Militarisation of Off-Cycle Elections and Voter's Turnout in Nigeria: The Anambra State Experience

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Abstract
Over burden with security agencies presence during elections in Nigeria is becoming a frequent issue most especially 'off-cycle' elections which Anambra state is not an exclusion. There are various factors that cause electoral violence in Nigeria which has been extensively established in the literature. But the militarization factor which was common in Anambra due Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) threats. This is largely due to the IPOB threatening and disrupting elections with violence, which has influenced voter turnout during the Anambra State's governorship election. Methodologically, secondary sources were used for data collection and analysis. The paper found out that the unusual deployment of over 34,000 security personnel to Anambra alone during the election was an exceptional threat to the electorate that were already in deep rooted regional ethnic struggles with the federal government. The paper concluded that low voter's turnout across the state was due to threat of insecurity among voters who may have weighed their gains from the elections against the fear of being intimidated by IPOB and security personnel deployed for elections.

Keywords: Elections, Anambra state, Voter Turnout, Militarization, IPOB

Introduction

In democracy, elections serve several functions; they help solve governance issues by allowing for the peaceful transition of power; they ensure accountability; and they give voters a voice through the exercise of their civic rights though the ballots. In this light, elections are the expression of the people's sovereign will and consent. However, elections voting rates in emerging democracies like Nigeria, on the other hand, appear to have been steadily declining in recent years. Manipulation of electoral results, intimidation and ballot box snatching, militarisation of elections, elite manipulation of electorate behaviour through ethnic mobilisation, hate speech, and fake news are just some of the factors that have contributed to the decline in voter turnout.

As a consequence, electoral violence which results into militarisation of elections is one of the most serious threats to modern democracy's trend, security and legitimacy. Since 1999, when Nigeria returned to democratic era after 16 years of military authoritarian rule, electoral violence

cum militarisation has become a recurring issue. Of course, from 1999 till 2022, both general and off-cycle elections in the country were highly controversial. For example, the off-cycle elections in Anambra, Bayelsa, Ondo, Osun, Edo, Ekiti and Kogi states respectively experience heavy security presence thereby influencing voter's turnout largely due to fear of threat among the electorate (Ibeanu & Mbah, 2012; Omotola & Samuel, 2023). These elections were even compared to warfare rather than civil exercise.

Admittedly, it was argued that military's deployment during off-cycle governorship elections in Anambrs state was justified because of the need to ensure electoral integrity. For example, the need to divert attention of IPOB threats (Verjee *et al*., 2018). It could be argued here that security personnel (such as military men) are rarely seen within voting polls in advanced democracies, and that they do not impose a lockdown of the town, as did happen in the Anambra gubernatorial election. Indeed, the massive deployment of security personnel for the elections harmed voter confidence and turnout.

The attack by the IPOB men and the militarisation of the off-cycle governorship election affect voter's turnout in Anambra state in 2021. In fact, low voter's turnout has had a negative impact on Anambra's political development because it has not only impeded democratic consolidation but also increased the rate of votes buying. However, given the pre-election violence, it was contended that the militarisation of the Anambra election was justifiable. Others claimed that the deployment of security personnel was a conscious effort by the federal government's ruling party to win elections. Although such claims could be uncertain as there were other factors that culminated to low voter's turnout in Anambra state when comparing with other off-cycles elections in Nigeria. However, the focus of this paper is on how heavy deployment of security personnel affects voter's turnout and its implications for the Nigeria's democratic project, rather than on justifying the above positions. This paper investigates how election militarisation affects voter's turnout in Anambra state.

Conceptual Clarifications

Voter's Turnout: It is important to indicate here that every attempt to understand the explanations of voter's turnout one should narrow it down to political participation. Political participation, according to Kaase & Marsh (1979) is all voluntary exercises by citizens intended to influence political decisions at multiple levels of the political system, whether direct or indirect. It was argued that individuals' levels and patterns of political participation influence the political system's success to some extent (2015). Mahmud (2015) , clarified that voter's turnout simply refers to the proportion of people of voting age (or registered voters) who cast votes in an election. It is thus a measurement of the quantity of eligible voters that voted in elections rather than the number of citizens who registered to vote or participated in other aspects of the electoral process such as attending campaigns, rallies or joining political parties (Chiamogu, 2018). It is calculated as the proportion of valid ballots cast in a given election.

Citizens' confidence in the electoral process, as well as their willingness to vote, is prerequisites for responsible democratic leadership (Chiamogu, 2018). Voter's turnout is one of the most important indicators of citizen participation in their country's democracy (Omotola & Aiyedogbon, 2012). Lower voter's turnout is usually associated with voter apathy and distrust of the political process, whereas higher turnout is usually associated with democracy's strength (IDEA, 2016). Militarisation of elections on the other hand, is defined in this study as the use of security forces

such as the military, police, the Department of State Service, and other relevant security operatives to conduct democratic elections both during and after the election.

Militarisation of Elections and Voter's Turnout: A Review of Literature

The intensity of researches regarding the strong nexus between democratic elections and internal conflict as well as militarisation is growing. A number of Political Science studies have looked into the conduct and consequences of violent elections in democratic countries. While this study looks at countries in transition that have experienced violence and social unrest, election militarisation has received little attention.

The book '*Democracy and Elections in Africa'* written by Staffan Lindberg in 2006, shows how conducting frequent elections could indeed improve the quality of democracy in countries that have recently moved away from dictatorial regime. Elections, even when held in difficult circumstances, such as when there is violence and systemic corruption, may provide a framework for the long-term development of more democratic values. While Lindberg's research does not specifically address political cum electoral violence, it does include countries that have experienced violent conflict, such as Uganda and Angola. Elections, according to his findings, can aid in the development of capacity for peaceful conflict resolution.

Furthermore, a number of empirical studies on the general idea that distinct political behavior and perceptions are influenced by their social and political contexts (Huckfeldt, 1979; Huckfeldt, Paul & John, 2004; Corder & Wolbrecht, 2006; Mondak, Diana & Huckfeldt, 2006; MacKuen & Brown, 1987; Baker, Barry & Lucio, 2006). Therefore, issues on insecurity; the threat of violence by non-state actors, and electoral militarisation always have an effect on political behaviour and attitude because they influence the overall the opportunities and challenges that people have faced when trying to make political choices.

Similarly, others argued that African elections continued to experienced low voter's turnout due to several factors. For example, some scholars attributed it to patronage politics linking it with colonialism through the neo-liberal retrenchment and patronage politics fuelled by ethnic polarisation (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Others are of the view that electoral laws and automatic registration to be the institutional factors exercising the most influence on voter's turnout (Jackman, 1987; Powell, 2000; Fornos, Power & Garand, 2004). Norris and Mattes (2003) stressed that ethnicity influences party support which could facilitate votes turn out. Blais & Dobrzynska (1998) found out that the socioeconomic environment has a strong effect on voter's turnout. While other recent studies linked with electoral violence through intimidation and others linked it to economic voting narrative otherwise known as *talakawa* effect (Buchard, 2015; Carl, Matthew & Yoonbin, 2018).

However, election militarisation and voter's turnout in conflict-prone societies, on the other hand, have received limited attention than they expect. In other words, considering the increasing literature on political cum electoral violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Nigeria in particular, there are unexpectedly few studies that have looked at its correlation with election militarisation, violence, and voter's turnout. Therefore, this study is motivated by the obvious theoretical and empirical gaps.

Militarisation of Elections in Nigeria: Anambra State Experience

In scholarship, there are several theoretical debates in support of why deployment of security forces during democratic elections. Onapajo (2015) , for example, believed that security men are only needed to protect election officials and to provide a conducive environment for the voting and collation processes. He also defended Nigeria's horrific election-related causalities. According to him, violent clashes erupted in the run-up to the Bayelsa by-elections in 2011, 2015, and 2016 respectively, exacerbating security problems among election officials. With a rising insurgency in the Northeast, separatist civil unrest in the Southeast and South –South, and Fulani herdsmen-farmers clashes across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, he believed such elections will face major security challenges. These trends, he predicted, would push election administration beyond its regular policing obligations.

It was argued that direct assaults on electoral officials and infrastructure, threats on security forces on election duty, misapplication of security orderlies by politicians, particularly incumbents; targets on opposition; threats on members of the general public; thuggery during campaigns; threats of candidate violence were identified by Prof. Attahiru Jega, former INEC Chairman (Onapajo, 2015).

Orji (2014) and Olurode (2013) , agreed that it is nearly impossible to think about elections in Nigeria without considering violence conflicts. Nigeria's government must have deployed the military and used force to deal with election security threats in order to break the cycle of death and destruction. On the other hand, critics argued that security agents should be held accountable for abuses such as voter's suppression, mistreatment and marginalisation of members of political parties opposed to the Federal Government, extrajudicial killings, and collusion with politicians to commit riggings (Okechukwu, Ugwu & Onu, 2016).

To that effect, it is common knowledge that every election in Nigeria's recent history has been marred by varying degrees of violence. However, given the importance of security in Nigeria, there is a risk of over-militarisation of elections, with political freedoms and voter's turnout taking a back seat due to political instability and insecurity. According to Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2019), military personnel in Nigeria frequently assist criminal gangs and thugs in intimidating voters, thereby encouraging voter apathy. Military personnel are frequently used to police elections, and they harass and intimidate voters.

As a result of the increased security men and the insecurity created by the already existing conflict in the area, it is difficult for both politicians and voters to exercise their political freedom of electioneering and voting. Military or paramilitary activities enhance what is not achieved through electoral politics, and vice versa (Kristine, Anna, Jarstad & Mimmi, 2009). Indeed, the unprecedented deployment of security forces during the Anambra state elections not only explains the state's militarisation of elections to ensure security, but it also unintentionally induced anxiety among residents, lowered voter turnout, and adversely affected political marginalisation.

As a necessary consequence, during the recent election in Anambra, armed security operatives, military tanks, arms, and ammunition were heavily deployed. Apart from the military, which had been dispatched to the state to maintain or exacerbate insecurity in the wake of the IPOB threat, Usman Alkali Baba, the former Inspector-General of Police, deployed 34,000 police officers. Over 100 senior police officers in the ranks of Deputy Inspectors-General (DIGs), Assistant Inspectors-General (AIGs), and Commissioners of Police (CPs) were employed by the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). Indeed, the genuine fear and anxiety that led to the deployment of

thousands of security officers in the state had an effect on voter's turnout. According to acclaimed evidences during the election, fighter jets and other military weapons were launched in preparation for the governorship election, causing concern among stakeholders, including political parties. They claimed that massive security force were deployed to help stop threats from IPOB and other militias during the election, especially since IPOB had issued a sit-at-home order to coincide with the election days. Despite the fact that IPOB subsequently announced the withdrawal of the sit-at-home order two days before the election, anxiety remained high since the group's sit-at-home order had been so effective that when the restrictions were lifted, inhabitants continued to sit-at-home out of sympathy or to be safe.

However, it could be argued that Anambra's election history since the democratic era began in 1999 has been marred by political interference. Between 1999 and 2013, for example, the state had a history of 'godfatherism' since its inception. The first was the Sir Emeka Ofor-Barr Chinwoke Mbadinuju saga (1999-2003), followed by Chief Chris Uba-Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige comedy (2002-2006), and later Mr. Peter Obi's farcical impeachment as governor of Anambra State (see Center for Democracy and Development- CDD) (Premium Times, 2021).
Similarly, kidnapping of a governor - Dr. Chris Ngige who was allegedly asked to resign; an election petition for a governorship election that lasted nearly three years in a four-year term; the impeachment of a governor, which was later discovered to be without validity but took several months to get the governor returned; and the willful destruction and burning of government buildings, to name a few. Also, the apparent defeat of cabals and godfathers by the never-existing Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige and Mr. Peter Obi-led governments invariably signaled the end of political godfathers in Anambra. By 2007, Mr Obi had cruised to a landslide victory, ushering in a new era in Anambra gubernatorial politics, culminating in the election of Chief Willie Obiano in 2014. Recently, the activities of Biafra separatists were evidenced by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) declaring a boycott, which posed an unimaginable threat to the state's election process.

Voter's Turnout in Anambra State: Historical Context
An underlying idea of representative democracy is that citizens engage in elections and actually vote for their representatives, and that once elected leaders act in the interests of their constituents (Dahlberg & Solevid, 2016). Voting is perhaps the most noticeable and excellent reasons of participatory democracy in the electoral process in this arrangement. Voter's turnout is the most popularly used criterion for assessing political participation (Mbah *et al*, 2020).
In this regard, voters turnout is not only one of the most important criteria for democratic electoral legitimacy, but it is also critical for connecting leaders with their constituents in terms of policy representation and accountability (Powell, 1980; Franklin, 2004). The logic here is that if a large number of citizens do not express their opinions, politicians will not be able to implement policies that benefit them (Agu, Okeke & Idike, 2013). Indeed, the level of voter's participation in elections has a significant impact on democratic success (Falade, 2015). Thus, voter apathy could help stop elections from fulfilling their three primary goals of transparency, credibility and representation. Unquestionably, voter's turnout is one of the most important determinants of democratic strength. When voters turnout is high during elections, it demonstrates democracy's confidence; on the other hand, low voter's turnout is frequently associated with voter apathy and distrust of the electoral
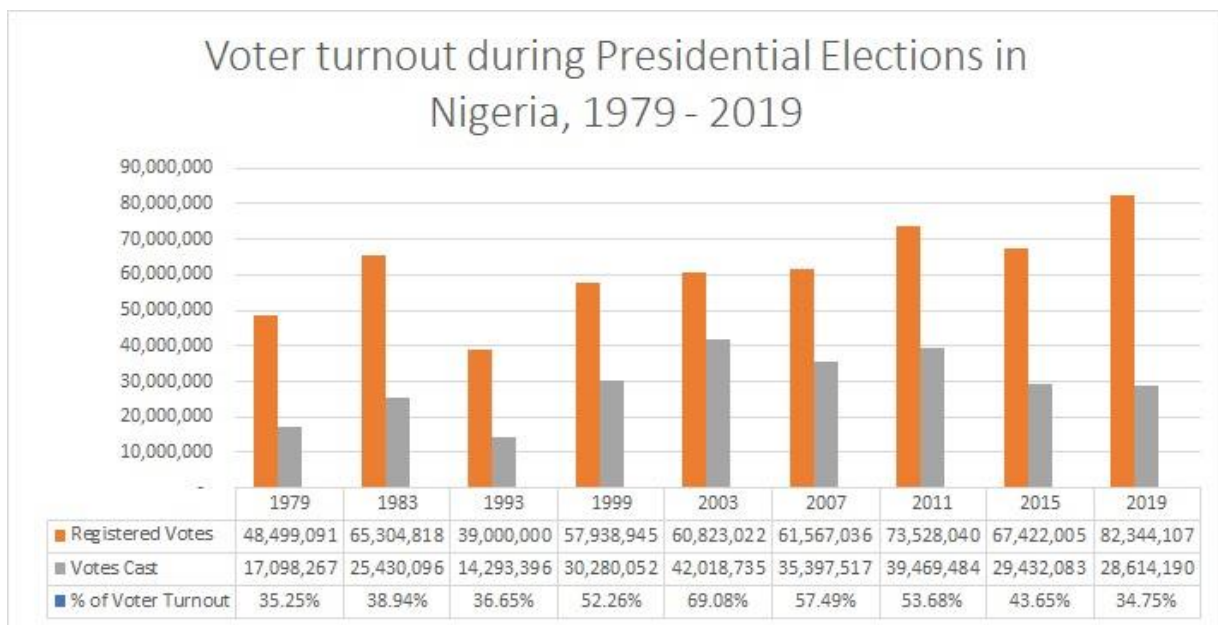
process (Solijonov, 2016). According to Mohamed (2018), increased voter's turnout is linked to democracy's continued existence, effective consolidation, and representativeness. By undermining voter registration and turnout, scholars in most developing countries where democracy is still in its infancy, have linked lower turnout to electoral irregularities as a result of institutional failures rather than actual fraud (Piccolino, 2016; Wellman, Hyde & Hall, 2018). Surprisingly, low voter's turnout in developing countries is strongly linked to voters apathy (Tsai, Tan & Jung, 2019). As a result, according to Coma & Trinh (2017), higher turnout is associated with greater electoral integrity.

Election fraud, according to Dahlberg & Solevid (2016) , reduces voter's turnout in countries with low levels of corruption while increasing turnout in countries with high levels of corruption, such as Nigeria, where voters are frequently induced to vote during election. Also, it was indicated that in some states in Africa, Mexico and Colombia, high voter's turnout decreased as as a of political violence and crimes (Dahlberg and Solevid, 2016; Collier and Vicente, 2014; García & Maydom, 2019; Ley, 2018; Mac-Ikemenjima, 2017; Mohamed, 2018; Taiwo and Ahmed, 2015; Mbah *et al.*, 2020).

As a result, it could be argued that low voter's turnout in Nigerian elections is due to a number of factors, including a lack of trust in the electoral system, the phenomenon of votes buying, the failure of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) used for election administration, such as the BIVAS machines that broke down during the last election in Anambra, and anxieties as a result of widespread insecurity and previous election violence. It was revealed, for example, that the tense environment in which the 2021 Anambra State governorship election was held made voters fear election violence, resulting in low voter's turnout.

Furthermore, voter's apathy appears to have been a trend in Nigeria since the country's democratic transition in 1999. Nigerians' despise of voting in elections has been well documented, aside from the Anambra elections. Despite the government's massive spending, this is the case. According to INEC official statistics, voter's turnout has been below 35% in the last two election cycles, including off-season elections. According to official data from the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), voter's turnout multiplied from 52% to 69% between 1999 and 2003 elections. Again, voter's turnout has steadily declined since the 2003 Presidential election, dropping to 57% in 2007, 54% in 2011, and 44% in 2015. In addition, it was indicated from INEC data, only 34.75% of registered voters cast their ballots in the 2019 Presidential election. The graph below showed the number of people who voted in Nigeria's Presidential elections from 1959 to 2019.
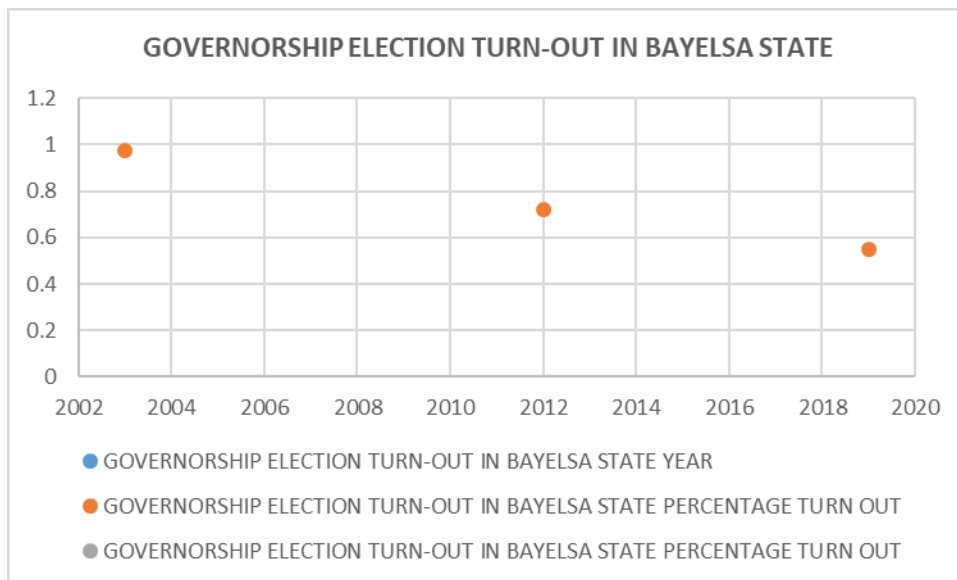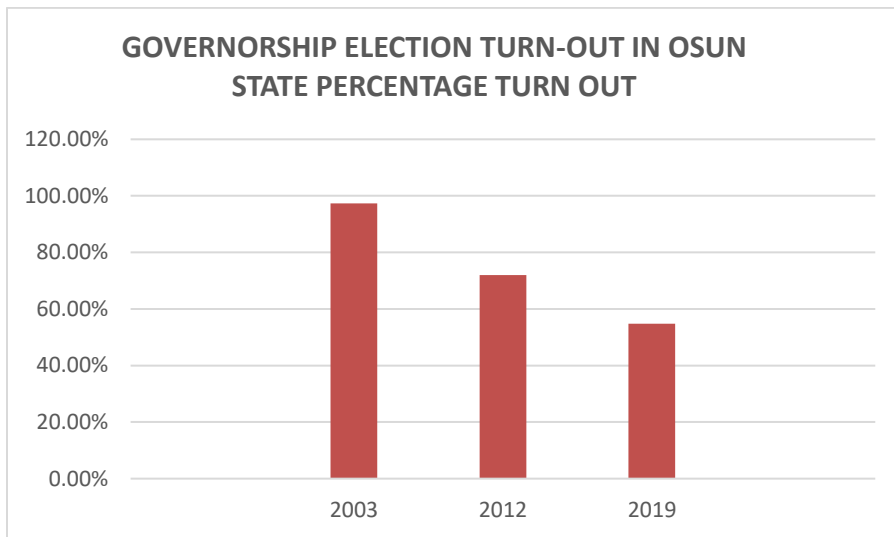
Figure 1: Voter Turnout during Presidential Elections in Nigeria from 1979 to 2019

Voter turnout during Presidential Elections in Nigeria, 1979 - 2019

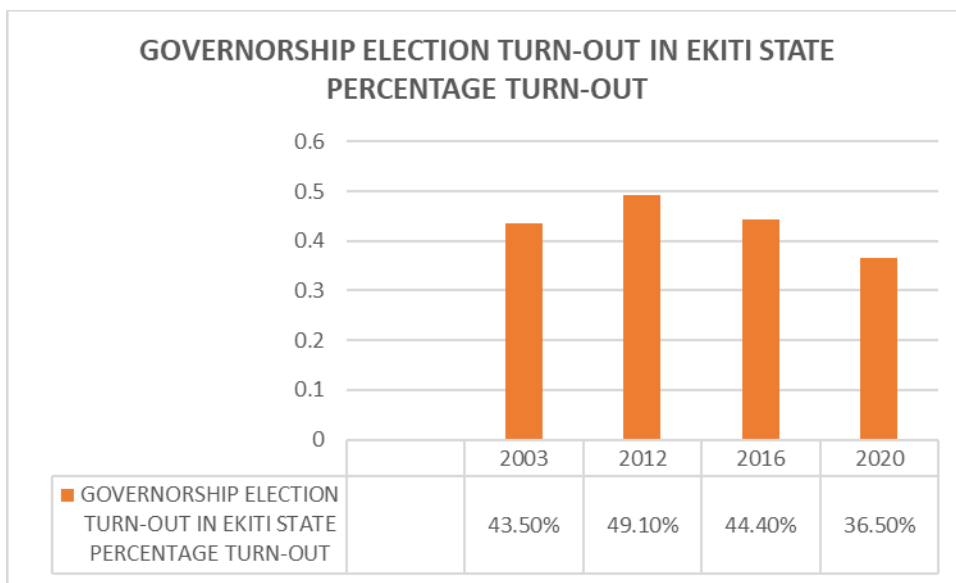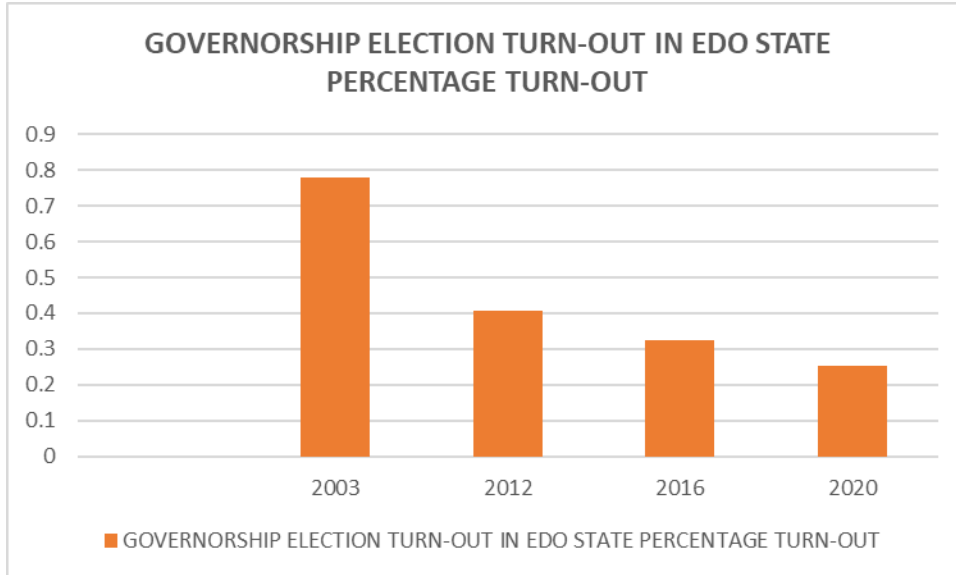|	1979	1983	1993	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Registered Votes	48,499,091	65,304,818	39,000,000	57,938,945	60,823,022	61,567,036	73,528,040	67,422,005	82,344,107
Votes Cast	17,098,267	25,430,096	14,293,396	30,280,052	42,018,735	35,397,517	39,469,484	29,432,083	28,614,190
% of Voter Turnout	35.25%	38.94%	36.65%	52.26%	69.08%	57.49%	53.68%	43.65%	34.75%

Source: Configuration by the Authors from INEC Website, 2022
However, from the above analysis one could debunk the argument that militarisation of off-cycle elections in Nigeria result to low voter's turnout. This is because other states off-cycle elections often experienced low turnout even when there was no serious threats of insecurity. Indeed, culture of apathy during elections has been common factor among some states in Nigeria. Even though it is obvious that elections are at the core of modern democracy, but in this case low voter's turnout rates might indicate that people do not see elections as central to political life due certain institutional failure or other challenges. For instance the graphs below shown the declined of votes turnout among off-cycle elections in Nigeria

Figure 2. Gubernatorial Election Turn-Outs In Off Cycle Elections Conducted in Four States

GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION TURN-OUT IN OSUN STATE PERCENTAGE TURN OUT

GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION TURN-OUT IN BAYELSA STATE

- GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION TURN-OUT IN BAYELSA STATE YEAR
- GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION TURN-OUT IN BAYELSA STATE PERCENTAGE TURN OUT
- GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION TURN-OUT IN BAYELSA STATE PERCENTAGE TURN OUT

GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION TURN-OUT IN EDO STATE PERCENTAGE TURN-OUT

GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION TURN-OUT IN EKITI STATE PERCENTAGE TURN-OUT

	2003	2012	2016	2020
GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION TURN-OUT IN EKITI STATE PERCENTAGE TURN-OUT	43.50%	49.10%	44.40%	36.50%

Source: Configuration by the Authors from INEC and Dataphyte Website, 2022

It could be seen from the above graphical representation that those elections were conducted without much internal threats of non-states actors. Although there was massive deployment of security forces during those elections. For instance, it was indicted that violence and murder continued in Bayelsa State despite the deployment of over 30,000 security officers there to guarantee the integrity of the governorship election on November 16, 2019, was truly terrifying. In a same vein, the police said that 66,241 people had been deployed in Kogi and Bayelsa alone to cover all terrain.
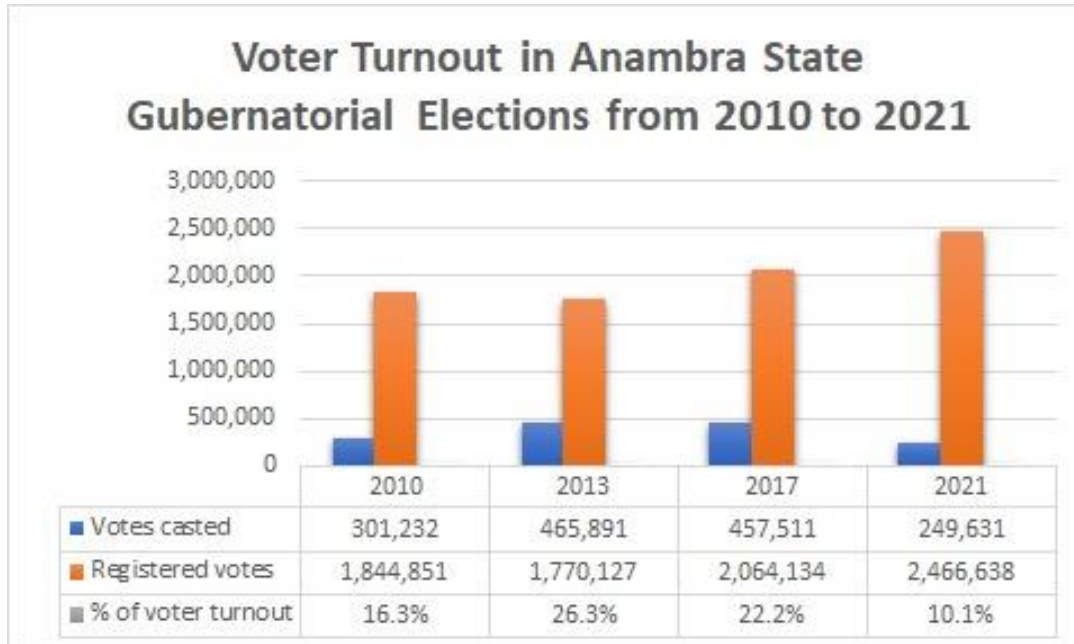
Beyond recent political developments in Nigeria's South East region where there is a total apathy among the citizens and initial threats by non-state actors to frustrate any election in the state. The threat of boycotting and disrupting the governorship election in 2021 was a major factor in the

state culture of militarisation intensification. IPOB launched a *No Election, Sit-at-Home campaign*, urging residents of Anambra State to boycott the governorship election scheduled for 2021. This was how IPOB's tactics and advocacy influenced voter's turnout in the November 2021 governorship election, particularly in IPOB-controlled areas. Indeed, the threat of going to the polls or being killed had a significant impact on voter's turnout in Anambra State. The danger was real, and many people avoided voting because they were afraid of violence and death. The militarisation of the election was ostensibly intended to prevent election disruption by IPOB members. It paved the way for the militarisation of the 2021 election. These deep-seated fears, which affected both election officials and voters, prevented voters from voting and increased voter apathy. It could be argue that low voter's turnout is not new in the state but a continuing as a trend in Anambra governorship elections (Fagunwa, 2018; Chiamogu, 2018).

For instance, the overall turnout of accredited voters in the recent governorship election was less than 20%. This becomes obvious when the percentage of accredited voters is compared to the number of eligible voters in each election. In the 2010 governorship election in Anambra state, for example, there were 1.84 million registered voters and 302, 000 accredited voters, indicating a turnout of 16%. Again, there were 1,770,127 registered voters and 465,891 accredited voters in 2013. This was representing 26.3% turnout. Only about 30% of registered voters cast ballots in the election. According to CDD, voter turnout was as low as 5% in many polling units during the November 2013 governorship election. In fact, only 442,242 voters out of 465,891 cast ballots (Chidi, 2018).

The situation was similar to that of the state's 2017 governorship election, which recorded 2,064,134 registered voters, 448,771 total votes, 457,311, valid votes – 422,314, rejected votes – 26, 457 percent, and turnout was 22.2 percent (Chidi, 2018). The 2021 governorship election, from the final results announced by the electoral Commission (INEC), a total of 241,523 valid votes were cast while 8,108 were void. The total voters accredited for the election was put at 253, 388 (10.27%) while 249,631 votes cast represents only 10.12% of the 2,466,638 registered voters in the state. The consequence of the indicated statistics for governorship elections from 2010 to 2017 is evident that low voter's turnout in Anambra governorship elections is a trend. From 2010 to 2021, the percentages of voters in Anambra state are shown in the graph below.

Figure 2: Voter Turnout in Anambra from 2010 to 2021

Voter Turnout in Anambra State Gubernatorial Elections from 2010 to 2021

	2010	2013	2017	2021
Votes casted	301,232	465,891	457,511	249,631
Registered votes	1,844,851	1,770,127	2,064,134	2,466,638
% of voter turnout	16.3%	26.3%	22.2%	10.1%

Source: Configuration by the Authors from INEC, 2022

Another factor that influenced voters' decisions was the ideology of the dominant single political party, with citizens in recent years voting for the state-based party, the APGA. The incumbent factor has an impact on voting patterns. Looking at the analysis of votes by the four major political parties according to Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Anambra state's 2021 governorship election, for example, reveals dominant party influence. The table below shows how the electorate of each local government voted.

Table 1: The 2021 Governorship Election Votes according to the 21 Local Government Areas in Anambra

S/N	LGA	APC	APGA	PDP	YPP	COMMENTS
1	AGUATA	4773	9136	3798	1070	APGA
2	ANAMBRA EAST	2034	9746	1380	559	APGA
3	ANAMBRA WEST	1233	1918	1401	357	APGA
4	ANAOCHA	2085	6911	5108	868	APGA
5	AWKA NORTH	755	1908	840	381	APGA
6	AWKA SOUTH	2595	12891	5498	919	APGA
7	AYAMELUM	2409	3424	2804	407	APGA
8	DUNUKOFIA	1991	4124	1680	1360	APGA
9	EKWUSIGO	1237	2570	1857	727	APGA
10	IDEMILI NORTH	2291	5358	2312	902	APGA
11	IDEMILI SOUTH	1039	2312	2016	752	APGA
12	IHIALA	343	8283	2485	344	APGA
13	NJIKOKA	3216	8803	3409	924	APGA
14	NNEWI NORTH	1278	3369	1511	6485	YPP
15	NNEWI SOUTH	1307	3243	2226	1327	APGA
16	OGBARU	1178	3051	3445	484	PDP
17	ONITSHA NORTH	3909	5587	3781	682	APGA
18	ONITSHA SOUTH	2050	4281	2253	271	APGA
19	ORUMBA NORTH	2672	4787	1847	655	APGA
20	ORUMBA SOUTH	2060	4394	1672	887	APGA
21	OYI	2830	6133	2484	900	APGA
TOTAL	21 LGAs	43,285	112,229	53,807	21,261	APGA
Total Registered Voters		2,466,638				
Total Accredited Voters		253,388				
Total Valid Votes		241,523				
Total Rejected Votes		8,108				

| Total Votes Cast | 249,631 |

Source: generated from INEC Website, 2021.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that the political culture was nervous as a consequence of increasing deployment of security personnel, which caused people of the state to travel out of the state prior to election days. It could be stress here that according to Nigerian electoral laws, each polling unit ought to have one unarmed police officer, and the military must not participate in the election. However, during the Anambra elections, armed police and military personnel were deployed in large numbers, raising the question of whose interest they will represent. Voter's turnout was low in Anambra's recent election, owing to the state's excessive militarisation, which created an atmosphere of deliberate tyranny and fear. In total, less than half of the registered voters were accredited.

Similarly, is obvious that beyond the 2007 elections in Anambra where it recorded 68% voter turnout, subsequent elections in the state recorded 16% (2010), 25% (2013) and 22% (2017) as the percentage of voters that turned out for voting. While the heightened tension in the state and the South-East region as a whole had provoked fears of low turnout for the election, security arrangements and political developments in Anambra before and during the election had quenched its increased political temperature. Notwithstanding these gains, the issue of voters' apathy remains a huge setback in deepening Nigeria's electoral process. For a state like Anambra where majority of its citizenry are expected to make crucial decisions as using election as platform of selecting leadership, a paltry 10% out of nearly 2.5 million registered voters deciding the fate of an estimated population of over 5 million residents in the state is far from the ideal. It is important to note, however, that 60% of registered voters decided not to vote in the election. Insecurity and mistrust in the electoral system were cited as reasons in a few instances. Many others claimed that those who came out to vote were unable to do so due to INEC's BVAS machine's failure, which was supposed to accredit registered voters before they could vote (Premium Times, 2021).

Conclusion

Voter's turnout during the governorship election in Anambra state has consistently been below 30%, indicating the existence of some factors that have negatively impacted on Nigeria's democratic project. The activities of IPOB, the disengagement of the majority of youths from voting during the election, the unusual deployment of security personnel in a manner that resulted in the militarisation of polling centers across the state, and the issue of votes buying are were among these factors. Additionally, many Anambarians are apathetic about politics. It is evidence that most of the people are unknowledgeable about how the government works and the candidates during elections. Indeed, majority of them are business men and women that pay less attention to politics after all they have enough resources to cater for their families. Indeed, political culture in the state when measure could be seen as parochial in nature. Many complain that they do not like either party/candidate or does like politics. This may also explain the low turnout in the subsequent governorship elections.

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