

Election, Insecurity and the Crises of Development and Underdevelopment in Nigeria's Imo State, since 2019

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Abstract

Election-induced insecurity has become the greatest challenge confronting Imo State presently. Since 2018 governorship primaries of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the general election in March, 2019, the results have plunged the State into violence. Several literatures have highlighted elections and the challenges but current research investigated the poor management of the election processes which generated insecurity. Zero-sum game and frustration-aggression theories guided the study. 420 respondents were interviewed using the Likert scale questionnaire for quantitative technique while 14 key informants were interviewed for qualitative data collection. Quantitative were analyzed using statistical mean while qualitative data were content analyzed. [confrontation with perceived enemies triggered off insecurity. The atmosphere in Imo State was characterized by attacks from unknown gunmen; kidnapping and the activities of IPOB. The outcomes of these criminal activities were threats to lives and property, citizens no longer have confidence in the electoral process and the socio-economic stagnation in the State. The study recommended free, fair and transparent elections and the introduction of Peace-building measures to restore security in the State.

Keywords: Crime, Election, Gunmen, Insecurity, Peace-Building.

Introduction

Most constitutional crises erupt due to poorly conducted and supervised primary before the actual election into political positions in government. This is at the root of politically related conflicts in Nigeria before and after elections and this has had grave consequences on decision making and implementation of government policies. The flawed processes particularly allow all manner of individuals to participate without a proper check of their background and managerial capacity. This has been allowed for a long time because of weak institutions and corruption. Many of these institutions have been compromised to a large extent by parties in government and by powerful individuals who are more powerful than government. Moreover, politicians have made electoral contest a 'do or die' exercise. In some African countries election and election results have led to civil unrest and in most cases escalated to civil wars as in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone in recent past.

During the First Republic in Nigeria, election-related challenges triggered off the crisis in the Western region and part of this snowballed into military take-over of governance in Nigeria on January 15, 1966, (Anifowose 1982; Soeze, 2011). Also, during the aborted June 12, 1993 presidential election in which Chief Moshood Abiola was on the verge of victory,

and the election result was declared inconclusive, this led to unprecedented violence in Lagos and some South western states of Nigeria, (Babarinsa, (2003). Ploch (2012); Bekoe, (2011) and Amnesty International (2011) argued that Nigeria has had a wave of violent incidents ranging from communal unrest to bombings. There have been persistent attacks by Boko Haram Islamic militant group in the North East; the IPOB and unknown gun men in the South East; banditry in the North West; Fulani militant attacks on farmers and indigenes in North Central; and South West and some miscreants parading as agitators of resource control from the South South. Several lives are lost daily due to the activities of these militants. Moreover, there are kidnappers and political terrorists who use their position of authority to steal resources meant for development. All these agents of destabilization are used by politicians to cause election violence in Nigeria but security agencies have failed to curb these criminalities.

In Nigeria, the incumbency factor is exploited at both the federal and state levels to aid election mal-practices with the sole objective of retaining the instrument of power. This is reinforced by the zero-sum type of politics that promotes 'the winner takes all'. And where it becomes apparent that the party in power is on the verge of losing power, they resort to violence particularly through sponsored criminality and the net result is bad governance. Therefore, election could be won legitimately or procured at the court of law with the backing of the corrupt electoral body or the compromised judiciary. Obviously, as a corollary to this argument, is that since 1999, elections have been massively rigged and those backed by the party at the centre and with huge sums of money are declared winners and they shamelessly ask the loser to go to court, where they would not get justice. The consequence of this flawed process is that election-induced criminality has been trailed with a high degree of fatality in terms of human and material losses.

The understanding of election related insecurity is basically made easier by examining the contending forces involved. This is critical toward confronting this challenge. It is in this connection that this research argues that election-induced insecurity has dominated discourse in Imo State since the 2018 All Progressive Congress (APC) governorship primary where the then incumbent governor, Rochas Okorochoa wanted his son-in-law to emerge as the flag bearer, but current governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma, with the backing of powerful external forces was drafted from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to wrestle the position from Okorochoa, Hope Uzodinma was announced as the APC flag bearer. This set the stage for a political crisis. Obialor and Ozuzu (2019) argued that "elections in Nigeria have been generally described as a 'do-or-die affair', where every contestant tries at all cost to undo his perceived political rival". They further argued that the consequences of this mannerism have always manifested in arson, high profile killing of opponents, maiming of electorates, snatching of ballot boxes and election materials and destruction of properties.

The displacement of Okorochoa's interest in APC made the emergence of Emeka Ihedioha of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the governorship election much easier as he was declared winner. However, Hope Uzodinma of the APC who came fourth in the election approached the Supreme Court which granted him his request to be declared winner.. Since his swearing in as the governor of Imo State, this has escalated the activities of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and the 'unknown gun men. There has been threats to lives and property and governance most times were stalled by the seemingly atmosphere of insecurity. Moreover, the imposed sit-at-home order by the IPOB, a separatist organization on Mondays has crippled the economy of Imo State and the South-East in general.

The reason for this sordid situation has been attributed to irreconcilable differences during the APC primaries and the displacement of the PDP led government by the APC. Government infrastructure and the general welfare of citizens are threatened daily leading to loss of lives and property and the escalation of economic crisis and poverty. All these have threatened national security as violence has conceptualized the entire gamut of governance in Imo State. It is against this background that this research tries to interpret election-induced insecurity and assess its implications on national security and the growth of democracy in Imo State taken into consideration the widely held maxim that the peace and security are the basis for the development of democracy in any society.

Statement of the Problem Elections in Nigeria have been bedeviled by corruption right from the process of nomination of party delegates, primaries and the election proper. The process has been problematic and highly compromised by money politics and party leaders who impose candidates on the people. This situation has resulted to chaos. Election in Nigeria has been conceptualized in the context of violence; the more connected you are and the heavier your pocket, determines how successful a candidate could be. That is why election is viewed as a matter of life and death. Ogundiya and Baba (2005) see electoral violence in Nigeria as the major issue in assessing the progress and problems affecting democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Elections are the life wire of modern democracy and without it, strong men would take power by force and run autocratic governments.

In the build up to the general election of 2019, there was a rift in the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Imo State between the then governor Rochas Okorocha, who wanted his son-in-law, Uche Nwosu, to become the party's candidate, and the other camp which sponsored Hope Uzodinma, who cross carpeted from the People's Democratic Party (PDP); in the process, Hope Uzodinma emerged the party's sole candidate which forced Uche Nwosu to contest under the Action Alliance Party. The battle line was drawn. They both lost in the governorship election to Emeka Ihedioha of the PDP, but Hope Uzodinma approached the High court to be declared as the rightful winner of the election and persisted till the Supreme Court granted his prayer and was sworn in, in January 2020 as the legally elected governor of Imo State. Since that time, insecurity has dominated the entire gamut of the of Imo state. It is as result of this that this research investigates the background to the state of insecurity, the nature of insecurity and the negative outcome on democratic development in Imo State.

Purpose of the Study The purpose of this study is to investigate election-induced insecurity and its impact on the social, economic and development of democratic principles in Imo State. But the specific objectives are: (a) To highlight the root causes of insecurity in Imo State 2019-present (b) To examine the nature of insecurity within the period (c) To investigate the consequences of insecurity on the governance structure of Imo State; and (d) To suggest strategies that would restore security and development in Imo State.

Research Questions The questions that would guide the investigation are: (a) What are the Root causes of the election-induced security in Imo State 2019-2022? (b) What is the nature of insecurity in Imo State within this period? (c) What are the consequences of insecurity on the governance structure of Imo State? (d) What are the strategies that would restore peace in Imo State?

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Election and Electoral Conflict Election is viewed as the process of selecting leaders to manage the affairs state. It is a method of allowing citizens/electorates to make a choice of those that would organized their society to achieve the purpose of government, (Onah and Chukwu, 2017, Abah and Nwokwu, 2015). Election ensures political recruitment for the representatives of the people. It sustains democracy and the process must be insulated from manipulation by politicians who want to win at all cost. As a matter of fact, the quality of the process determines the quality of leadership. If a process is flawed due to corruption, the representatives selected would not represent the proper choice of the people. In Nigeria, the electoral process has always been influenced by the government in power and the few powerful rich. Therefore, it has been described as the 'cash and carry' process because the poor hardly wins election in the country.

Other factors that influence elections in Nigeria are religion, ethnicity, regional interest and the wealth of the candidate. In fact, these factors have been the bane of good governance. Orji and Uzodi (2015) argued that "results in Nigerian elections come in two separate columns. One, records the votes cast at polling stations, the other the number of people killed around the time of the election." This is because several cases of electoral malpractice have resulted in conflicts and violence in Nigeria and the manipulation of electoral results start from the primaries.

This situation elevates office holders above other citizens and rules are flouted because the judiciary has been disabled by several factors. In most primaries in Nigeria, the results are either written before or after the election in hotels and some private buildings and some principal offices of the judiciary are compromised to authenticate them. For instance, the All Progressive Congress (APC) governorship primary in 2018/2019 was hijacked by the Chairman of the party's committee that came to conduct it, Mr. Ahmed Gulak, who gave the ticket to Hope Uzodinma, while the secretary of the committee gave his support to Uche Nwosu, who is the son-in-law to the then sitting governor Rochas Okorochoa. This created a rift in the party. as a result, there were several cases of kidnapping and subsequent murder of people loyal to each opposing group. There was also the challenge posed by the candidate of the PDP, Emeka Ihedioha. All these created tension and an atmosphere of insecurity.

Concept of Crime Crime is viewed as an immoral and harmful behavior exhibited by a criminal. This behavior causes injury to moral sense, because it is a threat to public safety. It disorganizes society, breaches political and social rights of citizens whose effort to develop their society is affected. Crime exposes the loss of social and cultural values that symbolize the essence of the existence (Ijioma, Ibeh, Ijioma and Uzuegbu 2022). Crime is an act that has left the personal into the public realm, because it breaks existing rules and laws that have legitimate punishment or sanction to prevent an occurrence (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 2009). A crime is reported and processed through an administrative system or law enforcement agency. It could be taken to a court unless otherwise (Adedayo 2013). Adedayo also argues that crime is a threat to economy, political and social security. He further avers that these threats are major factors that hinder development by scaring foreign investors, reducing quality of life, destroying human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states and undermines democratic development. It is in this view that we see electoral manipulation by both the political class and the staff of the electoral body as criminal behavior that have resulted in the selection of rulers and not leaders who manipulate the electoral process to achieve their selfish ambition. The net result of this immoral behavior is bad governance, because the representatives owe nobody

any explanation for their actions. Therefore, to restore law and order in elections require that the fundamental elements of crime such as public run, moral run, law and punishment of the criminal must be upheld.

Concept of Security and Insecurity Various scholars across the globe have postulated differing viewpoints on the concept of security. According to the United Nations Development Programme (1994) human security could be defined as protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the daily activities, at homes, offices or communities. That is, security is the state of being safe and secure from danger, it could also be protection from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression. For the Commission on Human Security (2003), human security is the protection of important aspect of human lives in a way that would enhance human freedom and fulfillment. Human security encompasses freedom from want, harm, fear and the freedom to take appropriate actions without any form of hindrance. It is also the assurance of future well-being and freedom from threat.

Williams (2008) who sees security from the socio-political perspective averred that security involves the capacity to pursue cherished political and social ambitions. That is, security is socio-political in nature as without security there can be no political stability and consequently social activities will be in chaos. Palme (1992) argues that there is a connection between security and survival. For him, security is a basic condition for the survival of human beings. Thus, security is synonymous to freedom from danger, fear and doubt among others. Nwagboso (2012) argues that security is an essential concept which is commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to the survival of individuals or groups. Thus, for him, security can be equated with freedom from present and future danger, harm or anxiety. Security may not be the absence of threats but it is the ability to respond to these threats with appropriate skill and expertise. Otto and Ukpere (2012), view security as it relates to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis. Akin (2008) also argues that security is any laid down procedures toward the protection of persons and property against hostile persons. It is a situation where by a conducive atmosphere is created within which people in the state can go about their normal daily activities without threat to either their lives or properties. Thus, security encompasses all approach toward safeguarding humans as well as material resources in the state against all forms of aggressions or violent conduct. On the other hand, insecurity encompasses threat to lives and property through assassinations, kidnapping, imposition of sit-at-home, inability to move freely in one's environment with harassment from all manner of criminals and security agencies, inability to associate with others and to carry out one's economic activities.

Theoretical Framework

This research shall be guided by two theories: The Zero-sum game and Frustration-aggression theories. The zero sum game theory was developed by John Von Neumann and co-written by Oskar Mongenster in 1944. The concept is important because people use it in wide variety of industries, such as economics, finance and experimental economics. When people apply zero-sum game to these industries with equations and mathematical formulas, they can predict the outcome of a transaction. Experimental economics considers many factors like losses, gains, individual behavior and optimality to test economic theories and get real world insight. Even though a zero-sum game involves two distinct parties, the result of a zero-sum game could impact millions of people, depending on the sizes of the parties involved. A zero-sum game is a situation where one person's loss in a

transaction is equivalent to another person's gain. After the losses and gains, the net effect on both sides is equal to zero. This is because the model of zero-sum game includes all the resources at the start, meaning the supply of resources shrink, cannot grow and there cannot be any external intervention. Zero-sum game can only allow for the redistribution of the initial amount of the resources.

This game is like a toss and during elections politicians buy votes, snatch ballot boxes, intimidate opponents and write results on procured authentic INEC Form E8 sheets. The activities of some INEC staff justify the claim that they are compromised and make these sensitive forms available in exchange for huge sums. This was the case during the APC primaries and in the main governorship election due to the pecks of office that come the power invested in the positions they occupy after being declared winner and the loser is left at the mercy of the victor.

The frustration-aggression theory developed by Neal Miller in 1941 and expanded by Leonard Berkowitz in 1969 is commonly referred to as the frustration-aggression hypothesis. It ranks as the most seminal and prolific theories in research. This theory has been applied and studied in various areas, including clinical and social psychology, ethnology, sociology, criminology and medical research. Frustration-aggression theory explains the behaviour of animals (Berkowitz, 1983). This theory states that "the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression.". Frustration is an event instead of an affective state. Aggression does not occur without any form of prior frustration and the assertion that frustration "always leads to some form of aggression" implies that aggression is a certain outcome of any frustration. This theory explains that people in society have different expectations and targets, sometimes the opportunities are limited resulting in unfulfilled goal. There is the tendency of confronting those responsible for frustrating them, and it usually comes in form of violence; the greater the deprivation, the greater the anger and the level of violence. Therefore, most conflicts are a result of frustration. With regard to the this research, the politicians who felt cheated in the APC primaries and the judicial installation of Hope Uzodimma as the new governor after Emeka Ihedioha's seven month stint as governor may have invoked a wave of violence in Imo State to make governance difficult for the new governor. Unknown gun men attacked police installations, the correctional centres and property belonging to ordinary citizens. These actions combined with the sit-at-home order, kidnapping, militarization of the state, assassinations and violent activities of the IPOB threatened the entire existence of the state and the consequences have deepened the under-development in Imo State.

Empirical Studies In the course of carrying out this study, several scholars' works were reviewed to give direction to current research. Peter and Abdulrahman (2018) investigated Political and Economic Effects of Post-Election Violence on National Development. This work argues that one of the most recurring crises in Africa is electoral violence because politicians tend to use money, power, intelligence and craftiness to ensure elections are won in their favour. The build-up, magnitude, and nature of electoral violence depend on a number of factors. These include the democratic integrity of the political parties; that of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); the methods of sitting polling units; and the distribution of voting materials, among others. The study highlights the causes of post-election violence; its implications on both political and economic spheres and also proffers solution to the problems vis-à-vis national development. The study adopted the documentary research methods and found that: (i) weak electoral laws, (ii) poverty, (iii) unemployment, (iv) hate speech (via social and media), and (v) lack of

effective collaboration by security agencies leads to post-election violence. The study therefore recommends that: a robust and strong inter-agency collaboration by the INEC to conduct hitch free election. In Ojo and Ademowo's (2015) *Electoral Security and its Implications for Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, the study examined the phenomenon of electoral violence and how this problem has continued to intensify with its corrosive effect on the democratization process in the 4th Republic. Using secondary sources of data collection, this study explored the nexus between electoral security and democratic consolidation in Nigeria and it revealed that this manifested in physical, psychological and structural violence perpetrated against political opponents, the system and the citizenry. It further revealed that the threat to electoral security is a product of a complex set of interactive factors characterizing various stages of the election process. Invariably, it created a sense of insecurity, electoral apathy and legitimacy crisis in the polity. Therefore, the study recommends democracy-friendly measures that spans across the three stages of the electoral process for electoral security management with a view to securing an enabling environment for 'good politics' and participatory democracy in the country's 4th Republic. Their views are more in line with current research. Akpan (2017) investigated *Election and Security Challenges in Nigeria: Experience from the Niger Delta 1999-2015* and argued that since 1960 and the return to democracy in 1999, elections in Nigeria have remained a security threat. The question of loss of lives, carting away of ballot boxes, shootings and killings have been common feature of elections. The study is framed around the human security theoretical framework and focused within the period 1999 to 2015. The study identified divergent insecurity threats associated with the conduct of elections including conceptual and theoretical issues surrounding election and security and made some recommendations.

Research Design and Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive survey combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to study election –induced insecurity and its impact on the social, economic and democratic development in Imo State. Purposive sampling involved 14 key informants made up of 2 security personnel, 4 politicians, 4 academics and 4 youths for qualitative technique while 420 respondents from the three senatorial zones were interviewed for quantitative data. The researcher adopted the interview format such as “do you have any knowledge about the state of insecurity in the state?” for qualitative and the Likert scale questionnaire for quantitative data. Data were statistically analyzed using mean, frequency and percent while qualitative were content analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Section A analyzed socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents. On sex, it revealed that male respondents accounted for 298 (71.0%) while female respondents represented 122 (29.0%). From this analysis, the male gender responded more than the female. On age, respondents between 25 and 55 constituted 327 (77.9%), while 56 and above constituted 93 (22.1%). On the basis of marital status, 201 (47.9%) of the respondents were single; while 219 (52.1%) were married. Analysis also shows that 39 (9.3%) were Muslims, 227 (54.1%) of respondents were Christians, 98 (23.3%) were African traditional adherents, while 36 (13.3%) of respondents belonged to other religious groups. Analysis further revealed that respondents' educational qualifications below first degree accounted for 170 (40.5%) [First school leaving 12(2.9%); O-level 59 (14.0%) and ND/NCE 99 (23.6%)]; those with first degree were 241 (57.4%); while respondents with master's

degree constituted 9 (2.1%). Finally, respondents with security background were 32 (7.6%); civil servants accounted for 129 (30.1%); owners of private businesses were 202 (48.1%), while public servants represented 57 (13.6%).

Substantive Issues: Research question identified the factors that triggered insecurity in Imo State 2019 – present.

Table 1: SHOWING RESPONSES ON THE FACTORS THAT TRIGGERED INSECURITY IN IMO STATE FROM 2019.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean Value	Decision
1.	The issues raised in the APC governorship primary were not properly resolved	3.8	Accepted
2.	The contending forces in the state have refused to accept the outcome of the governorship election	4.0	Accepted
3.	Political opponents have not recognized the Supreme Court governorship verdict	3.3	Accepted
4.	Current government believes in the use of force	3.6	Accepted
	Cumulative mean	3.7	

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 1 above shows the responses of 420 respondents on questionnaire items 1-4 investigating the factors that triggered the election-induced insecurity in Imo State since 2019. Analytically, 3.8 mean value of the respondents accepted that insecurity in the state was the fallout of the All Progressive Congress (APC) primaries. The poor management of the APC primaries polarized the party as opponents of the flag bearer switched over to the Action Alliance (AA) party. This created political crisis and tension in Imo State before the governorship election. 4.0 mean value of respondents confirmed that the contending forces in the governorship election in the state vehemently opposed the outcome in which the Independent Electoral Commission had declared the candidate of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Emeka Ihedioha, winner of the governorship election and after 7 months, the Supreme Court sacked him and directed that Hope Uzodinma, of the APC be inaugurated as the new governor having approached the Court claiming that he was short-changed.

Findings revealed that forces from both the APC/AA and PDP who had lost in the power play, mounted covert campaigns against the new governor and these forces introduced and escalated the unknown gunmen phenomenon in the state which made the state almost ungovernable. 3.3 mean value of respondents agreed that politicians who have been aggrieved mounted campaigns to delegitimize the government of Hope Uzodinma whose government is perceived as a contraption laced with corruption installed by powerful forces from Abuja (sort of internal colonization) through the Supreme Court. 3.6 mean value of respondents accepted that the government of Hope Uzodinma encouraged security agencies to clamp down on perceived enemies and this is having a toll on youths. Every youth found in Orlu, Ideato North and South, Njaba, Isu, Oru, Orsu, and communities bordering Ihiala in Anambra State, is tagged a member the Indigenous People of Biafra and Eastern Security Network member and marked out for elimination, These communities have been under siege by the joint forces of the Nigerian army and police on one hand, and the Unknown gun men and IPOB/ESN forces. The youths are

killed and branded terrorists to justify an alleged predetermined political and violent plan determined against the South East because this has extended to other state of the South East. The analysis justified the claim that Imo State has been militarized and government infrastructure and citizens are threatened on daily basis. Responses revealed that the factors in items 1,2,3 and 4 revealed the main reasons why insecurity incubated and spread like cancer in Imo State in recent time, since 2019. The researcher therefore agreed that with the average mean score of 3.7, the view is accepted.

Research question 2 highlighted the nature of insecurity in Imo State since 2019.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean Value	Decision
5.	The unknown gun men have attacked government, individuals and properties	3.6	Accepted
6.	Kidnapping has been on the increase	3.7	Accepted
7.	The state has been militarized	3.6	Accepted
8.	There are high profile killings and destruction of infrastructure	2.6	Accepted
	Total	3.4	

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 above shows the responses of 420 respondents on questionnaire items 5-8 investigated the nature of insecurity in Imo State since 2019 and analytically, 3.6 mean value of respondents identified the unknown gun men who have attacked both government infrastructure and citizens' lives and property unabated. The Police Headquarters and the Correction Centre/Prison facility in Owerri, and several police stations in the state were attacked and burnt including the death of some security personnel. Others areas attacked were security check points, INEC offices and ordinary citizens. One of the victims of these attacks was Ahmed Gulak, a prominent politician from northern Nigeria who chaired the infamous APC governorship primaries in Imo State; and to compound the security concern, the IPOB imposed a sit-at-home to demand for the release of their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, who was abducted in Kenya by the security details of the Federal Government of Nigeria. 3.7 mean value of respondents accepted the view that there has been high incidence of kidnapping in Imo State particularly along Owerri – Orlu, Owerri - Okigwe and Owerri – Port-Harcourt roads. These kidnapers are alleged to have been disguising as commuter bus drivers and assistants who divert commuters to their den where they contact relatives for ransom while others are killed for ritual purposes. Some other citizens have been kidnapped at worship centres and social occasions. 3.6 mean value of respondents agreed that the state has been militarized by security agencies mounting road blocks in search of supposed criminals but intimidate and humiliate citizens of the state, extorting motorists, embark on illegal raids. Youths are arrested and forced to part with their hard earned money. Finally, 2.6 mean value of respondents confirmed that there are high profile killings and destruction of lives and property. Prior to the elections, some citizens who returned home to build private and commercial houses were gruesomely murdered by those who had hijacked the agitation from the real IPOB wrecked havoc daily. People no longer had the courage to visit their

country home. Since items 5, 6, 7 and 8 were accepted, the researcher, therefore, affirm that the above responses described the nature of insecurity in Imo State.

Research question 3: examined the consequences of insecurity on the governance structure and development of democracy in Imo State.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean Value	Decision
9..	Life has been insecure as a result of ceaseless attacks	4.0	Accepted
10.	Poverty has increased as a result of sit-at-home and fear of violence	3.1	Accepted
11.	Citizens no longer trust the democratic system	4.0	Accepted
12.	Youths are killed while others get missing daily	3.6	Accepted
13.	Education has been negatively affected	3.0	Accepted
14	Economic and social well-being are greatly stagnated	3.9	Accepted
		3.6	

Table 3 above shows the responses of 420 respondents on items 9-14 highlighting the consequences of insecurity on national security and democratic development in Imo State. Analytically, 4.0 mean value of respondents accepted that there were constant threats to lives and property, including attacks on security agencies and their infrastructure. All these have been inimical to national security because every loss threatens peace and security of the entire gamut of life: economic, social, political and cultural environment of the State. these hinder over all development of a society. Findings revealed that 3.1 mean value of respondents acknowledged that insecurity emanating from imposed sit-at-home by IPOB and the activities of the unknown gunmen and kidnappings has exacerbated poverty. Half of every week is wasted on sit-at-home, private business operators such as POS, supermarkets, transporters and even banks are attacked and precautionary measures are put in place by locking up business premises. Economic hours are wasted due to unresolved political issues. That is why politics has remained the super structure of the society. Findings further established that 3.6 mean value of respondents affirmed that the youthful population is constantly depleted in Orsu, Oru, Njaba and Orlu local governments where there are protracted violence between security agencies and youths that are designated as IPOB and ESN, whereas, the economy of every society is sustained by the active participation of youths. Data also revealed that 3.0 mean value of respondents confirmed that citizens have lost faith in the capability of the state in protecting lives and property. State security agencies are perceived as enemies because they are alleged to have been molesting ordinary citizens, arresting, detaining people unlawfully and sometimes eliminate citizens based on trump charges. There is the problem of many criminals dressing as police or the army personnel, to rob, kidnap, and kill victims. These activities pervade the length and breadth of Imo State and by extension the whole of the South East. The study further revealed that 3.9 mean value of respondents avers that election-induced insecurity has affected the educational system. Students have been deprived the opportunity of having their studies on normal week days due to sit-at-home and attacks on schools where some school administrators have been killed. In fact, the school system is distorted and many students have missed their national public examinations, whereas the rest of the country did not wait for them. Insecurity has also affected social life and the economy is almost grounded. Finally, 4.0 mean value of respondents revealed that Imo

citizens have become apathetic to the democratic process in the country by not registering for elections because of the outcome of the governorship election at the Supreme Court and the persistent attacks during registration for PVCs. Since items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 agreed that insecurity impacted negatively on national security and democratic development in the state, the researcher, therefore confirmed that the question was proved.

Research question 4 advanced strategies that would restore peace and the sustainability of democratic principles in Imo State.

S/N	Questionnaire items	Mean Value	Decision
15.	Transparent elections should be conducted	3.4	Accepted
16.	Government should dialogue with perceived group, but deal with criminals	2.9	Accepted
17.	Unemployment should be tackled to prevent recruiting idle hands	3.1	Accepted
18.	Security agencies should stop intimidating citizens	3.4	Accepted
19.	Peace-building and strong democratic institutions should be established to ensure proper democratic principles	2.8	Accepted
20.	Zero-sum elections should be de-emphasized	2.3	Rejected
	Total	3.0	

Source: *Fieldwork, 2023*

Table 4 above shows the responses of 420 respondents on the strategies that would restore peace and good governance in Imo State. Analytically, findings revealed that 3.4 mean value of respondents agreed that peace and security would be restored when INEC conducts transparent elections (both primaries and the main election). 2.9 mean value of respondents also revealed that government should adopt a non-kinetic option such as dialogue to discourage the use of violence to resolve conflicts in the State. Dialogue should not be seen as a sign of weakness, but a creative and respectful means of resolving issues and sustaining peace to engender development. Findings further revealed that 3.1 mean value of respondents agreed that unemployment should be tackled through the concerted effort of both the government and the private sector. Prominent Imo citizens should be encouraged to come home and stimulate economic activities while government creates opportunities for employment by generating peaceful climate for the growth of private businesses. 3.4 mean value of respondents accepted that security agencies should cease the intimidation, illegal arrest, incarceration and elimination of youths all in the name of fighting the separatist organization called IPOB, whose body had been infiltrated by criminals perpetrating all manner of criminality. Thorough investigations to apprehend those terrorizing the state should be embarked upon. However, 2.3 mean value of respondents rejected the view that the zero-sum method of presidential system of democracy should be scrapped but an inclusive system is to be adopted. Finally, 2.8 mean value of respondents affirmed that peace-building strategies such as the modification of the electoral system, strengthening of institutions to discourage manipulations by powerful individuals, proper management of state resources and free and fair elections must be conducted. All them were accepted as having advanced strategies to restore development in Imo State except item 19.

Discussion of Findings

Research revealed that the general insecurity in Imo State have been attributed to the poor management of the APC primaries which polarized the party and both groups lost the general election to the People's Democratic party whose candidate, Emeka Ihedioha was declared winner by INEC. However, the APC flag bearer, Hope Uzodimma, went to court claiming that his votes were suppressed in so many areas and should be declared the winner of the election. This prayer was granted by the Supreme Court, thus, the court sacked Ihedioha of the PDP and this twist in judgment created a two-prone opposition to the new governor. According to Iwundu (2022):

Imo State has always been known for dirty politics; the process of recruiting leaders has never been fair and transparent. Since 1999, those that nobody expected have emerged as flag bearers of major political parties because of interference from Abuja and the godfathers.

The outcome of primaries engendered bad governance because these governments were never chosen by the people. As a result, disgruntled politicians always recruit the army of unemployed youths to wreak havoc on the state. As regards current insecurity, both internal and external forces challenged Uzodimma's legitimacy through covert means which gave birth to the dreadful unknown gun men attacks on government facilities and individuals. Orji and Uzodi (2015); Soeze (2011) and Anifowose (1982) corroborate this gory situation with what happened in the old Western Region in 1965 when unacceptable election was announced and violence and breakdown of law and order reigned in the region. This gave rise to the infamous 'Operation Wetie' – an atrocious practice of dousing political opponents in petrol and setting them ablaze. In Imo State, the perpetrators were not known but the government and the police accused IPOB, whereas politicians created opportunities for increase in kidnapping, armed robbery and political assassinations. Prominent indigenes who visited their communities were killed, including those targeted along airport road. In fact the chairman of the infamous APC primaries that produced Hope Uzodimma, Ahmed Gulak, was murdered along airport road in Owerri, while on a private visit to the state. The wave of violence intensified fear and indigenes living outside resisted the temptation of visiting their ancestral homes during burials. In fact, extra security has to be provided for citizens to visit their ancestral homes

These criminal activities limited social life, demoralized economic activities and creating opportunities for the members of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra to establish its sphere of influence in the State. The climax of insecurity was the abduction of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB, in Kenya by Federal Government sponsored operation, and incarcerated in DSS cell in Abuja. The organization had to introduce the defiant sit-at-home strategy to defy the Federal government and the State Government. This was imposed on the rest of the South East, particularly on Mondays and other days that their leader would appear in court. This has dragged on and there is tension in the state, which has hindered smooth running of government; lives and property are threatened daily and innocent citizens bear the brunt. Ohale (2022), argues that citizens no longer trust politicians because the lives of citizens no longer matters.

Research question 2 investigated the nature of insecurity in Imo State since 2019 and data revealed that the unknown gunmen attacked both government and private property; there were incidences of kidnapping citizens from workplace, worship centres and roads with the state being militarized with the activities of security personnel and criminal

gangs. Assassination of high profile persons and abductions of the high and low; and the destruction of property have characterized the nature of insecurity in Imo State. Data revealed that insecurity had become the trademark of both state and non-state actors. The consequences have been unbearable as Beland (2005); and Achumba et al (2013) agree that insecurity depicts a state of fear due to lack of protection or inadequate freedom from danger and the state of being exposed to risk. This state makes a person vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur. These scholars aptly captured the situation Imo citizens have found themselves. Unknown gunmen have become masquerades that security agencies are incapable of demystifying and as such they have been consistent in their operations. Insecurity has resulted in extortion, unlawful arrest and maiming of youths in the guise of fighting terrorism. Data further revealed that the sit-at-home order established by the IPOB in solidarity with their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, have made life miserable in Imo State. Local councils, INEC offices, and some traditional rulers were killed in Orlu, including the APC stalwart Ahmed Gulak.

Okoye (2017) and Abdulkarim's (2016) assert that in the legislative rerun election in River State, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, DSP Alkali Mohammed of Mobile Police Unit 48 and his orderly were beheaded by suspected political thugs on December 10, 2016. While all these were going on, politicians were pointing accusing fingers at each other. Data revealed that with a cumulative mean of 3.4 which is greater than the criterion mean score 2.5, indicates that the nature of insecurity in Imo State had varied dimensions as adumbrated above. A respondent, Eze (2022) assessed the situation:

Last year, 2020, was so turbulent that we all thought that the end had come. Everybody woke up to something that looked like gun battles in Owerri; the police headquarters was attacked and all the vehicles parked there were burnt while another group blew open the gate of the correctional/prison centre just few metres from the police headquarters and Imo State Government house. Just after these incidents, there were regular gun duels along Amawusa on Douglas Road and Mbaise road, in Owerri. Police stations in all parts of Imo State suffered from attacks with their buildings burnt and many police personnel killed. Kidnapping has been on the increase with many citizens abducted daily. Prominent Imolites and Alhaji Ahmed Gulak, who headed the APC primary, have been murdered, including those close to the government of the State. Anybody found to be related in one way or the other to the government has had his property destroyed. Government and security agencies have intensified the fight against the unknown gunmen and members of the IPOB. Youths are murdered in Orlu, Orsu and Njaba areas by both security agencies and the State owned Ebubeagu. Lives and property are destroyed in these areas if not daily but on weekly basis. The State is continually threatened and movement, social life and the economy have suffered. Poverty has increased resulting in armed robbery and other criminal activities.

The above respondent has just given an apt description of the insecurity situation in Imo State and if the security agencies had done their job passionately, the threats would have been checkmated.

Research question 3: What are the consequences of insecurity on national security and democratic development in Imo State? Data as shown on question 4, established that the

lives of citizens have been threatened continually; poverty has deepened because citizens can no longer pursue their legitimate businesses, youths are dying in the hands of security agencies and unknown gunmen; citizens have lost faith in the democratic process because they discovered that their votes no longer count; education, social life and the economy have suffered from persistent threats and have closed down institutions in these sectors and finally, citizens have lost faith in the governance structure because decisions taken by government are for its survival and not in the interest of the people. Okoye (2017) and Obialor and Ozuzu (2019) agree that free, fair and transparent elections have eluded the country and the security agencies who were supposed to ensure that the sanctity of the election were maintained usually collaborate with politicians to sabotage the system. Therefore, both the INEC officials and security agencies are complicit in creating instability in the country. Moreover, Peter and Abdulrahman (2018) corroborate this view that the electoral process in Africa is characterized by violence and this undermines true democracy. Data shows a cumulative mean of 3.6, which is greater than the criterion mean score, 2.5, indicating that the factors agreed with the assertion that the consequences threaten the existence of citizens and damaged relationships. Also, it has had serious psychological impact on the people. According to Eber (2022):

Insecurity in Imo State since the 2018 primary election of the APC has elevated criminality to a much higher level. A new concept of criminality called unknown gunmen has overtaken other forms of crime. They exhibit indescribable boldness in attacking anybody and infrastructure notwithstanding who owns it. They must be sponsored by higher authorities and people with excessive wealth and connection. With this background, the primary purpose of government in protecting lives and property is defeated; nobody is secured and with the sit-at-home order forcing people to stay at home on Mondays in solidarity with Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB, incarceration for challenging the Federal Government's discriminatory attitude towards the Igbo, lives are threatened and the economy suffers neglect, resulting in unemployment and poverty. Social life is almost dead; people have lost confidence in INEC and the judiciary. Finally, democratic processes are seen to unnecessarily interfered and distorted.

Governance is engulfed in the politics of insecurity instead of managing the affairs concerning development. The farms are occupied by the herdsmen, security agencies extort citizens, the security agencies lack the capacity to secure the state just as it has failed to secure the entire country; prostitution has been on the increase with armed robbers robbing without resistance from security agents. Unemployment and brazen display of electoral malpractice have escalated insecurity and the failure to stem these have acts of insecurity has deepened poverty. Okonkwo, Ndubuisi-Okoli and Amagbogu (2015) corroborate the view that insecurity hinders business activities which in turn generates a more dangerous environment that eclipses development.

Finally, data as shown on items 15 – 20 with mean scores of 3.4, 2.9, 3.1, 3.4 and 2.8 respectively accepted that transparent elections, fruitful dialogue, creation of employment opportunities, caution on government security agencies to stop intimidating citizens, and peace-building measures should be introduced and sustained to create peace and security and development. However, data discouraged the zero-sum type of politics in Nigeria but advised that peace and security and democratic development be promoted to build a

society where things would follow well defined processes. Strong institutions should be built and not strong men. Entrepreneurship funded education must be encouraged by government to empower youths and take them away from scrupulous politicians who recruit them to pursue their selfish ambitions. Study therefore encourages the security agencies to adhere strictly to their statutory responsibilities in order to establish friendly environments for peace and development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated Election crises, Insecurity and the underdevelopment of social, economic and democratic Ethos in Imo State since 2019. The study concluded that the reasons for the out-break of violence in Imo State were the outcome of the APC primary, the actions of the contending forces, the refusal to accept defeat by the opponents of Hope Uzodinma within the APC and the PDP and the insistence on kinetic approach to tackling crime, are responsible for insecurity in Imo State. These factors resulted in the birth of the unknown gunmen wreaking havoc on the people including government installations; kidnapping and abductions; the militarization of the State by the security forces and the assassination of high profile individuals have characterized the nature of insecurity in the state. The consequences of these criminal tendencies: a near-total breakdown of law and order which has increased unemployment and poverty in the state. Finally, the research concluded that only free, fair and transparent elections, dialogue instead of might, the upgrading of the security forces and their respect for the civil population. The study also recommends strong institutions to build a better society.

In view of the findings in this research, it recommended that: (a) The electoral process should be adjusted to accommodate the opposition. (b) The electoral process must be free, fair and transparent in order to build a good government structure that would usher in good governance. (c) Government must increase the capacity of the security agencies to tackle criminality in the State and in Nigeria in general. (d) Unemployment must be tackled vigorously to decongest the pool from which politicians recruit youths as thugs. (e) Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) should stop collaborating with politicians to undermine the electoral process. (f) Dialogue should be encouraged in resolving all conflicts instead of force. (g) The security agencies must respect the rights of citizens.

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