

Ekiti State 2018 Governorship Election



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Introduction

The Ekiti Governorship election is slated for July 14, 2018. The election matters for many reasons. First, Ekiti state is the only state in the South West outside the control of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) at the centre. Second, the incumbent governor of the state, Ayodele Fayose, would appear to have been continuously a thorn in the flesh of the central government led by APC. He 'is known for his consistent vituperations against the APC in general and President Muhammed Buhari in particular, right from the inception of the party. It is, therefore, hardly surprising to note the obvious desire, if not desperation of the APC to capture the state from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), albeit at all costs. According to Omotola (2018), nothing captures this tendency better than two recent events:

One, President Buhari's address to stakeholders of the APC from Ekiti state and the South West in Abuja shortly after Dr Kayode Fayemi won the party ticket, was highly revealing and illustrative. In the address, he challenged his audience to go and do all possible things to capture the state as he considered that as a signpost to what to expect in 2019. Second, Dr Kayode Fayemi himself had earlier declared in an address to his teeming supporters during his official declaration of intention to run for the party ticket on 15 March 2018 that before now, he was 'suegbe', 'alatarodo'; but now he had been transformed to the point that he now 'sa pra pra'. When interpreted literally, this means that before he was too tolerant and gentle to the point of foolishness. But he had become a changed person, who is now well-schooled in the intrigues and intricacies of local politics, including the willingness and capacity to meet force with force. Such a disposition portends danger for violence.

Omotola (2018) also stressed the need to arrest the seemingly endless political ridiculing, if not shaming of the APC in the state by Governor Fayose's constant reference to '16-0' at every slightest opportunity to rub it in. This is an allusion to the fact that Fayose's PDP defeated Fayemi's APC, then incumbent governor in all the 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state during the 2014 Governorship election. If attained, success in the 2018 governorship election will strengthen the APC's longstanding position, at least symbolically, that the 2014 governorship election results were rigged. It can also help to restore some personal pride of Kayode Fayemi and his supporters; the same way it can raise their hopes ahead of the 2019 general elections.

For the PDP and Governor Fayose, defeat in the governorship election could be too devastating a blow to handle. They may, therefore, be strongly motivated to do all possible things to win and show that their victory in 2014 was not a fluke. Success will also provide some buffer to Governor Fayose, who has always been inconsistent battles with the APC at all levels, most especially President Buhari. It is only by installing his anointed candidate as his successor that some respite may come his way; though not a guarantee since his immunity would have lapsed.

Overall, the 2018 Ekiti governorship election will not only rekindles old rivalries between two political parties, the PDP and APC; but also between two formidable opponents and strongmen of Ekiti politics, Fayose and Fayemi. Subterranean external interests, most notably by the ruling APC at the centre, symbolised by the presidency; and their 2019 permutations, only serve to add troubling twists and turns to the election.

The import of the preceding is that the election promises to be highly competitive, laced with electoral risk factors that could degenerate into violence if not mitigated on time. To be sure, several parties and candidates are set to contest in the election. However, the primary contest seems to be between the APC and PDP. This has been the pattern of electoral contests in the state since 1999. However, this does not foreclose the possibility of surprises by smaller parties.

Now that the election is around the corner, featuring 35 candidates, it is pertinent to survey the electoral environment, including the prospects and challenges of a peaceful and violence-free election in the state. This is the primary purpose of this background paper.

The table 1 below shows the number of political parties, and their candidates for governorship election.

Table 1: List of political parties and their candidates contesting 2018 Governorship Election in Ekiti State.

S/N	Name	Sex	Political Party
1	Jacob Abiodun Aluko	M	A
2	Shola Omolola	M	AA
3	Owolabi Bode Olowoporoku	M	ACD
4	Agboola Olaniyi Ben	M	AD
5	Segun Adewale	M	ADP
6	Orubuloye Dele Lucas	M	AGA
7	Oribamise Stephen Ojo	M	AGAP
8	Afe Henry Babatunde	M	ANRP
9	Saheed Olawale Jimoh	M	APA
10	John Olukayode Fayemi	M	APC
11	Temitope Adebayo	M	APDA
12	Ayodeji Lawrence Ayodele	M	APGA
13	Adegboye Ajayi	M	BNPP
14	David-Adesua Ayodele	M	DA
15	Olanrewaju Olalekan	M	DPC
16	Akerele Oluyinka Gbenga	M	DPP
17	Sule Olalekan Ganiyu	M	FJP
18	Adewale Olushola Akinyele	M	GPN
19	Ajibare Emmanuel Tosin	M	ID
20	Amuda Temitope Kazem	M	KOWA

See Final list of Candidates for the Ekiti Governorship Election, 14 June 2018, retrieved at <http://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/EKITI-2018-GOV.-ELECTION-FINAL-LIST0001.pdf>

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21	Lawal Sikiru Tae	M	LP
22	Jegede Olabode Gregory	M	MMN
23	Jeremiah Adebisi Omoyeni*	M	MPN
24	Babatunde Oladapo Alegbeleye	M	NDLP
25	Oladosu Olaniyan	M	NPC
26	Jeremiah Adebisi Omoyeni*	M	PANDEL
27	Ayoyinka Oluwaseun Dada	M	PDC
28	Olusola Kolapo Olubunmi	M	PDP
29	Animashaun Goke	M	PPA
30	Bejide Oluwadare Patrick	M	PPN
31	Aiyegbusi Akinloye Oladele	M	SDP
32	Adeleye John Olusegun	M	UDP
33	Gboyega Olufemi Jacob	M	UPN
34	Fakorede Ayodeji Ebenezer	M	YDP
35	Omotayo Temitope Gabriel	M	YPP

* Jeremiah Adebisi Omoyeni's name with same qualification and age is put as candidate for MPN and PANDEL for the Governorship Election.

As the table above indicates, there are no female candidates among the 35. This follows old patterns of politics in Nigeria where women have always been on the margin of political representation.

Political Dynamics and the 2018 Governorship Election

Politics in Ekiti State, like in other places, is full of intrigues and its dynamics make it unpredictable. As the 2018 governorship election gathers momentum, the political tempo in the state has heightened, as many of the governorship aspirants have begun to consult various interest groups for alignment and re-alignment.

Political godfather-son conflicts, cultism, and Area Boys menace are recurring problems in the South West, Ekiti inclusive. Given the political history of political crisis in the Western region in the 1960s, the South-West is seen to be prone to the use of thugs during elections. This is rooted in the overwhelmingly dominant posture of godfathers in elections. For example, the political godfather, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu, took centre stage of Oyo political scene until his death. He employed populist politics, patronage, violence and extortion to strengthen his political forces.

However, though not wholly free of such tendencies (after all, it is public knowledge that Governor Fayose is the father figure to PDP candidate, Professor Olusola Kolapo, popularly referred to as Eleka), Ekiti does not seem deeply rooted in this form of godfatherism. Its dynamics of election risk factors are located elsewhere. These include, among others, the desperation by the two leading parties, the PDP and APC, for various reasons that bother on personal ego and pride, as well as power and influence at both state and federal levels, to win the election at all costs. The gale of defections, most especially from the PDP to the APC, following the poor handling of party primaries and candidate selection process, mainly as the election draws closer, remains a source of worry. Also the rise in the level of political thuggery, including the violent attacks during electioneering campaigns and killing of perceived opponents.

Votes and Voting Pattern in Ekiti State in the 2014 Governorship Election

In the run-up to the governorship election, there are some concerns as to whether a credible electoral process is possible due to current political dynamics. As voting day approaches, indications have emerged that the election might not be a smooth ride for hitherto front-line candidates. The exercise is likely to throw up surprises, given the fact that many of the political parties are witnessing internal crises and factionalism. This development has altered the political calculations that the race would be a two-way contest between PDP and APC.

The voting pattern of Ekiti people was in the first part of the current political dispensation based on the issue of the moment. In 1999, it was all about June 12, and Afenifere point, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) as a party then was so lucky to have served towards the burning issues in the minds of the people. Hence, the party won the election. Later especially from 2003, the politics in the state turned into votes for cash syndrome, which is now rampant in the Nigerian politics. For the 2014 gubernatorial election, Ekiti had 733,766 registered voters, 2,195 polling units, 2,803 voting points, 117 collation centres and 16 local government collation centres and divided into three senatorial districts. While a number of polling units, voting points, and LGA remain the same, the number of registered voters has increased. Following the ongoing Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) in the State, INEC announced that registered voter has risen to 842,731, as at February 2018, ahead of the governorship election.

A cursory look at table 2 below shows an unimaginable shift from a voting pattern of voters in Ekiti State. Unlike in 2014 governorship election that PDP received overwhelming votes across the 16 LGAs which resulted to the defeat of the incumbent governor and the ruling party, APC, the party lost most of the LGAs in the 2007/2009 governorship elections. Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) which was then opposition party won at least 9 LGAs and emerged as the ruling party after years of litigation and conduct of bye-elections in some LGAs.

Table 2: 2014 and 2007/2009 Governorship Elections' Result in Ekiti State

LGAs	2017 Governorship Election Results				2007/2009 Governorship Election Results			
	PDP	APC	Difference	LGAs Won	PDP	APC	Difference	LGAs Won
Ado-Ekiti	41,169	13,927	+27,242	PDP	9,700	16,612	-6,912	ACN
Efon	5,335	3,422	+1,913	PDP	X	X	X	X
Ekiti East	12,498	8,584	+3,914	PDP	4,006	4,000	+6	PDP
Ekiti South West	11,038	6,746	+4,292	PDP	7,556	7,106	+450	PDP
Ekiti West	10,702	7,860	+2,842	PDP	6,174	6,468	-294	ACN
Emure	7,086	4,332	+2,754	PDP	2,925	3,645	-720	ACN
Gbonyi	11,046	8,138	+2,908	PDP	5,975	5,962	+13	PDP
Ido-Osi	13,045	7,134	+5,911	PDP	X	X	X	X
Irepodun/Ifelodun	13,038	6,834	+6,204	PDP	1,578	4,224	-2,646	ACN
Ikere	16,197	7,989	+8,208	PDP	6,214	6,971	-757	ACN
Ikole	14,238	8,804	+5,434	PDP	2,390	2,514	-124	ACN
Ijero	13,814	9,348	+4,466	PDP	9,110	5,359	+3,751	PDP
Ilejemeje	3,670	3,336	+334	PDP	3,405	2,122	+1,283	PDP
Ise-Orun	10,136	5,809	+4,327	PDP	3,864	4,221	-357	ACN
Moba	8,878	7,994	+884	PDP	7,792	8,364	-572	ACN
Oye	11,200	10,176	+1,024	PDP	7,478	10,535	-3,057	ACN
TOTAL DIFFERENCE			+82,657				-9,936	

The Issue of Zoning/Power Rotation in Ekiti State

The matter of zoning or power rotation -where elected positions rotate between different geopolitical districts- is emerging as a significant factor in the campaign for the Ekiti State governorship election. The current Governor, Ayodele Fayose is popularising the zoning in Ekiti State politics as he rounds off his four years in office as the governor of the state. Fayose's advocacy for zoning was so compelling that zoning became possible. Convinced about the potency of the bloc vote, Fayose jettisoned other PDP contestants and settled for his Deputy, Olusola Eleka. Thus, zoning dominates the state governorship race. Out of the three senatorial districts, only Ekiti South has not produced an elected governor since 1999. Ekiti North has produced two elected governors (2007-2010 and 2010-2014). Ekiti Central has equally produced three elected governors (1999-2003, 2003-2006 and 2014 to date) (Ojomoyela, 2018).

The list Governors of Ekiti State since 1999

Name	Title	Took Office	Left Office	Party	Senatorial-Zone
Otunba Niyi Adebayo	Governor	May 29th, 1999	29 May 2003	AD	Central
Ayo Fayose	Governor	29 May 2003	16 October 2006	PDP	Central
Chief Friday Aderemi	Acting Governor	17 October 2006	18 October 2006	PDP	North
Tunji Olurin	Administrator	18 October 2006	27 April 2007		
Tope Ademiluyi	Acting Governor	27 April 2007	29 May 2007	PDP	North
Segun Oni	Governor	29 May 2007	15 Oct 2010	PDP	North
Dr. Kayode Fayemi	Governor	15th Oct 2010	16th Oct 2014	ACN/ APC	North
Ayo Fayose	Governor	16th Oct 2014	October 2018	PDP	Central

The above table shows that the North and Central geo-political districts have dominated the governorship seat since 1999. This situation has resituated the issue of zoning in Ekiti State, as the 2018 governorship election draws nearer. Though some powers in the state do not buy into it, politicians from Ekiti South Senatorial district are closing ranks to ensure that they get the governorship seat. Since 1999 when democratic government returned, Ekiti South remains the only senatorial zone that has not occupied the Oke Bareke Government House in Ado Ekiti. The first civilian governor, Otunba Niyi Adebayo hails from Iyin-Ekiti in Irepodun/Ifelodun local council in Ekiti Central, same as the incumbent governor, Mr Ayodele Fayose, who defeated him during his first term (2003-2006). In 2007 election, former Governor Segun Oni from Ifaki, Ido/Osi local council in Ekiti North Senatorial District came in briefly before the Appeal Court Judgement of October 14, 2010, terminated his tenure and brought in former Governor Kayode Fayemi. Fayemi is from Ishan-Ekiti in Oye Local council, also in Ekiti North Senatorial District. By the time Fayose's second term ends in October 2018, Ekiti Central Senatorial District would have spent 12 years in power, while the North has done eight years, with the south still nursing only hope.

Agitation for political office based on zoning, though not peculiar to Ekiti State, has remained controversial. While marginalised groups advocate for an all-inclusive political arrangement, fairness and equity, the larger group with strong voting strength most times kick against it. Out of 33 aspirants that contested for the APC ticket, no fewer than twenty were from the South. Prominent among these are; Hon Bamidele Faparusi, former Commissioner, Funminiyi Afuye, an Australian-based Medical Doctor, Dr Wole Oluyede, Senator Gbenga Aluko, Hon. Olufemi, Bamisile, Sunday Adebomi and Diran Adesua. However, the Former governor and Minister of Mines and Steel Development, Dr Kayode Fayemi, who is from the Northern geopolitical district of the state, secured the ticket.

This accounts for the great clamour for the governorship slot to be ceded to Ekiti South geo-political district. Ekiti South consists of Gbonyin, Ikere, Ekiti East, Ise/Orun, Emure and Ekiti South-west local government areas. Power has been alternating between the two senatorial districts of North and Central geo-political zones of the state. Some are of the view that it would be against equity, justice and fair play to deny Ekiti South an opportunity to produce governor for the first time since the state was created over 20 years ago. Nevertheless, the APC and other parties do not seem bothered about the agitation for zoning in favour of the South. But the advocates of zoning insist that the only way other political parties, particularly the APC could convince Ekiti people about their much-touted belief in fairness and justice was to ensure that the governorship ticket was exclusively zoned to the south senatorial district of Ekiti, a request that has failed to materialise

For Fayose who is rounding of his second term, his determination to hand over to his Deputy, Professor Kolapo Olusola is a political battle that has caused severe disaffection within the PDP. While some PDP leaders, including candidates in the party primary, particularly Chief Adeyeye, the strongest (and eventually only) challenger to Eleka in the primary, did not only publicly denounced the decision of Fayose but eventually defected to the APC in protestation, Fayose has refused to bulge in his determination to ensure power shift.

The Party Primaries for July 14, 2018 Governorship Election

The primary election is an intra-party election to select candidates to run for public office. Party primaries may be closed (partisan), allowing only declared party members to vote, or open (nonpartisan), enabling all voters to choose which party's candidate they wish to vote in without stating any affiliation. Nigeria practices the former, that is, partisan type in which only declared party members vote. In a partisan primary election, registered party members may participate in choosing the candidate for the party's nomination by voting through secret ballot, as in general elections. The purpose of a partisan party primary in the two political parties of APC and PDP is for members of the political parties to nominate candidates and elect party officers for the governorship election in Ekiti to come July 2018.

The APC Party Primary

The APC party primary that eventually ended up as inconclusive held on 5th May 2018. Thirty-Three (33) aspirants contested the party primary. There were about 2, 618 delegates from across the 177 wards in the state for the party primary (Ojomoyela, 2018). The contestants went to the 133 communities and 177 wards in the 16 local government areas canvassing for support and votes for the primary. The APC National Working Committee set up a 5-man committee headed by the Governor of Nasarawa State, Umaru Al-Makura to conduct the election. However, on the 5th May, mid-way into the election, it was suspended amidst violence and protests that broke out at the Oluyemo Kayode Stadium in Ado Ekiti, venue of the primary election. The violence and protests started when agents of some of the aspirants complained that the electoral process was being manipulated to favour a particular candidate.

This led some thugs to attack ballot boxes and smashed them. Agents of some contestants accused the security agencies present of colluding and compromising the process in favour of Kayode Fayemi. They alleged that an agent to Fayemi, Mr Samuel Abejide was writing the serial numbers of ballot papers to authenticate who delegates voted for (Ogundele, 2018).

With the preceding, the exercise was then cancelled and another primary was fixed for Friday 11th May 2018 at the same venue. The existing primary committee was maintained, except the secretary who was substituted. The agents who participated in the previous election but unruly were disqualified from the fresh primary election and barred from coming to the voting arena with their mobile phones (Shibayan, 2018). Dr Kayode Fayemi, the past governor and then Minister of Mines and Steel Development won the APC primary election. The shadow poll was the first critical step towards the July 14 governorship poll. The election was competitive and antagonistic as it witnessed the use of hate speech and mudslinging. The election and its preparations dismantled the notion of zoning. While aspirants from the South Senatorial District have been agitating for power rotation, contestants from other zones have decried the clamour, claiming that Ekiti is one indivisible zone. The crisis is not peculiar to Ekiti APC. There are intra-party conflicts within the party in Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Kogi, Rivers, Ekiti, Oyo, Cross River, Enugu, Yobe, and Kebbi states among others. The violence that marred the first primary and various dramas and theatrics that was witnessed were pointers to the fact that the APC's crisis is not close to an end. Surprisingly, the party was able to address the fallouts of the primary election and managed to avert defection of other candidates who lost the primary election. The intervention of party leaders from the South West, especially Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the acclaimed national leader of APB, Chief Bisi Akande and the presidency may have helped to douse tensions.

PDP Party Primary

Unlike the APC, where 33 aspirants contested, only three, Deputy Governor Olusola Eleka, Senator Biodun Olujimi and Prince Dayo Adeyeye finally contested in the race for the ruling People's Democratic Party. The PDP held its party primary On Tuesday, May 8, 2018. Professor Kolapo Olusola Eleka, deputy governor of Ekiti State, won the ticket. Eleka is the preferred candidate of Ayodele Fayose, governor of the state. Out of the 1,968 votes, Eleka scored 1,191, while Prince Adedayo Adeyeye got 770 votes and seven votes were voided while Abiodun Olujimi stepped down for the former Minister of State for Work, Prince Dayo Adeyeye (Abu and Afolabi, 2018). The withdrawal reduced the aspirants to two, while 1, 966 delegates were voted to elect the party's flag bearer.

Intra-Party Crises Ahead of the Governorship Election

Intra-party crises, real and contrived are rife in Ekiti state and have resulted in a spate of defections and conflicts involving politicians of different party affiliations. The weak political party system mostly serves as a vehicle for fluctuating, personal ambitions, sectional, religious, and clan interests.

There is no doubt that the party primaries in the two major political parties of PDP and APC has further divided the parties and increased their internal crises. This seems much more pronounced within the PDP where Prince Dayo Adeyeye, the only challenger to Eleka in the party primary, eventually defected to the APC. Some members of the state House of Assembly, including a former Chief Whip and a former Deputy Majority Leader, have also defected to the APC (see The Eagle Online, 27 June 2018). A member of the House of Representatives, Mr Olamide Oni, who represents Ijero/Ekiti West/Efon Federal Constituency, together with his personal assistant, Mr Banjo Filani, had also recently defected to the APC, openly declaring support for Dr Kayode Fayemi (Soniya, 2018).

Even before the primary, leading members of the PDP had been defecting. Defection became a source of concern to the PDP, given the calibre of people leave the party. It was such that the Senate's Deputy Minority Whip, Biodun Olujimi, 'expressed concerns over the continued exit of prominent members of the party', worrying that 'it may affect the performance of the party at the July 14 polls'. According to her:

Our leadership should take the blame for standing with their hands akimbo; this is not good. They waited for so long and allowed these crises to fester, but now they will wake up having known that there are problems. It is worrisome that we are losing our prominent members. Former Deputy Governors Lawal and Omoyeni are major stakeholders in our party... They worked hard in the last election of 2014 for the enthronement of Governor Ayodele Fayose's government (Oluwole, 2018).

This is not to say that the APC was utterly devoid of defection. Yinka Akerele, who many believed won the PDP primary in 2006 but was substituted with Segun Oni by then President Olusegun Obasanjo, took part in the APC primary and had since defected to; and became the flag bearer of the Democratic People's Party (DPP) in the July 14 governorship election (see Johnson, 2018). These defections are not entirely surprising, given that intra-party conflict has been one of the downsides of party politics in Nigeria since 1999.

The APC Crisis

The crisis in APC began when different people with different persuasions merged to form the party. These groups were the Congress for Progressives Change (CPC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and a portion of PDP christened the new PDP (NPDP) and All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). Despite the merger, these tendencies (old party identities/party lines) have continued to manifest in the organisation of the APC at all levels, especially in the spheres of allocation of the spoils of office, with accusations and counter-accusations among various groups of marginalisation, if not exclusion.

Ekiti state has not been an exception. Expectedly, therefore, the build-up to the primaries had not been a tea party. It has been tensed, with the various aspirants inundating party delegates with

their respective programmes. There is a great struggle over who gets the ticket of the APC in Ekiti state. The crisis generated by the botched governorship primary election, took a different dimension, on Monday, May 7, 2018, as some protesters sealed off the Ekiti APC party's secretariat in Ado Ekiti. They padlocked the gates of the secretariat and sealed it off (Nwako, 2018). The protesters argued that the Ekiti APC executive had moved for a consensus candidate, which is against the constitution of the party. The ticket was keenly contested by 33 candidates, notably Dr Kayode Fayemi, then Minister of Mines and Solid Minerals, a former governor and chieftain of the APC Segun Oni; former Speaker, Femi Bamisile; Presidential Adviser on Political Matters, Babafemi Ojodu; former Senators, Ayo Arise and Gbenga Aluko; Mojisola Yaya-Kolade, Bimbo Daramola, among others. As noted earlier, Fayemi won the ticket. There were initial threats of defection by those who lost out. The discontents revolved around the party primary. Some candidates were aggrieved that Fayemi only joined the race barely a month to the primary, while some of them had been on the field for over a year. But because of the perceived deployment of money and support from the 'above', he was able to win. For many of the aspirants, therefore, the playing ground was not level. The party was, however, somewhat able to resolve the concerns to a considerable extent, thereby keeping the party mostly united going into the governorship election. However, former Governor Segun Oni and erstwhile Deputy National Chair of APC have since approached the Federal High Court in Abuja to nullify the candidature of Fayemi in the July 14 Ekiti governorship election. Oni who polled 420 in the primary elections is challenging Fayemi emergence based on his refusal to resign his appointment, Fayemi as the Minister of Solid Mineral, Mines and Steel Development, as at the time of contesting and winning the May 12 APC primary. The PDP Crisis

A factional crisis has hit the PDP following the state congress of March 9, 2017, as two parallel executives emerged from the Congress, with both Oguntuase and Chief Williams Ajayi laying claim to the chairmanship seat. The latest crisis rocking the party is the decision of the Ekiti State governor, Ayodele Fayose to endorse his deputy, Kolapo Olusola, as his successor. This caught other aspirants in the PDP napping and is threatening to tear the party apart. Fayose had always known that he faced a herculean task in determining who would succeed him. With heavyweights like a former Minister of Works, Dayo Adeyeye, the Senator representing Ekiti South Senatorial District and Deputy Minority Whip, Biodun Olujimi both scheming to take over from him, Fayose knew he had to tread softly in anointing a successor (Ogunje, 2017). But on Wednesday, September 8, 2017, the governor announced that he had adopted Prof. Olusola Eleka, who is from Ekiti South Senatorial District, as the preferred candidate of the party. Fayose's decision to endorse his deputy was contrary to the promise made at his maiden press briefing on June 22, 2014, after his victory where he stated that he would leave the government house with his deputy upon expiration of his tenure. The game had changed, and Olusola may end up spending another four or eight years if he can win the governorship election. Sensing that such action had fore-closed their ambitions, the quartet of Adeyeye, Olujimi, Bejide and the immediate past Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Mr. Owoseeni Ajayi reacted angrily, describing the action as a flagrant violation of section 50, subsections A and B of the party's constitution, which made it a matter of imperative for the conduct of primary when consensus can't be reached for any elective positions (Ogunje, 2017). Since Eleka won the ticket, the party has been grappling with the fallouts of the primary, including party defections.

Party Defections

In about the last five months, politics in Ekiti state has witnessed a series of political defections with politicians decamping from one political party to the other mainly from the opposition APC to the ruling PDP in the state. Scholars and commentators see the reasons as resulting from personality clash, power tussles, divergent views on the operations of a political party's philosophy, crisis or division within political parties, disagreement on party's position on an issue, realization of one's personal political ambition and party leaders reneging on agreed matters of the political party probably on power-sharing formula (Mbah, 2011:3). This has not allowed democracy to acquire value and stability in Nigeria.

Defections have become more alarming in the present democratic dispensation and have become more so in the build-up to general elections. Nigerians have continued to witness the drama of movement of party members especially of the two leading parties of APC and PDP. Several reasons account for this. The primary reason is the lack of internal democratic practice and culture in these parties (Adeyemi, 2014). Since political parties are essential elements of a democratic machine, it behoves them to be democratic in their internal operations. This, therefore, makes internal (intra-party) democracy an vital feature which political parties must possess to be able to reduce the rising tide of party defections and speed up democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Adeyemi, 2014).

In April 2018, some aspirants such as two former deputy governors of the PDP in the state, Sikiru Lawal and Bisi Omoyeni, as well as a former Nigerian envoy to Canada, Dare Bejide, left the party for the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Oluwole, 2018). In March 2018, it was reported that about 200 members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) dumped the party for the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Ido/Osi Local Government Area of Ekiti State (Ani, 2018). The defectors led by a former local government APC Deputy Chairman, Mr James Afolabi posits that he left the party alongside his followers because internal democracy was not at its best practice in the APC. This may affect the performance of either of the parties at the July 14 polls.

Aside from political party defections, there are strong indications that if Governor Ayodele Fayose did not make haste to appease his aides and make them stay on the job till the expiration of his tenure, he might be in for a shocker. This is a sequel to many of his aides resigning from his government. Prominent among those who had parted ways with the governor include, former Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Ekiti State University, Prince Dayo Adeyeye; former Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Mr Owoseni Ajayi. Others are former Director General/Special Adviser Bureau of Public Procurement, Chief Segun Akinwumi; former Commissioner for Public Utilities, Mr Deji Adesua; former Board Member representing Ekiti at Odua Investment, Dr Sikiru Lawal. Others include Kayode Osho, a former Commissioner for Works and a blossom friend of the Governor and the Governor's Assistant on Transportation, Odunayo Ehinafe (Ojomoyela, 2018). This development may affect the fortunes of party negatively come July 14 polls.

Dangers of Militarization: Lessons from the Past

The Operation WETIE (literally means pour petrol and set ablaze) started in the old Western Region over the alleged rigging of the election in 1964 comes to mind in discussing violence and militarisation of the electoral process in Ekiti state. The geography of electoral conflicts in Ekiti state is very complicated. The state has been witnessing intense political party competition, both within and outside the ruling party and this has the likelihood of influencing electoral outcomes. The adoption of candidates by the political parties especially the PDP and APC increase the visibility of the candidates and possible conflicts and violence. Their rising profiles have contributed to the intensity of inter-party rivalry with a high risk for violence before, during or after the election. In 1983, the former Ondo State lost notable indigenes like Chief Fagbamigbe to the crisis during the attempted rigged the election for Chief Akin Omoboriowo of the defunct National Party of Nigeria. Since then, political sensitivity of the state had taken a dangerous turn. In March 2011, two supporters of the PDP identified as Ayo Kinde and Michael Ipdola were killed in Ado Ekiti (Babalola, 2011). Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) was accused of masterminding the killings.

The history of violence remains a source of worry as the governorship election approaches. Contradictions in inter- and intra-party abound, including issues around party primaries, candidate selection and defections have always been associated with political contests in the state since 1999. However, the militarisation of the 2014 governorship election arguably remained the height of common infractions in the state in recent times. It may recall, on Thursday, June 19, 2014 barely 48 hours to the governorship election, some leaders of the APC including three sitting Governors – Rotimi Amaechi (Rivers); Adams Oshiomole (Edo) and Rabiu Kwakwaso (Kano) were either barred from entering Ado-Ekiti or taking off from their local airports to Ado Ekiti, the state capital for the grand rally of Kayode Fayemi by the Military men and other security operatives (Balogun, 2014). Similarly, the APC key stalwarts were rounded up in different parts of the state, on the eve of the election. Even Fayemi himself and some election observers were not spared in the harassment as there were alleged sporadic shooting around his (Fayemi) house in Oye Local Council, while the security men stormed the apartments of observers and ransacked their luggage and the entire apartment (Balogun, 2014). Some journalists were also harassed.

Though the election was primarily adjudged to be free and fair, the overzealousness of some security officials who restricted the movement of some APC Governors into Ekiti and the arbitrary arrest of some officers of the party also prevented the APC from perfecting its last minute plans for the election. This action was seen by the APC members as an affront on its party leaders and an abuse of federal power to give the PDP candidate an undue advantage. Concerning heavy security presence before, during and after the election, the situation remains abnormal in a civil society. However, we may not rule out the fact that the exercise would have probably gone either way if such abnormal measure was not put in place. This again underscores the poor level of political education and advancement in the country. Historically, elections in Ekiti state have always been marred by violence, intimidations and long-drawn legal tussles. This has made the previous governorship elections conducted in the state to witness the presence of massive security forces. Platoons of security operatives, including military officers, were drafted to lock down the state shortly before, during and

immediately after the elections with immediate consequences of violating peoples' rights and freedom. Accordingly, Jega (2012) posits that physical attacks on electoral officials and facilities, attacks on security personnel on election duties, misuse of security orderlies by politicians, especially incumbents; attacks on opponents; assaults on members of the public; violence at campaigns; intimidation of voters; snatching of election materials; kidnapping and assassination of political opponents are significant impediments to election security.

However, security personnel no doubt, perpetrate violence during the electoral process that was drafted to secure elections, such as intimidation of voters, oppression and victimisation of members of political parties different from that of the government at the centre, excessive show of force and connivance with politicians to perpetrate rigging. Hence, the first security challenge facing electoral conduct in Nigeria is that of securing the men and materials for the election. As Jega further noted, in many ways elections in Nigeria is akin to war. For one thing, mobilisation by the election commission is massive, similar to preparations for a major war. Thus, securing men and material is always very challenging so is securing the voters and the candidates during elections in Nigeria. Admittedly, elections in post-colonial Nigeria have rarely been peaceful. This is because they have become a matter of warfare that has resulted not only in killings, maiming and destruction but also impacted negatively on electoral processes as recorded in 1966, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007 and post-election violence in 2011. However, voters in Ekiti state defied the massive deployment of security operatives as they turned out in large numbers to cast their votes in the 2014 governorship election. There is now a growing concern that the 2018 election is 'pay-back' time for Fayose's PDP. There is a shift in the balance of power concerning control of power at the centre. All the talks about the possible use of federal might in favour of Fayemi's APC derived mainly from this perception.

Conflicts Dynamics and Pre-Election Violence

Ahead of the July 14, 2018 governorship election in Ekiti State, the various political parties fielding candidates in the election have nominated their flag bearers, and a good number of them have also named the running mates of their candidates. As the INEC prepares for the governorship election, there are fears that the state may witness a repeat of the violence that has always characterised governorship elections in the state since 1999.. In 1999, during electioneering campaigns, there was violence involving Alliance for Democracy (AD) members. For example, an AD Woman Leader was bathed with acid and later died in the hospital. In the 2003 elections, violence believed to be caused by intra-party squabbles then festered and assumed full-scale crisis in which people were reportedly injured. Between the 2003 and 2007 elections, the state witnessed violence, and many lives were lost, especially in 2005 and 2006. The killings were believed to be politically motivated. The political upheaval remotely led to the imposition of a state of emergency by the then President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. Chief Obasanjo was alleged to have manipulated the State Assembly to impeach the democratically elected governor, Ayodele Fayose. Political instability reached its height in the state between 2006 and 2007 that it had five governors (Ado, 2018).

In the same vein, the governorship rerun or supplementary elections held on April 25 and May 5, 2009 held in 10 local governments, 63 wards, and about 800 polling units in Ekiti State to complete the April 14, 2007 elections between the then Action Congress (AC) Kayode Fayemi

and PDP's Segun Oni were so violent. Serious carnage was not just caused but duly accredited observers and journalists were assaulted. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HUQytgR7jE>

The 2014 governorship elections also featured pre-election violence of such a magnitude that then incumbent governor, Kayode Fayemi, and members of the APC, were attacked by police during a rally in Ado-Ekiti on 8th June 2014. The then governor and his entourage were said to be on a mission aimed at "sweeping the State capital" when Tear gas was fired into the crowd, and APC supporter Taiwo Akinola was shot in the head. Fayemi accused the PDP of being the mastermind behind the attack (PM New June 2014). However the 2014 elections were marred by accusations and counter-accusations of violence, threats, and intimidations throughout the campaign, for instance, the killing of one of the supporters of Labour Party Candidate, Opeyemi Bamidele, Funsho Ogundare, in November by people believed to be APC members at Emure Ekiti led Bamidele to accuse the then governor Fayemi of being a threat to peace in the state (PremiumTimes. In his Open Letter, Bamidele opined:

"If you really ask me, your Excellency,, I fear that you, probably without knowing it, constitute the greatest threat to the realisation of a free and fair election in Ekiti State in 2014 owing to your seeming allergy to any form of opposition as well as the intransigence of many of the political gladiators you surround yourself with in Ekiti and who seem to have finally boxed you into a corner,"

Already, signs of election-induced violence have begun to manifest in the state as the elections draw near. There have been cases of politically motivated killings: recently, Willy Aye-goro, an APC member, was killed by suspected assassins at Igbehin area of Ado-Ekiti, the state capital on 13 June 2018. Earlier on the same day, there was an early morning gun attack on the hotel owned by former APC governorship aspirant, Dr Wole Oluyede by yet-to-be-identified shooters. Also on 20 June 2018, Mr Ayo Ayodeji (aka Omo Ijoba), was shot dead around Oke Ori Omi area of Ado-Ekiti. All these cases constituted the basis of the APC's petition to the Commissioner of Police in Ekiti state (The Nation, 25 July 2018).

The situation can only worsen as the election draws closer. It is therefore essential to pay attention to areas with a history of electoral violence in the state. Such areas as may constitute flashpoints in the 2018 governorship election include: Ishan and Ikere (Homes of Fayemi and Eleka respectively), as well as other areas where significant political figures and appointees come from, are likely going to violent areas. However, regarding records of electoral violence occurrences, the following areas are regarded as the hotspots, namely:

- ❑ Emure and Ikere, have a reputation for being volatile. There seems to be more sympathy for the PDP through the APC is very powerful there. Any electoral outcome against the popular will of the people may result in violence.
- ❑ Ijero and Ikole: These are also volatile areas from the electoral history of the state;
- ❑ Irepodun: Both PDP's Ayo Fayose and APC's Opeyemi Bamidele (MOB) hail from this local government area. The perceived assassination of MOB could only complicate the already tensed environment in the local government and may raise the likelihood of violence.
- ❑ Efon and Oye: Kayode Fayemi comes from Oye and is likely to be a flash point,

- Ido Osi: The people of Ido Osi are still bitter that their votes did not count in the disputed election between Kayode Fayemi and their son, Segun Oni. It is, however, expected that the defection of Segun Oni to the APC would help moderate the situation.
- Gbonyin: The area has potential to witness violence during the election

War Of Words – Hate and Disinformation Deployed

Ahead of the 2018 governorship election in Ekiti State, politicians are making inflammatory statements capable of igniting violence before, during and after the election. The increasing and trending use of inflammatory communications, otherwise known as hate speech/songs on various arms of the mass media, especially electronic section (radio and social media) do not mean well for the governorship election in Ekiti state.

Hate speeches, though perhaps not unknown to us in the past, never became such a worrisome feature of life in the country as they are today, occupying a significant part of the political space. A hate speech is not a manifestation of ordinary dislike of another person; it connotes, by the dictionary definition of the word hate, “extreme or intense” loathing, such as excludes or impedes mutual tolerance, mutual accommodation, togetherness or co-existence. Making derogatory, derisive or insulting remarks about another person is not a hate speech. Nor does belonging to a political party in opposition to someone’s party connote a relationship characterised by hate; it indicates merely ties characterised, not by enmity or hate, but by divergent interests. This poses a grave danger to the peace and unity of the country in general and Ekiti state in particular.

For instance, the former Governor of Ekiti State and one of the governorship contestants, Dr Kayode Fayemi, boasted that the APC would defeat PDP in the July 14, 2018 poll and ensure that Governor Fayose goes to jail afterwards (Odunsi, 2018). Ayodele Fayose, equally criticised the Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Kayode Fayemi for trying to proffer solution to corruption in Nigeria. According to him “It is funny that Fayemi is not even ashamed to sermonize on the need to say no to impunity and eliminate the syndrome of sacred cows, when he, himself acted as a sacred cow by refusing to appear before a commission of inquiry, duly constituted to probe his four years as governor of Ekiti State. The reality is that President Buhari is leading a government of scandalously corrupt people and one of them is Dr Kayode Fayemi, Fayose concluded.

In a proxy war between the PDP and APC, the former has accused the latter of turning Ekiti state which has been a peaceful state into a war zone with violent ridden party primary which was disrupted by some thugs. All these hate speeches and disinformation do have potential implications on the July 14 governorship election.

Conclusion

In the forthcoming governorship election in Ekiti State, what will define and shape the outcome of the result is going to be money, and incumbency (both at federal and state) might spice with a monopoly of violence. These two major factors will influence and shape the electoral outcome. The election seems to have gone beyond a contest on who governs the state, to that of two foes in the person of Fayemi and Fayose in a replay match. The campaign is being rife with hate and intimidation asides violence playing out in the street and on the pages of newspapers. As Fayemi chants he is now “Sapra Sapra” Fayose taunts back with 16-0. This has fueled the fear of rigging and violence ahead of the elections. The win at all cost mentality may likely change the historical landscape of battlegrounds and violence. It is, however, important to point out that the fear of the possible rigging and violence should not serve as a basis to militarise the elections as this may lead to voter apathy during the vote in the state. It is also essential for INEC and relevant stakeholders to heighten voter education and confidence building in the elections.

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