

Security Implications of Violating Nigeria Broadcasting Code during the 2019 General Elections

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Abstract

Participation in elections by the electorate is aided by media campaigns through content dissemination of relevant information. The campaigns are a constitutional right for political parties and candidates and are defined in terms of mode, time and rules by the Electoral Act. One of these rules is stoppage of partisan campaign on broadcast media 24 hours to election day; otherwise called 'election silence.' One of the essence of the ban was to allow the voters to reflect on parties and candidates' manifestos in making their informed choices and to avoid violence because of politicians' access to the media on the day. But media organisations often violate this provision on election day and this has grave security implications on the general conduct of elections. Therefore, this study examined the extent of violations by broadcast media organisations and sanctions imposed on them by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) during the 2019 general elections. Content analysis method was used to examine the Weekly Monitoring Reports (WMRs) of the NBC. The findings showed that presidential election attracted more sanctions than gubernatorial election and the sanctions were more on private broadcasters than public and they occurred more in the north-central and south-west than any other geo-political zone. The researchers concluded that such might have arisen due to so many factors, including the desire of politicians to grab power on one hand and the broadcast stations' economic interest for survival. Based on this, the paper recommends that NBC's fine imposition alone might not stem the tide; it should be complemented with a more severe sanction such as reduction of transmission hours for any partisan violation on election day.

Keywords: Election Day, Media Coverage, Political Broadcast, Broadcast Regulation, NBC