



A-Z about elections in your country and the world.

3 **POSTULATIONS AHEAD OF NIGERIA'S 2023 ELECTIONS**

January 2021
Review

Introduction

It's more than 700 days to the 2023 general elections but the conversation on who Nigeria's next president will be has inundated the current political discourse. Worthy of note, is that Nigeria's middle class who are now more politically active have been championing these conversations. However, past experiences have shown us that the one who wins the presidential debate is not the one who wins the presidency. We saw this come to play in the 2019 elections. While Atiku had the support of the elite and middle class, Buhari still won the election despite the fact that his popularity has dwindled significantly since he first came into power. Politicking ahead of the election cycle has also begun to take shape; it is expected that campaigns will intensify towards the end of 2021.

With prospective candidates making moves, and the electoral body planning amendments. We have some assumptions on how the 2023 race will play out.

Atiku is Likely to Lose Again



Former vice president Atiku Abubakar who lost to President Buhari in 2019 has been making shy moves to run for presidency again in 2023 but it appears his last shot at the presidency happened in 2019. On his inability to command support, especially from the region of the country where he is from, Michael Famoroti, Partner at Stears posited that Atiku's weakest link appears to be the absence of any base. While he has the support of political elites and many middle class Nigerians, he will fail to get support in the vote-rich North West and North East of Nigeria. Also, the agitation for zoning to return to the south could significantly affect his chance at taking the seat.



The Rotation Agitation will Intensify

The controversy on power rotation has been fierce and could intensify as the polls draw closer. While former minister of Works and Housing, Babatunde Fashola claims there was an agreement that power should rotate between both regions, other founding members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) disagreed with him, saying there has been no written law to such effect. However, Article 20 (iv) (d) of the party's constitution states that

...the National Working Committee shall, subject to approval of the National Executive Committee, make rules and regulations for the nomination of candidates through primary elections. All such rules, regulations and guidelines shall take into consideration and uphold the principle of federal character, gender balance, geo-political spread and rotation of offices, to as much as possible, ensure balance within the constituency covered.

With this, the party may have no choice but to zone power to the south. The new debate will now be on whether that successor will be from the southwest or the southeast.

Lesser Parties Will Field Candidates

In the 2019 elections, up to 93 political parties contested in the general elections. In February 2020, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) deregistered up to 75 of those parties for reasons including the failure of the parties to win at least 25% of votes cast in one state of the federation in a presidential election or one local government in a gubernatorial vote and failure to win at least one ward in a chairmanship election, a seat in the national or state legislature, or a seat in at the councillorship level. With these requirements, these parties will have to step up their campaigns and win the seats or remain deregistered. This can discourage new parties from coming into the pool if they do not have needed support. Third force movements may also resort to forming alliances in order to strengthen their base.

93

Political parties
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75

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Bottomline

Same issues that spearheaded political campaigns in past election cycles will dominate the current electioneering cycle: poverty, unemployment, security, corruption, and the economy. A candidate who is able to rally the support of the vote-rich northwest and northeast will most likely win in the polls, it will even be a smoother victory if the candidate is anointed by the outgoing President. While the conversation of party ideology and political participation is improving, the middle class may not have its full swing of victory yet as politics in Nigeria happens mostly at the grassroots. Civil society, party candidates and electoral actors while proposing reforms must remain engaged with local and grassroots communities.