



Impact of Insurgency on Electoral Security: Appraising the role of the Nigerian Military in Securing the Electoral Process in North-East, Nigeria

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Abstract

The insurgency since 2009 has significantly disrupted electoral process in the North-east, Nigeria. This study examines the impact of insurgency on electoral security with emphasis on the role of the military in securing the electoral process in the North East, Nigeria. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 342 respondents comprising community members, civil servants, politicians, security operatives, INEC staff, businessmen, and students. The findings revealed that the effects of insurgency on security of electoral officers included fear and anxiety (35.0%), abduction and hostage-taking (20.8%), threats and intimidation (19.0%). The study found that the effects of insurgency on security of registration materials included destruction (28.1%), high replacement costs (21.3%), and loss of Permanent Voter Cards (19.6%). In response, the military played critical role such as airlifting of INEC umpires and sensitive materials (27.0%), armed convoy escorts (21.6%), area domination (19.9%), protection of IDP voting centres (18.4%), and safeguarding of INEC facilities (13.1%). The study concludes that insurgency has significantly undermined electoral process in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. While military support to electoral process remains indispensable, sustainable electoral integrity in the Northeast requires enhanced psychosocial support for electoral officers, redundant digital backup systems for registration data, and strengthening of civil-military coordination through the Joint Election Taskforce. The study recommends institutionalizing joint planning cells, investing in modern resilient technology and expanding community-based early warning networks to protect the electoral officers and registration materials in conflict-affected regions.

Keywords: Insurgency, Electoral Security, Electoral Process, Nigerian Military, North East

1.0 Introduction

In the context of the world, elections constitute the cornerstone of democratic governance, and the integrity of electoral processes depends substantially on the safety of electoral personnel and the security of registration materials (Albert, 2017). Elections serve as a fundamental expression of popular preference in democratic societies, functioning as a mechanism through which citizens confer legitimacy on elected leaders (Usman, 2026). However, Kaim (2006) posits that guarantee credible election, and to prevent electoral violence, security must be emphasized for the survival of human being, ecological issues and electoral process. In India, military forces have been extensively deployed in militancy-prone regions such as Jammu and Kashmir to sanitize polling stations, reflecting a tiered security architecture where military assets are reserved for existential threats (Puri, 2022). In Bangladesh, the military played a leading role in a nationwide voter registration effort between 2007 and 2008. The Bangladesh Armed Forces organized the logistics of registering over 80 million voters with photographic identification, achieving 99% accuracy, a task beyond civilian institutional capacity (UNDP, 2009). South Africa's 1994 democratic transition provides a foundational example of military electoral support.

In Africa, insurgency has emerged as one of the most significant threats to electoral democracy in the twenty-first century, with armed groups deliberately attacking elections because they confer legitimacy on the state; by preventing voting, insurgents signal state failure and delegitimize democratic authority (Bekoe, 2012; Stanley, 2013). In Kenya, Al-Shabaab attacks during election periods in 2013 and 2017 targeted voter registration centers and campaign rallies in the North Eastern region, contributing to low participation and increased security costs (Branch & Cheeseman, 2018). Similarly, in the Sahel, groups such as JNIM and ISGS have made large parts of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger "electoral deserts" where state-administered voting is impossible (UNDP, 2022).

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East has resulted in the loss of lives, displacement of over 2.3 million persons, a decline voters' turnout, and destruction of critical infrastructure including INEC offices and polling units (UN-OCHA, 2023; INEC, 2023; Onuoha, 2010). The scale of insurgency in the Northeast has necessitated an expanded and more specialized role for the military in protecting critical infrastructure, INEC personnel, materials, and voters. According to Peter, (2017), the deployment of the military has drastically reduced use of violence as well as poll rigging. No doubt, the military and surveillance of poll materials and personnel in recent times have added credibility to polls outcomes and results. Nigeria is widely known for turbulent polls and military is the only neutral third party capable of providing hope for Nigerians (Ayelazuno, (2016).

In conflict-affected states such as Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, the insurgent group strategically deploy violence to undermine state legitimacy, suppress voter participation and disrupt electoral process (Onuoha, 2010; Burchard, 2015). By targeting INEC facilities, political actors, and civilian populations, these groups seek to delegitimize the state and demonstrate its inability to provide security, a core function of democratic governance (Bekoe, 2012). In the North-East, the Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in the destruction of electoral infrastructure, mass displacement of registered voters, and the imposition of fear that discourages turnout during general elections (INEC, 2023; HRW, 2019). Consequently, voter apathy, low registration, and reduced participation become instruments through which insurgency weakens democratic consolidation and erodes public trust in electoral institutions (Norris, 2014).

In the context of election security, the security of electoral officers and registration materials in conflict-affected regions typically requires a multi-layered approach involving physical protection, redundancy in documentation, alternative registration mechanisms for displaced populations, and contingency planning for material replacement (ACE EKN, 2014).

Election security becomes a primary challenge as state and non-state actors target electoral officers, materials, and critical infrastructure to undermine the electoral process (Agbiboa, 2018). It is against this backdrop that this study examines the impact of insurgency on electoral security in the North-East, with emphasis on the role of the Nigerian military in securing the electoral process.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Since 2009, the violence has resulted in mass displacement, destruction of critical infrastructure, and the killing of over 35,000 persons (UN-OCHA, 2023), making the Northeast the most challenging region for election administration in Nigeria. During the 2019 and 2023 general elections, INEC declared several local government areas in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States as high-risk, while fear of attacks and displacement significantly suppressed voter turnout, particularly among internally displaced persons who could not access their polling units (CDD, 2023). In several conflict-affected communities, electoral activities have been suspended or severely curtailed, effectively disenfranchising segments of the population (Obafemi & Orhero, 2025).

Similarly, electoral officers have been exposed to physical danger, psychological trauma, and restricted mobility, with 42% of officials in the North East citing fear of insurgent attacks as the primary reason for poor deployment to rural polling units during the 2023 general elections (CDD, 2023). This environment of fear has led to manpower shortages, as many officers' refuse deployment due to anxiety, while insurgent targeting of state personnel and destruction of critical infrastructure has made the recruitment, deployment, and retention of electoral staff exceedingly difficult (CDD, 2023). INEC (2017) noted the destruction of Permanent Voter Cards and other registration materials by Boko Haram insurgents in the North East, necessitating costly replacement exercises and undermining the credibility of the voter registration at one point requiring Nigerian Air Force assistance to airlift electoral officials and

materials to safer locations (INEC, 2023). Existing literature has largely focused on the general impact of insurgency on democracy (Agbiboa, 2018) with little attention to specific strategies for enhancing military support to the electoral process in conflict areas. This gap necessitates an investigation into how insurgency affects electoral security and what strategies can be adopted to enhance the Nigerian military's role in supporting INEC during elections in Borno State, Nigeria.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of Boko Haram insurgency on the security of electoral officers and registration materials in Borno State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Assess the effect of Boko Haram insurgency on the security of electoral officers in North East, Nigeria.
2. Examine the extent of loss or damage to registration materials due to insurgency in North East, Nigeria.
3. Determine the role of the Nigerian military toward securing electoral officers and registration materials in North East, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

This study answers the following research questions:

1. How has Boko Haram insurgency affected the security of electoral officers in North East, Nigeria?
2. To what extent have registration materials been damaged or made inaccessible by insurgency in in North East, Nigeria?

3. What is the role of the Nigerian military toward securing electoral officers and registration materials in North East, Nigeria?

1.4 Literature Review

This study reviewed under different sub-themes, which includes effect of Insurgency on electoral security, the Nigerian military, constitutionality, electoral security and role of Nigerian military in securing the electoral process in the North East, Nigeria.

Effect of Insurgency on Electoral Security

Empirical evidence demonstrates that insurgency directly undermines three pillars of electoral security: personnel safety, logistics, and voter access (CDD, 2023). Agbiboa (2018) noted that National Youth Service Corps and ad hoc staff deployed in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States were specifically targeted because they represented state authority, while Eze (2021) argued that exposure to improvised explosive devices, ambushes, and the threat of abduction caused anxiety and refusal of deployment among electoral officers. The security of electoral officers represents a critical determinant of electoral integrity, particularly in conflict-affected states (Van Baalen, as cited in PMC, 2024). Studies on counterinsurgency and governance in Northeast Nigeria have documented how the activities of insurgents in conflict-affected communities have led to a reliance on military escorts for civil servants, including electoral officials (Obafemi & Orhero, 2025).

In conflict-affected environments, registration materials face exceptional risks of destruction and displacement. INEC, (2017) noted that the insurgent activities in the North-east have resulted in the destruction of significant quantities of Permanent Voter Cards, necessitating replacement exercises that imposed additional logistical and financial burdens on the electoral body. Omede (2016) documented attacks on INEC offices in Bama, Gwoza, and Marte where Direct Data Capture machines, generators, and over 30,000 Permanent Voter

Cards were destroyed. Similarly, INEC (2022) documented attacks on INEC offices in Damaturu and Madagali, resulting to the destruction of 12 Direct Data Capturing Machines and 8 Direct Data Capturing Machines respectively. The insurgency in the North-east region has severely disrupted logistics, voter access, and rendering movement of sensitive materials without military escort impossible in border local government areas such as Bama, Dikwa, Gwoza, Gujba, Yunusari, Geidam, Madagali, Gombi and Hong LGAs (Defence Headquarters [DHQ], 2022, OCHA, 2023; OPHK, 2023).

The Nigerian Military, Constitutionality and Electoral Security

In practice, the Nigerian military has been deployed to provide electoral security since 1999, with increased presence in the North-East due to the Boko Haram insurgency (Onuoha, 2010). Ojo (2014) contend that military involvement is necessary to protect critical infrastructure, INEC personnel, electoral materials, and voters in conflict zones, and to ensure the credibility of elections. Momoh (2020) noted that the involvement of the Nigerian military in the conduct of elections is desirable owing to the violent nature of most elections in Nigeria. Hutchful (1997) noted that the military is deployed in aid to civil authority to secure elections, and in Nigeria, the military has become a critical stakeholder in providing logistics, escorts, and force protection for INEC personnel and materials. Albert (2011) argued that electoral security requires both adversarial methods and use of force by military, thus, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) and the various electoral Acts provide the participation Nigerian military in electoral process. The Nigerian military has the responsibility of preventing violence and maintenance of social order thereby contributing significantly to electoral security and democratic consolidation (Usman, 2026).

The Nigerian military is expected to carryout constitutional responsibilities, which usually include defending the territorial integrity of Nigeria from external aggression and

assisting in the maintenance of internal security such as suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the president (CFRN, 1999; Momoh, 2020). This provision, reinforced by Section 28(3) and 30(3) of the Electoral Act 2022, provides the legal basis for military deployment to support the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during elections, particularly in areas of heightened insecurity (Aiyede, 2009). However, in carrying out its roles and responsibilities, the Nigerian military is also expected to be an efficient, effective and apolitical force, which is subjected to civilian authority (Momoh, 2020). In accordance with section 217(2c) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Armed Forces of Nigeria are mandated to be deployed in aid of civil authority during elections (CFRN, 1999; Norris, 2014). This constitutional provision provides the legal basis for military deployment during elections, particularly in areas affected by insurgency and violent crime.

Role of Nigerian Military in Securing the Electoral Process in the North East

The provision of logistic support constitutes one of the most visible military contributions to electoral security. The military has supplied helicopters, boats, naval patrol vessels and armoured transport vehicles to enable INEC to deploy staff, sensitive and non-sensitive election materials to riverine, difficult terrains and conflict-affected communities (INEC, 2022). Of particular significance, the Nigerian Air Force has airlifted sensitive materials and electoral officers to frontline local government areas including Abadam and Marte (Adeyemi & Salihu, 2022). During the 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections, the Air Force transported Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) devices, Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), and ad hoc staff to "island local government areas" including Abadam, Marte, and Guzamala, thereby overcoming the geographic barriers imposed by insurgents (Adeyemi & Salihu, 2022; Musa, 2021).

Armed escort and outer-perimeter security represent another critical dimension of military electoral support. For instance, through ICCES troops provided convoy protection for INEC personnel and CVR materials, and mounted static guard at collation centres and INEC warehouses to prevent attacks on sensitive materials and personnel (Operation HADIN KAI, 2023). This protective function was particularly important given documented attacks on INEC facilities in Bama, Gwoza, and Marte, where Direct Data Capture Machines and over 30,000 Permanent Voter Cards were destroyed (Omede, 2026; INEC, 2015). Similarly, in Yobe and Adamawa border local government areas, the military armed escorts enabled INEC to move DDCMs to Gashua, Geidam and Madagali despite insurgent threats (EU EOM, 2023)

Area domination through counterinsurgency operations has created essential windows of stability for Continuous Voter Registration in reclaimed communities. Walker (2021) and Agbiboa (2018) argue that military counterinsurgency operations generated periods of relative security that enabled INEC to conduct voter registration exercises in conflict-affected communities. Without such area domination, the physical deployment of electoral officers to these locations would have been virtually impossible, given the persistent threat of ambush and attacks. For instance, through Operation HADIN KAI, the military created a security bubble around Damaturu and Potiskum during the 2022 CVR mop-up, which deterred insurgent's attacks after the November 2022 bombing (DHQ, 2022). This initiative significantly reduced the risk of disruption and gave citizen confidence participate in the electoral process (INEC, 2023)

The protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) voting centres constitutes a distinctive contribution necessitated by the mass displacement caused by the insurgency. Military personnel secured IDP camps to enable displaced persons to participate in electoral processes despite their displacement from original polling units. IOM (2022) and Eze (2021) documented those military personnel secured IDP camps in Maiduguri and environs,

facilitating both voter registration and voting for populations that would otherwise have been effectively disenfranchised by conflict-induced displacement. For instance, in Dalori and Teachers Village camps in Maiduguri, soldiers secured the registration points while NSCDC managed crowd control (NEMA, 2022)

The protection of INEC personnel and registration materials during transit and storage represents a continuous military function throughout the electoral cycle. For instance, in the Northeast, troops secured the movement of materials from the Central Bank of Nigeria to registration Areas (CDD, 2023; Op HADIN KAI, 2023), thereby safeguarding the integrity of the material chain of custody. Inter-agency coordination has been strengthened through the ICCES, which ensures joint planning between military and electoral bodies. INEC, (2022) noted that the framework for collaboration mandates the military to provide static guard, convoy escort, and quick response capabilities. Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) activities have complemented kinetic operations by addressing the informational and psychological dimensions of electoral security.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Theory of Electoral Security as its frameworks of analysis.

The theory of electoral security, which was developed by Busan Barry, Ole Waever and Jaapde Wilde (1998) assumes that every electoral contest portent rivalry, discordant and rancorous competition, which leads to electoral insecurity if not well managed, and that unsecured electoral space creates political apathy and weak participation in the electoral process by the electorates. The Theory of Electoral Security established that electoral integrity depends fundamentally on the state's capacity to protect personnel, materials, infrastructure, and voters from violence and disruption (Norris, 2014; Stanley, 2013). The theory assumed that the military is an indispensable stakeholder in conflict-affected states where civilian

security capacities are overwhelmed. The theory explains how state and non-state actors interact to either protect or undermine electoral processes in conflict-affected areas (Aiyede, 2019; Agbiboa, 2018; Bekoe, 2012). According to Norris (2014), electoral security encompasses three interrelated dimensions: the physical safety of electoral personnel, the protection of registration materials and voting infrastructure, and the guarantee of unimpeded voter access. In Borno State, the Nigerian military through Operation HADIN KAI and the Joint Election Security Taskforce has assumed critical functions in protecting electoral personnel, materials, and voters (Hutchful, 1997; Agbiboa, 2018). Electoral Security Theory is appropriate for this study because it explains how Boko Haram insurgency compromises electoral officer and material security in Borno State, and how military protective strategies, airlifting, convoy escorts, area domination, IDP camps protection, and facility safeguarding are acquired, reinforced, and expanded through operational experience.

1.6 Research Methodology

The study adopted quantitative method to investigate the effects of Insurgency on electoral security in Borno State. The quantitative data involved administering questionnaire to the respondents using simple random sampling technique. Primary and secondary data was employed for this study. The primary data was sourced through the administration of questionnaires in the study area. On the other hand, secondary data was sourced from relevant agencies of government, online materials, textbooks, journals, unpublished lecture notes and seminar.

Purposive sampling was used in administering questionnaire to the respondents. The sample size consists of community members (120), journalists (40), Aids workers (40), civil servants (40), prospective registrants (40) security personnel (40), INEC staff (40), Civil Society Organizations (40), thus the sample size for the study is three hundred and fifty thousand (350) respondents in the sampling frame. The primary data collection instrument used

in this research includes: questionnaire, Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discuss (FGDs). Details in the research instrument were categorized in two sections. Section A covers socio-economic details of respondent and section B covers the main research questions in line with the objectives of the study. Copies of the questionnaires were carefully administered, retrieved and analyzed.

Results and discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Response rate through Questionnaires

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentage
Returned questionnaire	342	97.7%
Unreturned questionnaire	8	2.3%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: *Researcher's Survey, 2026.*

Table 1 shows data were collected from 342 respondents out of 350 questionnaires administered, representing a 97.7% response rate. The high response rate indicates strong participant engagement and enhances the reliability of the findings.

1.7 Presentation and discussion of Findings

This section presents and analyses the data gathered from the field of study. The section is divided into two sub-sections. Sub-section 1 relates to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents while sub-section 2 presents the results gathered from the field on each of the research objectives and questions.

Section 1: Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents

Table 1.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 342)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–29	110	32.2%
	30–39	117	34.2%
	40–49	80	23.4%
	50–59	26	7.6%
	60 and above	9	2.6%
Sex	Male	253	74.0%
	Female	89	26.0%
Occupation	Community members	95	27.8%
	Civil/public servants	70	20.5%
	Politicians	50	14.6%
	Businessmen	45	13.1%
	Students	42	12.3%
	INEC staff	40	11.7%

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026.

In table 1.1, the demographic profile reveals that respondents were predominantly male (74.0%), aged 30–39 years (34.2%), and community members (27.8%), with representation across civil servants (20.5%), politicians (14.6%), businessmen (13.1%), students (12.3%), and INEC staff (11.7%).

Table 1.2: Distribution of Respondent by Effects of Insurgency on Security of Electoral Officers in North East, Nigeria

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Fear and anxiety	120	35%
Abduction and hostage taking	71	20.8%
Threat and intimidation	65	19%
Psychological trauma	57	16.7%
Targeting of electoral officers' homes	29	8.5%
Total	342	100.00%

Source: *Researcher's survey, 2026.*

In table 1.2 above, each of the participants expressed divergent views on what they perceived as the effect of insurgency on electoral officers in the North-east. The table shows that majority of the respondents 120 (35%) were of the view of the view that the effect of insurgency on security of electoral officers was fear and anxiety, while 71(20.48%) of the respondents were of the view that the effect of insurgency on security of electoral officers was abduction and hostage taking. Meanwhile 65 (19%) of the respondents expressed the view that the effect of insurgency on security of electoral officers were threat and intimidation. Also, 57 (16.7%) of the respondents were of the view that the effect of insurgency on security of electoral officers was psychological trauma, while 29 (8.5%) of the respondents were of the view that the effect of insurgency on security of electoral officers was targeting of electoral officers' homes.

Table 1.3: Distribution of Respondent by Effects of Insurgency on Security of Registration Materials in North East, Nigeria

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Destruction of electoral materials	96	28.1%
High replacement cost	73	21.3%
Loss of Permanent Voters Card (PVCs)	67	19.6%
Attack during transit	62	18.1%
Looting of electoral materials	44	12.9%
Total	342	100.00%

Source: *Researcher's survey, 2026*

In Table 1.3 above, it was revealed that majority of the respondents 96 (28.1%) were of the view that the effects of insurgency on security of registration materials in the North-east were destruction of electoral materials, while 73 (21.3%) of the respondents were of the view that the effects of insurgency on security of registration materials were high replacement. Meanwhile, 67 (19.6%) of the respondents were of the view that the effects of insurgency on security of registration materials were lost of Permanent Voters Card (PVCs), while 62 (18.1%) of the respondents were of the view that the effects of insurgency on security of registration materials were attack during transit. However, 44 (12.9%) of the respondents were of the view that effects of insurgency on security of registration materials were looting of electoral materials.

Table 1.4: Distribution of Respondents on the role of Nigerian Military in Enhancing Election Security

Strategies adopted by the Nigerian Military	Frequency	Percentage
Airlifting of electoral officers and sensitive materials	92	27%
Armed convoy escort and perimeter security	74	21.6%
Area domination and containment of insurgency	68	19.9%
Protection of IDPs voting centres	63	18.4%

Protection of INEC offices, warehouses and voting centres	45	13.1%
Total	342	100.00%

Source: *Researcher's survey, 2026*

In Table 1.4 above, it was revealed that majority of the respondents 92 (27%) were of the view that the role of military in enhancing election security in the North-east were airlifting of electoral officers and sensitive materials, while 74 (21.6%) of the respondents were of the view that the armed convoy escort and perimeter security were the role of military in enhancing election security. Meanwhile, 68 (19.9%) of the respondents were of the view that the role of military in enhancing election security were area domination and containment of insurgency, while 63 (18.4%) of the respondents were of the view that the role of military in enhancing election security was protection of IDPs voting centres. However, 45 (13.1%) of the respondents were of the view that the role of military in enhancing election security were protection of INEC offices, warehouses and voting centres.

1.8 Discussion of Major Findings

The findings on objective one revealed that the effect of insurgency on security of electoral officers includes fear and anxiety, abduction and hostage taking, threat and intimidation, psychological trauma and targeting of electoral officers' homes. Majority of the respondents (35%) identified fear and anxiety as the primary effect of insurgency on electoral officers. This finding aligns with the work of work of Musa (2021) who noted that fear and anxiety, threat and intimidation, psychological trauma and abduction of electoral officers compelled INEC to depend on Military airlift. This finding also corroborates with the work of work of Agbibo (2018) who argued that insurgency personalizes electoral officials as agents of state, making them targets.

The findings on objective two revealed that the effect of insurgency on electoral materials were destruction of electoral materials, high placement cost, loss of PVCs, attack

during transit and looting of electoral materials. The destruction of materials (28.1%) suggests that the insurgents targeting of registration materials is a deliberate strategy to undermine the electoral process. This finding aligns with CDD (2019) who noted military involvement in securing materials and responding to electoral violence in the 6 geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

The findings on objective three revealed that the Nigerian Military adopted a multi-layered strategy combining logistics (airlifting), outer-perimeter security, terrorist containment and protection of IDPs voting centres and protection of INEC offices, warehouses and voting centres to enable elections in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States. The dominance of airlift of electoral officers and sensitive materials (27%), followed by armed convoy escort and perimeter security (21.6) reflect the reality of an insurgency that made ground movement highly risky (Aiyede, 2019). This finding aligns with DHQ (2023) and CDD (2023) which emphasized that the military secured INEC warehouses, escorted materials, and provided rapid response to distress calls in over 15 states.

1.9 Conclusion

The study concludes that insurgency undermined electoral process in North-East, Nigeria. Major roles of the military include protection of personnel, securing electoral materials, deterrence of violence and logistic support among others. While the Nigerian military cannot lead the electoral process, enhancing its support role through better coordination, logistics, technology, and civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) is critical for free, fair and credible elections, especially in conflict- affected areas. Though the Nigerian military has made indispensable contributions to electoral security, sustainable electoral integrity in North-east will also require a fundamental strengthening of state capacity, community trust, and institutional resilience. Without these, the forthcoming 2027 elections will remain vulnerable to insurgent's activities, low voters' turnout and legitimacy deficits.

1.10 Recommendations

To secure the electoral process in conflict-affected areas:

- i. The Nigerian government and INEC should institute mandatory psychosocial support programmes for electoral officers in conflict-affected areas, including pre-deployment training, in-service counselling, and enhanced hazard allowances, to mitigate the pervasive fear and anxiety.
- ii. INEC should develop redundant digital backup systems with cloud-based storage and decentralized repositories, invest in armoured transport with GPS tracking, and pre-position contingency replacement stocks in secure locations to reduce vulnerability to material destruction.
- iii. INEC in collaboration with the Nigerian military should institutionalize joint planning cells at state and local government levels, expand community-based early warning networks, and integrate civil-military cooperation activities to build sustainable community trust.

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