

THE ROLE OF SECURITY IN CREDIBLE ELECTIONS AND SUSTAINANCE OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *Democracy is beneficial to people provided the democratic rule is adopted while democracy cannot be achieved unless there are periodic elections. Elections, though, considered as pre-requisite for good governance, however, mere elections without ensuring credibility is also tantamount to despotism. An election cannot be judged as credible, free and fair unless the following agents of democracy - security, media and civil society organizations – perform their constitutional roles. This paper focuses on the evaluation and dynamics of role of security, media and civil society organization in Nigerian democracy. It explores the pertinent roles of the security, media and civil society organizations to the conduct of credible elections which in turn may beget true democracy. The existing literatures have drawn the linkage between security democracy and elections. However, this paper does not only argues that security men, press men and civil society organizations have not done well in the conduct of elections in Nigeria but also highlights some other core issues that have dominated the discourse and explores the challenges on democratization process in Nigeria. Finally, a recommendation is made that all stakeholders should be honest and moral in discharging their duties.*

Keywords: *Election, Democracy, Nigeria, Security, Media, Civil Society Organization*

1. INTRODUCTION

Development history bears credence to the maxim that any democratic state cannot conduct free and fair elections unless if security officers, media practitioners and civil society organizations adequately perform their roles. It is quite unequivocal that developed countries are what they are today simply because everybody or agents in the polity perform their constitutional role to sustain democracy. Has any state developed without institutionalizing ways of conducting free and fair elections? In other words, failed states are often known through their inability to choose competent leaders in credible, free and fair elections. I mean the competent leaders, who can paddle the canoe of the state into Promised Land. African states are still wallowing in pathetic ocean of bad leadership due to their inept to conduct internationally acceptable elections. It is indeed, argued in this paper that any country cannot witness credible elections to sustain its democracy unless the security is ensured before, during and after elections. Thus, this paper is arranged to discuss, after introduction, conceptual clarifications, the role of the security during election in any democratic states. This section is followed by the assessment of the security in the Nigerian context. The last section gives summary, conclusion and recommendations.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Concept of Democracy

Democracy (Greek *demos*, "the people"; *kratein*, "to rule") is a political system in which the people of a country rule through any form of government they choose to establish. In modern democracy, supreme authority is exercised for the most part by representatives elected by popular suffrage (Richard, 2009). To appadorai (1975:137) "*democracy may be described as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by them.*" The representatives may be supplanted or uprooted by the electorate according to the legal procedures of recall and referendum, and they are, at least in principle, responsible to the electorate. The Heater goes to argue, as quoted by Anifowose, that *democracy is essentially a method of organizing society politically. There are, it is suggested, five basic elements without which no community can call itself truly democratic. These elements are equality, sovereignty of the people, respect for human life, the rule of law and liberty of the individual.*

From the Heater's definition deficiency is discovered since his definition does not address the role of both political parties and the interest groups. To take care of these shortfalls Larry Diamond's definition does justice to these points. He defined democracy to have consisted "*meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups, either directly or indirectly, for the major positions of governmental power*" (Diamond, 1988:4). This Diamond definition tremendously magnifies the importance of competition at the level of political parties and the role of people's participation at the level civil societies. In many democracies, such as the United States and Nigeria, both the executive head of government and the legislature are elected. In typical constitutional monarchies such as the United Kingdom and Norway, only the legislators are elected, and from their ranks a cabinet and a prime minister are chosen. Although often used interchangeably, the terms *democracy* and *republic* are not synonymous. Both systems delegate the power to govern to their elected representatives. In a republic, however, these officials are expected to act on their own best judgment of the needs and interests of the country. The officials in a democracy more generally and directly reflect the known or ascertained views of their constituents, sometimes subordinating their own judgment.

Democracy is generally traced to the rule by the people of the pre-Christian era. The democracies of the city-states of classical Greece and of Rome during the early years were direct democracies, in which all citizens could speak and vote in assemblies that resembled New England town meetings. Representative government was unknown and unnecessary because of the small size of the city-states. Europe first contact with democracy was in 1642, during the political and revolutionary action against autocratic European governments resulted in the establishment of democratic governments. Such action was inspired and guided largely by political philosophers, notably the French philosophers Montesquieu and Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the American statesmen Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Before the end of the 19th century, every

important Western European monarchy had adopted a constitution limiting the power of the Crown and giving a considerable share of political power to the people. Later, the success of democratic institutions in the United States served as a model for many states. The conception of democracy in Nigeria could be traced to 1922 Clifford constitution. During this period the constitution allowed Nigeria citizens to contest for four reserved seats for Africans in the legislative house. Though the constitution restricted the franchise due to the monetary conditions attached to it. However, the constitution led to creation of the first political party in Nigeria in 1923 by Herbert Macaulay. Since then till now Nigeria had been a democratic state except in few years of military rules.

Finally, by the middle of the 20th century, every independent country in the world, with only a few exceptions, had a government that, in form if not in practice, embodied some of the principles of democracy. It should be noted here that, although, the ideals of democracy have been widely and commonly professed, the practice and fulfillment have been different in many countries.

Concept of Elections

Election is a process and procedure through which the eligible citizens of a particular state choose their political representatives whom are expected to solve on their behalf the collective problems of the masses. It is a process through which representatives are emerged to direct the affair of the state. Put differently, election is considered to be the process of choosing the representatives of the people who are to be saddled with the clearly defined responsibilities of governance through the voting exercise. Election consists of all prerequisite exercises involved both pre and post. Benjamin (2009) defines election as *“a procedure that allows members of an organization or community to choose representatives who will hold positions of authority within it.”* Nwolise, (2007:155) and Bamgbose (2012:206) defined election to be *“a process of selecting the officers or representative of an organization or group by the vote of its qualified members.”* To Anifowose (2003:21), election is *“the process of elite selection by the mass of the population in any given political system.”* The most important function of any credible elections is to provide the people opportunity to select the leaders of local, states, and national governments. This chance participating in choosen the leaders at all levels serves as golden opportunity for the public to make choices about the policies, programs, and future directions of their government. At the same time, elections promote accountability. The threat of defeat at the polls exerts pressure on those in power to conduct them in a responsible manner and take account of popular interests and wishes when they make their decisions.

Concept of Security

Security is a safety from harm; the degree of resistance to, or protection from harm. It applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling community, nation or organization. However, security as a word has different dimensions in psychology, public safety, defense and military matters, information etc. though is

used in different disciplines and to mean different things but general meaning is ‘to protect’ and to provide maximum protection for certain thing. Despite that we are only concerned with security during election; it is still pertinent to acknowledge the fact that it is used in other areas like computer security, Data security, information security, human security, personal security, national security, financial security, electoral security, to mention but few.

3. DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL PRACTICE: ANY ROLES FOR SECURITY

The purpose of this segment is to critically analyse the pertinent roles of the security, media and civil society organisations to the conduct of credible elections which in turn may beget true democracy. To start with, it has been recognized all over the world that democracy is the best form of government. It is also generally held that elections are an important pillar of democracy. As explained above, election gives citizens choices of choosing among the contesting parties and candidates through voting. Under democracy, elections are supposed to be conducted to ensure that the winner reflects the intention of the voters.

To achieve this gargantuan task, the role of security is not subservient. Otiye (not dated: 6-8) argues that the success or failure of any election depends on the stakeholders performing their duties (INEC, Political Parties, Election Observers, Media and Security Agencies). He laments that *“the security agencies can make a difference in the outcome of elections. It is therefore important that security officers display the highest level of integrity, neutrality, professionalism and sense of duty. The protection of human life, voters, electoral materials and officials and the preservation of lawful and orderly electoral processes are necessary for credible, free and fair elections.”* Just like the way Lai (2013:xx) put it *“security is indispensable to the conduct of free, fair and credible election. From the provision of the basic security to voters at political party rallies and campaigns to ensuring that result forms are protected, the whole electoral process is circumscribed by security considerations.”* Thus, without adequate security, there cannot be credible, free and fair elections.

Some of the roles of security in elections are as follows: Providing security for candidates during rallies, congresses, conventions, electioneering campaigns and elections; safeguarding the lives and properties of citizens during the electoral process; ensuring and preserving a free, fair, safe and lawful atmosphere for campaigning by all parties and candidates without discrimination; maintaining peaceful conditions, law and order around the polling and collation ; providing security for electoral officials at the voting and counting centre’s; ensuring the security of election materials at the voting centre’s and during transportation; ensuring the security of all electoral material, personnel and citizens during registration of voters, update, revision and any other electoral event. In sum, the role of security is to ensure safety of electorate, electoral materials and electoral officers before, during and after elections.

To pinpoint the key lessons from this analysis, it is pertinent to acknowledge the roles of security in elections. All parties concerned must discharge their duties efficiently

ranging from police, military and other paramilitary corps. It is only a well secured electoral practice that can bring about a consolidated democratic rule.

4. THE ROLE OF SECURITY IN DEMOCRATIC RULE AND ELECTORAL PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

Without mincing words, Nigeria has witnessed the gigantic roles of the trio mentioned above in the area of democratic consolidation. Since Nigeria has gotten independence the foremost challenge that had confronted its political activities was its inability to conduct credible, free and fair elections. Scholars have argued that the only election that possessed such good attributes was June 12 general election in 1992. Unfortunately the then third republic was abortive. Thereafter, military rule ruled for other seven years before the regime was put to an end. Another election was conducted in 1999; new democratic dispensation-fourth republic started on May 1999. For more than a decade of this nascent democratic rule in Nigeria, it is quite unequivocal that free and fair election is still a mirage. Just like the way Joseph (2011: 246) put it *“in any credible democracy, elections constitute the soul of the democratic process”*. This segment wishes to enquire the role of the security, media, and civil society in ensuring free and fair and credible elections in Nigeria.

SECURITY AND ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

The constitutional roles of security men in Nigeria during election are quite germane. Electoral security in Nigeria is primarily handled by police. In other words, the police are primarily saddled with the responsibility of making sure that people exercise their voting rights in an orderly manner with the help of other paramilitary organisations. But it got a level that military have to participate in this process. The participation of security men is now becoming more alarming. Since the situation has even degenerated to the level that hardly could Nigeria conduct any election without abundant of security men. In fact, it has now become a paradigm that election without security men in Nigeria is impossible. What could have led to this myopic view?

The answer is not farfetched. Security men generally, except few, have made themselves available for election rigging. What an insult? Security personnel that are expected to maintain laws are breaching them with impunity at this precarious time. In most of the previous elections, it is discovered that security men could not exonerate themselves from common scourge of corruption. One can even contend that police and others security officers can be easily pocketed by the politicians and most especially government in power. No wonder, it is popularly held that *“he who pays the piper dictates the tune”*. In short, corruption has been used to characterize the role of security men in elections in Nigeria.

Closely related to the above point is the issue of partisanship. The security men have been accused of belonging or being used by one or more political parties against others. The alleged *“sophisticated and professional rigging”* that took place in Ekiti has made some analysts to conclude that security men are not but the stooge of the ruling

party, PDP in Nigeria. The controversial tape released on internet which was said to have exposed the cruel deal that transpired between the head of police, head of military, and the PDP delegates on how they would rig the then election was a good example of such partisanship of security men.

Sometimes, security men are used to intimidate both electorates and the opposition parties. This phenomenon is becoming rampant in recent days in Nigeria. It was reported in daily news that police arrested some of the political gladiators of APC in Ekiti and Osun States on the eve days of elections. These arrests were later found illegal. Also, in some areas, the electorates were reported being afraid of the security men. This phobia and trepidation debar some voters from exercising their civic right. This was alleged to have reduced the turn-out of the electorates especially at the areas where supporters of APC were numerous.

Be that as it may, security men still have some positive impacts towards successful conduct of elections. This could be felt right from the period of campaigns. The politicians always like to jump the rules of the game unless there are security's controls and interventions. Another round of security role in election is in providing security for election materials, electorates, candidates, and the INEC officials. These have been their normal routine since the inception of democracy in 1999. While these roles are both constitutionally and morally commendable, the partisanship and corruption is highly condemnable both nationally and internationally.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal republic of Nigeria as a democratic state has been wallowing in pathetic ocean of backwardness, insecurity, corruption, and high level of poverty. The menace of these problems is often referred to as bad leadership. The realization of the fact prompted Nigerians to clamour for democracy. The logic is that democracy will allow them to choose good heads to paddle the canoe of this country. Quite unfortunate, since the inception of the present fourth republic, elections have not reflected the opinion of the voters. Scholars have suggested that inability of Nigeria to conduct free and fair elections is the cause of leadership crisis in Nigeria. Then, there is need for credible elections in Nigeria. Based on this background, what are roles of security, media, and civil society?

In this paper, an attempt has been made, after introduction, to briefly make conceptual clarifications. The paper draws the linkage between federalism, democracy and elections. This paper does not only analyse the roles of security, media and civil society in any democratic settings but also elucidates the roles of the trio in elections. Consequently, this paper makes a critical analysis of the aforementioned agents (security, media, and civil society) on elections in Nigeria. The main purpose is to examine the extent at which the three agents have performed their constitutional duties and /or rights. It is discovered that the security has tried in Nigeria to ensure safety of lives, properties and peaceful conduct of elections. However, it is also discovered that security men have truncated the efforts of Nigerians to choose good leaders and to let the results of the polls reflect the wishes of the voters. It has been discovered, in this paper, that media perform

tremendous roles. Media educate, enlighten, and monitor elections but some of these media are found biased and discriminative. Furthermore, it is discovered that in Nigeria civil society organizations perform great roles in educating the electorate through different means. They also serve as watch-dog during elections. However, different challenges usually confront civil society organizations ranging from financial and strategic challenges.

Finally we can then recommend that security is well fed and are given more autonomy to perform their constitutional duties without being induced by candidate, political parties, and government. Security men should also be moral in discharging their duties. Also, the media should improve their efforts in educating and enlighten the electorate but they should, by all means, jettison all forms of discriminations. For the civil society organisations, should be focused, financially independent, and always up and doing. On a final note, I would like to persuade the participants of this workshop especially the security men here present, journalists, and the representatives of civil society organisations to discharge their duties in the forthcoming elections as constitution dictates. I strongly believe that we will all learn more from our guest lecturers. I congratulate the organisers of this workshop for your usual efforts to educate, orientate and enlighten us all.

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