



Centre for Democracy & Development
Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

Background Paper

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OSUN

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A Vote for Continuity or Change?**



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CDD-West Africa Background Paper

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INTRODUCTION

By Saturday August 15, 2026, 2,339,233 million eligible voters in Osun State will go to the polls to elect the sixth executive governor of Osun State in an election that has understandably generated wide interest across the state and beyond. As the people of the state look forward to the election with high expectations, the extent to which the election will pass the test of legitimacy and integrity has continued to dominate public discourse. The election will be the second to be organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the 2026 Electoral Act; and the third major election (after Anambra and Ekiti elections) to be supervised by Professor Joash Ojo Amupitan since his assumption of office as the Chairman of the election agency late last year.

Without any pretension, the August election will be an electoral battle between what could be described as the ‘forces of continuity’ and ‘forces of change’. While the former represents the Accord which is determined to ensure mandate renewal for the incumbent Governor Ademola Adeleke, the latter represents the All Progressives Congress which is seeking to return to the Government House after its ouster from power at the end of the 2022 vote. In this context, the forces of change and continuity do not represent more than a symbolic identity of the two top contenders in the election. In other words, the ascription of ‘change’ and ‘continuity’ does not indicate marked policy and programmatic differences between the Accord and All Progressives Congress.

Examining the political ecology of the 2026 election is crucial to understanding the contradictions that define the election, gaining insight into the character and intensity of the campaign and projecting into the likely outcome of the election. This election is taking place within a volatile context characterized by some defining issues. First, the Osun election is holding in a period of domination of national politics by the All Progressives Congress. The spate of inter-party defections recently witnessed across the country has ensured that the party now controls more than two-thirds of the 36 states in the country while it also controls the majority seats in the two chambers of the federal parliament. There is a strong belief within the polity that the APC will be seeking to add Osun State (one of the two states in the South West region outside its control; the other being Oyo) to its fold. Since the removal of fuel subsidy by the Tinubu presidency shortly after inauguration, there have been increased fiscal transfers to the sub-national units from the federation account. This increased allocation has become a contentious issue between the ruling Accord and the opposition APC which argues that the increased earnings from the centre have not produced remarkable improvement on the socio-economic status of the state. The August 15 election is also taking



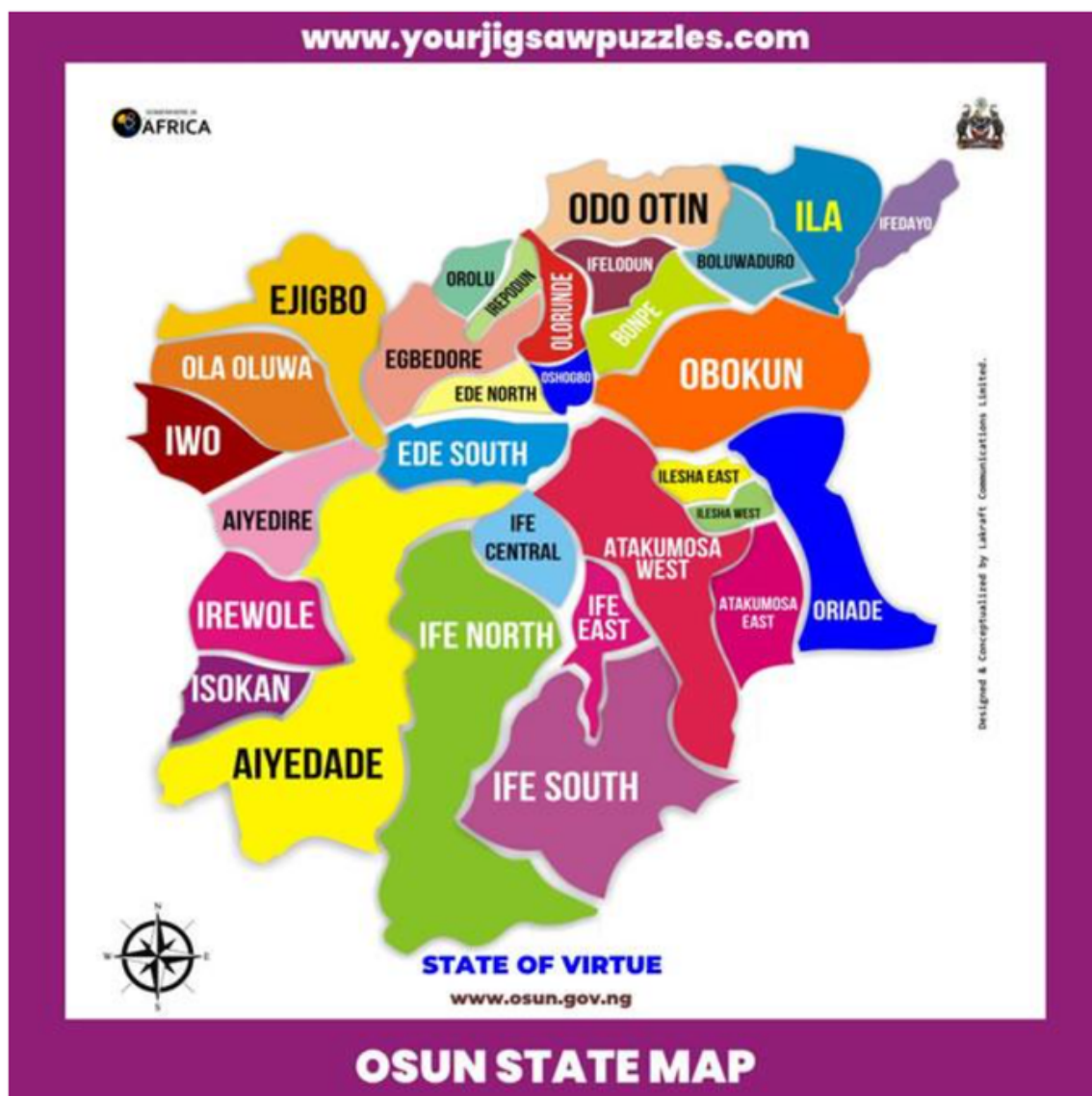
place in the context of the confusion in, and near paralysis of, local government administration in the state. The rightful control over local governments in the state has been a subject of contestation between the ruling Accord and the opposition APC with the two feuding parties interpreting judicial interventions on the matter in a way that serves their respective interests. The contestation over local governments has not only engendered institutional immobilism in local councils across the 30 councils in the state, it has also triggered violence that has resulted in fatalities.

The significance of the Osun 2026 election can be premised on three important points. First, Osun is rumoured to be the native state of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and this could increase the stakes of the August 15 election for the president. Second, the incumbent Governor Ademola Adeleke is competing in the election on the platform of a party other than the one that gave him the current mandate. The festering internal crisis in the PDP made it risky for Governor Adeleke to run on its ticket. There are credible accounts that suggest that he attempted to join the APC. In a public release on June 4, 2026, Spokesperson to Governor Adeleke, Mallam Olawale Rasheed, disclosed that his principal actually made a move to join the APC. He said Governor Adeleke met President Tinubu and other national leaders of the party as part of the preparations for his eventual defection to the APC but that the move was frustrated by former governor of the state and current Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola. Indeed, the PDP under which platform Adeleke ran in 2022 will not be on the ballot in the August election for the first time since 1999. The PDP as a party label is in a way synonymous with the politics of Nigeria's fourth republic. Despite its failings as a ruling party and as an opposition label, PDP has weathered the storm to be the only party among the initial Big Three- Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) - that retains its foundation name and logo. Third, the August gubernatorial election is the last election to be conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) before the 2027 general elections. Coming on the heels of the Ekiti governorship election which received a largely positive assessment from stakeholders, the Osun election offers an opportunity to INEC to consolidate on the modest success recorded in Ekiti; and strengthen public faith in the electoral agency and its activities.

This background paper adopts a qualitative method of research and essentially relies on desk research, internet search, extensive media monitoring and key informant interviews with purposively selected respondents that span election management body, political parties, academia, media and civil society.

ELECTORAL PROFILE OF OSUN STATE

Osun State was created out of the old Oyo state on August 27, 1991 by the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida. Sitting on a land area approximately 9, 251 sq kilometers, the state has an estimated population of 3, 416, 959 million according to the 2006 Census making the state to be the 17th most populous in the Nigerian federation. Bordered to the north by Kwara state, to the west by Oyo state, and to the east by Ekiti and Ondo states, Ife, Ijesha, Oyo and Igbomina people represent the major sub-ethnic identities in Osun State. Islam, Christianity and Traditional religion are the major religions in the state and adherents of these faiths co-habit with little inter-faith frictions.



Osun State has a high historical significance and is endowed with enormous resources. The state is widely acknowledged as the heartland of Yoruba history and home to many historical landmarks and sites including Ile-Ife widely acknowledged as the cradle of Yoruba civilization. Osogbo, Osun's capital city is a global destination for tourism. The state also houses major theatres of wars in Yorubaland including the 16-year Kiriji War of 1877 to 1893. Osun is also home to iconic legends such as Oduduwa, the progenitor of Yoruba race, Timi Agbale of Edeland and Ogedengbe Agbogunbobo of Ijeshaland (Abati, 2021).

The August 15 election will be the 7th in Osun State since the restoration of democratic rule in Africa's largest electoral democracy. Out of the seven elections, four including the upcoming poll are off-cycle elections (2014, 2018, 2022 and 2026 elections). Osun joins Anambra, Bayelsa, Edo, Ekiti, Imo, Kogi and Ondo states to form a league of states in Nigeria which hold their governorship elections outside of the national calendar as a result of election nullifications and court orders that affected past governorship elections in these states.

Table 1: List of Former and Current Governors of Osun State since 1999

S/N	Name	Party	Gubernatorial tenure	Senatorial zone
1.	Chief Adebisi Akande	AD	May 1999-May 2003	Osun Central
2.	Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola	PDP	May 2003-November 2010	Osun Central
3.	Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola	ACN/APC	November 2010-November 2018	Osun East
4	Alhaji Isiaka Oyetola	APC	November 2018-November 2022	Osun Central
5.	Senator Ademola Adeleke	PDP/accord	November 2022-Present	Osun West



In the transition election of 1999, Chief Adebisi Akande of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) won the governorship election to become the first elected governor of the state in the fourth republic. He defeated Chief Isiaka Adeleke of the All People's Party (APP) and was inaugurated on May 29, 1999. The victory of Chief Akande was not too surprising given the popularity of the Alliance for Democracy in the South West region of the country. The party was generally perceived as an offshoot of the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a perception that was strongly supported by the presence of many disciples of the late sage in the party including Chief Bola Ige, Senator Abraham Adesanyo and Senator Ayo Fasanmi.

In the first post-transition governorship election of 2003, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who is from the same senatorial zone with Chief Akande, defeated the incumbent Chief Akande in an election that was generally believed to be tainted with irregularities.

The incumbent Oyinlola was also declared winner of the 2007 election by the INEC ahead of the candidate of the Action Congress, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola. The outcome of this election was popularly believed to have been massively manipulated by the Obasanjo presidency. The president had warned that the 2007 elections would be a 'do or die affair' and he did not spare any effort to sway victory to the PDP particularly in the South West region where his party surprisingly won five of the six states in the region.

Prince Oyinlola's gubernatorial tenure was however cut short in 2010 by the Ibadan Division of the Appeal Court which nullified his election and declared Ogbeni Aregbesola as the winner of the 2007 contest. The fate that befell Oyinlola was experienced by other PDP governors in the South West such as Engineer Segun Oni of Ekiti state and Dr. Olusegun Agagu of Ondo state. Aregbesola is from Osun East senatorial constituency.

In the 2014 election which was the first off-cycle election in the state, the incumbent Governor Aregbesola, running on the platform of the newly formed All Progressives Congress (APC), defeated Otunba Iyiola Omisore of the PDP to claim second term tenure. Aregbesola's triumph was secured despite brazen deployment of federal incumbency including voter intimidation by the Goodluck Jonathan presidency to support the candidacy of Iyiola Omisore.



In 2018, the candidate of APC, Alhaji Adegboyega Oyetola who was Chief of Staff to Ogbeni Aregbesola won the Osun State governorship election narrowly defeating the candidate of PDP, Senator Ademola Adeleke in an election that went into second ballot in certain areas of the state after being declared inconclusive by INEC. At the end of the controversial re-run election on September 27, 2018, the final votes received by Oyetola stood at 255,505 while Adeleke's votes stood at 255, 023. Oyetola, like Akande and Oyinlola, is from Osun Central senatorial district.

Adeleke resorted to election petition to challenge INEC's declaration of Oyetola as the winner of the election. While Adeleke won the case at the Tribunal, the Appeal Court set aside the judgement of the Tribunal. Not satisfied, Adeleke approached the Supreme Court to adjudicate on the matter. In its July 5, 2019 judgement, the apex court affirmed the verdict of the Appeal Court and declared Oyetola as the winner of the election.

In the 2022 election which was a sort of a repeat of the 2018 contest, the candidate of the PDP, Senator Adeleke, defeated the incumbent Governor Adegboyega Oyetola to clinch the governorship seat of Osun State. Adeleke is from Osun West senatorial district.

Table 2: List of Candidates for Osun 2026 Governorship Election

S/N	POSITION	NAME OF CANDIDATE	PARTY	PWD	AGE	GENDER	QUALIFICATION
1.	Governorship	ADELEKE Ademola	Accord	None	65	M	SSC/BSc
2.	Governorship	FARINLOYE Olanrewaju	Action Alliance	None	40	Male	GCSE/CCECS
3.	Governorship	ESAN Olajide	African Action Congress	None	39	M	FLSC/SSCE/BSc
4.	Governorship	Salaam Najeem	African Democratic Congress	None	60	M	FSLC/SSCE/MSc



6.	Governorship	OYEBAMIJI Bola	All Progressives Congress	None	60	M	FLSC/WAEC/HND
7.	Governorship	ADEYEMI-D ORO Adesina	All Progressives Grand Alliance	None	39	M	SSCE/BSc
8.	Governorship	ADEBAYO, Simon	Allied People's Movement	None	41	M	FSLC/NECO/MBA
9.	Governorship	ADESUYI Clement	Action People's Party	None	69	M	FLSC/SSCE/BSC
10.	Governorship	ADELEKE Masilo	Boot Party	None	65	M	FLSC/WASC/Diploma
11.	Governorship	ADELEKE Taofik	New Nigerian People's Party	None	52	M	FSLC/SSCE
12.	Governorship	SALIU Oyelami	People's Redemption Party	None	49	M	FSLC/SSCE/Degree
13.	Governorship	Ogunsakin Olalekan	Young People's Party	None	37	M	BSc
14.	Governorship	ADESUYI Olufemi	Zenith Labour Party	None	50	M	FSLC/NECO/PGD

Source: INEC



According to the final list of candidates for the Osun 2026 governorship election released by INEC on 4 March, 2026, 14 political parties will be competing in the August 15 election. The names of two established parties are conspicuously missing on the list: the People's Democratic Party and the Labour Party. Out of the 14 candidates, only 2 of them are females: Mrs Yemisi Adeagbo Opawoye, governorship candidate of Action Democratic Party (ADP) and Hon. Mrs Yemisi Agiri, deputy governorship candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC). This however represents a slight improvement over the 2022 election where all the 15 governorship candidates were males. In terms of demographic character of the governorship list, only four candidates, Esan Olajide (39 year old), governorship candidate of African Action Alliance, Adeyemi-Doro Adesina (39 year old), governorship candidate of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Adeyefa Adeshola (36 year old), deputy governorship candidate of New Nigerian People's Party (NNPP) and Ogunsakin Olalekan, governorship candidate of Young People's Party (YPP) are close to youth age bracket. The list however fails inclusivity test as no party is fielding persons with disabilities (PWDs).

From all indications, the upcoming election will be a two-horse race between the Accord and the All Progressives Congress. This is similar to the character of the 2022 contest in which the People's Democratic Party and the All Progressives Congress were the dominant parties. Thus, the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of parties/candidates competing in the election will be restricted to the candidates of the two parties.

Political watchers opine that four critical factors will shape the structure of voter support for the Accord and APC across the 30 local governments and senatorial districts in the August 15 election. These are political incumbency, native identity of gladiators, modest developmental achievements of the Adeleke administration particularly in the area of infrastructure provisioning and pre-election inter-party defections/political alignments which for all intents and purposes have profited Accord more than APC.

Osun State, like other states in the Nigerian federation, has 3 senatorial constituencies namely, Osun Central senatorial district, Osun East senatorial district and Osun West senatorial district. Each of these three districts has 10 local governments each as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Senatorial Zones and Constituent Local Governments in Osun State

S/N	Senatorial District	Constituent Local Govts.
1.	Osun Central	Boluwaduro, Boriipe, Ifedayo, Ifelodun, Ila, Irepodun, Odo Otin, Olorunda, Orolu, Osogbo.
2.	Osun East	Atakunmosa East, Atakunmosa West, Ife Central, Ife East, Ife North, Ife South, Ilesa East, Ilesa West, Obokun, Oriade.
3.	*Osun West	Aiyedaade, Aiyedire, Ede North, Ede South, Egbedore, Ejigbo, Irewole, Isokan, Iwo, Olaoluwa.

****Osun West is the senatorial zone of the two leading candidates in the 2026 election.***

In the 2022 governorship election in which APC and PDP (with Adeleke as its standard bearer) were the two leading political parties, the final results of the election declared by INEC show that PDP got the highest number of votes in 17 local governments while APC won in 13 local governments. Local governments won by PDP are Ede North, Ede South, Ifelodun, Boluwaduro, Egbedore, Odo Otin, Osogbo, Ila, Atakunmosa West, Olorunda, Ilesha West, Obokun, Oriade, Orolu, Ife North, Irepodun and Ejigbo. On the other hand, APC won in Boriipe, Ilesha East, Aiyedire, Ifedayo, Ife Central, Aiyedaade, Iwo, Olaoluwa, Isokan, Atakunmosa East, Ife South, Ife Central and Ife East. In terms of senatorial spread, APC won 2 local governments in Osun Central while PDP won 8. In Osun East, both parties equally shared the 10 local governments while in Osun West, APC won 6 local governments with PDP winning 4.

From all indications, the pattern of voter preferences is unlikely to differ significantly from that of the last election across the three senatorial zones even as the recent political alignments and re-alignments across the state immensely benefit Accord. For instance, in the Osun Central senatorial zone, if the behind-the-curtains negotiation between Governor Adeleke and Prince Oyinlola is successful,



Accord is projected to consolidate on the enormous voter support received by PDP/Adeleke in the senatorial zone in the 2022 challenge. There appears to be little threats to the dominance of the Accord in the senatorial district. Boriye (local government of former Governor Oyetola) and Boluwaduro are still safe for APC. In Osun East, Accord is projected to reap substantially from the recent defection of notable members of APC to Accord; as well as the decision of Senator Iyiola Omisore to make his political structures available to Governor Adeleke. These two factors are expected to considerably impact the electoral prospects of Adeleke's candidacy in a manner that will alter the balance of voter support from what it was in the 2022 vote during which APC and PDP shared the 10 local governments equally. Observers have however also pointed to the giant strides that the Adeleke government has made in infrastructural development in Ile-Ife town in the area of road construction, an effort that was publicly commended by the Ooni of Ife, His Royal Majesty Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja II. This royal acknowledgement could be an advantage for Adeleke at the crucial poll. While the Ooni has not publicly made any partisan comment in relation to the candidacy of the two top contenders, there are rumours that most senior chiefs of Ile-Ife have a preferred candidate. The chiefs are covertly mobilizing support for the candidate. The question is whether this can be initiated without the tacit endorsement of the Ooni. Expectedly, the Osun West senatorial district is where the two parties will seek to demonstrate their greatest strengths and this is understandable against the backdrop of the fact that the two key gladiators come from this zone. In the 2022 contest, APC clinched 6 local governments in the senatorial district while PDP won 4. The better performance of APC could be easily attributed to political incumbency and all that it enables in an electoral competition. The battle will be different this time around not only because APC has lost incumbency but because the recent political alignments and re-alignments within the senatorial zone, the emergence of new gladiators into the politics of the zone (especially those who won the tickets of both parties for national assembly elections) as well as the primacy of religious identity within the zone may shape voter perceptions and preferences at the election.

ELECTIONEERING CAMPAIGN

It is puzzling, if not utterly ironic, that the poor rating of Osun State in many facets of social indicators of citizen welfare including access to education, access to healthcare, gainful employment, decent housing and access to safe water has not received sufficient attention in the campaign messages of the two leading candidates in the election. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), there were 165, 114 out-of-school children in Osun State in 2018. 68.52% of this figure were males and 31.48% were females. Similarly, statistics from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Health Policy + (HP+), shows that mortality rate in Osun State was higher than the national average of 62 deaths per 1000 live births in sub-Saharan Africa. In the latest Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MIC S-6), conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Osun State has the highest out-of-school children in the South West at 297, 000 children translating into 13% of children population in the state.

While the Accord party is amplifying the modest achievements of Adeleke's first term, the APC has largely resorted to negative campaigning and is doing little to market the 'Prosperity Agenda' of its candidate. Instead, APC pays ample time and resources to defaming the governor through such catch phrases as 'ere to, ise ya' which loosely translates to 'drama should stop and serious governance should begin', 'dancing governor', 'Ade dancer', 'placeholder' and other demeaning words against the personality of the governor. Paradoxically however, this negative campaign is unwittingly creating emotional populism for the governor in a way that enhances his street credibility. This strategy almost cost APC victory in the 2018 governorship election and partly contributed to the defeat of the party in the 2022 election. The Prosperity Agenda of Bola Oyebamiji, the APC candidate, has 7 broad components: poverty alleviation, responsive and accountable governance, opportunities for economic growth, youth and women empowerment, security, safety and social protection, productive agriculture and rural development, education, skill development and healthcare delivery and renewed infrastructure, culture and tourism. While this document substantially captures the core areas of need for Osun State, the party is yet to sufficiently and aggressively articulate the Agenda and unleash it into the public domain as an article of faith with the Osun voting public.

Apart from the decline of issue-based campaign, one other defining feature of the electioneering is electoral violence. Since early May, the incidents of election-based violence have increased across the state. On June 8 for instance, a solidarity walk organized by APC in Ile-Ife turned violent when hoodlums suspected to be loyal to both the APC and Accord hijacked the procession.



Media reports confirmed that dangerous weapons were freely used in the ensuing pandemonium. A member of Accord in Irewole Local Government was reportedly murdered on May 8 in Ikire. On June 3, the Chairman of Accord in Osogbo Local Government, Asimiyu Ajibola, was reportedly shot by assailants. In a similar vein, a member of APC in Ward 9, Ikire, Saheed Oyegunju was reportedly murdered by armed attackers while four APC members in Ilesha West Local Government were also allegedly killed. The Osun State Police Command had to issue an order for the suspension of political activities including rallies and campaigns in Oriade Local Government following heightened tension and fears of electoral violence across the local government.

During his visit to Osun State on July 4, 2026, which was apparently in response to the wave of violence that hit the state, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Tunji Disu expressed deep concern over the increasing rates of election violence in the state ahead of the August election. Addressing election stakeholders including political parties, civil society groups and the media, the IGP lamented that politicians approach elections like war assuring that the police will provide adequate security throughout the electioneering period.

As a part of stakeholder efforts to achieve violence-free Osun election, 12 out of the 14 political parties fielding candidates for the August election (Accord and APC are not part of the initiative) agreed to convene a summit on peaceful governorship election in the state under the auspices of the Forum of Osun State Political Party Chairmen. It is expected that this effort and the Peace Accord of the National Peace Committee will positively impact the behaviour of the gladiators as the state inches towards the election.

THE 6 'I'S ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

This analysis is anchored on six interrelated analytical frameworks namely, institutions, incumbency, insecurity, intra-party cohesion, identity and information disorder. Taken together, these frameworks provide insights into the respective roles of the relevant institutions in the election process and highlight the extent to which these institutions and the other five frameworks shape the conduct of the August 15 election and the legitimacy of its outcome.

Institutions: Election management body and allied institutions

Election-related institutions are a web of institutional entities, both statist and non-statist, that are associated with the administration, regulation, security, oversight, adjudication and legitimation of the electoral process. These institutions include the election management bodies, security services, the judiciary, National Orientation Agency, civil society groups, media and election observers.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has consistently maintained its preparedness for the August poll. According to the Osun State Resident Electoral Commissioner, Mrs Oluwatoyin Babalola, INEC is ready to give Osun people an election all stakeholders will be proud of. Speaking during an interactive session with stakeholders in Osogbo, the state capital, Mrs Babalola disclosed that INEC has taken delivery of 95% of the non-sensitive materials needed for the election and the materials have since been distributed to INEC local government offices across the state. According to her, “sensitive materials such as result sheets would be released on the week of the election in line with standard procedure”. She further disclosed that a total of 3, 768 Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines would be deployed for the election and all the machines and 664 backups are already with the commission and in good condition. She also disclosed that the commission has concluded arrangements for a hitch-free logistics for transporting election workers and materials during the election. On July 9, 2026, INEC presented official electronic voter register for the 2026 Osun election to political parties at its headquarters in Osogbo. Speaking at the event, Mrs Babalola disclosed that a total of 2, 339, 233 million eligible voters will cast ballot at the election.

The foregoing signals adequate preparation and demonstration of transparency by INEC which would impact positively on the integrity of the election and its outcome. Election integrity matters in election administration particularly in the Nigerian context where citizen's trust in public institutions is low (Madueke & Enyinzu, 2024). Election integrity exists when election processes and procedures meet international standards, norms and conventions (Garnett & James, 2021). To the extent that



electoral integrity legitimizes the outcome of an election, it represents a tool to measure the level of citizen's or politician's satisfaction with democracy (Gaspard, 2025). When an election management body demonstrates professional efficiency and institutional integrity, satisfaction with democracy increases.

From Key Informant Interviews (KII) conducted for this paper, key stakeholders in the Osun election not only believe that INEC is prepared for the election, they equally believe the commission has been transparent in its actions in relation to the election. According to one respondent:

The new Resident Electoral Commissioner in Osun State is an effective leader. She has done all humanly possible to prepare for the forthcoming gubernatorial election in Osun State. She had several interactions with all the political parties fielding candidates for the election. Just last week, she invited the parties to the presentation of polling registers. After the presentation, she gave each of the parties one copy of the register... (KII/Top Party Official/Osogbo/July 2026).

Another informant, also a principal officer of a political party, corroborated the above submission by stating thus:

To the best of my understanding, INEC has been up and doing regarding the coming election. They have been engaging the stakeholders from time to time to let us know their preparedness. In my own opinion, they are well prepared. Our request to them is that they should discharge their duty professionally and maintain neutrality throughout the process (KII/Top Party Official/Osogbo/July 2026).

It is important that INEC converts this goodwill into veritable social capital to deliver a credible election that substantially reflects the preferences of the Osun people.

The roles of the judiciary in the election process are widely acknowledged. Among others, the judiciary adjudicates matters that relate to election and its conduct including nomination process, election schedule and election petition. There are mixed opinions about the roles of the judiciary in Nigeria's democratization since the inauguration of the current republic in 1999 particularly as it relates to its independence and conflicting verdicts. According to one informant:

The judiciary is supposed to be an institutional defender of democratic practice and protector of democratic rule. But, the reality is that the judiciary in Nigeria has not been able to do that remarkably. There are



insinuations that the executive branch particularly at the federal level indirectly influences the judiciary. This is partly evident in some of the unpopular, controversial or conflicting judgements by the courts (KII/Civil society activist/Osogbo/July 2026).

The judicial organ of government must demonstrate judicial integrity and assert its independence in order to earn public trust. Lack of citizen trust in the judiciary poses a potent danger to our democracy. The roles of the judiciary in the crisis of local government administration in Osun State, the leadership crisis in the People's Democratic Party as well as deregistration of some political parties including Accord are some of the controversial issues that question the integrity and neutrality of the judiciary.

The roles of the security services in election are related to providing security to electoral personnel, materials and facilities. Ideally in a well-functioning democracy, the military does not have formal roles in election administration. This is simply because election and election management are purely civil matters that involve civil processes and procedures which are not amenable to the training and orientation of the military and are better handled by the police. However due to certain exigencies in developing democracies, the armed services have been assigned certain election-related roles such as providing security during election, safeguarding electoral process for neutrality and monitoring border areas during elections.

The story of the involvement of the security agencies particularly soldiers in election administration in Nigeria has not been pleasant. The general belief within the Nigerian polity is that the security services are deployed for election duty with the covert intention of working for the interest of the ruling party. Osun State witnessed this partisan deployment of the security services during the 2014 governorship election when the Goodluck Jonathan presidency deployed soldiers for the election in a manner that caused voter intimidation which was widely perceived as a strategy of enhancing the electoral prospect of Iyiola Omisore, the candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) at the election. Stakeholders expect the federal government to display utmost neutrality in the 2026 election while they urge security operatives to demonstrate high sense of responsibility and professionalism throughout the electioneering. In the words of one respondent:

The Osun election places a moral obligation on President Bola Tinubu. Osun is his state of birth and thus he has a responsibility to ensure that the election is free, fair and credible. As the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, he should rise above personal and party interests



to support a credible election in Osun (KII/Academic/Osogbo/July 2026).

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) is a key state institution vested with the task of public education and mobilization for actualization of national (public) goals. Currently affiliated with the Federal Ministry of Information, the agency serves as a tool for public enlightenment and value (re)orientation. In relation to election, the NOA performs two critical roles of voter education and public enlightenment on the electoral process. The NOA Osun State office has played significant roles in voter education and citizen mobilization in the build up to the August 15 election. As a key stakeholder in the democratic process, the agency is a prominent actor in major stakeholder efforts at ensuring free, fair, credible, inclusive and violence-free election in Osun State. It has organized many public enlightenment and voter education programmes across the senatorial constituencies in Osun State and it is poised to continue with the public education efforts till election day. According to one informant:

NOA perfectly understands its crucial roles during election period and particularly during the Osun governorship election.. We have since embarked on intensive public enlightenment and voter education through visits to schools, markets and other public places and the reception from the people has been encouraging. We have been telling them that it is their civic responsibility to participate in the selection of political leaders. We have spoken strongly against vote buying and political violence. We told the people that if they collect money from politicians to vote for them, politicians will take more than what they gave the people from public treasury. We also told them that it is the poor people that are victims of political violence not politicians (KII/NOA Staff/Osogbo/July 2026)

However, while there is wide acknowledgement of the democracy-enhancing efforts of the National Orientation Agency, the key informant interviews reveal that the agency is contending with certain challenges that constrain its efficiency. One key constraint is logistics challenge. According to a respondent:

The Agency is facing some challenges and the most critical one is logistics problem. The state office does not have a single vehicle to support its activities and staff members have been using their personal vehicles to discharge national assignments. We have been asking for vehicle from the national headquarters but we are yet to be allocated one. However, the new Director General, Mallam Isa Lanre Onilu has promised to give us a vehicle and we are hoping that his promise will be kept very soon so as to enhance the operation of the agency (KII/Top NOA Staff/Osogbo/July 2026)

INCUMBENCY: STRUCTURE, USE AND MISUSE

Political incumbency in electoral competition is naturally associated with incumbency advantage which Redmond, Munley and Garcia-Rodriguez (2026) describe as “the advantage that incumbents possess over non-incumbents through perks of office such as free postage, printing, support staff, name recognition and greater fund raising efficiency”. One key manifestation of incumbency advantage in electoral democracies is the control over state administrative resources (SARS). Venice Commission (2013) defines state administrative resources as “human, financial, material, in natura and other immaterial resources enjoyed by incumbents in elections, deriving from their control over public sector staff, finances and allocations, access to public facilities as well as resources enjoyed in the form of prestige or public presence that stem from their position as elected or public officers and which may turn into political endorsements or other forms of support”. SARs typically include institutional resources such as public utilities and physical infrastructure including buildings, sports facilities and bureaucracy; coercive resources such as military services, law enforcement agencies and their operatives; regulatory resources such as election management bodies, budgetary resources such as appropriation of public funds; media resources such as state-owned media organs; legislative resources such as policies and laws; as well as logistics resources such as vehicles, jets and helicopters. Studies have shown that in democratic countries with authoritarian character, political incumbents leverage their effective control of state apparatus to influence electoral outcomes and for regime continuity (Seeberg, 2021).

Since the democratic rebirth in 1999, abuse of SARs has remained a recurring issue in elections in Nigeria. Political incumbents use their positions to deploy state resources for their campaign use at the expense of the opposition even when the Electoral Act strongly prohibits this act. Deployment of political incumbency in election in Nigeria takes place at two levels, the state level and the federal level reflecting the bifurcated nature of the phenomenon. The two levels of incumbency, federal incumbency and state incumbency, are activated either singly or in combination by politicians to enhance their electoral fortunes. The August election in Osun State will see a dual incumbency advantage in which Accord will profit immensely from state incumbency while APC will seek to exploit federal incumbency.

The electioneering in Osun has witnessed open display of misuse of state administrative resources by the ruling Accord and Governor Adeleke. This comes in forms of domination of public media, monopolization of public infrastructure including sports complexes and subtle deployment of government vehicles and



public servants for campaign use. Campaign messages of opposition parties are hardly aired on state-owned media houses while public servants and public facilities are routinely made available for the campaign use of the Accord. Interestingly, from the key informant interviews, this misuse of SARs does not constitute a big infraction by the Accord in the reckoning of the people as the abuse has been normalized in the Nigerian electoral context. In the words of one informant:

Although the misuse of state administrative resources is illegal, I don't think opposition parties see it as a big problem or an unfair action against them because they believe that any party in power has the tendency to misuse state administrative resources. Did you hear APC complain of abuse of state administrative resources? They cannot complain because they did the same thing to PDP in 2022 by denying the party the use of both Freedom Park and Osogbo Township Stadium. So, it is payback time now (KII/Media practitioner/Osogbo/July 2026).

The history of gubernatorial election in Osun State however points to the ineffectiveness of political incumbency as an enabler of electoral success. Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola of PDP defeated incumbent Chief Adebisi Akande of AD in the 2003 election while Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola of Action Congress (AC) defeated Prince Oyinlola in 2007 in an election in which INEC declared incumbent Oyinlola the winner but the Appeal Court overturned INEC's declaration and declared Ogbeni Aregbesola as the true winner of the fiercely contested election. In 2022, the incumbent governor, Adegboyega Oyetola of APC lost to Ademola Adeleke of PDP.



INSECURITY: NATURE AND IMPACT ON POLLING

Adewara et al (2025) have shown that while incidents of election-based violence have progressively increased since the first transition elections of 1999, electoral violence significantly contributed to the poor voter turnout that defined the 2023 presidential election particularly in the South East and South West regions.

Whereas the South West region of the Nigerian federation, to which Osun State belongs, has been witnessing general insecurity in recent times like the other regions in the country, recent developments within Osun State suggest that the potent threats to the upcoming election may not be a deteriorated security situation. Although the state has recently witnessed pockets of violence involving rival cult groups and transport workers union, these incidents are not directly related to election. According to findings from the key informant interviews, rather than generalized insecurity, the behaviour of the main gladiators in the election particularly their perception of political power as a 'resource', their language of voter mobilization, their resort to hate speech and the use of inflammatory statements could generate tension that is capable of undermining electoral peace. For instance, campaign messages on the bill boards and posters of Accord and APC such as 'no vacancy in Osun', 'light has come, darkness gone forever' and 'rescue Osun' are inherently volatile and capable of inflaming passion. One informant submitted thus:

Personally, I don't think we will witness low voter turnout on account of insecurity. The kind of insecurity we experience in Osun is not one that can encourage voter abstinence. But the National Orientation Agency, political parties and INEC should intensify their voter education efforts as we approach the final days of the election. The messages in voter education and public enlightenment should emphasize civic obligation and violence-free election (KII/Acdemic/Osogbo/July 2026).



INTRA-PARTY COHESION

Literature on party politics and election clearly establishes a relationship between party organization and electoral success (Cirhan, 2024). The underlying assumption here is that the character of party leadership, party membership, equity, inclusivity as well as structure of decision making within political parties directly or indirectly shape party's stability, legitimacy and electoral prospects. In emergent democracies, the extent of internal democracy within political parties particularly in relation to selection of candidates for elective offices has been cited as a key factor that engenders instability within political parties.

In the upcoming Osun election, both the Accord and All Progressives Congress are enmeshed in internal schisms though of different kinds and intensity. Intra-party turbulence is more potent in APC. The vestiges of the controversy that followed the outcome of the party's nomination of its governorship candidate still linger within the party. The aftermath of the governorship primaries of the party saw the exit of three former members of the Osun State House of Assembly, Honourables Lekan Oyediran (Odo-Otin state constituency), Aleem Bakare (Ejigbo state constituency) and Folorunso Oladoyin (Ife south state constituency) who later served as Education Commissioner under Governor Adegboyega Oyetola; and a senior administration official under the Oyetola government (Jamiu Olawumi, Special Adviser on Education) from APC and their subsequent defection to Accord. The announcement by Senator Iyiola Omisore, former deputy governor to Chief Adebisi Akande and immediate past National Secretary of APC, (who contested the APC governorship primaries and was disqualified in controversial circumstances alongside other five contestants), that he would make his political structures available to support Governor Adeleke's candidacy constitutes a major setback for APC as it goes into the August election.

The leadership of APC in Osun State however appears not to be too bothered about Senator Omisore's duplicitous conduct and has mapped out strategies to ensure that the party gets the support of the people of Ile-Ife (Omisore's immediate political constituency) in the election. According to an informant:

Having directed his allies and loyalists to defect to Accord and having announced that he would support Adeleke's candidacy, we know that his soul has left APC. That actually constitutes anti-party activities for which he must be sanctioned. But because he has not formally announced his resignation from the party, we cannot bar him from party activities even though he has frustrated all frantic efforts to reach him for dialogue including efforts by our governorship candidate (KII/APC Official/Osogbo/July 2026).



There are however strong APC members who are grassroots mobilizers and are well connected to the locals in the Ife axis in particular and Ife/Ijesha district in general who the APC can rely on to offset the loss of Omisore's support. These include the deputy governorship candidate of APC, Engineer Benjamin Kayode Adereti, senator representing Osun East senatorial constituency, Senator Adenigba Fadahunsi, member representing Ife Central/Ife East/Ife North/Ife South federal constituency, Honourable Taofeek Bimbola Ajilesoro, and member representing Obokun/Oriade federal constituency, Honourable Oluwole Oke.

IDENTITY: ZONING, GENDER, RELIGION AND INCLUSIVITY

Identity politics is basically rooted in political mobilization on the basis of social identities such as gender, ethnicity, religion and region or race. At the level of election, identity manifests in the areas of participation, voting, leadership selection and resource allocation. Identity is capable of influencing both voters' preference and election outcome (Anisa, Azizah & Wijaya, 2024).

For the upcoming election, Accord and APC apparently adopted zoning formula which the two parties judge to be the best that can guarantee electoral success for them. The two parties not only have their governorship candidates from Osun West, the two deputy governorship candidates are also from the same senatorial district, Osun East. In fact, the deputy governorship candidates are from the same town, Ile-Ife. In this candidate pairing, Osun Central senatorial district and Osogbo, the state capital are ignored. This snub would however not raise any dust because the Osun Central zone has produced three out of the five governors elected in the state since 1999 namely, Chief Akande, Prince Oyinlola and Alhaji Oyetola. The outcome of the August election could however upset existing elite consensus. If Governor Adeleke wins the election, the governorship will naturally return to Osun Central and Osogbo will be largely favoured to produce the candidate having not produced governor since the state was created. By this calculation, the current National Secretary of APC, Senator Suraju Ajibola Basiru, is favoured to clinch APC ticket. Indeed, the covert gubernatorial ambition of the APC Secretary is at the heart of the self-styled '2030 tendency' group within the Osun APC. On the other hand, if the APC candidate wins the August election and he decides to seek re-election in 2030, his aspiration will certainly upset elite consensus. In terms of sectarian identity, the three leading parties (Accord, ADC and APC) reflect religious diversity in their gubernatorial tickets. All the three parties are fielding Muslim governorship candidates and Christian deputy governorship candidates.

There are only 2 female candidates on the list of 14 candidates for the election representing 14.3% of the candidates. This reflects sheer gender marginalization in a state that has produced only one female deputy governor, Mrs Titi Laoye-Tomori who deputised Ogbeni Aregbesola between 2010 and 2018. The fact that the two main political parties are not fielding female candidates points to the effective domination of Osun state politics by men. Only 2 out of the 25 commissioners (8 %) appointed by Governor Adeleke are women while there is no single woman in the current 26-member state legislature.

If the low representation of women in the candidates' list is disturbing, the non-representation of youths in the candidates of the 14 political parties is outrageous.



The youngest candidate on the list is 36 year old Adeshola Adeyera, deputy governorship candidate of the New Nigerian People's Party (NNPP), a fringe party with remarkably low electoral prospect. Persons with disabilities do not have representation on the list despite the rhetoric of inclusivity by the mainstream political parties. Accounting for the non-inclusion of PWDs on the list, a key informant suggests that:

The non-inclusion of persons with disabilities on the list can be attributed to the discriminatory practices and greed of politicians particularly party leaders. They know PWDs do not have money to induce party leaders so they are not ready to reckon with the aspiration of the PWDs whereas there are many PWDs that are extremely brilliant minds who have the capacity to change the narrative of Osun State. But due to political corruption and money politics, their aspirations are buried in the thick of greed (KII/Civil society activist/July 2026).

The respondent however commended the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the efforts in promoting inclusivity of voting during the election. According to him:

I commend the new Osun Resident Electoral Commissioner for her sense of inclusivity. She has interfaced several times with the PWDs community in the state. During the presentation of electronic voter register to the stakeholders in Osogbo, she showed the gathering the Brailles and other facilitative tools to enable PWDs to participate in the election. From our own end, we are doing a lot of aggressive campaign ahead of the election in collaboration with the Osun State Agency for People with Disabilities to mobilize the PWDs constituency for the purposes of political inclusion (KII/Civil society activist/Osogbo/July 2026).

INFORMATION DISORDER: MISINFORMATION AND GRAVE CONSEQUENCES



Information disorder, which Morse and Pratt (2025) describe as a media environment with low barriers to content creation, spread of misleading contents and amplification of sensational and distorted narratives, represents a potent threat to both electoral integrity and election management. Information disorder- be it disinformation, misinformation or malinformation- violates the electoral space, misleads the public and challenges the integrity of the electoral process (Aluko, 2026). Desperate and unscrupulous politicians are wont to leverage information disorder to secure political gains. Naturally distrustful of the conventional media, they appropriate social media to spread half-truths or outright falsehoods (Morse & Pratt, 2025).

The media environment in Osun state ahead of the election is heavily polluted. A lot of misinformation and unfounded insinuations are flying around particularly on social media. Two of these will be cited here. First is the allegation made by the representative of a political party (not competing in the August 15) at a recent stakeholders' dialogue organized by the Kukah Centre in Osogbo that the redeployment of former state Resident Electoral Commissioner, Dr. Mutiu Agboke, is part of the plot to rig the forthcoming election in favour of APC. Another rumour making the round is the allegation by opposition parties that APC has concluded plans to win the election through the court rather than through the ballot. Personal as well as official social platforms of political parties, politicians and their support groups including Facebook, WhatsApp and X are awash with fake and sensational stories that aim at discrediting rival candidates/political parties, election management body and security services.

Assessing the prevailing media context in the state ahead of the election, one informant submits that:

Media environment ahead of the poll is untidy and it will become worse in the coming days. Parties are deliberately dishing out fake news and use social media to spread the contents. Few compromised national newspapers are also helping those involved to misinform the people (KII/Media practitioner/Osogbo/July 2026).

CRITICAL RESIDUAL FACTORS THAT WILL SHAPE ELECTION UPSHOT

Apart from main issues that are likely to influence the outcome of the August 15 election discussed above, there are other secondary factors that are capable of shaping the outcome of the election. These include large resources, influence of personalities, sectarian identity, royal endorsement and influence of public sector workers.

Substantial finance is an enabler of electoral success in all electoral democracies. Political parties need resources for both routine operations and election campaigns. The two leading parties in the upcoming election have large pockets and the extent to which they can put this asset into good use for voter mobilization (and even inducement) will determine the extent of their electoral success. The outcome of the election will also be influenced by the force of personalities. Apart from the two gubernatorial gladiators, Governor Ademola Adeleke and Asiwaju Bola Oyebamiji, personalities like Senator Iyiola Omisore, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola, Alhaji Adegboyega Oyetola and Rt. Honourable Lasun Yusuff would one way or the other shape the outcome of the election. Leaving aside the fact that APC lost to PDP (Adeleke's former party) in Osun state during the 2023 presidential election, Adeleke is going into the August 15 election with very rich personal electoral credentials: he defeated Mudasiru Hussein, candidate of the ruling APC in the 2017 senatorial by election to elect successor to Senator Isiaka Adeleke (Governor Adeleke's elder brother) who died in April 2017; he narrowly lost the 2018 governorship election to Adegboyega Oyetola of the ruling APC through a controversial re-run election; and he defeated the then incumbent Oyetola in the 2022 governorship election. In terms of regime performance, observers say that Governor Adeleke has recorded modest achievements in the areas of infrastructure and revenue generation.

One significant instance of income generation was the concession secured on gold mining activities in the state by Segilola Resources Operating Limited. The state government raised many issues against the mining firm that bothered on taxation, shareholding/ownership, environmental concerns and federal-state control. The matter was resolved after the intervention of the Federal Ministry of Solid Minerals and two of the resolutions were that the firm should pay the state government PAYE tax liability approximating N1.2b as well as handing over relevant shareholding documents to Osun state government. In contrast, the APC candidate in the August election has modest political experience having only served as Finance commissioner under the Aregbesola and Oyetola administrations. Senator Iyiola Omisore is one of the most experienced politicians in Osun state with a political journey that traverses four political parties. He was the first deputy



governor of Osun state when the current republic was inaugurated in 1999. He was a member of the upper chamber of National Assembly between 2003 and 2011 and he is the immediate past National Secretary of the ruling APC. He is widely acknowledged as a grassroots politician with large structures and wide network within the state. Though Senator Omisore has not formally defected from APC (apparently to retain the patronage being enjoyed from the party), there are strong indications that he will support Accord in the election. Prince Oyinlola, former governor and former National Secretary of PDP elected to remain in the party when Governor Adeleke defected to Accord in November of last year. He has now teamed up with Oyo state governor, Seyi Makinde, in his newly adopted platform, Allied People's Movement (APM) under which he (Makinde) is aspiring to presidency in 2027. Interestingly, APM is fielding candidate for the August 15 election. There are unconfirmed reports that Governor Adeleke and Accord are in talks with Governor Makinde to help secure the support of Prince Oyinlola for Adeleke's candidacy.

However, developments as recent as this week indicate a major shift: the Oyinlola-led faction of the PDP has publicly withdrawn support for the incumbent and declared backing for APC candidate, Mr. Bola Oyebamiji, ahead of the August 15 poll. This political realignment underscores the fluidity of elite politics in Osun State and the potential impact of intra-party grievances on voter mobilization and turnout. CDD continues to monitor how this realignment affects grassroots structures, especially in Oyinlola's traditional strongholds in Osun Central, and what it means for the credibility and competitiveness of the contest.

There is a deep anti-Oyetola sentiment within Osogboland which significantly worked against the former governor and APC in his re-election bid in 2022. The root of the sentiment is traced to the alleged selective project execution under his four-year governorship particularly in the area of road construction which allegedly left Osogboland at a disadvantage. There are also allegations against Oyetola that he attempted to relocate some federal agencies located in Osogbo including the Airforce Research and Development Institute, Ibokun road, Osogbo. That sentiment still subsists and a common refrain among Osogbo people is that they rejected Oyetola himself in 2022 and they will reject the candidate (Oyebamiji) imposed by Oyetola in 2026. Osogbo has the highest number of registered voters in the voter register just released by INEC. Rt. Honourable Lasun Yusuf, a former Deputy Speaker of the lower chamber of the federal parliament and former governorship candidate under the Labour Party, is another strong personality that can shape the



outcome of the August election. He is now a member of Accord party where he contested the party's primaries for Osun Central senatorial election which he lost to Alhaji Gani Olaoluwa, a close ally of Governor Adeleke. He however remains in the Accord and the party relies on him to mobilize the people of Irepodun/Orolu axis to vote for Governor Adeleke in the August 15 election.

The Osun Muslim Community on July 12, 2026 hosted Governor Ademola Adeleke at a meeting in Osogbo. The meeting provided an opportunity for the governor to highlight some of the interventions his administration has made in support of the Islamic faith including the construction of a befitting Hajj Camp in the state and the building of a mosque inside the Government House as well as the formalization of the issuance of Islamic marriage certificates in Osun state. This interaction with the Osun Muslim body is regarded by many analysts as a booster for Governor Adeleke who has for long been associated with a dual sectarian identity.

Whereas, traditional rulers are not expected to be partisan and identify with electoral candidates, it is widely believed that many royal fathers in the state are overtly or covertly being pressured to support Governor Adeleke and given the strong influence of some of these natural rulers within their domains, their endorsement of candidates can impact the outcome of the election. The influence of public sector workers in the state will also be crucial to the outcome of the election. The organized labour in the state is still nursing animosity toward the APC over the delayed and modular salary model of Aregbesola and Oyetola administrations. If public servants carry this animosity to the poll on August 15, it will electorally injure APC. Government workers in the state now receive their emoluments fully and promptly.

ELECTION OUTCOME AND SPECTRE OF VIOLENCE

Theoretically, democracy and violence are opposed to one another. Democracy is not only a mechanism of institutionalized conflict resolution; it also delegitimizes violent acts that threaten the democratic process (Hegre, 2014). In democratic contexts, election affords citizens the opportunity to choose preferred leaders out of diverse preferences (Fjelde & Hoglund, 2022).

In broad terms, electoral violence involves the threat to use or actual use of physical and psychological force with the intention of injuring, killing or intimidating another person with the ultimate aim of influencing the outcome of an electoral contest (Alemika, 2011). Of the major forms of electoral violence cited in the literature (Frank, 2025; Diaz, 2026), two of them are relevant to this paper namely, physical violence and structural violence. While the former involves bodily harm or injury on political opponents, election officials or election facilities, the latter entails the use of institutional power to undermine the electoral aspiration of a political aspirant or electoral candidate.

It is not out of place to assume that the respective strongholds of key gladiators in the August 15 election represent potential flash points of violence. Working by this logic, Osun West and Osun East senatorial constituencies constitute the most vulnerable or susceptible to electoral violence. Osun West comprises towns like Ikire, Ede, Ejigbo and Iwo/Ile Ogbo. Ikire is the home town of APC candidate, Bola Oyebamiji and the town is touted as the safest stronghold of APC for the election. Ede is the home town of Governor Adeleke and the town has consistently been his electoral stronghold since his first shot at elective office in 2017. The governorship candidate of ADC, Najeem Folasayo Salam, is from Ejigbo town. The senatorial candidate of APC for the Osun West senatorial district, Akin Ogunbiyi, is from Iwo/Ile Ogbo axis. On the other hand, Osun East senatorial district consists of towns like Ife, Ilesha and Ibokun in Oriade local government. The deputy governorship candidates of the APC (Benjamin Kayode Adereti) and Accord (Prince Kola Adewusi) are from Ile-Ife town. So also is the Osun state Chairman of APC, Sooko Tajudeen Lawal. The National Secretary of ADC, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola is from Ilesha while the Director General of Bola Oyebamiji Campaign Council, Hon. Wole Oke is from Ibokun. Osun Central senatorial district made up of towns like Osogbo, Iragbiji, Ikirun, Okuku and Ila will be no less contentious. Osogbo is the home town of the APC Osun Central senatorial candidate, Rasheed Kunle Adegoke, SAN, senatorial candidate of Accord, Gani Olaoluwa, House of Representatives candidate of APC, Ibrahim Taofeek and House of Representatives candidate of Accord, Hon. Maruf Adewale. Iragbiji, headquarters of Boriye Local Government, is the home



Osun East senatorial district consists of towns like Ife, Ilesha and Ibokun in Oriade local government. The deputy governorship candidates of the APC (Benjamin Kayode Adereti) and Accord (Prince Kola Adewusi) are from Ile-Ife town. So also is the Osun state Chairman of APC, Sooko Tajudeen Lawal. The National Secretary of ADC, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola is from Ilesha while the Director General of Bola Oyebamiji Campaign Council, Hon. Wole Oke is from Ibokun. Osun Central senatorial district made up of towns like Osogbo, Iragbiji, Ikirun, Okuku and Ila will be no less contentious. Osogbo is the home town of the APC Osun Central senatorial candidate, Rasheed Kunle Adegoke, SAN, senatorial candidate of Accord, Gani Olaoluwa, House of Representatives candidate of APC, Ibrahim Taofeek and House of Representatives candidate of Accord, Hon. Maruf Adewale. Iragbiji, headquarters of Boriye Local Government, is the home town of former Governor Adegboyega Oyetola who is now the Leader of APC in Osun state. Ila is the home town of the deputy governorship candidate of ADC, Yemisi Temitope Agiri and House of Representatives candidate of Accord, Hon. Clement Ademola Akanni. While Ikirun has always been a strong electoral base of the progressives, recent alignments and realignments around Ikirun-Okuku corridor threaten that long-term voter loyalty. Okuku is the home town of Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola.

There is a sense in which the spate of violence witnessed across the state in the build up to the election can be regarded as warning signals that the outcome of the election may trigger violence. Following rising security concerns capable of undermining public peace, the Osun state police command issued an advisory to all political parties to suspend rallies and campaigns across Oriade Local Government Area in early June. The advisory was sequel to the non-cooperative attitude of some parties and their members to embrace peace (Vanguard, 2026). On Sunday 26 July, 2026, armed attackers invaded the collection centre for the Permanent Voter Cards located at Oyinlola DC School Ward 2, Okuku in Odo Otin Local Government Area carting away an unspecified number of voter cards after shooting sporadically into the air (The Nation, 2026). On 4 June, 2026, police confirmed that the chairman of Accord in Osogbo Local Government Area, Hon. Ashimiyu Ajibola was attacked around 11:50 pm around MDS area of the state capital in what looked like an attempted murder. Hon. Ajibola was rescued from his assailants by security operatives who took him to a medical facility for treatment (The Guardian, 2026). Interestingly, the two top political parties trade blame on the rising wave of violence ahead of the election. While Accord alleged that its members have sustained injuries from coordinated attacks by pro-Ambo (Bola Oyebamiji) armed thugs, the APC has also alleged that its members and supporters have been targets of attacks sponsored by Accord (The Punch, 2026).



In addition, it is an open fact in Osun state that there exists an unholy alliance between state and transport workers association that predates the current administration. This alliance represents a potential trigger of post-election violence which the security sector workers should pay due attention to. The recent crisis within the Osun state chapter of the National Union of Road Transport Workers could worsen as the election approaches. It is apparent that external actors both within the state and Abuja are interested in the crisis; and are thus supporting different factions of the leadership of the transporters body.

As a measure of stemming the crisis, the state government, following the resolution of the state's Security Council, suspended activities of the NURTW across the state even as the governor made it clear that the state did not dissolve the existing leadership of the union headed by Comrade Nurudeen Alowonle (Leadership, 2026). In a move that betrayed the internal schisms within the union, Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON), under whose authority management of motor parks is vested by the 1999 Constitution (as altered), swiftly appointed a caretaker committee to steer the affairs of the union under the chairmanship of Comrade Kazeem Oyewale popularly called 'Asiri Eniba', a known loyalist of former governor and Leader of APC in Osun state, Adegboyega Oyetola (Business Hallmark, 2026). The national chairman of the union, Mr. Musiliu Akinsanya, popularly called MC Oluomo, widely rumoured to be an ally of President Tinubu, subsequently inaugurated the caretaker committee in Abuja.

The National Orientation Agency, political parties and civil society organizations need to intensify advocacy for violence-free election. There is a need to compel greater accountability to the Peace Accord initiative instituted by the National Peace Committee headed by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. It is not enough to sign the Accord, every contestant who signs the document must commit to seeking formal or legal ways of resolving electoral matters. It is against this backdrop that the absence of the APC candidate at the signing of the Accord is unfortunate, though he was represented at the occasion. It is however gratifying that some civil society groups are making efforts in this direction. One of them is Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI). The organization organized Osun Election Peace and Security Summit in Osogbo on July 13, 2026 with the theme: safeguarding the 2026 Osun governorship election.



CONCLUSION

The August 15 election will certainly be an historic one. The Osun people are looking forward to the election that offers an opportunity for the Osun voters to demonstrate their long-held faith in democratic rule. The citizen enthusiasm to go to the poll is boosted by the preparedness and commitment of the election-related institutions including the election management body, judiciary, security agencies, media and civil society organizations to play their respective roles with a high sense of professionalism and responsibility. The chairman of INEC, Professor Joash Amupitan reiterated the preparedness of the election management body for the August 15 election during his meeting with stakeholders in Osogbo on July 29, 2026. The commission has fixed mock accreditation in 40 polling units across the three senatorial zones for August 1, 2026. It has since started the distribution of voter cards to new voters who registered during the last Continuous Voter Registration window and gave one extra day for the distribution even as the commission promised that it would issue replacement cards to voters whose cards were among those carted away by hoodlums at Odo Otin Local Government Area. The National Orientation Agency is to intensify its campaign for massive turnout by the people so that the election can record an impressive voter turnout. Given the criticality of voter turnout to the degree of legitimacy of an elected regime, it is important that intentional efforts are made to attain a voter turnout that is higher than the 42.3% recorded in the 2022 election which in itself was lower than 45.7% recorded in 2018. Security operatives now carry out constant surveillance across the state particularly in Osogbo, the state capital, while certain arrests have been made in respect of the attack at Odo Otin. The Tuesday 28 June, 2026 judgement of the Abuja Division of the Court of Appeal which set aside the judgement of the Federal High Court which had earlier ordered INEC to deregister five political parties including Accord and African Democratic Congress is a major boost for the Accord even as the verdict earned the judiciary commendation across the polity. Civil society groups are also intensifying their interventions particularly in the areas of advocacy for credible election, voter education and advocacy for violence-free poll. On its own, the media should intensify its voter education interventions with a view to sufficiently equipping the citizens to make an informed and wise choice.

Among the emerging issues on the August 15 election in the past week, five of them stand out. First is the arrest of the Secretary to the Osun State Government, Mr. Teslim Igbalaye on July 29. The top government official was arrested with five others at a private residence in Osogbo. According to the police, one of those arrested with Mr. Igbalaye at the building, Oladele Abiodun, is a criminal suspect. A sum of



N4, 810,500, a voter register, a laptop, one photocopy machine and one printer were allegedly recovered from the residence. Second was the adoption of President Bola Tinubu by the national leadership of Accord as its presidential candidate for the 2027 election at its meeting held in Osogbo on July 25, 2026. The third emerging issue is the deployment of a new commissioner of police, CP Samuel Erale Etaifo to Osun state to take charge of election security during the August 15 vote, a development that creates uncertainties about the status of CP Ibrahim Gotan as the commissioner of police in the state. Fourth is the freezing of the accounts of the Osun State Government by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on Wednesday August 5, 2026. In a release by the anti-graft agency, the placement of 'Post No Debit' order on the accounts became necessary following "the precipitate and unwarranted movement of funds from the accounts to different suspicious accounts since August 2, 2026". The freezing order was however lifted the following day following the intervention of President Bola Tinubu even though the presidential directive raised another question about the institutional autonomy of the EFCC. Fifth, again on August 5, the campaign for the August 15 election witnessed the involvement of external sub-national actors as Governors Monday Okpebholo, Usman Ododo and Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Edo, Kogi and Ondo states respectively stormed the Osun state capital to mobilize non-indigenes resident in Osun state to vote for the APC candidate, Munirudeen Bola Oyebamiji at the election. The state may play host to more external actors when the two leading parties hold their mega rallies which will be attended by the national leaders of the two parties. These five issues are bound to shape the conduct and outcome of the August 15 election to varying degrees.

The election will largely be a two-horse race between Accord and APC and the two parties have continued to map out strategies that are capable of delivering electoral victory come August 15. The outcome of the election will either endorse continuity or effect regime change.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as the institutional regulator of the election process must demonstrate greater efficiency, professionalism and non-partisanship in the Osun election. The commission must improve on its logistics management in a manner that ensures timely and seamless delivery of election materials on election day. The commission should also address the technology versus trust paradox. Increased adoption of technology in the election process must engender greater citizen trust. There is a need to firm up the functionality of BVAS and IReV as well as other technological tools deployed for election conduct. There should be adequate provision of assistive technologies by the commission to facilitate the participation of PWDs in the election.

All political parties competing in the upcoming election must show high commitment to violence-free election. They must demonstrate decorum and restraint in their actions and activities particularly during rallies and campaigns. They must not only sign the Peace Accord but must commit themselves to work by the spirit of the Accord.

Security operatives must demonstrate greater sense of professionalism in the discharge of their election duties. They must remain non-partisan and ensure that the voting environment is safe for voters and election workers.

The security services must be deliberate in their efforts to curb vote trading during the election. They must be very vigilant to frustrate the plan of some unscrupulous persons that would want to compromise the election with voter inducement. One key shortcoming identified with the Ekiti governorship election of June 2026 was vote trading. Security personnel should spare no effort to ensure that vote buying and selling are not allowed to compromise the Osun election.

Stakeholders must continue to work together to ensure massive turnout of voters to cast the ballot. INEC, NOA and political parties should individually and collectively embark on resilient drives to mobilize all categories of voters including the vulnerable constituencies- youth, women and persons with disabilities (PWDs) for the election.

Lastly, there is a need by the state police command to closely monitor the activities of the road transport workers union for two key reasons. First is the critical involvement of the union in election logistics particularly on the election day. Second is the need to ensure that members of the rival factions within the union do not engage in acts that can compromise electoral peace.



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ABOUT CDD-WEST AFRICA

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa) was established in 1997 as an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit organisation working to promote democratic governance, human security, and sustainable development across the West African sub-region.

With a core mandate to serve as a catalyst for change, CDD-West Africa brings together policymakers, civil society actors, academics, and development partners to advance evidence-based solutions to the region's most pressing challenges. The organisation's work spans rigorous research, strategic policy analysis, advocacy, capacity building, and civic engagement.

Through its programming, CDD-West Africa has led pioneering initiatives in election monitoring, anti-corruption, peacebuilding, countering disinformation, and strengthening democratic institutions. Its thematic focus areas include governance and transparency, peace and security, digital democracy, political inclusion, and the rule of law.

Headquartered in Abuja, Nigeria, with a strong regional network, CDD-West Africa plays a critical convening role in shaping democratic discourse and policy in West Africa. The Centre remains committed to amplifying citizen voices, defending civic space, and building a resilient, just, and democratic future for the region.



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