

BENUE STATE

Introduction and Background

Benue State presents an uneasy yet breath-taking opportunity for the two leading candidates in the 2019 general elections. Arising from a domain that is tensed on the basis of herders-farmers confrontation, Benue State has had to struggle with the responsibility of repositioning the course of development after the seemingly awful experiences of Gabriel Suswam and Georege Akume as non-performing governors. The regime of Mr Ortom has been no different from the public perception of the two formers. Particularly, there is an apparent and tragic abdication of governance on the part of Mr Ortom. His administration has held workers on economic hostage by not paying salaries for months on end. in the wake of the recent economic recession by not being able to pay workers' salaries and wages.

The 2019 general elections and the contest for votes between the two major parties in the Benue valley may appear predictable given the disaffection of the Benue people with the seemingly contented posture of the Buhari's regime about the mass killings arising from the farmers-herders confrontations. The general belief is that the State would vote for the PDP candidate. The residents within the State had constantly criticized the body language of the president whom they believed has been sympathetic to the marauding herdsman. This inaction has undoubtedly angered elders and traditional leaders who have borne the pains and may be ready to spill the doom for the regime. When the outcry became agonising, Buhari in March 2018 with the interest of strengthening security visited the state capital, Makurdi and sued for peace by particularly appealing to the people of the state to accept and be at peace with their Fulani brothers.

Moreover, youths, who could not permit the complacent attitude of the federal government in handling the killings, disallowed the governor from further political relations with the APC leaders and Ortom eventually bowed to pressure and defected to the PDP. However, as the above occupies the minds and may basically form the political behaviour of the people therein, there is also a reportedly growing concern about the ability of the governor to offer leadership and show capacity in delivering good governance especially because of his sheer irresponsibility in non-payment of salaries for over ten months despite the several rebates including the Paris fund dished out to them.

There is also the George Akume factor. His apparent silence in the wake of the casualties from the face-off between the farmers and herders indicates his acceptance of the Federal Government posture on the spate of insecurity in the State which is almost taken as the main reason for the defection of Mr Ortom. This in itself may mean that sympathy votes may go to the opposition.

The Benue South zone from all of the above and given the voting trend of the Idoma and the Igede people, appear obviously as a stronghold of the PDP. The difficulty of APC in mopping up votes in the area is essentially a function of the violence that has rocked the people especially the Agatu people. The PDP flag bearer, Atiku Abubakar has exploited this to his advantage by parading an advocacy and campaign on re-structuring as the alternative means of mitigating future occurrence of the face-off. He also got a chieftancy title which has presented him as a SON OF THE SOIL of the Tiv people - Zegu Mule U Tiv (The Great Shade of the Tiv).



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The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) was established in the United Kingdom in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, research training, advocacy and capacity building organization

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