

KADUNA STATE

Kaduna is of strategic significance, being the regional capital of the old North and abode of many of the northern influential and powerful political, bureaucratic and military elite, including President Muhammadu Buhari.

Between 1999 and 2015 the state was ruled by the PDP, but fell to the APC in 2015. It is noteworthy too that notwithstanding the dominance of the PDP within that period, since his first foray into partisan politics in 2003, Buhari has consistently won in the state. However, it is not likely that there will be any dramatic change this time during the February 2019 presidential election.

For a host of reasons, Buhari may not muster the huge vote tally he got in 2015. First, the PDP presidential candidate, Atiku, is equally on the ground in the state and can boast of an array of lieutenants, including the hugely popular Isa Ashiru Kudan, his party's gubernatorial flag-bearer. Two, almost immediately after the 2015 polls, APC started to experience serious turbulence in the state. Things got to a head at the wake of the APC primaries in 2018, culminating in the defection of key figures such as Senators Suleiman Usman Hunkuyi and Shehu Sani, Representatives Soba and Jagaba, among others. Grassroots mobilizers like Audi Yaro Makama Rigachikun, an erstwhile state chairman of the PDP, returned to the party after a sojourn in the APC. Three, lurking in the sidelines is the looming shadow of Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi, 2-time governor, former senator and presidential aspirant who is likely to lend a helping hand. Former Vice President Namadi Sambo and his protégé, the immediate past governor, Mukhtar Ramallan Yero are also expected to do just that. Four, the incumbent governor of the state, Nasir el-Rufa'i – who many pundits perceive to thrive in controversies – has become a big liability for APC, particularly among the Christian-dominated South Senatorial District which, in any case, has always voted PDP. Five, some influential Islamic cleric – Sheikh Ahmad Gummi, Sheikh Sambo Rigachukun and Ustaz Hussaini Zakaria – have openly declared for Atiku. Six, Kaduna is the state of Sheikh Ibrahim Yaqub El-Zakzaky and the stronghold of his Shiite Movement, who regard Buhari as an implacable foe and have reportedly vowed to mobilize against him. Seven, activities of

kidnappers and general air of insecurity, particularly around the Birnin Gwari axis, may scare voters – many of them APC supporters and sympathizers – from even venturing out to vote. What is working for Buhari in the state, however, is his undiminished grip on the ordinary people. The religion-inspired zero-sum politics among the citizens of the state may also work in his favour. In addition, sensing that his own political survival is tied to the President`s, Governor el-Rufa`i is likely to come all out and go to any length to ensure that the state is delivered, and decisively too, to APC.

On the whole, therefore, with almost four million votes up for grabs, Kaduna is an important battleground state in this election.



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

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