, the system maintains equilibrium as a result of all these interactions.

Electoral Violence in Nigeria
Since the country's independence, almost all of Nigeria's general elections have been marred by acts of violence. Human Rights Watch estimates that the unrest after the first election held in 1964–1965 cost more than 200 deaths, mainly in the Southwest (HRW). Following the 1983 election, the nation also saw "massive post-election violence," which resulted in the loss of numerous lives and extensive property damage. Even the 1993 presidential election, which was largely regarded as the freest in the nation's history and had no severe violent incidents, had a spotty background. The military government led by Ibrahim Babangida annulled it, which caused a public uproar and a flurry of demonstrations. Beko Ransom-Kuti, the leader of the Campaign for Democracy (CD) at the time, estimated that security personnel killed over 100 nonviolent protesters and bystanders while purportedly attempting to quell the violent outgrowth of the July riots (Adebajo, 2022).

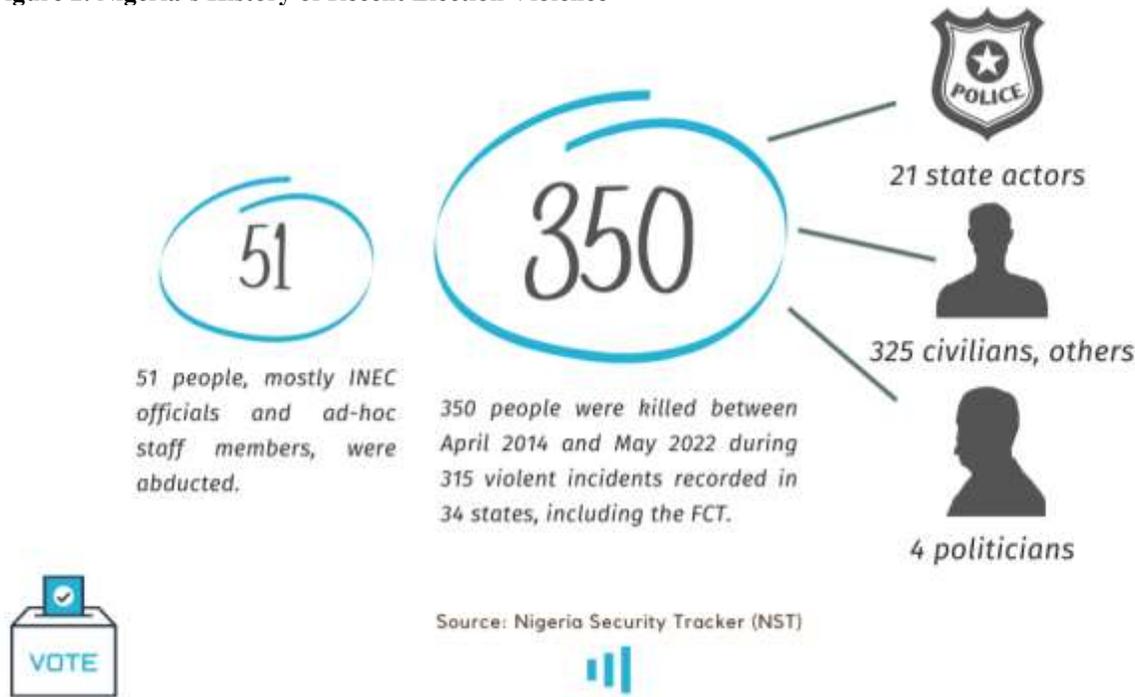**Figure. 1 Timeline of Lives lost to Election Violence in Nigeria**

Chart: Kunle Adebajo/HumAngle • Source: HRW, ICG, CD, Africa Watch • Created with Datawrapper

We can more thoroughly examine the pattern of political and electoral violence in the country from 2014 to the present thanks to the documenting efforts of the Nigeria Security Tracker (NST). The tracker's originator and research associate at the Council on Foreign

Relations, Asch Harwood, revealed that soon before the 2015 midterm elections, it broadened its focus to include election-related violence.

Figure 2. Nigeria's History of Recent Election Violence

51 people, mostly INEC officials and ad-hoc staff members, were abducted.

350 people were killed between April 2014 and May 2022 during 315 violent incidents recorded in 34 states, including the FCT.

21 state actors

325 civilians, others

4 politicians

VOTE

Source: Nigeria Security Tracker (NST)

According to Adebajo (2022): The statistics support data on the 2015 and 2019 national elections from the International Crisis Group and the European Union Election Observation Mission. According to press reports compiled by the tracker, election violence in Nigeria claimed the lives of at least 350 individuals between April 2014 and May 2022. During the same time frame, 51 other people were kidnapped, most of whom were INEC employees. The violence takes many forms, including thuggery, shooting, arson, assassinations, vote box theft, coercion, violent disruption, kidnapping, and crises brought on by hate speech. Most of the casualties were civilians, although 21 members of the security forces also perished.
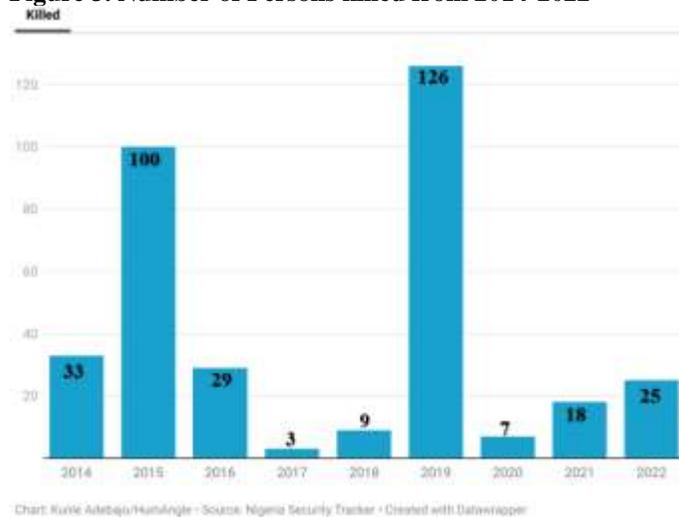
Figure 3. Number of Persons killed from 2014-2022

Chart: Kunle Adebajo/HumAngle • Source: Nigeria Security Tracker • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 4. Number of Person Kidnapped from 2014-2022
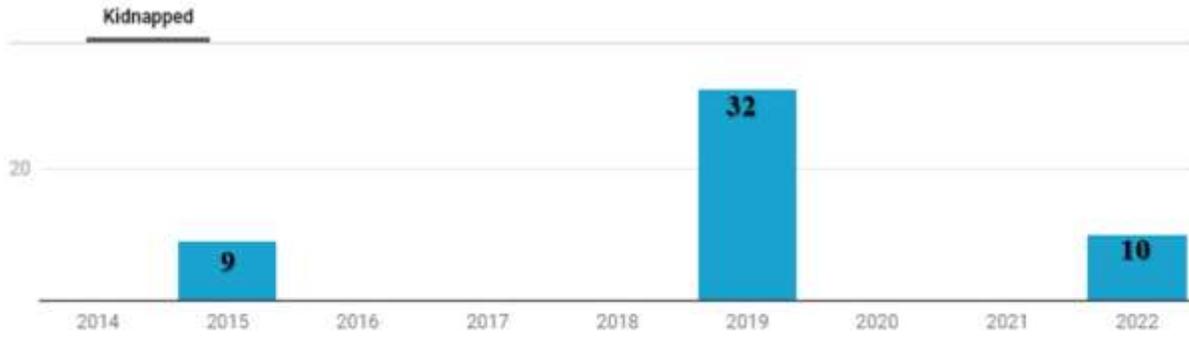
Comparing statistics between the different states is another type of study that can be done with the NST data. The states with the most incidences between 2014 and 2022 were, in order, Rivers, Lagos, Kogi, Ondo, and Ekiti. The states with the highest death rates were Rivers and Lagos again, followed by Taraba, Bayelsa, Delta, Ebonyi, Kano, and Kogi. However, regarding abductions, Katsina, Imo, Enugu, Kogi, and Sokoto had the highest number of victims (See Figure 5).
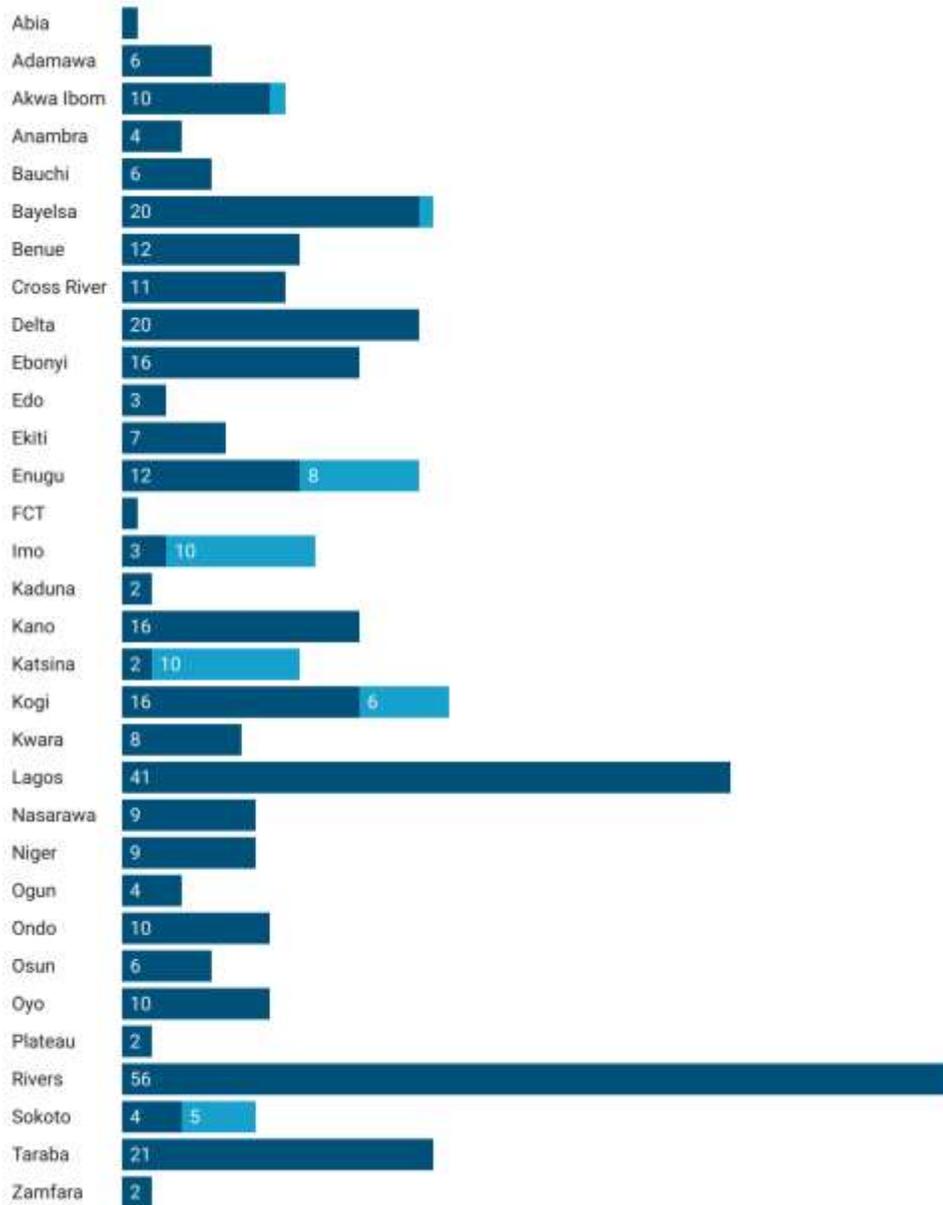
Figure 5. Death and Kidnap records by States

Chart: Kunle Adebajo/HumAngle • Source: Nigeria Security Tracker • Created with Datawrapper

In recent years, attacks against Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) institutions around the nation have grown, adding another dimension to electoral violence. According to the commission, attacks on its offices occurred 41 times between 2019 and May 24, 2021, spanning 14 states. These comprised 20 instances of vandalism, 18 instances of arson, and three instances of both. Eighteen of the occurrences were attributed by INEC to anti-police brutality (End SARS) protesters, 11 to "unknown gunmen" and hoodlums, six to election-related thuggery, and the other instances were attributed to bandits, Boko Haram militants, and post-election violence. The Southeast and Southwest of the country saw the majority of the events. It had seven instances, Osun had six, Akwa-Ibom had five, Abia and Cross River had four, and Osun had six.

Figure 6. Attacks on INEC Offices in Nigeria (2019-2021)

Chart: Kunle Adebajo/HumAngle • Source: INEC • Created with Datawrapper

Election security goes beyond only voting on election day and other events (Adele, 2011). In order to ensure the integrity of elections, it is also the purposeful protection of electoral governance from distortions, violations, and manipulations. Security for the electoral process in Nigeria is the duty of security forces such as the Police, Navy, Airforce, and Army. The impartiality of security personnel is, however, occasionally questioned.

Security officials were involved in several alleged election malpractice instances in 2003 and 2007, mostly in remote voting districts. On election day, security staff in some locations purposefully failed to report to their areas of duty, giving thugs the freedom to terrorize voters. Nigeria's scenario has been unique in stark contrast to global norms, where security personnel participate in elections only to the extent necessary to carry out their legally mandated obligations. Nevertheless, it continues to be a significant source of anxiety, violence, and insecurity (Hounkpe & Gueye, 2010).

Constitutional Responsibilities of Security Agencies
Law enforcement personnel must strike a balance between the requirement for electoral security, the maintenance of order, and non-interference with election participants' rights. They have a crucial role to play in avoiding and regulating instances of electoral violence.

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is the country's central law enforcement organization, with personnel stationed in all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The Inspector General of Police is in charge of the NPF's command and control.

The Nigeria Police Force, the leading civil force in the country, has duties in elections and electoral procedures, which have been underlined in the Uwais report on electoral reform (2008). These consist of the following:
1. Ensuring safety and peace during the electoral process
2. Restoring order and safety after potential chaos caused by constituency delineation
3. Ensuring the safety of the people, things, and ideals involved in voter registration
4. Ensuring the safety of individuals' lives and property when they register to vote, participate in political campaigns, and cast ballots
5. Making sure that election officials are safe before, during, and after elections
6. Providing political candidates with security throughout the campaign
7. Defending and upholding an accessible, equitable, and secure environment for election campaigns by all parties and candidates without distinction
8. keeping the area around the voting places and the collation or counting centers lawful and orderly
9. They guarantee the safety of critical electoral materials while transported and at the voting, collating, or counting locations. Election materials have not been stolen, destroyed, or fraudulently changed, according to the police.
10. Preventing politicians from intimidating, coercing, or influencing voters at places of registration and voting
11. Keeping the areas surrounding the election petition tribunals secure.

The Nigeria Police is also in charge of upholding the different stipulations of the nation's electoral laws.

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) is a paramilitary organization under the control of the Nigerian government that was created to offer defenses against attacks and natural disasters that can affect Nigeria and its people. The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps Act of 2003 gave it legal authority, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps Act No. 6 of 2007 revised it. The following tasks of the Corps are specified in Section 3(1) of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps Act, 2003 (as modified by Section 1 of Act No. 6, 2007):
1. Assist in keeping the peace and safeguarding and rescuing the civilian population in times of need.
2. Keep an eye on federal, state, and local government projects, sites, and infrastructure. S
   a. search any location and confiscate any items believed to have been utilized in vandalism or to be the result of vandalism.

    b.   Enter and search any alleged illicit dealer of petroleum products or materials utilized by Nigerian Postal Services, Nigeria Telecommunication, or any other public utility or infrastructure, as well as any suspected dealer's premises.

3.   Under the provisions of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, they have the authority to detain, investigate, and institute legal proceedings by or in the name of the Attorney-General of the Federation against any person who is reasonably suspected of having committed an offense under this Act or who is engaged in any criminal activity, industrial espionage, or fraud, an activity intended to thwart any government program or policy.

The NSCDC's extensive responsibilities make it clear that it has the authority to manage Nigeria's election violence.

The Armed Forces are in charge of defending the nation from any foreign assault. The Military Forces were founded by Section 217(1) of the 1999 Constitution and consist of the Federation's Army, Navy, Air Force, and any other armed forces that an Act of the National Assembly may constitute. According to Section 217(2), "The Federation must, according to an Act of the National Assembly passed on that behalf, equip and maintain the armed forces in a manner that may be deemed necessary and effective for the following purposes:

1.   Nigeria's defense against external aggression;
2.   Protecting its boundaries against infringement on land, sea, or air; maintaining its territorial integrity;
3.   Suppressing rebellion and helping civil authorities regain control when the president requests it, but only under the conditions that may be outlined in the Act of the National Assembly; and
4.   Performing any additional duties that may be required under a National Act.

The provisions of section 217(2)(b) and (c) of the 1999 Constitution make it very plain that the military's duties go beyond protecting Nigeria from external invasion and include suppressing rebellion and assisting civil authorities when the president so directs. Along with other security services, the military is a crucial component of national defense and guarantees the country's territorial integrity and internal security (Ruwan et al., 2013).

The State Security Service is a vital security organization that significantly contributes to managing election violence in Nigeria. The National Security Agencies Act was passed even though the DSS was primarily created to perform national security effectively. The Nigerian Security Organisation was abolished, and three new security agencies were established under the National Securities Agencies Act (NSA Act). These three organizations were formed by Section 1 of the NSA Act, namely:

1.   The Defence Intelligence Agency;
2.   The National Intelligence Agency; and
3.   The State Security Service.

The NSA Act tasked these three organizations with the proper national security function. Under NSA Act section 2(3), the State Security Service is in charge of the following:

1.   The discovery and prevention of any crime against Nigeria's internal security within Nigeria;
2.   The safeguarding and preservation of all non-military sensitive information about Nigeria's internal security; and
3.   Other duties that might impact internal security in Nigeria that the National Assembly or the President, depending on the situation, may judge essential.

It is clear from the explanation above that these security organizations are essential to maintaining Nigeria's internal security. Their general duties aim to maintain Nigeria's peace, stability, and harmony despite differences. These security organizations have also been crucial in maintaining the long-term viability of Nigeria's democracy.

Electoral Violence in view of the 2023 General Elections
According to Asadu (2022), attacks on Nigeria's electoral commission headquarters have raised fears about the security of the West African country's approaching elections in February 2023. "It will be the most challenging election in Nigeria's recent history in terms of security," Bulama Bukarti, a senior fellow at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, told The ABC News Press. "This is a high-stakes election for Nigeria and its neighbors: a make-or-break election."

Violent separatists aim to build an independent state of Biafra in the southeast, where most attacks on voting infrastructure have occurred, more than 50 years after a revolt failed to gain a separate state. Authorities have accused members of the Indigenous People of Biafra, Nigeria's third-largest ethnic group, of killing security officers and occasionally their people from the Igbo ethnic group.

Recently, some paid political thugs, hoodlums, and hooligans threatened the Lagos Labour Party to cancel a gathering dubbed "#Obidattti23 Forward Ever Rally," slated for October 1, 2022, in Lagos. In addition, paid thugs, hooligans, hoodlums, and police officials were dispatched to disrupt the peaceful one-million-march movement planned by Labour Party supporters in Ebonyi State. These democratic travesties occur on the eve of the start of political campaigns that will usher in the 2023 elections (Ekwowusi, 2022).

Nigerians are again faced with rising uncertainty over the 2023 general elections, which are scheduled for February and March. There is a recurrence of lethal attacks on the office of the electoral umpire and vote-buying. The country's delicate democracy is under assault by ruthless politicians. The Independent National Electoral Commission, concerned, has warned that these threats might disrupt the elections. The warning should be taken very seriously. To counter the threats, the President, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari (ret.), must use the state's coercive resources.

Ekwowusi (2022) opines that besides threats and intimidation, politicians have developed the practice of dispatching political thugs to remove, pull off, or damage opposing political parties' hung campaign banners or billboards. One thing I still do not understand is the gullibility of the governed. Nigeria's next problem, after the leadership issue, is the followership crisis.

In a report on Vanguard by Jannamike (2022), The President of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Archbishop Daniel Okoh, and the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Abubakar Sa'ad IIi, have warned stakeholders about the risks of electoral violence, including all types of rigging and hate speech, ahead of the 2023 general elections. This call to action was issued at the Inclusive Security Dialogue, hosted by the Global Peace Foundation (Nigeria) in collaboration with ADI International and Vision Africa on Monday in Abuja.

Another threat to the elections might come from Boko Haram and its offshoot branch Islamic State West Africa Province, in Nigeria's northeast. Disrupting Nigeria's 2023 elections would be "the biggest accomplishment they can ever achieve," according to Tony Blair Institute researcher Bukarti. Many rural villages are caught in the turmoil since there is minimal government administration and almost no security presence in the northern territories. According to analysts, armed groups are now attempting to solidify their position in these locations.

Political parties are also in turmoil. Nigerian politicians have acted as though this is a true rumble in the jungle, a Darwinian, apocalyptic battle for existence, since the campaigns began on September 28, 2022. The road to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria has become a breeding ground for thugs and violence planners. The Labour Party, for example, has complained about harassment of its followers in the states of Ebonyi, Nasarawa, Katsina, and Lagos. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) has issued a statement condemning attacks on its members and supporters in Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Zamfara, and Maiduguri. Other political parties have had reason to complain about being denied the ability to publish posters, build billboards, or even obtain access to the media, particularly in places where incumbent governors insist on not allowing the opposition to campaign. They are breaking the law, yet they get away with it. Even more concerning is the increase of hate speech and intolerant politics performed online by a strange breed of social media bandits who spew without thinking, attack without any semblance of decency, and harm their candidates without regard for their vulnerabilities (Abati, 2022).

According to Iniobong (2022), Stakeholders in Conflict Research drew security authorities' attention to the risks of the country's different conflicts, encouraging all measures to secure a violence-free general election in 2023. Ukoha Ukiwo, a professor and the Technical Lead of the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme, recently told the media that violent confrontations by various ethnic militia groups would set the tone for political violence in 2023.
Abati (2022) strongly believes that as we approach the general elections in 2023, we need all security agencies to be awake and alert. Security chiefs in the country should quit wailing and lecturing. They should quit moaning and start working professionally.

Conclusion
According to the preceding debate, the responsibility of security forces in elections management is essential to ensure peace and order for the electoral management authority - INEC - to conduct free and fair elections. Security services, on the other hand, are occasionally accused of partiality, collaboration, and open backing for specific individuals and political parties. Security personnel has been accused of belonging to or being utilized against others by one or more political parties. Furthermore, security personnel are sometimes employed to intimidate voters and opposition parties. In addition to the previous cases of direct engagement of security personnel, it has been observed that the presence of armed security forces intimidates voters. This might sometimes explain poor voter participation during elections. Despite these issues, the multidimensional insecurity in Nigeria and the violence that tends to define the electioneering process necessitate that the role of security services in election administration not be diminished. They continue to play vital responsibilities in ensuring the safety of election materials, voters, candidates, and INEC officials. Since Nigeria transitioned to civilian democracy in 1999, they have served in these capacities. As a result, it is reasonable to say that the

debate on the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria's fourth republic is incomplete without critically examining the activities of security services, which is the article's substantial contribution.

Since 1999, electoral violence has been a recurring occurrence whenever there is a general election. Security is required for a peaceful election and for the process to be viewed as effective. Adequate election security should include more than just the physical presence of security officers. It includes a company of security agencies and their professional tasks in terms of being impartial, safeguarding all political players and voters, protecting electoral materials, venues, and counting centres, and preventing violence during all phases of the elections. Security attempts to create a socially oriented transformation by studying and explaining the constraints and possibilities of human liberation, which includes the basic demands of human desire and fundamental rights.

Recommendations
The study suggests that adequate briefings on duties and responsibilities be conducted prior to the deployment of security personnel - before, during, and after the election. Security deployment must also be skillfully done to prevent compromise by erring security employees. Security personnel must be aware of their obligations to ensure the safety and security of INEC workers, INEC infrastructure, voters, and election observers during and after elections. Election officials should guarantee that electoral violations listed by INEC are either prevented, regulated, or do not occur on election days. For example, canvassing for votes, urging any voter not to vote for any particular candidate or not to vote at all at the election; yelling election slogans; possessing any acid, offensive weapon, or missile or wearing any attire or having facial or other decorations which in many instances is likely to frighten voters; lingering without a legitimate cause after voting or after being refused to vote; to the offense of voting or attempting to vote.

Modules on democracy, elections, political parties, and constitutional/statutory requirements on elections should be included in police training courses at all levels. In addition, the police force's independence should be ensured by enhancing its autonomy from the supervision of the current administration; the police force's independence should be maintained in communication, weapons, and transportation for successful mobilization, deployment, and better performance.

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