

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declares Bola Tinubu, the former governor of Lagos and the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) flag-bearer, as the winner of the presidential elections on 1 March. Tinubu calls on the country to unite behind him and promises to work toward achieving “good governance, a functional economy and a safe nation” in his victory speech. President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-present) publishes a statement on Twitter on 1 March, congratulating Tinubu on his electoral victory and calling him “the best person for the job”. He also pledges to work with Tinubu and his team to ensure a smooth transition. Opposition parties reject the electoral results and call for the scrapping of the presidential election. Parties have three weeks to appeal the results at the supreme court, which has never overturned a presidential election result.

Tinubu prevails in tight Nigerian election...

The **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)** declared **Bola Tinubu**, the former governor of **Lagos** and the ruling **All Progressives Congress (APC)** flag-bearer, as the winner of the presidential elections on 1 March.¹ The victory hands him control of Africa’s biggest economy as it combats widespread insecurity, a deepening economic crisis, and a chronic shortage of gas and local and foreign currency. The INEC confirmed that of ballots tallied in Nigeria’s 36 states and the federal capital territory of **Abuja**, Tinubu won 37% of the total while former vice president and candidate of the main opposition **Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)**, **Atiku Abubakar**, garnered 29% and businessman, former governor of **Anambra** state and flagbearer of the **Labour Party (LP)** **Peter Obi** received 25%.²

Obi was the top choice to become **Nigeria’s** next president and emerged as the most popular candidate in six pre-election polls, including two surveys conducted by **San Francisco**-based data firm **Premise Data Corp** for **United States (US)** media house **Bloomberg**, one by the local non-profit **Anap Foundation**, and another by Lagos-based media and data company **Stears**. Obi had the momentum heading into the election and made the Nigerian establishment nervous by making significant inroads in regions long dominated by the APC and PDP. Obi won 12 states, including Lagos state, Tinubu’s political base, and a quarter of the national vote.³ While Obi garnered massive support among urban youths and in the **Christian** regions such as **Plateau**, **Nasarawa** and **Benue**, his lack of votes in the voter-rich **Muslim** north undermined his possibility of merging as the winner of this highly contested election.⁴ Voter turnout in the election was also the lowest since 1999, with a turnout of 25% or just under 25 million of the 87.2 million people that registered and collected their voting cards.⁵ The 2019 election saw a 35% turnout.

¹ Independent National Electoral Commission, 1 Mar 2023

² Independent National Electoral Commission, 1 Mar 2023

³ TVC News, 1 Mar 2023; Bloomberg, 1 Mar 2023

⁴ Africa Report, 27 Feb 2023

⁵ Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

The low turnout most likely had an impact on the result. In the Stears poll released on 7 February, Obi was predicted to win the elections should there be a high turnout of voters on election day.⁶ The poll also indicated that Tinubu would emerge victorious in the event of low voter turnout.

The INEC noted that Tinubu not only attained the most support nationally but also met the constitutional threshold which requires a successful presidential candidate to win more than 25% of all votes cast in two-thirds of Nigeria's 36 states and Abuja.⁷ Former senator and governor of **Borno** state, **Kashim Shettima**, will serve as vice president. The APC which removed the PDP from power in 2015, has now won three consecutive presidential elections.

Party	Candidate With Most Votes	States	Total Votes (M)
APC	Bola Tinubu	12	8.8
PDP	Atiku Abubakar	12	7.0
Labour	Peter Obi	12	6.1
NNPP	Rabiu Kwankwaso	1	1.5

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission

Tinubu calls for unity in victory speech...

Tinubu gave a victory speech at APC headquarters in Abuja, calling on the country to unite behind him and promising to work toward achieving “*good governance, a functional economy and a safe nation*”.⁸ Following a three-month transition period, Tinubu will succeed President **Muhammadu Buhari** (2015-present) on 29 May after serving the maximum two terms allowed by the constitution.⁹

The 70-year-old Tinubu is called the “*Asiwaju*” (boss) and political “*godfather*” of Nigeria for his “*strategic deftness and clout*” and is accustomed to navigating controversy having spent decades at the forefront of Nigerian politics.¹⁰ Believed to be one of Nigeria’s richest politicians, Tinubu has been accused of money laundering, corruption and operating more than a dozen foreign bank accounts.¹¹ However, he has never been charged and denies any wrongdoing.

Despite these allegations, Tinubu had a great reputation for service delivery during his time as Lagos state governor. Although he was at odds with the central government under former president **Olusegun Obasanjo** (1999-2007) and Lagos cut off from state funds, Tinubu established a proper tax collection for the first time in Lagos with great success and used that money to get things done, make further profits and later propel Buhari to the presidency in 2015.¹² Following his successful spell managing the commercial hub of Lagos for eight years

⁶ Stears, 7 Feb 2023; Business Day Nigeria, 7 Feb 2023

⁷ Independent National Electoral Commission, 1 Mar 2023

⁸ Bloomberg, 1 Mar 2023

⁹ The Guardian Nigeria, 1 Mar 2023

¹⁰ Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

¹¹ Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

¹² ARC Source, former senior government official

until 2007, Tinubu remained the most influential politician in the Southwestern region, where he played a significant role in the selection of state governors.¹³ Since the APC's formation in 2013, Tinubu has been a leading powerbroker in the party and despite the odds, fought off formidable challengers including vice president **Yemi Osinbajo** and then transport minister **Rotimi Amaechi** to secure the presidential nomination by a landslide in June last year.¹⁴ However, Tinubu's narrow presidential electoral win may make it more challenging for him to tackle the myriad of challenges facing the country.¹⁵

Buhari calls for peace and calm...

Buhari published a statement on **Twitter** on 1 March, congratulating Tinubu on his electoral victory and calling him "*the best person for the job*".¹⁶ He also pledged to work with Tinubu and his team to ensure an "*orderly handover of power*".¹⁷ Buhari called on aggrieved opposition parties, who had called for the election to be cancelled, to remain calm and maintain peace despite their misgivings.¹⁸ However, Buhari admitted that there were valid issues with the electoral process:

*"That is not to say the exercise was without fault. For instance, there were technical problems with the electronic transmission of the results. Of course, there will be areas that need work to bring further transparency and credibility to the voting procedure."*¹⁹

Buhari did cover his tracks though and note that none of those issues warrant a "*challenge to the freeness and fairness of the elections*" and called on any disgruntled candidates alleging that fraud was committed against them to "*bring forward the evidence*".²⁰

Opposition rejects "sham" election results...

Nigeria's electoral process was expected to be smoother than previous elections because of the addition of technology, however, the process was marred by glitches and delays in tabulating votes, which prompted the two main opposition parties to boycott the collation process.²¹ Opposition parties announced that they are rejecting the '*sham*' electoral results over the failure of INEC to upload results on its website for over 24 hours after polling stations closed, and called for the presidential election to be scrapped.²²

Opposition parties and civil society organisations also cited disparities between official tallies and data available with parties' polling agents. Results from Nigeria's 176,846 polling stations were manually counted and then sent electronically to INEC headquarters in Abuja for posting on its website. A reason for the delay in announcing results is that a returning officer from each state had to travel to Abuja with a tally sheet, which was compared against results relayed directly by the polling station to the national collation centre.²³ Additional allegations of intimidation and violence spurred concerns that the vote was compromised, but electoral officials have vehemently denied this. INEC defended its handling of the presidential election and in a statement published on 28 February, a spokesperson for the electoral agency, **Rotimi**

¹³ Bloomberg, 1 Mar 2023

¹⁴ Bloomberg, 1 Mar 2023

¹⁵ Bloomberg, 1 Mar 2023

¹⁶ President Muhammadu Buhari Twitter Account, 1 Mar 2023

¹⁷ President Muhammadu Buhari Twitter Account, 1 Mar 2023

¹⁸ The Guardian Nigeria, 1 Mar 2023

¹⁹ President Muhammadu Buhari Twitter Account, 1 Mar 2023

²⁰ President Muhammadu Buhari Twitter Account, 1 Mar 2023

²¹ Bloomberg, 1 Mar 2023; TVC News, 28 Feb 2023

²² Africa Report, 28 Feb 2023

²³ TVC News, 1 Mar; Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

Oyekanmi, said that the serious allegations that results were doctored are “*unfounded and irresponsible*” and scores announced are representative of a free, fair and credible process.²⁴

The LP’s vice presidential candidate, **Datti Baba-Ahmed**, said in a press conference held on 1 March that the “*purported results did not meet the minimum criteria of a transparent, free and fair election*”.²⁵ Baba-Ahmed also accused government of “*attacks, violence, voter intimidation and suppression*”.²⁶ While calling for supporters to remain peaceful, he also admitted that the LP will mount a legal challenge against the election.²⁷ **Emma Ik Umeh**, a member of the PDP, also said on 1 March that the party rejects the results because the party does not feel they were conducted fairly.²⁸ However, a member of the winning APC, **Ali Mohammed Ali**, said that he was not surprised by the opposition’s allegations of election rigging and is prepared to “*meet them in court*”.²⁹

The West African regional bloc, **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, in a statement published on 1 March called on all political parties to urge their supporters to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from using provocative language which could “*exacerbate political tensions, divisiveness, and violence at this critical stage*”.³⁰

Process of election appeal...

An election in Nigeria can only be invalidated by the supreme court if it is proven that INEC largely did not follow the law and acted in a manner that could have changed the outcome.³¹ Parties challenging an electoral result have three weeks to appeal the results. While court challenges in Nigeria are common, the supreme court has never overturned a presidential election.³² This was backed by a local analyst who told **Africa Risk Consulting Briefing (ARC Briefing)** while opposition parties have raised “*valid concerns*” it is “*common for electoral results in Nigeria to face challenges in court*”.³³ He said:

“It is a general expectation in Nigeria that results will be challenged. Our democracy has not matured to a level where results are accepted by opposition candidates.”³⁴

An electoral challenge by opposition parties is unlikely to be successful given that several electoral observers and foreign leaders, such as **United Kingdom (UK)** prime minister **Rishi Sunak** (2022-present) have acknowledged the result.³⁵ Observers generally agree that the issues that dogged the electoral process are not sufficient to change the outcome of the election. A successful electoral challenge is also unlikely given Tinubu’s major influence over the supreme court and the state security apparatus, and control over the electoral process (*see ARC Briefing Nigeria Jan 2023*).³⁶

²⁴ Independent National Electoral Commission, 1 Mar 2023

²⁵ Labour Party, 1 Mar 2023

²⁶ Labour Party, 1 Mar 2023

²⁷ Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

²⁸ Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

²⁹ Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

³⁰ Economic Community of West African States, 1 Mar 2023

³¹ TVC News, 1 Mar; Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

³² Al Jazeera, 1 Mar 2023

³³ ARC Source, 1 Mar 2023

³⁴ ARC Source, 1 Mar 2023

³⁵ The Cable, 1 Mar 2023

³⁶ ARC Source, former senior government official

Planner

29 May 2023 (Nigeria) **Bola Tinubu** inaugurated as president;

Chronology

1 Mar 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *The Cable*. **United Kingdom (UK)** prime minister **Rishi Sunak** congratulates president-elect **Bola Tinubu** on his election victory;

1 Mar 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *TVC News*. The **Labour Party's** vice-presidential candidate, **Datti Baba-Ahmed**, says his party rejects the electoral results due to the vote being stolen;

1 Mar 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *TVC News*. Opposition supporters launch a small protest at **Millennium Park** in Abuja;

1 Mar 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Economic Community of West African States*. The West African regional bloc, **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, calls for all political parties to urge their supporters to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from using provocative language which could "exacerbate political tensions, divisiveness, and violence at this critical stage";

1 Mar 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Al Jazeera*. A member of the **People's Democratic Party (PDP)**, **Emma Ik Umeh**, says that the party rejects the results because "we feel it wasn't fair";

1 Mar 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *The Cable*. President **Muhammadu Buhari** congratulates president-elect Bola Tinubu on his election victory;

1 Mar 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Independent National Electoral Commission*. The **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)** declares **Bola Tinubu** as the winner of Nigeria's presidential elections conducted on 25 and 26 February;

28 Feb 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *TVC News*. The ruling **All Progressives Congress (APC)** holds a press conference to vehemently reject claims by opposition parties that the election was rigged;

28 Feb 2023 **Yobe (Nigeria)** *SF Group*. The **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)** ad-hoc staff are arrested for rigging voting polls in **Yobe** state;

27 Feb 2023 **Tudun (Nigeria)** *The Guardian Nigeria*. **Kano** state police command confirms the death of two people in a suspected bandit attack during the elections in **Tudun**;

26 Feb 2023 **Takai (Nigeria)** *SF Group*. Four people are killed at the **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)** offices in **Takai (Kano state)**;

26 Feb 2023 **Takai (Nigeria)** *SF Group*. Suspected bandits burn down **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)** offices in **Takai (Kano state)**

25 Feb 2023 **Gwoza (Nigeria)** *SF Group*. Five people injured after Islamic terror group **Boko Haram** disrupts voting exercises in **Gwoza (Borno State)**;

25 Feb 2023 **Abuja (Nigeria)** *Reuters*. Polls open in Nigeria's presidential elections.

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