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Informed Policy Engagement or Intensive Personality Disparagement in Osun 2022 Governorship Election Campaign?

Osun 2022 Governorship Election Campaign Monitoring Report

Issue 1, May 14, 2022

Introduction

By July 16th, 2022, registered voters in Osun State will be at their various polling units in the state to elect a new governor who will be leading the state from November 2022 when the tenure of Alhaji Gboyega Oyetola expires[1]. Governor Oyetola was elected in 2018 after the former governor, Engineer Rauf Aregbesola, spent 8 years of two terms. Since the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared the official date for electorate to be at the poll, and hinted that primary election would commence in February and end in March 2022, political parties and candidates had been campaigning, informing electorate why they should be voted for. Though the national electoral body approved April 2022 as the month for official campaign, our observations of various campaign platforms in the state revealed that concerned stakeholders had earlier started internal campaign before the month. Available information indicates that the All Progressives Congress (APC) officially inaugurated Campaign Council in May 2022, while the People's Democratic Party (PDP) initiated its committee in April 2022[2]. Based on the previous elections in the state, these political parties remain the leading parties in terms of election results that had emerged since 1999 that Nigeria returned to democracy. Like what happened during the 2018 governorship election, there are other political parties that competed in the election, but they hardly had the expected simple majority results. This and other factors have made smaller political parties to usually have small campaign structure instead of what the two leading parties usually have during the election. In spite of this, our analysts consider them in the monitoring and evaluation of campaign activities of actors within political parties, candidates and their supporters on various platforms being used for spreading messages about personality traits of the candidates, parties' and candidates' leadership style as well as capacity to govern the state sustainably. This report is the first output of the 2022 governorship election campaign monitoring in the state. The report specifically considers campaign strategies employed by candidates, parties and their supporters, most importantly members of the media team of the parties and the

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[1] INEC (2022). Osun State Governorship 2022 Timetable and Schedule of Activities. https://inecnigeria.org/osun-state-governorship-2022-timetable-and-schedule-of-activities/.

[2] Dada, L., (2022). Osun Guber: Senate spokesperson named DG Oyetola's campaign council. *The Sun*, May 5, 2022. https://www.sunnewsonline.com/osun-guber-senate-spokesperson-named-dg-oyetolas-campaign-council/; Ezedinuo, F. (2022). Osun 2022: PDP inaugurates campaign, anti-rigging committees. *Daily Post*, April 26, 2022. https://dailypost.ng/2022/04/26/osun-2022-pdp-inaugurates-campaign-anti-rigging-committees/.

candidates. The strategies were examined within the context of the intended and unintended outcomes of the messages spread on social networking sites (especially Facebook) and political actors' interactions with the conventional media (especially newspapers).

Our Approach

Messages posted on Facebook by the political parties through their official pages, candidates' pages and supporters' personal accounts as well as news stories were the primary sources of data for this report. These stakeholders were monitored from April 9 to May 11, 2022. This is a 17-day period. During the period, our analysts paid specific attention to messages that were campaign-driven not general messages, especially those promoting activities of the incumbent governor and mere social engagements of the candidates that were not related to political activities. Attacks, acclaims and defenses were the three categories of campaign strategies our analysts looked for in each message extracted from Facebook and national newspapers. Attacks were the messages that denigrated personality traits of candidates and leadership quality and/or competence of the parties as well as candidates to govern the state. Attacks were also examined from the perspective of the actors, demeaning the quality of programmes, initiatives and projects of the incumbent. Acclaims were the messages that show that the parties and the candidates were better in terms of personality traits, leadership quality as well as competence in delivering quality public goods to the citizens and residents in the state. Defenses were the messages that refuted negative elements pushed out by actors against candidates and political parties. In this context, our analysts looked for traces that established members of the opposition and the ruling camps defending what were considered as negatives and/or not true about the personality traits, leadership style and competence of the candidates and political parties. Although the national electoral body announced candidates of 15 political parties for the election, our tracking mechanism only found the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Allied People's Movement (APM) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) as parties that engaged the electorate during the monitoring period. Across the campaign platforms that were examined, 60 messages were found as relevant for evaluation by our analysts. Apart from the campaign strategies (attacks, acclaims and defenses), infrastructure, social programmes, workers' salary, welfare and employment, agriculture, economy, education, health, security and others

were created as campaign issues or policies that the parties and their supporters need to address for the electorate for them (electorate) to make informed decision during voting on July 16th, 2022. The campaign strategies and issues/or polices were reliably checked using stability and reproducibility approaches. A member of the research team coded the messages several times while another member repeated the process of coding the messages. The outcome indicated strong level of agreements in line with what each campaign strategy and issue and/or policy represented.

Key Results

From the 60 messages, a total of 76 traces of the campaign strategies were found. Out of these traces, attacks and acclaims were more than defenses. Analysis indicates that 55.26% of the traces were attacks, while acclaims and defenses were 35.52% and 9.21% respectively.　Day-by-day analysis of the strategies showed that actors started using attacks on Friday, April 29, 2022, though the extent to which they were used was low compared to defenses and acclaims (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: Campaign Strategies by Days

|	Attacks	Acclaims	Defenses
Saturday, April 9, 2022	2.38%	0%	0%
Wednesday, April 20, 2022	0%	3.70%	0%
Monday, April 25, 2022	0%	3.70%	0%
Tuesday, April 26, 2022	2.38%	3.70%	0%
Friday, April 29, 2022	7.14%	11.11%	14.28%
Saturday, April 30, 2022	4.76%	0%	14.28%
Sunday, May 1, 2022	2.38%	3.70%	0%
Monday, May 2, 2022	2.38%	0%	0%
Tuesday, May 3, 2022	2.38%	3.70%	0%
Wednesday, May 4, 2022	2.38%	7.40%	0%
Thursday, May 5, 2022	9.52%	0%	0%
Friday, May 6, 2022	11.90%	7.40%	14.28%
Saturday, May 7, 2022	16.66%	18.51%	28.57%
Sunday, May 8, 2022	0%	7.40%	0%
Monday, May 9, 2022	4.76%	7.40%	14.28%
Tuesday, May 10, 2022	19.04%	14.81%	14.28%
Wednesday, May 11, 2022	11.90%	7.40%	0%

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

This also applies to its usage on Friday, May 6, 2022, the day defenses were used as the same level they were employed on Friday, April 29, 2022. The use of attacks picked on Saturday, May 6, 2022 and increased till Sunday, May 7, 2022 before it nose-dived on Monday, May 9, 2022 and picked again on Tuesday, May 10, 2022. While this strategy was used during these days, acclaims were employed intermittently. Defenses were dominantly deployed on Saturday, May 7, 2022.

Our analysts discovered 106 traces of campaign and/or policy issues from the messages that were tracked during the monitoring period. Analysis shows that instead of spreading messages and debating about critical governance issues or programmes in the state, actors focused on communicating and deliberating on issues that were not related to campaign directly. For instance, majority of the actors discussed lack of respect for traditional institutions by a candidate and his party, intra-party visitation over campaign, nomination of candidates for state assembly election, candidate's national party engagement, popularity of a candidate as well as his good works during previous political office he held. Specifically, over 27% of the 106 traces were devoted to discussing these among others while less attention was paid to the current state of economy, education, health and security in the state (see Exhibit 2).

*Exhibit 2: Campaign and/or Policy Issues*
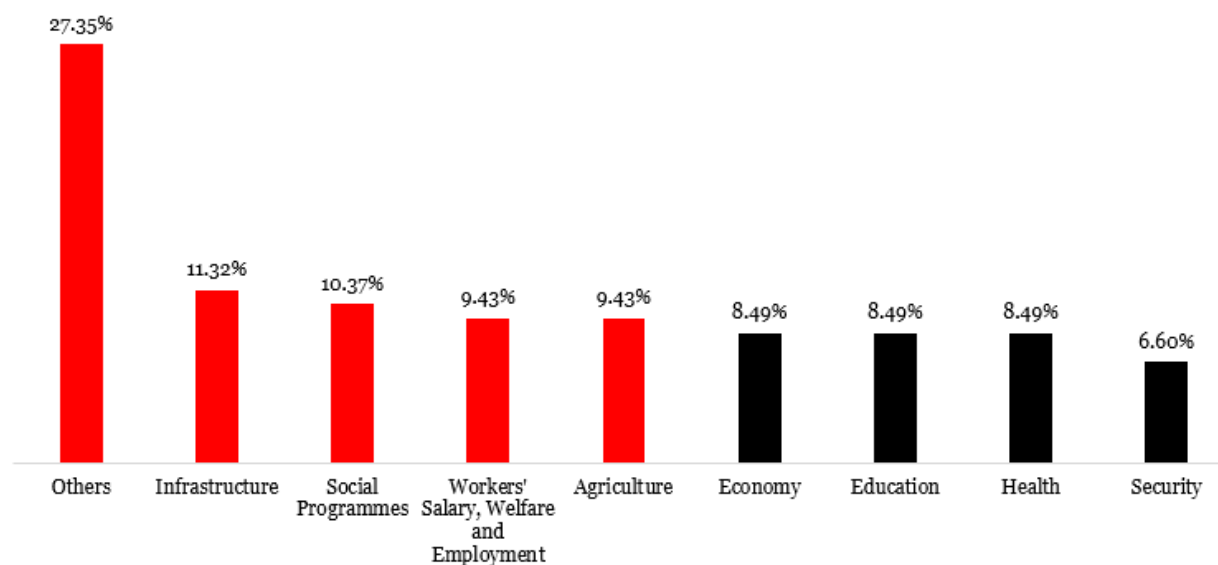
Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Exhibit 3: *Campaign and/or Policy Issues by Media Types*
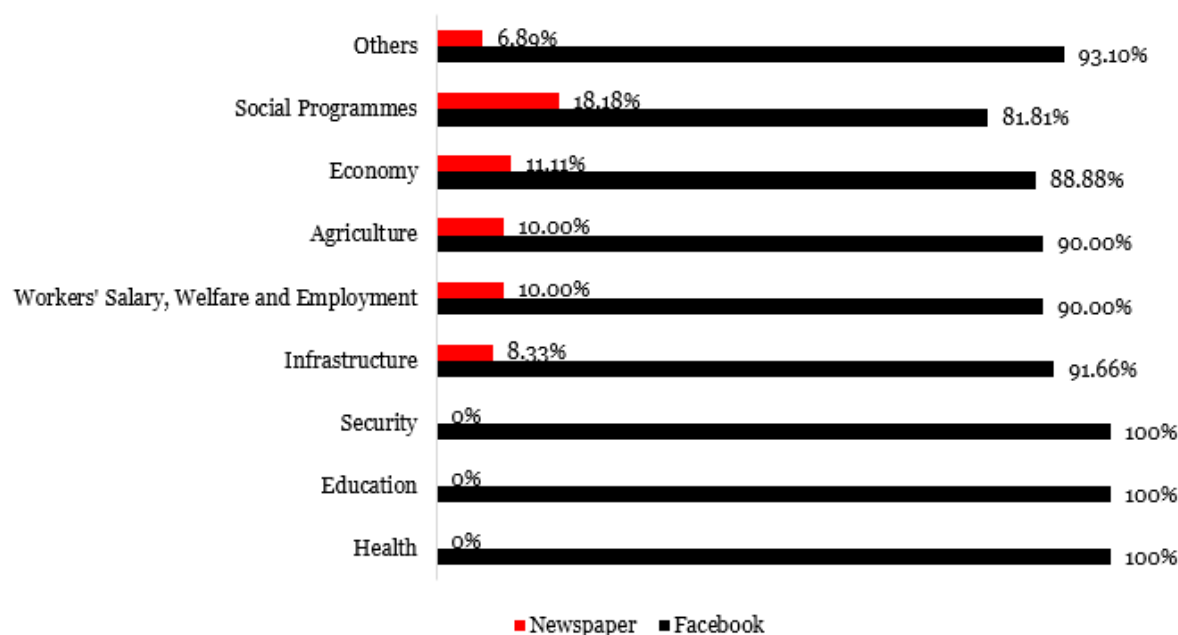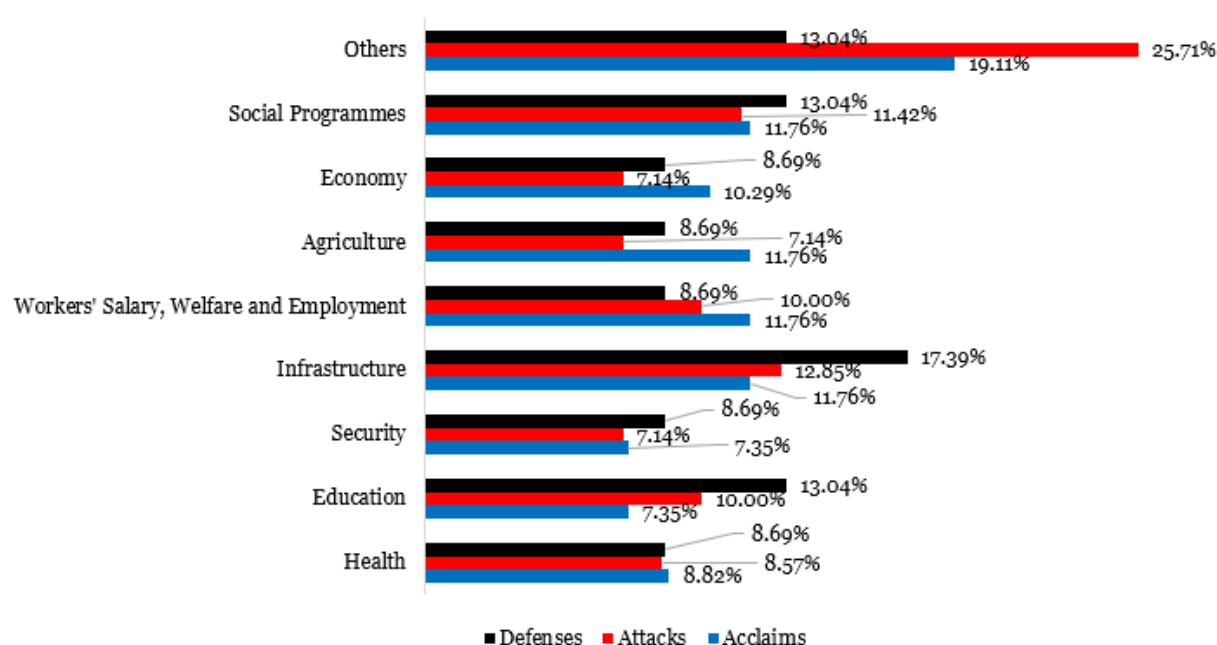

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Across media types (Facebook and newspapers), analysis reveals that the identified campaign issues and/or polices were discussed on Facebook more than in the newspapers (though small messages were found from the newspapers). Analysis further indicates that actors discussed health, education, security, agriculture, infrastructure, workers' salary, welfare and employment mostly on Facebook.

Exhibit 4: *Campaign and/or Policy Issues by Political Parties*
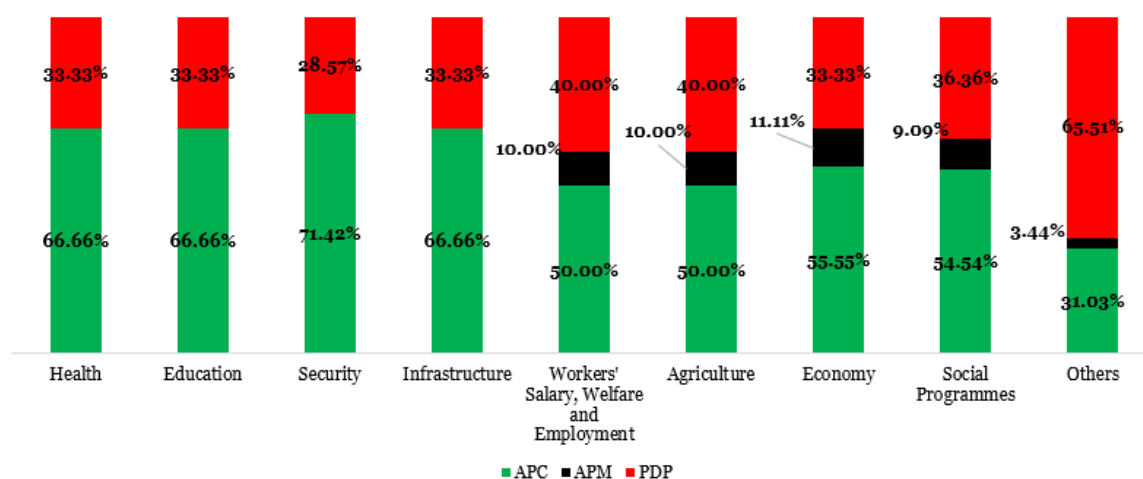
Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

In terms of political party that had supporters and candidates that engaged the public using the campaign issues and/or policies, our analysis shows that the All Progressives Congress was much better than the People's Democratic Party and the Allied People's Movement (see Exhibit 4). However, the People's Democratic Party led the All Progressives Congress in the others category. Textual analysis of the category reveals that supporter of the party and the party itself (through its campaign Facebook page [*Imole DE*]) predominantly leveraged personality traits' component of the category. This result is further expatiated based on the next outcome of our analysis.

Exhibit 5: Campaign Strategies across Campaign and/or Policy Issues
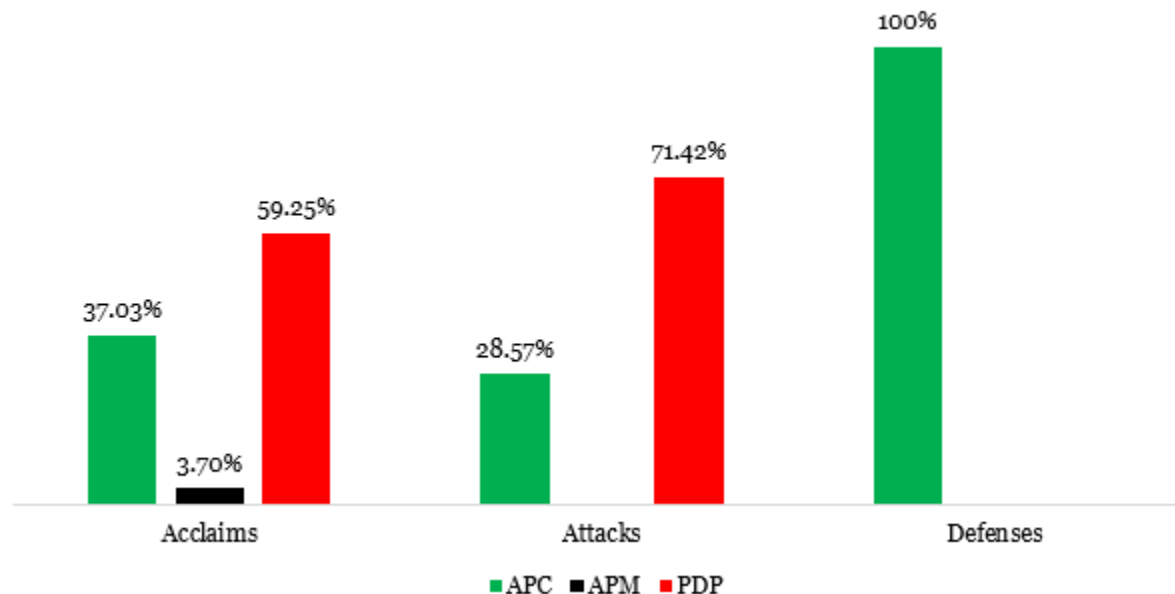

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Analysis of the campaign strategies in relation to the campaign issues reveals that acclaims and attacks were closely used by the actors. A total of 161 traces of the strategies were found across the campaign issues. From this figure, 43.47% were associated with attacks, while 42.23% and 14.28% resonated with our definitions of acclaims ad defenses. Further analysis establishes that attacks were predominantly employed while actors discussed personality traits, party's engagement of the candidates (see earlier definition of others for more components of the category). Acclaims were also deployed significantly while discussing these components. Defenses were mostly employed in the course of

discussing issues related to infrastructure, social programmes and education. In this regard, our analysts found members and supporters of the All Progressives Congress as the main users of the strategy. It was mainly used to correct perceived negativities communicated by members and supporters of the People's Democratic Party.

Beyond understanding which political party and its supporters deployed these strategies mostly across the campaign issues and/or policies, our analysts were equally interested in knowing which of the political parties (APC, APM and PDP) employed the strategies significantly during the monitoring period. Our analysts found 76 traces of the strategies. Over 55% of this figure were attacks while 35.52% and 9.21% were acclaims and defenses respectively. Further analysis indicates that the People's Democratic Party attacked more than acclaimed and defended while the Allied People's Movement only acclaimed. The 7 defenses found were basically deployed by the All Progressives Congress' members and supporters (see Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6: Campaign Strategies across Political Parties

Source: Positive Agenda Nigeria, 2022

Conclusion and Our Verdict

From these data, both the PDP and the APC attacked each other in terms of personalities of their candidates alongside their capabilities to rule the state, although the PDP engaged

in such attacks than the APC. Nonetheless, in a contest like this, concerned observers and citizens of the state would have expected that the political parties, their members/supporters and media team sell the manifestoes of their flagbearers to potential electorate, especially opposition parties that intend slugging it out with the incumbent governor in July, 2022. With the current findings, the political parties, their members/supporters and media team are not yet addressing "real campaign issues" every informed electorate in Osun State will want to hear on why they should vote for a particular candidate. We strongly recommend that the political parties, their supporters and media teams start engaging electorate on the social media on real campaign issues/policy programmes instead of demarketing the personalities of their political opponents.

About Positive Agenda Nigeria

Positive Agenda Nigeria is a non-governmental organisation led by a group of academics and independent researchers dedicated to adopting evidence-based approaches to preserve a favourable climate for Nigeria's socioeconomic and political activities.

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