

The Brookings Institution
5 on 45: Is Nigeria's presidential election result valid?
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(MUSIC)

PITA: You're listening to 5 on 45 from the Brookings Podcast Network, analysis and commentary from Brookings experts on today's news regarding the Trump administration.

MBAKU: My name is John Mbaku, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in the Global Economy program.

I'm going to talk today about the general election that just took place in Nigeria this past Saturday February 21st, 2019. The election was designed to elect a president and vice president for the country early yesterday morning, which was Wednesday. The country's Independent National Electoral Commission Unica just announced the official results of the country's presidential election which took place as I said on Saturday February 2018. The incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari was declared the winner with 56 percent of the votes. The opposition candidate Atiku Boubakeur received 41 percent of the votes. Atiku Boubakeur however has rejected the result and has accordingly refused to concede the election. He has indicated that he will take his case to the courts.

It is very important that Buhari and Boubakeur and his supporters allow the courts to resolve all election related conflicts. In addition, the two candidates should advise their supporters to resist any attempt to engage in post-election violence and seek only peaceful ways to resolve their conflicts. The court must be allowed to perform their constitutional functions and Nigerians must accept and respect their institutions including the courts in addition to the fact that Nigeria is Africa's largest and most important economy. The country is also an important partner in the fight against global terrorism and extremism. Nigeria also plays a significant leadership role in the African Union and in the region, organization known as the Economic Community of West African States or Ecos. Hence, peaceful transfer of government will not only advance the cause of peace and security for Nigerians but it will also do so for Africa and the global community a peaceful

and prosperous Nigeria can serve as an important foundation for economic and human development in the West Africa region and beyond.

In addition to talking about the elections we need to consider the fact that despite the shortcomings of this electoral process Nigeria has made and continues to make significant progress towards its transition to democracy and constitutionalism. Of course, similar challenges remain and the most important of these challenges include one dealing with corruption and governing impunity to developing and implementing programs to fully tackle extreme poverty. Providing more effective legal mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflict, particularly that type of conflict arising from the struggle between nomadic herdsman and farmers for access to arable land and water for dealing with extremism including eliminating those conditions that continue to attract young people to join extremist groups and lawless gangs that roam the urban areas kidnapping people and holding them for ransom and finally generally providing opportunities for historically marginalized groups like those in the Niger Delta and communities to participate more fully in political and economic systems. The opposition is likely to challenge the results of the election in court if that happens.

Both the president elect and the opposition should allow the courts to perform their constitutional functions and resolve the conflict. All parties to the conflict should accept the decision of the Supreme Court as FINA the court of course should exercise the highest level of professionalism and perform its functions as stipulated in the Constitution and in the laws of Nigeria. The new president should then proceed to form a government of national unity and bring all of Nigeria's various stakeholders together to begin the process of creating an enabling environment for peace and security and inclusive economic growth and development in the country as part of the way forward for Nigeria. Buhari Abu-Bakr and other Nigerian political elite must ask themselves one important question. Will posterity judge us as political opportunists whose only interest was in or were posterity just

as public servants who led the transformative processes that brought peace security and prosperity to Nigeria diverse peoples?

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