



## **The Election Security and Off-Season Elections in Nigeria: The November 16, 2019 Governorship Election in Kogi State Experience**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It is regrettable that since Nigeria got her independence in 1960, elections in the country pose serious security challenges, not only in terms of security of the men and materials deployed for the elections, but also in terms of protecting the voters and candidates. The political impunity has been influenced by the lucrative spoils of electoral victory, hence the political officeholders are ready to risk all to win elections. The heat and passion associated with off-season governorship elections in Nigeria often make elections appear like war. The violence had led to the death of many politicians, their supporters and innocent citizens in off-season governorship elections in the following states; Bayelsa, Osun, Ekiti, Edo, Anambra, Kogi among others. Election security is crucial for creating the proper environment that electoral officials require to carry out their duties, for voters to freely and safely go to their polling units to vote, for candidates and political parties to organize rallies and campaigns and for other numerous stakeholders to discharge their responsibilities under the Constitution and the Electoral Act. Police is the foremost internal security matters agency in Nigeria and handles all internal security matters including the provision of security for the conduct of any election in Nigeria. It is worrisome that over 35,000 security operatives under the umbrella of Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) deployed to Kogi state to safeguard the conduct of November 16, 2019 governorship election in Kogi state could not stop violence and bloodshed in the state especially, the murder of Mrs Acheju Abuh, the woman leader of Wada/Aro Campaign council, Ochadamu ward is a case in point who was burnt alive in her home by political thugs. This is because without adequate security, the Election Management Body (EMB) cannot guarantee free, fair and credible elections, and democracy can neither prevail nor flourish. Therefore, it is imperative for Nigeria to create a body whose responsibility would be to ensure the prosecutions of electoral offenders, else the electoral process would remain perpetually impoverished.

**Keywords:** Election Security and Off-season Governorship Elections, Political Violence, Bloodshed, Kogi State, and Election Management Body (EMB).

### **INTRODUCTION**

The off-season elections are elections conducted outside the calendar of general elections time table in Nigeria. The off-season elections were created by certain circumstances of Supreme Court verdicts in the past. For example in 2003 general election in Anambra State, Chris Ngige under the platform of PDP was declared winner of the governorship election by INEC, but Peter Obi of APGA went to Court to challenge it and after two years his mandate was restored. The Supreme Court mandated him to serve for four (4) years without making reference to the years Chris Ngige served as governor, thereby shifting the governorship election outside the general election time table. Moreover, few of other states have similar cases such as Kogi, Bayelsa, Edo, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun among others.

It is assumed that since the Off-season elections are scheduled outside the general election time table, that there will be adequate security during the conduct of such elections to police the elections. This is because the idea of democratic election is to choose leaders in a free, fair and peaceful manner, devoid of deceit

and violence. According to Imobighe (2003:7) security has to do with the freedom from danger, fear, anxiety or uncertainty. A secured state is therefore, one that is reasonably free from or not exposed to, external aggression and internal sabotage. He stated that security is normally a priority concern of every nation. This is so because it affects not only satisfying the need of the inhabitants, but also and perhaps more importantly, the fundamental issue of the national survival as a viable entity. It is only under a secure atmosphere that a state can develop and direct its human and material resources towards productive ends.

The November 16, 2019 governorship election in Kogi state had over 30,000 security agencies deployed to the state to enforce law and order and ensure that the election was free, fair and transparent. It is worrisome that, in spite of the number of security agencies deployed for the election, the exercise still witnessed increase of electoral violence. It is perhaps in the light of the foregoing that, the Nation Editorial Newspaper of December 4, 2019 pointed out that the governorship election in Kogi was marred with violence despite the early warning signs and recommendations to relevant actors/agencies in the election process. And it went further to state that police and the Election Management Body (EMB) failed to improve on the lapses from the February 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. The level of violence witnessed and reported during the governorship election was alarming and it raises concerns about the state of our elections, not just in Kogi but as we move ahead towards, attaining sustainable electoral democracy in Nigeria.

It is unfortunate that thuggery and hooliganism have been part of our politics all these years, instead of subsiding, as in other civilized climes, ours appear to be on the increase. Our diverse cultural, historical and religious backgrounds have ensured that these sentiments remain in our body politics and politicians are taking maximum advantage of the situation to the detriment of the people, but if we want, we can bring our democracy to the standard that is accepted internationally. Our aim should be universal suffrage, free and fair elections devoid of cheating, hooliganism, thuggery, militarism among others. But why do our politicians find it so difficult to keep to the rules? What is in this politics that makes them want to subvert the process always and at all cost? Why must our politics be a do-or-die affair? (Ikhioya, 2020:18).

Apart from electoral violence, there are fears of kidnapping and violence against innocent citizens in different parts of the country which had pushed states to seek alternative methods of fighting crime. For example, South West states established the “Western Nigeria Security Network” (code-named in Yoruba as “Amotekun”) and other regions have also made moves to establish similar security outfits to make up for the inadequacy of the existing security and law enforcement systems. The centrality of security agencies in Nigeria by the Federal Government was attributed to woeful performance of this body especially in the conduct of off-season elections in Nigeria. It is possible that in a situation where the Federal authorities have interest to control a state, the Federal security agencies could be briefed and used to undermine and manipulate the conduct of elections. So this gives rise to states clamouring for state police.

In any election, authorities take steps to ensure that voters, candidates, poll workers, observers, and other actors involved in an election experience the process free from fear or harm and to ensure that sensitive election materials are kept secured. The specific security requirements for a given election will vary greatly depending on the context. In places with ongoing conflict or where there is a significant potential for violence, securing an election will need to address a multiplicity of factors and will likely involve deploying relatively large numbers of security personnel from police, NSCDC, or military forces, to protect physical locations and individuals. In every election, there will be plans in place for the security, transfer and storage of election materials, especially ballot papers and ballot boxes. The safeguards to any technologies used in the election process should also be adopted to prevent hacking or manipulation (USAID, 2013).

Governor Yahaya Bello was first elected as Kogi governor in 2015, after he was chosen on APC platform as a replacement for the late Abubakar Audu, who originally won the election but died before the result was declared. The independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), on Monday, November 18, 2019, declared the All Progressive Congress (APC) governorship candidate, as the winner of the governorship

election held in Kogi state on Saturday, November 16, 2019. The APC Candidate, polled a total of 406,22 votes to defeat his major opponent, Musa Wada of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), who polled 189,704 Votes to emerge second. Announcing APC candidate, Yahaya Bello as the winner, INEC's Returning Officer for the election and vice-chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Professor Ibrahim Umar, stated that Bello triumphed after scoring the highest number of Votes during the Poll.

Kogi state has 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs) that participated in the November 16, 2019 election. The bitter struggle for power played itself out again in the election, but what passed for election in the state should really worry us as a people about what to expect in 2023 and in the other elections before then. Democracy is a game of numbers, at least in other places. It has no room for reason or rationale. It is supposed to depend on the electorate. In their wisdom they could vote in the best person for any office, just as they could also make the most foolish contender carry the day. The choice is theirs, but in the end they also should not complain about the choice they made or did not make because it is garbage in, garbage out. People get the kind of leadership they deserve. Unfortunately, our politicians do not think voters are wise enough to decide for themselves, or that they even have a right to vote foolishly. The politicians therefore resort to self-help on Election Day. Unfortunately, too, the self-help is hardly peaceful, because all manner of strong arm tactics come into play (Adegboyega, 2019:20).

There was a lot of violence in the build-up to the election and the state presented a case study in electoral violence. This was particularly so with what appeared to be the premeditated murder of Mrs. Acheju Abuh, the Women Leader of Wada Aro Camapign Council, Ochadamu Ward, who was also the Women Leader for the Campaign Organisation of the Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) governorship candidate, Musa Wada, on November 18, barely two days after the governorship election. It is inconceivable that people with blood flowing in their veins would kill a fellow human being, and a woman for that matter, the way Mrs Abuh was killed. The woman was in her house, resting, apparently after the long weeks of Campaign that culminated in the November 16, 2019 election when she met her death in the hand of thugs.

### **Theoretical Perspective of Electoral Security in the Off-Season Elections in Nigeria**

The test of true democratic society has been said time and again, rests on its ability to ensure that the rule of law guiding elections is carried out to the satisfaction of all participants in the exercise. Sadly for us in this part of the world, it seems this vital requirement is far-fetched and is exactly why most of the perpetrators of heinous electoral rigging go unpunished. The security agencies are strategic ally in this respect; hence the urgency and importance of developing and employing security measures so as to prevent, contain or control factors that trigger disorder and violence during elections.

Election Security (ie. Security of election officials and materials) remains a formidable challenge in Nigeria. Nnoli (2006:16) agreed that, National Security is a cherished value associated with the physical safety of individuals, groups, nation-states, together with a similar safety of their other most cherished values. It denotes freedom from threats, anxiety or danger. Therefore, security in an objective sense can be measured by the absence of fear that threat, anxiety or danger will materialize.

Violence has become a political strategy in Nigeria where the unpopular anti-democratic elements impose themselves on the people by force. Nigeria's brand of democracy has become government of the rich, through the manipulation of the poor for the service of the few and exploitation of the majority. Violence is dysfunctional to representative government and draws back the hand of development. Violence has resulted in bloodshed, burning and destruction of properties and casts doubt on the legitimacy of those pronounced winners at the polls. This is because violence undermines electoral integrity. Through the instrumentality of violence, there is enthronement of unconcerned and anti-democratic characters holding the levers of power. Of course, the consequence of this, is the sustained recession witnessed in all areas of our national life (Tade, 2019:17).

Jega (2019) noted that deeply embedded unwholesome practices such as use of money, violence, incumbency powers and a range of electoral malpractices and fraudulent activities in the electoral process grossly undermine its utility as a vehicle for democratic development. Violence is embraced by dominant

political classes to access power for self-actualisation rather than for the betterment of their states and Nigeria. He averred that ritualized elections which lack integrity merely serve to legalize, if not legitimize, access and control of power into executive or legislative arms of government by people unconcerned with or indifferent to, the requirements of sustainable democratic development. The implications are that such elections do not produce responsive and representative leadership.

In the light of the above, the prevalence of election violence in a country, determines the level of security to be provided by the security agencies. Countries that do not have the propensity for electoral violence may provide minimal election security. On the other hand, countries with history of electoral violence need to be adequately prepared for development of security personnel to protect both electoral staff and materials. Nigeria has its share of electoral violence since the First Republic, as such each time election year is approaching, and there is apparent fear of violence. Election Security involves the physical protection and safety of polling units, election materials and electoral personnel both permanent and adhoc-staff before, during and after elections until electoral results are collated and announced.

The political activities stir up in citizens many feelings, emotions and desires which give rise to the formation of different groups with different interests such as institutional interest groups, Associational interest groups, Non-associational interest groups, Anomic interest groups and different political groupings (Parties). The activities of the political parties and other interest groups in Kogi state, shaped the power play in the build-up for election which suggested that there would be violence and bloodshed in the election. To achieve this analysis, "group theory" will be used to analyze the use of thuggery, intimidation, violence and murdering of opposition, by some interest groups. "Group theory" was conceptualized by Truman (1953) as a collection of individuals, which on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied in the shared attitudes which constitute the interests. In applying this theory, we have to explain the grouping and regrouping of the different political parties and other group interests in the November 16, 2019 Governorship election in Kogi state.

**(a) The APC Ruling Party Perspective Interests:**

The All Progressives Congress (APC) Candidate, Governor Yahaya Bello emerged victorious in the November 16, 2019 Governorship election in Kogi state. He was the Youngest Governor in Nigeria and seen as the child of destiny, because as an Ebira from Kogi central was termed an accident, Occasioned by Abubakar Audu's death. The APC perspective according to Rasaan (2009:12) is that the Party went through the meticulous process of picking the right candidate and he was accepted across board and that reflected in the election result. He further stated that the People chose Yahaya Bello as their Governor because they knew about the resources available to him to manage the state and they believed that he has done wonderfully well in managing those resources. They also believed there is a need for him to complete his eight year tenure and consolidate on what he has done and take the state to the next level.

The Party (APC) argued that the people are aware that APC government at the Federal level is doing wonderfully well and the people of Kogi state needed to be on the same page with the Federal Government, so that they can attract more development to the state. The people have seen the PDP spent 16 years in government in Nigeria and they know the destruction the party did to their psyche.

The Party Praised their members for been law abiding members and denounced those oppositions that were calling for the cancellation of Kogi governorship elections held in November 16, 2019 as a result of magnitude of violence witnessed during the exercise. Rasaan (2019: 12) agreed with the above, saying when the judgement was given against APC in Zamfara and Rivers States and APC lost from the National Assembly election, through governorship and House of Assembly because their candidates were not accepted by INEC, PDP members celebrated, stating it was the best that could have happened, but they never complained. When the PDP lost at the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal and the Supreme Court, they condemned the Judiciary and said it is corrupt. That means that it is only when the judgement is in their favour that it is the best.

Despite the irregularities, bloodletting, violence that characterized the Kogi election, President Buhari Congratulated the APC winners and told the losers to go to court, informing everyone that cared to listen that the election were well run. President Buhari was enthusiastic about Kogi election and quickly

embraced the results. He saw the re-election victory of Yahaya Bello as “a race well run and victory well won”. He left the contentious issue of just how far the so-called isolated incidents of violence and pockets of unrest vitiated the victory of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Candidates. Perhaps it would have been unnatural for him to castigate his Party’s Victory, seeing that he was elected President on the platform of the same Party and given the regnant and fawning culture of elevating Presidents as leaders of the Party. It would be inconceivable for the Party’s undisputed leader to say or do anything that would undermine” his own leadership and diminish his achievements (Akinlotan, 2019:56).

**(b) The Opposition Parties’ Perspective Interest:**

The opposition perspectives argued that the administration of Governor Yahaya Bello is a government with uncommon disdain for civil servants, one that loved to owe workers’ salaries with impunity and without any tangible performance in infrastructural development, despite the huge resources at its disposal. His government was also accused of being intolerant to the voice of the opposition. The opposition Parties thought that the Kogi Guber Poll would be a day of reckoning for Bello, believing that the majority of the people would rise to pay him back notwithstanding the pleadings by the APC emissaries, but the governor proved them wrong. He was eventually declared the winner of the election by INEC.

The hope of his winning the election, therefore, was so remote that a powerful delegation, including Nigeria’s First Lady, Aisha Buhari, wife of Vice President, Dolapo Osinbajo, governor of Kaduna State Nasir el-Rufia, among others, were drafted by the All Progressives Congress (APC) on a rescue mission to Kogi state to plead with the people for the forgiveness of the governor’s perceived many sins, especially the over 17 months salaries allegedly owed the state civil servants. The political heat from the state made most stakeholders and political observers to strongly believe, rightly or wrongly, that governance has taken a leave from Kogi since Yahaya Bello reputed as the youngest governor took over the saddle of leadership (Kanu, 2019:2).

The opposition perspective is that Kogi people around the world had always dreamt of having a governor who will launch the state on the national and international stages, a builder and unifier who will collapse the walls of division, a patriotic leader who places service above elections and who is ever ready to give meaning to the lives of Kogi people. They lamented that the incumbent governor of Kogi state does not have the qualities of leadership enumerated above and that is why there are violence and bloodshed in the state.

The highpoint of the killing was when the woman leader of WADA/Aro campaign council, Ochadamu Ward, Mrs Acheju Abuh, was killed after some suspected political thugs burnt her alive in her home. The thugs arrived at Mrs. Abuh’s house around 2.00pm and surrounded her house, poured petrol on the building before setting it ablaze. It was a gory death as the attackers shut the doors and window to Mrs Abuh’s house during the attack and ensured she didn’t have a way of escape (Kanu, 2019: 2). The opposition described the murder of Abuh of PDP as inhumanity to man and called on the Inspector General of Police to investigate the matter and bring those responsible to book and prosecute them.

For the Governor Yahaya Bello’s opponents, theirs have been weeping and gnashing of their teeth both on accounts of the scale of electoral loss and of the near dozen lives lost. By the reckoning of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), 10 deaths in the 79 cases of violence and election malpractices were recorded across the 21 Local Government Areas (LGA) in Kogi state. There were supposedly unbiased electoral umpire attempt to shut a candidate on a ground that would ordinarily be deemed flimsy. The case of social Democratic Party (SDP) Candidate, Natasha Akpoti which INEC attempted to shut until the courts stepped in at the last minute to rescue the ticket. The election in Kogi state was democracy by conquest-the conqueror being the Party that had the superior firepower, a contest in which the elector was at best a spectator (Sanya, 2019:19).

It is sad to hear the Police Service Commission saying that security agencies were overwhelmed by hooded demons (fake policemen) that unleashed terror on peaceful voters. While violence is not limited to Nigeria, the crass display of superior aggression by APC and PDP call into question their genuine development agenda for the country beyond the instrumentalisation of violence on the polity. It is perhaps

in the light of this, the Daily Sun Editorial Newspaper of December 3, 2019 lamented that the Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu confessed that the police were over-powered by “fake policemen”. The argument that the police were over-powered is unconvincing, because ballot boxes were snatched in broad day light in the presence of voters and three or four policemen without the policemen raising a finger. It was not that they tried to apprehend the thugs but failed. It was that they did not try at all. All over the world, policemen almost instinctively in and out of uniform, try to stop lawbreakers. The editorial board argued, for the police to play dead in the face of such open violent attack during an election is the height of insensitivity, a total lack of commitment. Now, the question is who enlisted the fake policemen and armed them enough to be able to overpower the real policemen? In that case, the police should have alerted the nation that what was going to happen on November 16, 2019 was no election but a civil war.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

A research design is a scientific logic that has a link with the data collected with appropriate analytical tools already specified and adopted under methodology. The discussion constitutes a major task that would largely determine the relevance of the work (Obasi, 1999: 106). However, in a descriptive study such as this, its finding must be credible. The key criterion or principle of a good documentary research is found in the notion of trustworthiness and neutrality of its findings or decisions (Bouma and Ling, 2014). Just as a quantitative study cannot be considered valid unless it passes reliability and credibility tests: Trustworthiness entails credibility and transferability, which is the extent to which the findings can be explored in another context (Bassegy, 1981: 73-94).

These qualities of a good methodology will help to explain the roles and involvement of different stakeholders and security agencies in the conduct of the Gubernatorial Election in Kogi State. This thesis will help us to unearth the effort of security agencies that participated in the conduct of election in Kogi state, in the maintenance of security for free and fair election.

The technique of content analysis will assist to draw some relevant information or facts that will help validate the research hypotheses. The technique is a scientific means or process of analysing or comprehending information or facts scientifically. It is a Universal process of carrying out a research work in order to generate a detailed knowledge of the work under study. This technique will be used to analyze the data collected.

**Content Analysis**

S/N	Speech/Interview	Number of Paragraph	Election Security in Off-Season Elections.
1	The interview of Chief Lanre Rasaq, a chieftain of APC, “Governorship Election in Kogi”, <u>New Telegraph</u> , December 6, 2019.	5	4
2	The Daily Sun Editorial Comment on Governorship Election in Kogi, “Justice for Salome Abuh”, <u>Daily Sun</u> , December 3, 2019.	8	7
3	The Speech of INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu to Security Agencies, “INEC to Security Agencies: your failure to act encourages thuggery”, <u>Saturday Telegraph</u> , January 11, 2020.	9	8
4	The Nation Editorial Board on Governorship Election in Kogi State, “Kogi Elections: Strengthening Early Warning Response Mechanism,” <u>The Nation</u> , December 4, 2019.	7	6
5	The Majeed Dahiru in “Electoral Banditry in Buhari’s Nigeria on Governorship Election in Kogi and Bayelsa” <u>Daily Sun</u> , November 27, 2019.	5	4
	<b>Total</b>	34	29

From the table above, the empirical research shows that out of 34 paragraphs that focused on the conduct of Governorship Election in Kogi state, 29 emphasized on the issue of Election Security. The empirical research findings was that despite the huge investment into security democracy and ensuring that electorates were able to speak with their votes freely and fairly without fear, threat or intimidation in Kogi governorship election, the violence has become a political strategy in Kogi state where the unpopular anti-democratic elements impose themselves on the people by force.

It is pertinent to note that elections in Kogi State have continued to pose serious security challenges, not only in terms of security of the men and materials deployed for the elections, but also in terms of protecting the voters and candidates. It is a fact that, violence is used to attack the strongholds of opponents, intimidate electorates from coming out to cast their votes in order to reduce the chances of a more popular opponent. This has resulted in bloodshed, burning and destruction of life and properties and casts doubts on the legitimacy of those pronounced winners at the polls. The security agencies who looked the other way as the bandits intimidate the electorates from coming out to cast their votes during Kogi election had failed in their primary responsibility. Moreover, the citizens who sold their votes in Kogi election for short term gain should be ready to suffer long term pains of being impoverished. It means that, the electorates (people) may likely be the victims of kidnapping, since the Politicians who used and dumped them after election, may no longer care for them.

Security has to do with the freedom from danger, fear, anxiety or uncertainty. This is because the election security is the process of protecting the electorates, candidates, the election officials among others, by ensuring free, fair and credible elections in the system. This issue is traceable to police, which is the foremost internal security agency in Nigeria and handles all internal security matters including the provision of security for the conduct of any election in Nigeria. Therefore, the ability of INEC to conduct credible election that is adjudged free and fair by the people is largely dependent on the ability of the police to provide adequate Security for the Movement of Men and Materials before, during and after the elections. In Kogi state governorship election, about 35,000 Security agencies was sent to the state, but still it does not stop people from snatching ballot boxes, buying of votes openly, shooting to scare voters on election day or falsifying election figures, bloodshed among others. The bitter struggle for power played itself out again in Kogi election as our politicians do not think voters are wise enough to decide for themselves, or that they even have right to vote foolishly as they resort to self-help on election day. They hire and arm thugs to the teeth to rig-election for them while the Security Operatives were helpless.

The role of Security men in the Kogi governorship off-season election has become source of worry to many political analysts and observers. It is true that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) holds the Key to the credibility of the electoral process; the Commission cannot achieve that without the full collaboration of the security operatives in the conduct of elections. The setting up of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) by INEC is a strategic move to assist in plugging election Security holes and repositioning of the security agencies for the challenges of electoral violence in Nigeria. However, it is a source of worry that ICCES was not able to provide adequate security to stop the violence, bloodshed and electoral fraud that characterized the conduct of governorship election in Kogi State.

### **Understanding the challenges of Pre-2015 and 2019 Off-season Governorship Election and Security in Kogi State**

It is a matter of deep regret and national calamity that the envisaged new electoral bill passed by the eight (8) National Assembly in 2018 which would have offered Nigeria a new lease of life and by extension the consolidation of her unity did not see the light of the day as the presidency refused to sign into law. This is because if Nigeria must join the comity of advanced democracies in the world and stop her current retrogression, our present crop of political class must rise to the occasion and quickly create the conducive electoral environment for the enthronement of true and genuine democratic principles and norms within the frame work of the constitution.

However, in developing societies, the Wellbeing of the citizens largely depends on the extent to which the democratic institution is strengthened and sustained, especially during Off-season Governorship Election

in Kogi state. The Off-season election is the election conducted outside the scheduled general election in Nigeria. The election security involves the physical protection and safety of polling units, election materials and electoral officials during and after the elections until election results are collated and announced/declared. Jega (2012) agreed that security is indispensable to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections, and that from the provision of basic security to voters at political party rallies and campaigns to ensuring that result forms are protected, the whole electoral process is circumscribed by security considerations.

Electoral Security is crucial for creating the proper environment for electoral staff to carry out their duties, for voters to freely and safely go to their polling units to vote, for candidates and Political Parties to organize rallies and campaigns, and for other numerous stakeholders to discharge their responsibilities under the constitution and the Electoral Act. In planning, coordination and deployment matters pertaining to electoral processes, well-coordinated security is a fundamental requirement for success. Adequate Security ensures the free movement of electoral staff, voters, candidates, observers and other stakeholders on Election Day, which, in turn adds to the credibility of the electoral process. Similarly, adequate Security is an important Pre-Condition for the deployment of valuable electoral assets and sensitive materials to registration and Polling sites. Adequate security increases the level of participation of political parties, candidates and voters in an election.

In November 21, Pre-2015 Off-season Governorship Election in Kogi State, the APC'S Candidate Abubakar Audu, died on Sunday, November 22, 2015, just as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was announcing that the Kogi state Governorship Election was in conclusive. The Audu-Faleke ticket won 240,867 votes and the incumbent Governor Idris Wada of PDP won 199,514, a difference of 41,353 votes. However, James Faleke and his sympathizers thought that Faleke should have inherited the votes he won jointly with Audu, pick a running mate and contest as Governor in the December 5, 2015 supplementary elections. Surprisingly, Yahaya Bello who came second during the party primaries with late Audu was adopted as the APC's candidate for the supplementary election. However, Faleke went to court to claim the mandate and lost.

The Nigeria constitution does not expressly provide how to handle a situation where a candidate dies after his election was declared inconclusive even if he was leading with the number of votes already cast (Letan, 2016:57). Section 33 (2) of the Electoral Act 2014 (as amended) says: "If the candidate whose name was submitted to INEC dies or withdraws from the election, the Political Party, which nominated the candidate, shall forward to the commission the name of the aspirant, who scored the second highest number of votes at the primaries as the substitute candidate". Audu's sudden death has opened a new vista in the nation's electoral law. The Electoral Act did provide for the death of a candidate in an election but Audu's scenario was not provided for. What the law provides for was that in the event a candidate dies before an election, the election will be put on hold for 30 days to enable the candidate's party get a replacement. The constitution also provides that in case a duly elected candidate dies or resigns, the law allows that his/her running mate takes over.

Moreover, after the APC's candidate, Abubakar Audu died, the Party was engulfed in crisis of succession. The PDP candidate former Governor Idris Wada and his Party asked INEC to declare them winner of the election since their opponent in the election died. However, INEC conducted the supplementary election in December 5, 2015 and APC's candidate, Yahaya Bello was declared winner of the election. The inauguration ceremony of Yahaya Bello was conducted without a deputy governor because the Unwilling deputy governor elect, James Faleke boycotted the event in continuation of his stand not to be associated with Bello's emergence as replacement for late Abubakar Audu.

November 16, 2019 Governorship Election in Kogi State was contested by twenty-four (24) Political Parties, 21 male candidates and three (3) female candidates. However, the race was between the Ruling All Progressive Congresses (APC) Candidate, Yahaya Bello and Musa Wada of the main Opposition Party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Other candidates included Natasha Akpoti (Social Democratic Party, SDP), Abdullahi Muhammed (Accord Party), Muhammadul Kabir (African Action Congress), Medupin Ephraim (Alhance for Democracy), Justina Abamida (African Democratic Congress), Ndakwo Tanko (Action Democratic Party), Orugun Emmanuel (Abundant Nigerian Renewal



Party), Ibrahim Sheikh (All Progressives Grand Alliance), Bello Dele (Grassroots Development Party of Nigeria), Victor Akubo (Green Party of Nigeria), Jimoh Yusuf (Mass Action Joint Alliance), Muhammed Dangana (National conscience Party), Ukwumonu Idachaba (Peoples Party of Nigeria), Moses Drisu (Peoples Progressive Party), Ayodele Ajibola (Peoples Redemption Party), Abdulmalik Adama (Hope Democratic Party), Abdulrazaq Emeje (United Democratic Party), Abuh Omogami (United Progressive Party), Shuibu Seidi (Young Democratic Party), Aisha Audu (Young Progressive Party), Suleiman Mikhail of Zenith (Labour Party) and Alfa Oboy (Justice Must Prevail Party).

In the November 16, 2019 Governorship Election in Kogi State, there was a lot of violence in the build up to the election. Adegboyega (2019:17) lamented that, even the most optimistic observer knew before the November 16, 2019 governorship elections in Kogi state that the polls would be bloody and rambunctious. The police anticipated the looming catastrophe and deployed 35,000 policemen of all shades for the Poll, not even sniffer dogs were left out. If they did not for see danger, why would they have sent such a large number of policemen to Kogi state just because governorship elections were approaching? Is that the way it is in other countries, even African countries? Obviously not. After all, some of our political leaders who have had cause to visit some African countries as election observers have come back to tell us stories of how voting would take place till late in the night in some of these countries, with electoral officers sometimes keeping vigil and voters coming to cast their votes at their convenience without any evil befalling either the electoral officers or the election materials. But here, we usually conduct elections in broad daylight; yet, it does not stop people from snatching ballot boxes, buying votes openly, and shootings to scare voters on election days, or falsifying election figures, among other electoral crimes.

It is unfortunate and sad that politics of thuggery, hooliganism and bloodshed played part during the governorship election in Kogi state. The election in Kogi state had all the trappings of war in view of innocent lives that were wasted during the exercise. The example of violence in the governorship election in Kogi state was the way and manner Mrs Acheju Abuh was killed, the Woman leader of Wada Aro Campaign Council Ochadamu Ward, who was also the Women Leader for the campaign Organisation of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), on November 18, 2019 barely two days after the governorship election. The woman was in her house, resting, apparently after the long weeks of campaign that culminated in the governorship election. The thugs arrived at her residence at about 2.00pm, blocked every exit from the house to ensure that none of the occupants could escape the evil intention they labored in their minds. They then, doused the house in Petrol, set it ablaze amidst the booming of guns to scare terrified villagers away.

The blood-thirsty thugs waited, shooting and watching with relish while Mrs Abuh cried from inside the inferno until her voice died out. They left when the entire house had been burnt to ashes, with Abuh in it. Aya (2019:17) the Police Command's spokesperson said that there was a misunderstanding between one Awolu Zekeri, a member of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and one Gowon Simeon, a member of the PDP, both of Ochadamu Ward. He further stated that, Gowon Simeon stabbed Zekeri with a knife and he died on his way to hospital. As a result, angry youths in the area mobilized to the house of one Simeon Abuh of same address, who is an Uncle to the suspect set it ablaze (and) thereby burnt one Salome Abuh, aged 60 years, and three (3) other houses were also burnt. Without doubt, Mrs. Abuh was not the only person killed, whether in the course of the election or the run-up to it. Her murder, however, was too gory to behold and only sadists who are not fit to live among human beings could have done such without batting an eyelid.

In reaction to the above, the Inspector-General of Police claimed that fake Policemen were responsible for the electoral violence in Kogi state. However, the question , how many fake policemen could have over powered 35,000 genuine and seemingly well trained policemen, begs for answer? And if the police inspector-general could say the some politicians were planning to sew police uniforms for thugs to wear on the day of election, what did he do to forestall such? Many people saw video recordings of guns booming freely as if they were bangers, with people in police uniform snatching ballot boxes in Kogi (Adegboyega, 2019:17). The role played by the Inter Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) during the conduct of November 16, 2019 Governorship Election in Kogi State is still

source of worry to many Nigerians considering the magnitude of violence and bloodshed during the election. The ICCES is a consultative platform not a legal structure and it was designed to increase the level of consultation, coordination, and harmonization and managed decentralization of election security/risk management. It is the main agency used by INEC as an advisory body to support the commission to ensure effective security around elections which is critical to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria. The same body (ICCES) was used in Kogi state Governorship election, still violence and bloodshed took the centre stage, so the question is what went wrong during election?

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced results in the governorship election in 21 Local Government Area (LGAs) of Kogi state, with the incumbent Governor Yahaya Bello declared winner of the election. Below is the breakdown of results between the three contending parties APC, PDP and SDP.

**Table 1. Results of governorship election in 21 Local Government Area (LGAs) of Kogi State**

S/N	Local Govt. Area	APC	PDP	SDP
1	Adavi	64,657	366	279
2	Ajaokuta	17,952	5,565	323
3	Ankpa	11,209	28,108	390
4	Bassa	8,386	9,724	269
5	Dekina	8,948	16,575	321
6	Ibaji	12,682	10,504	221
7	Idah	4,602	13,962	221
8	Igalamela Odolu	8,075	11,195	208
9	Ijumu	11,425	7,587	223
10	Kabba/Bunu	15,364	8,084	364
11	Koton Karfe	14,097	9,404	657
12	Lokoja	19,457	11,059	772
13	Mopa-Muro	4,953	3,581	95
14	Ofu	11,006	12,264	531
15	Ogori/Magongo	3,679	2,145	244
16	Okehi	36,954	478	3,015
17	Okene	112,764	139	50
18	Olamaboro	16,876	8,155	262
19	Omala	8,473	14,403	567
20	Yagba East	6,735	7,546	220
21	Yagba West	7,868	8,850	211
	<b>Total</b>	<b>406,222</b>	<b>189,704</b>	<b>9,443</b>

Source: Pmnewsnigeria.com.

Finally, the term “do or die” affair is still an adequate description for parts of the country’s political culture, as youths are frequently manipulated to act as thugs deterring the electoral process. Elections are at the core of the democratic process and to cast their vote is the supreme sovereign right of every citizen. They must be able to do this free from pressure, free from inappropriate influence and free from fear. Therefore, security is indispensable to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in any society. This is because, electoral security is crucial for creating the proper environment, free from violence, intimidation and bloodshed during and after elections.

## CONCLUSION

A major challenge which has remained persistent across the country, in its quest for improving the electoral processes, is that of ensuring that political campaigns, election logistics and voting processes are characterized by high level of security without which free and fair elections would be a mirage. Electoral security involves the safety of the electoral process and to create an enabling environment to encourage

citizens to take part in the electoral process without fear and intimidation before election, during and after election activities.

Security is without doubt a key ingredient for an Election Management Body (EMB) to be perceived as effective. This is because effective security is not to be conflated with mere physical presence of security agents. Prior to deployment, there must be proper briefings on roles and responsibilities and deployment must also be professionally executed. Training of staff is also a determinant factor in election outcome and in election security. This is because it is through Professionalism, competence and discipline of the elections staff that candidates and general public are at ease with the way they engage in the electoral processes. Election staff cannot afford to take sides or act in suspicious ways and the same applies to members of the commission. Security concerns in protection of freedom have assumed global dimensions and tackling them now require transnational cooperation and partnership, acts of terrorism ought to concern all (Mahiri-Zaja, 2013: 120).

One point that usually makes me sick is the ferocious manner many of our politicians fight for political offices only to get there and mess up people's lives. People who really intend to serve do not seek political power the way many of our politicians do. If only these politicians devote 50 percent of the energy they expend fighting for power to good governance, the country would not be in this sorry state, pass. It is bad that even incumbents who should only make election time a time to showcase their achievements in the last four years start jumping from pillar to post and looking for distractions because they have little or nothing to point at as their achievements. People who should naturally have walkover at election time start getting jittery at the approach of the polls.

The bitter struggle for power played itself out again in Kogi and what passed for elections in the state should really worry us as a people about what to expect in future elections. Democracy is a game of numbers, at least in other places. In the electorate wisdom they could vote in the best person for any office, just as they could also make the most foolish contender carry the day, the choice is theirs. But in the end they also should not complain about the choice they made or did not make because it is garbage in garbage out. This is because people get the kind of leadership they deserve. Unfortunately, our politicians do not think voters are wise enough to decide for themselves or that they even have a right to vote foolishly. They hire and arm thugs to the teeth to disrupt the process, ballot-box snatching is the order of the day, where the thugs are confronted by countervailing forces, and they test their strengths, leaving in their trail gory tales. The least result is the maiming of innocent citizens or destruction of properties.

The incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari has a lot of work to do to bequeath a better electoral legacy to his successors. The election that brought him in, in 2015 was by far better than what we witnessed in Kogi and Bayelsa states. His anti-corruption war has not made a dent on political corruption as yet. However, corruption is not about money or financial issues alone. When people cannot decide their leaders through the ballot box in a democracy because some people have decided to bastardise the process, it is a graver form of corruption. Indeed, there would be less dissipation of energy on fighting economic corruption when elections reflect the will of the people because political leaders would mind their actions, knowing full well that they would return to the people for revalidation of their tenure (Adegboyega: 2019: 17).

It is perhaps in the light of this, that the Daily Sun Editorial Board of March 17, 2020 pointed out that, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in its current state cannot do much in the fight against rising criminality in the country without being adequately equipped and remunerated. And in a situation where the criminals are equipped with sophisticated weapons, the police cannot withstand them. The Editorial board advice the Federal Government to carry out the request of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Mohammed Adamu, during a public hearing organized by the House of Representatives Committee on Police Affairs. He demanded the operational needs of the Nigeria police force (NPF) includes the following: 250,000 assault rifles and ammunition, 1000 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs), 774 drones and recruitment of more Personnel to meet the internal security challenges currently facing the country, 2000,000 tear gas canisters and smoke grenades too, 200,000 riot gunners and smoke pistols and 1000 tracking devices. The paper argued that, with less than 400,000 policemen, most of who provide security to our politicians and

their friends, there is no way the force can adequately police about 200 million Nigerians. The current numerical strength of the force is below the United Nations (un) recommended ratio of 1:221.

In conclusion, considering the wanton destruction of lives and property in governorship election in Kogi state it would not be out of place to state that the people of Kogi state asked for an election but got war instead. Sadly, what can best be described as the height of man's inhumanity to man played out in Kogi when thugs suspected to be loyal to a political party burnt a PDP women leader, Mrs. Salome Abuh, alive in her home, leaving only ashes and skull for her family to recover. The cry that justice will not be got cannot be a false alarm judging by the long list of unsolved murders in a country where impunity is king. Why must elections almost always yield death certificates? Why must elections precipitate a harvest of tears, sorrow and blood? There is no doubt that the Nigeria police leads and it is responsible for the deployment and coordination of security personnel on election duties. In the light of the above, the role played by the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) in Kogi governorship elections is a source of worry to scholars and Nigerians. This is because security in any process allows a situation where members of the general public's freely and fully exercise their democratic rights to elect a person of their choice.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Security remains a constant variable throughout the electoral cycle. It is without doubt, a key ingredient in any effective election management. This is because election security defines public and observer's perceptions of the electoral process. However, without security, free and fair elections cannot be guaranteed, democracy can neither prevail nor flourish. Election Security gives people of a country the opportunity to elect their leaders and change a government which fails to deliver. It remains a formidable challenge in Nigeria especially in the conduct of election Kogi state. In the light of this, I make the following recommendations:

1. In the light of the security failures, violence, thuggery, bloodshed and general abuse witnessed in the elections, there is need for an urgent passage and implementation of an Electoral Offences Commission Law to address all issues related to electoral abuse. It is imperative for the country to create a body, whose responsibility would be to ensure the prosecution of electoral offenders; else the electoral process would remain perpetually imperiled.
2. The Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) was a novel initiative by INEC to provide platform for more integrated and efficient security management before, during and after the elections. However, the objective of creating ICCES need to be reviewed and strengthened with legislation to empower them to do the right thing without compromising with the ruling party or government in power. This is because for the Election Management Body (EMB) to conduct free, fair and credible elections in the country there must be effective and efficient security system in place.
3. There is the urgent need to modernize the operations of Nigeria Police Force (NPF) with modern technology as obtained in advanced countries for effective and transparent discharge of their lawful duties. This is because, in an internet age, the operations of the police should be driven by modern technology for an enhanced service delivery.
4. There is urgent need for private sector participation in funding the police force. This is why the recent calls for state police make more sense, so the Federal Government must muster the political will to decentralize the police for the states to participate.

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