

# Opinion

## Provisional report on election 2011

By Edwin Madunagu

I AM happy to return to this column. But I am definitely not happy to have to return to start reviewing a political crisis, which I had predicted almost to its details. My admonition now is: "Weep not, laugh not, but understand." And it is for us all: you and me. We shall be looking at the recently concluded general elections and the predictable violence that sprang from them. In the fullness of time, all the people responsible for the blood-bath and horrifying destruction of human lives that we saw in April 2011, whatever side of the fence they may have been, and however indirect their involvement, will answer for their crimes. The system itself is already on trial.

In order to ensure completeness, I shall attempt to separate this discussion into a number of overlapping components. The components would include: the election results, as can be re-arranged for purposes of greater appreciation of their imports and historical significance; electoral options before Nigerians, as human beings, as citizens and as voters; personal notes and observations against the promise of free, fair, credible and transparent elections; the new balance of socio-political forces as distinct from electoral forces; the re-assertion of the two power-blocs in Nigeria; political parties and power blocs; the role of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and its leadership; the political parties in competition - what they actually did, their presidential candidates and the relationships between the candidates, their parties and the nation.

Other sub-themes would include the abortive re-alignment of opposition forces; a deeper look into the power of "incumbency" and its "democratic" import; the role of the big Nigerian capitalists, the oil companies and imperialism (international community); refutations of self-serving narratives and analyses; April 2011 and the national question; beyond April 2011. Some of these sub-themes will be discussed under the present title while others will come under different titles. The present installment should be taken as introduction or prologue.

I went out to observe the April 2011 general elections with some strong fears or negative expectations. I feared that there would again be different types of electoral "malpractices": voter-intimidation; bribing of voters; ballot box snatching; vote-inflation; collusion between electoral officers, security agents and party "enforcers." I feared that there would be large-scale violence, partly because of what I heard people say and partly because the arms and ammunitions and army uniforms which politicians were importing were meant for use, not exhibition. Some acts of violence would be spontaneous,

but others would be deliberately provoked or initiated. The former would be more serious. I feared problems of collusion, that is, problems like whether 2 plus 2 is 4, or 3, or 40, and whether 20 minus 7 is 13, or remains 20.

From what I read and heard before the elections, and what I saw during voting, I knew votes would be cast by "unregistered voters," "bribe voters" or otherwise people who were not qualified to vote. I knew that the impunity with which these malpractices would be perpetrated would vary from one geopolitical zone to another, from one state to another and from one locality to another. I knew that in some states and localities the impunity would be near 100 per cent, while in some others it would be quite low. The majority of the states and localities will be in-between.

Sadly, all these fears were confirmed in the elections. If you ask for my source of information I will tell you that there are three sources: personal observation, that is, what I saw with my eyes; then, what I learnt from "unofficial" but patriotic Nigerian observers; and finally, what I learnt from the media, including "social media." I was an eye-witness to some of the concrete cases I shall be reporting here. But if you ask me to appear as a witness in court, or provide "proof," I shall look at you again to determine whether you are an agent provocateur, a cynic, or simply a naive compatriot. And if you ask me if the level of "malpractice" was high enough to overturn Goodluck Jonathan's victory, I will refuse to answer. My refusal will be based on several reasons including the fact that I am unable to construct a margin of error for the results as officially announced. Surely, it is ridiculous to suggest a 45 per cent margin of error-nationally and across board. But if you go on to ask if the level was high enough for the entire election and the system under which it was held to be nullified, I will answer YES.

As I moved around on April 16, 2011, I wondered what the voting pattern in the presidential election would be in the Southwest geopolitical zone. Specifically, I wondered whether the electoral support for the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) which I expected to be very strong would be maintained for the four sets of elections: National Assembly, Presidency, State Governorship, and State Assemblies, or a significant decline in the presidential election. I had, before the election, aligned myself with the prediction that the ACN vote would significantly decline in the presidential election. But a comrade of mine predicted differently. We decided to wait and see.

I also wondered how far the fanatical support for the Congress of Progressive Change (CPC) seen in rallies in the Northern parts of the country would be translated

into electoral votes. We all know that, for many reasons, socio-political strength does not always translate into electoral strength. I expected an epic battle between state power and sociopolitical force. I knew that the renewed alliance talks between the ACN and CPC would break down as some of the actors themselves knew ab initio. But I was wondering how the "blame game" would go. A journalist friend I met in the field asked if I had observed any "electoral malpractice" during my movement. I said yes. He wanted me to elaborate, but I only added: "But the fault may not be that of Attahiru Jega."

In the event, the results of the presidential election, as officially announced, did not carry big surprises for me. Some of the main factors that would determine and shape the results were already known before the polls. It was known, for instance, that the government and the ruling party in each of Southeast and Southsouth states, including the APGA-run Anambra State, would be struggling to deliver a hundred per cent return to President Goodluck Jonathan.

The two unknown factors, namely the presidential electoral "behaviours" in the Southwest and in the Northeast and Northwest became known within 24 hours of the election. And they carried no "bombshell." I knew that Jonathan would win, or be declared winner, more probably in the first ballot. I invite readers to check through recent instances in Africa where the opposition had truly or falsely - defeated and supplanted the ruling parties in national elections. I propose that in each instance, you would see and confirm the preference and practical support of the "international community" (or imperialism) before, during and after the polls. That was not the case in Nigeria 2011. In fact the opposite was the case: the "international community" preferred Goodluck Jonathan, and his party, the PDP. The reason is "stability."

Let me make the preceding point clearer: The wish of the "international community" can be thwarted; but this can be done only by a truly revolutionary movement in a revolutionary situation. Nigeria has been in a revolutionary situation for several years. But given the "power of incumbency" and the current hold of the "international community" on Nigeria, and the absence of a truly national revolutionary movement with a respectable measure of strength, the preference of the "international community" is decisive. What I am proposing here is two-fold: first, that no one, not even the electoral body, knows the true result of the presidential election; and secondly, that given the "power of incumbency" which the President deployed to the fullest, and the support of the "international community," he was bound to win, or be declared winner.

# Opinion

## Provisional report on election 2011...(2)

By Edwin Madunagu

THE promise was "free, fair and credible elections," where "every vote counts." Later, when election monitors came in their hundreds, the phrase "transparent and peaceful process" was added. The international monitors were the usual ones: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), America's National Democratic Institute (NDI), the United Nations (UN), etc. I briefly wondered why the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) did not send in monitors - to study the grounds in case the election violence that they had all expected got out of hand, and they were "requested" to intervene. The foreign monitors were joined by local monitors and, together, they formed a large army of election "watchdogs."

I concede that the monitors could not be everywhere, but it was reasonable to expect them to move out of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and cover the state capitals and some local government headquarters, and from there to some polling centres. They were also expected to do a general survey of the "environment" before, during, and immediately after, each election. Monitoring of the collation of results was also within their briefs. If they did all these, what did they see? What did they hear? Did they see what others saw? Did they hear what others heard? We may reduce our expectations and focus only on what happened in the open, along major roads and streets in major cities. For instance, the Inspector General of Police announced a pre-election night curfew from 10.00pm on Friday, April 15, 2011, the eve of the presidential election, to 6.00am on Saturday, April 16, the election day. But long after the start of the curfew, on Friday night, town criers with bells went along the major roads in certain state capital asking, or rather threatening, people to vote for the ruling party.

The order, the town criers said, came from the government and the traditional institutions. Did the monitors hear the town-criers? Did they get the report? Did they try to investigate? What were their findings? Some cynics claimed that the police imposed the night curfew in order to allow the town-criers and the ruling party's "enforcers" the maximum space to operate with maximum effect. How do you respond to that? In another state capital the town criers went about in buses. Did the monitors see or hear anything? Will they argue that in spite of this, there was "substantial compliance" with the electoral law when the phenomenon I have just described characterised the elections in many states?

How many instances of open and loud campaigns, intimidation and bribery at polling centres did the national and international monitors report? When I say bribery, I mean the purchase of all the relevant "stakeholders" at a polling centre: INEC officials, security agents, agents of opponents, and finally the voters themselves. How many cases of confrontation between voters, on the one hand, and "instant vote buyers" and party "enforcers, on the other, did the monitors record and report? In a riverine, but urban, local government area, snatched ballot boxes were simply thrown into a fast moving current. Protesters were asked to jump into the current. The perpetrators acted openly in broad daylight - with humiliating impunity. They were not in a hurry. Did any monitor - local or foreign - see or hear this? Many "ballot box snatchers" were caught, but most were not.

Let an investigative journalist follow just three cases of aborted and reported "ballot box snatching" and report what happened thereafter. My hypothesis here is that there was no "snatcher-at-large" or "independent snatcher." The chain of command for a particular act of snatching could be as long as could be imagine, and its origin as high up the political or state ladder as could be imagined.

Most of the electoral malpractices recorded can be separated, for the purpose of analyses, into two categories: those that derogated from the requirements of free elections, on the one hand, and those that offended the spirit of fairness, on the other. We are then left with incidents that simultaneously fall under the two categories and those that were undefined. But all of them violated the letter and spirit of the Electoral Act. Now, bribing voters before an election, outside the polling centres, was bad, very bad. But bribing voters at a polling centre, when they had actually lined up to be accredited, or to vote, was worse - isn't it? Am I being cynical? Who was the worse violator of the Electoral Law: the purchaser or the purchased? Is this a mere academic question - posed by an idle person who is removed from the "political field," or worse, who is divorced from "reality"? My answer is NO. The question is far from being academic.

Let us dwell at bit on the question of "vote-purchase." A patriotic investigator will easily establish that the phenomenon is both *national*, that is, across the country, and *general*, that is, across all the parties and candidates seriously contesting the elections. The investigator will also establish that though the "vote-purchase" market is a free one, like our free market economy, a purchaser's share of the market in the recent elections depended on his or her financial endowment, political structure and level of desperation. The last factor, in turn, depended

on what was at stake. What of the vote-sellers? Were they moved by poverty or by cynicism ("this is all I will ever get from the candidate, win or lose"), or both? Again, this is not an idle academic question - that is, if we see this problem as a big one that must be solved in whatever manner: from the roots, or by tinkering with the state superstructure.

On a lighter mood: The price of a vote was not always and everywhere quoted in cash. It was sometimes quoted in cash, sometimes in kind, and sometimes in both cash and kind. I saw a typical cash-and-kind package that was exchanged for a vote: it contained about a cup (but definitely, not more than two cups) of rice; a two-hundred naira mobile phone recharge card; a box of matches; an exercise book; and two hundred naira in cash. I have seen people whose electoral choices were changed with the offer of beer - usually two bottles, but sometimes one. They moved straight from the "magic beer" to the polling centres.

There were generally two modes of vote-purchase: payment before voting or payment after voting. The mode of transaction adopted in a particular locality depended, just like the average price of a vote, on the environment and "sophistication" of the buyers and the purchasers. Thus the law of free market economy (as moderated by monopoly or oligopoly) holds.

The reports I received on the recent elections, and what I saw myself, were simply terrible, very terrible. All the forms of rigging I recorded in 2003 and 2007 were again in use. The simplest was *maximum voting*, that is, if, say, 800 voters were registered to vote at a particular centre, and 300 actually came, then 500 were available for "sale." A disillusioned ad-hoc staff of INEC, drawn from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), rhetorically asked why an agent of one of the parties was insisting on further "thumb-printing" and "stuffing" ballot boxes when the man's party was already sure of overwhelmingly defeating its opponents. The agent replied that he just wanted the "gap" between his party and the other parties to be bigger. The youngman who gave me the report expected a comment from me. But I simply told him: "It will be well." And he answered "Amen."

Last week, in the first installment of this Report, I said I was having difficulty in determining the "margin of error" to use in evaluating the results of the various elections, especially the presidential one. Perhaps, if I apply the concept of *minimum electoral democracy* which I introduced, but did not give a precise name, last February (*Beyond the Atiku - Goodluck contest*, February 10, 2011); my problem may be clearer. That is part of what I intend to explore next Thursday.

# Opinion

## Provisional report on election 2011... (3)

By Edwin Madunagu

IN this third segment, I shall first present, in summary, and with minimum analysis, the official results of three of the elections: Presidential, Senate and State Governorship. This is sufficient for our need at this point. I shall follow this up with the concept of *minimum electoral democracy*.

According to the official result, the incumbent President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, won the presidential election conducted on Saturday, April 16, 2011. He contested the election on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the ruling party at the centre. Approximated to one decimal point, which is sufficient for our need here, Jonathan scored a total of 22.5 million votes. His closest rival, General Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), obtained 12.2 million votes. Mallam Nuhu Ribadu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), got 2.1 million votes, while Mallam Ibrahim Shakarau of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) got 0.9 million votes.

The relative distribution of these votes is as follows: Jonathan won in 23 states: 16 in the South and 7 in the North. He obtained 25 per cent, or more, of the votes cast in 32 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Buhari won in 12 states, all of them in the North. The general scored 25 per cent, or more, in 16 state (all in the North) and the Federal Capital. Ribadu won in one state (in the South) and scored 25 per cent, or more, in 4 states (all in the South). Shakarau did not win in any state and did not score up to 25 per cent in any state. Presented in percentages, Jonathan got a total of 59 per cent of the total votes cast in the election. Buhari got 32 per cent; Ribadu got 5 per cent; and Shakarau got 2 per cent. The total valid votes cast was 37.7 million. The number of registered voters was 73.5 million. This put the voter turnout in the presidential election at a little over 50 per cent.

The repeat of the National Assembly elections took place on Saturday, April 9, 2011. In the elections, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), obtained 58 Senate Seats in the 109 - member Chamber. The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) got 13 seats; the Congress of Progressive Change (CPC) got 6 seats; the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) 7 seats; the Labour Party (LP) 3 seats; while the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) and the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP) got one Senate seat each. This gave a total of 89 seats. The remaining 20 seats were contested on Tuesday, April 26, 2011. The relative performance of the parties remained relatively unchanged, with PDP increasing its

numerical dominance.

In the state governorship elections conducted on Tuesday 26, 2011, the PDP won in 18 states; ACN won in 3 states; ANPP won in 3 states; CPC won in a state. The election into one governorship seat was "inconclusive." That election was "concluded" on Friday, May 6, 2011, and it resulted in victory for APGA. This gave a total of 26 governorship seats. The remaining 10 seats were vacant and were not contested. Of these, PDP is in power in 5 states; ACN is in power in 3 states; APGA and LP are in power in one state each. What this means is that the governorship strengths of the parties is now as follows: PDP, 23 states; CAN, 6 states; ANPP, 3 states; APGA, 2 states; LP, one state; and CPC, one state.

To bring together in one place all the relevant figures to which I may henceforth be referring in this report, the following background information is offered: The country is structured into 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Nineteen of the states are in the North and seventeen in the South. The 36 states are grouped into six geopolitical zones (three in the North and three in the South) and composed as follows: South-west (6 states); Southsouth (6 states); South-east (5 states); North-central (6 states); Northeast (6 states); and North-west (7 states). The 36 states and FCT are further divided into a total of 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs), which in turn, are divided into 8,809 Wards. And for the purposes of the April 2011 general elections, in each Ward were erected a number of *polling centres*. There were, altogether, about 120,000 of such centres in the country.

Let us now focus on the four political parties, which the Nigerian media, not without reasons, took as the leading electoral parties before the elections. These are the PDP, the ACN, the CPC and the ANPP. PDP emerges from the official results - and some other details so far not included in this report - as the largest, the strongest and the most national electoral party in Nigeria. One significant point about the "poor" performance of the ACN in the presidential election was that this performance was decisively negated in the other four elections. It can therefore be said that ACN is in near-absolute control in the Southwest geopolitical zone, except in one of the six constituent states. The party is also in comfortable control of one of the states in the Southsouth geopolitical zone, a state that is contiguous with the Southwest zone. The significance of this goes beyond mere number. It is significant historically and geopolitically.

In the CPC emerges the sharpest form of a contradiction found in all the four parties, that is; the unevenness in support

across the elections. In the presidential elections, CPC was clearly the second strongest, obtaining more than 30 per cent of the total votes cast. But in the other elections the party fell disastrously from this position. The ANPP performed badly (the last) in the presidential contest, but improved significantly in the other elections. It is difficult for me to go further in this type of "analysis" in the absence of a "margin of error," that is, a mathematical expression of the level of credibility that can be bestowed on the results. I am also unable, at this stage, to even guess the impact of the post-presidential election violence on the elections conducted after the presidential contest. I shall return to this difficulty.

We may now introduce the concept of *minimum electoral democracy*, which might be used to evaluate the status of the elections and their official results. The concept may be articulated from the following excerpts from my article, *Beyond the Atiku - Goodluck contest*, February 10, 2011:

"That an electoral contest or vote is correctly and truthfully described as a "cash and carry" exercise does not imply that it does not, otherwise, possess positive attributes, or is not simultaneously driven by non-monetary passions, wishes and desires;" "If every ballot paper that is marked and cast by a registered voter is counted for the candidate so chosen, if there is no inflation or deflation or swapping of votes, if there is no disappearance of ballot boxes, then we can say that in that particular election "every votes counts." But, surely, that alone does not make the election "free, fair and credible;" "In the impending elections, focus mainly, if not exclusively, on the prospects of every vote cast, whatever the inspiration and whatever the sociopolitical conditions, going to the candidate that has been chosen by the voter. That is *the best* we can have in the April 2011 elections."

I wrote the above paragraphs on February 10, 2011. For the avoidance of doubt what I called the *best* here is as follows: "that every vote counts; that we disregard the motivations or inspirations that drove each voter; that there is no inflation, deflation or disappearance of votes; that there is no multiple voting; that everyone who votes is a registered voter; and that we ignore the impacts of "power of incumbency," "international community," money and other material inducement." This "best" is what I call *minimum electoral democracy*. The question is whether the April 2011 elections met this minimum requirement. With what I have said so far in this report, my answer is NO.

• To be continued next Thursday

# Opinion

## Provisional report on election 2011... (4)

By Edwin Madunagu

SOMETIME in early April 2011, a leading functionary of one of the frontline political parties was interviewed by a national newspaper. The subject was the seemingly difficult alliance negotiations between his party and other Opposition parties. The functionary prefaced his answer with a categorization of the existing 63 parties in Nigeria. For him, only about five of the parties were serious, that is, deserved any attention. The others were either those that existed only in "briefcases" or those created by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) or its regime.

While endorsing the main thrust of this man's analysis, I would offer some elaborations and modifications. There are, indeed, several "briefcase" political parties in the current official register of parties in Nigeria. But they are in "briefcases" for different reasons. Some of them exist only in "briefcases" because their founders genuinely believe they are parties of the future. Some are in briefcases because they are severely limited, in organisation and activity, by lack of the huge material and financial resources which "modern" electoral politics in Nigeria demands. A number of these technically excluded political formations are genuine revolutionary parties. There are also "briefcase" parties that were created solely for business, for negotiations with bigger parties, especially the ruling party.

Beyond the briefcase parties, I agree that there are parties that were created and funded by "external forces" which include the Nigerian state and imperialism. These parties were created to cause confusion in the Opposition Community (*to act as agents provocateur*), or to channel mass discontent along non-revolutionary lines, or both. This is not a new historical phenomenon, either in Nigeria or in Africa or in the world at large. It is an extension of the well-known strategy of state infiltration of "enemy" formations. We are then left with "serious" parties, that is, parties that are seriously contesting for power at any level.

The current Electoral Law does now admit independent candidates, that is, candidates that are not sponsored by any of the registered political parties. It is, however, fair to propose that every Nigerian should be able to find, among these 63 registered parties, at least one for which he or she could have voted - after all no political party or movement can completely reflect, or express, one's ideals in philosophy, programme, organisation, strategy or tactics. But suppose the socio-political system, which is enforced by the state, structurally rules out the possibility of fair electoral competition between various classes, groups and segments of the population or fundamentally different ideologies? Examples are the one-party systems, apartheid systems and, more fundamentally, capitalist systems characterised by mass poverty, gross material inequalities, and heavily monetised politics. In these systems, the voting population is severely constrained - whether there are 50 registered political parties, or 100, or even 1000.

In spite of the structural constraints imposed by the type of sociopolitical and electoral systems described above, many citizens may still go out to vote. And we all know, and can testify that many Nigerians actually went out to vote in the just concluded general elections. But many of these Nigerians who went out to vote actually voted for reasons other than political convictions or genuine expectations. In many of the systems under discussion, including that of Nigeria, elections are also not free or fair - thus imposing on many voters what can be called *double jeopardy*. This opinion, which is widely held, was recently thrown at me by a taxi driver. *I shall come back to it*. In the meantime, I wish to re-introduce the concept of *power bloc*.

I introduced the concept of power-bloc into this column in early or mid-1990s. My study of power blocs grew out of my study of the national question during the regimes of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. My references here include three European Marxist intellectuals: Antonio Gram-

sci (Italian) in the 1930s, Louis Althusser (French), in the 1960s and Nicos Poulantzas (Greek), in the 1970s. In my application of the concept in those early days I defined Nigeria's power blocs as "political forces, or alliances of political forces, that are either in power or seriously pushing for power." Today, I consider this definition too idealist, and therefore unsatisfactory. *I shall now define a Nigerian power bloc as a fraction of the Nigerian ruling class that exercises, or is trying to achieve, hegemony or dominance in that class, and hence over the nation as a whole.*

Many things immediately follow from this definition if we remember, *first*, that Nigeria is a capitalist country, *second*, that we are referring to the country as a single social formation and not as amalgam of social formations, and *third*, that there is a world of difference between *power* and *office*: My proposition in the present report is not that the two power-blocs have re-emerged, for they have been there since the end of the Civil War in 1970. *My proposition is that the two power blocs have re-asserted themselves and their dominance through the April 2011 general elections.* One of the two power-blocs has its *centre of gravity* in the far-North and the other has its *centre of gravity* in the Southwest of the country. All other political forces in Nigeria are what they are: political forces. But they are not power blocs in the sense they have been defined here.

It needs to be emphasised that the two power blocs are not outside the class structure or social formation of the country. The power blocs grew and took shape within the class structure and social formation. They are capitalist blocs. And are not hostile to the "international community." Beyond these shared attributes, however, the two power blocs are separated by every other thing: history, culture, political ideology, political strategy and tactics, relationship with the masses, vision of a united Nigeria, etc, etc.

The presence and weight of the two power blocs can be felt, and even measured, in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the Ac-

tion Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP). But none of the power blocs can be reduced to any of these parties. Conversely, none of the four parties can be reduced to any of the power blocs or separated along "power bloc lines" - the main reason being that present in each political party are several other minor political actors or players. Political parties are forms of existence of power blocs, but they are not power-blocs. Nigeria's power blocs are the creators of the leading political parties.

Let us recall what General Olusegun Obasanjo, as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria between 1999 and 2007, tried to do both to his party, the PDP, and to the Alliance for Democracy (AD), one of the leading opposition parties. My proposition at the time was that Obasanjo was attempting to construct a *third power bloc* from fragments of the existing two power blocs. The April 2011 general elections confirmed what had been known for a couple of years, namely, that Obasanjo failed woefully in this assignment. You cannot construct a power bloc as you construct a political party. *I shall come back to this subject.*

We end this segment with a brief look at the abortive attempts to forge an "alliance" between the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). The ACN is dominated by fraction of the *Southwest power-bloc* while the CPC is dominated by "intransigent" fractions of the *far-North power-bloc*. As I said earlier in this report, the alliance talks were doomed. They were doomed because they were essentially a struggle between detachments of two power blocs each of which was determined, on account of what was at stake, to obtain a more favourable or powerful position in the alliance. My reading of Nigerian history is that it is very difficult to effect a merger, or even an alliance, of large and well-formed political parties each of which is dominated by fractions of power blocs. *I shall also return to this.*

• To be concluded next Thursday.

# Opinion

9/6/2011

## Provisional report on election 2011... (5)

By Edwin Madunagu

THIS concluding segment summarises my positions on the remaining aspects of election 2011, as I indicated in the opening segment. Needless to add, there may be need to elaborate, clarify, or even revise, some of my arguments in the near future. Do not forget that this is a provisional report.

*Investigating the post - presidential election violence:* The post-presidential election killing and destruction in parts of Northern Nigeria started before dark on the day of the elections: *Saturday, April 16, 2011.* Voting and announcement of results had ended in most polling centres but collation of these results - to determine the winner of the contest - was still going on nationwide. The winner was officially announced about 48 hours after the start of the slaughter which went on for three more days. Just before the announcement of the result some senior military officers visited the headquarters of the electoral body. This indicated, at least, the level of the perceived threat to "national security."

Estimates of the total number of victims ranged from 500 to 800 dead - including at least 10 National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members who were on election assignment. I had been told by an eye-witness, a current participant in the NYSC programme, that the number of murdered colleagues was much higher than 10, as myself had privately feared. It was generally agreed that the number of wounded was in thousands. So was the number of displaced. Destruction of property - private and public, movable and immovable - was massive. A high-profile public investigation of the violence, inaugurated by the Federal Government, is in progress, and the nation is eagerly awaiting its outcome. I am more than eagerly awaiting the report of the investigation. In fact, the final version of my current report on election 2011, or rather the addendum to the report, cannot be written before the report of the presidential investigation and the outcome of the high-profile election petitions. President Goodluck Jonathan has set down the

definition questions which the investigating panel should answer. But even without the government's "terms of reference," questions to which answers are awaited are clear from the "poisonous" debate that the tragic event has generated. Let me elaborate. In the course of the "mayhem" the president reminded the nation of the bloody events which led to the Civil War (1967-1970) and the bloody aftermath of the annulment of the presidential election of June 12, 1993. He vowed, as expected, to crush the incipient rebellion and defend the Constitution of Nigeria with all his presidential powers. We all shared the president's pains and emotions over a bloody event which shook the very foundations of the Nigerian state.

It would appear, from media reports, that large segments of the Nigerian population, including individuals, political parties, civil society organisations and institutions, believed that General Muhammadu Buhari and his party, Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), were responsible ideologically, politically and morally for the violence. Some others went beyond this to hold the general and his party responsible organisationally. On moral or ideological responsibility the accusers pointed to what Buhari is believed to stand for in Nigerian politics and what he was reported to have said before the elections - concerning how to deal with perceived "rigging" and "riggers." They also referred to his announcement, before the election, that he would not go to court to challenge the result.

Also listed by Buhari's accusers as one of the grounds for holding him responsible for the carnage was his rejection of the result before it was officially announced; and his failure to quickly condemn the killings when they started. On political responsibility they drew attention to the "war cries" of the rioters in support of Buhari. And on organisational responsibility some accusers simply swore that Buhari and his party organised, or must have organised, the killings, after losing the presidential election, or sensing defeat. Many called for the general's arrest.

On their part, General Buhari and his party, the CPC, not only formally denied responsibility for the violence in all its ramifications, they also argued that the rioters could not have been members of CPC, because the party and its members are law-abiding. Later, in another statement, the party explained that the April 2011 post-presidential election violence could be likened to the violence that followed the general elections of 1964 and that of 1983. In each case, according to the party, the masses reacted to the ruling party's refusal to yield office after losing at the polls.

In reaction, Buhari's accusers said his party's statement was a "justification" of the post April 2011 presidential election violence, and this led some of them to renew their call for his arrest. Some functionaries of the party, however, insisted that it was an "explanation," not "justification." As I said earlier, from this three-cornered debate - President Goodluck Jonathan and his government, the accusers of General Buhari and his party, and those that were accused - can be articulated definite questions which the investigators of the April 2011 tragedy should try to answer - in addition to the president's mandate. The nation is waiting.

*Questions on the power blocs:* Some general, and deliberately simplified, questions emerge from my introduction and notes on Nigeria's two power blocs (see the preceding segment of this report). The questions include: *One:* Should a struggle be initiated, or intensified, to democratise the "field" of power blocs by creating new ones, or "allowing" new ones to emerge? *Two:* Should a struggle be initiated, or intensified, to create a third power bloc - the type ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo attempted to create - with the strategic objective of neutralising, dissolving or absorbing the existing two power blocs, thereby creating a single national power bloc, so to say? *Three:* Will the struggle for the restructuring of the country into a true and fiscal federation logically and in practice absorb the problems of the power blocs? *Four:* Should a struggle be initiated, or intensified, to create a third, but genuinely revolutionary power bloc?

*Five:* Is it possible, and is it desirable, to leave the questions of "capitalism," "power blocs," "popular democracy," etc, for history to resolve and concentrate on the struggle for electoral democracy?

These, among others, are questions I shall be taking up in this column in the near future. But I would like to append the following clarification here. The revolutionary power bloc I talked about in the fourth of my five questions is not, strictly speaking, a power bloc in the sense I defined it in the fourth segment of this report. Why? Because, unlike the two existing power blocs and other power blocs that can, theoretically, emerge from the workings of the Nigerian capitalist system and political struggles within the rules of the present dispensation, a revolutionary power bloc will be ideologically critical of capitalism and imperialism. But I used the term "power bloc" for the revolutionary political force simply to indicate the enormity of its mission: to supplant the present power blocs, and not to be satisfied with merely being a "pro-democracy group," a "pressure group" or a "discussion group."

*Conclusion: War over "zoning":* Let me end this segment and, hence, the report itself, by recalling the war on the zoning of party and government offices. Leaders of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) almost set the nation on fire over this dispute. The frightening and really tragic character of the crisis was that as it progressed it tended to draw in more and more individuals, political formations, socio-cultural and civil society organisations, armed dissident groups and, I suspect, the security agencies. It would have been regarded simply as a heated national debate, perhaps ultimately a useful one, if it was not, at the same time, a "dialogue of the deaf." All genuine attempts at raising the level of the debate by "historicising" and generalising it were rebuffed. But after all the "war drums" and "dress rehearsals," we may now ask: What is the situation now? What is the state of the warfare? Where are the combatants? *I shall return to these questions.*

*\*Concluded*