

**ELECTIONS AND HUMAN SECURITY IN NIGERIA: A
REFLECTION OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND
THE WAY FORWARD**

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ABSTRACT: This paper examined elections and human security in Nigeria with reference to the 2019 general elections. In Nigeria, there are manifold human security challenges before, during and after general elections. This is rooted deep within the fabric of the state (government security structures such as the police) or state mechanisms/actors (militant and terrorist groups) competing and overlapping each other. The lack of meaningful progress in addressing the prevalent political violence, lack of accountability for human rights abuses and the inability of security forces to respond effectively to threats to people's lives and security affected the way and manner in which the 2019 general elections were conducted in the country. Therefore, this study aimed to determine how general elections were conducted and how they grossly affected human security in Nigeria. To achieve this goal, the paper adopted the qualitative descriptive research design; relied on secondary data; applied social contract theory; and theoretically analysed the collected data. This study revealed that the nefarious activities of political parties, unpatriotic politicians, terrorism threats and their similarities in Nigeria, to a large extent, undermined the level of human security before, during and after the 2019 general elections in the country; and that the factors militating against human security during the 2019 general elections were security issues, partisanship among security forces, vote rigging, vote-buying, fake news etc. This study recommended. among others, the need for improved security surveillance, vigilance and high-level intelligence gathering by military and para-military agencies in Nigeria.

Keywords: Democracy, Corruption, Election; Security, Human Security and National Security

INTRODUCTION

Since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1960, Nigeria has struggled to develop a culture of democratic governance. Hopes that independence would usher in a new political order characterized by democratic governance and constitutionalism were dashed on January 15, 1966, when a group of mutinous soldiers led a brutal coup d'état that ended the country's First Republic and continues to haunt the country to this day.

After years of further coups and elections pervaded with fraud and other irregularities, the general elections held on March 28–29, 2015, marked a turning point in Nigeria's transition to democratic governance and constitutionalism. The exercise pitted Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) against the incumbent Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Jonathan, who was seeking re-election, and was the leader of the party that had ruled the country virtually unopposed for 16 years (Umana, 2018). However, before the 2015 general elections, which effectively ended the PDP's nearly two-decade hegemonic control of the government, there were threats to human security propelled by

nefarious activities involving of the proliferation of ethnic militia, vigilante and separatist groups. According to Obasi (2002), “the proliferation of ethnic militia, vigilante and separatist groups has been one of the most significant failures of Nigerian society and politics in recent years”. These groups subvert the rule of law, create violence in Nigeria, and thus constitute a threat to human security in the country.

In a similar manner, human insecurity remained a major concern before and during the 2019 general elections. The Chairperson of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, notable Nigerians, Civil Society Organizations and Members of the International Community expressed worry that the pervading human insecurity in the country, particularly in the Northeast Region, would disenfranchise eligible voter and affect the conduct and outcome of the elections in the country. However, despite the assurances by security agencies and the electoral umpire to conduct hitch-free elections and that no eligible voter would be disenfranchised during the elections in the country, there were still ominous security threats in many parts of Nigeria which grossly undermined the credibility and success of the 2019 general elections. Experience over the years has shown that the Nigeria Police Force, the principal law enforcement and the lead security agency in Nigeria, has lived below expectations in ensuring human security and in the fight against crimes and other security-related threats in the country (Nwambuko & Nnaeto, 2024). The inability of the Nigerian Police force to adequately ensure human security during the 2019 general elections resulted in election rigging, thuggery, impersonation, ballot box snatching, explosives possession and vote-trading., the spread of fake news, violence and other related election issue-based crisis.

Therefore, based on the above, this study aimed to determine how the 2019 general elections were conducted and how they grossly affected human security in Nigeria; to make recommendations on how to ensure and improve human security in future elections to improve the integrity of future elections in the country and boost confidence in the country’s democracy.

Conceptual Explanations

Concept of Election: Although elections are fundamental and very common in modern political discourse and there is hardly any dispute about their meaning, they have, like many other social science concepts, been discussed from several perspectives. According to Dowse and Hughes (1972), “Elections are one type of social mechanism, among others, for aggregating preferences of a particular kind. An election is, therefore, a procedure recognized by the rules of an organization, be it a state, a club, a voluntary organization or whatever, where all, or some, of the members, choose a smaller number of persons to hold an office, or offices, of authority within that organization”. By analysis, this definition assumes that every political organization is democratic, and goes through the mechanism of elections to arrive at the smaller number of leaders that hold offices. It is quite easy to describe this definition as impressionistic and hastily generalizing, considering the fact that it was given in 1972 when only approximately forty-two percent of the world’s nations were democratic and produced their leaders through elections.

In the same vein, Ball (1977) could be accused of similar things based on his definition that “elections are the means by which the people choose and exercise some degree of control over their representatives”. This simply suggests that wherever people are chosen to lead other people, the mechanism used is election.

But in line with this study, election is simply the organization of voting and its allied activities such as party registration, candidates' background checks and campaigning. Thus, elections are characterized by electoral systems, elections, suffrage, use in democracies, use in constitutional monarchies, and periodicity.

Concept of Human Security: The concept of human security emanates from the conventional security studies that focus on the security of the state. Its focus is individuals and its ultimate end point is the protection of people from traditional and nontraditional threats. Centre to this concept is the belief that human security deprivations can undercut peace and stability within and among states. The Commission on Human Security (CHS) in one of its works defines human security as follows:

The ability to protect the vital core of all human lives in such a way that it enhances human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms that are essential to life. This means protecting people from serious and persistent threats and situations. This means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. This means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity (Adedoyin, 2013: 125).

Hubert (1999:3) describes the importance of the concept when he asserts that: In essence, human security refers to the safety of people from violent and nonviolent threats. It is a condition of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their ability or even their lives. It is an alternative way of seeing the world taking people as its point of reference rather than focusing exclusively on the security of the territory or government. Like other security concepts - national security, economic security, and food security - are all about protection.

It is important to state that human security covers every area of human needs. This is why it serves as the basis of all forms and categories of security. It is pertinent to state that threats to human security are very easy to manage if preventive measures are taken at appropriate times before the threat advances to a devastating state.

Elections and Human Security in Nigeria

Elections are the life wire of a democratic government and give life to its functionality. However, the nature of the polls and the process of selecting leadership go a long way in determining the extent to which democracy is consolidated. If elections are conducted in line with stipulated electoral guidelines, it creates more chances for the emergence of the best candidate or apparent. Again, what determines if a leader is re-elected is how well he rules in the first term and if the constitution allows for the second term. In Nigeria's case, human insecurity during elections has remained frequent and has continued to occur from the first republic to this fourth republic. This has remained a bane of democratic consolidation.

In the 1999 general elections poll in Nigeria, Aniekwe and Kushie (2011) argued that the election was accepted to give room for democratic rule and allow for growth (consolidation) and not taken because it was credible. In the 2003 general elections, about one hundred persons were killed (HRW, 2004). The 2007 election (HRW, 2007) gave the number of deaths to be 300, including police officers. Though the 2011 general elections were considered to be

relatively peaceful, immediately, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) was declared the winner by INEC in the Presidential election; violence erupted in Northern Nigeria. Supporters of (CPC) candidate General Muhammadu Buhari took to protest and violence. According to HRW (2011), over 800 people were left dead. The killing happened within three days of protest and violence in 12 Northern States. According to the European Union EOM Report (2015), the 2015 general elections produced one of Nigeria's most tense campaigns, as imprudent words were commonly used. The National Human Rights Commission Report (2015) on pre-election violence identified 60 incidents and 58 persons killed over 50 days.

Human insecurity caused by electoral violence has continued to be a replicated experience in the Fourth Republic. The high rate of pre-electoral violence, coupled with other factors, affected the voter turnout of electorates in the 2019 general elections. According to INEC, voters' turnout was 35.6% for the elections of February 23, 2019 while that of March 9 was even lower. The figure was lower than the 44% percent recorded during the 2015 general elections (INEC, 2019). Two reasons account for the low voter turnout: electoral violence witnessed before the Presidential election and the postponement of the election from February 16 to February 23, 2019. A closer look into the election shows the influence of various stakeholders such as private actors, the state, as well as other stakeholder in the electoral process by intimidating electorates, disrupting voting, and threatening the officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). There were several cases of disruptions in Ebonyi, Abia, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, and Lagos State as reported by the Civil Society Situation Monitoring Unit. There were also cases of attacks on INEC offices. The INEC office in Ijesa, Oriade Local Government Area in Osun State was one of the offices of the electoral body attacked on Saturday, February 23, 2019. Card readers and ballot papers used in the presidential election were reported to have been burnt by the assonants.

The Civil Society Situation Room Report (2019, p. 33) also showed that there were 96 verified incidents, leading to 361 deaths between November 16, 2018, and February 23, 2019 which was the Presidential Election Day on. A daily average of 3.5 deaths of Nigerians was on record to have occurred within a period of 104 days, with a daily occurrence of incidents. There were incidents which resulted in fatalities that were reported to have taken place in 29 of the 36 States (including the Federal Capital Territory). These incidents took place in each of the six geopolitical zones. The number of incidents as well as the number of deaths per incident became more pronounced as the elections approached, with the Election Day recording the highest number of these incidents and then going down afterwards.

More breakdowns by the CSSR lay bare the fact that the average death count per incident was four, while the North-central, Northwest, and Northeast recorded death tolls exceeding the average. The South-east recorded the lowest number of deaths, incidents, and the minimum death rate. A critical analysis of human insecurity caused by national violence and deaths rates during the elections show Rivers States, Benue, Kaduna, and Borno states as the leaders. Reports also have it that 15% to 20% of all election-related deaths took place on the election days, with tensions that had existed over time prompting the clashes to more deaths. Though the incidents that took place in the north were not much, they were bloodier. Majority of the violence that took place in the Southern Nigeria on Election Day happened mainly in Rivers, Delta, and Lagos States (CSSR, 2019, Obiam, 2021). They were characterized by violence, ballot box snatching, and maiming and killings both by state security agencies and by criminal elements. The lack of meaningful progress in addressing the prevalent political violence, the

lack of accountability for rights abuses and the inability of security forces to respond effectively to threats to people's lives and security affected the way and manner in which the 2019 general elections were conducted in the country.

Table 1: Electoral Violence Based on Geo-Political Zones in the 2019 General Elections

SN	Geopolitical Zones	Number of Incidents	Number of Casualties
1	North Central	23	111
2	North East	16	146
3	North West	20	172
4	South East	7	14
5	South South	59	120
6	South West	36	63

Source: *Civil Society Situation Room (2019; Obiam, 2021)*

A state-by-state presentation of the data by the Civil Society Situation Room (2019) shows that Zamfara, Benue, Kaduna, Borno, and Rivers states witnessed the highest number of casualties. Again, violence caused by the security agencies was recorded in Bayelsa, Abia, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Lagos, Anambra, Benue, Kwara, Plateau, and Rivers States while incidents in the North East though they were few, they were fatal because of Boko Haram menace.

The Niger Delta Watch (2019, p. 4) while writing on the 2019 presidential election, submitted that the Niger Delta region alone recorded intimidation or disappearance of party candidates or supporters, 116 cases of bribery, 103 fatalities, 159 violent incidents, 38 incidents of destruction, manipulation, or theft of campaign materials (such as billboards and posters), 35 cases involving detention, intimidation or disappearance of voters or civil society members, 36 cases of detention, 31 incidents involving delays or irregularities in voting preparations or processes, 16 incidents of destruction, 29 riots or protests, manipulation or theft of voting materials or systems, 12 incidents involving campaign misconduct or irregularities.

According to Justice (2019), violence was worst witnessed in six states, which include Plateau, Bauchi, Sokoto, Benue, Rivers, and Kano states. Consequently, INEC had to cancel elections and reschedule another day for supplementary elections for Kano and Rivers states. The two states (Kano State- APC and Rivers State – PDP) have become hot spots for violence even during the past elections, which had resulted in several killings and the destruction of properties. Human Rights Watch accounted for those 11 persons who lost their lives in the presidential election that took place on February 23, in the two states. Similarly, Human Rights Watch reported that a Non-governmental Organization, "We the People" submitted that soldiers carried out a retaliatory attack after armed men killed one of them, and this led to the death of over 40 persons and about 52 seriously wounded as they tried to swim across when soldiers were shooting randomly. According to Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (cited in Sanni 2019), about 629 persons (North Central 121, North-West 172, South-south 120, South-east 14, North East- 146, and, South-west 63) were killed before, during, and immediately after the 2019 general elections over election-related matters. All these incidents showcased the paucity of human security before, during and after the 2019 elections in the country.

Human Security Threats in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

For easy analysis, the intensity and dimensions of violence which affected human security as witnessed in the 2019 general elections are discussed under the following headings:

- a) *Loss of life:* Virtually all the election observer groups acknowledged widespread violence before, during, and after the 2019 general elections. Of serious concern was the high incidence of deaths recorded during this period which to many observers surpassed the number of deaths recorded in previous elections. For example, the European Union Election Observation Final Report on the 2019 general election has the following to say ... approximately 145 people were killed in election-related violence, 84 of which were in the South-South zone... Approximately, 64 people were reportedly killed during the campaign up to the 23 February election, 21 of these deaths were during the week following the postponement. Approximately 35 people were reported killed on 23 February and 24 on 9 March (EU Election Observers Mission Final Report, 2019: 23). Similar figures on the number of deaths during the 2019 general elections were reported by other election observer groups. The Civil Society Situation Room on its part documented more than 260 politically motivated deaths since the beginning of the campaign that led to the 2019 general elections.
- b) *Attack on INEC Offices and Officials:* Apart from observed irregularities including vote-buying, and intimidation of voters and election officials which were reported by virtually all the Observer Groups, the 2019 general elections also witnessed several cases of physical attack on election officials and the INEC offices across the country. There were reports that “INEC premises and officials were subject of attack and harassment during the three election day periods”. It is on record that two weeks before the scheduled 16 February election, “three INEC offices in Abia, Plateau and Anambra states were engulfed by fire leading to the destruction of hundreds of PVCs, electoral materials for over 100 polling units and over 4,600 smart card readers”. There were also reports of intimidation of INEC officials in 39 local government areas in 20 states by EU election observers. Several other attacks reported by election groups included: threatening and compelling INEC officials to issue collated results under duress; assaults, abductions, and sexual violence against officials; intimidation and unlawful arrest of election officials by soldiers who invaded collation centres, especially in Port Harcourt, etc.
- c) *Snatching of Ballot Boxes and Destruction of Electoral Materials:* Both acts were well-known atrocities committed during past elections in Nigeria. However, the dimension they assumed during the 2019 general elections was so alarming. Social media were littered with videos of unimaginable acts of hooliganism and vandalism perpetrated by well-known political thugs, while the security agents meant to protect the voters and ballot boxes watched in disbelief, especially in Lagos and many other states. The role played by soldiers and armed gangs in Rivers State collation centres during the 2019 general elections was equally amazing to many political observers.
- d) *Inflammatory Utterances and Hate Speeches:* Inflammatory utterances like a verbal threat against political opponents, use of abusive language, and hate speeches, especially during campaigns and before elections are often ignored as part of electoral violence. However, these practices have been shown to constitute major physiological assaults against their victims and are known to be very potent for building physical and structural violence during elections. Most of these acts played out during the period leading to the 2019 general elections. These helped to further heighten an already tense atmosphere ready to explode in violence as witnessed during the elections (Obiam et al., 2022).

The above were intensified by the following human security threats which occurred before, during and after the 2019 general elections in the country:

- a. *Security Issues:* There are a number of human security issues across the country that threaten national development and the stability of the country. The International Crisis Group sees the risks of violence to be highest in six states: Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and Adamawa. The risk of violence is often due to local political dynamics and rivalries involving a mix of factors that include “an intense struggle between the APC and PDP for control over states with large electorates, vast public revenues or symbolic electoral value; local rivalry between former and incumbent governors; tension resulting from ethno-religious or herder-farmer conflict; and the presence of criminal groups that politicians can recruit to attack rivals and their constituents”. The security risks across the country include the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, the herder-farmer conflict in the Middle Belt which is actually more deadly than Boko Haram, armed banditry in the northwest, Biafran separatists in the southeast, and political thugs working with political figures to intimidate citizens and rig votes, particularly in the South-south zone.
- b. *Partisanship among Security Forces:* Partisanship among security forces, who are supposed to ensure human security and peaceful elections across the country, remains the most potent of all the security threats. Concern about the partisanship of security forces, and vote-rigging that comes along with it, was reinforced with the 2018 Osun and Ekiti state elections, the 2019 general elections, and the elections held in the Bayelsa and Kogi States. These flaws could foretell of the impending doom in the country’s future elections. Security agents currently serve as instruments for truncating electoral democracy in the country. Unfortunately, security agents who are supposed to serve as symbols of peace and order sometimes collide with some politicians in election rigging. They will scare away voters by carrying out massive arrests at the targeted locations so as to allocate more votes to their influential masters. The Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room, a broad platform of 60 civil society organizations, released a statement that the election was “heavily policed” with security forces, including the army, that “created heavy tension and apprehension among voters.” The Situation Room noted “reports of political thugs and hoodlums being used to intimidate voters” and “incidences of violence and gunshots around some of the polling units and attacks against opposing political sides with supporters of a particular party being prevented from voting.” The group concluded that “the lapses in the Osun rerun elections has put a serious question mark on the electoral democratic process and raises concerns about the forthcoming 2019 Nigeria general elections,” which later manifested in the 2019 general elections. In fact, throughout the election campaign, the PDP was particularly vocal in its warnings of vote rigging by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security forces.
- c. *Vote Rigging:* Vote rigging has remained a threat to Nigeria elections, human security and the sustenance of electoral democracy in the country. The deepening suspicion of vote rigging in the country was ensured by President Buhari on January 25, 2019 when he suspended the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Walter Onnoghen, due to accusations of failing to declare his assets. Buhari claimed to be acting on an order from the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT). Buhari replaced Onnoghen with an acting chief justice, Tanko Muhammad. This is worrisome because, as the head of Nigeria’s independent judiciary, Onnoghen was expected to oversee any electoral disputes in the upcoming February 16 election. Buhari apparently did not follow the provisions in the constitution that provides some checks and balances from either the Senate or the judiciary. Although Nigeria’s judiciary has been seriously compromised, in the past, the courts have played a stabilizing

role in the electoral conflict. Buhari's action casts doubts about the rule of law in Nigeria and causes many to see this as "a calculated attempt to gain some electoral advantage should an election petition between the president and the main opposition party end up in the Supreme Court." Atiku called the move an act of dictatorship, the Nigerian Bar Association called it an "attempted coup," and the US Embassy said that it "undercuts the stated determination of government, candidates, and political party leaders to ensure that the elections proceed in a way that is free, fair, transparent, and peaceful – leading to a credible result."

- d. **Illegal Arrest and Detention of Political Opponents:** Adding to the above, some politicians who have the upper hand in the government, in an attempt to win an election by all means may call for an illegal arrest and detention of their opponents on or before the election Day thereby violating some of their human rights/human security. This, as a result, might render the mobilization of votes by his opponents very limited. Influential politicians sometimes hire thugs who will rigmarole the streets shooting sporadically in the air at polling centres to scare away genuine electorates who will in return run for their dear lives allowing these thugs to take away the stuffed ballot boxes and replace them with empty ones.
- e. **Vote-buying:** This is another threat to elections and human security in Nigeria. To ensure adequate human security and improve the management and integrity of elections, in 2015 biometric voter-card readers were introduced by the INEC. These card readers have reduced the broad daylight rigging of elections. The trend now is to buy votes, and disrupt elections in opposition strongholds, which often leads to inconclusive elections. Vote buying was prominent in the just concluded 2019 general election.
- f. **Fake News:** Another threat to elections and human security in Nigeria is the pervasive presence of fake news. While fake news is not new to Nigerian politics, this phenomenon has reached new heights. With the widespread adoption of social media, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, it is becoming easier for fake news to spread and gain traction, even resulting in people being killed. Nearly one-third of Nigerians have reported sharing news that they later found was made up of, according to a study by Nieman Lab. Most famously this cycle has been an outrageous yet persistently shared story in which President Buhari died from an illness and is being impersonated by a Sudanese clone named Jubril. This story started from a Biafra secessionist group and eventually started becoming mainstream. The government's poor communication about Buhari's 150-day medical leave in London certainly contributed to the story's ability to gain traction. These fake news stories serve as another means to garner more votes, divide the electorate, or suppress votes for one's rivals. In response to this trend, 16 Nigerian newsrooms have been collaborating to debunk fake news through the fact-checking project Cross-Check Nigeria (Mbaka, 2019).

In a similar manner, a political observer, Ibrahim (2007), has identified some ways by which the nefarious activities of political parties, unpatriotic politicians, public office holders and their like have affected elections and human security in Nigeria. These factors include illegal printing of voters' cards; illegal possession of ballot boxes; stuffing of ballot boxes; falsification of election results; illegal thumb-printing of ballot papers; infant voting; compilation of fictitious names on voters' lists; illegal compilation of separate voters' lists; illegal printing of forms used for collection and declaration of election results;; deliberate refusal to supply election materials to certain areas; announcing results in places where no elections were held; unauthorized announcement of election results; harassment of candidates, agents, and voters; change of list of electoral officials; and box-switching and inflation of figures. Poverty and inequalities; environmental degradation and climate change;

unemployment; conflicts and violence, persecution or human rights violations, forced displacement; disease outbreaks; hunger and food insecurity among others.

Factors Mitigating Human Security in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

There are immediate factors opined by Osuntokun (2017) which militate human security before, during and after the 2019 general elections in the country. They include:

- a) *Porous Borders*: One major immediate factor that has enhanced insecurity in Nigeria is the porous frontiers of the country, where individual movements are largely untracked. The porosity of Nigeria's borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders as well as the weak and security system, weapons come easily enter Nigeria from other countries. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the availability of these weapons have enabled militant groups and criminal groups to have easy access to arms. Nigeria is estimated to host more than 70% of the approximately 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa. Additionally, the porosity of the Nigerian border has made it possible for an unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Niger, the Chad and the Republic of Benin. These migrants who are among the perpetrators of crime in the country.
- b) *Rural /Urban Drift*: The migration of jobless youths from rural areas to urban centres is also one of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Nigeria is a country with very high rural/urban drift. Most urban areas in Nigeria have grown beyond their environmental carrying capacities and existing infrastructure which has resulted in increased poor quality of the living conditions in urban areas in Nigeria. Out of frustration, these youths are drawn into crime.
- c) *Social Irresponsibility of Companies*: Corporate social irresponsibility is a set of actions that increases externalized costs and/or promotes distributional conflicts. Companies engage in corporate social responsibility in order to offset corporate social irresponsibility. The rise of terror groups in some parts of the country is directly related to the neglect of social responsibility by companies to the community where they are operating. This was the case for the Niger Delta crisis.
- d) *Unemployment/Poverty*: As a result of the high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime. The failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is one of the major causes of insecurity in the country.
- e) *Terrorism*: At the most proximate and least disputable level, terrorism is the most fundamental source of insecurity in Nigeria today, and its primary bases and sources of support are generally been located in religious fanaticism and intolerance. "The premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts" which has cost 13.4% of the world gross domestic product. Nigeria has lost more than 1000 lives in the northern region since 2009 due to the insurgency of this infamous sect, Boko Haram which has been ravaging the northern region of the country.
- f) *Weak Security system*: This results from inadequate equipment for the security arm of the government, both in terms of weaponry and training. This is in addition to the poor attitudinal and behavioural disposition of security personnel. In many cases, security

personnel assigned to deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the situations in a way that prevents them from occurring. Even when these exist, some personnel become influenced by ethnic, religious or communal sentiments and are easily swallowed by their personal interest to serve their people, rather than the nation. Thus, instead of being national watch dogs and defending national interests and values, and protecting people from harm by criminals, they soon become saboteurs of government effort by supporting and fuelling insecurity through either leaking vital security information or aiding and abetting criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law. Furthermore, the Boko Haram insurgency/Niger Delta militancy is sufficiently diffuse that the superior fire power of government cannot be fully effective, and to approaching triumph too closely may be to foster resistance by the communities where the battle would be is fought.

All of the factors above are succinctly summarized in the views expressed by foreign observers about the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Sources of insecurity in Nigeria are characterized by four factors: political conflicts; unbalanced development that involves horizontal inequalities; religious/ethnic distrust; and leadership failure. It could be associated with a low level of economic development as a result of poor governance and a high level of corruption.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the social contract theory as championed by Thomas Hobbes in 1646. In his *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes tells us that in the state of nature, when there was neither politics nor morality, men lived in a state of chaos, conflict, strife, war of all against all, and insecurity. There was no politics, nor law, no morality, no sense of justice or injustice, good or evil. Only might was right. The major concern of men was how to satisfy their appetites, and the only means of doing so was by brute force.

In the state of nature, there was no permanent ownership of anything. Men lived in a state of perpetual hostility. Men were enemies of one another, there was no peace. Men lived in a state of fear and danger of violent death. Hobbes described the life of man in the state of nature as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (Hobbes 1646).

The realization of the danger of leaving perpetually in this state of affairs made men to decide to come together and form a political society on the basis of a social contract. They made social contract (agreement) among themselves to voluntarily surrender their right to do whatever they could, and also restrict their freedom. They therefore, empower a sovereign to enforce morality, law and order. The sovereign government has the sole authority to determine right and wrong, good and bad, justice and injustice, in the society and to enforce them in order to ensure peace and unity. To Hobbes, this is the beginning of political society and morality.

Accordingly, to his social contract theory, you could see that Hobbes describes the nature of man as essentially selfish; he is moved to action not by his intellect or reason, but by his appetites, desires and passions for power and dominance. This reflects the way and manner in which most politicians and their respective political parties in Nigeria move to actions not based on their intellect or reason but on their selfish appetite to seize political power by all means, including influencing INEC officials in their favour, intimidating and victimizing their opponents and electorates not in their favour, and distorting the election administration process among others.

Finally, to curb the high level of insecurity of life in Nigeria during elections and the dare need for peace so as not to plunge Nigeria into the state of nature, there is the need for the observance or enforcement of morality (electoral laws) during elections in the country. Thus, for human security to be guaranteed during elections, the electoral law (which represents an agreement reached by the INEC, political parties and the electorates) gave the sovereign (INEC in this instance working with law enforcement agents) absolute power to enforce law and order to achieve peace during election periods in the society. Therefore, the INEC via the agreement is empowered to control and checkmates possible excesses of some politicians and political parties over the weaklings in the state. In this case, the INEC is the sovereign Hobbes called the Leviathan.

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a qualitative descriptive research design. A qualitative descriptive research design is used when an uncomplicated description is desired that focuses on the details of what, where, and why of an event or experience. The rationale for adopting this research design is to aid this study in understanding people's (that is, the government officials, the INEC officials, security agencies, political loyalists, politicians, the electorates etc) beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions before, during and after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Additionally, the study relied on secondary data generated from textbooks, journals, newspaper, magazines, periodical, unpublished materials etc. The collected data were theoretically analysed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Democracy can only be consolidated, if human security, that is, the protection of lives and properties and observance of fundamental human rights remains paramount because democratic governance promotes supremacy of the constitution and constitutionalism. The rule of law is also very important for the consolidation of democracy. In the absence of the rule of law, democracy will lose its good value. Therefore, our discussion so far in this study reveals that elections and human security in Nigeria have always been problematic and often characterized by violence since independence. Also, attempts by successive governments to address these challenges over the years had only shown little or no success. The 2019 general elections in the country, however, presented before Nigerians another opportunity to reflect and project into the future with the view to providing suggestions on how this common problem can be tackled, and with a special focus on the recommendations given by various Observer Missions during the elections. The big picture of the state of affairs in Nigeria can be located within the social contract theory as championed by Thomas Hobbes and the failure to regulate the electoral process. To tackle the issue of human security during elections in Nigeria, we recommend the following plausible measures as way forward for Nigeria:

1. There should be improved security surveillance, vigilance and high-level intelligence gathering by military and para-military agencies in Nigeria. The Nigeria Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, Civil Defence, Immigration and others should collaborate with one another in intelligence gathering and sharing. This is necessary to help identify high risk areas, arrest and prosecute sponsors of terrorism and other unholy acts that threaten Nigeria's national security.
2. As the country is intensely preparing for another national multiparty election in the year 2023, the federal government should improve the capacity of the country's national

- security agencies to prove adequate human security and guarantee free and peaceful conduct of elections in the country. This will douse the doubts about the capacity of the national security agencies to prove adequate human security and guarantee free and peaceful conduct of future elections in the country.
3. The police should intensify efforts at arresting and prosecuting criminal elements especially cultists, militias, bandits and their sponsors. By developing administrative competence, according to Nwambuko and Aмоке (2021), through consistent training and retraining in crime detection and counterterrorism management. This will enable the police and other paramilitary agencies to strive to carry out in-depth investigations of security threats assessment in Nigeria, and advise the electoral body (INEC) appropriately to ensure that electoral officials and voters are not exposed to danger during elections.
 4. Similarly, the federal government should ensure that national security agencies remain apolitical before, during and after elections in Nigeria. This is essential in order to promote healthy competitive elections and guarantee adequate human security in the country. Human security should not be compromised to guarantee the deepening of democracy in Nigeria.
 5. Traditional ruler as custodian of the people's culture has strategic roles to play in engendering violence free elections. They should consistently remind their subjects of the need to maintain peace before, during and after elections in the country. Also, security agencies should work closely with traditional rulers, vigilante leaders and their members in order to track down criminal elements that may threaten human security. This is paramount in fostering human security in the country especially in election periods.
 6. Generally, it is obvious that diverse human security threats exist before, during and after the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Therefore, all hands (including the international community) should be on deck to tame the tide of rising cases of human insecurity. This will ensure or promote adequate human security and guarantee free, fair and credible general elections in the country's future elections.
 7. The government should take concrete steps to address the widespread political violence and threats to human security before, during and after elections in the country, and to ensure accountability for human rights abuses by national security agencies. Security forces should be made to respond effectively to threats to people's lives and security.
 8. Security forces that have been implicated in serious violations of electoral laws and human rights abuses, such as threats to human security - arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention without trial, torture, extrajudicial killings, rape and sexual violence against women and girls in camps for displaced people among others should be adequately punished to serve as deterrents to others. The government should start by reforming the security forces to ensure strict compliance with human rights standards and prompt the investigation and prosecution of those credibly implicated in abuses.
 9. Finally, according to Nwambuko and Nnaeto (2023), public sector organizations are entities that serve the public interest. Therefore, as the INEC is a public sector organization established to serve the public interest, it should be independent of the executive and remain nonpartisan. This is important as it will make the Commission to be independent and transparent in its dealings with politicians, in the discharge of its functions, be accountable and responsive to other stakeholders involved in the electoral process.

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