THE ELECTORAL HUB

Threat of Electoral Violence During and After the 2023 General Election

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Table of Content

Table of Contents iii
List of Tables iii
List of Figures iii
Acknowledgments iv
Executive Summary vi

Introduction 1
1.1 Background/Context 1
1.2 Electoral Violence: a specific form of insecurity 3
1.3 Study Objectives 4

What is electoral violence and why does it occur? 5
2.1 Conceptualizing Electoral Violence 5
2.2 Forms of Electoral Violence 5
2.3 Causes of Electoral Violence 6

Combating electoral violence: level of preparedness 7
3.1 Complexity and the Need for Security in Nigerian Elections 7
3.2 Security Needs of Nigerian Election 8
3.3 Legal Framework 8

INEC's election security architecture 9
4.1 Triangle of responsibilities 9
4.2 Three concentric circles of deployment 11

Conclusions 13
References 14

List of Tables

Table 1: Lives Lost, Injuries and Arrests in the 2011 Post-election Violence 4
Table 2: Security Deployment Approaches 12

List of Figures

Figure 1: Forms of Electoral Insecurity in Nigeria 3
Figure 2: Typology of Electoral Violence 5
Figure 3: Interlocking Explanation of Electoral Violence 7
Figure 4: INEC Election Security System 9

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The Electoral Hub says thank you!

Princess Hamman-Obels
Director, IRIAD – The Electoral Hub

Executive Summary

Contextual Background

In the recent past, insecurity and violence have been significant in Nigerian elections although in different ways. Some of the elections have experienced pre-election and post-election violence, one has been postponed for security concerns, and virtually all have seen the intervention of security agencies in ways that raised questions about their neutrality. The rise in general insecurity across the country has contributed to election-related insecurity, as pre-existing insecurity tends to escalate during elections. Additionally, politicians instrumentalize insecurity and violence for electoral gains. They politicize security issues, manipulate security agencies for partisan purposes, and deploy private militias and thugs during elections, often with official security operatives looking the other way. This multifaceted character of security issues in elections underscores the need to properly study and understand them to mitigate their impact on Nigerian elections.

Hitherto, when serious violence occurs in elections, as in 2011, government sets up official inquiry to investigate them and suggest ways of ameliorating them. However, the recommendations arising from these investigations have often not been seriously implemented, sometimes due to their own shortcomings. Thus, the post-2011 investigation report, the Lemu Panel Report, which identified how specific actions and inactions by various agencies contributed to the violence. Unfortunately, the report's recommendations faced controversy and were not fully implemented. Since then, electoral violence has continued to manifest during elections, even in smaller bye-elections. As the 2023 general election approaches, concerns about election violence remain, exacerbated by nationwide insecurity and pre-election violence. This paper explores the recurring issue of electoral violence in Nigeria, particularly focusing on the upcoming 2023 election, highlighting areas of concern and suggesting measures to reduce violence during and after the election.

What is Electoral Violence and Why Does it Occur?

Electoral violence is a specific form of insecurity, which is directly or indirectly linked to election. It takes diverse forms and categories. There is the physical form, which has three main categories: election-generated violence, which is directly linked to electoral activities; election-amplified violence, where pre-existing violence intensify due to elections; and election-sustaining violence, associated with prolonged communal conflicts influenced by electoral dynamics. Additionally, there is a structural form of electoral violence, which may be called *electoral structural violence*, which includes institutionalized issues like exclusion and marginalization. The factors that have been linked to the occurrence of electoral violence in Africa, including Nigeria, vary. While some attribute it to worsening social conditions and the influence of politicians on easily manipulated young individuals, others emphasize institutional weaknesses and electoral corruption. A general explanation of electoral violence should focus on the broader societal context, with an understanding that it is intricately connected to wider insecurity influenced by the political economy, the character of the state, and ruling class. However, a more specific explanation considers the interplay of political culture, social structure and electoral management.

Combatting Electoral Violence: Level of Preparedness

Ensuring a successful election in Nigeria, particularly the 2023 general election, hinges on effectively safeguarding the electoral process, including the prevention of electoral violence. This requires a concerted effort to provide security not only for the vast number of voters and election personnel but also for election equipment, materials, and results. The task is enormous, with over 90 million voters, numerous polling units, ward and local government collation centers, state collation centers, and a national collation center, in addition to a substantial workforce and multiple INEC offices needing protection. The key to controlling election violence lies in collaborative efforts between INEC, citizens and security agencies, as well as among the various security agencies themselves.

The Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) has been instrumental in fostering cooperation between INEC and security agencies since 2011, involving about eighteen different agencies working together to ensure the safety and security of all election stakeholders. To further enhance this collaboration, a harmonized framework for deploying security personnel in alignment with INEC's deployment of election workers and materials should be developed. This cooperative approach is grounded in the legal framework provided by the Nigerian Constitution and the Electoral Act, which grant specific roles and responsibilities to both INEC and the security agencies in securing elections.

INEC's Election Security Architecture

INEC's election security architecture, implemented since 2011, involves a triangular structure of responsibilities and a three concentric circles deployment strategy. The triangle involves planning and implementation, knowledge and training, and monitoring and reporting, aiming to ensure secure and violence-free elections. Collaboration with the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) is crucial for coordinated security efforts. INEC's Situation Room and Election Support Centres further enhance communication during elections, between INEC, citizens and security agencies. On the other hand, the three concentric circles of deployment involve securing the outermost circle, which includes international boundaries and major entry points into the States of the country; the middle circle comprising towns and cities; and the innermost circle covering polling units and collation centers. The security level varies across these circles, and collaboration among all stakeholders is essential for their effectiveness.

Conclusion

Elections in Nigeria are characterized by an intersection of rising expectations, zero-sum outcomes and communal mobilization with a tendency for political elite to manipulate, communalize and privatize security, insecurity and violence. This has predisposed the country to cycles of violent elections. As Nigeria prepares for the 2023 general election, there is a pressing need to take steps towards containing this perennial threat of electoral violence. Ten key issues demand close attention: (1) Voter suppression and intimidation, particularly along ethnic and religious lines; (2) Manipulation of security deployments; (3) Potential logistics failures by INEC, including technological challenges; (4) Risks associated with incitement, fake news, and hate speech; (5) The impact of judicial decisions in the post-election period; (6) Rising expectations, especially among the youth; (7) Tension in tightly contested elections; (8) Impunity and a lack of accountability for those involved in violence; (9) Voter ignorance about the electoral process, especially in presidential elections; and (10) Divisions within civil society along partisan lines that hinder accountability measures. These issues warrant careful monitoring to mitigate electoral violence.

Introduction

1.1 Background/Context

In the three preceding general elections in Nigeria, 2011, 2015 and 2019, insecurity was a key factor, albeit for different reasons. It seems that the 2023 general election may not be different. In 2011, soon after the Presidential election result was declared, violence broke out in many parts of Northern Nigeria, leading to several deaths and destruction of property. Among the dead were some members of the National Youth Services Corps (NYSC), who served as ad hoc staff in the election. Many Nigerians and indeed the international community were appalled by the death of these young innocent Nigerians who were serving their country. However, beyond the mayhem, a major concern for students of elections in Nigeria was to understand why an election, which was generally acclaimed as one of the best thereto could generate such violence. How could a good election be marred by such violence? Government subsequently set up the Lemu Committee to investigate the violence. Unfortunately, it is not clear what that government, and indeed successive governments, ever did with the outcome of that investigation.

In 2015, about three weeks to the general election scheduled for 14th February, the National Security Adviser (NSA), Sambo Dasuki, made a speech at the Chatham House, London in which he among other things called for the postponement of the election. This was ostensibly because the security agencies needed to focus on fighting the insurgency in the North-East and could not guarantee proper security for the election. However, many observers perceived that they were acting under the influence of the ruling party and government. Before the NSA's Chatham House appearance, he chaired a meeting between INEC and the security agencies, called at the instance of the latter. At the meeting, the security chiefs had pressured INEC to announce a postponement of the election, but the Commission turned down the request. Early in February 2015, INEC was asked to brief the National Security Council, during which the Commission was again pressured to postpone the election. Again, the Commission declined saying that if the problem was security, it was only proper that the announcement should be made by the security agencies themselves. Also, it was necessary for them to say exactly how much time they needed to solve the security challenge. Thereafter, the security agencies announced that they needed six weeks to deal with the insurgency and on Saturday, 7th February, exactly one week to the election, INEC announced a six-week postponement.

On 16th February 2019, the day of the general election, INEC in the early hours of the morning announced the postponement of the election until 23rd February, owing to logistical challenges. The sudden and unprecedented intervention of the security agencies in the election following this postponement, speaks to another dimension of the links between security and elections in Nigeria. In the aftermath of the postponement, the Directorate of State Security (DSS) invited a National Commissioner and some senior staff of the Commission for questioning regarding the postponement. Many observers criticized this move as a thinly veiled attempt by the ruling party and government to pressure the election umpire. In the end, the invitation was withdrawn. However, the intervention of the security agencies in the election did not stop there. The most brazen instance happened in Rivers State, where different security agencies appeared to be working for opposing political parties. Videos emerged online of soldiers invading the home of an opposition politician in Port Harcourt. In fact, in one situation, things deteriorated to a point that the police and the army came close to a shootout at INEC State headquarters in Port Harcourt.

In July 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari sent a supplementary budget to the National Assembly requesting about N60billion for the security agencies specifically for the 2019 general election. In that budget, N30.5 billion was allocated to the Police, N12.2 billion to the DSS, N4.2 billion to the Office of the National Security Adviser, N3.5 billion to the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and N2.6 billion to the Nigeria Immigration Service, among others.[i] Many observers at the time questioned the use of that humongous amount only to secure the election, an activity that was taking place in peacetime. Others criticized specific items in the supplementary budget such as the N310 million to the NSCDC to “feed and

administer drugs to dogs that will be deployed in states", seven million Naira allocated to the Police to "feed 50 horses that would be used for patrol during the elections" and N126 million for the Nigerian Immigration Service "for printing name tags for its personnel that would be involved in the elections". Surely, the security budget for 2023 general election, giving the rising and widespread security challenges across the country, will make this 2018 supplementary budget look like pocket money.

These election security anecdotes from the last three elections clearly demonstrate the diverse dimensions and growing import of election security in Nigeria. How do we explain this? There are general and specific explanations. A general explanation suggests to us that the rising import of insecurity and violence during elections is the result of the general rise in insecurity around the country. In other words, there is a positive correlation between general insecurity and election insecurity. While election may not be the direct cause of such violent security challenges, election tends to aggravate them. The point is that those factors that drive insecurity and violence in the country also aggravate insecurity during elections. This suggests that pre-existing insecurity is likely to be worsened during elections, as the purveyors of such insecurity are likely to ramp up their activities to disrupt elections. In any case, it is usually the case that the same arms that are used to perpetrate violent crimes are also used for violence during elections, and criminals are likely to be recruited by politicians as armed phalanxes in electoral "wars".

A second general explanation relates to the instrumentalization of insecurity and violence by politicians for purposes of gaining electoral advantages. This is what some have described as the "securitization of elections", but which more correctly is the politicization of security and takes three forms namely, the manipulation of security and insecurity, the communalization of security and the privatization of security.[ii] This explanation argues that for purposes of winning elections, politicians:

a) Manipulate security and insecurity, as well as their corollary of electoral violence, for instance by encouraging security agencies, thugs and other irregular forces to support their electoral interests, both directly and indirectly. For instance, politicians, especially those controlling governments, have been known to suddenly ramp up security deployment in some areas, under the guise of insecurity to harass citizens and suppress opposition votes. Concomitantly, they remove security operatives in some areas to give free reign to political thugs and election rigging.

b) Communalize security, insecurity and electoral violence usually by portraying these as targeting specific communities (usually theirs) and asking such communities to take their security into their own hands. The logic is to delegitimate the public security agencies, raise communal militias, vigilantes and irregular forces linked to communities and deploy them for electoral purposes. This narrative of community victimhood, which is often deployed by opposition politicians, further bolsters and provides the pretext for further manipulation of security and insecurity by ruling parties and governments.

c) Privatize security through the deployment of security agencies and irregular forces, including political thugs, to protect private individuals and politicians, who are portrayed to be likely targets of electoral violence. The withdrawal of security operatives from public duties to private activities further denudes the legitimate protection of the electoral process and leaves the field open for political thugs.

Figure 1: Forms of Electoral Insecurity in Nigeria



1.2 Electoral Violence: a specific form of insecurity

The report of the Lemu Panel established after the post-election violence in 2011 demonstrates the specificity of electoral violence within the complex of electoral insecurity. The report shows how specific actions and/or inactions of various agencies before, during and after elections catalyze violence. Unfortunately, the panel and its report became mired in controversy. Consequently, its recommendations were never implemented due to their divisive nature. Many people who were opposed to its implementation, principally from the main opposition party, portrayed it as a hatchet job for the ruling party at the time to indict the main opposition Presidential candidate. However, ironically, some government officials also said that it was biased and that many of its claims were unsubstantiated. For instance, they pointed out that its claim that an immediate cause of the violence was the postponement of the election by INEC was unfounded because the violence occurred after the election and the declaration of a particular candidate as the winner. Also, for them, the insinuation by the Report that the NYSC members were murdered because they assisted the ruling party to rig the election was in bad taste. In the end, not much was done to implement the recommendations of the panel, even after President Jonathan promised to do so. And even after his government left office in 2015, the report remained unimplemented, thus confirming the position of the Panel that one remote cause of the violence was the "non-implementation of previous panel reports". For instance, Table 1 shows the number of lives lost, injuries and arrests following the 2011 post-election violence, as identified by the Lemu Panel. The panel had strongly recommended the prosecution of culprits, but not much was heard about it thereafter

Table 1: Lives Lost, Injuries and Arrests in the 2011 Post-election Violence				
S/N	STATE	No. OF LIVES LOST	No. OF INJURIES	No. ARRESTED
1	Adamawa	26	158	40
2	Akwa Ibom	5	30	N/A
3	Bauchi	36	200	N/A
4	Borno	3	20	N/A
5	Gombe	20	147	N/A
6	Jigawa	1	38	N/A
7	Kaduna	827	71	N/A
8	Kano	8	22	169
9	Katsina	7	59	N/A
10	Kebbi	0	0	1
11	Nasarawa	0	5	N/A
12	Niger	9	27	213
13	Sokoto	0	31	34
14	Yobe	1	3	120
15	Zamfara	0	27	49
	TOTAL	943	838	626

Source: Lemu Panel Report[iii]

Since the Lemu Panel sat, practically every election in Nigeria has had the pall of violence hanging over it. Even bye-elections in relatively small constituencies have been affected. For instance, in April 2016, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had to cancel the State Assembly bye-election in Minjibir, Kano State due to violence. It was reported that as soon as polls commenced, thugs descended on polling units and disrupted the election, leaving many people injured. Again, on 18th August 2023, a bye-election to fill the vacant seat of Port Harcourt III State Assembly constituency was cancelled by the Commission due to widespread violence. According to the Resident Electoral Commissioner for Rivers State, Mr. Obo Efanga "midway into the election, miscreants and hoodlums accompanied by heavily armed security personnel in uniform stormed the various polling units and Registration Areas disrupting activities, destroying and carting away election materials including smart card readers and ballot boxes." [iv]

1.3 Study Objectives

As the 2023 general election approaches, concerns persist about election violence, especially in the post-election period. These concerns are deepened by the general atmosphere of insecurity across the country and the violence that continues to mar the campaign period.[v] This paper seeks to examine the risk of election violence, especially in the post-election period. It will explain the recurrent problem of electoral violence in Nigerian politics as a basis for contextualizing the evidence of violence in the 2023 general election. Finally, it looks at key areas to watch in the aftermath of the elections and suggests factors that could mitigate violence during and after the election.

What is electoral violence and why does it occur?

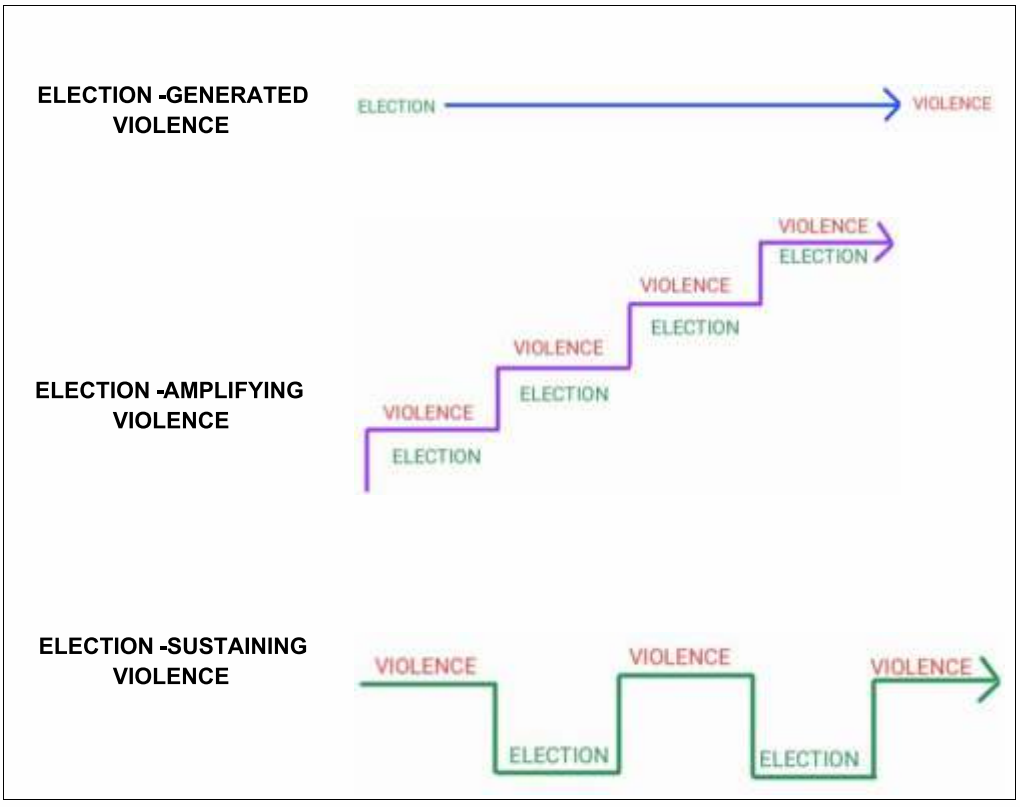
2.1 Conceptualizing Electoral Violence

Conceptualizing electoral violence is not as straightforward as it appears because it presents diverse forms, manifests in assorted contexts and involves a myriad of actors. One extreme understanding is that it is every violent activity in the period of election. The problem of posing it in this manner is that not every violence during election can logically be linked to elections. The other extreme is to see electoral violence as only such violence that are manifestly linked to electoral activities. But then, there are several underlying problems that are not manifestly electoral that feed into electoral violence. Thus, we can see that electoral violence is both directly and indirectly related to electoral activities, particularly elections.

2.2 Forms of Electoral Violence

We identify three forms of electoral violence namely, election-generated violence, election-amplified violence, and election-sustaining violence (Figure 2). Election-generated violence refers to violence that is directly associated with electoral activities such as campaigns, voting, registration of voters, etc. But not all electoral violence shows this direct relationship. Others are mediated by other factors. Thus, election-amplified violence refers to situations where pre-existing violence are amplified by electoral activities. Thus, in each electoral cycle, such violence tends to erupt and become amplified. The final type, the election-sustaining violence, refers to violence that is sustained by elections. This is common in situations of communal violence, where two or more communities are in a conflictual relation and struggles for domination. Since elections provide the context for control of political power, which could alter the balance of forces among the communities, violence often erupts as part of these pre-existing struggles. Thus, elections sustain them over a very long period.

Figure 2: Typology of Electoral Violence



However, this three-part typology of electoral violence only captures what may be described as direct violence. They are physical and overt in nature. But there is also a structural-institutional form of electoral violence, which may be termed electoral structural violence, following Johan Galtung. These are usually institutionalized and therefore mostly covert in nature. They include exclusion, sexism, marginalization, psychological pressure, etc. Thus, the institutional exclusion of women, young people, and persons with disability from political party leadership, candidacy and even voting may not come across as electoral violence, but they constitute a form of violence.

2.3 Causes of Electoral Violence

But why does electoral violence occur? One common explanation of electoral insecurity in Africa is to link it to the worsening social conditions in many African countries, including Nigeria, specifically the emergence of a pool of young people who are easily enticed into violent activities for politicians. Other explanations point to the relative recency of elections in Africa, suggesting that the security challenges in elections constitute only a phase in the growth of electoral democratic institutions. The more specific explanations refer to electoral corruption as the major explanation for election insecurity. Rising electoral fraud expressed in various methods of election rigging usually have violence as a spinoff.[vi] Extant explanations of electoral violence in Africa tend to show certain characteristics.

First, there is a tendency toward excessive institutionalism. The position is that the problem is one of weak institutions, particularly those that moderate competition. These include the weakness of rules guiding competition. Therefore, what is needed is institution building. While there is some truth in linking the problem to institutions, particularly rules, we think that the problem is not with rules per se, but with respect for rules. In other words, the rules are there on paper, but as we shall show, it is the proclivity of the reigning petty bourgeoisie to disrespect rules that is at the heart of the problem. This is not to be understood in a voluntary sense of the petty bourgeoisie choosing or not choosing to obey rules, but rather it is intrinsic in the very class character, interests and instincts of the petty bourgeoisie.

Second, related to excessive institutionalism is the argument that elections are violent because democracy in African countries is weak. These are "countries without solid democratic credentials", as Khadiagala puts it.[vii] However, we argue that elections are an intrinsic part of the democratic credentials and cannot be separated from them. It seems therefore that this argument is circuitous: elections are violent because democracy is weak and democracy is weak because elections are violent. In other words, it seems to explain electoral violence by itself (weak democratic credentials) and it is not clear which is the causal variable (electoral violence or weak democratic credentials).

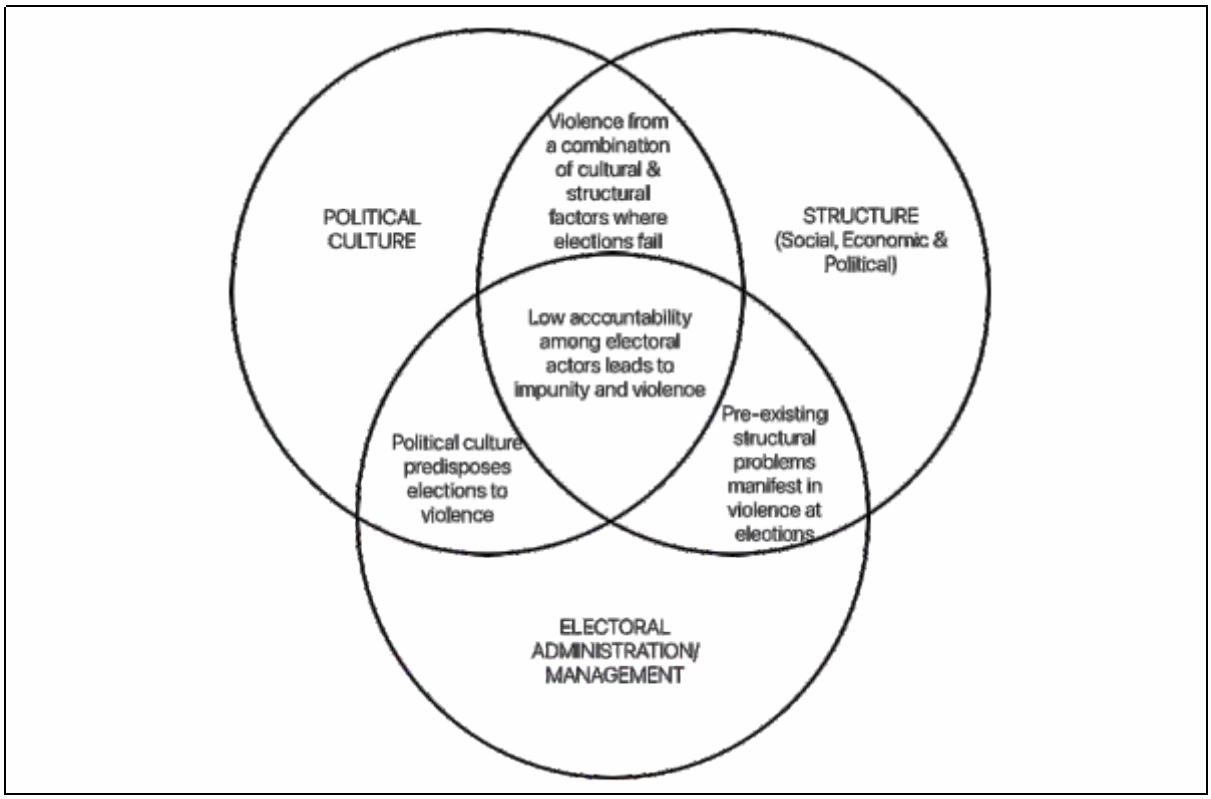
Third, there is a strong tendency to be "evolutionist". Thus, as we have already noted, election violence is portrayed as a teething problem in the evolution of democracy in African countries, suggesting that with time in that evolutionary trajectory, African countries would outgrow electoral violence. This is not supported by empirical evidence. It seems that election violence is getting worse in intensity and ramifications, suggesting that it is not to do with an evolutionary phase but with the fundamentals of the system. Finally, many times, analysis of election-related violence in Africa seems to treat it sui generis. In other words, election-related violence is analyzed as one of many forms of violence with its own intrinsic characteristics and propulsion.

On the whole, while these explanations are not necessarily wrong, we argue that electoral insecurity cannot be treated *sui generis*. It is organically linked to wider insecurity in society. Since elections are major events in which we select those who control the state, which in countries like Nigeria opens a vista of access to and control of enormous resources, broader security challenges become exacerbated during elections. Therefore, generally, electoral insecurity is to be understood in the context of wider insecurity, which has its roots in the evolution of Nigeria's political economy, the Nigerian state and the character of its ruling class.

However, such a general explanation should be amplified by a more specific explanation capable of supporting practical action.

Our specific and contextual explanation of electoral violence in Nigeria sees it as an interaction among three factors namely, political culture, social structure, including economic and political structure, and electoral management (Fig.3). The interactions of these three produce four configurations. First, pre-existing structural problems manifest during elections to generate violence. Second, political culture predisposes elections to violence. In Nigeria, this culture is characterized by mistrust, money, and zero-sum mentality of politicians. Third, where elections fail, especially through mismanagement by Election Administration Agencies (EAA), pre-existing structural problems and a negative political culture combine to unleash violence. Finally, Low levels of accountability by electoral actors, including EAAs, media, political parties, etc. is conducive to electoral violence.

Figure 3: Interlocking Explanation of Electoral Violence



Combating electoral violence: level of preparedness

3.1 Complexity and the Need for Security in Nigerian Elections

One measure of a good election is the extent to which voters can make their choices freely and unencumbered. Violence is a major factor in curtailing freedom of choice. Consequently, the success of any election depends on the extent to which it affords adequate protection from violence, not only for voters and election workers, but also for election equipment, materials and results. In Nigeria, for the 2023 general election security must be provided for over 90 million voters, 176,606 Polling Units, 8,809 Ward Collation Centres, 774 Local Government Collation Centres, 37 State Collation Centres and one National Collation Centre.

3.2 Security Needs of Nigerian Election

In addition, over one million election workers and 812 INEC offices will also require security. Consequently, controlling election violence in the 2023 general election, calls for effective collaboration not only between INEC and the security agencies, but also among the security agencies themselves. It calls for joint and efficient sourcing and deployment of security personnel.

Since 2011, INEC, security agencies and other cognate agencies have worked collaboratively under the aegis of the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES). During the intervening years, ICCES has been a collaborative framework for managing election security. It presently counts about eighteen different agencies working together to ensure that all stakeholders are protected during elections and that elections are safe and secure. As part of this collaborative framework, ICCES has developed a joint code of conduct for security officials during elections. There is need to extend this collaboration by developing a harmonized framework for deployment of security officials during elections in the light of INEC's deployment of election workers and materials.

3.3 Legal Framework

Collaboration between INEC and security agencies in securing elections derive from both the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and the Electoral Act 2022 (as amended).

(a) Section 160 (1) of the Constitution provides as follows:

> Subject to subsection (2) of this section, any of the bodies may, with the approval of the President, by rules or otherwise regulate its own procedure or **confer powers and impose duties on any officer or authority for the purpose of discharging its functions**, provided that in the case of the Independent National Electoral Commission, its powers to make its own rules or otherwise regulate its own procedure shall not be subject to the approval or control of the President.

(b) Section 27 (3) of the Electoral Act provides that:

> Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law and for purpose of securing the vote, the **Commission shall be responsible for requesting for the deployment of relevant security personnel necessary for elections or registration of voters and shall assign them in the manner determined by the Commission in consultation with the relevant security agencies**: Provided that the Commission shall only request for the deployment of the Nigerian Armed Forces for the purpose of securing the distribution and delivery of election materials and protection of election officials.

INEC's election security architecture

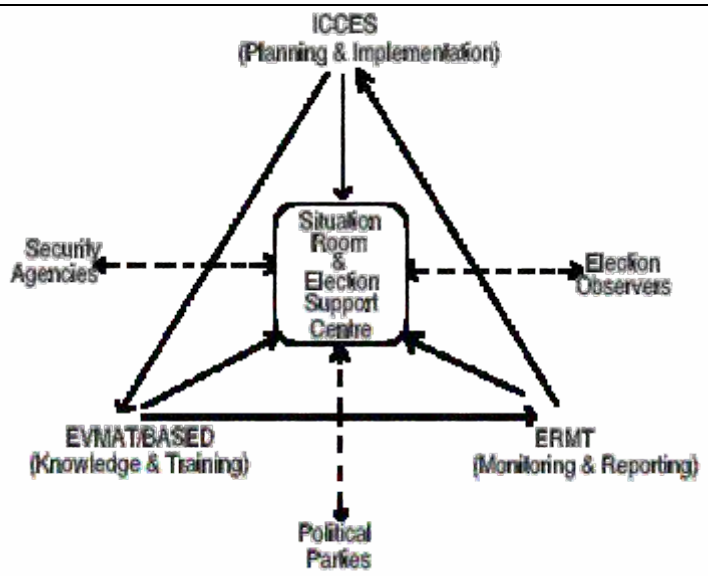
INEC's election security design since 2011 has been in two parts, namely the triangle of responsibilities and the three concentric circles of deployment.

4.1 Triangle of responsibilities

Since the 2011 general election, INEC has worked to establish a dedicated system of electoral security management. Among other things, it established the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES). The task of improving the management of election security has led to an integrated mechanism, which the Commission has been implementing since the 2015 general election to ensure secure and violence-free elections. The security of the 2023 general election is largely built on that architecture, which is a triangle of complimenting responsibilities. It has three basic components (see Fig. 4) namely, Planning and Implementation, which is carried out through ICCES; Knowledge and Training, which is conducted by INEC's Electoral Institute; as well as Monitoring and Implementation, using the International IDEA's Election Risk Management Tool and a special application developed by the Commission in 2021 called the INEC Security Alert and Notification System (SANS).

During elections, all these are coordinated through the INEC Situation Room at the Headquarters and Election Support Centres at State Offices. These are high-level bodies of INEC run by the Chairman, Commissioners and Directors to ensure rapid intervention when cases are reported. The Situation Room and Election Support Centres are also in constant touch with Security Agencies, Election Observers and Political Parties. The mechanism is illustrated below.

Figure 4: INEC Election Security System



NB: SANS was introduced in 2021 after the development of this system

1. Planning and Implementation

This is the main role of the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES). ICCES was established in 2011 to serve as a collective framework for security agencies and INEC to secure the electoral process. It is designed to increase the level of consultation, coordination and harmonization of electoral security planning and implementation. Among the agencies in ICCES are INEC, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Air Force, State

Security Service, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, National Youth Service Corps, National Intelligence Agency, Nigeria Prisons, Nigeria Customs Service and Nigeria Immigration Service. ICCES operates at the national, state and to some extent local government levels. It is now well established at the national and state levels. In addition, there is also regular cooperation between security agencies and our Electoral Officers at the local government level. ICCES is an advisory body to support INEC on security surrounding elections, including electoral violence.

The functions of ICCES include:

a. Coordinate the design of election security plans for INEC and lead the implementation.

b. Develop locally focused plans for providing security before, during and after elections.

c. Harmonize the training, deployment and actions of security personnel on election duties.

d. Assess existing security threats across the country that have implications for elections and produce a red, amber and green electoral security map for the country, which will be regularly updated.

2. Knowledge and Training

A major part of the mandate of the INEC Electoral Institute (TEI) is the production of knowledge and provision of training programmes on diverse aspects of election administration, security. As part of its responsibility to contribute to secure and violence-free elections, TEI is collaborating with CLEEN Foundation, development partners and other agencies to standardize the methodology for electoral risk assessment, as well as develop an Electoral Violence Mitigation and Advocacy Tool (EVMAT). In addition, through this collaborative project, it will develop a standardized protocol for measuring and predicting risk of electoral violence, review reports and researches on electoral violence and synthesize findings and recommend policy actions for relevant agencies, and establish a repository of information on electoral violence in the form of an electronic database.

In order to fully actualize the Commission's mechanism for secure and violence-free elections, it became necessary to organize joint trainings for the security agencies working within the framework of ICCES. Hitherto, each agency trained its own personnel deployed on election duty. While this approach is not necessarily wrong, it tends to leave some gaps. First, agency-specific training only focuses on the particular circumstances and roles of the agency. However, the reality of securing Nigerian elections has made interagency collaboration inevitable. Thus, it is important that in addition to agency specific training, INEC conduct interagency training for ICCES officials to be deployed for elections, using an integrated module that makes experience sharing possible.

Secondly, the quality of training given by individual agencies to their personnel before deployment could benefit immensely from knowledge within INEC as the election management body. Finally, it is important that the agencies in ICCES have a shared understanding of the INEC election security framework, since these agencies form a central part of its implementation. Consequently, the Electoral Institute conducted a training of trainers' programme for security agencies that work within ICCES. It is hoped that these agencies will then cascade this training down within their organizations.

INEC has also been implementing a Basic Security in Election Duty (BaSED) training programme

for INEC field officers. BaSED is designed to provide electoral field officers as well as other INEC staff an understanding of key security procedures required to ensure their safety while performing election duties. It also avails election personnel with general security awareness and identifies practical, strategies to improve their safety and wellbeing in the field. The goals of BaSED include to:

a) Reduce the possibility of INEC staff becoming victims to violence and life-threatening situations.

b) Help staff develop habits, skills and actions for enhancing personal safety and security.

c) Increase employee safety through self-awareness, discipline and environmental awareness.

d) Increase security awareness and vigilance across the field operations of the Commission.

e) Drive the knowledge of key safety and security procedures across the Commission's field operations.

f) Generally, improve electoral Risk Management.

3. Monitoring and Reporting

In addition to the foregoing initiatives, INEC is also implementing an Election Risk Management (ERM) Tool to ensure a violence-free election. In a bid to curb violence in the electoral cycle, INEC entered into a tripartite agreement with International IDEA and the African Union in April 2014 to support the implantation of the ERM Tool. The ERM Tool aims to help build user's capacity to understand, analyze, prevent and mitigate outbreaks of election-related violence. This tool has been piloted in several countries like Colombia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nepal, Sri-Lanka and Kenya with impressive results.

The ERM tool is designed to enhance INEC's capacity to understand electoral risk factors, analyze risk data and take action to prevent or mitigate election related insecurity. It is already assisting the Commission in identifying possible triggers for election related violence at different stages of the electoral cycle and to devise appropriate measures to avert violence. Pilot implementation of the Tool was carried out in the Osun governorship election in 2014 and a full implementation commenced with the 2015 general election.

The last monitoring and reporting tool, INEC SANS, was introduced in 2021 at the height of attacks on INEC facilities across the country. The SANS is an early warning tool. It is a web-based and mobile application that sends security threats to a back end and to rapid responders. Each alert appears in real-time on a map, enabling responders to quickly intervene. It also incorporates an SOS system, which when activated by staff in distress, enables them to get rapid intervention from responders. The responders are usually INEC officials and security operatives.

4.2 Three concentric circles of deployment

The Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) has for the last three electoral cycles used the three concentric circles approach to deployment.

i) Outermost circle

The outermost circle designates the major land/road entrances into a State or the FCT. This circle also includes the areas for “show of force exercises” conducted by security agencies before elections, rivers and seaports, the international borders, as well as airspace. They are usually manned

by the military and other agencies that are statutorily assigned to do so. Usually, this should commence about four weeks to an election. However, the land, river and sea access to a State are completely closed at midnight preceding the election.

ii) Middle circle

The middle circle represents cities, towns and villages in a State. It also includes INEC offices, storage facilities and Registration Area Camps (RACs), where INEC election staff pass the night before deployment on election day. This circle requires armed guards and patrols and should commence about two weeks and one week to an election.

iii) Innermost circle

This refers to actual location of voting and results management activities, specifically Polling Units and Collation Centres. By law, they are manned by unarmed security personnel.

Table 2: Security Deployment Approaches

S/N	Location	Cordon	Security required
1	Show of force	Outermost circle	Combined forces (Armed)
2	Delivery of election materials	All over	Combined forces (Armed)
3	Major land entrances into a State	Outermost circle	Army (Armed)
4	Rivers and seaports	Outermost circle	Naval guards & patrols (Armed)
5	Airspace	Outermost circle	Air Force (Armed)
6	International borders (alert)	Outermost circle	Combined forces (Armed)
7	Cities, towns and villages	Middle circle	Police & Army patrols (Armed)
8	INEC Offices	Middle circle	Police guards (Armed)
9	INEC storage facilities	Middle circle	Police guards (Armed)
10	Registration Area Camps	Middle circle	Police guards (Armed)
11	NYSC members quarters	Middle circle	Police guards (Armed)
12	Polling Units	Innermost circle	Police and Other agencies (Unarmed)
13	Collation Centres	Innermost circle	Police and Other agencies (Unarmed)

The idea behind the three concentric circles is that the preponderance of arms reduces as you move towards the inner circles. However, an inner circle should be able to call for support from an outer circle whenever the need arises. Table 2 summarizes the election security deployment based on the three concentric circles approach.

Conclusions

Elections in a context of rising expectations, zero-sum outcomes and communal mobilization like Nigeria tend to be violent. This is particularly so because of the tendency for political elite to manipulate, communalize and privatize security, insecurity and violence. The 2023 general election has all these seeds that predispose elections to violence. Therefore, the following ten issues have to be closely watched for the general election:

1. **Voter suppression and intimidation**, especially along ethnic and religious lines could lead to violence. Urban areas with a large concentration of people who are not indigenous to the locality will be most prone to this dimension of electoral violence.

2. **Manipulation of security**, this is related to voter suppression and intimidation, but could occur anywhere. The over deployment or under deployment of security personnel could become a cause or amplifier of violence.

3. **Logistics failure on the part of INEC** has always posed a threat of violence on election day and after. The impression that such failure is for partisan reasons fuels anger among voters and political parties who feel that they are the targets. Of a high premium here will be technological hitches. In 2015, the use of a particular telephone network in some parts of the country, which failed to activate the Smart Card Reader, was perceived by voters in those areas as an attempt by INEC to disenfranchise them.

4. **Incitement, fake news & hate speech** are usually the sparks in the tinder box of electoral violence. Disinformation fuels preconceptions and conspiracy theories about how elections are to be thrown by INEC and how certain candidates and parties are favoured. We have already seen signs of this in the 2023 general election, with well-orchestrated mudslinging by some candidates and claims of being the victims of government policies and INEC machinations.

5. **Judicial decisions in the aftermath of the elections** could become a major precursor of electoral violence. Already, some court decisions have raised eyebrows in the run up to the elections. It seems that if the low standing of the judiciary in the eyes of many ordinary Nigerians becomes the cypher through which they view judgments of Election Petition Tribunals and Courts, some of those judgments could lead to violence after the election.

6. **Rising expectations, especially among young people** – 2023 general election has been characterized by a high mobilization of young people and new voters. There seems to be a rising belief that good elections are possible in 2023 and there is a good chance of electing people who will transform the country. Should they be disappointed, it could lead to youth restiveness along the lines of the End SARS movement.

7. **Tight elections & desperation politicians** – where elections are close to call, politicians become very desperate and willing to use everything at their disposal including violence.

8. **Impunity and failure to bring culprits to book** - the Lemu Panel said 626 culprits were arrested after the 2011 violence. There is no known trial of them or any convictions. In Minjibir in 2016, hundreds were arrested, prosecuted and convicted. All were allegedly freed by their sponsors.

9. **Ignorance of how winners emerge, especially in Presidential election** is a major issue to watch. Voter education is key in this regard, especially because some positions are not based on only on simple plurality.

10. **Divisions in civil society along partisan lines** will hinder holding actors accountable.

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[v] In the last two weeks to the election, there have been reports of serious attacks on the APC campaign in Ebonyi, PDP campaign in Rivers State and Labour Party campaign in Lagos. The general economic situation in the country, particularly over the availability of fuel and money, also portend further violence during and after the election.
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ABOUT THE ELECTORAL HUB

The Electoral Hub, an affiliate of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), is a knowledge and advocacy hub which seeks to provide solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. It is committed to promoting electoral knowledge, integrity, and accountability in Nigeria. Our aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of critical and contextualised analysis, and solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving electoral governance and sustaining democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity.

Our core values are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency, and accountability.

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