Background Paper on the 2019 Governorship and House of Assembly Elections in Nigeria

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#NigeriaDecides2019
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Nigeria’s return to the polls for the governorship, house of assembly and the FCT area council elections on March 9\(^{th}\), 2019. The elections will hold in 29 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). The Presidential polls were earlier conducted on February 23\(^{rd}\) with the incumbent President Muhammad Buhari of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) winning reelection with 55.6 per cent of the total votes cast to claim a victory over major opposition candidate Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The elections represent the sixth electoral circle since the return to democracy and are coinciding with twenty years of democracy in the country. The fourth republic has been the longest uninterrupted period of democratic governance in Nigeria since independence in 1960.

Following the conduct of the national elections on February 23\(^{rd}\), 2019 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) won the presidential vote, as well majority in the National assembly winning at least 60 out of the 109 Senate seats\(^1\). The APC also won 220 of 360 House of Representatives seats in the National Assembly. As a result of this outcome, the incoming APC-led federal government will enjoy a majority in the legislative arm of government.

The APC victory in the Presidential and National Assembly election may have an effect on the forthcoming Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections scheduled for March 9\(^{th}\), 2019. We find evidence of a significant swing of the electorate toward the party at the centre in previous elections. The bandwagon effect has often seen voters at state levels shifting allegiance to the governing party at the national level. For instance, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) South West stronghold was swept by the PDP in 2003\(^2\).

The 2015 general elections, however, showed PDP retaining its South-South and South West stronghold but created upset in the North West with APC taking PDP’s Traditional stronghold states such as Jigawa, Plateau, Benue and Kogi. We find strong evidence for the existence of the bandwagon effect in Nigeria’s electoral history with the ruling party at the centre maintaining majority governorship seats, a pattern consistent with the PDP 16 years rule and APC ascendancy as the ruling party. There is the likelihood that the APC’s success in the recent polls will trigger a chain of similar results in the upcoming elections.

\(^1\) The opposition Peoples Democratic (PDP) won seats and Young People’s Party (YPP) one seat, while seven senatorial seat election have been declared inconclusive
\(^2\) The AD lost 5 out of the six south-west states except for Lagos to the ruling PDP
The state elections may throw up some new political actors as seen during the national assembly elections, where the Young Progressive Party (YPP), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and African Democratic Party (ADP) all won seats.

Where the Governorship and House of Assembly Elections will hold? 

While governorship elections will be held in 29 states, State Houses of Assembly elections will take place in 36 states, both on March 9th, 2019.

Map 1: 2019 Governorship and State House of Assembly Elections in Nigeria

The staggered elections in the seven states highlighted in white above is as a result of court rulings that upturned election victories after the 2007 general elections and changed their governorship election cycles.
“Nigeria’s return to the polls for the governorship, house of assembly and the FCT area council elections on March 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2019. 

While governorship elections will be held in 29 states, State Houses of Assembly elections will take place in 36 states, both on March 9th, 2019.”
Until recently, the dominance of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria’s electoral system is evident in her overwhelming control of political power at state levels. As shown in Table 1 below, PDP has maintained a lead in the number of state powers it controls between 1999 and 2011 (up to 2014), having controlled an average of 24 States within the period. This constitutes 66 per cent of the 36 States of the Federation.

Table 1: Snapshot of political party performance in governorship elections (1999-2018)

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In 1999, PDP won governorship elections in 21 (58.3%) out of 36 states of the federation. The number of states governed by the PDP peaked at 28 (77.8%) in 2003 but began to decrease in 2007 to 24 (66.7%) and then 23 (63.4%) in 20117 elections. The outcome of the 2015 governorship elections and other off-cycle elections were unfavourable to the party as it experienced a further decrease in the States it exercises control over. Between 2011 and early 2018, the number of states it controls reduced by 47 per cent (from 23 to 11 States). These are Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, and the Sokoto States.

“Until recently, the dominance of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria’s electoral system is evident in her overwhelming control of political power at state levels.”

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3 As a result of electoral fraud that characterised the 2007 elections and courts’ nullification of governorship election results, political parties in favour of court cases replaced incumbent which resulted to a change in parties’ steering leadership wheels in States like Osun, Edo, Kogi, Bayelsa.
4 Conduct of off-cycle elections is a spill-over effect of several court judgements arising from the 2007 governorship elections.
5 Under the leadership of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Action Congress (AC) metamorphoses into Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and later merged with other parties to form All Progressive Congress (APC) ahead of the 2015 general elections.
6 The leadership of All Progressive Party (APPP) changed its name to All Nigerian Progressive Party (ANPP) ahead of the 2003 general elections.
7 This electoral cycle includes elections conducted until 2014.
Political Party performance in Governorship elections (1999-2018)

1999
- Won in 21 states (People's Democratic Party)
- Won in 9 states (All Progressives Congress)
- Won in 6 states (Nigeria for Democracy)

2003
- Won in 28 states (People's Democratic Party)
- Won in 6 states (All Progressive Congress)
- Won in 1 state (National Party)

2007
- Won in 24 states (People's Democratic Party)
- Won in 5 states (All Progressives Congress)
- Won in 4 states (Ace Party)
- Won in 2 states (Progressive Party)
- Won in 1 state (All Progressive Congress)

2011-2014
- Won in 23 states (People's Democratic Party)
- Won in 2 states (All Progressives Congress)
- Won in 1 state (Congress for Progressive Change)
- Won in 6 states (All Progressive Congress)

2015-2018
- Won in 7 states (All Progressive Congress)
- Won in 11 states (People's Democratic Party)
- Won in 24 states (All Progressive Congress)
As shown in Fig. 1 above, PDP won a landslide in all states of the South-South and South-East geopolitical zones in 1999 and had three states each in North-West and North-East as well as four states in the North-Central.

Although, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) won elections in all the states of the South-West in 1999 as shown in Fig. 1 above, the PDP was defeated by AD in five of the six states of that zone in 2003 as Fig. 2 indicates. In 2003, the PDP won all six states in the North-Central and made significant in-roads in the North-East. PDP won an additional State in the Northeast to increase the number of State it exercises control over to 4 in the geopolitical zone.

However, while it won Bauchi in the Northeast, it lost Kano State (North-West) to the All Nigeria Peoples’ Party (ANPP). Nonetheless, the number of States it controls, compared to the aftermath of the 1999 general elections, increased by 25 per cent after the 2003 general elections.

Fig. 2: Geographical spread of party performance in 2003 Elections
Notwithstanding the gains of 2003, PDP lost out in a political contest for governorship seat in Imo and Abia State to People Progressive Alliance (PPA) and Bauchi State to ANPP during the 2007 general elections. The number of States controlled by PDP further decreased after the conclusion of court cases and subsequent run-off elections in Edo and Ekiti States. Therefore, the States dropped by 14 per cent (28 to 24) after the general elections.

**Fig. 3: Geographical spread of party performance in the 2007 Elections**

![Geographical spread of party performance in 2007 governorship elections](image)

In 2011, again, the dominance of the PDP in state-level politics slightly declined having lost Nasarawa State to the CPC and Ogun State to ACN – although won back Kano State in the 2011 governorship election to dominate politics in the North West geopolitical zone.

**Fig. 4: Geographical spread of party performance in the 2011 Elections**

![Geographical spread of party performance in 2011 governorship elections](image)
The continuous decrease in the political dominance of PDP in South West placed ACN as the leading party in the geopolitical zone. In the Southeast, the party regained its dominance by clinging victory in Abia State away from PPA; and in the Northeast, having retrieved Bauchi State from ANPP during the 2011 governorship election.

**Fig. 5: Geographical spread of party performance in the 2015 Elections**

![Geographical spread of party performance in 2015 Governorship Elections](image)

The overwhelming victory of APC in the 2015 governorship elections and the off-cycle elections in Kogi and Ekiti States drastically shifted political power away from the PDP. Except for the South-South and Southeast that PDP continues to dominate state-level politics, APC swept the entire States in the South West and equalled the number of the States in the North Central. PDP lost out in Niger State that has always been its stronghold since 1999, and Kogi State where it has established hegemony since 2003 governorship elections. Interestingly, APC gained prominence in the North West geopolitical zone’s politics, having won Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa and Sokoto States in 2015.

**The Battleground States**

**Lagos**

Lagos State remains a highly competitive state, as illustrated by the results of the 2019 presidential elections in the state, in which the APC won 580825 votes to the PDP’s 448015. However, in the National Assembly elections, the APC’s dominance in the state since May 1999 is evident in the party’s winning all the three senatorial seats and an overwhelming majority of the seats in the house of representatives.

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8 The incumbent governor of the State later defected to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).
If the APC repeats this performance in the governorship and house of assembly elections on March 9, 2019, it will maintain the dominance of the executive and legislature in the state, begun since May 1999, under one of the partners in the coalition of parties in the APC.

The unfolding political dynamics in the state suggest that the contest for the governorship elections will be a highly competitive one between the two major parties in the state, the APC and the PDP. It is a contest that is now, more than ever, cast in terms of capturing the ethnic voting banks controlled by the two major ethnic groups in the state—the Yoruba and Igbo. In effect, the governorship elections in the state, as indeed of the presidential elections that preceded them, are viewed as a test-run for the prospects for a Yoruba or Igbo presidency in 2023.

As with the presidential elections, the following considerations have defined the political context for the governorship elections in the state:

- Fractionalization within the APC state leadership that has been festering since Bola Tinubu ended his two-term tenure as Governor in 2007, over his continued hold over the state government and complaints about internal democracy deficits within the party in the state.
- The progressive depletion and fractionalization of the PDP leadership in the state, the weakness of its party structures in the state, and the lackluster presidential and gubernatorial campaign of the party in the state.
- The denial of a second term to the current state Governor and his defeat in the state party primaries for the governorship elections.
- Concerns within the APC in the state that the Governor has not shown strong commitment to supporting the party’s governorship candidate in the state, resulting in the move to impeach him—a move that was aborted when it was realized that it might be electorally unwise for the party to continue with the impeachment process in the state house of assembly.
- Perception of the strong Igbo ethnic voting bloc in the state, the competition to secure, weaken or suppress it, and the ethnic animosity it reignited, particularly after the presidential elections.
- The spill-over/demonstration effect of the “o to ge” (Enough Is Enough) movement in Kwara State in Lagos State and the strenuous effort to counter it by the APC in the state.

**Bauchi**

Bauchi is currently an APC states. There are twenty governorship candidates in the state but three major contenders. The incumbent governor Mohammad Abubakar, Prof Mohammad Ali Pate of the PRP and Senator Bala Mohammed of the PDP. Bauchi has been a traditional stronghold of President Buhari, and this was reaffirmed in the February 23rd election where he won. The APC rank in the state has so far swelled with the defections of crucial PDP bigwigs such as former national chairman, Adamu Muazu, Isa Yuguda and others. However, the PRP has proven not to
be a push away in the race and even won a House of Representative seat in the just concluded national elections.

**Taraba**

The 2015 governorship election was a straight run between incumbent Governor Darius Ishayku of the PDP and former Women Minister Hajia Jumai Al Hassan. The election marked with pockets of violence was declared inconclusive because the difference in the number of cancelled votes was above the margin of win between the two candidates. In the 2019 elections, the three major contenders are Governor Darius Ishayku of the PDP, Hajia Jumai Al Hassan of the UDP, and Sani Danladi of the APC. The battle again is now solidly between Jumai Al Hassan of the UDP and Darius Ishayku of the PDP. Ethnicity, religion are all potent factors in the race. The influential role of General T. Y Danjuma cannot be foreclosed.

**Kwara**

Kwara State since 1979 has been a traditional Saraki Political dynasty. However, the recent “Otoge (enough is enough) movement which swept scion of the Saraki family Senate President Bukola Saraki from his senatorial seat. The PDP lost all the three senatorial seats and six of the house of representative seats to the APC. The APC is determine isd to oust Saraki and his cronies from office. The governorship elections present an opportunity for the APC and its O to ge movement to forever oust Saraki and his friends from power. However, much is left to be seen if the PDP and Saraki will decide to watch and not put up a fight to win the state it has kept under its stranglehold since 1979.

**Kano**

The primary battle is between Governor Abdullahi Ganduje of the APC and his main rival from the PDP’ primaries that produced Abba Kabir-Yusuf as the party’s governorship candidate in the state. The defections of strong PDP members such as ex-Governor Ibrahim Shekarau has dwindled the fortunes of the APC in the state. It is also important to point out that some of the APC members who defected with the APC to PDP with Rabiu Kwankwaso have since defected to the APC. The nullification of the primaries that brought the current PDP flagbearer in the elections has heightened the stakes. The nullification followed suit filed by one of the party’s governorship aspirants, Alhaji Ibrahim Ali-Amin, who challenged the legitimacy of the process which produced Kabir-Yusuf as the candidate.

The court has since ordered a new primary be conducted before the March 9th election. This will not be the first time that the court few days into the election will be ordered that a fresh primary is conducted. In the 2011 elections, the federal high court in Kogi state on April 4th ruled that a new primary is held to select a new candidate before the April 8th 2011 elections. The PDP had nonetheless called on their supporters to vote for their candidate as they have appealed the judgment. However, on the eve of the governorship election, Justice Daniel Kalio of Court of Appeal granted a stay of execution of the order of a high court which barred the PDP from recognizing Mr Abba Yusuf as candidate. This presupposes that PDP candidate will participate in the 9th March 2019 governorship election in the State.
Sokoto
The governorship race in Sokoto is strictly between the incumbent PDP Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal and his erstwhile deputy Alhaji Ahmad Aliyu of the APC. Tambuwal defected from the APC into the PDP. Godfather politics may play a determinant role in who is elected governor with former Governor Aliyu Wammako a strong factor. It is also left to see what role former Governor Attahiru Bafarawa will also play in the race. The APC won all the senatorial seats in the national elections, but it is also important to point out that PDP had it best showing in the North West as it polled 361,604,000 as against the APC 490,333,000.

Kaduna
The contest in Kaduna is a straight battle between incumbent Governor Nasir el-Rufai and Mallam Isa Ashiru Kudan of the PDP. The elections will be primarily defined by the divide between the Christian and Muslim, the Hausa-Fulani and Southern Kaduna differences and importantly the Shitte votes.

Plateau
The contest is all time high in Plateau state; the APC is fielding the incumbent governor Simon Lalong while the PDP is fielding its General Jeremy Useni. The two top candidates are both Christians. However, religion and the age-long Jos North may still play an essential role in who emerges the winner.

Ogun
The Ogun state governorship election is a four-horse race and just like the Imo elections, the incumbent APC governor and Senator-Elect, Ibikunle Amosun is supporting his political godson, Mr Adekunle Akinlade of Allied Peoples Movement (APM), the APC, PDP and African Democratic Congress are the top contenders in the election. The Politics of Zoning, Intraparty conflicts within the APC and PDP may play a substantial factor in determining who emerges the winner of the vote. However, it is important to note that the APC won all the three senatorial seats in the state.

Imo
The governorship election in Imo is one of the most keenly contested in the state with a record number of sixty-five candidates vying for the governorship position. The four major contenders in the race are the former Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Emeka Ihedioha of the PDP, Senator Hope Uzodimma of APC, Ifeanyi Ararume of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), and Uche Nwosu of the Action Alliance (AA). Uche Nwosu is the son in law of the outgoing governor and Senator-elect Rochas Okorocha.

**PART ONE**

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## 1999

"The 1999 elections witnessed largely electoral irregularities and limited episodes of violence"

## 2003

"The beginning of electoral impunity"

- Gun attacks
- Political thuggery
- Political assassinations (12 cases in Ebonyi)
- Riots

There were also cases of low-intensity armed struggle and collusion between security agents and politicians. The most affected geo-political zones were the South South and South East. Rivers and Bayelsa stands out. Violence was also experienced in Lagos.

## 2007

**ELECTION OR SELECTION?**

"it is a do or die affair"

- 280 election-related fatalities recorded 6 months before the elections
- 300 killed at the end of the election
- 4 gubernatorial candidates assassinated in Lagos, Ondo and Plateau States
- Police men killed while on election duties
- MEND may have bombed oil installations and increased kidnapping of companies employees
- ANPP supporters burnt houses of rival PDP Property in Katsina State

Katsina was battlefield as two main candidates in that elections, Late Gen. Musa Umaru Yar’Adua and incumbent President Buhari were contesting in the elections. ANPP supporters burnt houses of rival PDP Property. In turn PDP paid N1000 to Yar’Adua to intimidate opposition (PDP Youth became Yar’ Adua’ army)

**2011**

*“A blood bath, the bloodiest in the History of Nigeria’s elections”*

- **7 BOMB BLASTS** in Niger, Bauchi, Jos and FCT between April & December 2010
- **750 VEHICLES DESTROYED** by Mob in Akwa Ibom State
- **800 DIED** in 12 STATES due to post-election violence
- **65,000 DISPLACED** from post-election violence
- **300 CHURCHES BURNED**

The gubernatorial candidate of the defunct All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) Abuja, Moshood Abiola was murdered alongside four police officers amongst others. Several ANPP rallies, police officers and innocent civilians were killed before and during the 2011 elections.

**2015**

*“My ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian”*

- **58 ELECTION RELATED FIATALITIES** recorded before the elections
- **61 INCIDENTS OF ELECTION VIOLENCE** in 21 States
- **58 BOMB HARAM ATTACKS**
- **4 BALLOT SNATCHING & STUFFING**

**2019**

*“Voting Amidst Insecurity”*

- **OVER 20 PEOPLE KILLED** on election day
- **POLITICAL THUGGERY**
- **INCIDENTS OF ELECTION VIOLENCE** in Lagos, Rivers, Benue, Kogi, Oyo, Ondo, Delta, Kogi and Akwa Ibom
- **BALLOT SNATCHING**
- **VOTER SUPPRESSION**
States likely to have violence in the 2019 Gubernatorial Elections

Most likely to experience violence
Likely to experience violence
Less likely to experience violence
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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