



# PREVIEWING POSTPONED POLLS: NIGERIA'S STATE ELECTIONS

March 2023





---

# ABOUT CDD

---

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 organisation. The purpose was to mobilise global opinion and resources for democratic development and provide an independent space to reflect critically on the challenges posed to the democratisation and development processes in West Africa.

CDD West Africa does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CDD or West African Insights.

This paper may not be reproduced in whole or in part, in any form, in any registered online or print publication without express permission from the Centre for Democracy and Development.

The CDD appreciates the efforts of Dengiyefa Angalapu, Nichole Grossman, Jamie Hitchen and Pelumi Obisesan in the drafting of this report.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a week delay, on 18 March voters in 17 states will head to the polls to elect new governors regardless of the outcome. In the remaining 11 governorship races incumbents will be on the ballot. In addition to these 28 gubernatorial contests, all of Nigeria's states will conduct state house of assembly elections. Credible polls are vital but will be challenged by the threat of violence, logistical obstacles linked to insecurity and cash and fuel scarcity, and decreased trust in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) following the delays and technical issues that undermined the polls on 25 February.

This Centre for Democracy and Development report provides analysis of six key themes likely to shape state-level elections in Nigeria, previews how the contests might unfold in 14 states and offers some initial projections as to factors that will likely determine the outcome and credibility of the polls.

The six themes identified are identity, insecurity, institutional preparedness, intra and inter-party disputes, voter participation and the question of personalities versus parties. It contends that whilst identity politics is sometimes more visible at the national level, state politics is arguably its main domain with candidate selection requiring careful consideration of one, or a combination of, ethnicity, religion and senatorial district zone depending on the state. Analysis of the 25 February polls also illustrates the important role of personalities over political agenda, as presidential backing for a candidate in a state did not always translate down the ballot. Fractious party primaries leading to intra-party disputes and the fact that 60% of contests will not have a sitting governor on the ticket, will also fuel strong inter-party competition in a number of states.

The frustration expressed by Nigerians at the conduct of the INEC during the 25 February elections could impact on the polls. The timely arrival of materials, improved functionality of technology and quick action against electoral officials caught being engaged in malpractice will be critical in countering suggestions that INEC is subject to the whims and caprices of some state governments. Wider insecurity, and election-specific disruptions, portends dangers for the ability to conduct credible elections and increases the likelihood of inconclusive results and the need for supplementary elections. Citizen participation may be impacted by these two factors, with the continued scarcity of fuel and naira increasing the risk that those who do are incentivised to do so.

Rivers, Lagos, Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto are key states to watch but there will also be closely contested races in Cross River, Delta, Enugu and Zamfara, whilst Adamawa could see the election of Nigeria's first female governor. The southeast geo-political zone represents the best chance for the Labour Party to build on the gains made during the 25 February polls.

Our analysis enables us to make some predictions on how the elections will unfold. Closely contested races will likely increase election-related violence; INEC staff will be targets of intimidation and co-option from politically aligned actors; with efforts to manipulate voting processes most likely to target voter suppression in strongholds of political opponents through ballot box snatching and the destruction of election materials.

Based on the most recent off-cycle governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun, turnout could be higher than the 29% recorded for the general election but there will be significant variation between states and geopolitical zones with the competitiveness of the race and insecurity risks being defining factors. Caution must also be exercised in reading too much into presidential performance in a state when seeking to ascertain the credibility of the governorship outcome. Our analysis of the National Assembly results shows important variation in who voters cast ballots for across the three races. This is especially key as misinformation and disinformation that amplifies divisive identity rhetoric at the state level will continue to be a feature of the electoral environment.



---

# INTRODUCTION

---

Three weeks after presidential and National Assembly elections, and a week later than initially planned, Nigerians will return to the polls on 18 March to elect governors in 28 states<sup>1</sup> and members of all 36 state houses of assembly. The remaining eight states choose their governors in off-cycle elections, three of which are scheduled for November 2023.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) took the decision to move the polls from 11 to 18 March, following the decision of the Court of Appeal on 6 March to deny presidential election litigants the chance to forensically assess the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines and instead mandate INEC to upload the data contained about accredited voters and ballots cast. INEC stated that, despite the decision, it would not be able to reconfigure the devices in time for polls to take place as originally scheduled.

Voters in 17 states will be electing a new governor regardless of the outcome, with the remaining 11 sitting governors seeking re-election due to term limit constraints. But many former, or outgoing, governors remain highly influential figures in state politics, often handpicking their successors and playing a critical role in determining the outcome. It has been argued that “a governors character and intentions are the most important factors in determining a state government’s performance”<sup>2</sup>. A point that underscores the critical importance of these polls.

Credible polls are vital but will be challenged by the threat of violence, logistical obstacles linked to insecurity and cash and fuel scarcity, and decreased trust in INEC following polls on 25 February that were undermined by delays and technical issues. This briefing paper identifies six general themes that will shape the sub-national polls on 18 March – insecurity, identity, institutional preparedness, intra and inter-party disputes, voter participation and the question of personalities versus parties – as well as providing brief analysis on half of the 28 state governorship races.

## FRAMING THE VOTE

---

### *Identities*

Beyond competency and capacity considerations, ethnic and religious concerns are shaping discourse around the suitability of candidates for governorship roles across Nigeria. In fact, whilst identity politics is sometimes more visible at the national level, state politics is arguably the main arena of identity politics. Candidate selection considers ethnicity, religion and even senatorial district zoning, with these three identities, or a combination, having varying levels of importance in different states to prospective voters. Generational identity has also been a more prominent feature of the 2023 election cycle in Nigeria but, as the results of the presidential election illustrate, Nigeria’s youth are not a monolithic entity when it comes to political interests and preferences. For many voters, including youth, the established identity markers described above remain pertinent shapers in their electoral choice.

---

1. 18 states are controlled by the All Progressives Congress and 10 by the People’s Democratic Party.

2. Africa Research Institute. 2016. ‘State(s) of crisis: sub-national government in Nigeria’. Available at <https://www.africaresearchinstitute.org/newsite/publications/states-of-crisis-sub-national-government-in-nigeria/>



Historically marginalised groups that have consistently been denied access to power – minority ethnic groups, women, non-indigenous settlers and youth – will again be on the periphery in these elections. Nigeria has one of the lowest rates of female parliamentary representation in Africa; figures that have got worse in 2023 with just three senators and 13 house of representative members elected so far. Of 420 gubernatorial candidates, only 26 are women. Only one is running on a major party ticket, the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate in Adamawa state. A win would see her become Nigeria’s first female-elected governor since the return to democracy in 1999.

### *Insecurity*

Despite limited attacks by non-state actors during the presidential elections, banditry and vigilante groups in the northwest and terrorist organisations – Islamic State in West Africa Province and Boko Haram – in the northeast continue to be a potential threat to the peaceful conduct of the elections. In the southeast, the threat of attacks by members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network, which have impacted significantly on participation in recent off-cycle gubernatorial races, are also a continuing risk. The southwest experienced the most reported election-day violence, with political thugs disrupting polling in Lagos in particular, although more incidents were recorded in northwest, south-south and southeast geo-political zones. A reality that will likely be replicated during the gubernatorial elections.


However, data from the Nigeria Election Violence Tracker shows that in the week after election day - 26 February to 3 March - the rate of violent incidents reduced. There were six violent incidences resulting in six deaths, as opposed to 15 incidents and 41 deaths the week before<sup>3</sup>. Notwithstanding sporadic clashes in Lagos, where significant property damage was done during street protests after election results were announced, attacks across the country in the post-election period have been less frequent and less violent. Almost all have been in reaction to contested results or concerns about the fairness and credibility of the election process.

On the day of presidential elections, violence was frequent with the intention of discouraging specific voters from exercising their franchise. Unlike the attacks leading up to the elections, which were executed by organised terror groups and non-state actors, the attacks on election day were largely attributed to political thugs. Voter intimidation and voter suppression were allowed to occur in a small number of polling stations in several states, with observers suggesting that security personnel chose not to engage with political thugs. As the nation prepares for the state-level elections, it is reasonable to expect a more muted approach to political violence in the run-up to the polls, but it could become increasingly pronounced on voting day itself, and in the aftermath of polling, depending on the perceived credibility of the process and outcome.

Groups such as Yan Sakai, the Civilian Joint Task Force, Neighbourhood Watch, *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu* have been, and can be, armed and deployed by state governors and their allies to perpetrate electoral violence. Alongside these are more conventional political thugs, paid to disrupt polls or intimidate political opponents. The insecurity they create itself portends dangers for the ability to conduct credible elections and increases the likelihood of inconclusive results and the need for supplementary elections. Politically sponsored violence can be a determining factor in deciding the outcome of the polls and a

---

3. See 'Nigeria Elections Violence Tracker' - <https://acleddata.com/nigeria-election-violence-tracker/>



---

contributor to worsening insecurity in the aftermath.

The federal government is committed to ensuring that the 400,000 plus security personnel that were deployed for the general election will again be deployed again for the gubernatorial elections. However, the continued fuel and cash scarcity being experienced across the country, despite the Supreme Court ruling that old notes could be used until the end of 2023<sup>4</sup>, and the Central Bank's statement on 13 March to abide by the ruling, will likely impact on effective deployment and on their ability to effectively guarantee a violence-free environment within which voters can exercise their franchise. In previous elections cycles, security agencies have also been implicated in, or accused of, partisan enforcement. Sustained allegations that they have engaged in electoral violence at the behest of politicians or looked the other way while thuggery erodes order have not gone away. In fact, during the just concluded presidential elections APC thugs were alleged to have invaded polling units in Kano under the watch, and inaction, of security agencies.

### *Inter and intra-party disputes*

Inter and intra-party battles were key shapers of the presidential and National Assembly elections, and they will continue to play a prominent role during gubernatorial polls. Currently all but one of the states is controlled by either the APC or PDP<sup>5</sup>. The arguments which fuelled national intra-party conflict – such as presidential power rotation between the north and the south – are less relevant to gubernatorial contests but state-level disputes over the zoning of candidates and factions caused by the imposition of aspirants, often by outgoing governors, are important. This is most relevant for the 17 outgoing governors who have served their constitutionally allocated two terms in office and need to ensure that their political party retains power in the state to protect their own personal interests. Splits within parties linked to contentious primaries have seen unsuccessful candidates seek a new political home, sometimes in smaller parties. In other instances failed primary candidates have backed political opponents.

There will also be a renewed focus on inter-party contests, given the power governors can exercise in the state over both development and governance. State Houses of Assembly are often controlled by the sitting governor. These contests for control will drive political violence and online violent rhetoric on closed messenger applications like WhatsApp during and after polling, and increase the risk of election processes being manipulated.

### *Personalities versus parties*

Nigeria's presidential election was historic for its high level of competitiveness with each of the three leading candidates – Bola Ahmed Tinubu (APC), Peter Obi (Labour Party) and Atiku Abubakar (PDP) – winning 12 sub-national units each<sup>6</sup> with Kano won by the New Nigeria People Party aspirant Rabiu Kwankwaso. But only Tinubu reached the constitutional requirement for vote share, winning 25% of votes cast in 29 states, whilst Atiku secured the figure in just 21 states and Obi managed it only in 16 states according to the results announced by INEC that are being disputed in court. The presidential results map illustrates a clear geographic division broadly along ethnic, but also religious, lines with some notable exceptions. But a look at the results from National Assembly votes held the

---

4. Adesomoju, A. 2023. 'Supreme court extends old naira notes validity until December'. Premium Times. 3 March. Available at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/585884-supreme-court-extends-old-naira-notes-validity-till-december.html>

5. Anambra is governed by the All Progressives Grand Alliance.

6. Bola Tinubu and Atiku Abubakar won 12 states each, while Peter Obi won 11 states plus the Federal Capital Territory.



---

same day suggest that the presidential pattern may be less relevant to more localised political races, such as governorship and state house of assembly polls.

The Labour Party's legislative candidates won 35 of the 327 House of Representatives seats so far announced, and seven of the 101 Senate seats declared<sup>7</sup>, suggesting that the performance of their presidential candidate should not be taken as being reflective of the overall strength of the party. Despite Obi securing the most votes in Plateau, Lagos, Delta and Cross Rivers for example, the party won no senatorial seats in the four states and only 8 of the available 52 house of representative seats, five of which were in Lagos. This is an important reminder of the role personalities play in voters decision and an illustration that the party's efforts to get its supporters to vote 'top to bottom' was not realised in practice. This is evidenced not just in the performance of Labour Party in the legislative polls.

Bola Tinubu failed to win the presidential vote in states like Lagos, Yobe, Katsina and Nasarawa. However, his party was still able to dominate in the legislative races winning 8 of the 11 so far declared senatorial seats and 36 of the 50 house of representative contests. In Katsina and Yobe, it was the PDP presidential aspirant who was able to win the most presidential votes, but his party could not repeat that performance in more localised state races. On the flip side, whilst Atiku was unable to win the most votes in Rivers state, a result likely shaped by his falling out with outgoing state governor Nyesom Wike, the PDP won 81% of the house of representative seats and all three senate races. The data highlights the importance of personalities in political choice both at national and sub-national levels. This, more so than loyalty to a particular party – Nigerian political parties do not have distinct ideologies in the main – will be key to understanding how the gubernatorial races will play out across the country.


### *Institutional preparedness*

There has been significant frustration expressed by many Nigerians about the conduct of the 25 February elections. The presidential candidates who placed second and third are both challenging the announced outcome in the courts, whilst 33 house of representative races and 8 senatorial seats remain undeclared or inconclusive. The presidential petitions are the reason why the gubernatorial elections were pushed back a week, as INEC must first back-up the data stored on the BVAS machines and make it available to the litigants, before it can re-programme them for the governorship polls. Given the requirement of technological accreditation laid out in the Electoral Act of 2022, the elections cannot be held if these machines are not recalibrated.

INEC tardiness in opening the polls, in part as a result of challenges with the distribution of sensitive materials, issues linked to the use of technology for the accreditation of voters and collation of the results and question marks about the integrity of some of its state-level and ad-hoc staff have led to reduced public confidence in its ability to conduct credible elections. Although INEC has given assurances that the gubernatorial elections will not experience the same hiccups as the general election many of the same factors are at play.

---

7. 33 House of Representative elections and eight Senate contests are yet to be announced or have been declared inconclusive.



---

With an additional week to prepare for the gubernatorial and state house of assembly polls, INEC has more time to ensure that materials reach polling units in a timely manner, but this does not mean they will do so. The complexities of reaching communities in riverine areas, or those inaccessible except by motorbike with sensitive materials that need to be secured at all times, continues to be a logistical headache for INEC and one which is further challenged by the wider security environment across the country and worsening fuel scarcity and continued naira scarcity.

The effective use of technology will arguably be the area most scrutinised given the failure of the INEC results viewing platform (IReV) platform to deliver the promised real-time transmission of polling unit results in a transparent way. After an elongated silence following the conclusion of presidential polls, INEC stated that technological glitches were to blame but, by then, unproven rumours that the lack of results was part on an effort to rig the outcome were the dominant narrative, particularly online. With question marks about the deployment of the BVAS and IReV, INEC now has a perception of bias challenge to overcome.

In some states, it goes beyond a perception of bias to a reality. The Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) for Abia and Sokoto states have been suspended following the presidential polls for “endangering the electoral process”<sup>8</sup>. The former was accused of bungling the logistical arrangements ahead of the polls, the latter for failing to make declarations of results for National Assembly races. RECs are appointed by the president and approved by the National Assembly and their problematic performance can have significant impacts. It can lead to suggestions that INEC is subject to the whims and caprices of state governments, that negatively impact voter confidence and the election’s credibility, potentially breeding instability and potentially electoral violence in concerned areas.

Contestation of electoral outcomes are inevitable in Nigeria, and the recent judicial rulings in this regard indicates that the outcome declared by INEC can be successfully overturned by the courts. The outcome of the 2019 off-cycle election in Bayelsa, initially won by the APC, was reversed by the Supreme Court who awarded the victory to the PDP candidate, not on the basis of the votes cast but on the legality of the APC deputy governorship candidate<sup>9</sup>. An ongoing challenge over the outcome of the Osun elections is also now with Nigeria’s apex court. Whilst ensuring that electoral outcomes are in line with the law are critical, the judiciary is not immune from political influence, and changes to electoral outcomes on technical grounds further reduce trust in INEC and the wider electoral process.

### *Popular participation*

Just as it was for the presidential election, turnout will be a key element that shapes the outcome and credibility of the governorship elections. 29% of Nigerians with a permanent voters card – more than six million remained uncollected by the time voting took place – cast a ballot in the president and National Assembly polls continuing a pattern that has seen voter turnout decline each cycle from above 50% in 2011. But, in 2019, many state races saw increased rather than diminished engagement from voters with Taraba, Sokoto and Borno all recording turnout above 50%, exceeding the number of voters who cast ballots in the presidential polls in the state. However, there were also states Abia (23%) and Lagos (15% of accredited voters) which saw less voter engagement for gubernatorial polls than for the presidential races. An important reminder that a number of factors and considerations shaping voter participation and that these can differ across states.

Vote buying, although more creative during the presidential polls with food and material goods replacing

---

8. Are, J. 2023. ‘INEC withdraws Abia and Sokoto RECs for ‘endangering electoral process’. The Cable. 8 March. Available at <https://www.thecable.ng/inec-withdraws-abia-sokoto-recs-for-endangering-electoral-process>

9. Adesomoju, A. 2020. ‘Supreme court nullifies Bayelsa governor-elect’s election, declares PDP winner’. The Punch. 13 February. Available at <https://punchng.com/breaking-supreme-court-nullifies-bayelsa-governor-elects-election-declares-pdp-winner/>





cash in some instances, appears to have reduced in 2023, with CDD observers only recording instances of it happening in 12% of polling units<sup>10</sup>. However, and ironically, the lack of an incentive to vote may be one of the factors that explain the low national turnout recorded despite what appeared to have been renewed political engagement from younger voters in particular, and anecdotal reports of long queues in parts of the country on polling day. Questions marks about the performance of outgoing President Buhari in his core voter base in northwest, resulting in the opposition PDP winning in states that were previously part of the 'Buhari coalition', and concerns that the register is not reflective of Nigeria's population could also explain low levels of engagements<sup>11</sup>. Similar factors may shape popular participation in the 2023 gubernatorial races, with perceived competitiveness of the race, the risk of actors violently disrupting the process<sup>12</sup> and the scarcity of fuel and naira which continue to make life difficult for ordinary residents, all important considerations.


## CONTESTS TO WATCH

### *Abia*

Abia is a state that may suffer from voter apathy in the gubernatorial elections. Issues during the general election with the transmission of the results led many to believe that their votes were not counted. Some have advocated for sitting out this election while others have threatened violence if INEC fails to deliver again.<sup>13</sup> The APC had sought to make inroads to the southeast through the state but, despite a former governor running for senate and leading the party's campaign, president-elect Tinubu did not do well in the presidential election leading some to blame his poor showing for the party's poor performance in legislative races.<sup>14</sup> The Labour Party was the biggest beneficiary, winning six of the eight house of representative seats and a senatorial race. Its governorship candidate, Alex Otti, has a significant level of support which could see him defeat the PDP and APC candidates in the state.

The PDP had to replace their candidate after the death of Prof. Uche Ikonne in January 2023. An elongated and public intra-party argument ensued with agreement finally reached on Okey Ahiwe, the current governor's chief of staff while retaining Dr Jasper Uche, Ikonne's former running mate, on the ticket. This choice was viewed by many as insensitive, given Uche's open campaigning for the governorship role during Ikonne's illness<sup>15</sup>. Internal party disputes also shaped the selection of the APC candidate, with parallel primaries producing two candidates with the decision on the valid candidate,

10. Centre for Democracy and Development. 2023. 'Four key issues that defined Nigeria's 2023 presidential and legislative election process'. Available at <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/reports/four-key-issues-that-defined-nigeria-s-2023-presidential-and-legislative-election-process/>
11. Abiru, F. 2023. 'Why was voter turnout in the 2023 general election so low?'. Stears. 10 March. Available at <https://www.stears.co/premium/article/why-was-voter-turnout-in-the-2023-general-elections-so-low/>
12. Turnout for the off-cycle Anambra state elections in 2021 was just 10%, after threats were made by IPOB towards anyone engaging in the process.
13. This Day. 2023. 'Ensure next Abia governor emerges via credible, transparent poll, NUJ urged INEC'. 14 March. Available at <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/13/ensure-next-abia-gov-emerges-via-credible-transparent-poll-nuj-urged-inec/>
14. Emeruwa, C. 2023. '2023 presidential election: Nwosu blames Tinubu's loss in Abia on unpopularity of state APC leaders,' Daily Post Nigeria (blog), 13 March. Available at <https://dailypost.ng/2023/03/13/2023-presidential-election-nwosu-blames-tinubus-loss-in-abia-on-unpopularity-of-state-apc-leaders/>.
15. This Day. 2023. 'PDP gambles with another emergency candidate in Abia'. 14 March. Available at <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/02/26/pdp-gambles-with-another-emergency-candidate-in-abia/>.



---

Ikechi Emenike, reached by the Supreme Court in February<sup>16</sup>.

### Adamawa

Adamawa, the home of PDP presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar, will see a closely contested race between the APC challenger and PDP incumbent and their aligned supporters. The APC is running the only major party female candidate in the country, Aishatu Binani, for the post, which has garnered strong support from women's groups and who would become Nigeria's first elected female governor. On 5 March, the Labour Party gubernatorial candidate dropped his candidacy in support of Binani. However, she was recently recorded saying that she plans to win at all costs, even if it means stealing the election.<sup>17</sup> Her opponent, incumbent Governor Ahmadu Finitiri, has been endorsed by five candidates from other parties<sup>18</sup> who have asked their supporters to vote PDP in this election. Violence in the state was minimal in the lead up to the presidential elections, a pattern that has continued in the post-election period. While terrorist attacks have picked up in bordering Borno state in the last two weeks, a similar spike has not been observed in Adamawa.

### Anambra

Anambra will not be holding a gubernatorial election on March 18. Nonetheless, its state assembly races are sure to be contentious. Anambra's current governor, Charles Soludo, is engaged in an open feud with Peter Obi, the Labour Party presidential candidate who hails from the state and was governor from 2003-2010. This feud was on display during the presidential campaign, when Soludo wrote an open letter disputing Obi's claims of investment in the state and accused Obi's followers of harassing him and his family, fueling the flames between the two camps.<sup>19</sup> The national assembly elections resulted in a win for the Labour Party which took five seats in the house of representatives and two senatorial seats, with the ruling All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), winning just four seats.

This outcome has only heightened the tension between the two politicians and their supporters. Soludo has accused of the Labour Party of seeking control of the state house of assembly in order to facilitate his impeachment and has mobilised his entire political machinery to sweeping the state house of assembly elections. There is a risk that the intensity of political contestation will increase pressure on electoral officials whose ability to remain neutral is in question. The PDP has called for the REC, Queen Elizabeth Agwu, to be removed from office following irregularities during the general election. Concerns about the independence of INEC officials may lead to violence at polling units in the state should more irregularities occur.<sup>20</sup> Wider insecurity also remains a threat to the polls, however, despite several attacks on police stations in the run up to the presidential polls, election day was largely calm in the state.

### Bauchi

The historical doctrine of *Akasa-atsare-araka*, which translates to 'one-man-one-vote' has often been cited as a reason for the fairly erratic and unpredictable results from the state. This

- 
16. Ejekwonyilo, A. 2023. 'Ex-minister loses as Supreme Court affirms Emenike' <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/580864-ex-minister-loses-as-supreme-court-affirms-emenike-abia-apc-governorship-candidate.html>
  17. Sahara Reporters. 2023. 'Leaked video: I'll win election at all costs, even by theft - Adamawa APC governorship candidate, Binani'. 8 March. Available at <https://saharareporters.com/2023/03/08/leaked-video-ill-win-election-all-cost-even-theft-adamawa-apc-governorship-candidate>
  18. The five parties are the Allied People's Movement, All Progressives Grand Alliance, National Rescue Movement, Zenith Labour Party and Africa Democratic Congress.
  19. 'Soludo's statement on Peter Obi,' Punch Newspapers (blog), 15 November 2022. Available at <https://punchng.com/full-text-soludos-statement-on-peter-obi/>.
  20. The News Chronicle. 2023. 'Remove Anambra REC now, PDP tells INEC chairman, Mahmood'. accessed March 14, 2023, <https://www.thenews-chronicle.com/remove-anambra-rec-now-pdp-tells-inec-chairman-mahmood/>.



---

was notable during the 2019 elections, when the APC won the presidential results and a majority in the state house of assembly, despite the PDP winning the governorship elections by unseating an incumbent in the process.

Ahead of the 2023 governorship race, it is a straight contest between the incumbent PDP governor and a strong APC challenger. PDP's Bala Mohammed is a former FCT minister who unsuccessfully sought the PDP presidential ticket ahead of the elections, while APC's Sadique Abubakar is a former Chief of Air Staff who served for the first five years of the present administration. Abubakar has also been able to rely on the strong support of former Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara, as well as former governor and PDP party chair, Adamu Mu'azu. This is why, despite the PDP winning the presidential result and gaining a majority of national assembly seats (2 of 3 senators and 7 of 12 representatives<sup>21</sup>), the contest is still expected to be similar to the highly contested 2019 elections which Mohammed won by under 15,000 votes after initially inconclusive results in the Tafawa Balewa and Ningi LGAs.

The role the military and security agencies will play in the elections could be defining, with allegations that the APC candidate has imported security actors loyal to him to support his bid for office. The role of non-state actors will also be critical, as political thugs such as Sara Suka boys have played significant roles in previous polls. Violence has already been a feature of the campaign with an attack in Alkaleri LGA during a visit by the APC candidate injuring at least 15. INEC officials are likely to face intimidation at the hands of these actors on election day and during the announcement of results.

### *Cross River*

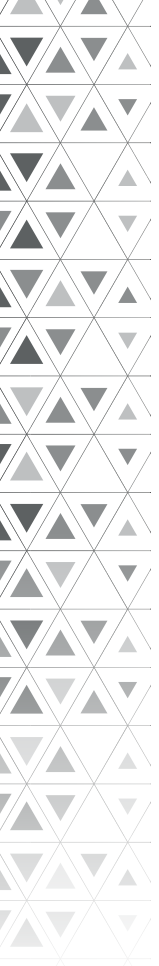
Governor Benedict Ayade is term-limited and cannot seek re-election for a third term. He won 73% of the vote in 2019 and his then party, the PDP, won every seat in the state house of assembly along with all three senate seats. But, after Ayade defected to the APC in May 2021, providing the party with a foothold in the south-south zone, a wave of further defections gave the APC control of the state house of assembly and half of the federal house of representative seats. The federal legislative candidates outperformed the presidential nominee in the state, by winning two of three senate seats and five of eight federal constituencies. This recent result, coupled with the historical strength of the PDP, means that it is likely still a two-horse race between APC and PDP.

Arguments over the zoning of the governorship candidate to Cross River South senatorial district, which last produced the governor in 2007, led to intra-party contests in the selection of candidates. Neither major party closed their primaries to non-south candidates but, while the APC ended up nominating Bassey Otu from the south, the PDP chose Sandy Ojang Onor from the central district. Both are former senators. Otu was selected as a "consensus" candidate by the APC, but divisions remain visible with Usani Uguru Usani, a former cabinet minister and one of the four leading contenders, leaving the party to contest on the People's Redemption Party ticket. The unpopularity of the outgoing governor, further demonstrated by his failure to win the Cross River North senatorial seat on 25 February<sup>22</sup>, presents a further challenge for the APC candidate with voters equating his performance with that of the party. The church is also playing a role in the election with

---

21. The APC was still competitive – winning the other senate seat and the other five of the 12 representatives seats.

22. Premium Times. 2023. 'Governor Ben Ayade loses senatorial election in Cross River'. 27 February. Available at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-south-regional/584852-governor-ben-ayade-loses-senatorial-election-in-cross-river.html>



a circular dated 6 March emanating from the Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria, Cross Rivers branch endorsing the PDP candidate and calling all their members across the state to vote for him.

A close race is expected between the PDP and APC with other parties capable of playing a spoiler role. The tight contest in the state increased the risks of violence. Inter-communal crises and cult violence have been a factor in previous elections and 16 persons were arrested for engaging in election violence in Obudu LGA following the February polls.<sup>23</sup>

### *Delta*

Ifeanyi Okowa, incumbent governor and the PDP vice-presidential nominee in the recently concluded 2023 presidential elections, is standing down after two terms at the helm. Although Okowa won 80% of the vote in 2019, with the PDP dominating state and federal legislative contests, he was unable to deliver his state for Atiku in 2023, with Peter Obi gaining 56% of the presidential votes cast in the state. However Obi's success did not translate 'down ballot' for legislative Labour Party candidates – they won only two of ten house of representative seats and no senators – a pattern that is likely to be repeated with state races, with the APC and PDP candidates leading a field of 17 gubernatorial aspirants.

Identity considerations are not pronounced in the state, with all major political parties having managed to keep to informal zoning and ethnic balance arrangements in selecting aspirants. Sheriff Oborewori (PDP), Ovie Omo-Agege (APC), Chief Great Ogboru (All Progressives Grand Alliance) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) contestant, Olorogun Kenneth Gbagi, are all Urhobo from the Delta Central senatorial district. In further adherence to the informal identity provisions, the APC and the PDP both picked deputies from the northern district. However, Okowa allegedly picked Sheriff Oborewori against the wishes of many of the political bigwigs in the state including his erstwhile godfather and former governor, James Ibori. This situation has caused severe intra-party arguments, with many promising to work against the ticket. This can partially explain the APC's improved performance in the state in 2023 to date, with the decision to give Omo-Agege, the sitting deputy senate president, the governorship ticket further aiding their cause as he is well regarded by citizens for his ability to translate federal influence into benefits for the state, even those not within the party<sup>24</sup>.

For Okowa, this election is one last chance to prove his political relevance and he may seek to use incumbency advantages to get his preferred outcome. Electoral disruption is most likely in the southern senatorial district, which will be a key determinant of the outcome as it is the district without a son of the soil to get behind. The district is home to many of the riverine communities of the Ijaw ethnic group, which are

23. Olufemi, D. 2023. 'Police arrest 16 for electoral violence in Cross River. Punch. 4 March. Available at <https://punchng.com/police-arrest-16-for-electoral-violence-in-cross-river/>

24. Premium Times. 2023. 'Omo-Agege woos Peter Obi's supporters, calls for alliance to fight PDP'. 6 March. Available at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-south-regional/586549-delta-guber-race-omo-agege-woos-peter-obis-supporters-calls-for-alliance-to-fight-pdp.html>



largely difficult to reach areas for INEC and home to ex-militant leaders wielding considerable political influence. The area has also been a hotbed of electoral violence in the past and a hotspot for the manipulation of election results. However, whilst in past elections there were divisions among militant groups, for the 2023 elections, there appears to be a tacit agreement between many of the ex-militant leaders, including Tompolo, to support the APC because it guarantees the continuation and possible renewal of the surveillance contracts that they enjoy from the federal government.

### Enugu

An attack on 6 March, which left one dead, several injured and significant property damage has increased tensions in the state in the run up to the gubernatorial elections.<sup>25</sup> Besides the candidates of the two main parties – Peter Mbah of the PDP and Uche Nnaji of the APC – two other parties are fielding strong candidates for governor: Chijioke Edeoga of the Labour Party and Frank Nweke Jr. of APGA. Mbah overwhelmingly won a competitive primary and will seek to continue the party's dominance in the state: it has held the governorship position since the return to democracy in 1999. However, following the performance of the Labour Party on 25 February in the state – Obi won the presidential vote and it won seven of the eight house of representative seats and a senate seat – the previously expected dominance of the PDP is being challenged and candidates are campaigning accordingly. Yet apathy may still be a factor in the outcome, with Labour Party supporters in particular frustrated that their strong endorsement of Obi did not translate to national success.

### Imo

Imo, an off-cycle state, will not have a gubernatorial contest. Currently an APC state, incumbent governor Hope Uzodinma was returned after a contentious election in 2019 that saw the result overturned by the Supreme Court in 2020 and continues to battle a legitimacy crisis. He is likely to see the state house of assembly polls as a chance to further exert his authority over the state and the house of assembly – controlled by the APC – as he prepares for re-election in November 2023 but the even distribution of house of representative seats between APC, PDP and Labour Party points to a difficult task ahead. Governorship primaries are scheduled for 10 April, a factor that makes violence more likely, as the party that wins big will be best placed to win the governorship poll when it is held later in the year.

Imo saw the most attacks on INEC infrastructure and security agencies in the run-up to the 25 February polls. This necessitated the National Youth Service Corp to restrict members from serving in areas they consider flash points such as Okigwe, Orlu and Orsu LGAs and these along with Owerri and Oguta will remain likely hotspots for electoral violence. IPOB remain the most likely perpetrators of violence. Beyond just having grievances against the federal government, IPOB members have animosity towards local politicians that do not support them, an example being their suspected involvement in the beheading of the sole administrator of Ideato North LGA<sup>26</sup> on 23 January 2023. Politically sponsored violence, especially because of the tight race and the impact it will have on the governorship election, is also possible.

25. Sahara Reporters. 2023. "Sit-At-Home: Hoodlums reportedly kill one, burn 7 vehicles in Enugu". 6 March. Available at <https://saharareporters.com/2023/03/06/sit-home-hoodlums-reportedly-kill-one-burn-7-vehicles-enugu>.

26. Ugwu, C. 2023. 'Gunmen behead council chairman in Imo'. Premium Times. 23 January. Available at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-east/577342-gunmen-behead-council-chairman-in-imo.html>



## *Kaduna*

Kaduna, home to well-known centres of learning and being the base of the Nigerian Army, has become a melting pot of heterogenous cultures in the country. This has led to religious divisions in the state between the mostly Muslim north and predominantly Christian south. Incumbent APC governor Nasir El-Rufai jettisoned a long-standing agreement where both religions were represented on the governorship/deputy governorship positions in 2019, when running with a fellow Muslim for his re-election. Uba Sani, the influential chair of the senate committee on banking and a former special assistant to the governor, won the primary to represent the APC in the election. But the Labour Party's popularity in the south, as a result of aversion to the Muslim-Muslim ticket, and the strong performance of the PDP in taking the three senate seats and the majority of the house of representative races, means that election will be keenly contested. The LP gubernatorial candidate, Jonathan Asake, is a Christian and has been vocal in his criticism of the APCs Muslim-Muslim ticket. The PDP candidate, Isa Ashiru, stands to benefit from the support of the three PDP senators-elect and the momentum from his party flipping the state during the presidential election for the first time since 2003. The PDP candidate is being backed by the Christian Association of Nigeria and Evangelical Church Winning All in the state. Alleged anti-party activity within the APC<sup>27</sup> could further affect the party's bid to retain the governorship. The risk of voter suppression taking place in the south to minimise the turnout of the opposition parties in order to ensure the APC is able to hold on to the governorship is high. Identity conflicts between the Fulani and ethnicities such as the Atyab, could also depress voter turnout. On 11 March eight persons were killed by Fulani militia in Zango Kataf LGA<sup>28</sup>.

## *Kano*

A history of violence and the nature of political contest makes Kano a potentially volatile state. The contest is essentially a two-horse race between the New Nigerian People' Party (NNPP) and its candidate Abba Kabir and the ruling party APC and its candidate, incumbent deputy governor Nasir Yusuf Gawuna. The NNPP won the presidential elections in the state, two out of the three senatorial seats and 17 out of the 23 declared house of representative seats. Kabir is also a familiar face in state politics, having narrowly lost to outgoing incumbent governor Abdullahi Ganduje in the disputed elections in 2019 when contesting on the PDP ticket. He appears well placed to benefit from NNPP popularity in the state.

- 
27. Hassan-Wuyi, I. 2023. 'LG coordinator in viral video allegedly sabotaging APC candidates'. The Vanguard. 13 March. Available at <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/03/kaduna-apc-lg-coordinator-in-viral-video-allegedly-sabotaging-apc-candidates/>
28. Tauna, A. 2023. 'Eight persons reportedly killed in fresh militia attack in southern Kaduna'. Daily Post. 11 March. Available at <https://dailypost.ng/2023/03/12/eight-persons-reportedly-killed-in-fresh-militia-attack-in-southern-kaduna/>



Vote trading will likely be a key part of the APC's strategy to win the election, in what is likely to be a higher turnout than was seen for the presidential polls. However, the NNPP will point to the mass support for Kwankwaso – evidenced by his winning of almost 60% of the vote during the presidential elections amid reports that he did not need to rely on incentives to receive that level of support – to counter such APC optimism. It is likely that violence will also be used to generate a desired outcome. Both Gawuna and Garo, the governorship and deputy governorship candidates of the APC, were alleged to be responsible for the orchestrated disruption of collation in Nassarawa LGA in the 2019 governorship elections when Abba Kabir, then the PDP candidate, was leading by about 26,000 votes. This disruption forced INEC to declare results inconclusive and hold supplementary polls where violence was again to the fore, orchestrated predominantly by the ruling party, and led to Ganduje's re-election. Ahead of the 18 March vote, the APC has been accused of looking to hire political thugs from Niger Republic and other Nigerian states<sup>29</sup>. Eight LGAs – Tarauni, Fagge, Ungwowo, Kumbotso, Dalla, Kano Municipal, Gwale, and Nassarawa – with the highest concentration of votes are likely to be violent hotspots. But other LGAs may also see violence. Alhassan Doguwa, the majority leader of the house of representatives and a member of the APC, was arrested on five charges including “culpable homicide, criminal conspiracy, causing grievous hurt, mischief by fire, and inciting public disturbance” for allegedly having led thugs to burn down the office of the NNPP in Tundun Wada LGA that led to the death of three people in the aftermath of the 25 February polls<sup>30</sup>. Doguwa's re-election to the house was also revoked by INEC after the returning officer confirmed that the declaration of his victory was carried out ‘under duress’. Such antecedents point to a potentially volatile election. So too does the recent replacement of the commissioner of police with what is reported to be a Ganduje ally. A decision that has elicited protests from the NNPP.

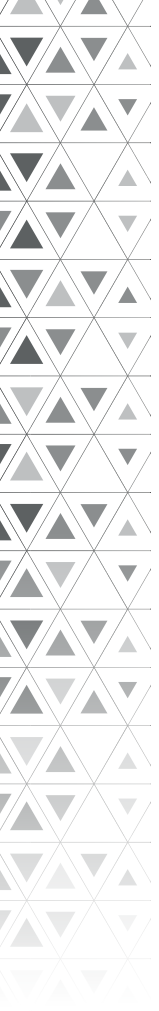
## Lagos

Peter Obi won the presidential race in the state despite it being the home state of the president-elect and former state governor, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the APC. However, the Labour Party was unable to repeat that performance in legislative races with the APC retaining its three senate seats and winning 19 of the 24 house of representative seats. Driven by identity politics, couched in indigene versus settler narratives, politics in the run-up to the state polls has become increasingly divided along ethnic lines. The Igbo-Yoruba ethnic tussle has trickled down from the presidency contest and is shaping the discourse around whose personal history is more deserving of the governorship seat among the three main contenders - incumbent APC governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Labour Party candidate Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour and the PDP's Abdul-Azeez Adediran, known popularly as ‘Jandor’.

---

29. Maishanu, A. 2023. ‘Tension in Kano as police, political parties allege importation of foreign thugs’. Premium Times. 7 March. Available at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/586664-election-tension-in-kano-as-police-political-parties-allege-importation-of-foreign-thugs.html>

30. Uthman, S. 2023. ‘Police arrest Doguwa over alleged electoral violence in Kano’. The Cable. 28 February. Available at <https://www.thecable.ng/police-arrest-doguwa-over-alleged-electoral-violence-in-kano>



Problematic narratives and counter-narratives have emerged about who ‘owns’ Lagos and how authentically Yoruba the Labour Party’s gubernatorial candidate is, with both his mother and spouse being Igbo and a perceived ‘accent’ and challenge when speaking Yoruba. In these discussions, the legitimacy of the incumbent APC governor, with his state of origin being Ogun state is also questioned. Different identity groups have adopted different candidates with religion also a part of the identity discussion. The Muslim community of Lagos have adopted Jide Sanwo-Olu as ‘their’ candidate, despite Sanwo-Olu also taking his campaign to churches in the run-up to the election. Some Lagos elders, such as Bode George and others, have mobilised as ‘Lagos indigenes’ in support of Rhodes-Vivour.

The online space is being used to entrench pre-existing social cleavages around ethnicity and religion in the contest. It is likely to accentuate violence during the elections as hate speech and fake news are being curated along ethnic lines. Widely viewed tweets have called for attacks on traditional rulers supporting the APC, amongst other incendiary speeches. Violence will likely be a feature of election day, with the ruling party likely to employ voter suppression operations in Mainland, Eti Osa, Oshodi Isolo and Amuwo Odofin LGAs. Vote buying and resorting to violence such as ballot box snatching, to guarantee victory are also tactics that will likely be deployed. Similar incidents already took place during the presidential elections and, despite assurances to the contrary, might reoccur during the governorship polls. This could further impact on turnout, which was lower than 20% for the presidential election.

### Plateau

Until 2015, and the election of Simon Lalong, the PDP controlled the governorship position in the state. The party had a resurgence in 2023, winning a majority of the seats in the legislative elections, although it lost out to Peter Obi at the presidential level. But, despite Obi’s strong showing, no Labour Party candidates were elected from the state and their gubernatorial candidate, Peter Dakum, may well meet the same fate. PDP governorship candidate Caleb Muftwang could be well-placed to benefit from popular frustration with the APC administration in the state, perhaps best indicated by Lalong’s failure in his senatorial bid on 25 February. Lalong’s preferred candidate, and the APC nominee, Nentawe Yilwatda, is INEC’s former REC in Benue state and is also not popular within his party. The Integrity Group faction of Plateau’s APC chapter, which comprises five aggrieved governorship aspirants, endorsed Muftwang, in protest against Nentawe’s imposition.

Identity conflicts have been a driver of violent conflicts in the recent past in the state, particularly in the Jos North senatorial zone. However, with the all three leading contenders indigenous Christians, the likelihood of ethno-religious violence during these elections is reduced.

### Rivers

Outgoing governor Nyesom Wike is the de-facto leader of the G5, a group of renegade PDP governors who were against the presidential nominee of the party. Prior to the elections, Rivers had been a solidly PDP state, but Wike actively played a spoiler role in flipping the state for APC in the presidential election. Wike has now publicly declared his support for Sim Fubara,





the PDP gubernatorial candidate, confirming that his alliance with the APC is now over<sup>31</sup>. But aggrieved members of the PDP, and Labour Party officials who believe Wike manipulated the poll at the collation of results phase, are set to work against him in the state election. The APC and its candidate, Tonye Cole, is also a strong force. Although it has been boosted by the presidential election outcome in the state and the active backing of a former governor, Rotimi Amaechi, factional politics continue to undermine unity. The internal contradictions within the APC and PDP, as well as the closely contested nature of the election, with SDP candidate Magnus Abe a factor, heightens the risk of violent disruption and irregularities.


The big issue in Rivers is the role that incumbency will play. In the build-up to the elections, the state government issued restrictive executive orders prohibiting political campaigns at public schools and closing political party campaign offices in residential areas. These restrictive orders, and other specific acts such as closures of hotel premises, appear targeted at political opponents. Unproven allegations also persist that Wike's reported influence over INEC's REC in the state enabled him nominate party members and supporters for recruitment as ad-hoc staff. During the 25 February elections, there were widespread cases of voter suppression along ethnic and party lines sometimes openly in the presence of law enforcement agencies who did not step in. Voter suppression was observed in Asari Toru, Khana, and Gokana LGAs, as well as Runuigbo, Rumopirikom, Oroazi, Rumunduru, Rumuomasi and Woji communities in Obio Akpor LGA.

The threat of violence also cannot be ignored. The 2015 elections, which saw Wike win a first term as governor, were originally inconclusive occasioning several supplementary elections, a pattern that continued in 2019. The risk of elections returning inconclusive results again is high with cult gangs likely to be mobilised by political actors to intimidate political opponents and voters. Another potential driver of contestation surrounds debates around the underdevelopment of riverine communities, who feel their voice is largely excluded from politics although both PDP and APC candidates are from these areas of the state. Recent calls by several ethnic minorities - such as the Ogoni and Kalabari - for more inclusive political representation predisposes the state to ethnic based political violence especially in Ogoni populated LGAs.

### *Sokoto*

The potential for violence is high in the state given the many difficulties experienced during the national elections on 25 February. Violence, over-voting, vote buying, the theft of ballot boxes, and claims of INEC partisanship have left the state with three undeclared senatorial district representatives and 11 undeclared federal constituency seats with supplementary elections to follow the gubernatorial poll. On 6 March, INEC suspended the state's REC, Dr Nura Ali, for this performance, with rumours circulating in the state that he was being paid by political actors to manipulate the outcome in their favour by failing to declare results and hiring unqualified ad-hoc staff. The 2019 governorship elections were also initially declared inconclusive, with the incumbent

31. Ojo. O. 2023. 'Elections: G-5 governors had relationship with APC, LP for presidential poll — Wike'. The Sun, 3 March. Available at <https://sunnewsonline.com/elections-g-5-governors-had-relationship-with-apc-lp-for-presidential-poll-wike/>



---

eventually winning by just 340 votes. A closely contested race is again expected in 2023, with question marks about the ability of INEC to hold credible polls ramping up tensions and increase the risk of election and post-election violence. Campaigning has been marred by violence, political thuggery, hate speech and the spread of fake news. At a townhall event attended by the leading candidates to debate each other on their plans for the state, and hosted by the Voice of America Hausa Service, a question from the audience directed at the APC candidates use of political thugs sparked violence between party supporters in attendance with some brandishing knives.

Sokoto's political contestations are driven by two former allies and state governors, Attahiru Bafarawa (1999–2007) and Aliyu Wamakko (2007–2015). While the two initially started as governor and deputy governor, they eventually split and have since continued their battles via proxy. Incumbent governor Aminu Tambuwal (2015–date) was originally a Wamakko ally and won his first term under the APC. However, he defected to the PDP and his victory in 2019 was partly attributed to Bafarawa's influence. Ahead of the 2023 elections, Wamakko has supported the same candidate who narrowly lost to Tambuwal in 2019, while Bafarawa's son is the deputy governorship candidate of the PDP. This added dynamic is bound to play a role in shaping the contest.

### Zamfara

Incumbent APC governor Bello Mattawale is being challenged by PDP candidate, Dauda Lawal, who eventually emerged from contested party primaries. The ruling APC edged a narrow victory in the presidential election in the state, took three-quarters of the National Assembly seats and will seek to build on this performance in the state elections. Ethnicity and zoning arrangements are set to be important factors in how ballots are cast. The two main candidates are Fulani (Matawalle) and Hausa (Lawal) with votes set to be divided, particularly in rural areas most affected by the violence such as Anka, Bakuri, Bukkuyu, Gummi and Maradun LGAs, along these lines. In Zamfara, there has never previously been an elected governor from Gusau, the state capital, and Lawal, who is from the city, may benefit from the strong Hausa vote base in the city.

Ahead of the polls there has been limited violence by non-state actors such as bandits. However, this may change during the governorship elections as non-state actors have more of an interest in the outcome. There are suggestions that the PDP have promised, if elected, that it would engage in dialogue and listen to all parties involved in the conflict. For this reason, some bandit groups are rumoured to be working to support the PDP. At the same time the incumbent is alleged to be incentivising bandits to mobilise wide-scale violence in PDP strongholds during the gubernatorial elections,<sup>32</sup> in an effort to suppress votes. Turnout was just 23% in the 25 February vote. Vote buying is also expected from both political parties.<sup>33</sup>

---

32. This Day. 2023. 'PDP alleges plot by Zamfara government to use bandits manipulate governorship elections'. 8 March. Available at <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/08/pdp-alleges-plot-by-zamfara-govt-to-use-bandits-to-manipulate-governorship-election/>

33. Maishanu, A. 2022. 'Zamfara governors distributes 260 cars to traditional rulers after accusing them of abetting banditry'. Premium Times. 7 April. Available at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/522339-zamfara-governor-distributes-260-cars-to-traditional-rulers-after-accusing-them-of-abetting-banditry.html?tztc=1>



## OUR PROJECTIONS

---

Based on this rigorous analysis, which draws on an in-depth look at the results of the 25 February elections and reflects on the history of state level contests, the Centre for Democracy and Development makes seven projections for the 18 March governorship and state house of assembly races:

- An intensification of political competition in more localised races, increases the likelihood of violence with states such as Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, Rivers, Sokoto and Zamfara most at-risk.
- Misinformation and disinformation that amplifies divisive identity rhetoric at the state level will continue to be a feature of the electoral environment, with the expected challenge of governing after the contentious polls.
- INEC staff will not only be challenged by popular perceptions of their poor performance during presidential polls but will be the targets of intimidation and co-option from politically aligned actors.
- With the deployment of BVAS, efforts to manipulate election processes are most likely to target voter suppression in strongholds of political opponents than overvoting in known areas of support. We expect to see destruction of ballot papers, the hijacking of BVAS machines and violence to push voter suppression.
- Based on the most recent off-cycle governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun, turnout could be higher than in the general election but there will be significant variation between states and geopolitical zones with the competitiveness of the race and insecurity risks being defining factors.
- Vote trading is likely to be more pronounced than in the 25 February election, given the localised nature of the races, the prevailing economic hardship and the announcement by the Central Bank that old naira notes remain legal tender until the end of 2023.
- Finally, most parties and online commentary has made the mistake of expecting similar results to the presidential results of 25 February. Those 'projections' have erroneously forgotten to consider the senate and house of representatives' results, which did not always go along the same line as the presidential outcome. As a result, an inflated expectation might enable political actors call for the delegitimisation of the process, policies and eventual winners – with the uncertainty of what this might represent for the democratic process.



© 2023 Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa). All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Centre for Democracy and Development.

Please direct inquiries to:

Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa)  
Research Department  
16, A7 Street Mount Pleasant Estate (CITEC)  
Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T) Abuja  
[research@cddwestafrica.org](mailto:research@cddwestafrica.org)  
[cddabv@cddwestafrica.org](mailto:cddabv@cddwestafrica.org)

[CDDwestafrica.org](http://CDDwestafrica.org)

This publication can be requested or downloaded at no cost at [www.cddwestafrica.org.org](http://www.cddwestafrica.org.org)

Cover Image: Commonwealth Secretariat  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/comsec/50109553562>  
(CC BY-NC 2.0)



Centre for Democracy & Development

Centre pour la démocratie et le développement



16 A7 Street, CITEC Mount Pleasant Estate, Jabi Airport Road,  
Mbora District, Abuja, FCT



[cddwestafrica.org](http://cddwestafrica.org)



[research@cddwestafrica.org](mailto:research@cddwestafrica.org)



[@cddwestafrica](https://twitter.com/cddwestafrica)