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**A Political Analysis of the August 9, 2014 Gubernatorial  
Election in Osun State, South West Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

The August 9, 2014 gubernatorial election in Osun state, South West Nigeria was significant in many ways. It was the second in the series of major elections before the 2015 general elections. Coming on the heels of the June 21, 2014 gubernatorial election in Ekiti state it provided an opportunity for the two major political parties in the country the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) to test their electoral strength once again. In Ekiti the PDP was victorious and there was much talk about the Osun election also going the way of the PDP. As it turned out, the Osun election was won by the APC and there are major lessons to be taken from the election. Among other things, it is clear that when elections are keenly contested, the political parties and their candidates go the extra mile to woo the electorates. The ultimate gainers in such a scenario are the people because it is they that decide the outcome. As a corollary, the country's democracy is strengthened. While there have been complains about the militarization of the election, this paper is of the opinion that it was the so-called militarization that led to the success recorded in the election. The paper advocates that the country needs to build on the successes recorded in the Osun election

to make future elections in the country even better. It strongly recommends staggered elections for the country so that adequate men and materials can be mobilized for elections in the country as was the case in the Ekiti and Osun elections.

**Key words:** Political Analysis, Gubernatorial, Election, Osun, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

The August 9, 2014 gubernatorial election in Osun state, South West Nigeria has come and gone but the outcome of the election changed the political calculations in the South West in particular and Nigeria in general. Coming on the heels of the June 21, 2014 gubernatorial election in Ekiti state, the election provided an opportunity for the major political parties and their candidates to either prove that the Ekiti victory of the Peoples Democratic Party(PDP) was not a fluke or that the South West was indeed the stronghold of the All Progressive Party(APC). For the avoidance of doubt twenty political parties fielded candidates for the election but in reality the contest was between the APC and the PDP (Jimoh and Olawale, 2014). As it turned out the candidate of the APC, Rauf Aregbesola won the elections and some of the analyses after the election seem to say that while it was indeed a keenly contested poll, the eventual winner seemed obvious from the very beginning of the process[Omoloye,2014; Ojelu, 2014; Adeyinka, 2014].

This paper is a political analysis of the Osun election and its aftermath. However to put the paper in proper perspective, an attempt is made to examine all the issues and activities that led to the election. The paper is divided into seven parts. This introduction is followed by clarification on the concept of election and then a review of the key issues leading to the election. This is followed by an analysis of the election itself, its aftermath and then the lessons from the election are isolated and discussed. The last part of the paper is the concluding remarks.

### **Conceptualizing Elections**

Elections are a major component of the democratic enterprise. Regular, free, fair and transparent elections are the hallmarks of *genuine* democracy. We use the term genuine democracy deliberately because all over the world regimes exist which mouth the term democracy but whose practices are at variance with the tenets of democracy. In fact there is hardly any government in the world today that does not make claims to being a democracy (Shively, 1999).

Elections according to Ejumudo;

...are the technical means or instruments of ensuring popular participation in governance by citizens who choose their representatives in conformity with the dictates of modern democracies and hallmark of legitimacy [Ejumudo, 2013, p. 50].

Elections are according to Mackenzie [1968], “the rituals of choice and their binding character are derived from the participation of the individual as a chooser in a social act which confers legitimacy on the person chosen” (in Ejumudo, 2013, p. 50). Elections are important in a democracy because it is through them that according to Schumpeter, “the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them” (in Mutfwang, 2010, p. 117). The importance of elections is vividly captured in the following statement by Martin;

The idea of election as the ultimate democratic device is a deep-seated one...It is hard to escape it. Children are taught all about elections in school and may vote for school, council or club officers...Indeed, the main connection which most people have with their rulers is the ballot box. It is no wonder that electoral politics is sanctified (in Ende, 2013, p. 31).

Against this background of the sanctity of elections, it is important to note that elections have had contentious outcomes in Nigeria (Egwemi, 2008; 2009). This has been as true for Osun state as it has been for Nigeria especially in the 2007 gubernatorial election in the state. In fact the incumbent governor of Osun state, Rauf Aregbesola only assumed office after a long legal battle against the PDP “elected” governor, Olagunsoye Oyinlola (Onyekwelu, 2014). Be that as it may Nigerians have continuously strived to achieve free and fair elections in the country (Jega, 2007). It is against the background of this contentious trajectory that one will begin to appreciate and make sense out of the 2014 election in Osun.

#### **Events Leading to the August 9, 2014 Gubernatorial Election in Osun State**

For the avoidance of doubt, let it be reiterated that elections in Osun state in Nigeria’s Fourth republic have always been controversial. In fact the incumbent governor, Rauf Aregbesola came to power via the courts after the election tribunal nullified the election of Olagunsoye Oyinlola and declared him winner of the 2007 gubernatorial election in the state (Onyemelukwe, 2014). It is against this background that one can better appreciate some of the events leading to the Osun election.

The major event that preceded the gubernatorial election in Osun state was the June 21, 2014 gubernatorial election in Ekiti state also in South West Nigeria. The Ekiti election was won by the PDP candidate and it led to much talk about a bandwagon effect in subsequent elections in the geo-political zone in general and the Osun election in particular. In fact many PDP stalwarts had started gloating about the Osun election being a done deal in the PDP’s favour (Jimoh, 2014). The APC apologists not to be out done had drawn attention to the fact that Osun state was not the same as Ekiti (Adeniyi, 2014; Oladele and Johnson, 2014; Bamidele and Gbolagunte, 2014). The two parties embarked on vigorous campaigns across the length and breadth of the state.

There were also several fiery exchanges between the political parties and the two main gladiators (Okojie and Ukaibe, 2014). As it turned out the APC candidate had victory at the end of the contest. As a corollary to the Ekiti election already discussed, was the control of the South West geopolitical zone. The PDP buoyed by the Ekiti victory seemed bent on making inroads into the zone while the APC seemed equally determined to halt the advance of the PDP in the zone. After the defeat of the APC in Ekiti, the party leadership had indicated it would re-examine its strategy for future elections (Egwemi, 2014). One month to the election it was reported that APC leaders had met to strategize about the polls (Omofoye, 2014). With its victory in Osun, it seems that whatever *new* strategy it devised actually helped the party to achieve this.

The second issue was that the period before the election proper was accompanied by a lot of controversy with the ruling APC accusing the PDP of militarizing the polls in order to intimidate APC supporters and rig the elections (Olawale, 2014; Oropo, 2014; Abuh, 2014; Dada, Okojie and Ihejirika, 2014). In fact the APC threatened to set up a parallel government if the PDP rigged the election (Olawale, 2014). The Presidency on its part went ahead to mobilize a lot of security personnel to monitor the election believing that this was the only way of guaranteeing the integrity of the process (Omofoye, 2014; Wakili and Olawale, 2014).

Then we had the defection of the immediate past governor of the state, Olagunsoye Oyinlola to the APC on the eve of the election (Olawale, 2014). It will be recalled that it was Oyinlola who lost the governorship seat to Aregbesola via judicial pronouncement in 2010. It will also be recalled that Oyinlola was National Secretary of the PDP that was ousted also via the judiciary (see Onyekwelu, 2014). Oyinlola's defection added to the drama and anxiety that preceded the election. It went to show that indeed in politics, there are no permanent friends, only permanent interests. Oyinlola's defection no doubt improved the chances of the APC and conversely reduced those of the PDP. This is however a matter of conjecture because the PDP's candidate had dismissed the electoral value of Oyinlola (*Leadership* August 7, 2014, p. 45).

Whatever the case, it will be recalled that other PDP stalwarts had defected to the APC before Oyinlola. For example, another former governor of the state, Isiaka Adeleke who was also interested in the governorship defected to the APC following irreconcilable differences with the PDP (Omofoye, 2014). Another PDP chieftain, Elder Peter Babalola had also defected to the APC. The Labour Party candidate, Alhaji Fatai Akinbade was also a former PDP stalwart [Omofoye, 2014]. All these cases of defections no doubt had implications for the performance of the PDP in the election. Most of the issues that led to these defections boarder on the lack of internal democracy which has been an issue among almost all political parties in the country (Egwemi, 2013; Omofoye, 2014).

Furthermore, there was the massive propaganda deployed especially by the APC. First, the party alleged that the federal government was planning to withhold the state's monthly allocation (Omofoye, 2014). This move it alleged was aimed at weakening the APC government ahead of the election in August. The party also continued to allege a grand plan by the PDP to rig the election (see advertorials in *The Nation* July 24: 57 *Leadership* August 8: 11; *Leadership* August 8: 57 see also Akintunde, Joshua, Ukaibe, Okojie and Tolulope, 2014). To avoid being rigged out the party had also requested that its supporters be allowed to photograph their ballot paper after voting. The party also alleged that INEC had a ballot paper that automatically changed votes in favour of PDP and that PDP had drawn up result sheets even before the elections (Jega, 2014). As already indicated, it was ready to form a parallel government if rigged out. Such a threat was novel in the country. The import of the APC's propaganda was that it was the party to beat and any contrary result would be an aberration. The implication of this was also that as desirous as the PDP was of winning Osun state it had to thread very carefully (Ezemon, 2014). The APC *via* its propaganda machine had taken the fight to the PDP as it were (Yisa, 2014).

Lastly, there was the matter of religion. The two major contenders, Aregbesola and Omisore belonged to the Islamic and Christian faiths respectively. There were concerted efforts to tag Aregbesola a religious bigot because of some of the policies and changes he made in the state. These included among others his declaration of the first day of the Islamic calendar a holiday. Aregbesola is said to have reached out to prominent Christian leaders and this is said to have helped to allay the fears and anxieties of the Christian community in the state (Akintunde, 2014). It may be difficult to actually gauge the part played by religion in the outcome of the election. However, it was a resource widely used in the build up to the Osun election.

### The Election

Twenty political parties took part in the August 9, 2014 gubernatorial election in Osun state. However, only two of the parties, APC and PDP could be considered the front runners in the process (Jimoh and Olawale, 2014). The election returned the incumbent governor to office. He won the election in 26 of the 30 local government areas of the state. The full details of the result are presented in table 1 below;

**Table 1: Result of August 9, 2014 Gubernatorial Election in Osun State**

| Local Government | APC  | PDP  | LP |
|------------------|------|------|----|
| Atakumosa East   | 768  | 422  | 13 |
| Atakumosa West   | 2486 | 1689 | 17 |
| Ayedaade         | 3715 | 3548 | 91 |
| Ayedira          | 614  | 450  | 50 |
| Boluwaduro       | 3327 | 3241 | 28 |
| Boripe           | 1686 | 1485 | 35 |

|             |       |      |     |
|-------------|-------|------|-----|
| Ede North   | 4176  | 2817 | 26  |
| Ede South   | 127   | 163  | 0   |
| Egbedore    | 1135  | 887  | 3   |
| Ejigbo      | 992   | 492  | 28  |
| Ife Central | 2169  | 4964 | 55  |
| Ife East    | 889   | 775  | 11  |
| Ife North   | 1658  | 2137 | 87  |
| Ife South   | 1923  | 2117 | 29  |
| Ifedayo     | 1837  | 1833 | 36  |
| Ifelodun    | 1378  | 1134 | 14  |
| Ila         | 4996  | 3695 | 41  |
| Ilesa East  | 4347  | 586  | 41  |
| Ilesa West  | 4443  | 1745 | 52  |
| Irepodun    | 6057  | 4066 | 161 |
| Irewole     | 3364  | 1844 | 43  |
| Isokan      | 722   | 782  | 6   |
| Iwo         | 2565  | 1884 | 258 |
| Obokun      | 1940  | 1706 | 20  |
| Odo-Otin    | 2329  | 2841 | 205 |
| Ola-Oluwa   | 287   | 59   | 45  |
| Olorunda    | 3173  | 1082 | 25  |
| Oriade      | 4960  | 4264 | 73  |
| Orolu       | 3022  | 2480 | 160 |
| Osogbo      | 11367 | 3043 | 254 |

Source: *The Guardian* August 10, 2014:1

The ruling APC and its candidate were ecstatic about the victory. According to Aregbesola, “our victory is due to the steadfastness and resolute determination of our people to assert and defend their rights” (in Olawale, 2014:4). On his part the President, Goodluck Jonathan described the loss of Osun as painful. Speaking through his special Adviser, Political matters, Prof Rufai Alkali the President said *inter alia*;

Today we would have celebrated Osun victory, it is however, a very painful day for us because the PDP candidate and the party had completed their homework and we know the people of Osun are tired of what is happening in the state but here we are. I hope the APC, which is in the habit of complaining of having security agencies in ensuring enabling environment for election and is consistent in controversy and rejecting election results, will reject this Osun state gubernatorial election result (Agba, Otuchikere, Ukaibe and Nda-Isaiah, 2014, p. 5).

The import of last part of the statement is not hard to see given that the APC has since the Ekiti election and before the Osun election complained about the militarization of

the electoral process. Electoral loss is usually not easily accepted in the Nigerian context. As we stated earlier the APC had drawn attention to PDP's rigging plans and had threatened to form a parallel government in the event of a PDP winning via rigging. The APC seems to be gloating in its victory even in spite of the militarized nature of the election. This is an area Nigerian politicians need to address. Elections should not be seen as credible only when one's political party or preferred candidate wins! How would the APC react if the PDP sets up a parallel government? Political parties (and their stalwarts) need to be careful in their use of propaganda.

The PDP candidate did not congratulate the APC candidate. This is a marked departure from what happened in Ekiti where the incumbent governor congratulated the governor-elect (see Egwemi, 2014). This is clear evidence of the bad loser syndrome. If the President who is leader of the PDP had congratulated the winner, it behooved on Omisore to also do the same. Or are we to assume that the candidate and his party have fallen apart already? The answer to that would still be in the realm of speculation.

The election has been won and lost and the good part is that the acrimony that trail election in the country has not reared its head in Osun. Aregbesola was returned to office because of his commendable performance in his first four years. With his re-election, he has another four years to positively impact the lives of the people of the state. There is no reason to speculate that he will not rise to the challenge of delivering on his electoral promises. Aregbesola has dedicated his victory to the people of the state (Dada, 2014). What is left is for him now is to *work* for the people.

### **Post-Election**

The victory of the APC in Osun is a clear indication that the party is in control of the state. The bush fire effect that the PDP had anticipated after its victory in Ekiti was not to be. The party was able to halt the march of the PDP into the South West zone. In fact with the victory some APC stalwarts are gloating about the demystification of the PDP (Alkassim, 2014). But this victory has implications. It means in the first place that the APC has not been able to shed its toga as a regional party. The emergence of the party was intended to bring about a platform big enough to challenge the ruling PDP. The APC must look beyond Osun and indeed the South West as the country prepares for general elections in 2015. However, there are indications that the party has national aspirations. The National Secretary of the party, Alhaji Maimala Buni has opined in the aftermath of the Osun election that the Osun election has proven that the APC can win the presidency in 2015. As the Americans say, talk is cheap. The APC needs to go beyond rhetoric as it prepares for 2015.

Owing largely to the massive deployment of security personnel during the election, it was largely violence free. Unfortunately after the election there was a reported clash

between APC and PDP supporters in Ile-Ife (Lawal, Aba and Omofoye, 2014). Ile-Ife is the home town of Omisore the PDP candidate. In future elections security agencies should remain vigilant even after elections especially in flash points to forestall post-election violence.

### **The Lessons to be Learnt from the Osun Election**

A number of important lessons can be drawn in the aftermath of the Osun election. The first lesson is that election has become serious business in the country. By this is meant that political parties and their candidates take issue of electioneering very seriously given the many issues at stake. In Osun it was a major battle for the political soul of the South West and by extension about the 2015 general election and all the parties especially the PDP and APC campaigned vigorously. Coming on the heels of the Ekiti elections the major political parties could not afford to take chances and so they also engaged in war of words, threats and all round propaganda. All these go to show that the people were not taken for granted and this goes to show the importance of the people in the electoral process. Of course only one party can win at a time and the APC won in Osun.

The second lesson is that in spite of the fear about the massive deployment of security personnel, this may actually be a plus in the quest for electoral transparency in the country. The election in Osun like the earlier one In Ekiti was very peaceful because mischief makers were wary given the heavy presence of security personnel. A caveat may however be added namely that security personnel must strive to be professional in the election duties. Given the success recorded in the Ekiti and Osun elections it can be said that effective deployment of security personnel in elections may be good in the country's quest for electoral transparency. The jury still is out about the desirability of deployment of the military for election duties (Makinwa, 2014; Ezea, 2014; Omofoye, 2014; Nzah, 2014; Hamagan, 2014). Be that as it may, this paper is of the reasoned opinion that the deployment of security is what led to the relatively peaceful conduct of the election in spite of the high stakes involve. The conduct of the election has been described as one of the most peaceful in the country (Ogundele, 2014). Is it not a surprise that thugs and hooligans have *disappeared* from election centers especially in the South West? Recall that the Inspector General of Police had raised an alarm about politicians recruiting thugs for the Osun election (Mutum, 2014). Recall also that there had been reported clashes of PDP and APC supporters before the election (Gbolagunte, 2014). Is it not instructive that violence only burst out after the Osun election?! Given the successes recorded in the last two *militarized* elections, the massive deployment of security personnel for elections may be with us for some time to come (Makinwa, 2014).

Thirdly, the conduct of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was been credible in the election. Unlike in previous elections where INEC is

usually guilty of complicity in the electoral flaws, her conduct in the Osun election was commendable as it was in the Ekiti election before it (Onyekakeyah, 2014: Ukaibe, 2014: Makinwa, 2014). The electoral body needs to continue to perform in this manner as Nigeria prepares for (and more importantly during) the 2015 general elections.

There is the need for the country to consider the option of staggered elections. The reason for this advocacy is simple. When all elections are held on the same day all the institutions and personnel are stretched to the limit. As the experience from the 2014 Ekiti and Osun gubernatorial elections have shown the outcome of the elections were a function of the adequacy of men and materials during the elections; adequate security personnel, adequate INEC personnel and other logistics. Given the size of the country, it is not usually easy to adequately monitor elections holding simultaneously in the country and hence the advocacy for staggered election.

One other major lesson is that Nigerian politics is still largely defined by the issue of personality. As it was in Ekiti so also was it in Osun. The personalities of the two main gladiators played a major role in determining the outcome of the election. While the two, Aregbesola and Omisore were both recognized as effective grassroots politician, the former did not carry the latter's baggage of complicity in the murder of a prominent son of the state, the late Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige. While indeed the APC had a strong support base in Osun the personality of Aregbesola vis a vis that of Omisore was critical in determining the direction of the pendulum of the election in the Osun. As formidable as the Omisore challenge was given the PDP control of all the security apparatus and the massive deployment of money, the Bola Ige albatross diminished the personality of Omisore (Akintunde, 2014).

Did *stomach infrastructure* (the use of material inducement) play any role in the Osun poll? It will be recalled that it was the effective use of the strategy that led to Fayose's victory in Ekiti in June (Egwemi, 2014). While the APC had condemned the use of the strategy in Ekiti, there are indications that the APC used the strategy in Osun as much as the PDP also used it (Omofoye, 2014: Makinwa, 2014). The use of the *stomach infrastructure* strategy as mundane as it is, is a pointer to how (under)developed Nigeria's political process is. That people can be swayed by the needs of their stomachs in the making of vital political decisions is a pointer to the extent of the country's political (under)development after fifteen years of democracy.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The election in Osun has been won and lost but the ripples of the outcome will continue to resonate in the polity up till the conduct of the 2015 general elections. Some

of the vital lessons from the election have been highlighted and discussed. All key players in the country's democratic enterprise need to imbibe these lessons and possibly improve upon them for future elections. What the outcome of the elections adequately attests to is that the will of the people is uppermost in all electoral situations. No matter how the parties and their candidates feel, they have to respect the peoples will at the end of the elections. The major lesson that can be taken is the fact that credible, free and fair; violence free elections can be conducted in the country. All the agencies, groups and individuals connected with the electoral process in the country need to build upon and even improve on the successes recorded in the Osun election. The role of INEC has been commended. The electoral body has continued to improve in its performance. This trend needs to be sustained and possibly improved upon for the 2015 general elections.

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