

OGUN STATE

Ogun State is one of the battleground states, having a population of registered voters of 1,709,409 in the 2015 general elections with a turnout of up to 46%, higher than the national average of voter turnout. For the ruling party, the APC, Ogun state must be won because of the Vice-President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo who hails from Ogun State. On the other hand, Atiku Abubakar, the PDP presidential candidate, also has the significant support of former president, Olusegun Obasanjo. Indeed, Ogun State is home to some of Nigeria's key political figures in history: Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Ernest Shonekan, MKO Abiola, Olusegun Obasanjo among others. These have significantly influenced politics in the state.

Historically riven between conservative nationalists and progressive Awoists, the lines may be blurring in Ogun State. Recently, the current matriarch of the Awolowo clan, Dr Tokunbo Awolowo Dosunmu, disowned the APC and its candidate, asserting that she never endorsed the party nor Buhari in the 2015 elections. This is worthy of note for a few reasons, one of which is that the APC draws legitimation from claiming Awoist roots, progressive ideology, and for being the legacy party of the Awoist parties of the past – AG, UPN, AD, before the ACN.

The history of elections in Ogun state shows that it has been a swing state since 1999, voting for different parties – the PDP and the AD/ACN/APC – at the different presidential elections:

1999 – AD

2003 – PDP

2007 – PDP

2011 – PDP

2015 – APC

Candidates and their Backers

For the 2019 gubernatorial elections, the main candidates in the state have support from various heavyweights: Buruji Kashamu is recognised by INEC; Adebutu is supported by his party, PDP; Gboyega Isiaka of ADC has Obasanjo and some traditional rulers; Akinlade of Allied Peoples' Movement has Amosun; Dapo Abiodun has VP Osinbajo, Bola Tinubu, among others.

Politics of the Incumbent

The incumbent governor, Ibikunle Amosun, had been a staunch supporter of President Buhari and his re-election until recently. He has been stirring the hornet's nest in relation to the national leaders of the party by insisting on supporting his own candidate and not that of the party. The stoning of the president and his platform party at the campaign rally in Abeokuta a few days ago by perceived Amosun loyalists and thugs is instructive. By the next day, the APC declared intention to take disciplinary action against Amosun once the elections are over.

Impact of split in ruling party

We may aver though that the split within the APC at the governorship contest may not in any way affect the presidential poll. With the people of Ogun state, certain factors cannot be underestimated:

- a. The enduring allegiance of the people to the Awolowo family and Awoist politics, at least in principle. However, this factor might now be pulling the state in two different directions: towards the PDP, given the Awolowo family's distance from the current regime;
- b. Allies of the current APC leadership, especially the Vice-President (himself son-in-law to the Awolowos), would still vote APC.

Politics of 2023

Relatedly, the basic fact that Ogun State is already part of the federal government with the VP there is expected to influence a lot of voters who will most likely vote to keep him there. The politics of 2023 is also already in play and Ogun people are likely to vote considering the likelihood that they will yet again produce another president, come 2023.

Decampments

There was also a large decampment of PDP politicians to the APC including former Deputy Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Remmy Hassan and Senator Lekan Mustapha who decamped with their supporters to the APC. Mustapha is a former Ogun East Senator.

About a month earlier, the former Minister of Power and Steel, Tunji Sharafa-Ishola also decamped to the APC. This has also undermined the PDP's ability to mobilise across the state, and weakened it.

Split in the PDP

The contest between Kashamu and Adebutu, two heavily moneyed contestants, also split the party, and this may be expected to affect its performance in the presidential elections. On the other hand, both rich politicians are expected to work hard to 'deliver' their constituencies for the PDP to keep their party happy and their current positions secure. Conversely though, it is expected that Dapo Abiodun will do the same for the APC.

In conclusion, it is most likely that the margin of presidential victory of either of the two main parties will be much closer, projected as 51/49 by some media estimates. In some way, the power of incumbency will be in play.



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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

Address

16, A7 Street Mount Pleasant Estate (CITEC), Jabi Airport Road, Abuja.

Phone No

+23492902304

Email

cddabv@cddwestafrica.org

Website

www.cddwestafrica.org