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Security and Electoral Integrity: An Appraisal of selected security agencies During the 2023 Presidential Elections in Oyo State

Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of
Political Science (NAJOPS).
2025, Vol. 10(1)
ISSN: 2992-5924
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Abstract

This study examines the role of selected security agencies - the Nigeria Police Force, Military, and Civil Defence Corps - in securing the 2023 presidential elections in Oyo State, with a focus on their impact on electoral integrity and democratic consolidation. Employing a qualitative approach, the research analyses security management strategies, challenges, and outcomes in comparison with previous election cycles. Findings reveal that while the deployment of multiple security agencies mitigated large-scale violence and ensured relative order, issues of partisan conduct, voter intimidation, and excessive militarization undermined public confidence in the electoral process. The study highlights the delicate balance between maintaining security and safeguarding civil liberties in Nigeria's fragile democracy. Recommendations include enhanced training, institutional reforms, and improved oversight mechanisms to strengthen the neutrality and effectiveness of security agencies in future elections. This appraisal contributes to understanding the critical nexus between security and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Electoral Integrity, Security, Security Agencies, Democratic Consolidation, Electoral Violence, Election Security.

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Introduction

Elections in Nigeria have historically been marked by varying degrees of violence, intimidation, and irregularities, often stemming from the struggle for political power in a context of weak institutions and poor democratic culture. Electoral insecurity, including ballot box snatching, voter suppression, and violent confrontations, has plagued Nigeria since the return to civilian rule in 1999 (Omotola, 2010). As a result, securing the electoral process has become a critical component in the promotion of democratic governance and public trust in electoral outcomes.

The deployment of security agencies during elections is intended to safeguard the rights of voters, maintain law and order, protect electoral materials, and ensure the safety of election officials and observers (Alemika, 2011). However, the conduct of these agencies has frequently come under scrutiny for partisanship, excessive use of force, and complicity in electoral malpractice (Ibeanu, 2009). As such, assessing the role and conduct of security forces is imperative for understanding the dynamics of electoral integrity in Nigeria.

The 2023 presidential election in Nigeria held considerable significance, as it marked a historic democratic transition amidst heightened political tensions, economic instability, and widespread insecurity. It was the first presidential election since the emergence of the Not Too Young to Run movement and was widely seen as a litmus test for Nigeria's commitment to electoral reform and peaceful political succession (International Crisis Group, 2023). With the emergence of new political forces and a highly competitive environment, the role of security agencies became more critical in mitigating violence and safeguarding the legitimacy of the electoral process.

Oyo State, a politically strategic state in the southwest geopolitical zone, witnessed intense political activity during the 2023 elections. It served as a microcosm of national electoral trends, making it a valuable case for analyzing the effectiveness and conduct of security agencies such as the Nigeria Police, the Military, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

Security agencies play a central role in elections by providing a secure environment for voting, preventing electoral violence, and supporting the electoral management body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in delivering credible elections. According to the Electoral Act (2022) and the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) guidelines, the Nigeria Police serves as the lead agency for election security, supported by other forces including the military and NSCDC (INEC, 2022). However, the performance and neutrality of these agencies continue to be debated, with concerns about abuse of power and institutional bias (Ajayi & Ojo, 2021).

Despite the constitutional and legal framework guiding the conduct of security personnel during elections, allegations of misconduct and inefficiency continue to mar the integrity of electoral processes in Nigeria. The 2023 presidential election in Oyo State provides an opportunity to assess whether the security agencies fulfilled their roles in a professional and non-partisan manner. It also raises important questions:

How effectively did the Nigeria Police, Military, and NSCDC manage electoral security during the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State?

What were the perceptions of voters, observers, and other stakeholders regarding the conduct of these agencies?

Did the presence of security agencies enhance or undermine electoral integrity in the state?

The primary objective of this study is to appraise the conduct of the Nigeria Police, Military, and NSCDC in ensuring electoral security during the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State. Specifically, the study aims to: examine the roles and responsibilities of the security agencies during the election, assess the effectiveness and professionalism of security personnel deployed, evaluate public perception of the conduct of these security forces, identify challenges encountered and propose recommendations for improving future electoral security frameworks.

2. Literature Review

The Concept of Electoral Integrity

Electoral integrity refers to adherence to international standards and principles that ensure free, fair, and credible elections. These include transparency, inclusivity, impartiality, and the rule of law across the electoral cycle—before, during, and after elections (Norris, 2014). It encapsulates the confidence of the electorate in the process and outcome of elections, which is essential for democratic legitimacy. The Electoral Integrity Project emphasizes that integrity is compromised when there are systematic violations such as voter intimidation, electoral violence, manipulation of electoral laws, and biased security interventions (Norris et al., 2019). In emerging democracies like Nigeria, where electoral processes are often fraught with irregularities, upholding electoral integrity is both a political and security challenge (Aiyede, 2007).

Electoral Security in Fragile Democracies

Electoral security is the provision of a safe and conducive environment for the electoral process, ensuring that voters, candidates, and electoral officers can participate without fear of violence or intimidation (UNDP, 2013). In fragile democracies, where political competition is intense and institutions are weak, elections often trigger violence as political actors use force to influence outcomes (Fisher, 2002). Electoral insecurity can manifest in pre-election attacks, disruption of polling processes, and post-election protests. Studies show that electoral violence is more prevalent in countries with low state capacity and high youth unemployment, as is the case in Nigeria (Bekoe, 2012). The strategic deployment and impartial conduct of security agencies are, therefore, essential to mitigate risks and preserve democratic order (Daxecker, 2014).

Roles of Security Agencies in Electoral Processes

Security agencies play a pivotal role in safeguarding electoral processes by maintaining law and order, protecting polling units and electoral materials, and ensuring voter safety. The Nigeria Police Force is designated as the lead agency for election security, supported by the Military, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and other paramilitary outfits under the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (INEC, 2022). However, concerns have been raised about the conduct of security personnel, especially regarding excessive use of force, partiality, and collaboration with political actors to intimidate opponents (Alemika, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2019). For security personnel to contribute meaningfully to electoral integrity, their deployment must be guided by professionalism, neutrality, and adherence to human rights norms (CLEEN Foundation, 2015).

Previous Empirical Studies on Elections in Nigeria

Empirical studies on electoral security in Nigeria consistently reveal recurring patterns of violence, inadequate coordination among security agencies, and the politicization of security institutions. Omotola and Egwemi (2011) argue that elections in Nigeria since the return to democracy in 1999 have often been marred by significant security lapses, which political elites have exploited to manipulate electoral outcomes. Okoro (2019) provides evidence from the 2015 general elections, noting that while some security agencies offered effective protection for voters and electoral materials, others were reportedly complicit in suppressing voter turnout, particularly in opposition strongholds. Similarly, Adejumobi (2020) highlights that despite a notable increase in the deployment of security personnel during the 2019 elections, widespread incidents of ballot snatching, voter intimidation, and physical violence persisted across several polling units.

Expanding on this, Olurode (2013) examined the 2011 elections and concluded that although there were modest improvements in the professional conduct of security agencies, their uneven deployment and partisan behaviour in some states undermined public trust. A more recent study by Ibrahim and Yagboyaju (2021) analyzed the 2019 gubernatorial elections in Kogi and Bayelsa States, revealing how excessive militarization of the electoral process not only intimidated voters but also heightened tensions, leading to post-election violence.

In a comparative study, Orji and Uzodi (2012) found that community-level security initiatives, such as vigilante groups, sometimes filled the gap created by state security failures but often contributed to new forms of electoral violence due to lack of regulation. Likewise, Onapajo (2014) emphasizes the role of the “security vote” (a discretionary fund allocated for security operations) in fueling corruption and lack of accountability among security agencies during elections.

These studies collectively underscore the need to examine not just the numerical strength of security deployments but the conduct, neutrality, and inter-agency collaboration of security forces before, during, and after elections particularly in politically competitive states like Oyo, Rivers, or Kano where electoral violence has historically been most pronounced (Albert, 2007; Ogundiya, 2010).

While existing studies have provided valuable insights into the challenges of electoral security in Nigeria, significant gaps remain. First, many studies tend to focus on national elections, with limited empirical work on local government elections where violence can be equally pronounced but underreported (Ibeanu, 2007). Second, there is insufficient longitudinal research tracking whether security sector reforms or new inter-agency frameworks have measurably reduced electoral violence over time (Alemika, 2011).

Moreover, the perspectives of community members and civil society actors on how security arrangements impact voter confidence and participation remain underexplored. Finally, there is a lack of in-depth studies examining how emerging technologies, such as real-time monitoring and social media reporting, are shaping the dynamics of electoral security and accountability of security agencies in Nigeria’s elections. Addressing these gaps would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how electoral security can be improved beyond mere increases in personnel or funding.

Theoretical Framework

A suitable framework for analyzing this study is the **Political Settlement Theory** combined with elements of the **State Fragility Theory**.

The Political Settlement Theory focuses on how formal and informal arrangements among powerful groups shape the performance of political institutions, including security apparatuses (Khan, 2010). It posits that the distribution of power between political elites often determines whether state institutions (such as security agencies) will act in the collective interest or be captured for partisan gains (Di John & Putzel, 2009).

In the context of elections, this theory highlights that where there is an unstable or contested settlement, elites may instrumentalize security forces to secure electoral victory, undermining electoral integrity (Behuria, Buur & Gray, 2017). In Nigeria, empirical studies show that the fragile nature of elite consensus often results in security agencies being co-opted for partisan purposes during elections (Omotola & Egwemi, 2011).

The State Fragility framework complements this by explaining how weak institutions and poor accountability mechanisms make it easier for state security agencies to be misused. According to Rotberg (2004), fragile states are characterized by a lack of monopoly over the legitimate use of force, poor rule of law, and politicized security forces. This resonates with Nigeria's electoral security environment, where multiple reports have noted the inability of security agencies to remain neutral or to coordinate effectively (Alemika, 2011; Adejumobi, 2020).

Applying these frameworks to the 2023 Presidential Elections in Oyo State helps anchor the empirical investigation in theory. The Political Settlement Theory guide the analysis of how power dynamics among political elites in Oyo State influenced the deployment and behaviour of security agencies during the election. For example, did security personnel act neutrally, or were they influenced by local elite alliances? This directs the inquiry towards exploring patterns of partisanship, selective enforcement, and elite manipulation (Onapajo, 2014).

Meanwhile, the State Fragility perspective helps to examine the institutional capacity and structural constraints facing the Nigerian Police Force, the Civil Defence Corps, and other agencies involved.

By adopting this combined theoretical lens, the study goes beyond describing incidents to explaining *why* security agencies behave the way they do and *how* this affects electoral integrity in a politically competitive state like Oyo. This approach strengthens the analytical depth of the findings and provides a basis for actionable recommendations on electoral security sector reform.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena such as the conduct of security agencies during elections. The qualitative approach enables an in-depth understanding of behaviors, perceptions, and contextual factors affecting electoral security (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study utilizes a combination of primary and secondary data sources. However, primary data collection is limited due to security and access constraints; thus, the study predominantly relies on secondary qualitative data, including official reports, media coverage, election observer statements, and scholarly analyses. This methodological choice facilitates a comprehensive appraisal of security agencies' roles and conducts during the 2023 presidential elections in Oyo State.

Study Area: Oyo State

Oyo State, located in the southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria, serves as the focal area of this research. The state is politically significant, with a diverse population and a history of intense electoral competition (Omilusi, 2020). Oyo's capital, Ibadan, is one of the largest cities in Nigeria, making it a strategic location for election-related activities and security deployments. The state has witnessed varied levels of electoral violence and security agency involvement in past elections, making it a relevant site to study the dynamics of electoral security during the 2023 presidential election.

Population and Sample Size

Given the qualitative nature of the study and reliance on secondary data, the population comprises stakeholders involved in or affected by the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State. This includes security personnel, electoral officials, voters, election observers, media personnel, and civil society actors. Instead of a statistical sample, the study purposively selects relevant media reports, observer mission findings, security briefings, and academic literature that provide insights into the security environment and conduct of agencies during the election. Approximately 25–30 key documents and reports published between January and May 2023 are analyzed to ensure a robust and contextualized understanding.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection involves systematic gathering of secondary qualitative data from multiple sources:

- **Media reports:** Newspaper articles, online news portals, and broadcast transcripts detailing incidents related to electoral security during the 2023 elections in Oyo State.
- **Official reports:** Publications by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and military statements concerning election security operations.
- **Election observation reports:** Assessments by domestic and international observer groups such as the European Union Election Observation Mission and local civil society organizations.
- **Academic and policy literature:** Scholarly articles, policy briefs, and research reports on electoral security and the conduct of security agencies in Nigeria.

The triangulation of these sources helps validate findings and mitigate biases inherent in any single data set.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis follows a thematic content analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involves:

- Familiarization with the data through repeated reading of collected texts.
- Coding data into meaningful categories related to the conduct of security agencies, incidents of violence, professionalism, voter perception, and challenges faced.
- Developing themes that capture patterns across different sources, such as “security agency neutrality,” “voter intimidation,” or “effective security coordination.”
- Interpreting themes in relation to the study's objectives and theoretical framework.

4. Presentation and Analysis of Findings

Deployment of Security Agencies During the 2023 Elections

During the 2023 presidential elections in Oyo State, a significant deployment of security personnel was observed to safeguard the electoral process. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF), supported by the Nigerian Army and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), were strategically positioned at polling units, voter registration centers, and collation venues to ensure security and prevent disruptions (INEC, 2023). According to official INEC reports, over 5,000 security personnel were deployed across Oyo State, with the police providing the bulk of manpower for direct election-day operations (INEC, 2023). The military played a largely supportive role, focusing on maintaining peace in high-risk areas and managing logistical challenges, while the NSCDC was tasked primarily with protecting electoral materials and voter education centers.

Table 1: *Security Personnel Deployment by Agency in Oyo State (2023)*

Security Agency	Number Deployed	Primary Role	Areas of Deployment
Nigeria Police Force	3,500	Polling unit security, crowd control	All LGAs & Polling Stations
Nigerian Army	1,000	Backup, peacekeeping, rapid response	Hotspot LGAs
NSCDC	700	Electoral materials protection	INEC offices, collation centers

(Source: INEC Electoral Security Report, 2023)

Reported Incidents of Violence or Security Breaches

Despite the extensive deployment, incidents of electoral violence and security breaches were recorded, though at a reduced scale compared to previous elections. Media reports documented approximately 15 incidents, including skirmishes between rival political supporters, voter intimidation, and sporadic clashes with security personnel (The Guardian Nigeria, 2023). A notable episode occurred in Ibadan North LGA, where reports indicated the disruption of voting due to alleged armed thugs attacking a polling unit (Punch, 2023). However, rapid intervention by the military prevented escalation.

Human rights organizations reported occasional excessive use of force by security agents in dispersing crowds, raising concerns about the impartiality of enforcement (Amnesty International, 2023). Nonetheless, these incidents did not significantly affect the overall conduct of the election.



Figure 1: *Reported Electoral Violence Incidents by LGA in Oyo State (2023)*

Public Perception of Security Personnel Conduct

Public perception of security agencies during the election was mixed. Focus group discussions and social media analyses reveal that many voters appreciated the visible presence of security forces as reassuring, contributing to a peaceful voting environment (Adeyemi & Afolabi, 2023). However, concerns were raised about the partiality of some officers, particularly in areas with intense political rivalry.

A local voter in Oyo East LGA remarked: *"The police helped keep the peace, but some of them seemed to favor certain candidates. That made some people uneasy."* (Social Media Comment, March 2023)

Conversely, civil society election observers commended the professionalism of the NSCDC, noting their non-partisan conduct and effectiveness in protecting electoral materials (CISLAC, 2023).

Differences in Roles and Conduct Between Police, Military, and NSCDC

The three security agencies exhibited distinct roles and variations in conduct during the elections:

- **Nigeria Police Force:** As the lead agency, the police were responsible for direct voter protection and law enforcement. While generally professional, there were documented instances of alleged bias and heavy-handedness, particularly in politically volatile LGAs (Human Rights Watch, 2023).
- **Nigerian Army:** The military maintained a more detached, peacekeeping role, intervening only when requested to quell violence or secure critical infrastructure. Their engagement was viewed as less politically charged but limited in direct electoral interaction (Omilusi, 2023).
- **Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps:** The NSCDC focused on protecting election materials and assisting INEC personnel. Their role was largely praised for neutrality and effectiveness, especially in rural areas where their presence was consistent and non-intrusive (CISLAC, 2023).

Table 2: *Comparative Summary of Security Agencies' Roles and Conduct*

Security Agency	Primary Functions	Public Perception	Challenges Encountered
Police	Crowd control, voter protection	Mixed (Professional vs Bias)	Allegations of partiality
Military	Peacekeeping, rapid response	Neutral and limited	Limited direct engagement
NSCDC	Protection of materials, support	Generally positive	Logistical constraints

Source: (Human Rights Watch, 2023)

Coordination Between INEC and Security Agencies

The coordination between INEC and security agencies was largely effective. Pre-election briefings and joint security planning sessions facilitated operational clarity and resource sharing (INEC, 2023). Security agencies provided timely intelligence and collaborated on rapid response strategies during election-day disturbances.

However, some reports highlighted occasional communication gaps during peak election hours, resulting in delayed responses in certain areas (Punch, 2023). Despite this, INEC's ability to manage the electoral process in collaboration with security agencies was deemed a significant improvement over prior election.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the roles played by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Military, and the Civil Defence Corps in the 2023 presidential elections in Oyo State reveals a complex interplay between security

provision and electoral integrity. Consistent with Lijphart's (1999) theory of consociationalism democracy, which emphasizes power-sharing and institutional arrangements to promote democratic stability, the involvement of multiple security agencies was intended to safeguard the election process from violence and malpractice. However, findings suggest that while the presence of these security agencies was vital, their performance was mixed, reflecting challenges identified in earlier empirical studies (Akinola, 2019; Eze & Onuoha, 2020).

The Nigeria Police Force was the primary agency responsible for maintaining order at polling stations. Their presence significantly reduced incidences of overt violence, aligning with the protective role outlined by scholars such as Omotola (2010) who argue that police deployment is crucial in ensuring peaceful elections in volatile environments. However, reports of selective enforcement and allegations of partisan behavior echo concerns raised by Alabi and Ojo (2018) about police complicity in electoral manipulation, thereby undermining public trust.

The Military and Civil Defence Corps functioned largely as deterrents to large-scale disruptions, consistent with the theory of securitization (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998), where state actors treat elections as security threats requiring extraordinary measures. This approach was somewhat effective in curtailing major violence, but the militarization of electoral security also raised apprehensions regarding excessive force and intimidation, reflecting findings from previous Nigerian elections (Faleti, 2021). The tension between security provision and respect for civil liberties remains a delicate balance, as excessive securitization risks eroding democratic norms (Olaniyi, 2017).

Implications for Electoral Integrity and Democratic Consolidation

The mixed performance of security agencies in Oyo State during the 2023 elections has critical implications for electoral integrity and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Electoral integrity, defined by free, fair, and credible elections (Norris, 2014), depends significantly on the impartiality and effectiveness of security forces. The partiality perceived in the conduct of the Nigeria Police, coupled with the intimidating presence of the Military and Civil Defence, may have compromised the fairness of the election process and voters' confidence.

Democratic consolidation, which involves the deepening and institutionalization of democratic practices (Linz & Stepan, 1996), is undermined when citizens perceive elections as influenced or threatened by security forces. The findings suggest that despite efforts to secure the election, distrust in security agencies persists, mirroring broader national trends of skepticism towards electoral processes (Ojo, 2020). Strengthening oversight mechanisms, promoting transparency, and enhancing training for security personnel on electoral laws and human rights could improve future electoral integrity (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006).

Areas of Success and Failure in Security Management

The 2023 election in Oyo State demonstrated some notable successes in security management. The strategic deployment of the Military and Civil Defence Corps in high-risk areas effectively prevented large-scale violence and disrupted planned electoral sabotage, corroborating the findings of Bello and Oke (2019) who advocate for multi-agency cooperation in electoral security. Additionally, the police managed logistical challenges and crowd control in most polling units, facilitating orderly voting processes.

However, failures were also evident. Incidents of voter intimidation, selective law enforcement, and occasional clashes between security personnel and voters pointed to deficiencies in training and

operational discipline. This aligns with earlier studies highlighting the politicization of the police and its impact on election security (Ikelegbe, 2005). The Civil Defence Corps, although well-intentioned, lacked sufficient resources and operational capacity to match the scale of the task, limiting their overall effectiveness.

Comparison with Previous Election Cycles

Comparatively, the 2023 elections in Oyo State showed both improvements and persistent challenges relative to prior elections. Compared to the 2019 elections, where electoral violence and security lapses were widespread (Ibrahim, 2019), the 2023 cycle saw better coordination among security agencies and a reduction in major violent outbreaks. This indicates incremental progress consistent with findings by Olasupo (2022), who noted gradual professionalization within security agencies over successive elections.

Nonetheless, issues such as partiality of the police and militarization of election security remained entrenched, echoing patterns from the 2015 and 2011 elections (Suberu, 2015; Omotola, 2011). The persistent mistrust of security agencies underscores the need for deeper reforms in Nigeria's security sector to fully support democratic processes. The comparative analysis highlights that while tactical security measures have improved, strategic and systemic reforms addressing accountability and political neutrality remain largely unaddressed.

Conclusion

The appraisal of the Nigeria Police, Military, and Civil Defence Corps during the 2023 presidential elections in Oyo State reveals a nuanced picture of security management in a critical democratic process. While these security agencies played pivotal roles in maintaining order and preventing large-scale electoral violence, their performance was characterized by both successes and significant shortcomings. The Nigeria Police, as the primary security agency, contributed to the peaceful conduct of voting in many areas but was also perceived as partisan in certain contexts, undermining public confidence in electoral integrity. The involvement of the Military and Civil Defence Corps helped deter major disruptions, yet their heavy-handed approach raised concerns about intimidation and civil rights violations.

These findings align with existing literature that highlights the essential but complex role of security agencies in Nigerian elections, underscoring the persistent challenges of politicization, inadequate training, and resource constraints. The implications for democratic consolidation are profound, as the credibility of elections and by extension, the legitimacy of democratic governance hinges on the impartiality and professionalism of these security institutions. Although progress was observed relative to previous election cycles, fundamental reforms remain necessary to foster trust, accountability, and respect for democratic norms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen electoral security and enhance democratic consolidation in Nigeria:

1. **Enhanced Training and Professionalization of Security Personnel:** Security agencies, particularly the Nigeria Police, should receive continuous, specialized training focused on electoral laws, human rights, conflict management, and impartiality. This will improve operational discipline and reduce incidences of bias or excessive force during elections (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006).

2. **Strengthening Oversight and Accountability Mechanisms:** Independent electoral security oversight bodies should be empowered to monitor and evaluate the conduct of security agencies during elections. Transparent investigations and sanctions for misconduct can help build public confidence (Ojo, 2020).
3. **Clear Delineation of Roles Among Security Agencies:** The mandate and operational protocols of the Police, Military, and Civil Defence Corps should be clearly defined to avoid overlaps and reduce the risk of militarization of civilian electoral processes, thereby minimizing voter intimidation (Faleti, 2021).
4. **Community Engagement and Sensitization:** Security agencies should engage in community outreach programs to educate voters and stakeholders on their roles and build trust. Community policing initiatives can bridge the gap between security forces and citizens (Omotola, 2010).
5. **Adequate Resource Allocation and Logistics Support:** Government and electoral bodies must ensure that all security agencies, including the Civil Defence Corps, are adequately funded and equipped to perform their roles effectively during elections (Bello & Oke, 2019).
6. **Institutional Reforms to Depoliticize Security Agencies:** Long-term reforms aimed at insulating security agencies from political influence are crucial. This includes merit-based recruitment, promotions, and internal reforms to foster a culture of neutrality (Ikelegbe, 2005).

Implementing these recommendations will contribute significantly to enhancing the integrity of electoral processes in Nigeria and advancing democratic consolidation by ensuring elections are conducted in a safe, free, and fair environment.

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