

# Hidden Factors that may influence the outcome of the election



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There are a number of not-so-obvious variables that may also affect the outcome of the presidential election. This is what the Prussian General Karl von Clausewitz would call the 'fogs of war'.

## The Igbo Votes

Though figures from INEC show that the South-East has the least number of registered voters among the six geopolitical zones at 10 million, (while the North-west has 20 million registered voters followed by South-West which has 16 million voters), the Igbo are easily the most dispersed ethnic group in the country, often having the second highest population next to the indigenes in most communities in the country. Following from this, if claims by some Igbo groups that there are some seven million Igbo voters in the North and about four-five million Igbo voters in the South-West are anywhere near the truth, then the Igbo may actually be one of the largest voting blocs in the country (if you subtract Igbo voters in other zones and add them to those in the South-east). While the dispersed Igbo populations in several states of the country (outside Lagos and a few others like Plateau) may be insignificant in influencing the outcome of local elections because the number of the Igbo voters relative to the local population of each state will be relatively small, when you aggregate their numbers across the country, it becomes quite a huge figure that may be anywhere between 8-12 million. This will be almost equivalent to combining the two most populous states by voter registration (Lagos State at 6.5 million and Kano at 5.4 million). It will also be roughly equal to combining the next three largest states in terms of voter registration – Kaduna, Katsina and Rivers, each of which has some 3 million voters. Capturing a chunk of this vote will impact on the outcome of the election.

## Voter-turnout

A recent NOI Poll for ANAP Foundation suggests that voter apathy is highest in the South-east. According to the poll, voter apathy is strongest in the South-East zone where only 61 per cent of the electorate said they had given some consideration to the forthcoming elections, followed by South-South (73%), the South-West (79%), North-West(87 %); North-East(83) and North-Central, (80%).

It can be assumed that a similar apathy may prevail among the dispersed Igbo voters for

a number of reasons including security concerns and the tendency for some Igbo to travel back to the East in periods of tensions and uncertainties.

## **Impact of insecurity and ‘grudge fight’**

Voter turnout is likely to be depressed in states with high level of insecurity such as the IPOB threat in the Southeast, the Shiite threat in Kano, Kaduna and Bauchi, Boko Haram threats in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states and rural banditry and criminality in Zamfara, Katsina and parts of Kaduna. Low-turn-out of voters will work to the disadvantage of candidates who have such areas as their strongholds.

Also the outcome may be affected by groups like the Shiite who are openly nursing grudges against both Buhari and Governor El Rufai of Kaduna state. It has for instance been reported that the Shiites, whose voting strengths are put at between 3-5 million, have sworn to vote out Buhari and El-Rufai and have embarked on aggressive campaign for their members to get their PVCs. In recent times however there has reportedly emerged a faction within the Shiites which is critical of Elzakzaky and which could soften the impact of the Shiites' grudges against Buhari.

## **Third way candidates**

Some ‘third way’ candidates in the elections such as Prof Kingsley Moghalu and Omoyele Sowere have redefined ‘third way’ politics. Previously third way candidates limited their engagement to the media and an opportunity for a debate – as if elections are about who will win academic arguments. From the time they announced their candidacies, Prof Moghalu of the Young People’s Party (YPP) and Omoyele Sowere of the African Action Congress (AAC) traversed the length and breadth of the country holding town-hall meetings and getting a few high profile endorsements. A recent poll conducted by the pollster Williams & Associates, (which predicted an Atiku win) also predicted that Moghalu would secure 9 per cent of the total votes cast while Sowere would secure 8 per cent. An interesting question here is at whose expense (Atiku or Buhari) will be the votes cast for third way candidates like Moghalu and Sowere? If we use the ethnic bases of the candidates and the dominant political tendency in that ethnicity, we can argue that Moghalu’s candidacy will be at the expense of the Atiku while Sowere’s (and Durotoye’s) will be at the expense of Buhari. If we use the age factor and argue that younger voters are likely to be attracted to voters they consider cosmopolitan, then we can argue that votes for the third way candidates will be at the expense of Atiku, whose cosmopolitanism is one of his greatest attractions to his supporters.

## The Bradley effect

This is the observed discrepancy between voters' expressed preferences and election outcomes in some United States elections, especially where a White candidate is running against a Black candidate and voters mask their true preferences either out of social desirability or for fear of being called racist.

There is a suspicion that the 'Bradley effect' may also be playing out among many politically exposed persons such as Governors (especially those in their second terms) who may mask their true political preferences for fear of EFCC (after they lose their immunity) and influential business people who may not want to put their businesses at risk. Included in this category are Governors and top politicians dissatisfied by the outcome of the primaries in their states but who chose to remain with their parties out of expediency. How many fifth columnists do we have in either of the two main parties? Time will tell.

## Stoking the fear factor

Both the APC and the PDP are stoking the fear factor in order to scare voters from supporting their opponents. For instance in South West, where the Vice President Prof Yemi Osinbajo comes from, the Governor of Oyo State Ajumobi said the election was between the Yoruba and the Hausa on the one hand and the Igbo and the Hausa on the other hand (because the PDP has an Igbo, Peter Obi, as its Vice Presidential candidate). Some Igbo groups are also framing the election along the same line. Additionally both the PDP and the APC are using the 2023 presidency to bait both ethnic groups. For instance while the Secretary to the Government of the Federation had promised the Igbo that voting for Buhari would stand them in a good stead to produce a president of Igbo extraction in 2023, both Osinbajo and Babatunde Fashola, the Minister of Power, Works and Housing made a similar promise to the Yoruba if they vote massively for Buhari. How will this impact on the outcome of the election?

## Winning or losing may not be as important as the margin of the win or the loss

Given that the two leading candidates have parts of the country where they have their strength and parts where they are vulnerable, each stands a good chance of winning if the margin of victory in their areas of strength can offset their losses in their areas of vulnerability.



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