



Centre for Democracy & Development

Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

The Outlook for Ondo: Votes and Violence

OCTOBER 2020

Introduction

On the 10 October 2020, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) will conduct the sixth governorship election in Ondo State since the restoration of democracy in 1999. The state, in Nigeria's south-west geo-political zone, is currently held by the All Progressive Congress (APC) and is strategic in protecting the APC's political hegemony in the zone. Although 17 parties have registered candidates, only three have a chance of winning: the APC, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Zenith Labour Party (ZLP). The defection of the incumbent deputy governor, Agboola Ajayi, from the APC and his subsequent emergence as the governorship candidate of ZLP, raised the stakes in the elections.

This report provides an overview of the political environment leading up to the election. Specifically, it analyses the strength of the three major political parties and their candidates by thoroughly examining the history of votes and voting pattern, political alliances, and election-related violence.

The Candidates

Agboola Ajayi (ZLP) is the current deputy governor of Ondo State, a lawyer by training and a grassroots politician. He was a ward chairman in the defunct Alliance for Democracy (AD), a former chairman of Ese-Odo local government area (LGA) and is a former member of the House of Representatives. Former governor of the state, Dr Olusegun Mimiko (2009-2017), was a member of his ZLP party.



The APC candidate, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, is the incumbent governor of the state. Prior to his election in 2017, he was the Ondo State Attorney-General and Commissioner of Justice, a former President of the Nigerian Bar Association and a failed gubernatorial aspirant, having contested and lost the governorship elections in 2012 on the platform of the now defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).



Eyitayo Jegede, the candidate of PDP, is, like his opponents, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). He was appointed Attorney-General and Commissioner of Justice of Ondo State from 2009 to 2016 and ran, unsuccessfully, as the PDP candidate in the 2016 governorship poll. State.



Recent history

Since the return to democracy in 1999, four governors have steered the wheel of leadership in Ondo State. All senatorial districts have, at least once, had a representative at the helm.

Table 1: List of Governors in Ondo State (1999 – till Date)

S/N	Governor	Year in Office	Number of years	of	Senatorial District
1	Adebayo Adefarati	1999 – 2003	4 year		Ondo North
2	Olusegun Agagu	2003 – 2009	5 years, 9 months		Ondo South
3	Olusegun Mimiko	2009 - 2017	8 years		Ondo Central
4	Oluwarotimi Akeredolu	2017 – to date	Incumbent		Ondo North

Source: Data compiled by CDD, 2020

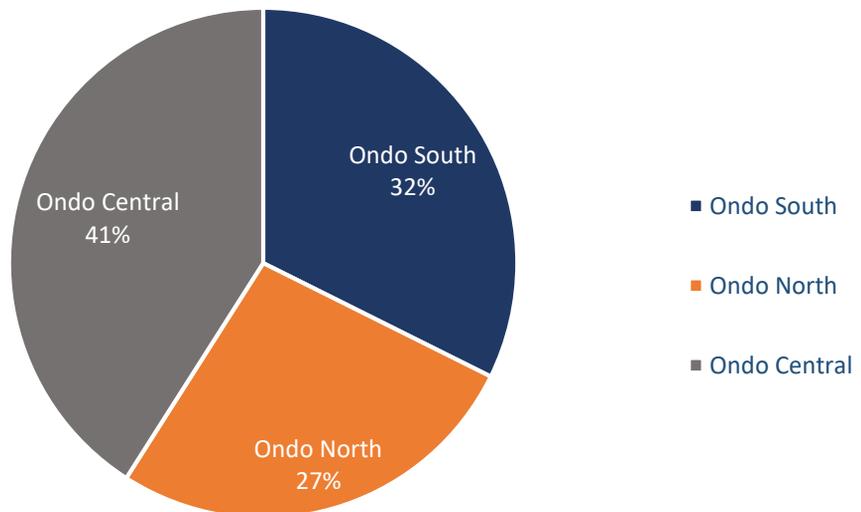
Table 2: Senatorial Districts of Governorship and Deputy Governorship Candidates of major parties in the October 2020 governorship elections

S/N	Political party	Governorship Candidate	Senatorial District	Deputy Gov. Candidate	Senatorial District
1	All Progressives Congress (APC)	Oluwarotimi Akeredolu	Ondo North	Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa	Ondo South
2	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Eyitayo Jegede	Ondo Central	Olumide Ogunje	Ondo South
3	Zenith Labour Party (ZLP)	Agboola Ajayi	Ondo South	Gboye Adegbenro	Ondo Central

Source: Data compiled by CDD, 2020

A cursory look at the choice of deputy governorship candidates by the three contenders in the 2020 Ondo election re-emphasises “zoning” as a strong factor in these elections. The governorship candidates of APC and PDP who hail from Ondo North and Central respectively opted for governorship candidates in Ondo South to leverage its voting strength: 588,931 registered voters or 32.3%. The voting population in Ondo Central and Ondo North senatorial districts are 746,105 (40.9%) and 487,310 (26.7%), respectively. The total number of registered voters for the 2020 governorship election is 1,822,346.

Ondo State 's Registered Voters per Senetorial Distrcit



Voting patterns

Voter turnout is one of the crucial indicators of how citizens participate in the governance of their country. Higher voter turnout is in most cases a sign of the vitality of democracy, while lower turnout is usually associated with voter apathy and mistrust of the political process⁽²⁾. An analysis of voter turnout in the 2012 and 2016 governorship elections in Ondo State shows that turnout rates are in decline, despite the increasing number of registered voters.

Table 3: Voter turnout and number of registered voters in Ondo State

Election Year	Registered Voters	Voter turnout
2012	1,638,950	38.1%
2016	1,647,673	35.2%
2019*	1,822,346	32.4%

*This is for the 2019 presidential election conducted in the State

Source: Data compiled by CDD

Table 3 shows that despite an increase of the number of registered voters between 2012 and 2016 from 1,638,950 to 1,647,673 turnout declined from 38.1% to 35.2%. Further analysis of turnout in the 2016 election at LGA level found that none of the 18 LGAs recorded up to 50% turnout; with the lowest turnout of 25.8% in Ondo West LGA and the highest turnout of 46.9% in Akoko North West LGA.

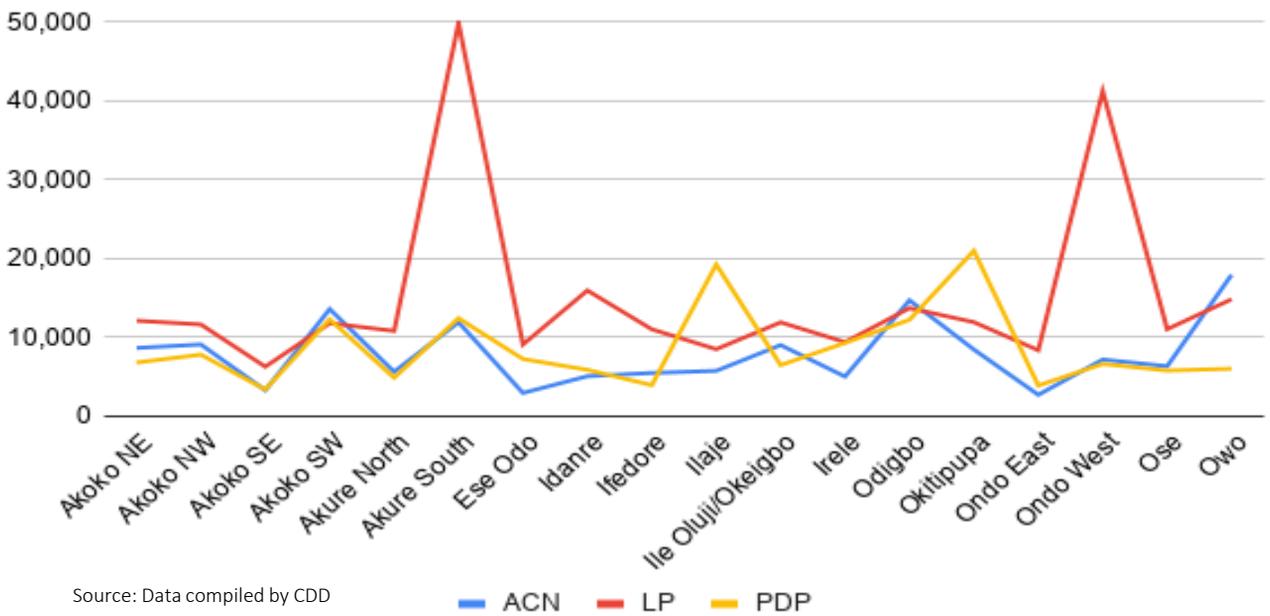
Furthermore, it is worth noting that of the 18 LGAs in the state, seven – Ilaje and Okitipupa in Ondo South, Owo and Akoko South-West in Ondo North; and Akure South, Ondo West, and Odigbo in Ondo Central contributed 61.1% of the total vote cast in the 2016 election.

While the state continues to experience low turnout, analysis of the spatial distribution of votes cast for the major political parties in the 2012 and 2016 governorship elections shows a noticeable variation of votes won by parties. This is quite revealing as it clearly illustrates the dynamics of voting preference in each of the 18 LGAs overtime.

The 2012 governorship election saw the then incumbent, Dr Olusegun Mimiko, contesting as the candidate of Labour Party (LP), face off against Oluwarotimi Akeredolu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and Chief Olusola Oke of the PDP. Mimiko gathered the highest number of votes in 13 LGAs (see Figure 2).

(2) Abdurashid Solijonov (2016), "Voter Turnout Trends Around the World", a publication of International IDEA, retrieved at <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/voter-turnout-trends-around-the-world.pdf>

Fig 2: Spatial patterns of Votes Cast (2012 Gov. Election, Ondo State)



Source: Data compiled by CDD

Following the defection of Dr Olusegun Mimiko to PDP towards the end of his second tenure of office, he supported Eytayo Jegede who was the flagbearer of the party in the 2016 governorship election. Mr Eytayo contested against, Oluwarotimi Akereledolu and Chief Olusola Oke of the APC and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) respectively. Akereledolu won the 2016 election, winning in 14 of the 18 LGAs. Traditionally, Akereledolu has been winning elections in Akoko South-West, Owo and Odigbo LGAs since 2012. In addition to these LGAs, he gathered highest votes in Akoko North-East, Akoko North-West, Akoko South-East, Akure North, Akure South, Ese-Odo, Idanre, Ifedore, Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo, Irele, and Ose LGAs, as shown in Fig. 3 and 4 below, during the 2016 election. These are LGAs that LP/PDP won in the 2012 election. However, Akereledolu has not won the governorship election in Ondo East, Ondo West, Ilaje and Okitipupa LGAs.

Fig 3: Spatial patterns of Votes Cast (2016 Gov. Election, Ondo State)

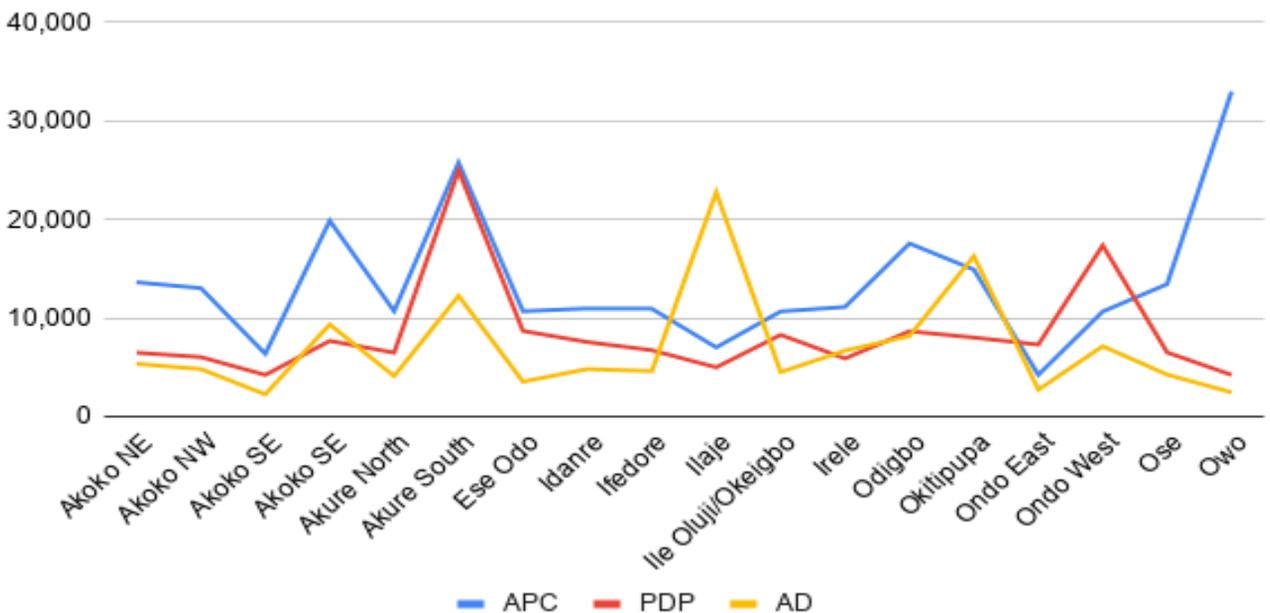
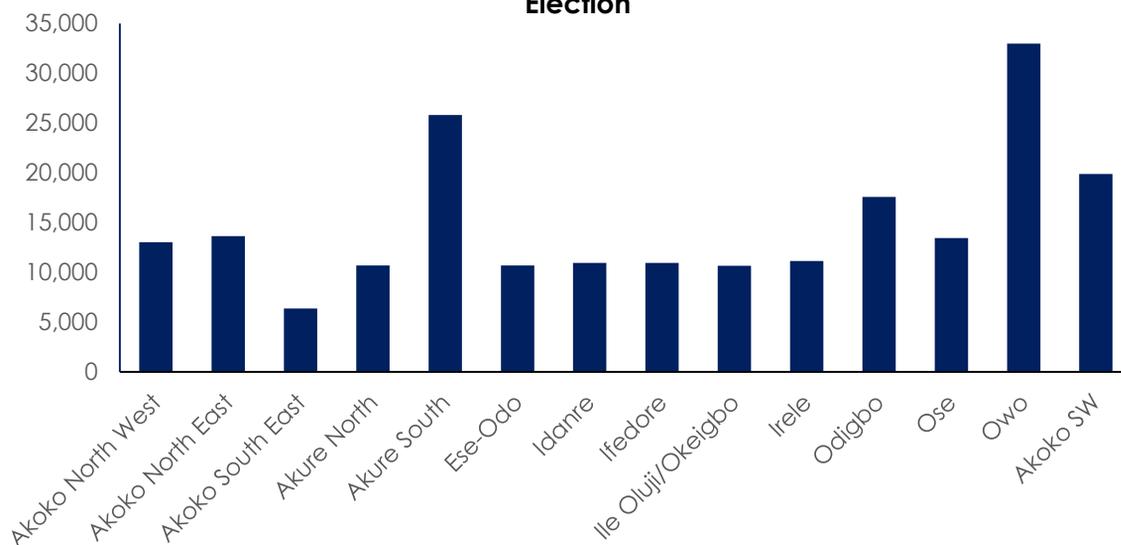


Fig 4: Votes gathered by APC Governorship Candidate in 2016 Election



Source: Data compiled by CDD

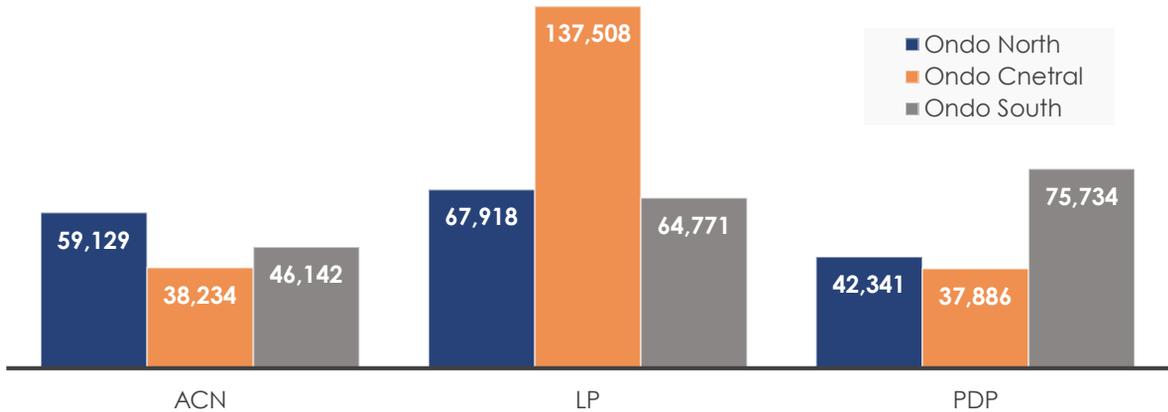
Analysis of the spatial distribution of vote cast at senatorial districts for parties and their candidates in the 2012 and 2016 governorship elections is also revealing.

Table 5: LGAs of governorship candidates of major parties (2012 – 2016)

S/N	Governorship candidate	LGA	Senatorial District	Year of Contest
1	Dr Olusegun Mimiko	Ondo West	Ondo Central	2012
2	Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, SAN	Owo	Ondo North	2012 and 2016
3	Chief Olusola Oke	Ilaje	Ondo South	2012 and 2016
4	Eyitayo Jegede	Akure South	Ondo Central	2016

In 2012, the three major candidates were from the Ondo Central (Olusegun Mimiko), Ondo North (Oluwarotimi Akeredolu) and Ondo South (Olusola Oke). Olusegun Mimiko won comprehensive in his senatorial district with 137, 508 votes, as well as in Ondo North; defeating Oluwarotimi Akeredolu who hailed from the senatorial district. In Ondo South he was second to Oke, but his margin of defeat was relatively small.

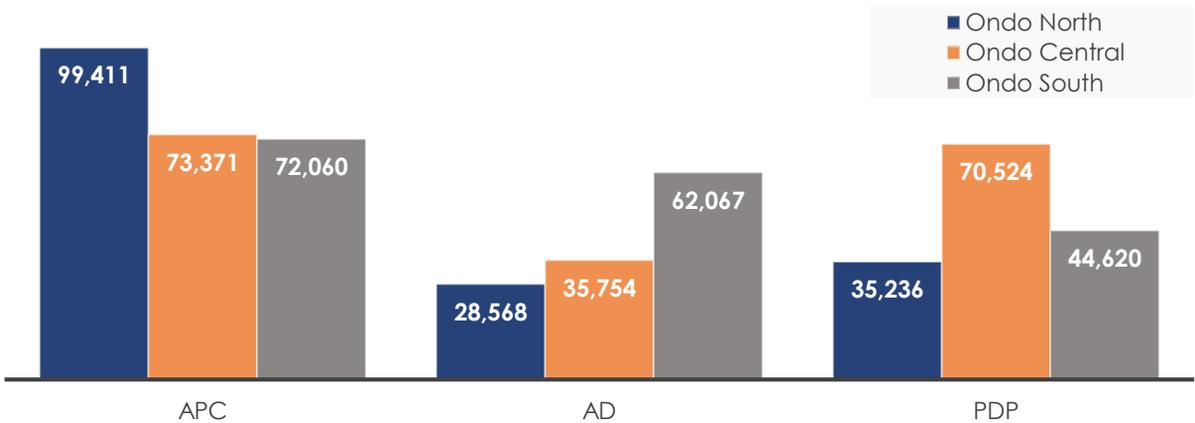
Fig 5. Senatorial Districts' Votes, 2012 Gov. Election



Source: Data compiled by CDD, 2020

The results for the 2016 governorship election show a comprehensive sweep of senatorial districts for Akeredolu. He won in Ondo South, leading Olusola Oke by almost 10,000 votes, and in Ondo Central, albeit by a slender margin of less than 3,000 votes. In Ondo North, his margin of victory – he had more 64,000 votes than his closest challenger – was comprehensive.

Fig 6. Senatorial Districts' Votes, 2016 Gov. Election



Although political parties continue to play a significant role in mobilising for votes, our analysis reveals a clear phenomenon of bloc votes from senatorial districts where candidates of major party's hail. In both the 2012 and 2016 votes each candidate got the most votes in the district they are from.

Fighting for victory: Mapping electoral violence in Ondo State

Electoral violence is a common feature of democratic contestations in Nigeria. The reality is that many politicians elected to office, their supporters, and political activists have altered their perceptions of electoral competition in the form of zero-sum logic with direct consequences for their opponents ⁽³⁾. Ondo State has a history of electoral violence. The state has its first democratic election in 1979 which produced Chief Michael Adegunle Ajasin of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) as its first governor. In 1983, Akinwale Michael Omoboriowo, who was Ajasin's deputy governor (1979-1983), decamped to the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) to vie for the number one position in the state. The declaration of Omoboriowo, the governorship candidate of NPN, as victorious by the then electoral umpire, Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), heralded an unprecedented level of post-election violence across the state. At least 40 persons died according to police reports, including two staffers of FEDECO and 8 NPN party members. Properties worth several billion Naira were destroyed⁽⁴⁾.

The general and governorship elections conducted in the state since 2007 have had their share of electoral violence. During the 2011 general elections, for example, a clash was reported between the supporters of PDP and the ruling LP in Obanla area with resulted in the death of three persons in Akure South LGA. Similar event happened during the State House of Assembly election in 2015. Political thugs were reported to have opened fire and stole ballot boxes⁽⁵⁾.

The prevailing political situation ahead of the 2020 Ondo governorship election has the potential to escalate in ways that could cause widespread violence. Since political campaigns began, CDD has been monitoring news reports to document and analyse the pre-election environment. The Centre observes an upsurge of political tensions in at least 11 of the 18 LGAs, with several reported cases of election-related violence. Group clashes, attacks on party secretariat and political rallies and campaigns by thugs and party supporters have been reported across the state with the highest number of incidents reported in Akure South and Idanre LGAs.

Local government elections, conducted on the 22 August 2020, were also characterised by intimidation of voters, conflict amongst party agents, hijacking of ballot boxes and disruption of the voting process at several polling units. Defacing of campaign posters, murder, kidnapping, destruction of properties, assaults and intimidation of party supporters and loyalists were also reported. With political party activists and supporters key instigators of the violence.

(3) Michal Mochtak (2018), *Fighting and Voting: Mapping electoral violence in the region of Post-Communist Europe*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 30(4): 1-27.

(4) Adeshola Samson and John Abimbola (2014), *Electoral Violence and the Survival of Democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Historical Perspective*, *Canadian Social Science*, retrieved at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/236296029.pdf>
.Nigeria Conflict Bulletin: Ondo State – Patterns and Trends, January 2012 – June 2015, The Fund for Peace

Ondo Central LGAs

The Ondo Central senatorial district remains a “very high-risk” district. As of 4 October 2020, CDD had documented 25 election-related violence incidents in five of the six LGAs in the district. During the August 2020 local government vote, CDD documented five cases of ballot snatching in Ondo East LGA, and three cases in Ondo West LGA. In Ondo town, Ondo West LGA, a clash between supporters of APC and African Democratic Congress (ADC) was reported which resulted in the vandalism of over 15 vehicles and left many injured⁽⁶⁾.

Seven recorded violent incidents in Akure South LGA makes it the most violent-prone LGA in Ondo State. On the 4 October 2020, there was pandemonium in the state capital, Akure, when the alleged supporters of the ruling APC and those of PDP clashed, heavily shooting at one another, around Oba Adeshida road. The attack was a reprisal for the killing of an APC member on the 3 October in the Obanla area of the state capital⁽⁷⁾.

Idanre LGA is also rated very high-risk for violence in this election. On 18 August 2020, the LGA witnessed gun-wielding thugs, alleged to be supporters of APC, attacking Social Democratic Party (SDP) during a campaign rally. Vehicles were destroyed and several persons injured⁽⁸⁾. Since August there have been ongoing incidents of APC, PDP and ZLP supporters attacking one another during campaigns.

Ondo North LGAs

Based on seven reported violent-related incidents in Owo, Akoko North West, Akoko South West and Ose LGAs, Ondo North is rated as a “high-risk” district in the forthcoming election. Since clashes between the supporters of the candidates of APC and PDP on the 29 September 2020 in Ipele and Owo towns, both parties have accused the other of masterminding the attacks. The PDP allege that its campaign convoy was attacked by heavily armed APC political thugs in the towns. Though, this claim was disputed by the APC campaign spokesperson, Olatunde Olabode, who claimed that PDP ordered its thugs to unleash coordinated attacks on the residents of Ipele and Owo⁽⁹⁾.

(6) James Sowole, Many Injured, Vehicles Vandalised as APC, ADC supporters Clash in Ondo, *ThisDay Newspaper*, August 22 2020, retrieved at <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/08/22/many-injured-vehicles-vandalised-as-apc-adc-supporters-clash-in-ondo/>

(7) Adejumo Kabir, Ondo2020: Violence in Akure as APC, PDP supporters clash again, *Premium Times*, 4 October 2020, retrieved at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-west/418364-just-in-ondo2020-violence-in-akure-as-apc-pdp-supporters-clash-again.html>

(8) Suspected APC Supporters Attack Members Of Social Democratic Party During Campaign In Ondo, *Sahara Reporter*, August 19 2020, retrieved at <http://saharareporters.com/2020/08/19/suspected-apc-supporters-attack-members-social-democratic-party-during-campaign-ondo>

(9) Joshua Oluwole, Ondo 2020: Many injured as PDP, APC supporters clash, *Premium Times*, 29 September 2020, retrieved at <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/417540-ondo-2020-many-injured-as-pdp-apc-supporters-clash.html>

Similarly, there was a reported attack on APC campaign convoy, allegedly by PDP supporters, in Oba Akoko in Akoko South West LGA⁽¹⁰⁾. In the same LGA and in Akoko North West LGAs during the August elections there were reports of ballot boxes being hijacked⁽¹¹⁾.

Ondo South LGAs

Ondo South has the lowest cases of violent-related incidents in the state ahead of the 2020 governorship election. With just two incidents documented so far it is considered as “low-risk” district. The major reported cases of violence were documented during the LGA elections in August in Ese-Odo and Okitipupa LGAs in which political leaders and thugs of the APC were alleged to hijack ballot boxes.

However, while any violence is yet to be documented in Ilaje and Odigbo LGAs, they both have a history of electoral violence. In 2015, for example, voters were reportedly intimidated and harassed by political thugs who also stormed the house of prominent local politicians during the State House of Assembly election. In Ilaje LGA, there were reported cases of shootings, stealing of ballot boxes and attacks on prominent politicians during the election⁽¹²⁾.

While the prevailing political situation in the state has the potential of escalating into widespread election-related violence during the forthcoming election, the arrest of suspected political thugs by the police over the violence that erupted in Ipele, Owo LGA is a laudable step towards mitigating violence. Nevertheless, the security agencies and other stakeholders should take necessary measures to douse the very tense political atmosphere characterising political campaigns.

Korefimi Akintunde, APC, PDP supporters clash in Ondo as vehicle set ablaze, *BusinessDay*, 16 September 2020, retrieved at <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/apc-pdp-supporters-clash-in-ondo-as-vehicle-set-ablaze/>

. The Approaching the Storm: The Cost of Political Tension, Potential for Violence and Violence Cases in Ondo State, Kimpact Development Initiative, 2020

Nigeria Conflict Bulletin: Ondo State – Patterns and Trends, January 2012 – June 2015, The Fund for Peace

ANNEX

Table 6: List of governorship candidates for the 2020 Ondo election

S/N	Position	Name of Candidate	Party	Gender
1	Governorship	Rotimi Adeleye Akindejoye	A	M
2	Governorship	Joshua Olufemi Adewole	AA	M
3	Governorship	Adeleye Adekunle Peter	AAC	M
4	Governorship	Adelegan Adedapo Oluwaseyi	ADC	M
5	Governorship	Martin Kunle Olateru-Olagbegi	ADP	M
6	Governorship	Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu	APC	M
7	Governorship	Olowoloba Dele	APGA	M
8	Governorship	Aminu Akeem Olanrewaju	APM	M
9	Governorship	Adesanya Olaoluwa	APP	M
10	Governorship	Okunade Taiwo	LP	M
11	Governorship	Ojajuni Joseph Eniola	NNPP	M
12	Governorship	Funmilayo Jenyo Ataunoko	NRM	M
13	Governorship	Eyitayo Olayinka Jegede	PDP	M
14	Governorship	Babatunde Francis Alli	PRP	M
15	Governorship	Fasua Peter Oyeleye	SDP	M
16	Governorship	Ojon Dotun	YPP	M
17	Governorship	Agboola Ajayi	ZLP	M

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