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Kashim Shettima

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Nigeria's most unpredictable election

Photo: Pius Utomi Ekpei/AFP



Special Edition: Nearly 100-million voters, 18 candidates and a broken economy. With control over Africa's biggest economy at stake, Nigerians head to the polls with what seems like three genuine contenders to pick from. Add in a dark horse and nobody knows what's going to happen. Voters just know that things have to get better, with record unemployment, chronic insecurity and hope in short supply. Here's your guide to what's coming next weekend. (p4)

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Inside:

- **Fickle power:** Moshood Abiola's former court is now in ruins (p11)
- **Afrobarometer:** For voters, everything seems to be getting worse (p13)
- **Line after line:** Will Nigerians be lining up for cash, fuel or the vote (p14)
- **Satire:** Elnathan John on how to get to Aso Rock (16)

CELEBRATING JOURNALISM: Africans rarely get to tell their own stories, on their own terms. That's got to change. So this week *The Continent* was in Nairobi for the first-ever Africa Media Festival, hosted by Baraza Media Lab, and which we helped to organise. The more than 600 people attending talked about the future of our industry, from how we tell stories to how we ensure journalists make a fair living. All this will mean more journalism – and ultimately more accountability and more stories about our home. Our weekly quiz also made its first IRL public appearance! Imagine a packed room working their way through the questions you get here each week. It was cool.

Nigerian election in numbers

18

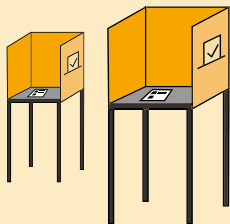
Candidates
on the
ballot.



unregistered
registered

93.4-million

Registered voters, in a population of 213.4-million. Nearly half of those registered are under 34 years old.



176,974

Polling stations across the country. More than 200 polling stations at "inappropriate" locations – such as private residences, places of worship and royal palaces – have been removed.

Polling stations
across the country.

More than 200 polling

stations at "inappropriate" locations – such as private residences, places of worship and royal palaces – have been removed.

21 days



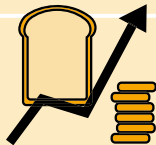
If no one wins an absolute majority, or if the top candidate gets less than 25% of the vote in 24 of 36 states, there will be a run-off between the top two candidates within three weeks.



\$43,000

The cost of recruiting a social media influencer to spread disinformation about a political opponent, according to a BBC investigation.

21.82%



The country's year-on-year inflation for January, driven by spikes in the price of basic foods like bread, potatoes and yams.

Elections '23

Nigeria has three choices, or perhaps four – and even then it might not be enough

This is the least predictable election in living memory



Power up: People's Democratic Party supporters in Lagos. Photo: AFP

Ayodeji Rotinwa

The last Nigerian president to leave his successor something tangible to build on was Olusegun Obasanjo, who left office in 2007. Even then, his administration's economic progress was marred by unconstitutional third-term ambitions,

the massacre of hundreds of unarmed civilians in Odi, and conflict over oil.

Since then, the clamour has been for change rather than continuity. Umaru Yar'Adua ruled from his sick bed, almost sparking a constitutional crisis, and eventually passed away in office. Goodluck Jonathan, the accidental

president who inherited his predecessor's office, will be remembered for his failure to bring back the close to 300 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram, 100 of whom are still missing. Muhammadu Buhari, over two terms, has presided over a collapsing currency and a contracting economy, even as insecurity worsens and the brain drain gathers pace.

If all goes according to plan – and it doesn't always – Nigerians will head to the polls again next Saturday seeking yet another change. Usually, elections here are a two-horse race, but this time is a little different. There are three frontrunners and one dark horse. In the absence of reliable polling, it is difficult to assess the depth of any candidate's support.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu, from the

incumbent's All Progressives Conference, is a political savant who has, over two messy decades, been a kingmaker at both local and national levels. Now, with the ruling party's formidable political machine at his disposal, he has a fair shot of sitting on the throne.

Atiku Abubakar, a vice-president under Obasanjo, has run for the top job on five previous occasions. He lost every time, but has grown a power base that cuts across Nigeria's traditional geographical, religious and ethnic divides. He styles himself as a pro-business candidate.

Peter Obi, the surprise frontrunner, made his name as the governor of Anambra State. He is one of the only governors in Nigerian history to have left state coffers in better shape than he found



Any progress? Supporters of the ruling All Progressives Congress, which is fielding Bola Tinubu as its candidate to succeed President Muhammadu Buhari. Photo: AFP

them. He has cultivated a reputation of humility and frugality, unlike other politicians, but may struggle to find support outside of his power base in the south (although he has chosen a running mate from the north to mitigate this).

The dark horse is Rabiun Kwakanso, a former governor of Kano State who has a cult-like following in the north, which has 22.5-million registered voters out of the eligible 93.5-million.

The unusually strong field of candidates complicates any predictions. A winning candidate requires the majority of the popular vote, plus at least 25% in at least 24 of the country's 36 states. If no candidate meets both of these criteria, the

top two will proceed to a run-off election within three weeks, with the eliminated candidates' supporters up for grabs.

This would be Nigeria's first ever presidential run-off, and no one knows quite what to expect.

What ultimately matters, however, is whether Nigerians will get the change they want, and deserve.

Whether their leader will serve with heart and might, one nation bound in freedom, peace and unity, as the national anthem promises.

Whether he (there are no women in the highest echelons of Nigerian politics) will attain great heights, and build a nation where peace and justice shall reign. ■

Trust me, I have a plan



The new Nigerian president, whoever he is, has plenty of work to do. But there are two issues that have dominated the campaign season. The first is the chronic insecurity which has worsened over the last decade. In 2022 alone, more than 8,000 people were killed by armed groups such as Boko Haram – and the military, despite massive investment, has been powerless to get the situation under control, while itself being implicated in repeated grievous human rights violations.

Then there is the fragile, misfiring economy that is always on the verge of collapse. Inflation is hovering above 21%, making basic goods unaffordable for many; while the decision to introduce new bank notes has created a widespread cash shortage. Unemployment is at 33%.

On these issues, **Bola Ahmed Tinubu** is very much the continuity candidate. He is so entrenched in the current political class that its stains cannot help but stick. He came under fire for appearing to blame unarmed protesters for the Lekki Massacre, in which at least 12 people were gunned down by security forces. They were protesting against atrocities committed by the police. His choice of running mate, Kashim Shettima, is interesting. Some see it as a provocation, as Shettima is, like Tinubu, a practicing Muslim – political tradition encourages power to be shared between Christians and Muslim. Shettima is the former governor of Borno State, a Boko Haram stronghold.

On the economy, Tinubu points to his track record as Governor of Lagos from 1999 to 2007, and claims credit for the city's economic boom. But that growth has



come at a cost: according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Lagos is the second worst city in the world in which to live, after only war-torn Damascus in Syria.



**The image of Bola Tinubu, top right, is a replacement. We mistakenly used an image of Governor Nyesom Wike (speaking to Tinubu), but not of him. We apologise for this error.*



It is hard to know what Atiku Abubakar plans to do about insecurity because he barely mentions it in his manifesto – perhaps wary of alienating his key northern electorate, who already worry that he is too liberal.

This raises concerns over whether he will be able to make difficult decisions in the larger national interest if he does make it into Aso Rock, the presidential office. He does, however, have some form in this regard, having opposed the introduction of Sharia law in Muslim-majority parts of the north between 1999 and 2007.

The focus of Abubakar's campaign is the economy. He is unabashedly pro-business, and has said he will scrap fuel subsidies – even if it makes petrol more expensive for ordinary people – and privatise the state-owned oil company. These savings will be allocated to small- and medium-sized enterprises, to create jobs. Other



Atiku Abubakar

ideas include renegotiating international debt agreements and raising a diaspora bond to fund the buzzing tech sector. Most Nigerians will agree that these are good ideas only if they are the beneficiaries.

Perhaps the secret behind **Peter Obi's** unexpected popularity is that he appears to offer something a little different. He has little experience in confronting armed conflict, but says that he is prepared to negotiate with those who can be encouraged to see things differently, and will “deal” with those who do not. His supporters – the Obidients, as they call themselves – believe that his personal integrity will help him avoid the corruption and abuses of power which have hampered the current administration’s response to insecurity.

Obi’s economic calling card is his record as Anambra State governor, where he built up state coffers; and his record in the private sector, where he created enough wealth that he felt the need to stash some of it offshore (a fact only revealed by investigative journalists in the Panama Papers). The theory is that he, unlike his



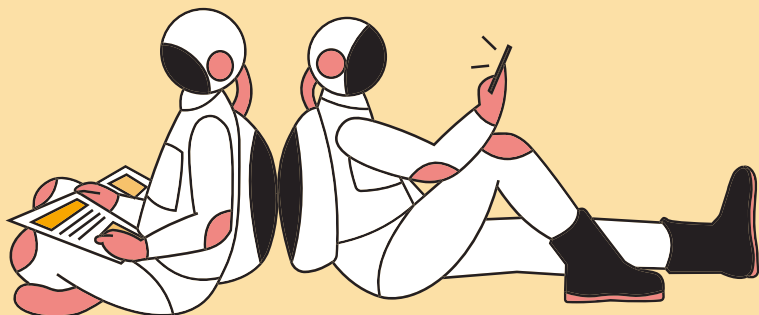
Peter Obi

rivals, is not looking to enrich himself while in office, and is thus a more reliable steward of Nigeria’s finances. ■



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Abeokuta

Abiola's old spot by Ogun river is as sad as his ultimate political fate

Diplomats, politicians and captains of industry used to flock to Mayas Hotel to meet Nigeria's most venerated democrat. The place is now in ruins.

Sidiq Ojuringbe in Abeokuta

On the banks of the Ogun river in Abeokuta sits a derelict complex that some say should be a historical and tourist site: the once prestigious Mayas Hotel built by Moshood Kashimawo Abiola, a towering figure in Nigeria's history.

Fondly referred to as MKO, Abiola won Nigeria's 1993 vote so decisively that it is still called the freest and fairest election in the country's history.

The day of his election, 12 June, is now celebrated as the national democracy day. But the 1993 result was annulled later by Ibrahim Babangida's military junta,

leading to a political crisis that paved the way for the start of Sani Abacha's dictatorship.

Mayas Hotel was where Abiola held court in his heyday as a businessman and politician. Built in the 1970s, it was one of Nigeria's best places to stay throughout the 1980s. According to his relative, Adesola Alao-Abiola, many diplomats, national politicians and captains of industry spent nights at the hotel to meet Abiola.

Today, what remains is a roofless and abandoned structure that is getting swallowed by bushes and climbing plants. A crumbling six-room bungalow on the grounds is now a colony for the area's delinquent boys.

Homeless and out of school, boys as young as 14 light up to smoke and blow tobacco, cannabis and other drugs into its thick air. A sawmill and wood sheds take up much of the defunct hotel's five acre grounds.

What remains is a roofless and abandoned structure swallowed by bushes and climbing plants

Abiola died in 1998 while incarcerated by the Abacha regime.

Rahmon Abiola, the secretary to Abiola's family, told *The Continent* that they plan to build a university at the site of the old Mayas Hotel. ■

Diaspora

Loving Naija from afar

Most Nigerians want to leave their country – but they can't vote if they do

Pelumi Salako

Seven in every 10 Nigerians say they want to leave the country, according to the Africa Polling Institute. Many do leave. Nearly 16,000 Nigerians were given work visas in the United Kingdom last year, while others headed to the United States, Canada and elsewhere.

Leaving Nigeria even has its own term: *Japa* – “to escape” in Yoruba.

But the experience itself is bittersweet, especially during pivotal moments back home, like elections. Nigeria does not allow citizens abroad to vote.

Jerry Chiemeka, who moved to the UK last year, says he feels like a football player who can't play for his team in a cup final because he has been suspended. “Of course it would have been nice to vote but certain decisions come at an opportunity cost,” he tells *The Continent*.

Before 2020, Chiemeka, a writer, hadn't felt any particular urge to leave Nigeria. But then on 20 October that year state soldiers shot into a crowd of protesters

at the Lekki toll gates in Lagos during the #EndSARS protests. At least 12 people died that day.

Chiemeka kicked off the process to get a UK visa, which was approved last year. Since settling into London, he found that he slept a lot better. “I don't miss the generators or church megaphones at all. I can hear myself think.”

For now, he has to make do with simply loving Nigeria, “albeit from afar”.

But for Fiyin Okupe, a Nigerian student studying for a Masters in Fine Art at a university in Iowa in the United States, not being able to vote feels like “a certain kind of deprivation.”

Her political awakening was also sparked by the Lekki massacre, but now she is unable to have her say at the ballot box. “I feel like I'm missing out on something,” she says. “But there are so many young people who are taking these elections so seriously and it has gladdened and inspired me.” ■



Obi ones: Peter Obi supporters ride out.
Photo: Benson Ibeabuchi/Getty Images

Nigerians are looking for more than just a name change

Next weekend, Nigerians will elect a new president. (Incumbent Muhammadu Buhari isn't allowed to run for a third term.) Afrobarometer survey findings indicate they'll be looking for more than a change in name.

Face-to-face interviews with 1,600 Nigerians in March 2022 portray a nation desperate to switch gears. Only one in 10 citizens are satisfied with the economy (11%) and think the country is "going in the right direction" (10%), both down by more than two thirds since 2017.

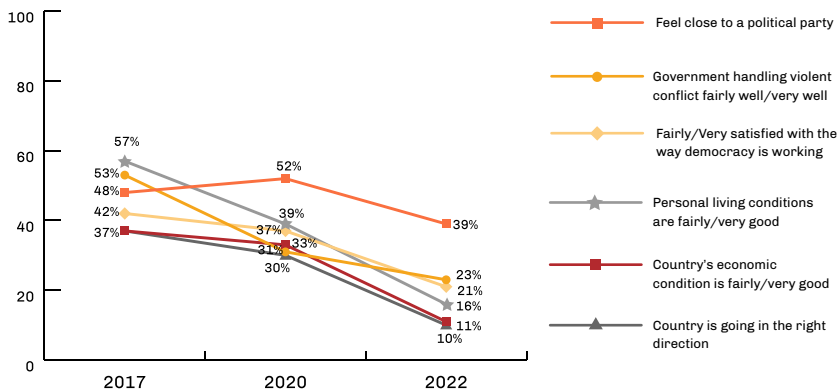
Fewer than one in four are content with their personal living conditions (16%), are satisfied with the way their

democracy is working (21%), or think the government is doing a good job on crime (21%) and violent conflict (23%) – all massive declines over the past five years.

Meanwhile, only 39% of citizens say they "feel close to" a political party – down from 48% in 2017 and 67% in 2015 – suggesting there's a large pool of uncommitted voters.

All of this may be good news for presidential candidate Peter Obi's long-shot, youth-fuelled "outsider" challenge to the two establishment parties. But there is much we don't know, including who will and who won't go to their polling stations on 25 February. ■

Satisfaction on the decline | Nigeria | 2022



Source: Afrobarometer, a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.

Niger State



Fading spirits:
Election fever has
been dulled by
other crises.

Outside the big cities, election enthusiasm wanes

Voting is just another queue

Justina Asishana in Niger State

A chain message making the rounds on WhatsApp in Nigeria asks: “Which queue are you joining today? Queue for fuel? Queue for PVC? Or queue for new naira notes?”

The run-up to the 25 February election has been exuberant in much of the country, with unprecedented interest from younger voters who mobilised

each other to register for permanent voter cards (PVCs). Their apparently disproportionate support for Peter Obi, a third-party candidate, turned a binary election between two established political parties into a three-horse race.

Then came the cash crunch. A central bank deadline for exchanging old naira notes with redesigned new ones has made it difficult to access cash – making politics feel like less of a priority.

“Let the elections be there o! For now, I am concerned about how to get money for my business,” said Umar Usman, a mobile money operator. He had gone to the bank hoping to withdraw 20,000 naira but was given only 7,000.

“Elections? Who is thinking about elections now when you cannot get money to take care of yourself?” said Umar Mustapha, a political analyst in Niger State.

But for Sadiatu Malami – who nearly lost a child after failing to find the cash to take him for medical care – the current cash crisis underscored the importance of voting: “I am telling the women in my area that they need to come out and vote if they do not want worse suffering.”

Like Malami, Maryam Ndagi, a trader, will be voting against the establishment next Saturday. “With what my family and I have faced this past week, this time we will vote right. With our voters’ card, we have the power to demand for a change from all these senseless policies that bring hardships and suffering.”

On the margins

The cash crisis – not yet eased by a court decision extending the deadline to swap out old notes – compounds even more serious issues that are making it difficult for people to vote.

Emeka Okoro, an analyst with SBM Intelligence, said that this election is going to be the most challenging electoral exercise Nigeria has ever attempted, due to “banditry, terrorist activities, herder-farmer conflicts and secessionist agitations” in the north and south-east of



Deserted: The empty science college in Kagara, where students and staff were kidnapped in 2021. Photo: AFP

the country.

Increasingly, the country’s electoral body is a direct target: it reported 55 attacks on its offices between 2019 and the end of 2022. Okoro fears that, if more happen on or around election day, polls in some places may be postponed or their results cancelled.

Across 14 out of the 25 northern states, mass displacement is a significant issue. Internally displaced people, many of whom left their homes without voter cards, have little hope of returning home to cast their ballot.

The country is also still gripped by a fuel shortage that started a year ago.

All these issues erode the election energy one feels in big cities like Lagos and Abuja to mere pockets of conditional enthusiasm as one travels into more remote areas. ■

How to run for president in Nigeria

**This politics business
is easier than you think
– as long as you follow
just a few simple rules**

Elnathan John

It is that time of year when all roads, conversations, photo ops, posters and sudden good gestures lead to Aso Rock, the seat of the Nigerian presidency.

Regardless of who wins, we can only salute the select few candidates who have made it this far. Yes, running for president requires deep thought everywhere in the world. But in Nigeria, it is an art form.

There are 18 names on the ballot, but most belong in the “...and others” category. You know you are a frontrunner when foreign media mentions you by your full government name, and gets the spelling right. You are doing even better if the editor uses the correct file photo (it’s hard, we know, when all black people look so similar).

There is a reason that some candidates have emerged as serious contenders, while the rest are left to make small talk with the interns who did the WordArt for their campaign posters. To be a top dog, you

must keep yourself clean-shaven – don’t ask me why, but beards are a no-go on the campaign trail – and stay true to these time-honoured guidelines.

Most important of all is to remember that shame is not only for the weak, it is a western concept that has no place in Nigeria. It is your turn to rule, after waiting so long for those other politicians, who may or may not have destroyed the country, to finish eating. It is your god-given right, and as such you should have no qualms about jumping from party to party or betraying your friends.

Remember too that, as all the Nigerian gods agree, the politician maketh the party. Parties are not organisations with fixed ideologies, but exist to serve your personal aspirations. If you are the mop, the party is but a cheap plastic bucket, easily replaced. Good mops, however, must be cherished, even when their threads begin to fray and turn gray, and no matter how much dirt, oil, drugs and other substances they may have absorbed over the years.

You must look to God as you run for president. More importantly, you must be seen to look to God. Go to church. Worship at the mosque. Commission a new Arabic school. Attend the bishop’s consecration. Do not wait for invitations. Show up to people’s houses and sign attendance books. Tweet about it. For as the good book says: What shall it profit a man – let’s face it, you must be a man to succeed here – to gain the world and have no audience engagement to show for it?



Clean sweep: A giant broom, as per the logo of the ruling All Progressives Congress, was constructed in Abuja just days before the 2019 election. Photo: Channels TV

You must have aides dedicated to the remembering of birthdays, deaths and disasters, each of which must be duly celebrated or condoled. Keep photos of yourself with every public figure you have ever encountered, even if it is only once, so that you can emphasise the close personal nature of your relationship. Call them my dear brother. Or if another candidate has already said dear brother, then go for dearest brother.

Never allow scandal to stand between you and your campaign goals. Nigerians are generous and will forgive a multitude of sins. Know that where there are international corruption scandals, they will be forgotten; and when there are foreign criminal allegations, they will fade away, and besides it was so long ago and you swear the heroin wasn't yours.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, remember that your elevated station in life means that you never need to account

for your actions in public, only in private to your wealthy benefactors who would prefer to remain anonymous, at least until you are in a position to issue new government contracts. Sometimes, you see, we like to copy white people too much. And white people ask too many questions. In Nigeria you do not ask an old man how or when he acquired the yams in his barn. Or the chickens in his backyard. Or the gray hair in his armpit. That is disrespectful.

So we do not ask how a person, who started as a public servant, acquired property and companies worth billions. That is rude. Besides, if you do become our public servant-in-chief, you will never be accountable to anyone, so you may as well start acting like it.

I wish you all the best as you front-run your way into Nigeria's presidency.

God bless your hustle.

I'm off to buy a new mop. ■

Nollywood plays politics, and vice versa

Why can't Nigeria's polling booth quit the box office?

Wilfred Okiche

As election season hits fever pitch in Nigeria ahead of next week's polls, Nollywood will not be left out.

Producers have taken advantage of the popularity of Peter Obi – the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, who has been an unlikely force to reckon with this electoral season – to cobble together something that exists somewhere between farce and biopic.

Titled *Peter Obi*, the film is typical Nollywood B-list exploitative fare, complete with exaggerated acting, bad sound and suspicious gender politics. *Peter Obi* might look and sound cringeworthy, but the filmmakers know their audience. The film has garnered over 120,000 hits on YouTube in less than a week and was a hit on social media.

Politics and entertainment have always gone hand in hand in Nigeria, at least as far back as the civil war in 1967. Big name authors like Chinua Achebe and Cyprian Ekwensi transferred their services to promoting the legitimacy of the secessionist state of Biafra.

Since then, this relationship has only grown to be mutually beneficial. Politicians bank on the goodwill and influence of celebrities to eke out votes, while entertainers receive patronage, access and material rewards in return.

The Goodluck Jonathan presidency, seeking legitimacy at the polls, capitalised heavily on the soft power of entertainers. Jonathan's presidency nurtured relationships with film, music and fashion icons that led to a massive endorsement at the 2011 general elections. Stars like Genevieve Nnaji expressed support publicly for Jonathan, while D'Banj and Onyeka Onwenu composed tunes that soundtracked the season.

But perhaps no celebrity show of support has been as meaningful in recent times as pop star Davido taking a break from his music career last year to hit the campaign trail for his uncle Ademola Adeleke, who was eventually elected governor of Osun State.

Some entertainers have gone one further by capitalising on their popularity to run for office themselves. Desmond Elliott transitioned from filmmaking to a nondescript career as a three-term state legislator. Music star Banky W has not been as lucky but continues to try. On the ballot this cycle is Funke Akindele, the beloved actress and filmmaker who has been campaigning as a running mate to Lagos gubernatorial hopeful Abdul-Azeez Olajide Adediran of the People's Democratic Party.

Akindele, a box office heavyweight



Strong stand:
Pop star Davido
stumped for his
uncle Ademola
Adeleke in 2022

whose *Battle on Buka Street* is currently the number one film in the country, explained herself in a video announcement: “I am not unaware of the cost of this assignment on my vibrant career, which I must now necessarily put on hold.”

Muted reception

This year, the celebrity activity surrounding electioneering has not been as pronounced as in previous cycles. The obvious reason is the dismal performance of President Muhammadu Buhari and his ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Despite a wave of popular support that culminated in his unseating of Goodluck Jonathan in 2015, Buhari has overseen Nigeria’s economic freefall. Two recessions, chronic fuel scarcity, forex crisis, naira unavailability and crippling insecurity are just some of the issues facing Nigerians presently.

This has led to a wave of economic migration with young and middle-class people at the forefront. “People are being a little hesitant to announce affiliations

because the ruling party has performed woefully. Intense backlash has greeted those bold enough to express support for the two big parties, especially the APC,” says Anita Eboigbe, a communications expert at Big Cabal Media.

Still, some entertainers have remained undeterred. True to peculiar electoral season politics, endorsements can be tracked along ethnic lines. A coalition of Yoruba-speaking actors – Joke Silva, Saheed Balogun – have thrown their support behind the APC’s Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Meanwhile, author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and musicians P-Square and Tekno favour Peter Obi, who is Igbo.

It remains to be proven how much direct value celebrity endorsements bring to a political campaign but Eboigbe stresses that regardless, entertainers must wield their cultural cachet carefully. “Entertainers should be held to higher standards. They influence the culture and with that comes a responsibility to be cautious with how they engage with politics. Elections have consequences.” ■

Six things Nigeria's next president needs to do (fast)

Nigerians are not satisfied with democracy in their country. So whoever wins this election has a lot of work to do. Here are some suggestions.

Idayat Hassan

Nigeria's seventh consecutive elections will mark 24 years of uninterrupted democracy – the longest period in the country's history. But the benefits of democracy are not being felt by its citizens.

Islamist insurgency, banditry, herder-farmers conflict and secessionist agitations are the cause of instability across the country. Corruption, a key campaign focus of outgoing President Buhari when he came to power in 2015, remains unaddressed.

The economy, which has suffered two recessions, has been further affected by rising inflation and fuel shortages. In December, data from the National Bureau of Statistics indicated that 133.3-million Nigerians were trapped in deep poverty.

Eighteen presidential candidates have presented themselves to the electorate. But only three have a realistic chance of winning on 25 February: Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the Labour Party (LP) candidate, Peter Obi.

Whoever emerges victorious will face one of the biggest challenges in world politics. It will be critical that the new leader identifies the right priorities and sequences reforms in order to effect political and economic transformation.

So here is an essential "to do" list for the next president:

1. Hit the ground running

Start on day one. Do not take months to form a cabinet and get the government up and running – the country does not have time.

2. Rebuild national unity

The election is likely to have a divisive effect on Nigerian society. Deal with this by focusing on unifying symbols and memories, while presiding over a government that is genuinely inclusive of the country's different communities, and brings together talented people.

3. Kickstart the social contract

The public are sceptical of your motivations and ability to deliver change, so boost your legitimacy and momentum by delivering on some concrete promises

early on. Aim for some “low-hanging fruit” to boost public confidence and renew the country’s social contract, sequencing reforms so that you build momentum for dealing with the most challenging issues.

4. Address insecurity

Insecurity is terrifying Nigerians while undermining any prospect of economic transformation. If you do anything during the presidency, you must get this right. Addressing this will need a combination of military and non-military interventions, that not only reduce the threat posed by non-state armed actors but tackle longstanding systemic inequalities that support their emergence in the first place. Do not just repeat the failures of the past by focussing on retooling the security forces without addressing the underlying drivers of instability.

5. Reduce corruption

Like insecurity, corruption is hurting Nigerians while undermining economic growth. We need a fresh start. Do not repeat past corruption failures by only focussing on punitive sanctions. Instead, build more transparent and accountable institutions that are answerable to a fiscally and politically independent anti-corruption body. If you are one of the candidates that has been accused of corruption in the past, be honest about your own limitations and take steps – such as publishing a list of your assets – that show you are willing to promote transparency in the future.

6. Develop and a coherent and long-term economic plan

Nigeria desperately needs a long-term plan for economic development that breaks free of the historic dependence on oil and creates genuine jobs for the country’s young people.

For once, plan beyond the lifetime of your own leadership, and start to lay the foundations for a more dynamic and sustainable economy for the future.

For once, plan beyond the lifetime of your own leadership, and lay foundations for the future

This will not be an easy task.

There are powerful vested interests that will seek to block change, and the country’s economic and security challenges run deep and will take many years to fix.

But this task must start now.

According to a recent Afrobarometer survey, 77% of respondents indicated that they were “not very/not satisfied at all” about how democracy has worked in the country.

Every year that this continues, the risk that the current political system will collapse increases, which would set the country back decades. ■



This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa. Idayat Hassan is the director of the Centre for Democracy and Development – West Africa.

The Big Picture

Out with the old: Muhammadu Buhari first took over Nigeria's leadership after a military coup in 1983. Then, in 2015 he did it again – the democratic way this time. Under his watch, the economy has barely grown, Nigerians continue to leave for anywhere else, and unemployment is at record levels. Voters will pick his successor next Saturday, 25 February.

Photo: Nigerian Presidency



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