

FACT SHEET EIGHT

An Assessment of the 2022 Ekiti Governorship Election

Rule of Law & Empowerment Initiative –Partners West Africa-Nigeria
No. 46b Mike Akhigbe Way, Jabi District, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.
Phone: +234 09 2904200; +234 09 2905797

Introduction <<

Hypothetically, after twenty years of uninterrupted civil rule in Nigeria and six election cycles, elections in Nigeria should be devoid of the negativities that have marked the conduct of elections between 1960 and 1999. Conversely, the over two decades of democracy have not yielded the corollary of positivity, good conduct, and peaceful elections in Africa's largest democracy. Consequently, violence and how to prevent its recurrence keeps attracting attention during preparations for elections in Nigeria. The Chairman of the Electoral Institute (Nigeria) Professor Abdullahi Abdu Zuru opined that "there seems to be an erroneous notion in the Nigerian political space that violence is a helpful route to winning elections. This seems to be the typical mindset of many political players in our climate, and so they often make preparations for elections as if it is preparation for war." (Daily Post, May 10, 2022). And like every war, the most vulnerable are those who are most unlikely to foment trouble – the women and children.

The German military theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, proposed over two hundred years ago his famous definition of war as "continuation of politics by other means." But in Nigeria, history has shown that the reverse is the case because it is "election (in Nigeria) that is the continuation of war by other means", going by the deaths, destructions of properties and attacks on perceived political opponents, electoral officials

and women and children. Specifically, Nigeria has a history of electoral violence in the three phases: pre-election phase, election day and post-election phase; of its electoral cycle. The most common act of electoral violence is thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral processes or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes. This history is also rooted in the Ekiti off-season elections.

Background to Ekiti Off-Season Electioneering

The Ekiti governorship election is one out of nine off-season elections that are currently conducted in Nigeria. The Ekiti off-season election resulted from a court decision to invalidate the results of the 2007 gubernatorial election in part, due to violence. The court ordered for rerun election to be conducted in 2010. (Vanguard, June 21, 2022). Usually, the governorship tenure is for a period of four years. With the court decision, the governor's term no longer corresponds to other gubernatorial elections and even the federal and state legislature. The subsequent gubernatorial elections were held in 2012, 2018, and another one is scheduled for June 18, 2022. Though the Ekiti off-season elections have been contentious with no incumbent governor winning back to back. The state had experienced the return of two past governors in 2014 and 2018.

Like any other state in Nigeria, Ekiti state has three Senatorial Districts: North, South and Central Senatorial District. The North Senatorial Districts has

produced two governors: Chief Olusegun Oni and Dr Kayode Fayemi, though the election of Oni was nullified. The Appeal court in 2010, (Vanguard, October 16, 2022) ordered that the then Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) candidate be issued the certificate of rerun as the elected governor, while that of the former governor, Oni was immediately withdrawn. Legally, the North has produced one Governor in the state, but it is politically otherwise. On the other hand, the Central Senatorial District produced two state governors - Mr Niyi Adebayo and Mr Ayodele Fayose. While the Southern Senatorial District is yet to produce any governor since 1999. However, the Ekiti South Senatorial District had produced a former governor in the old Ondo State, Chief Bamidele Olumilua. Past elections that the emergence of Adebayo, Fayose, Oni and Fayemi as governors over time, revealed that winning the gubernatorial election is determined by building state-wide networks based on different social, economic, and political cleavages.

Similar to other off-season elections, there are always concerns about the potential influence of the federal government, particularly through the security agencies in all the Eiki gubernatorial elections. The 2014 gubernatorial election witnessed the heavy deployment of military personnel and police officers in the state. With the perception such a climate of the militarization of the elections, could favour the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the detriment of the All Progressives Congress (APC). Consequently, such deployment of security agents, which was also witnessed in 2018, might be a feature of the June 2022 gubernatorial elections in the state.

Synopsis of Election Violence and the Security Outlook

Historically, the fallout from election violence in Nigeria truncated the three previous republics or democratic experiments in Nigeria (Olaniyan, 2010.p.162). Therefore, election periods are always tense with the country at the precipice. Unfortunately, the political elites in Nigeria are not conflict managers but conflict generators (Dudley, 1973:3 in Olaniyan: 2010). These political elites and their culprits in this regard actively precipitate violence. According to Ikelegbe:

many political parties mobilize violent groups to guarantee security to candidates, party officials, campaign meetings and related activities during election periods. Most post election violence is linked to political parties in terms of mobilization, engineering and heightening. Incidents of violent protests and arson tend to be instigated, organized and backed by associates and supporters of

opposition or losing parties, party leaders and candidates against alleged electoral irregularities and stolen victories (Ikelegbe, 2013:24). The character of the leadership of the parties, weak cohesion and the suffusion with divisions, factions, conflicts and defections have constructed the parties as institutions with high propensity and proclivity to violent conflicts (Ikelegbe 2013, cited in Akubo and Umaru, 2014.p 101).

Things have not gotten better in the Nigerian polity as the empirical conclusions to be presented forthwith will corroborate. The 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State had its fair share of violence but the most notable for the wrong reason was the unprovoked, dastardly, pernicious, and gruesome murder of a PDP women leader. Salome Abuh was burnt to death inside her house in Ochadamu, Kogi State on November 18, 2019. The helpless woman was set on fire by thugs and supporters of the ruling party in the state. One of the perpetrators, Oholi Edicha was later sentenced to 12 years and six months in prison for his involvement in the killing (Premium Times, 2021).

Ekiti is not insulated from election violence. According to the Guardian (2021) “...Ekiti State is no exception” as typified by the violence witnessed during the by – election into Ekiti East constituency 1 House of Assembly in 2021. Every election since 1999 in the State has been violent, only that the quantum of chaos differs. Specifically, a woman leader of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) was bathed with acid during a ward meeting in 1999 (The Guardian, 2021). This continued into the 2003 elections with many reports of violence, but no death was recorded. Conversely, 2005 witnessed many deaths from political violence; same as 2006. This orgy of blood-letting eventually led to the declaration of state emergency in the State and a military administrator put in place by then President Olusegun Obasanjo; three people laid claim to the governorship after the impeachment of the then governor- Ayo Fayose. This culminated in a high turnover of governors in the State given that “between 2006 and 2007...the state had five governors in quick succession” (The Guardian, 2021).

The trend of violence continued into the 2007 elections which had many violent battles between the then ACN and the PDP starting from the campaign period. This violence led to some of the votes being voided and a rerun was mandated by the court. “The violence during the rerun was unprecedented.” A man was reported to have lost a limb; he was presented as an exhibit in court. Mrs. Ayoka Adebayo, the Resident Electoral Commissioner fled the state when the violence threatened her life; she refused to announce the result of the rerun as she later claimed that she was

under intense pressure to announce the result against her wish. Yet she conducted a supplementary rerun in some local governments where violence prevented the conduct of the rerun earlier. It was reported that journalists covering the polls were not spared as they were mercilessly beaten. Violence further erupted at the collation centre, but Mrs. Adebayo eventually announced the result. After the announcement, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) office in the state capital was burnt down, several houses belonging to PDP members were also set ablaze; a young man was reported to have lost his life in the mayhem.

In a stark departure from the pathetic norm of the previous elections in the state, the 2014 elections did not witness too much violence pre-election; it was during the post-election crisis that the chairman of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURWT) in the state lost his life. As this paper's focus is on protecting women during elections, it must be stated that the 2014 election witnessed violence targeted at a woman. The mother of Honourable Segun Adewunmi (he later became the Deputy Speaker) of the Ekiti House of Assembly was killed in an act of election violence. She was shot at her residence in Erijinyan Ekiti; properties were also razed down in the chaos.

The 2018 election process was much calmer until the APC Primary fiasco of May 4, 2018 where ballot boxes were smashed; the repeat primary election 5 days later was a more peaceful affair. But there were recorded deaths pre-election, in what became known as Black Friday in the State. The APC rally degenerated into bloodbath as an APC Chieftain and Senator, Mr. Opeyemi Bamidele was shot by a policeman; he was flown abroad for intensive treatment. This ugly trend has continued as the by – election into the National Assembly held on March 20, 2021 showed (The Guardian, March 21, 2021).

Gender Dimension and Protection of Women during the Ekiti Election

Though women have a significant population in terms of their electoral strength, the participation of women in Nigeria's electoral process does not reflect this demographic reality. The reasons behind this disparity have complex historical and cultural elements, which were never given due focus in building the nation. The gender dimension of electoral violence in the run up to the Ekiti State gubernatorial election constitute a major risk for the perpetration of SGBV. There is a sense in which within the broader Nigerian elections, gender-based discriminatory and exclusionary practices have served to sideline women in the electoral process and have ensured their consistent underrepresentation in both politics and

governance. The most prevalent challenges in this context have been verbal intimidation, propaganda, and underhanded actions aimed at discouraging them from vying for elective positions.

Generally, Ekiti State, just as other states that make up the Nigerian federation is a largely patriarchal society, which has contributed to women's marginalization in both the electoral and political processes (Musa, 2019). Gender related discriminations have historically account for the reason why women have taken a secondary position to men, and this tradition is manifested in the practices of the country. Despite the constitutional provisions outlawing discrimination on the basis of gender, women continue to suffer setbacks whenever they seek not only elective, but also appointive, positions in the country. It is evident that, if gender equity is to be achieved, women must be fully involved in electoral and political process.

In conducting activities related to elections – pre, during and post, political parties have not been proactive in the promotion of gender equality by identifying the specific challenges women face in engaging in the electoral process and developing strategies to overcome such challenges, beyond the mere issuance of free nomination forms by the political parties. It is anticipated that, by not facilitating the effective engagement of women, their representation in elective positions will not improve, and women voters will not feel empowered to vote. With greater numbers of women underrepresented and issues specific to women not addressed in the context of ensuring compliance with the constitution and electoral act, gender inclusiveness will be hampered.

Protecting Women against Election Violence in the 2022 Election in Ekiti

With such a bleak record of conduct during elections as well as the proximity of the Ekiti/ Osun polls to the coming general elections in 2023, the electoral umpire in Nigeria, INEC is well aware that these two polls will be a harbinger of sort. This is why the body is making serious preparations to have a successful poll in so far as such an outcome will boost its credibility, inspire confidence in the electorates, the civil societies, and the international election watchers.

In this regard, INEC "has recruited and equipped some field agents with the requisite knowledge and skills on the application of one of the key election protection tools, known as Election Violence

Mitigation and Advocacy (EVMAT) which is an initiative of The Electoral Institute.” According to Dr. Sa’ad Umar Idris of TEI, “the instrument will be deployed to identify potential hot-spots and flash points so as to guide the Commission and election security personnel and other electoral stakeholders on places and areas that are likely going to be violent, and the urgent need to develop strategies to mitigate the violence” (Daily Post, 2022). The instrument was used in FCT Area Council Elections, Anambra State Governorship Elections and Ondo States Governorship Elections; it was said to have worked in those places. Can this instrument help in curbing Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWIE)?

Violence according to the UN Declaration on Violence (1993) is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (UN Declaration on Violence, 1993). Electoral Violence against a woman can be physical, sexual, psychological, socio-economic and harmful traditional practices.” (National Democratic Institute, 2015).

VAWIE is socio-economic when there is denial of opportunities and access to economic resources or political participation including exclusion from all such activity. Withholding of resources, destruction of property; gender role stereotyping” (National Democratic Institute, 2015). Implicit in the foregoing is that VAWIE might have been perpetrated long before the election day and even since birth in some cultures. Through certain doctrines and practices, women are demeaned, belittled, and have their confidence eroded by men/women who actively subjugate women due the erroneous roles ascribed them as helpmates to men and nothing more.

The above is borne out in poor participation of women in elections either to vote or vie for office as they are psychologically nurtured to think politics is the exclusive preserve of men. When some women participate, they are often teleguided into making decisions that favour the men in their lives. This gender stereotyping is at its apogee when political parties actively perpetrate it by having women leader as if to say women are not part of the mix in the society; they use this facsimile representation to deceive the women into thinking they are not being short changed in the political process.

When a woman tries to break through this segregationally erected barriers, political meetings become nocturnal ventures often held in places of ill-repute where any woman seen to be a customer might

be ostracised by the society. This lack of level play field is an obstacle and it constitute VAWIE.

Protecting Women from Violence during Elections

In the run up to the June 18th gubernatorial election in Ekiti State, a combination of cultural practices, long history of political exclusion has continued to keep women out of the electoral process. It has been established that VAWIE is far more entrenched than what occurs on Election days. Consequently, protecting women against VAWIE must start long before the election day. Certain Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) like making female children subordinate to males, wife as lesser being than husbands, women not being part of decision making in society, men allowed to have more freedom of movement than women, making education a priority for male children and not so much a priority for females, girls as homemakers and housekeepers while boys can play around and explore are some of the fundamentals of VAWIE. The corollary of long years of these (HTP) is what plays out on election day. To protect against this will require a revolutionary change in thinking and action on a societal level. From childhood, girls must not be made to feel limited in what they can do or achieve. They must be encouraged to compete with their male counterparts in every sphere of life.

With such level playing ground, socio-economic and psychological barriers to women participating in elections as either contestants or voters will be eradicated over time. As what affects a woman often impacts the children, empowering women politically will herald a more equitable and fair polity. Children are very impressionable as what they observe become the life doctrines they will imbibe. A male child who is brought up to respect women is very unlikely to act in a disdainful manner to women as a teenager or in adulthood; the reverse will be the case if a child is brought up in an atmosphere where the female members of the family are limited in their life pursuits, or never considered important enough to be part of the decision making process.

VAWIE can be psychological in a less explicit manner – militarization of the electoral process. When elections are characterized by the presence of armed soldiers ostensibly due to the threat of violence, some women might be put off participating as previous unprovoked police/military brutality might have left a psychological scar in them. This might not be vilified in a manner that will indicate what triggered the sudden apathy on the election day. It might be better

to provide security heavily reliant on intelligence and less on brute force to encourage more participation by those who are easily put off by excessive show of force.

Responsibility to Protect

Since VAWIE is societally entrenched tacitly or as a matter of policy depending on the society, the above suggested ways of protecting women have shown that the responsibility to protect is as multi pronged as the malaise of VAWIE. The family was mentioned as key to achieving a revolutionary change in attitude to female children, schoolgirls and wives. Similarly, societies are made up of families; the family as a unit of the society must commence this change which will ultimately come to have wider acceptance in society. Fathers and all male figures in the society must take this task seriously due to the impact it will have on the overall development of the society.

INEC as an institution is taking responsibility with the deployment of the Election Violence Mitigation and Advocacy EVMAT. Such a move will have a positive impact in the fight against VAWIE. Advocacy by other groups within the society must be amplified for more effectiveness, better reach, and vigour. Religious bodies, workers unions, guilds and student associations must also champion this quest for violence-free elections in Ekiti/Osun and during the general elections in 2023.

Recommendations

1. Security agencies should employ preventive measures to neutralise existing elections related security threats that deter women's participation in the electoral process, particularly as it relates to voting.
2. Security agencies should curtail the proliferation and use of firearms and other weapons, as well as ensure appropriate sanctions for those implicated in thuggery and election violence.
3. Citizens should work with security agencies by reporting incidents / threats of violence, or perpetrators of violence.
4. Effective policing in both urban and rural areas as a way of addressing impunity arising from criminality and banditry.
5. Proactive measure should be taken by the security agencies both the level of synergy and rapid response to violence and insecurity. To achieve this, the security agencies should partner with community-level stakeholders such as religious and community leaders,

youth and other social networks that exists across the communities.

6. INEC should strengthen its inter-agency consultative committee on election security, as a basis for information sharing and action, both within the members of the committee and critical stakeholders such as civil society.
7. In order to ensure that the legal and policy environments are conducive to women's participation in the electoral process, civil society should take the lead as whistle blowers in terms of monitoring the implementation of all relevant laws and policies such as constitution, electoral act, political party guidelines among others, with a view to ensuring adherence gender responsiveness pre- during and after the elections.
8. Civil society should develop multi-faceted interventions geared towards increasing women's representation in the electoral process, including civic awareness campaigns about women's rights. In pursuit of this, they should also respond to, as well as pursue threats to or violations of women's rights through sustained advocacy and public interest litigations for indigent women.

Conclusion

Elections are integral to the democratic process because they serve as the barometer for gauging the strength or otherwise of democracy being practised in society. Therefore, free, fair, credible, and widely accepted elections which had the active participation of all eligible members of the society are the hallmark of, and crucial to the democratic process. A society is said to be democratic in so far as no member of the society is prevented from exercising his/her franchise nor victimised due to the choice made at the polls. Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWIE) negates this time honoured and widely accepted dictum of democracy. VAWIE is a misnomer, a contradiction and an aberration to fairness, equity and justice that are the bedrock of democratic societies.

References

Akubo, A. Adaku and Yakubu, Adejo Umaru. (n.d.). Political Parties and Democratic

Consolidation in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*.

Daily Trust. (2022, May 10). Ekiti guber: INEC takes step to prevent violence.

Musa, O.F (2019) Women's Participation in Political Parties in Ekiti State, Nigeria, available in <https://www.grin.com/document/507228>

Olaniyan, A. (2010). Violence and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria. *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies: The Nigerian Perspective*, 162.

Oluwafunmilayo, J. P.-M. (2015). *Focus Group Discussion on Violence Against Women in Election in Kogi State*. National Democratic Institute.

Premium Times. (2022, March 25). Killer of Kogi PDP leader gets 12 years jail sentence.

The Guardian. (2021, March 24). Ekiti East By-election and spectre of vicious bloodletting, violence.

Appendix One: Ekiti 2022 Gubernatorial List of Candidates

S/N	Party	Position	Candidate	Age	Gender	Qualifications
1	A	Governor	Reuben Boye Famuyibo	63	M	SSCE, LLB. BL
		Deputy	Olumide Ezekiel Falana	67	M	BE.d
2	AAC	Governor	Ajagunigbala Moses Olajide	57	M	FSLC, GCE, BTh
		Deputy	Oludele Oluwabunmi	44	F	FSLC, NABTEB
3	ADC	Governor	Oluwole Olumayokun Oluyede	57	M	FSLC, WAEC, MBBS
		Deputy	Popoola Hidiat Simbo	47	F	FSLC, SSCE, MBA
4	ADP	Governor	Elebute-Halle Josephine Kemi	40	F	FSLC, NECO, ND, HND
		Deputy	Afuye Idowu Sunday	41	M	FSLC, WAEC
5	APC	Governor	Abiodun Abayomi Oyebanji	54	M	FSLC, SSCE, BS.c, MS.c
		Deputy	Afuye Monisade	63	F	FSLC, WAEC
6	APGA	Governor	Benjamin Olufemi Obidoyin	46	M	FSLC, SSCE, PTC
		Deputy	Oluwafemi Anthony Faeji	61	M	FSLC, GCE, BS.c
7	APM	Governor	Fagbemi Peter Adegbenro	59	M	FSLC, TCII, NCE, BS.c
		Deputy	Akinyeye Oluwatosin Eunice	46	F	FSLC, WAEC, HND
8	APP	Governor	Christiana Modupe Olatawura	62	F	FSLC, TCII, NCE
		Deputy	Ibukun Solomon Owolabi	38	M	FSLC, SSCE, BE.d

9	LP	Governor	Daramola Rowland Olugbenga	61	M	FSLC, SSCE, GCE
		Deputy	Onile Ibrahim Yusuf	54	M	FSLC, SSCE, GCE
10	NNPP	Governor	Fatomilola Oladosu Abiodun	47	M	FSLC, SSCE, BA
		Deputy	Ade-Ajayi Oluwatoyin Hannah	52	F	FSLC, GCE, BE.d
11	NRM	Governor	Iyaniwura Tope Ifedayo	36	M	FSLC, SSCE
		Deputy	Arowolo Kayode Williams	45	M	FSLC, SSCE, BEng.
12	PDP	Governor	Olabisi Kolawole	54	M	FSLC, WAEC, HND
		Deputy	Kolapo Olugbenga Kolade	55	M	WAEC, LLB
13	PRP	Governor	Agboola Olaniyi Ben	52	M	FSLC, WAEC, ND, HND, MBA
		Deputy	Ogidan Tolulope Oluwatoyin	46	F	FSLC, SSCE, HND
14	SDP	Governor	Olusegun Adebayo Oni	67	M	FSLC, GRADE II CERT, MBA
		Deputy	James Oladipo Owolabi	68	M	FSLC, WAEC, DIPLOMA
15	YPP	Governor	Adebowale Oluranti Ajayi	62	M	FSLC, GCE, BS.c
		Deputy	Olaseni Nureni Babatunde	48	M	FSLC, SSCE, DIPLOMA
16	ZLP	Governor	Adeolu Kolade Akinyemi	43	M	WAEC
		Deputy	Damilola Akintoye	36	F	NECO

Source: INEC

Appendix Two: Distribution of Voters in Ekiti State

Table 1: Age Distribution of Registered Voters in Ekiti			
S/ N	Age Group	Registered Voters	%Registered Voters
1	Youth (18-34)	381,338	38.56%
2	Middle Age (35-49)	330,991	33.47%
3	Elderly (50-69)	181,459	18.35%
4	Old (70+)	95,135	9.62%
	Total	988,923	100.00%
Source: INEC Registered Voters for Ekiti 2022			