
Elections, Boko Haram and Security: Assessing and Addressing Nigeria's Complex Challenges

Session One

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Session Two

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Introduction

Nigeria faces multiple challenges, ranging from the increasingly entrenched conflict with and terrorist threat from Boko Haram in the northeast to the economic impacts of declining oil prices. Added to this, what may be the country's most competitive and contentious elections yet are approaching. Recent violence at the National Assembly is a possible sign of things to come.

This event discussed Nigeria's upcoming elections, the potential influence (with a particular focus on security) of different factors and stakeholders on the process, and the opportunities for supporting a peaceful and credible vote.

Note: At the time of the Chatham House meeting, presidential and National Assembly elections were scheduled to be held on 14 February 2015, with governorship and State Assembly elections scheduled for 28 February 2015. The dates have been postponed until 28 March 2015 and 11 April 2015 respectively.

Session One

Professor Mohammad J. Kuna

Professor Kuna said that concerns about the 2015 elections in Nigeria are well founded and relate to two broad groups of challenges. The first group consists of structural factors concerning the nature of political competition, such as the fact that many politicians consider elections 'theatres of war'. It also includes security issues, which are dominated by concerns about the Boko Haram insurgency in the north and the agendas of other violent non-state actors. The institutional weakness of political parties, civil society organizations and the media also informs structural concerns.

The second group of challenges consists of process-related factors. These directly affect preparations for the elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Professor Kuna said that the deployment of commission personnel and the management of election-day staff have been consistently problematic in previous elections. So, too, have the processes for transmitting results from polling wards to INEC's central polling authorities and for ensuring the security of voters, observers and election personnel. In addition, there are some concerns that the legal framework governing the elections may affect INEC's ability to function effectively.

Professor Kuna said that while INEC has some capacity to confront process-related issues, it is not well positioned to address structural problems. He argued that the structural challenges Nigeria faces are fairly typical of states that have recently transitioned from authoritarian regimes, and so should be examined within the context of transitional democracies. He also suggested that Nigeria's experience to date of managing four electoral cycles might prevent political turbulence from derailing the democratic process in the fifth cycle of elections.

Since 2011, INEC has focused on implementing measures that address some of the structural factors. Seven out of 10 key reforms introduced in this period were direct responses to problems generated by the nature of political competition, the role of political elites and the weakness of political institutions. One example of this was the creation of a new voters' register in 2011 to replace the register used in 2007, which was not considered credible. However, the most notable reform has been the introduction of a

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more defined voting procedure, wherein voters are accredited simultaneously at polling units across the country. Professor Kuna said that this was necessary to prevent people from voting at multiple stations, as had happened in previous elections.

New security measures that protect polling materials from misuse have dramatically reduced the rate of ballot-snatching. In the 52 elections and by-elections since 2011, there have been virtually no cases of snatching because there is no longer any advantage to doing so. Election materials now customized to particular polling units.

The commission also launched a new framework for the recruitment and training of staff. Previously, staff were recruited locally, which allowed local political elites to influence their behaviour. A scheme recruiting graduates in Nigeria's non-military national service was trialled successfully in the 2011 elections. Professor Kuna said that during these elections there was no known case of academic staff being involved in malpractice. INEC has also increased cooperation with critical stakeholders, and meetings with political parties and civil society organizations are now regular. The commission has also organized meetings between traditional rulers and political leaders in order to send messages of peace and non-violence during the elections.

Professor Kuna argued that despite negative attitudes towards political competition throughout Nigeria, recent experiences have indicated that the trend of considering politics as a theatre of war may be waning. He said that during the primaries there was not much political violence despite many major party figures losing their nominations. Some of those who lost accepted defeat before the results were announced, suggesting that a healthier attitude towards political competition may be emerging.

In contrast, the security situation in certain parts of the country has worsened in recent years. However, Professor Kuna said that INEC will continue to organize elections in all states unless advised by the security services that elections are not possible in specific areas.

Professor Kuna expressed concerns about a culture of impunity that allows people to commit electoral crimes without being held to account. He said that this was not due to a lack of relevant laws, but rather because the commission does not have the resources to deal with offenders. In 2011 there were over 870,000 cases of multiple registrations, but INEC has made only about 200 prosecutions.

Preparations to tackle process-related problems are almost complete. Election risk-analysis tools are being deployed across states and monitored by the commission to identify factors that could threaten the election. In addition, card readers are being supplied to INEC to prevent voter fraud, and the recruitment of staff is virtually finished.

Professor Kuna concluded that the commission's preparations for the elections in 2015 are far more advanced and comprehensive than was the case for the last elections; the public and the international community should therefore expect a more credible electoral process.

Dr Oliver Owen

Dr Owen argued that the 2015 elections may be the most open and closely contested that Nigeria has had since its return to democratic rule in 1999. While the All Progressives Congress (APC) has weaknesses, it is the first credible opposition party in Nigeria's recent history. Coupled with the insurgency in three states, the recent downturn in the price of oil, bad inter-communal relations and an extremely low level of confidence in the government, this means that the situation is very different to that in 2011.

Dr Owen said that incumbency plays a huge role in elections. Incumbents are able to dictate the electoral landscape by organizing and incentivizing voters, and by influencing the security environment. Successful presidential candidates in Nigeria need to win both the highest number of votes and at least 25 per cent of the votes in two-thirds of states, rather than just getting an overall majority.

The elections of 2011 were notable for the much-improved management of security compared with 2007. The most significant contribution to this was policing reform. The Nigerian Police Force introduced a host of new rules, including disallowing politicians from taking personal security escorts to polling stations. Other practices such as the rotation of police commissioners were established. In addition, the Police Service Commission (PSC) observed the elections and took action when policing was not conducted properly. Dr Owen warned that although the PSC was effective in 2011, there has been a change in leadership since then. It therefore remains to be seen whether the PSC's previous success will be repeated.

Terrorist tactics were first used to disrupt politics in 2011. Dr Owen said that the violence mainly concentrated on party primaries, which tended to be more competitive. After the elections, when the public felt that the result conflicted with general sentiment, there was a backlash against people who had mobilized support for the parties. These events had a lasting effect on the social fabric of the places affected, and this is still being felt.

Routine security has become increasingly militarized since the last elections. The military is now undertaking ordinary policing duties in 32 of 36 states. There has also been growth in vigilante militias in areas such as the Middle Belt – encouraged by the fact that national figures have advised people to take care of their own security. The three northern states affected by the Boko Haram insurgency have a huge problem with internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Nigerian senate is currently debating how these people can vote and the possible problem of disenfranchisement.

Dr Owen stated that concerns about insecurity have been compounded by the condition of the military. There have been cases of mutiny in the security forces dealing with the northern insurgency. There are also questions over whether the military should supply election security, given that it is already overstretched. Another argument is whether state or federal police forces should be used. Dr Owen said that security lockdown tactics – which rely on the massive deployment of forces – seem to be effective. However, care is needed to ensure that lockdowns are effected in a non-partisan manner; otherwise, the conspicuous deployment of security forces can create an intimidating environment that dissuades certain groups of people from voting. In addition, it is difficult to replicate the level of attention and security management necessary for this deployment across all 36 states for multiple elections in a short period.

The speaker said that in 2011, the pattern of violence around elections was much more concentrated around party primaries. There has been less violence so far this time around; partly because the selection process has been less democratic. The parties' control over candidate selection was tighter this year, and public choice was therefore limited. Closer races and higher rates of violence tend to happen in ground-level elections such as those for local government chairmanships. Dr Owen argued that violence is often worse in areas when people have little trust in election procedures and related bodies, including INEC. One procedure that had reduced trust in INEC was the distribution of permanent voter cards, which appeared to disenfranchise many in opposition strongholds.

Dr Owen argued that the presence of armed non-state actors could actually have the effect of subduing violence on election days; partly because such groups often make their political preferences felt before elections. People generally know the balance of power in their communities, but where results are not a foregone conclusion some groups will be tempted to use the security situation to alter voter turnout. A low

turnout can cause future problems if people do not feel that elected officials represent the general preferences of their region – one of the reasons why the fallout from the 2011 elections boosted insurgency in northern Nigeria. There are areas in which groups might feel the need to show their strength to remind local people that they are politically relevant. Dr Owen said that this was likely to be the case in the Niger Delta.

Dr Owen described how Nigeria's partners can facilitate peaceful and legitimate elections. He said that it is important for outside bodies to focus on small issues as well as the general situation, and to have a comprehensive understanding of the often-complex political situations in the regions. Despite arguing that donor funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been extremely badly managed, Dr Owen said that partners should continue to offer bilateral assistance to Nigeria and make provisions for all possible contingencies.

Questions and Answers

Questions

What is INEC doing to protect the right of displaced people to vote?

To what extent do Nigerians trust in INEC's independence from the government?

Who has the authority to decide whether a vote will go ahead in states that have been affected by insurgency?

Is the plan to open 30,000 new polling booths in the north still going ahead?

Professor Mohammad J. Kuna

Professor Kuna said that INEC recently brought together all government agencies and development partners to discuss the issue of IDPs. A consensus emerged on the challenges to be faced, which include legal constraints. The Electoral Act stipulates that it is only possible for somebody to vote where he/she is registered. Even if the National Assembly amends the act, the logistics of registering IDPs is problematic as most IDPs live outside refugee camps. Professor Kuna said that the commission is obliged by law to consolidate the voter register one month before the election, meaning that INEC has little time to deal with the issue.

Public institutions in Nigeria have a history of non-transparency and corruption. Professor Kuna said this means all public institutions in the country today are accused of partisanship, including INEC. However, he said that INEC is the only one that has improved its standing with the Nigerian public since 2010. Professor Kuna warned that many years of public decay mean there will certainly be flaws in the election process, but that the commission should not be accused of partisanship if something goes wrong.

The commission will decide whether to hold a vote in areas affected by insurgency on the basis of information from the security services. The commission is legally obliged to stop elections from taking place if certain conditions prevail; these include a severe breach of the peace or a breakdown in law and order.

The commission had plans to open new polling booths because some units had unmanageable numbers of registered voters (the highest number recorded for any booth being 8,000 voters). The commission

wanted to limit each booth to 500 registered voters. However, the proposed creation of more units was seen by some as an attempt to confer an electoral advantage on one part of the country over another. Professor Kuna said that the strength of opposition to the idea prompted the commission to suspend the introduction of new units.

Dr Oliver Owen

Dr Owen said that abuse of incumbency can happen at any political level and can be engineered by any party. He said that it reflected the performance of the security agencies in respect of the political process in general. Nigeria's experience shows that petitions and complaints may not be dealt with equally, depending on who submits them.

Questions

Ten per cent of people who were on the electoral register last time may not be on it in 2015. Will that affect trust in INEC?

Does the commission have enough funding to do its job?

Why was the programme for training electoral staff at Nigerian universities stopped?

Are there secure plans for the possibility of a run-off election?

Professor Mohammad J. Kuna

Professor Kuna said that very early in the electoral cycle, the commission realized that it would not be possible to use the same budget as in 2011. Planning to bolster funding began in 2012, and as a result INEC has no funding concerns for 2015.

INEC has three training programmes in Nigeria, which are run by the Electoral Institute. However, there had not been a review of the curriculum for several years, and the commission concluded that much of the training was no longer relevant to the administration of modern elections. The universities had suspended the programmes while the structure of the Institute was reorganized. This reorganization is now complete, and the training centres will reopen within two months.

Professor Kuna said that a provision was added to the Electoral Act in 2011 that requires run-offs to be conducted within a week of the first election. The commission has asked the National Assembly to consider extending this period to three weeks, to give sufficient time for logistical arrangements. The assembly has not yet acted on the commission's request, although there is still a chance that the amendment may be passed before the elections. Professor Kuna said that even if an amendment is passed beforehand, it will probably come into effect only in time for the 2019 elections.

Session Two

Zainab Usman

Ms Usman said she has been researching trends for the 2015 elections using an analysis of the results and voter turnouts from the 2011 elections. In 2015, half of state governors will have completed their maximum terms in office, making the state governorship elections particularly competitive. Of the 28

elections for governor taking place, 18 do not have incumbents. Ten of these states account for 40.9 per cent of all registered voters. Ms Usman said her analysis showed that both the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) could win 17 state governorships.

The Nigerian constitution requires the winning presidential candidate to secure an overall majority and at least 25 per cent of the votes in two-thirds of states. Currently, President Goodluck Jonathan looks likely to get an overall majority but may not fulfil the second constitutional requirement. If voting patterns are similar to those of the 2011 elections, a run-off is likely. This would be the first in Nigeria's history. Ms Usman said that the outcome of the run-off may weaken the PDP's chances at the subsequent governorship elections.

Ms Usman said her research highlighted the importance of incumbency in Nigerian elections. She said that a review of the literature on elections in sub-Saharan Africa enabled her to identify some patterns. The findings indicated that Nigerian elections conform to the general trend in sub-Saharan Africa that when incumbents run for re-election, they win over 85 per cent of the time and typically with at least 60 per cent of the vote. In 2011, 85 per cent of Nigeria's incumbent state governors were re-elected, winning about 69 per cent of the vote. This rate was similar for governors belonging to both parties, making incumbency the most important factor at local level. Any candidate running for a vacant seat is more likely to win, and by a larger margin, if he or she belongs to the same party as the previous incumbent.

Ms Usman acknowledged the limitations of the research, which drew on just one election result. The reason for using a single electoral process was that the 2011 elections were the most credible since the transition to democratic rule; they therefore provided the most reliable figures for analysis. She listed several assumptions that defined the parameters of her analysis, including: elections will take place in 2015, uninterrupted by a state of emergency or a constitutional amendment; INEC remains committed to free and fair elections; improvements made in 2011 will remain in place, restricting vote-rigging compared with previous elections; the 2015 elections will overwhelmingly be a two-horse race; presidential elections will take place before the governorship elections; the PDP candidate will be Goodluck Jonathan, while the APC will select a northern Muslim candidate; and election security management will echo the arrangements of 2011, which saw improved security.

Other factors beyond the quantitative scope of the analysis may affect the elections, such as low turnout that favours election-riggers. Ms Usman also said that the use of rhetoric concerning identity politics by different political parties will also be significant.

She emphasized the extent to which incumbency matters in Nigerian elections. In 2011, elections took place in 25 states, of which 20 had incumbents running. Out of those, 17 were re-elected, with an average voter share of 69 per cent. In 2015, 28 governorship elections will take place. Only 10 of these will be contested by incumbents, while 18 will be open elections. Ms Usman explained that for the 10 governorships being contested by incumbents, her analysis suggested that the APC will win six and the PDP four (they currently control seven and three, respectively). In the 18 states with vacant governorships, her analysis predicts that the APC will win eight and the PDP 10. Altogether, including those states that will not hold governorship elections, Ms Usman's formula suggests that the PDP will end up with 19 state governorships and the APC with 17.

She noted that while her analysis forecasts an outright win for President Jonathan on the first ballot, there is likely to be a run-off because the PDP may not obtain the support of a minimum of 25 per cent of registered voters in two-thirds of states across the country. Ms Usman concluded that while incumbency

is important, its impact is affected by local dynamics such as the candidates fielded, local political coalitions, the electoral administration and the parties' engagement with key issues.

Dr Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos

Dr Pérouse de Montclos analysed the possible impacts of Boko Haram on the elections. He said that both the opposition and the government have benefitted from the insurgency. The opposition has emphasized the weakness of the government, and has sought to capitalize on the effect of the crisis in exposing corruption in the army and other public institutions. Media coverage of events such as the kidnapping of girls in the Chibok area of Borno state has helped the opposition to portray the government as incompetent, with some of the international media even depicting Nigeria as a failed or collapsed state. Recent complaints about the government by key Muslim northern supporters of the president, such as the Sultan of Sokoto, have supported the opposition's narrative.

Dr Pérouse de Montclos stated that there are three key ways in which the crisis is helping the government. President Jonathan has often accused the opposition of backing Boko Haram, portraying opposition leaders such as Mohammad Buhari as 'jihadists'. This has helped the government to mobilize the Christian lobby and cement support in the south. The president has recently emphasized his Christian credentials, going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and visiting the Vatican. Dr Pérouse de Montclos said that President Jonathan has used his religious beliefs to frame the insurgency as a Muslim conspiracy against a Christian president. In addition, the government has advanced the idea that it is better to stick with officials who have experience of dealing with the crisis rather than replacing the current government and possibly allowing Boko Haram to build momentum. A further factor is that the three states under emergency rule are considered opposition stalwarts. If the commission decides that these states are unable to hold elections, it will be easier for the incumbent president to win 25 per cent of the vote in two-thirds of states.

Dr Pérouse de Montclos expressed concern that the development gap between the north and south of Nigeria could have disastrous consequences. Economic growth is driven by the south, and this has widened regional differences in perceptions of Boko Haram. In the south, many people view the insurgency as a conspiracy led by the former military ruler, Ibrahim Babangida, or a revival of the jihad led by Usman dan Fodio in the 19th century. However, in the north the crisis is often seen as a government-engineered punishment for not voting for President Jonathan in the last election. The perception that there is a lack of political will to address the issue is ubiquitous. Furthermore, unlike the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Boko Haram controls no oil reserves and therefore has little economic leverage. That the government accepted the principle of an amnesty with MEND in 2009 has reinforced beliefs that it is not interested in helping the north because of Boko Haram's negligible effect on the economy.

Dr Pérouse de Montclos said that while religion will be an extremely important factor in areas such as the Middle Belt and Niger Delta, it may not play a huge role in voting patterns in other regions. Moreover, Boko Haram will not dominate election preferences. Other factors, such as the fall in the price of oil, divestment by Royal Dutch Shell and corruption, will also influence the vote. Dr Pérouse de Montclos cautioned that the election should not be seen through the prism of Boko Haram and jihadism – especially in the south, where day-to-day issues such as health, electricity and basic services are more significant.

Elizabeth Rushing

Ms Rushing said that although Boko Haram-related violence tends to dominate international attention, many other factors are causing mass displacement in Nigeria. She said that inter-communal clashes fuelled by ethnic and religious tensions flare on a weekly basis throughout the Middle Belt, which roughly divides the Muslim north and Christian south of the country. Violence in this region has increased over the last 15 years, displacing hundreds of thousands of people. Ethnic and religious issues are intensified by criminality, especially cattle rustling, and by land disputes and tensions between pastoralists and farmers.

Nigeria is prone to seasonal flooding, which in 2012 was the reason for the world's second largest disaster-induced displacement event of the year. Thousands of people have also been displaced as a result of desertification. In the cities of Abuja, Port Harcourt and Lagos, more than 2 million slum dwellers and other marginalized people have been forcibly evicted from their homes over the last 10 years. In addition, political violence forced a substantial number of people to flee following the presidential elections in 2011. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that nearly 65,000 people were displaced during three days of violence in 12 northern states in 2011.

In early 2014, attacks attributed to Boko Haram overtook inter-communal violence as the biggest contributor to displacement. Ms Rushing said that this has been exacerbated by the fact that Boko Haram now almost exclusively attacks civilians, as part of its mission to establish a caliphate in northeastern Nigeria. By September 2014, the Boko Haram insurgency had forced 1.5 million people to flee to other parts of the country. Moreover, at least 150,000 Nigerians have fled to neighbouring Chad, Cameroon and Niger. Boko Haram often launches surprise attacks, causing people to leave their homes empty-handed, abandoning identifying documents. Large-scale abductions have increased in recent months, and this has become a key factor in people's decision to flee. Ms Rushing said that the Nigerian government has been accused of heavy-handed tactics that cause further displacement. These include the extrajudicial killing of 600 suspected militants and the razing of properties thought to be harbouring Boko Haram fighters.

IDPs face a range of threats to their safety once they move from their homes. Boko Haram's proclamation of a caliphate in Adamawa and Borno states has trapped people in those areas. Ms Rushing said that the IDMC has received evidence of summary executions of those trying to flee. As Boko Haram and Nigeria's armed forces clash over control of main roads, fleeing civilians are often forced into forested areas where the risk of dying from hunger or thirst is greater. They also run the risk of being mistaken for militants by the armed forces. There are 12 official IDP camps in Borno and six in Adamawa. Although there is some support for those who live in or near camps, they often lack access to basic food and health care. The majority of IDPs do not end up in formal camps. She said that these people often live in cities where they have no contacts and where skills relevant to rural livelihoods are of no use.

Ms Rushing said that recent improvements in data collection have enabled the IDMC to identify three displacement patterns. First, people are fleeing from the three insurgency-affected northeastern states to the neighbouring states of Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba, and to the Middle Belt region. Secondly, civilians tend to flee from rural to urban areas within their own state, increasing population stresses in towns and raising security concerns. Finally, IDPs and host communities are affected by violence and a lack of basic supplies, which can cause a second or third cycle of displacement. She noted that the ongoing depletion of resources increases IDP vulnerability with each cycle of displacement.

The elections are likely to be heavily affected by mass displacement. If a third of the currently estimated 3.3 million IDPs are eligible to vote, that would represent almost two per cent of the population. Ms

Rushing predicted that new large-scale displacement is likely as a result of political violence during and after the elections. The African Union Kampala Convention on displacement legally obliges Nigeria to provide for IDPs' participation in elections. However, the government has experienced difficulties in transferring IDPs' voter registrations to their areas of displacement. It is likely that millions of voters will be disenfranchised as a result. She argued that allowing IDPs to vote is an obligation that Nigeria must uphold, and that failure to do so would severely undermine the validity of the democratic process.

Ms Rushing said that the IDMC has focused on two significant institutional gaps potentially relevant to the prevention of displacement in Nigeria. The first relates to problems in collecting data and information on the numbers of people fleeing violence and the means they use to do so. Cumulative figures on internal displacement are currently provided by the National Commission for Refugees (NCR), which reported the presence of 3.3 million IDPs in the country as of the end of 2013. She said that this figure was based largely on secondary sources, and that the methodology behind it was unclear. Disproportionate attention to areas affected by Boko Haram has improved understanding of displacement patterns in northern regions. However, generally poor data collection in the country as a whole continues to undercut confidence in relief efforts. Humanitarian agencies and international donors are hampered by their use of outdated and unreliable estimates. Ms Rushing said that the full impact of displacement in Nigeria has always been unclear. This is partly because data collection has never been prioritized, but also because a national policy on internal displacement has yet to clarify the mandates of different government agencies.

The second institutional gap has arisen from the fact that the federal executive council has yet to adopt the policies articulated in the Kampala Convention, even though Nigeria has already ratified the convention.

Ms Rushing argued that the above-mentioned institutional weaknesses create two interrelated problems: without proper data it is difficult to understand the country's displacement dynamics; and without a proper framework there will never be clearly defined roles and responsibilities for actors seeking to tackle the issue. Ms Rushing said that response efforts have consequently always been fragmented and inadequate. She said that the likely closeness of the forthcoming elections makes it more important than ever to adopt a holistic approach, which would include obtaining a solid understanding of the numbers and needs of IDPs, allowing them to register to vote, and implementing durable solutions to their displacement.

Questions and Answers

Questions

Who benefits from electoral violence?

In what ways does a lack of credible information on IDPs affect responses to displacement?

How is the percentage of registered voters split between north and south?

How important are Lagos and Kano to the election?

Elizabeth Rushing

Ms Rushing said that, in general, religion and ethnicity are politically manipulated for populist causes. She said that ethnicity, in particular, has played a significant role in religious conflicts in northern

Nigeria, where sectarian groups have exploited tensions between Hausa settlers and the indigenous Fulani. Research by the IDMC has suggested that the religious dimension is being misconstrued as the primary driver of violence, whereas in reality disenfranchisement and inequality are more important factors.

Ms Rushing said that regardless of the causes of displacement, the response to it will be the same. She said that figures for the number of displaced people vary wildly, relate to different time periods, and lack a process of systematic validation. For example, the IDMC currently estimates that 1.5 million people have been displaced by Boko Haram, but that revises a recent figure of 634,000 that was based on an agency assessment in May 2014. Even though it is widely known that the number of IDPs has increased significantly since May, no other more authoritative data could be obtained. Ms Rushing said that NGOs on the ground do not have the capacity to cross-check figures. She argued that it would be better to focus on communication strategies rather than on building capacity.

Zainab Usman

Ms Usman said that, based on the 2011 data, 10 of the 18 states that will hold open governorship elections account for 40 per cent of Nigeria's registered voters. She said that the issue is not the regional distribution of voters, but their distribution across states depending on party allegiances. The two states with the highest numbers of registered voters are Lagos and Kano. Lagos has 6.1 million registered voters and Kano 5 million.

Ms Usman said that Lagos and Kano states have historically been hotbeds for opposition politics. Since 1999, Lagos has always elected an opposition governor. She emphasized the importance of local issues, as the APC's choice of candidate in the two states is likely to determine its chances of re-election. Ms Usman noted that many people doubt the APC's ability to win both states, given the calibre of candidates put forward by the PDP.