



## Challenges of Electoral Insecurity in Nigeria: The Rivers State Experience

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**Abstract:** *Since independence, Nigeria's conduct of peaceful, free and fair elections has remained the most daunting challenge for the country's democratization; and the degree of violence, intimidation and fraud that generally characterized past elections in the country has seen electoral processes often met by public apathy. Herein, the statutory responsibility of the Nigeria security for maintenance of internal security and crime control, including the legal framework providing for its role in democratic elections, places it at the crux of the pursuit of electoral security. However, the experience in Nigeria is that the agencies have often largely been perceived as a political instrument for intimidating the opposition and public, and manipulating the outcome of elections in favor of its paymaster(s). Against the background of security threats posed to the conduct of the elections in Nigeria, we employ qualitative based research method to analyze the electoral policing-election security nexus in the conduct of elections in the Rivers State re-run. Studying various perceptions on the part of the security agencies in securitization before, during and after 2015 General Elections, we drew attention to lessons learned in preparation for future elections. Generally, while the experience with their election duties has not been so flattering nor praiseworthy, it did appear to domestic and foreign observers, this time, that on the whole, the security agencies performed creditably notwithstanding the hurdles politicians placed on the process. We conclude with recommendations for improving the role of the police in securing elections in Nigeria.*

**Key Words:** *Election Security & Insecurity, Political Violence, Rivers State, Security Agencies and Election Management body*

### INTRODUCTION

The history of elections in Nigeria since the colonial days has been a study of electoral violence. Yagub (1999), notes that the various experiences with competitive electoral political in Nigeria have brought the worst in political thuggery, brigandage, rigging, manipulation of electoral results, snatching of ballot boxes, arson, wanton assassination of perceived political opponents, unmediated and unrestrained destruction of lives and property.

The political leadership in Nigeria, since independence in a bid to end the anomalies usually associated with electoral process in the country has experimented various electoral bodies and enacted enabling laws to safeguard free and fair elections. Rather than solving the problems, the reforms have aggravated the situation, as electoral flaws, particularly electoral violence remains a recurring decimal in our political life.

The general elections in 2015 have come and gone with widespread sentiments that the polls, which resulted in a transition from an incumbent to opposition, were largely peaceful despite some lapses. However, acts of insecurity are possible at all stages of an electoral process, particularly in cases where key stakeholders in the process are potential threats to peace. The more reason the polls originally due to be held on 14 February, were later postponed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) due to security concerns, especially the threat from Boko Haram, to March 29th and April 11th, 2015.

*The Guardian Newspaper* while quoting the general elections in 2015 have come and gone with widespread sentiments that the polls, which resulted in a transition from an incumbent to opposition, were largely peaceful despite some lapses. However, acts of insecurity are possible at all stages of an electoral process, particularly in cases where key stakeholders in the process are potential threats to peace. The major reason that the polls originally due to be held on February 14th, were later postponed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was security concerns, especially the threat from Boko Haram, to March 29th and April 11th, 2015. To be sure, the risk of broader security challenges confronting Nigerian becoming heightened during elections made the provision of adequate security a necessity for the 120,000 polling units, at which an expected 68,833,476 voters would cast their votes. This is in addition to the over 9,000 collation centers, and at least 812 INEC officials (INEC, 2015). It is no surprise therefore that security was visibly an area that the government paid much attention to on Election Day, deploying policemen to man the polling units and collation centers.

The security report and postponement notwithstanding, many states of the federation became theaters of war. The Guardian Newspaper for instance while quoting a report by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nigeria, showed that 58 deaths were recorded with about hundred persons injured during incidents of election violence during campaigns and elections in the build up to the 2015 polls. The report, which was conducted in 22 States over a period of two months (December 3, 2014 -January 31, 2015), indicated that the south-south zone recorded the highest cases with 28 deaths, while the north-west recorded 11 deaths. Our case study recorded the highest number of casualties.

#### **Theoretical Perspectives on Electoral Insecurity in Nigeria**

It is axiomatic to posit that a politically impartial and peaceful polling environment that guarantees neutrality of electoral umpire and security are pre-conditions for the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria. Voters should not be afraid to come forward and cast their votes for candidates of their choice. It is only when these are done, that the acceptance of the electoral outcomes of elections will not be challenged and questioned. To achieve this, the Nigeria security agencies such as the police, army, navy, airforce and civil defence have been mandated by the Constitution and electoral act to discharge the functions of policing elections in the country. Given that the success or failure of any election or electoral processes in Nigeria depends largely on the conduct of police officers on election duties, the institution has been assigned a primary duty to protect the integrity of the electoral processes, the participants, institutions, and outcomes. Accordingly, by way of a summary, their functions in this regard could be summarized as follows: Safeguarding the security of lives and property of voters, electoral personnels, votes and voting materials and general peace during campaign and voting, so that citizens will not feel unsafe on account of holding, associating with or expressing a political opinion (INEC, 2015).

In policing and securing and other security officials, in the electoral process, the police is expected to have adequate awareness about activities prohibited throughout. The prohibitions in question are contained in part VIII of the Electoral Act, 2006 (Electoral Act, 2006). These include among others, obstruction of registration of voters (Section 124 Electoral Act 2006) destruction or forgoing of nomination papers (Section 125 Electoral Act 2006), thuggery (Section 126 Electoral Act 2006), electoral fraud (Section 127 Electoral Act 2006), improper use vehicles (Section 128 Electoral Act 2006), dereliction of duty (Section 130 Electoral Act 2006) bribery and corruption (Section 131 Electoral Act 2006), voting by unregistered person (Section 132 Electoral Act 2006), disorderly conduct of elections (Section 133 Electoral Act, 2006) treating (Section 134 Electoral Act 2006), and undue influence (Section 135 Electoral Act 2006). In electoral policing therefore, the police must monitor the pre-to post-election phases attentively, and call to order breach of the laws guiding electoral conduct in Nigeria.

The success or failure of any project as highlighted above is dependent on effective security and it is a state of environment which guarantees freedom from threat, intimidation and anxiety. Another perspective argued in opposite direction that the success/failure or even free and fair election is not only in the hands of security personnel alone, that it involves other group interests including the political parties, public, politicians, Government, and judiciary among others. To achieve this, group theory is used to analyze the commitment of two dominant political gladiators in the state- the APC controlling the federal government and the PDP, the opposition ruling the state.

A group, therefore, represented a pattern of arrangement as opposed to a static form, and as such could emerge only when the inter-actions among its individual members were both relatively frequent and sufficiently patterned to produce directional activity. The thesis that the same individual can belong to more

than one group, made it clear that the activity particular to the group was more important than its structural composition. Interest is a shared attitude concerning a claim or claims to be made by one group upon certain other groups in a social system (Varma, 1999: 163).

The Rivers debacle was a struggle between two dominant Political Parties namely the PDP and APC in the 2015 general elections in order to win the soul of Rivers State. The trouble started when the People Democratic Party (PDP) won majority of the elective positions declared in the state including the governorship. The APC took them to court. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Governor Nyeson Wike whose election was challenged by the APC candidate. A re-run election was held on March 19 and December 10, 2016, because the Federal Court of appeal, where hearing of petitions against the election results to the legislative houses terminated, ordered a re-run.

**The APC Federal Ruling Party Perspectives:** This perspective posits that since former governor Amaechi was a sitting governor during 2015 general elections, the assumption was that since he defected to APC, the state should be controlled by APC. The calculation was that with Amaechi as political gladiator in APC, his personality would give victory to his new formed party in Rivers State.

With Amaechi's departure from the People Democratic Party, the die was cast, and the political landscape of Rivers State was divided into two fiercely opposing camps (groups), with Amaechi and Wike as political gladiators. As a result of Amaechi's departure from the PDP some political big wigs of the PDP, like former Governor Peter Odili, who nurtured Amaechi's political career never supported him. In 2013, a thoroughly frustrated Amaechi, reacting to political activities in Rivers state teamed up with former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, and six other Northern governors and National Assembly members formed the New PDP. This new group later became an integral part of the ruling APC. The foot soldiers of each group (camp), were encouraged by their primordial tendencies, and the possibility of gaining access to oil funds that arena's thoroughly scrutinized at state level, turned Rivers state into a killing field (Lekan 2016:45). As Okonkwo (2016) had reported,

Going by the tones of the speeches of the gladiators in the struggle for the political soul of Rivers State, it is apparent that the coming re-run elections in the state may be nothing short of an electoral war. Since the annulment by various election Appeal Courts of 24 out of the 32 state House of Assembly positions, 12 out of the 13 House of Representatives and all the three Senatorial seats in the state, tension and confusion have pervaded the state with increasing security incidents daily reported across the state. Cold-blooded murders, armed robberies, kidnaps and cult attacks have suddenly overtaken the state with many pointing at the forthcoming re-run elections as being responsible for the heightened sense of insecurity now felt by many in the state.

Even interventions by the presidency, the police and other security agencies have not been able to curb the frequency of the incidents with new cases of armed robbery, kidnaps as well as shootings reported daily in various parts of the Rivers State. For instance, the presidency had posited that the Rivers State re-run must be free, fair, credible and peaceful for democratic consolidation to be attended to in this country. On the strength of this, President Buhari gave marching orders to security agents to deal decisively with sponsors and perpetrators of electoral violence. He condemned the political killings in Rivers State and also said killing of people over political differences was primitive, barbaric and unacceptable. He said, "we will deal decisively with all sponsors of violence. I have given the security services clear directives in this regard. We will show that violence in any form will no longer be tolerated before, during or after elections" (Buhari, 2016:10). With these belated but reassuring words, President Muhammadu Buhari signified the determination of the Federal Government to ensure that the re-run legislative poll in Rivers State was to be conducted free, fair and credible. Unfortunately, politicians struggling for elective positions rather than taking steps to address the security challenge are busy taking sides and politicizing the matter.

In view of the electoral violence that characterized the March 19 re-run election in Rivers State and Joint Investigation Panel was inaugurated on December 22, 2016 by Inspector-General of Police, Ibrahim Idris which comprised 12 officers of the Nigeria Police Force and three from Department of state services to investigate the various infractions, incidents, and violence that marred the re-run elections in Rivers state and any relevant matter. The Panel Chairman, DCP Okoro presented the panel report on February 6, 2017 which alleged that the Rivers State Government bribed officials of the INEC electoral officers with N360m to rig the December 10, 2016 legislative re-run elections in the state. The sum of N111.300,000 was recovered from 23 electoral officers while three INEC officials said they met with Wike and that the Rivers State

Government gave them money. Out of N350m, N15m was given to each of the electoral officers and N5m was added by the government of Rivers to the Electoral Officers who were in charge. The panel attributed the violence during the election to lawlessness and leadership failure (Abdulkarim, 2016 & Tam-George, 2017).

The committee established cases of misconduct against some electoral officers and law enforcement agents, who allowed them to be compromised in their line of duties. The panel indicates six police operatives and was later dismissed for misconduct and misuse of arms during the polls, contrary to the provisions of force order 237. The dismissed officers were ex-Inspector Eyog Victor, ex-sgts Peter Ekpok, Oguni Goodluck, Orji Nwoke, Okpe Ezekiel and Tanko Akor.

Reacting to the bribe allegations leveled against the Rivers State Government by the joint investigation panel set up by the Inspector-General of Police, the government of Rivers state, described the claim by the police panel as shameful, defamatory and reckless. The state government challenged the police to prove that Governor Nysom Wike bribed INEC workers to rig the December 10, 2016 legislative re run polls. They also challenged the Nigeria police force to prosecute and imprison the electoral officers indicted by the panel without delay, even as they described the police investigation as dubious. Never in the annals of infamy have we seen a vital state security institution descend to the lowest depths of blackmail and criminality as the Nigeria Police Force has done in this case. The Rivers State Government challenged the Nigeria Police to show Proof that Governor Wike financially induced any official of INEC. Do the police have bank records of the purported transactions between Governor Wike and the electoral officers? (Tam-George, 2017:7). Earlier before the panel report, the rivers State Government went to court to stop the Police panel from investigating the rerun elections but court did not grant that.

#### **The Opposition Party (PDP) Perspectives:**

This thesis blame alienation of the mass from state affairs by the ruling class, greed, injustice, selfishness, poverty, godfatherism, leadership crisis, frustration and unequal distribution of state resources are the major causes of electoral violence. The above are mere symptoms of an ailment, the cause of the ailment must be identified before trickling the symptoms, and thus the above cannot satisfactorily account for endemic violence in Nigeria. However, Okoli (2003), Dudley (1978), Zikky (2011), Joseph (2007), point at prebendalism, desperation of incumbents, and the competitive and pervasive nature of election as causes of violence. They ignored the fact that the character of contestants towards election is motivated by the expected gains, hence elections take a competitive nature involving invocation of tonic and religions sentiments. Fevanatti (1981), Moser and Ninton (2001), Oguzie (2003), Agbebor (2003) and Offoaro (2011) attributed violence to nature of society, ignorance and unconsciousness towards security.

Putting the legislative re-run elections in Rivers state in a perspective, this thesis posits that the violence was largely a battle between Governor Nyesom Wike and his predecessor, Mr. Chibuike Amaechi. This is because they are the personalities that largely influence the direction of politics at the state level. On his part, Amaechi apparently would want to use this rerun to prove that the defeat suffered by the APC in 2015 elections was largely on account of the reported irregularities that characterized the election during which he could not even vote.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) celebrated the defeat of APC and Amaechi when the party recorded a landslide victory in the controversial 2015 elections. The PDP captured all three senatorial seats, all 13 House of Representatives seats and 31 out of 2 state House of assembly Seats. The elections were slammed as a charade by the All Progressives Congress (APC), and its leaders, Rotimi Amaechi gave as example, his inability to vote even as the sitting governor as the hallmark of the alleged charade. His assertions were, however, debunked by the governor, Nysesom wike who accused the APC of crying wolf. Wike who is now governor just as Amaechi few years ago is alleging bias on the part of the INEC and the same security agencies that Amaechi had just few years ago alleged collaborated with Wike to shut out the APC from the polls. It appears that APC is beginning to enjoy those rights and privileges that were at the disposal of the PDP in 2015 general elections with the appointment of Amaechi as the Minister of Transportation. Amaechi had earlier vowed to regain the mandate of his party which he said was stolen by the ruling PDP in the state (Davies, 2016:38).

Though electoral security is crucial for creating enabling environment for a peaceful conduct of elections in Nigeria but one wonders, upon the presence of heavy security officers during the rerun elections still witnessed electoral crisis/ violence. The setting up of panel showed the level of in security during the rerun elections in Rivers State. The question is, were security personnel worked for the interest of the ruling

party or for the opposition, or were they neutral, still the insecurity persisted? This is to say that, the heat and passion associated with elections in Nigeria often make elections appear like war. What are these under current issues and how do they play out? This is the aim the section after methodology of the paper intends to achieve.

**Material and Methods**

A research design is a scientific logic that has a link with the data collected with appropriate analytical tools already specified and adopted under methodology. The discussion constitutes a major task that would largely determine the relevance of the work (Obasi, 1999:106). However, in a descriptive study such as this, its findings must be credible. The key criterion or principle of a good documentary research is found in the notion of trustworthiness and neutrality of its findings or decisions (Bouma and Ling, 2004). Just as a quantitative study cannot be considered valid unless it passes reliability and credibility tests. Trustworthiness entails credibility and transferability, which is the extent to which the findings can be explored in another context (Bassey, 1981:73-94). These qualities of a good methodology will help to explain the roles and involvement of different stakeholders and security agencies in the conduct of rerun elections in Rivers State. This thesis will help us to know whether their involvement undermined the credibility of the re-run election in Rivers state.

The technique of content analysis will assist to draw some relevant information or facts that will help validate the research hypotheses. The technique is a scientific means or process of analyzing or comprehending information or facts scientifically. It is a universal process of carrying out a research work in order to generate a detailed knowledge of the work under study. This technique will be used to analyze data collected:

**Content Analysis**

S/N	Speech/Interview	Number of Paragraphs	Electoral Insecurity in Nigeria
1	The interview of AIG of Police, Baba Bolanta, in charge of Zone 6, "Rivers Election would have been bloodier, if," <u>Daily Sun</u> , March 21, 2016.	7	6
2	The speech of Ekiti State Governor, Ayodele Fayose, "Free, Fair, Credible Polls dead under APC", <u>Daily Sun</u> , December 12, 2016.	6	5
3	The speech of Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, "I've lost confidence in INEC, Police, Army", <u>Daily Sun</u> , December 13, 2016.	7	5
4	The speech of the Minister of Transportation Mr. Rotimi Amaechi, "Wike playing politics with People's lives", <u>Punch</u> , March 30, 2016.	9	8
5	The speech of the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, "Rivers Rerun: Buhari gives Security agents Marching Orders", <u>Daily Sun</u> , March 16, 2016.	7	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>

From the table above, the empirical research shows that out of 36 paragraphs that focused on the conduct of Rivers state re-run elections by the Independent National Electoral commission (INEC), 30 emphasized on the of electoral insecurity challenge and their implications on the democratic consolidation in Nigeria in general and Rivers state in particular. Therefore, the empirical research findings located the electoral violence during the re-run election on two personalities. Though their names were not on the ballot papers but the election was largely a battle for supremacy between Governor Nyesom Wike and Chibuike. Both men are at the hub of the maiming and killing of Innocent citizens and the torching of houses and properties of INEC, voters and politicians.

**Understanding the Challenges of Electoral Insecurity in Pre- 2015 and Post- 2015 Rivers State**

According to Joab-Peterside (2015), Human Rights Watch (2016) and Ndibe (2016), Rivers State is not immune to politically-motivated violence. The state has a number of flashpoints. In Rivers State, political violence come in various forms such as cultism and other social miscreants who are used by desperate

politicians to intimidate and kill political opponents or rival political parties' supporters. In Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, about 20 persons had been killed between November 2014 and January 2015. Though many of the attacks lead to deaths and destruction of property, both the PDP and APC had been trading accusations on what caused the violence, perpetrators, victims and the consequences. Most of the analysts attributed them to the activities of rivalry among cult groups and communal clashes. The All Progressives Congress has vehemently opposed to on such argument while the Peoples Democratic Party had consistently dismissed the outcry of the APC on the increasing number of deaths of its supporters, positing that the ruling party was only crying wolf where there was none.

The politically motivated attacks at party rallies came to a head when gunmen opened fire on the APC governorship rally and a policeman, who attempted to repel the assailants, was hit by a bullet. A correspondent with *Channels Television*, Mr. Charles Eruka, was lucky to have escaped death when hoodlums who had attacked the rally broke a bottle on his head and used the same object to stab him on the neck. During the unfortunate incident, the then governorship candidate of the APC, Dr. Dakuku Peterside, was whisked away to safety by security operatives and personal guards.

While the APC and PDP were still pointing accusing fingers at each other over the onslaught in Okrika, another ugly incident took place in Kaani, Khana Local Government Area on February 22, 2015. The Deputy Chief Press Secretary to then Governor Rotimi Amaechi, was abducted in public glare while supervising the preparation of an APC ward congress. Riding in a *Toyota Highlander* Sports Utility Vehicle, the gunmen carried out the operation in commando fashion. Within the twinkle of an eye, the victim, Mr. Freddy Ndigbara, was whisked from the proposed venue. Ndigbara's brothers, sisters and APC members watched in dismay as he was taken away. Amaechi since described the incident as politically motivated. Also, the APC governorship candidate, Dakuku Peterside, raised alarm that the lives of his party members were no longer safe in Rivers as a result of the continued politically-motivated violence.

Earlier, the state APC and its chairman, Dr. Davies Ikanya, had during a world press conference called on the International, security agencies and other relevant international organisations to intervene by calling the PDP to order in the continued killings of its members. He lamented that while some of its members had been killed as a result of political violence allegedly unleashed by the PDP in the state, many of its faithful had sustained serious injuries following the attacks. The APC Chairman further cautioned that a free and fair election would not be possible if the current spate of violence, high-handedness, intimidation and terror was not halted. He said,

We call on these and other humanitarian and democratic organizations and institutions to set up a high-powered election monitoring networks, teams and processes to monitor the elections in Rivers State to avert unnecessary bloodbath which may cripple our already weakened economy. An acceptable electoral outcome is possible in Rivers State only if the elections are truly free and fair. There cannot be free and fair elections if the spate of violent high-handedness, intimidation and terror is not halted. As the 2015 general elections approaches, the scale, magnitude and intensity of the orchestrated violence against members of the APC is assuming a frightful dimension and this necessitated that we cry out to Nigerian and international communities. (Abuh, 2015a and Abuh, 2015b).

But the state PDP described the allegations of the APC as untrue. Before then, the PDP in the state had urged the APC to look inward, alleging that the ruling party stage-managed the attacks on their members. The Chairman, Media and Publicity of the Rivers State PDP Campaign Organisation, Mr. Emma Okah, dismissed the allegation describing the claim that his party was responsible for the death of 30 APC members and supporters as ridiculous and untrue. He explained that some people had died as a result of cult activities and communal clashes, adding that the APC was trivializing death by linking such deaths to political violence without any burden of proof and due process.

Occasionally, cult-related activities are bound to occur which could have been resolved ordinarily through litigations rather than resorting to jungle justice or by people taking the law into their hands. It is not in the character of the PDP to resort to violence.

He added:

Why is APC insisting that the PDP is responsible for the death of its (APC) members? So, what it (APC) is saying is that wherever a death occurs and that death is a violent death that involves any APC person, it means that the persons behind are PDP persons. It doesn't follow. However, recalled how a staunch PDP member in the state was nearly assassinated, adding that the party (PDP) only called the police to

investigate the incident and did not accuse the APC. What of those who are cult members and (got killed) as a result of cult related activities? What if they are members of APC? Are they also going to be pointing fingers at PDP? What of communal crisis? What of land crisis? You know that people can't go to court and the only option left to people now is to seek self-help at all material times because they will not let the courts open (Chinda, 2014a and Chinda, 2014b).

But an APC Chieftan, Chief Chukwuemeka Eze, disagreed with Okah's argument, maintaining that his party was not in doubt that the PDP are behind the violence against its members. Eze said that contrary to PDP's claim, the APC would never be involved in attacking its (APC) members and supporters. According to Eze,

"Go through their records. Remember we belonged to one political family before. So, you can see a division now. We have the violent type and the one that is not violent. Those that are not violent have since moved to the APC. We have listed about 150 sins of the PDP and all of them are attacks, attacks and attacks. They have gone to kidnap our member and they disrupted the rally both at Khana and Okrika local government areas. If the PDP is denying all these, is it the APC that would be disrupting its own rallies with violence?"

Ebiri (2014), Ughegbe (2015) and Williams (2015) had documented that they had raised alarm over the spate of pre-election violence in the state, saying that over 20 people have been confirmed dead in the first three months of 2015. The government disclosed that statistics from Braithwaite Memorial Specialist Hospital and Kelsey Harrison Hospital that between January and March 12, 2015, it revealed that 41 casualties were treated for gunshot injuries while 26 others were treated for machete wounds. The then state Commissioner for Health, Samson Parker, who raised the alarm in an interview with journalists in Abuja, said that the number of casualties attended to by the various healthcare facilities across the state have become a source of worry for the Ministry of Health. He said many deaths that have occurred during clashes between members of different political parties have gone unreported. He noted that the state has "recorded over 20 deaths in the last couple of months due to violent clashes across the state".

Parker said:

It behoves on me at this time to announce to the people of Rivers State the emergence of a new epidemic. There is an epidemic of political violence going on in Rivers State. At the Ministry of Health, my colleagues and I toil daily to ensure that we provide services, given available resources, in healthcare delivery (Ebiri, 2014a; Ebiri, 2014b, Ebiri, 2014c; and Ebiri, 2014d).

The heat and passion associated with elections in Nigeria often make elections appear like war. According to Abdulkarim (2016:11) while quoting the General Officer Commanding 6 Division, Nigerian Army posited that Deputy Superintendent of Police DSP Alkali Mohammed of Mobile Police Unit 48 and his orderly, were beheaded by suspected political thugs during the December 10, 2016 legislative rerun election in Rivers State. He lamented that the Army as a respected institution with constitutional responsibility to safeguard lives and property would not fold its hands to watch miscreants and hoodlums abducting, maiming and killing innocent citizens, especially uniform personnel. In an effort to addressing security challenges in the re-run election, the soldiers provided 'perimeter defence' to ward off hoodlums and miscreants, because they acted swiftly in response to security breaches to enforce the law, provided aid to the Nigeria Police and other security agencies in places like Abionema, Etche, Gokhana, Ikwere, Eleme, Tai, Khana and Omoku that were marred with violence. With these measures in place, it did not prevent the patrol vehicle of DSP Alkali Mohammed from been taken away with weapons, three policemen escaped while five were missing in action. This was the same area where soldiers of 34 Brigade were ambushed on November 20, 2016, where a soldier was killed. Also on November 21, 2016, 4 personnel of Nigeria security and Civil Defence corps (NSCDC) were killed and their weapons carted away.

The emphasis here is electoral violence not electoral malpractices, and with electoral malpractices, the court can help to some existent, but there is nothing the court can do about electoral violence because if a property is burnt, it is burnt (Jonathan, 2015:13). And there is nothing court can do to bring a dead person killed during electoral violence back to life, so insecurity of life and property is a terrible thing to manage.

Security is therefore indispensable to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections. Electoral security is crucial for creating the proper environment, electoral staff required to discharge their duties, for voters to freely and safely go to their polling units to vote; for voters to freely and safely organize rallies and campaigns; and for other numerous stakeholders to discharge their responsibilities contained in the Constitution and the Electoral Act. In planning, coordination and deployment matters pertaining to electoral

processes, well-coordinated security is a fundamental requirement for success. Anucha (2016:6) revealed how Okonta Dumebi Samuel, NYSC Corp Members with number RV/15B/5539 lost his life during legislative rerun election in March 19, 2016 in Rivers State. He was a serving corps member at GCSS, Ukpeliède. Okonta killed by gun men in Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers state where he was deployed as an INEC Ad hoc staff and was gunned down after he had submitted his election result to the Election Management Board (EMB), and was going home. Two other corps members who were with him escaped with the help of security agents.

The killing of NYSC Corps members and security men received wide condemnations who described the action as primitive, barbaric, and ungodly. Security reports put the number of death during the rivers re-run to 15 and was described by both international and local observers as one of the bloodiest in the annals of elections in the country since the advent of democracy in 1999. We consider NYSC Corps members' death as a great loss both to their immediate families, NYSC and Nigeria. Ndibe (2016:48), described the National and state Legislative re-run elections in Rivers State as spiraled out of security control at several hot spots, leaving at least few people dead. The police also confirmed 12 arrests.

In the first rerun elections, March 19, 2016, there was disagreement among political parties over the issue of result sheet. Bolanta (2016:16) captured this way: problem started when some members of political parties started hearing that there were fake result sheets being circulated and that INEC did not offer enough explanations that those result sheets were genuine. So, that was what escalated the troubles, otherwise, the elections were proceeding smoothly until the authenticity of the assumed fake result sheets started coming up and that was when the election started having pockets of violence all over. In fact, it was a fact that the unguided utterances of the two principal political gladiators of PDP (Wike) and APC (Amaechi) that contributed to the tension and violence in the state.

Anucha (2016: 6-7) buttressed this claim by positing, that the Governor Wike tasked his supporters to follow their electoral results closely and should not allow anyone to swap results, they should resist any attempt to rig the election and that the youths should vehemently resist anyone trying to smuggle in already written results. While Amaechi accused Wike of sponsoring those who carried arms during the 2015 general elections and 2016 rerun elections, Wike equally threw it back to Amaechi. As stated earlier, during the campaigns, people of various political parties were beaten, manhandled and others threatened, leaving many dead.

During the December, 10, rerun elections, the Inspector-General of Police deployed 25,000 police officers inducing conventional, Mobile police, Marine Police, Air Wing Police and tactical units, still electoral violence, irregularities and intimidation did not give way for a peaceful electoral process in Rivers State.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is painful when lives were lost during the election. As (Yakubu, 2016:6) cautioned that no matter the grievances of those involved in political contest, nothing justifies the cold blooded murder of an innocent official conducting a legitimate national assignment intended to afford the citizen an opportunity to freely choose their leader. One thing that has become glaring is that victory may be sweet, and defeat, bitter, but the process that rusher the winning and losing of elections are also important like the outcome. Both the PDP and the APC in the state have recorded human and material losses in this contest, but the greatest loss of all are the ordinary people in the state who have been stripped of the joy of electing their representatives in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility. They have been forced to see elections as a battle to either win or lose, with themselves as the ultimate victims of the exercise scores of ordinary citizens of the state suffered injuries (Sokunbi, 2016:19).

The facts remain that politics as practiced in Nigeria makes it a-do-and-die affair and as the only viable industry which guarantees and delivers three scarce commodities: Wealth, power and fame for the political class. This mad rush and quest for public office has made elections deadly and dangerous in the life of both competitors and voters. The political office seekers with their inordinate desperation to win elections at all cost recruit the services of unemployed youth as thugs and armed them with ammunitions terrorize both the opponents and the innocent Nigerians voters. However, associated with these issues, there is need for effective security during the conduct of elections in Nigeria. The following recommendations are necessary to checkmate the insecurity during the conduct of elections in Nigeria:

- (1) The country needs altruistic leaders who have the interest of their people in mind. The two strongmen of Rivers State Politics, former two-time governor of the state now Minister of Transport, Rotimi



Amaechi and the incumbent state governor, Nyesom Wike, need to be told in clear terms to leave room for peace and peaceful elections in the state. They should go beyond politicking to service to the people. The story of the endless political battles in Rivers State is nothing but an account of the unending conflicts between Amaechi and Wike.

- (2) The country needs effective and coordinated security agencies that are not biased in discharging their constitutional responsibilities in the conduct of elections. The setting up of the Inter agency consultative committee on Election Security (IECCES) is good intention by INEC but it should have constitutional backing with financial autonomy attached to it, to enable each agency prepare in advance.
  - (a) There should be more recruitment of security agents (police) to March 120,000 polling units, so that at least two security agents fan protect each polling unit throughout the country.
  - (b) There should be constitutional amendment in which policemen should be allowed to carry arms at the polling units to discourage thugs that intimidate voters with dangerous weapon at the polling units during elections.
  - (c) It is still necessary to deploy military to strategic points called flash points to checkmate the excesses of politicians and their political thugs in intimidating, and snatching of electoral materials.
- (3) The INEC should be unbiased umpire with the aspirations to conduct free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria which strengthen the confidence o the politicians and people in the polity.
- (4) The political class (politicians) should be ready to play the game by the rules and avoid recruiting thugs to intimidate, main and kill innocent citizens.

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