



Paper Analysis

Nigeria 2023 Presidential Elections: Key Issues & Lessons

Prepared by:

Abubakar Abubakar Usman (PhD)

Research fellow, Asia Middle East Center for Research
and Dialogue (AMEC)

Africa Studies Circle



@amec4red
@amec4redAr



www.amec4red.com



<https://t.me/amec4red>
<https://t.me/amec4redarabic>

Issue 1, Volume 1



Nigeria 2023 Presidential Elections: Key Issues & Lessons

Abubakar Abubakar Usman (PhD)

ummsad@gmail.com

Research fellow, Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue (AMEC)

Introduction

Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Elections marked the country's sixth consecutive election since the return to democratic rule in 1999. As the most populous country in Africa and a significant player in the global community, the Elections were closely watched by both domestic and international stakeholders. The election campaigns were dominated by a range of complex and pressing issues, such as insecurity, corruption, poverty, and unemployment, all of which posed significant challenges to the nation's development. The Elections were highly competitive, with 18 political parties and candidates vying for the top position. However, it eventually became a four-horse race among the leading candidates. In this context, this essay intends to discuss the key issues that shaped the outcome of the 2023 Presidential Elections, the lessons that can be learned, and the implications of the results.

Electoral Process

Nigeria's electoral process has been plagued by allegations of vote rigging, vote buying, and violence in the past. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is responsible for organizing and conducting the Presidential Elections, and it has introduced various measures to ensure free and fair elections, such as the use of biometric voter identification and electronic transmission of results, as well as the deployment of security personnel to maintain law and order. However, despite these efforts, there have been instances of electoral malpractices and irregularities in past elections. In response, INEC has promised to use the Bimodal Voter Registration System (BVAS), a technological device used to identify and accredit voters' fingerprints and facial recognition before voting. Additionally, INEC has introduced the Election Result Viewing Portal (IReV), an online portal where polling unit level results are uploaded directly from the polling unit, transmitted, and published for the public. These new measures are aimed at improving the credibility and transparency of the electoral process in Nigeria.



Political Parties

Nigeria operates a multi-party system, with over 90 registered political parties. Among them, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) are the leading political parties in the country, with the largest membership and political influence. However, other significant parties, such as the New Nigerian People's Party (NNPP) and the Labour Party (LP), have also recently gained some popularity in some parts of the country among particular voters. The APC's ideology centers around promoting economic growth, fighting corruption, and improving security. On the other hand, the PDP's ideology is centered around social justice, democracy, and good governance. These two parties have dominated the political landscape in Nigeria, with their policies and actions shaping the direction of the country's politics and development.

Presidential Elections 2023 Outcome

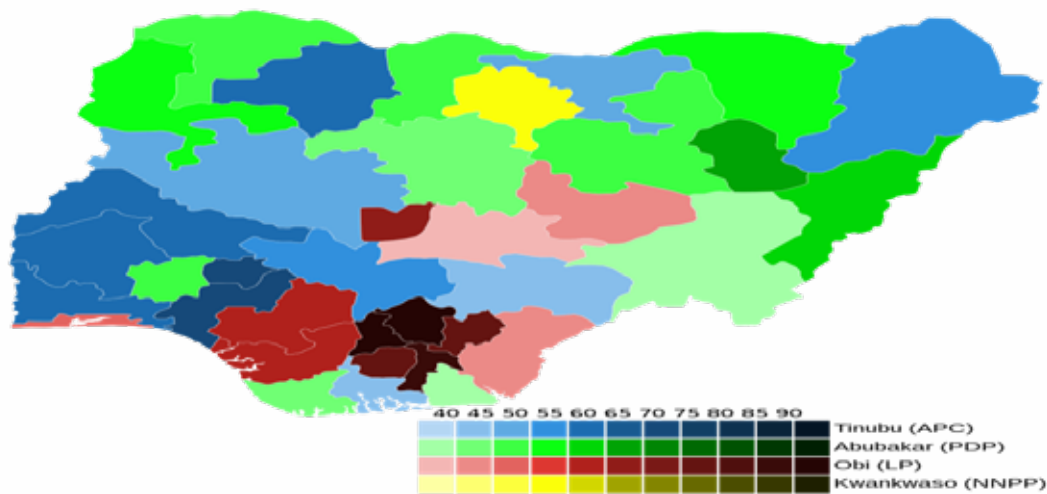
Party	APC	PDP	LP	NNPP
Candidates	BAT	ATIKU	Peter Obi	Kwankwaso
State Won	12	12	11+FCT	1
Total Vote Won	8,794,726	6,984,520	6,101,533	1,496,687
% of total vote won	36.61	29.07	25.40	6.40
All Votes	23,377,466			

The table provides information about the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Elections, showing the results for four political parties: the All Progressives Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the Labour Party (LP), and the New Nigerian People's Party (NNPP). The APC and PDP are the leading political parties in Nigeria, with both winning 12 states each. The LP won 11 states and the Federal Capital Territory, while the NNPP won only one state. The APC's candidate was Tinubu, and the PDP's candidate was Atiku, while the LP's candidate was Obi, and the NNPP's candidate was Kwankwaso. The total number of votes cast was 23,377,466, with the APC winning the highest number of votes at 8,794,726, representing 36.61% of the total vote cast. The PDP came in second, winning 6,984,520 votes, representing 29.07% of the



total vote cast. The LP won 6,101,533 votes, representing 25.40% of the total vote cast, while the NNPP won 1,496,687 votes, representing 6.40% of the total vote cast.

Elections Outcome by States



Factors that Influenced Presidential Elections Outcome

- Socio-economic Issues

The 2023 Presidential Elections in Nigeria were marked by the candidates' plans and strategies for addressing the country's complex socio-economic challenges. Poverty is a significant issue, with over 40% of the population living below the poverty line, while unemployment is another pressing challenge, with an estimated 33% of young people unemployed. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure, such as power, transportation, and healthcare, is a significant hindrance to economic development. Candidates in the election needed to demonstrate a clear understanding of these issues and present credible solutions to gain voter support.

However, a currency crisis engulfed the country due to the new banknote policy of President Buhari and the Central Bank Governor, Godwin Emefiele, intended to curb vote buying ahead of the election. The poorly implemented policy led to shortages of the new currency, causing Tinubu and other prominent APC figures to break with Buhari, first suing to stop its enactment, then criticizing the administration's handling of the situation. Surprisingly, other leading political parties welcomed the new currency policy expecting it to increase their chances of winning the elections.



- **Ethnic and Religious Divisions**

Nigeria's diversity is reflected in its purportedly more than 250 ethnic groups and its significant divide between Muslims and Christians. Muslims are estimated to be slightly more than Christians in Nigeria. In previous Presidential Elections, ethnic and religious divisions have played a significant role, with candidates often relying on the support of their ethnic and religious groups. However, this has led to accusations of nepotism, favoritism, and discrimination, and in some cases, it has resulted in violence and unrest. As a result, ethnoreligious factors have played a significant role in determining voting patterns throughout the country, with some voters casting their ballots based on ethnic or religious affiliation rather than policy positions or candidate qualifications.

The impact of ethnoreligious factors on the outcome of the presidential elections is evident in the candidates' percentage of votes from their respective political zones. The eventual winner, Ahmed Tinubu of APC, received 53.59% of votes from the South West, despite losing his state of origin to Peter Obi. Atiku Abubakar of PDP secured 50.58% of votes from the North East geopolitical zone, despite having the APC vice presidential candidate from the same zone. Peter Obi of LP received 87.78% of the total votes in the South East, his geopolitical zone. Rabiun Kwankwaso of NNPP, on the other hand, obtained 18.96% of the total votes in the North West, the highest percentage among all other geopolitical regions of the country.

Observations and Feedback on the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Elections

According to the EU EOM observers, the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections were marked by late deployment and opening of polling stations, while polling procedures were not always followed, and there were struggles to complete result forms. Similarly, according to the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, who conducted a joint observer mission, the election did not meet the reasonable expectations of Nigerian citizens. Most polling units also did not post the results publicly.

Despite these issues, the election witnessed a comparatively large turnout of voters in various geopolitical zones, according to the Observer Mission. The US congratulated the winner of the election while acknowledging concerns over some alleged shortcomings. In terms of vote buying, the Foreign Mission observed minimal incidences during the polls, which recorded a high turnout of voters nationwide.

Implications on Nigeria's Foreign Relations

Nigeria holds an important position in African politics, and its role in the international community is crucial. The West African region has been plagued by military coups, with three successful coups taking place in the past four years alone. The outcome of the 2023 Presidential



Elections in Nigeria will have far-reaching implications for the country's foreign policy and relationships with other nations. The incoming President will face the challenge of managing complex regional and international relationships and balancing competing interests. Global powers such as the United States, China, and the EU have all closely monitored the elections and are looking to engage with the new administration. The elections provide an opportunity for Nigeria to showcase its commitment to democracy and good governance, strengthening its position as a leader in the region and beyond.

Post-election Challenges

The aftermath of the 2023 Presidential Elections in Nigeria presents several challenges that must be addressed to ensure a smooth transition of power. One of the potential challenges is related to the acceptance of the election results. This has, so far, led to protests and even violence, as has happened in previous elections. Another challenge is related to addressing any instances of violence or unrest that may have arisen during or after the elections, to maintain law and order. Mending the ethno-religious rifts caused by the election's outcome will also be a challenge. Given Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious composition, it is crucial to address any tensions and promote reconciliation among different groups. Additionally, the government will need to address the issue of IPOB, a secessionist movement based in the Southeast of the country and find ways to address their grievances while maintaining national unity.

The incoming government faces a multitude of challenges, both in terms of security and the economy. The ongoing threats posed by banditry and religious extremist movements continue to have devastating effects on the country, particularly in the Northern regions. Moreover, Nigeria's economy has been struggling in recent years, leading to a rise in youth unemployment nationwide and a lack of opportunities. These problems are further compounded by the alarming increases in public debt and uncontrollable fiscal difficulties. To ensure a better future for the Nigerian people, the new administration must confront these challenges head-on. Additionally, the issue of restructuring the country's political system, which previous administrations have avoided, must be addressed for sustainability and to promote greater stability and fairness.

Implications on Future

The 2023 Presidential Elections in Nigeria are of great significance as they will shape the country's future development and prospects. The outcome of the elections will determine Nigeria's political, economic, and social policies for the next four years. It presents an opportunity for Nigeria to address its pressing socio-economic challenges, promote national unity and inclusivity, and reinforce its position as a leader in the region and beyond. The elections will also serve as a platform for the country to learn important lessons for future



elections, particularly in the areas of electoral integrity, voter education, and political leadership. It is essential that all stakeholders, including political leaders, civil society, and the media, remain committed to upholding the principles of democracy and good governance for the success of the elections. By learning from past experiences and addressing current challenges, Nigeria can build a stronger and more prosperous future for all its citizens.

Recommendations

To ensure a smooth electoral process and mitigate potential challenges:

- Nigeria must establish strong and independent institutions that oversee the electoral process and guarantee its fairness and transparency.
- It is vital for political leaders to respect the rule of law and accept the election results, even if they disagree with them.
- Adequate contingency plans must be put in place to address any potential violence or unrest and ensure the safety and security of all citizens.
- Civil society organizations and international observers must also play a significant role in monitoring and reporting on the electoral process.
- The independence and impartiality of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is crucial to ensure a credible electoral process.
- To continuously improve the electoral process, there is a need for increased voter education and sensitization, and stronger sanctions for electoral offenders.
- By taking these steps, Nigeria can demonstrate its commitment to democracy and the peaceful transfer of power, and strengthen its position as a stable and prosperous nation.

Conclusion

The 2023 Presidential Elections in Nigeria is a defining moment for the country's democracy and future development. A range of critical issues have shaped the elections, including the economy, security, corruption, ethnic and religious divisions, and international relations. It is vital that all stakeholders work together to promote free and fair elections, uphold the rule of law, and maintain peace and stability. The elections has provided an opportunity for Nigeria to address its socio-economic challenges, promote national unity and inclusivity, and strengthen its position as a leader in the region and beyond. By learning from past experiences and addressing current challenges, Nigeria can build a more inclusive, democratic, and prosperous society for all its citizens. Ultimately, the success of the elections will depend on the commitment of all Nigerians to building a stronger and more prosperous future for the country.