



Election Post-mortem: Did Security Fail Nigeria?

Policy Recommendations

1. The Police should be reformed so that they take can take charge of their duties.
2. Politicians should stop the abuse of security agencies in fighting one another.
3. Illegal arms and ammunition need to be mopped up in the country and especially in Rivers State.
4. All security officers on election duty should maintain the highest level of professionalism. There are clear guidelines for officers on election duties.

Nextier SPD Policy Weekly provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of Nextier SPD.

For further discussion of pragmatic implementation of the recommendations, please contact



www.nextierspd.com
info@nextierspd.com
+234 701 002 7301

On February 23, 2019, the Presidential and National Assembly elections were conducted in Nigeria. Though largely peaceful in most states, the polls were characterized by [irregularities and violence in Rivers, Anambra, Lagos](#) and a few other states. Even though incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari has been declared winner by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, has rejected the results citing foul play and irregularities. Of all the incidences of violence that trailed the elections, the clash between some armed youth and soldiers on February 23 in Abonnema community in Rivers State was the deadliest. In the mayhem, [soldiers killed six youth and lost one officer](#) while two others were injured. Besides the cancellation of elections in the area, the deadly clash has resulted in accusations and counter-accusations between the PDP-led Rivers State government and the 6 Division of Nigeria Army in the state. Following these developments, this edition of Nextier SPD Weekly assesses the rules of military engagement in an election and makes recommendations to avert soldiers-civilians clashes in the future.

Constitutionally, the major duty of the military is to protect [Nigeria against any form of external aggression](#). On the other hand, the police are charged with the responsibility of ensuring internal security. However, since the return of civilian rule in 1999, the military have been increasingly deployed for police duties as evidenced by the operations of the Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta, North-East and North-Central (Iwilade, 2014). Obviously, the police were overwhelmed by the frequency and sophistication of the threat posed by bandits, militants and terrorists hence the gradual resort to the use of military personnel for police duties. More recently, military officials have been mobilized for election duties following the rampant incidence of political [assassinations, thuggery, and ballot theft](#). While soldiers have tried to play these roles to the best of their knowledge amidst their multiple challenges, they have become vulnerable to ethnical, religious and political infiltration. Indeed, when military interferes in politics, politics also interferes in the military. Ironically, the Egyptian military have done pretty well in balancing their involvement in election management and maintaining professional standards (Roll, 2016). Sadly, their Nigerian counterparts have



come under intense criticisms on account of frequent human rights violations, rape and even extra-judicial killings of civilians (Isumonah, 2013).

Following the incessant clashes between armed thugs and soldiers with their attendant deadly consequences, some urgent policy measures are needed to rein in the trend.

1. The police should be reformed so that they can take charge of their duties. The growing use of soldiers in maintaining internal security is because of the inability of the police to rise to the challenge of sophisticated crime and insecurity. Thus, the police need to be retrained, effectively equipped and remunerated to discharge their roles including election monitoring.
2. Politicians should stop the abuse of security agencies in fighting one another. As the unfortunate incidence in Rivers State revealed, [some notable politicians were involved in the mobilization of security agents to quell their opposition](#). The two major parties in Rivers State have been known to deploy both formal and

informal security outfits in promoting their self-regarding agendas.

3. Illegal arms and ammunition need to be mopped up in Rivers State. It is unfortunate that armed civilian youth could still challenge the military in Rivers State where illegal weapons have been allegedly surrendered to the government as part of the amnesty programme since 2009.
4. All security officers on election duty should maintain the highest level of professionalism. There are clear guidelines for officers on election duties. Such persons are expected to be [alert, approachable, impartial, and fair](#). They should use force as a last resort; and communicate with their superiors as well as display awareness of the electoral law.

Finally, election is not a do-or-die affair. Politicians and their supporters as well as law enforcement agencies should conduct themselves in the most professional manner to ensure that elections are not only free and fair but also peaceful and generally acceptable.

Reference

- Isumonah, V. A. (2013), "Armed Society in the Niger Delta", *Armed Forces and Society*, 28(2), 331-358.
Iwilade, A. (2014), "Networks of Violence and Becoming: Youth and the Politics of Patronage in Nigeria's, Oil-Rich Delta", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 52 (4), 571-595.
Roll, S. (2016), "Managing Change: How Egypt's Military Leadership Shaped the Transformation", *Mediterranean Politics*, 21(1), 23-43