



# **The Covid-19 Pandemic And Off-Season Elections In Nigeria: The September 19, 2020 Governorship Election In Edo State**

**Okoye Gabriel N . (Ph.D)**

**Department of Political Science  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria**

## **ABSTRACT**

As the COVID-19 Pandemic gripped the whole World with a shock, thereby overwhelming the health system of most countries, new ways of living and doing things gradually emerged. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 Pandemic Outbreak which began in Wuhan, China on December 8, 2019. Nigeria recorded its COVID-19 index case, which was imported from Italy, on February 27, 2020, when Italian Citizen tested Positive to the Virus in Lagos. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in synergy with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Presidential Task Force (PTF) developed a Policy framework (COVID-19 Pandemic Protocols) as a general protective measures to protect election officials, voters and stakeholders in the electoral process from the dangers of COVID-19 disease during the September 19, 2020 governorship election in Edo State. The Election Management Body (EMB) outlined the Commission's readiness to provide equipment and materials for Voters to sanitise their hands, just as hand held thermometers were deployed to check the temperature of voters in the Polling Units. The Policy stressed the mandatory use of face masks for all involved in the electoral process and also mandated the disinfection of smart Card Readers (SCR) after the finger print of each was read. There were rules of social and physical distancing in all election activities, among others. The Policy framework help the Commission(INEC) to conduct the September 19, 2020 off-season governorship election in Edo State, adjudged by both domestic and International observers to be free, peaceful, fair, credible and transparent election. The incumbent governor Godwin Obaseki and his deputy Philip Shaibu under the platform of PDP scored 307, 955 Votes to defeat APC Candidate, Osagie-Iyamu who polled 223, 619 votes. The start of COVID-19 sent panic across Nigeria, like in every other country. Despite several victims narrations, many Nigerians still believe the Virus is a scam, which a few others who believed lived with insinuation that the cases recorded in the first wave of the Pandemic was inflated to get funds and grants for States to enrich some officials through contracts award.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic and Off-season Governorship Elections, World Health Organization (WHO), Godfatherism, Edo State and Election Management Body (EMB).

## **INTRODUCTION**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 Pandemic Outbreak, which began in Wuhan, China, on December 8, 2019, a public health emergency of International concern on January 30, 2020. Following the WHO declaration, Nigeria constituted a coronavirus preparedness group in Nigeria (a country with 36 States and a federal capital Territory (FCT), with World Health Organisation categorising Nigeria as one of high risk African Countries with weak healthcare system.

Although social distancing negates regular social interaction, which is the bedrock of interaction in the African society, the contagious disease also limited social relations and disrupted the usual norms of close

physical contacts in Nigeria. Human migration was restricted as airports were shut, while social events/gatherings such as sports, elections, festivals, parties etc were outlawed through stay-at-home directives. It was tough for most Nigerians, but health authorities explained that the new normal is necessary because COVID-19 is transmitted through contact with individuals who have contracted the disease (Adekunle, 2021:2). Nigeria recorded its COVID-19 index case, which was imported from Italy, on February 27, 2020, when Halian citizen tested positive to the virus in Lagos.

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic in the electoral process was a disturbing and worrisome issues to the Election Management Body (EMB) due to the Governorship Election in Edo State scheduled for September 19, 2020. However, as the COVID-19 Pandemic gripped the whole World with shock, thereby overwhelming the health system of most nations, new ways of living and doing things gradually emerged. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) adopted the COVID-19 Pandemic Protocols as issued by Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Presidential Task Force (PTF) to protect the election Officials, Voters, and Stakeholders in the electoral process. The COVID-19 Pandemic Protocols used by the Commission in Edo governorship election were as follows:

- (a) The use of face masks was made mandatory for all involved in election process at all election locations.
- (b) Infrared thermometers was used at the Local Government Area Offices, Polling Units, Registration Areas Centres (RACs) and all the collation Centres.
- (c) The rules of physical distancing were enforced in all election activities, including stakeholders' engagements, training, queuing at Polling Units, among others.
- (d) Alcohol-based hand sanitizers was provided for election Officials at the Polling Units etc.
- (e) Methylated Spirit and Cotton wool was provided for the disinfection of Smart Card Readers (SCRs) after finger print of each Voter was read.

The Commission worked in synergy with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Presidential Task Force (PTF) and other health authorities to have in place a system of Voluntary COVID-19 testing for all election officials before and after deploying for elections. They equally develop Protocols for dealing with persons who show symptoms of COVID-19 Pandemic at election venues (INEC, 2020:XVI). The COVID-19 Pandemic sent Panic across Nigeria, like in every other Country. Nigeria grappled with tremendous health Challenges as infection grew into multiple cases, claiming many deaths.

It would be recalled that in the build-up to the elections during COVID-19 Pandemic in Edo State, there was apprehension that the electoral contest would be bloody one, which would take a serious toll in terms of life and property (Ajanaku, 2020:26). As a result of this build up for Violence, the Oba of Benin, OMO N' Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II (2020:9) invited the Political gladiators of PDP and APC who were hitting up the Polity to restrain from Politics of do-or-die affair. He posited that Edo Politics have been in the news for quite some time now for all the wrong reasons, with sleepless nights, because these are all his people of same stock from the same body. He complained that he had been worried right from the time the conflict started between Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, the former governor and the incumbent governor, Godwin Obaseki.

The off-season governorship election in Edo State was conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on September 19, 2020. The outcome of the election has been generally adjudged to be the best, free, transparent, credible and fair election. The incumbent governor, Godwin Obaseki and his Deputy, Philip Shaibu was re-elected for another term of four years under the platform of PDP. He defeated Osagie Ize-Iyamu of APC who scored 223, 619 votes while the incumbent governor polled 307, 955 to clinched the ticket. The conduct of this election under COVID-19 Pandemic was to avoid tenure elongation or setting up of caretaker government that has no provision in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria.

However, it would be recalled that in 2016 governorship election in Edo State, Osagie Ize-Iyamu and incumbent Governor Obaseki ran the race of their lives to take over Government House, Benin City. At that time, Ize-Iyamu running more on his name and reputation than the power of a godfather, was the

standard-bearer of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Obaseki, on the other hand, was a shadow of then incumbent governor, Oshiomhole and candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC). It was indeed, a tight race. In the end, Obaseki won with 319, 483 Votes to Ize-Iyamu's 253, 173 Votes. In September 19, 2020, Governorship election, Obaseki and Ize-Iyamu swapped positions. Ize-Iyamu was now the candidate of the APC and was to work with Oshiomhole, when the National Chairman of the APC Adam Oshiomhole was on suspension. Governor Obaseki became the standard bearer of the PDP and no longer in the shadow of Oshiomhole.

The candidature of the duo was a product of Political anointing of Adam Oshiomhole which they have been reaping where they did not sow. Ize-Iyamu, an erstwhile arrowhead of the PDP, had defected to the APC in a move that was not happenstance. It was, therefore, not a surprise that he emerged the governorship Candidate of the Party after Obaseki failed the Scrutiny of the APC screening Committee and was consequently disqualified from the race. Obaseki had promptly defected to the PDP and clinched the governorship ticket. It is not surprising that the two governorship Candidates in Edo State have swapped Political Parties; that is the fashion in Nigeria. A Politician can go to sleep as a member of a Political Party and wake up in the morning as a member of another Political Party. It is normal, only names and Logos separate Political Politics here. Membership of Political Parties is not influenced by conviction or Ideology. It is just a vehicle to elective office (Onuoha, 2020:32).

Edo people should know that in a fight among Politicians, it is the people who usually lose out. Fights among Politicians are not usually for the people, but for personal gains of those involved. Those who stick out their necks in such fights end up bruised. Politicians make friends today and fight tomorrow. Thereafter, they reconcile their differences. When they do, those who make enemies for their sakes would not be there. Politicians are only interested in their interests only. However, with the decision of the APC National Executive Committee (NEC) to dissolve the National Working Committee (NWC) of the Party, on June 25, 2020 and set up a Caretaker Committee, which will run the affairs of the Party for six (6) months and thereafter Organise a National Convention, the suspended National Chairman, Adams Oshiomhole therefore lost out in the battle. What started as local and isolated squabble in Edo State transmogrified into a national Conflagration that has consumed the national Chairman. In chasing a small thing, Oshiomhole lost the big one. The Governor of Yobe State, Mai-Mala Buni was named Chairman of the Caretaker/extra-Ordinary Convention Committee while Akpan Udoedehe as Secretary of the 13-Man team whose core mandate was to organise a national Convention. This is because APC was thrown into a leadership crisis after the Court of Appeal upheld the suspension of Oshiomhole as the national Chairman. Moreover, if you look at the picture of the APC Crisis and by extension, the problem of Nigeria's failure to become a strong, resilient and egalitarian nation of significance, you can trace it to what Max Weber called Prebendalism. Prebendalism is the mindless and aggressive acquisition of public resources for one's private use or the use of cronies and supporters, a Nigerian disease. This is what leads to another disease called godfatherism. Godfatherism hobbles transparency, encourages Corruption, distorts development vision and causes internecine Conflicts within parties and governments. The godfather never sleeps; he stays awake, Superintending over the affairs of successor-governments for his own illicit purpose. Even though he is not directly working in the temple anymore; he wants to continue to eat from the temple (Ekpu, 2020:22).

Democracy, undoubtedly, is a vital and enduring experience. Though with its imperfections, among other systems of government, democracy is believed to be the ideal system of governance' for actualising the hopes and aspirations of the people. In countries where this system has flourished, it has proved, to a great extent, to have met many of the citizens' expectations. The question is: why is it that what has worked for other countries, has not worked for Nigerians? This is because Nigerian leaders sought power not to accomplish goals for the Country and better the lot of the people. They have no agenda, no vision, but for their selfish aggrandisement because they were handpicked' by the godfathers since they have no talents and no adequate preparations to succeed in that crucial office. Edo State is the remaining part of the defunct Bendel State after Delta State was carved out in August 1991. Then, Benin City, which is the Capital, has been serving as the Seat of government since the creation of Mid-Western Region in 1963. At

inception, Edo State had Fourteen (14) Local Government Areas (LGAs), but currently has eighteen (18) Local Government Areas (LGAs). Other Urban Centres of the State are Auchi, Irrua, Ekpoma, Uromi and Orhionmwon. The State Comprises mainly of the Benin, Isan, and Etsako Speaking groups/dialects. The State is popular for rubber, timber, Oil palm and Cocoa that are located in Akoko Edo, Owan and Etsako areas. It is also endowed with several Minerals such as quantize, Marble, gypsum, Limestone, Lignite and gold. Petroleum is found in Ovia and Orhionmwon areas of the State (INEC: 4).

### **Theoretical Perspective of COVID-19 Pandemic in the Off-season Governorship Election in Nigeria**

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the consequent lockdown of the nation brought in its trail severe hardship to most Nigerians, especially the vulnerable groups that lived on daily income or had no sustainable means of livelihood. Moreover, Churches, Markets, Schools, Offices and business premises were closed nationwide and the situation left the majority of Nigerians with no means of livelihood. Also, some families that experienced the dreaded COVID-19 infections or deaths were completely isolated (Ovueraye, 2020:11). They have been spawned by the struggle by humans to live with the reality of COVID-19 Pandemic, and some regarded this disease as “big man’s disease”. For them, it is a class disease that has nothing to do with the common man, because we were told in Nigeria that a nameless Italian brought the virus and the victims have been big men in government and the business world.

In the light of the above challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic, it is the duty of the electoral Umpire and other Stakeholders to ensure that our poll is credible, free and fair. The nation’s democracy can only be sustained if our electoral process is transparent and credible with a public policy that can sustain it within the period of COVID-19 Pandemic. It is no longer news that the Edo State Governorship election has come and gone, and that the incumbent Governor, Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki and his Deputy, Philip Shaibu have been re-elected for another term of four (4) years. The exercise which came up on September 19, 2020, has drawn widespread accolades for its freeness, fairness and Credibility.

The outcome of the election has been generally adjudged to be the best in a long while (though, some people still have reservations as usual), therefore it is instructive to highlight and appreciate some of the contributory factors; such as, the laudable discountenancing of Federal might to manipulate the election; the neutral stance of INEC in the handling of the process; the professional conducts of the various Security agencies in discharging their duties; the obvious reality of being closely watched and sanctioned by the international Community; the full coverage of the members of the press and independent observers; the fatherly roles played by the traditional/community leaders in the State; the supports of all well meaning Nigerians; the electorates show of resilience; decorum and high sense of responsibility before, during and after the exercise (Oghaede, 2020:14). To achieve this analysis, the “Public Policy” will be used to analyze the conduct of Elections during COVID-19 Pandemic by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Public Policy is the actual resources allocation presented by Projects and Programmes designed to respond to perceived Public Problems and Challenges requiring government action for their solution. That is, it means hard patterns of resource allocation presented by projects and programmes designed to respond to perceived public demands. The conception of public policy can be identified with a political scientist Anderson (1997) who defines Policy as a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or a matter of concern. This statement focuses on what is actually done instead of what is only proposed or intended, and it differentiates a policy from mere decision, which is essentially a choice among competing alternatives. Public Policy, therefore, is that Policy developed and implemented by government agency and officials though non-state actors and factors may influence its process (Anyebe, 2018). The following are the public policy of the Independent National Electoral Commission as the code of conduct for Elections during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria:

- (a) Wearing of face mask at Polling Units and all election locations is mandatory. You may be asked to lower your mask for identification when necessary.

- (b) Voting starts by 8:30am and stops at 2:30pm. There shall be two queues-one inside and one outside the Polling area. You will be called from the Outer queue into the Voting area in batches. By 2:30pm, the Outer queue shall close, but you will Vote if you are already on the queue.
- (c) Any Voter showing symptoms of COVID-19 such as high temperature, Coughing, Sneezing, etc, will leave the queue or voting area to be attended by the designated officials. Obey all directives by the officials to keep yourself and others safe. Report any health emergencies urgently to an official at the Polling Unit.
- (d) Avoid touching of surfaces or leaning on walls and other surfaces at the Polling Unit. Hand sanitizer will be provided on request, if available.
- (e) An election official may ask to clean your fingers with an antiseptic before your fingerprint is read with the Smart Card Reader.
- (f) Remember that cell phones or any other device that can take pictures are still not allowed in the voting cubicles.
- (g) Obey all directives issued by election officials, and be orderly at all times. INEC shall not tolerate assault of any election official and you may be prosecuted for doing so (INEC, 2020).

In the light of the above, the Commission (INEC) went on to create a balancing act by quickly adopting a modified approach for the conduct of elections. The commission did this by invoking relevant powers as conferred by Section 160 (1) of the 1999 Constitution as amended. This was done by putting forward the “INEC Policy on Conducting Elections in the context of the COVID-19”. In applying the theory, we have to explain the emergency mode, which pandemic imposed on the electoral process which necessitated drastic measures and INEC took full advantage of the legal provisions available for it to make the necessary adjustments.

**(a) The All Progressive Congress (APC) Party Perspective:**

The inability of the APC’s Buhari to navigate the ship of the Nigerian State away from the wrong direction of previous Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) administrations unto the right direction had left many Nigerians with the impression that both Political Parties are the same, hence, “Change” remains elusive. The frustration of Nigerians with the system is quite palpable to the extent of widespread apathy and lack of confidence in institutions of government resulting into a resort to self-help mechanisms in their everyday lives. Today, the very essence of democratic rule is being challenged with some going as far as positing that democracy does not work in African Countries (Dahiru, 2020:31).

The Party was at the precipice of disgrace in Edo State and they acted as if they did not care or as if it did not matter. By some strange, inexplicable, fault-chasing formula, they combed everywhere and managed to find enough reasons, convincing or not, to disqualify their own sitting governor, Godwin Obaseki of Edo State, to whom they had given their mandate to fly their flag with the same credentials in 2016. It did not occur to them that it is easier for a Party to lose a State in a governorship election than to get it from a governor who has several achievements to flaunt from his first term. All over the media, Oshiomhole’s flowery and furious recommendations of Obaseki in 2016 were on display. Also, his toxic remarks on Ize-Iyamu, who has now been picked as the APC governorship candidate, were fully on display in various media (Ekpu, 2020:22).

While all these political flips and fopes were going on, insecurity was mounting, people were being killed or kidnapped and COVID-19 was taking its deadly toll on Nigerians, eminent and anonymous. The APC was thrown into a leadership crisis after the court of Appeal upheld the suspension of Adams Oshiomhole as the National Chairman. The suspended national Chairman of APC Oshiomhole, was finally uprooted at the virtual emergency of National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting held at the Presidential Villa’, with the dissolution of the National Working Committee (NWC) on June 25, 2020. The Governor of Yobe State Mai-Mala Buni became the Caretaker Chairman and other members were Ken Nnamani, Stella Okorete, James Lalu, Abubakar Yusuf, Akinyemi Olaide, David Leon, Abba Ari, Tahir Mamman, Ismail Ahmed, and Senator John Akpan Udoedehe was the Secretary of the Committee. The Caretaker Committee of the Party was mandated to conduct a National convention within six (6)

months, but six months after, the Committee was yet to conduct the convention and had rather embarked on a “Suspicious” membership registration and revalidation exercise which was not part of its mandate.

In the APC Party Primary held on June 22, 2020, Osagie Ize-Iyamu emerged governorship candidate of the Party for Edo State September 19 governorship election. He scored 27, 838 Votes to defeat two other aspirants, Osaro Obazee, who Polled 2, 324 and former deputy governor, Pius Odubu, who scored 3, 776 Votes. Announcing the result, Chairman of Governorship Primary Election Committee and Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodinma (2020:28) commended members of his committee, the Security agents in Edo and representatives of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Edo and Abuja, for the role they played in delivering a peaceful, clinical and transparent election. He expressed hope that Edo State which was originally APC State would remain so after the governorship election.

Truly, what happened in Edo State was not new, because, Oshiomhole, a big Political player, was in a Voyage of relevance. He was consciously or unconsciously, trying to prove that Politics of the State revolve round him. We saw this in the last governorship election in the State. In 2016, Obaseki was a Political nobody, a technocrat in government, he was averse to Politics and therefore, not in reckoning in the battle for Oshiomhole’s successor. Through the instrumentality of Political anointing, he emerged on the scene and won the APC ticket. He went ahead to win the governorship election. The victory was the outcome of Political engineering by Oshiomhole, the governor then. At present, Obaseki has fallen out of favour with Oshiomhole. Ize-Iyamu, a newcomer in the APC became the favourite, (Onuoha, 2020:32). However, APC candidate, Ize-Iyamu lost to the incumbent governor, Obaseki of PDP and Edo State was literally turned into a carnival of Joy and Jubilation.

**(b) The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Perspective:**

The September 19, 2020 gubernatorial election has come and gone but reactions to its outcome will linger for some time for obvious reasons. It was one election the incumbent governor, Godwin Obaseki, was not given a chance of being re-elected having been driven out of the All Progressives Congress (APC) by his estranged godfather and ex-national Chairman of the ruling Party, Adams Oshiomhole. The pundits did not reckon that Obaseki, who defected to the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) after being ejected from the APC a platform through which he came to power four (4) years ago, could win overwhelmingly at the Poll.

Many scholars did not believe that Obaseki, an underdog, can battle his godfather, the strongman, to a standstill and possibly retire him politically. Not many Scholars could agree that Obaseki will survive the Akinwunmi Ambode treatment. Obaseki’s victory is a big blow to godfatherism in Edo Politics and by extension Nigerian Politics, and especially in those states that still have strongmen who dictate how the power Pendulum swings and who gets what in every election cycle. The significance of Obaseki’s victory is that with peoples will and determination, the godfather has no place in Nigerian Politics. The godfather can only exist where there are willing and pliant supporters to carry out his extra-constitutional biddings. Obaseki won the election because the voter saw him as a victim of power play. They saw him as a defender of the people from over-bearing godfathers. Besides, the people could not understand Oshiomhole’s contradictory rhetoric on whom to vote between APC’s Osagie Ize-Iyamu and PDP’s Godwin Obaseki (Afara, 2020:12).

Edo State was literally turned into a carnival of some sort immediately the INEC declared governor Obaseki re-elected having scored a total of 307, 955 votes as against his closest rival, Pastor Ize-Iyamu who Polled 223, 619. It was wild jubilation in the entire State as supporters of PDP and Governor Obaseki emptied into the streets, with the shouts of “4 + 4, torgba” while others drove their cars on top speed, blowing their horns. Obaseki (2020:13) in his appreciation message in Benin City, thanked the Edo people and supporters of his Party, the PDP for their display of immense courage and support in the face of threats, intimidation and brutalisation in the build up and during the election. He hailed President Muhammadu Buhari, the INEC, Security agencies and other Stakeholders who participated in the conduct of the gubernatorial election for ensuring a free, peaceful and credible Poll in the State. He said that, he was externally grateful to his Party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and his brother governors not

only for given him the umbrella during his political storm but for the hard work which had brought him back to office.

The Prominent Nigerian and groups from all Political divides congratulated the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for their public Policy measure used to ensure that election(s) were conducted during the period of COVID-19 Pandemic. This is because the most immediate challenge that COVID-19 poses to the electoral process is health related. The essence of using the public policies is to protect Voters, election officials and other stakeholders in the electoral process. The COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The first confirmed case in Nigeria was announced on 27th February 2020, when an Italian citizen tested positive to the virus in Lagos. However, it was first reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) on the 31st December, 2019 in Wuhan, China.

The outcome of the governorship elections in Edo State represents the true wish of the people who stood firmly behind their Governor against power mongers who were determined to foist their choice on the people. It represents the will of the people to vote in free, fair, credible and peaceful elections. The people of Edo State across the eighteen (18) Local Government Areas (LGA) spoke loudly and clearly in the reaffirmation of the choice of Obaseki as their Governor. Therefore, we must join hands together to put a permanent stop to the era where one man or few persons would sit in the comfort of their living rooms to decide the fate of millions of our people by their "directive(s)" of who takes what, when and how. We must ensure that our voices are heard and our votes count in determining who should rule us and be our representatives at all levels of governance.

## **RESEARCH 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 motion of trustworthiness and neutrality of its findings or decision (Bouma and Ling, 2004). 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 (Bassey, 1981:73-94).

These qualities of a good methodology will help to explain the impact COVID-19 could place great stress on societies and Political systems, creating the potential for new outbreaks of violence. All governments face hard choices about how to manage the virus. These are universal problems but if the disease spreads in densely packed Urban centres in fragile states, it may be virtually impossible to control. This is because any country that has weak health institution, may be hard to persuade populations with little trust in government or political leaders to follow public health directives. However many governments seem confused by the spread and danger of the outbreak especially the second phase of the Pandemic that has infected some Political elites, both in the developed and underdeveloped Societies. This thesis will help us to unearth the effort of the stakeholders and Election Management Board (EMB) in this period of COVID-19 Pandemic to conduct governorship election in Edo State that was adjudged to be credible, free and fair.

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**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Speech/Interview</b>	<b>Number of Paragraph</b>	<b>COVID-19 Pandemic in off-season elections</b>
1.	The World Bank Director, Shubham Chaudhuri, said, “COVID-19: World Banks warns Nigeria’s economy may go into severe recession” Daily Sun Newspaper, June 26, 2020.	9	8
2.	The Speech of President Buhari, “Buhari hails process, reiterates Commitment to free, elections” Daily Sun Newspaper, September 21, 2020.	6	5
3	The Osuntokun Jide us in his speech, “Global inequality and, the Coronavirus Pandemic,” The Nation Newspaper, January 28, 2021.	10	8
4	The Speech of the Oba of Benin, OMO N’ Oba N’ Edo UKU Akpolokpolo, Oba, Ewuare II, admonished the Political Class, “Stop Violence emulate Jonathan, Oba charges Politicians,” Vanguard Newspaper, September 3, 2020.	7	6
5	The Interview of member representing Federal Constituency of Plateau State in the House of Representatives Dr. Simon Mwankon, “Lack of Internal Democracy destroying Nigeria,” Daily Sun Newspaper, July 15, 2020.	7	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>

From the table above, the empirical research shows that out of 39 Paragraphs that focused on the conduct of governorship election in Edo State, 33 emphasized on the issue of COVID-19 Pandemic as the year 2020 will surely go down as a defining and very challenging year in the conduct of elections by the Election Management Body (EMB). The empirical research findings was that despite extra-cost INEC had to incur to adjust to the realities of COVID, the attitude of Voters in the Post Pandemic elections conducted by INEC showed general non-compliance to key Protocols for preventing further spread of COVID-19 Pandemic.

The attitude of the vast majority of Voters during the two off cycle governorship elections in Edo and Ondo States made a mincemeat of whatever efforts INEC had put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 Pandemic. In fact, adherence to the Protocols was reduced to the Partial wearing of face masks, just as Voters defied rules for social distancing by continuing to stay within close range of one another. The major take away from INEC’s exertions to prevent COVID is the fact that the populace was not interested because they did not really subscribe to the notions about the lethal nature of the virus.

The entire electoral process had to grapple with the realities of the new normal as imposed by the outbreak of the novel Corona Virus (COVID-19). The Pandemic forced INEC to quickly return to the drawing board with the Objective of working out strategies to ensure the electoral process does not become a Super-spreader point, which could go on to multiply the number of COVID-19 Pandemic fatalities. In fact, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had to initially postpone Senatorial bye-elections in Bayelsa, Plateau and Imo States in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19 in



March 2020. Electoral Act 2010 as amended in Section 26(2) empowers INEC to postpone election “where there is reason to believe that a serious breach of the peace is likely to occur if the election is proceeded with on that date or it is impossible to conduct the elections as a result of natural disasters or other emergencies” (Ajanaku, 2020:26).

Moreover, World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 Pandemic on the 11th March 2020 after initially declaring the Coronavirus Disease “Outbreak” in Wuhan, China. The first confirmed COVID-19 in Nigeria was on the 27th February 2020. However, prevention is better than cure applies to COVID-19 Pandemic. The Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs)/ COVID-19 Pandemic Mitigation Measures include Social distancing, Social Solidarity, Self-Isolation and Mass gathering restrictions, others are Lockdown of Countries, Industries, Schools, Businesses, Economics and Stay at home/Shelter-in-place etc. “Containment” includes Testing/Diagnosis and Isolation/Treatment. “Mitigation” includes Tracing/Tracking and Quarantine. “Universal and Specific Precautionary Measures” are impactful: Proper hand-washing technique/Hand Hygiene/Proper hand Sanitizer use. Use face masks when away from home and never use face shield without a face mask.

The Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs) are the effective interventions that work and include “Lockdowns”. There are “Lockdowns” in several human activities/engagements but there MUST not be “Lockouts” or “Knockdowns” in these activities/engagements; these are now discharged and facilitated by rapidly evolving ICT – Compliant Cloud-based technologies for virtual activities/engagements. These activities/engagements are now conducted in virtual, globally, there are virtual businesses, conferences, Sports Championships, Webinars, Educational Sessions/Webschools, Religious worships, Government meetings, International Global Meetings etc. (Eregie, 2020:31).

### **Understanding the Challenges of Pre-2016 and 2020 Off-season Governorship Election and COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria.**

One of the positive developments in the 2020 electoral process was in the fact that there was in place a policy framework, which provided a robust set of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 Pandemic during elections. As part of the general protective measures, the guideline outlined INEC’s readiness to provide equipment and materials for Voters to Sanitise, just as hand held thermometers were deployed to check the temperature of voters in the polling Units. Importantly too, the policy stressed the mandatory use of face masks for all involved in the election process. The Policy also mandated the disinfection of Smart Card Readers after the fingerprint of each voter is read. There were also rules to ensure physical distancing, not only on Election Day, but also at related activities including Stakeholder engagement, and trainings (Ajanaku, 2020: 26).

The COVID-19 Pandemic unquestionably presents an era defining challenge to public health and the global economy. Its Political consequences, both short- and long-term, are less well understood. The global Outbreak has the potential to wreak havoc in fragile States, trigger widespread unrest and severely test international Crisis Management Systems. Its implications are especially serious for those caught in the midst of conflict if, as seems likely, the disease disrupts humanitarian aid flows, limits peace Operations and postpones or distracts conflict parties from nascent as well as ongoing efforts at diplomacy. Unscrupulous leaders may exploit the Pandemic to advance their objectives in ways that exacerbate domestic or international crises-cracking down on dissent at home or escalating conflicts with rival states-on the assumption that they will get away with it while the World is otherwise occupied. COVID-19 has fuelled geopolitical friction with the United States blaming China for the disease while Beijing tries to win friends by offering aid to affected Countries, exacerbating existing great power tensions that complicate cooperation on crisis Management.

More broadly, the disease’s catastrophic economic impact could well sow the seeds of future disorder. It could do so whether or not the countries in question have experienced major outbreaks of the disease, although the danger in those that have will be magnified. A global recession yet unknown scope lies ahead; Pandemic related transport restrictions will disrupt trade and food supplies, countless businesses will be forced to shut down; and unemployment levels are likely to soar. Governments that have close

trading ties with China, especially some in Africa, are feeling the pain of the slowdown emanating from the Original Wuhan Outbreak. Oil producers are already struggling with the collapse of energy prices. Countries like Nigeria, which has strong import/export links to China and relies on Oil prices to prop up its public-finances, are suffering (Crisis Group, 2020:1-8).

The Federal Government directed the retention of phased two eased lockdown protocols in order to control transmission of COVID-19 Pandemic. The Chairman of Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 Pandemic and the Secretary to the Government of Federation, Mustapha (2020:6) said, it was important to ensure that restrictions were not completely relaxed in order to control transmission of the virus. He directed major changes to include gradual re-opening of international air flights and rail transportation within established parameters, granting permission to exit classes to resume ahead of examinations, allowing Civil Servants from Grade Level 12 to resume work and opening recreational Parks for Supervised exercises.

In Pre-2016 off-season Governorship Election in Edo State, you would recall that, four years ago, the immediate Past National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Adams Oshiomhole, Campaigned for his then beloved candidate, Godwin Obaseki. Then, Obaseki was the candidate of the APC, Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu was the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). In this particular election 2020 Obaseki is the candidate of the PDP while Ize-Iyamu is the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC). For reasons best known to him, Oshiomhole, who had called Ize-Iyamu unprintable names, became his main backer in 2020 Governorship election and campaigned vigorously for him. He even knelt down before some stakeholders in fawning obeisance just to garner support for his candidate (Igbokwe, 2020:31).

In 2016 governorship election, when the going was good, the incumbent governor (Obaseki) was the best candidate in terms of experience and qualification. He was indeed the perfect man for the position while his then opponent Ize-Iyamu was clearly painted in bad colours and called unprintable names to the extent that those ugly words could not be taken back no matter how Oshiomhole tried with his rhetoric to persuade Edo people to the contrary. Moreover, Oshiomhole's contradictory rhetoric haunted the APC in the just concluded 2020 Edo Poll. The Voters did not vote against Pastor Ize-Iyamu per se, they voted against the godfather and what he stands for in Edo Politics. The godfather baggage affected so much the chances of Ize-Iyamu in the Poll. They also voted against Tinubu's 'last minute interference in the Poll hence the chant, : "Edo no be Lagos". Edo people resented being dictated from outside whom to vote.

They believe that election is about freedom to choose and not to be dictated to. It is about informed choice and not imposition. Democracy is not a demonstration of impunity or dictatorship which some godfathers have made it look like. That is why Edo people spoke resoundingly with their votes and their votes were made to count by the Federal Government, the INEC, Security agencies and others because Aso Rock was not bothered about the outcome. The APC Stakeholders were aware that the Party entered the exercise from crisis and was deeply divided. The APC primaries in Edo that literally bulldozed Obaseki out of the Party did not go down well with many APC members both in Edo and outside the State. The APC in Edo through the instrumentality of Oshiomhole, did not treat Obaseki fairly. He was treated as a Political Orphan and outcast. APC lost the election after that primaries that failed to give Obaseki the chance of first refusal. What APC lost because of that Political brigandage and miscalculation the PDP gained (Afara, 2020:12).

Our Political leaders, especially the Politicians must learn how to be humble and stop playing God. Let them desist from speaking in absolute terms and in a military fashion that reminds us of dark-goggled dictators of Yore. Let our Politicians take courses in leadership and understand that political leadership is a call to serve the people and not to be served by the people as it is the case in our country. The Politicians should watch their comments and stop saying things that they can't easily take back. As our people say, rain can only weash away footprints but not bitter utterances. For Ize-Iyamu, there is life after Politics, there is life after electoral setback. It is equally wise to commend President Muhammadu Buhari, the INEC and Security agencies for not interfering in Edo Governorship Poll.

In the September 19, 2020 Governorship Election in Edo State, the incumbent PDP Governor Godwin Obaseki won re-election for a second term, defeating APC Osagie Ize-Iyamu and several minor Party candidates. Obaseki received 57.3% of the vote. However, Godwin Obaseki emerged unopposed in the PDP gubernatorial primary after all the aspirants stepped down. He picked Philip Shaibu as his running mate. Osagie Ize-Iyamu was the APC candidate with Audi Ganiyu as his running mate. Mabel Oboh was the ADC candidate. Iboi Lucky Emmanuel stood in for ADP in the Polls, while Osifo Uhun- Ekpenma Isaiah represented Labour Party. Moreover, 14 candidates contested in the election, 12 were male, while 2 were females. Two of the deputy governorship candidates were female. President Buhari (2020:20) commended the process and said that his commitment to free and fair elections is firm, because without free and fair elections, the foundation of our Political and Moral authority will be weak. He argued that, democracy will mean nothing if the votes of the people don't count or if their mandate is fraudulently tempered with.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced results in the governorship election in eighteen (18) Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Edo State, with the incumbent Governor Godwin Obaseki declared winner of the election. Below are the breakdown of results between the two contending parties PDP and APC:

S/N	LOCAL GOVT. AREA	APC	PDP
1	Akoko Edo	22963	20101
2	Etsako East	17011	10668
3	Etsako West	26140	17959
4	Etsako Central	8359	7478
5	Owan East	19295	14762
6	Owan West	11193	11485
7	Esan North East	6556	13579
8	Esan South East	9237	10565
9	Esan Central	6719	10794
10	Esan West	7189	17434
11	Uhumwonde	5972	10022
12	Orhionmwon	10458	13445
13	Ikpoba-Okha	18218	41030
14	Oredo	18365	43498
15	Egor	10202	27621
16	Ovia North-East	9907	16987
17	Ovia South West	10636	12659
18	Igueben	5199	7870
	<b>Total</b>	<b>223, 619</b>	<b>307, 955</b>

**Source:** Daily sun, September 21, 2020, P.1

Finally, the threat of violence and the disruption of the electoral process by desperate partisan actors was largely neutralised. While the achievement of a peaceful outcome in Edo State could be credited to the work of statesmen and women who appealed to the Politicians and their supporters, the preventions of widespread violence was attributed to the influence of issues-driven campaign in the build up to the governorship election. Although the Political actors continued with their jaded and anachronistic tactics of inciting their supporters through hate speech, misinformation and spread of fake news, determined statesmen and women worked tirelessly to preserve the peace (Ajanaku, 2020:26). All the same, Edo governorship elections was a great improvement on the 2019 general elections and the gubernatorial polls in Kogi and Bayelsa States. Ours cannot be said to be perfect yet but we hope to get there one day if we allow strong institutions to thrive in Our Polity instead of allowing the impurity of the strongmen to hold sway.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The deplorable State of Nigeria's health care facilities especially in the period of COVID-19 Pandemic requires emergency interventions to save Nigerians from this second phase of Pandemic. The Chairman of Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 Pandemic and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mustapha (2021:8) confirmed a recorded death of twenty-four (24) COVID-19 patients in the country on Saturday, 13th February 2021, being the second highest in a single day since the beginning of the Pandemic. The National Snapshot for COVID-19 from the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) as at Sunday, 14th February, 2021 put cases of infection at 146, 354, active cases: 23, 408 (16%), discharged; 121, 193 (82.8%), deaths: 1, 753 (1.2%) and tests: 1, 441, 013.

In December 2020, the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) claimed a new Coronavirus variant was found in Nigeria, saying "it's a separate lineage from the UK and the South African Lineages." That was how news media became agog with claims that Nigeria had slipped into a second wave of the Virus. Despite several victims' narrations, many Nigerians still believe the virus is a scam, while a few others who believed lived with insinuation that the cases recorded in the first wave of the Pandemic was inflated to get funds and grants for states to enrich some officials through contracts award. On December 10, 2020, Dr. Osagie Ehanire, Minister of Health, acknowledge that the second wave is real because of the rising number of cases. Officially, Nigeria entered the second wave of the Pandemic on 17th December 2020, which coincided with the day the Country recorded its highest daily number of COVID-19 cases with 1, 145 new infections.

In the light of the above, President Buhari (2021:26) signed coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Health Protection Regulations 2021 on January 26, with the urgent need to protect the health and wellbeing of Nigerians in the face of the widespread and rising numbers of COVID-19 Cases in Nigeria. The provisions of these Regulations shall apply throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria and to be enforced by the Personnel of the Nigeria Police force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, the Nigeria Immigration Service, the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria, the Federal Road Safety Corps, and other relevant Local Government, State and Federal Government agencies are hereby directed to enforce the provisions of these Regulations. Any person who contravenes the provisions of these Regulations commits an offence and any person who without reasonable cause, obstructs an authorised official from enforcement of these regulations commits an offence. The health Protection Regulations 2021 are as follows:

**In Part 1:** In all gatherings, a physical distance of at least two metres shall be maintained all times between persons. However, notwithstanding the provision of Regulation I, no gathering of more than 50 persons shall hold in an enclosed space, except for religious purposes, in which case the gathering shall not exceed 50% capacity of the space. **In Part 2:** Operations of Public places states that no person shall be allowed within the premises of a market, mall, supermarket, shop, restaurants, hotels, event centres, gardens, leisure Parks, recreation centres, motor Parks, fitness centre, or any other similar establishment except, he is wearing a face covering the nose and mouth, he washes his hands or cleaned the hands using hand sanitizer approved by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC), and his temperature has been checked. Moreover, all places of worship, work place and schools, Banks and Public transportation Vehicles shall comply with the provisions of Parts 1 and 2 of these Regulations. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had serious challenges on electoral process due to emergence of COVID-19 Pandemic, but wisely adopted the Public Policy measures of NCDC on COVID-19 Protocol measures to protect the health of electoral Officials, Voters and Stakeholders in the Conduct of September 19, 2020 Governorship election in Edo State. By this great achievement, the people of Edo State have set a standard that is worthy of emulation in the sustenance of our democracy and it is incumbent on all and sundry to use it as a yardstick for shaping the emerging new Nigeria under the period of COVID-19 Pandemic. The September 19, 2020 governorship election has paved the way and made it very obvious that there is light at the end of the tunnel if we join hands together and take back our country from the enemies of our democracy.

It is very important at this juncture to state emphatically that this research should not be seen as celebrating the success of the election because a particular party won against the other or because a particular candidate or others lost to the governor, rather, it is celebration of the people's victory. Determinedly, they wanted their votes to count and they deservedly achieved it in a free, fair and credible manner (without prejudice to any action that has been or may be instituted at the Election Petitions Tribunal or Court). This is the way to go in our quest for a government of all inclusiveness where everyone will have sense of belonging in all ramifications. Be that as it may, we should be prepared and willing to always acknowledge and celebrate with same enthusiasm whenever such feat is achieved in other election(s) regardless of the side of the divide the victory swings. We must ensure that the sustenance of our national interest is sacrosanct over ethnic, religion and Political affiliations.

Moreover, from the foregoing, we can conveniently deduce that if all elections are free, fair and credible, there would not be any reason for discontentment amongst our people from the east, west, north, south et al because mutual suspicion/mistrust would have been considerably minimised if not totally eradicated from our politics. Thus, we must change our attitudes from the parochial/sentimental perspective to that where all elected representatives of the people will always put the interest of our country topmost in all issues. No matter how myopic it sounds, the truth remains that it is the fall-out of the old order where the enemies of our democracy used their influence and wherewithal to determining outcomes of elections by frustrating the wishes of the people; that has made most electorate lose faith in our voting system. So, rather than exercising their right to vote during elections, they will stay away because of their belief that the results had been predetermined (Oghaede, 2020:14).

In 2016 governorship election in Edo State, Osagie Ize-Iyamu was candidate of PDP while Governor Obaseki was the candidate of APC and supported by the former Governor Adams Oshiomhole as the godfather. However, in September 19, 2020 Governorship election, Ize-Iyamu became candidate of APC and Adams Oshiomhole as the godfather while Governor Obaseki became the candidate of PDP and no longer in the shadow of Oshiomhole. This is the problem of lack of internal democracy of the Party destroying Nigeria electoral system. Internal democracy is the bedrock of the survival of any democracy and that is the beginning because party primaries should be transparent. The Political Parties saddled with the responsibility of conducting Party primary elections should be willing to conduct free and fair elections.

Moreover, if there is no internal democracy like what happened in Edo State APC where Governor Obaseki was screened out of the Party and he went to PDP as their flag bearer of the Party. Mwanko (2020:13) member representing Barkin-Ladi/Riyom Federal Constituency of Plateau State, posited that the Political Parties themselves have not demonstrated transparency in the conduct of their Party Primaries. It was still the same problem of lack of internal democracy that made the APC in Zamfara State to lose the governorship and the entire legislative seats to the PDP. He said, if we refuse to accept internal democracy in our political life or in the conduct of our party primaries, we are likely to have problems in the main election. It was the same internal democracy that made the PDP to lose the general elections to the APC in 2015. A lot of people were aggrieved in PDP as a result of the Party's decision to handpick its candidate who featured in the main elections. This led to many PDP members to join hands with the APC against their Party (PDP). It is a dangerous trend that could singlehandedly destroys democracy if care is not taking.

Nigeria has been experimenting with the principles and values of western democracy for the past 22 years (1999-2021). Regrettably, it has nothing to show for it. We were promised in 1999 that democracy would herald economic prosperity, that foreign investors would make Nigeria their second home, that democracy would prompt greater accountability and responsibility in government, that Politicians would reject corruptions, and that we will have a healthy deliberative democracy in which everyone would be free to express their views. All we have seen after 22 years of noisy parliamentary debate and ceremonial yearly budgets are growing Poverty, unemployment, decrepit infrastructure, a decadent public service, mortuaries that serve as public hospitals, poor quality of tertiary education, failure to harness new technologies to improve our socioeconomic conditions inability to produce and sustain enough electric

power to serve the country and limitless appetite for illegal acquisition of public property Nigeria has degenerated to this level because of the failure of the civil society to hold national and state leaders accountable. The more indifferent we are to our predicaments, the more difficult our lives become (Obijiofor 2020:32). The gradual collapse of Nigeria is impeccable evidence of the failure of political leaders to provide direction. It is proof of the breakdown of civil society, that is, the inability of citizens to hold political leaders to account. Take a look at the current state of insecurity across the country.

Finally, the Nigerian State has never been as divided and besieged in its 107 year Amalgamation, as it is witnessing. Today the 1966-67 crises which led to the three year civil war was roughly between two parts of the country. In the present crises, all parts of the country are in turmoil. The North East is besieged by the Boko Haram and Islamic State terrorists, the North-West by marauding bandits who have seized territories and the North-Central by terrorists and bandits, many of them, foreigners. The Southern part of the country while having issues of criminality, cultism and ethno-nationalism, has the general challenge kidnapping and banditing perpetuated mainly by men identified as criminal elements of Fulani ancestry from within and outside the country who camouflage as herdsmen (Lakemfa, 2021:16). In fact, government is gradually losing or has lost its credibility with the way events are unfolding. Nigeria has remained a failed state largely because everyone failed to act when things were going wrong, when Federal and State governments shuts their eyes and ears to public expressions of concerns, and when corrupt and decadent high-profile citizens or groups were being celebrated rather than apprehended and prosecuted. However, if we want to reform Nigeria, we must stick with the letters of the law. There should be no exceptions to the rule when it comes to crime and punishment.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the wake of COVID-19 Pandemic, the outcome of the governorship election in September 19, 2020 in Edo State generally adjudged to be the best, where the incumbent Governor, Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki and his deputy, Philip Shaibu was re-elected for another term of four years. By this great achievement, the people of Edo State have set a standard that is worthy of emulation in the sustenance of our democracy. It is instructive to highlight and appreciate some of contributory factors, such as the laudable discountenancing of Federal might to manipulate the election, the neutral stance of INEC in the handling of the process, the professional conducts of the various Security agencies in discharging of their duties, the press, Observers, the traditional institution in the State and among others. In the light of this, I make the following recommendations:

- (1) Firstly, the first lesson we must learn from COVID-19 Pandemic is that we must develop our health care system and be proactive to issues that have to do with human lives. We are just lucky in this part of the World that some natural factors which we cannot explain are working to our advantage, otherwise we would have been burying people in thousands in Nigeria, like Italy and Spain. There was a time Bill Gate said a time would come when the streets of Africa would be littered with Corpses because they know the capacity of our health care sector under this Pandemic. In Nigeria, many healthcare workers died in the frontlines as COVID-19 infections among them became a crisis at some point. This is because, the welfare of the health workers, pertaining to allowances and remunerations erupted into a national crisis due to the failure of government to honour agreements reached with the resident doctors such as non-payment of health workers' hazard allowance, lack of life insurance for doctors among other reasons. This made medical doctors between June and August 2020 involved in fight against the spread of COVID-19 had to abandon their duty posts to press home their demands for better compensations.
- (2) Secondly, there should be a strong democratic institutions in Nigeria for the rule of law and all known democratic precepts to stand the test of time. In the course of her political evolution, Nigeria has encountered several difficult moments but has continued to stumble and wobble very badly, largely due to weak democratic institutions, and failure to check abuse of power by the so-called strongmen who continue to dominate and control its socio-political and economic space.

Many are quick to refer to two events that ought to have positively defined Nigeria's future as a nation, but which were frittered away through the whims and caprices of strongmen at separate times. The first relates to the unconstitutional retention of EFCC's Acting Chairman, Magu, even after he was twice roundly rejected by the Senate. The second event concerns the questionable and contemptuous removal from office of Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Walter Onnoghen. These two major events happened with utter disregard for due process, rule of law all known democratic precepts. Unlike Nigeria, America proved to the World that the antics of one man, no matter how orchestrated cannot and should never make the county flounder. However, if for strong institutions, America, which had become the booth of Political jokes, would probably have lost its place as one of the World's finest democracies due to the shenanigans of a man (Trump). I think the United State still gives us an example of what strong institutions, a sound constitution and conscious citizenry can do. These three major things are not rooted in our governance architecture yet, but I think we can build it.

- (3) Thirdly, there should be credible and transparent internal democracy of the Political Parties, conducted according to the democratic precepts devoid of any manipulations. This is because internal democracy is the bedrock of the survival of any democracy. However, democracy is a welcome development characterised by rule of law, fair play and other things that would make the process workable but in Nigeria we cannot see all these democratic precepts. It is obvious that if we refuse to accept transparent internal democracy in our Political life or in the conduct of our Party primaries, we are likely to have problems in the main elections.
- (4) Fourthly, adequate electoral Security during electoral process should be guaranteed because election security (i.e. Security of election officials and materials) remains a formidable challenge of election in Nigeria. Security has to do with the freedom from danger, fear, anxiety or uncertainty, because it is the process of protecting the electorates, candidates, the election officials, among others. 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 internet age, the operations of the police should be driven by modern technology for an enhanced service delivery. Moreover, at the National Security level, Nigeria is currently facing a crisis, a crisis of insurgency, banditry, abduction of secondary school students in the Northern Nigeria. The silence of Federal Government whose Constitutional role it is to protect lives and property is worrisome. There is the need to condemn the activities of Fulani herdsmen who instigate crisis in the country through invasion of farm lands, vandalism, rape and killings of innocent citizens.

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