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Nigeria

Election in Nigeria: between disenchantment and hope

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The presidential election of 25 February in Nigeria is giving rise to disenchantment because the candidate of the government, Bola Tinubu, has won. The opposition is denouncing massive fraud in a particularly chaotic election. But also hope, because millions of young people have seized on Peter Obi's candidacy to express their desire for change.

Bola Tinubu of the ruling APC was declared the winner with more than 36% of the vote ahead of Atiku Abubakar of the PDP (29%) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (25.4%). Despite the nine million new voters, including nearly seven million young people, abstention remains high (73%).

Shambles

The disastrous voting conditions cast doubt on the sincerity of the election. The opposition contested the results and filed legal challenges.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had declared that the vote on 25 February would be flawless. In a country where electoral fraud is common, the use of sophisticated equipment was supposed to guarantee the fairness of the vote. To this end, INEC had deployed BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System) in all 176 000 polling stations, allowing a double check of fingerprints and faces. The results of each polling station were to be centralized via the Internet on INEC's servers. The idea was therefore to avoid manual entry of scores, a potential source of fraud.

However, the reality was quite different. In addition to the fact that the BVAS sometimes had difficulty recognizing voters, and some were unable to vote, it was not possible to send the results via the Internet. The results were entered manually and centralised at different levels before being sent to INEC headquarters. If Abubakar and Obi do not provide evidence of tampering, such confusion can only fuel suspicions of fraud.

Clientelism

Many have questioned the victory of the APC candidate, when the legacy of former President Buhari is catastrophic. As an intelligent politician, Tinubu did not hesitate to distance himself from the policies of his predecessor. He even had the luxury of criticizing some of the most unpopular measures, such as the change of currency which led to a shortage of liquidity throughout the country. His statements were widely reported, as he had a strong media presence thanks to his personal fortune.

He also took advantage of the division in the camp of his main opponent Abubakar. Indeed, five PDP governors refused to support their candidate and even one, that of Rivers State, campaigned for Tinubu.

Under the Yoruba slogan 'Emi Lokan' ('It's my turn'), Tinubu referred to his role as kingmaker, when he twice got Buhari elected through his control of the APC governors in the various states of Nigeria. It is hard to imagine that 'It's my turn' is very mobilizing except in the context of electoral patronage. Thus, anyone who is remotely dependent on Tinubu, the APC or state governors, has the hope that it will be 'his turn' to benefit from the country's rents.

Perspective

Omoyele Sowore, a journalist and human rights activist backed by the radical left, only got half the votes, around 15 000, compared to the 2019 election. The bulk of the votes for change went to Peter Obi, for the Labour Party, because he did not get the PDP nomination. Playing on his record as governor of Anambra State and his supposed probity, he was able to win millions of votes, mainly in the urban areas, winning states in the country's two largest cities - Abuja and Lagos. Peter Obi's very active campaign has capitalised on the great youth struggle against police violence, spearheaded by the #EndSARS (End Special Anti-Robbery Squad) Campaign.

This electoral mobilization is a great opportunity for revolutionaries to build a force for real change in the country. Especially as the workers' struggles are active, such as the renewable strike of the workers in Abia State.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).*

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