



THE DYNAMICS OF ELECTION IN NIGERIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA COMPARED

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Abstract: *The 2020 elections in the United States' 2020 elections were full of controversies despite recording the highest voters turnout since 1900. These electoral disputes are due to claims made by the then President, Donald Trump. Though the supreme court dismissed the claims of electoral fraud, the impact has left the American citizens more polarised at the national, state, and congressional levels. Scholars have argued that electoral fraud has existed since modern democratic development in the mid and late 19th century and is still occasionally an issue in some well-established democracies, while other scholars are not in support of such claims. Compared to the 2023 elections conducted in Nigeria, reports of electoral frauds have been on the front burner right from 1999. Its impact had made citizens have voters apathy and no trust in the democratic system in Nigeria. This paper used the qualitative research method to analyse the United States 2020 election cases of electoral fraud in an advanced democracy and diagnosed Nigeria's 2023 and the United States 2020 elections. First, the study looked at the issues and challenges that have affected elections in both countries. Second, the paper used Game theory and the Conspiracy theory to assess the impact of a more proximate determinant of Election Day fraud; it examines Nigeria's strategic efforts to combat electoral fraud using card reader technology. Finally, the paper concluded that there is no basis for comparison regarding elections in Nigeria and United States despite the hitches observed by the world in the United States elections. Electoral fraud will be inevitable regardless of how democratic a country claims to be if certain democratic tenets are not in place.*

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Elections in Nigeria involve choosing representatives for the federal government of Nigeria as well as the various states in the Fourth Nigerian Republic. The electoral process in Nigeria is a critical component of its democratic governance. It is guided by the 1999 Constitution (as amended), the Electoral Act, and is overseen by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Elections in Nigeria began in 1959 with several political parties. It's a method of choosing leaders for which the citizens have

the right to vote and to be voted for. In 2023, Nigerians were getting ready for presidential elections with about 93.4 million eligible voters across the federation.

Nigerians elect a President of Nigeria to act as head of state. The winner must have the highest number of votes and at least 25% in each of two thirds of the states and the capital territory. If no one meets both criteria, there would be a second round between the top two vote-getters. At the same time voters elect the Nigerian National Assembly which acts as the legislature. The National Assembly has two chambers: the House of Representatives, with 360 members, each elected for a four-year term in single-seat constituencies, and the Senate, with 109 members, elected for a four-year term. The thirty-six states are divided into three senatorial districts, each of which is represented by one senator, and the Federal Capital Territory which is also represented by one senator (Kabiru, Abdulkadir, Baba, 2017).

Nigeria has a multi-party system, with two or three strong parties and a third party that is electorally successful. However, members of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have controlled the presidency since elections resumed in 1999 until 2015 when Muhammadu Buhari won the presidential election. Presidential elections were held on 27 February, 1999. These were the first elections since the 1993 military coup, and the first elections of the Fourth Nigerian Republic. Presidential elections were held on 19 April, 2003. The 2007 general was held on 14 April where governorship and state assembly representatives were elected. A week later, on 21 April, the presidential and national assembly elections took place. The late Umaru Yar'Adua won the highly controversial election for the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and was sworn in on 29 May. The ruling PDP won 26 of the 32 states, according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), including Kaduna State and Katsina State, where the results were contested by the local population (Kabiru, Abdulkadir, Baba, 2017).

Following the presidential election, groups monitoring the election gave it a dismal assessment. Chief European Union observer, Max van den Berg, reported that the handling of the polls had "fallen far short" of basic international standards, and that "the process cannot be considered to be credible". A spokesman for the United States Department of State said it was "deeply troubled" by election polls, calling them "flawed", and said they hoped the political parties would resolve any differences over the election through peaceful, constitutional means. A parliamentary election was held on 9 April, 2011. The election was originally scheduled to be held on 2 April, but was later postponed to 4 April. A presidential election was held in Nigeria on 16 April 2011, postponed from 9 April 2011. The election followed controversy as to whether a Muslim or Christian should be allowed to become president given the tradition of rotating the top office between the religions and following the death of Umaru Yar'Adua, who was a Muslim, and Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, assuming the interim presidency (Kabiru, Abdulkadir, Baba, 2017).

Following the election, widespread violence took place in the northern parts of the country. Goodluck Jonathan was declared the winner on 19 April. The elections were reported in the international media as having run smoothly with relatively little violence or voter fraud in contrast to previous elections, in particular the widely disputed 2007

election. The United States State Department said the election was "successful" and a "substantial improvement" over 2007, although it added that vote rigging and fraud also took place. The 2015 general elections were originally scheduled to be held on 14 February but was later postponed to 28 March (presidential, senatorial, and House of Representatives) and 11 April 2015 (governorship and state house of assembly). General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress emerged as the winner of the presidential elections and was sworn in on 29 May 2015. The 2015 election was a success because there were tensions everywhere concerning the difficult political and security environment of the country at that time. However, It was the first time in the history of Nigeria that an incumbent president lost an election. Goodluck Ebele Johnathan of the People's Democratic Party lost his seat to Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (Kabiru, Abdulkadir, Baba, 2017).

Presidential and National Assembly elections were scheduled for 16 February 2019, while state and local government elections were scheduled for 2 March 2019. Elections were postponed by one week after INEC cited logistic challenges. The rescheduled dates were 23 February and 9 March 2019. President Muhammadu Buhari was re-elected for another four-year term. The primary contender was former vice-president Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Kingsley Moghalu of the Young Progressives Party (YPP), Yele Sowore of the African Action Congress (AAC), and Fela Durotoye of the Alliance for a New Nigeria (ANN) were other popular candidates who were all relatively young. Late in 2018, these three parties alongside some others attempted to form a coalition. The 2019 governorship and state house of assembly election was originally scheduled for 2 March 2019 and rescheduled for Saturday, 9 March 2019. The two major political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC), and the People's Democratic Party, fielding candidates in the elections across various states except Rivers where a court order prohibits The All Progressives Congress from fielding candidates as a result of an internal crisis with the state chapter of the party. The 2019 Nigerian general election suffered from unique issues and challenges and also enjoyed successes that had not been witnessed in the previous five elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. General elections were held in Nigeria on 25 February 2023 to elect the president and vice president and members of the Senate and House of Representatives (Kabiru, Abdulkadir, Baba, 2017).

Elections in the United States are held for government officials at the federal, state, and local levels just like the case in Nigeria. At the federal level, the nation's head of state, the president, is elected indirectly by the people of each state, through an Electoral College. Today, these electors almost always vote with the popular vote of their state. All members of the federal legislature, the Congress, are directly elected by the people of each state. There are many elected offices at state level, each state having at least an elective governor and legislature. There are also elected offices at the local level, in counties, cities, towns, townships, boroughs, and villages; as well as for special districts and school districts which may transcend county and municipal boundaries.

The country's election system is highly decentralized. While the U.S. Constitution does set parameters for the election of federal officials, state law, not federal, regulates

most aspects of elections in the U.S., including primary elections, the eligibility of voters (beyond the basic constitutional definition), the method of choosing presidential electors, as well as the running of state and local elections. All elections—federal, state, and local—are administered by the individual states, with many aspects of the system's operations delegated to the county or local level. Under federal law, the general elections of the president and Congress occur on Election Day, the Tuesday after the first Monday of November. These federal general elections are held in even-numbered years, with presidential elections occurring every four years, and congressional elections occurring every two years. The general elections that are held two years after the presidential ones are referred to as the midterm elections. General elections for state and local offices are held at the discretion of the individual state and local governments, with many of these races coinciding with either presidential or midterm elections as a matter of convenience and cost saving, while other state and local races may occur during odd-numbered "off years". The date when primary elections for federal, state, and local races occur are also at the discretion of the individual state and local governments; presidential primaries in particular have historically been staggered between the states, beginning sometime in January or February, and ending about mid-June before the November general election (Kabiru, Abdulkadir, Baba, 2017)..

The restriction and extension of voting rights to different groups has been a contested process throughout United States history. The federal government has also been involved in attempts to increase voter turnout, by measures such as the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. The financing of elections has also long been controversial, because private sources make up substantial amounts of campaign contributions, especially in federal elections. Voluntary public funding for candidates willing to accept spending limits was introduced in 1974 for presidential primaries and elections. The Federal Election Commission, created in 1975 by an amendment to the Federal Election Campaign Act, has the responsibility to disclose campaign finance information, to enforce the provisions of the law such as the limits and prohibitions on contributions, and to oversee the public funding of U.S. presidential elections. Voting in the United States is currently voluntary only at the federal, state and local levels. Efforts to make voting mandatory have been proposed.

Election administration plays a critical role in ensuring democratic governance, as it directly impacts the credibility, transparency, and fairness of electoral processes. In this regard, comparing election administration systems in different countries provides valuable insights into best practices and challenges. This study examines the election administration systems of the United States of America (USA) and Nigeria, two nations with vastly different political histories, socio-economic structures, and institutional frameworks.

The United States, with over two centuries of democratic experience, operates a decentralized election system (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). Elections are managed primarily at the state and local levels, allowing significant autonomy in electoral processes. The USA's model emphasizes technological integration, such as electronic voting systems, online voter registration, and cybersecurity measures. Additionally,

mechanisms like early voting, mail-in ballots, and voter accessibility programs have been introduced to enhance voter participation. Despite these advancements, challenges such as voter suppression claims, gerrymandering, and the spread of election misinformation persist.

In contrast, Nigeria, Africa's largest democracy, has a centralized election administration system led by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Nigeria has made strides in improving its electoral process since transitioning from military rule in 1999. Recent reforms, including the use of biometric voter registration and electronic transmission of results, aim to curb election malpractice. However, the country faces significant challenges, including logistical issues, electoral violence, voter apathy, and allegations of corruption and partisanship within electoral institutions.

While the USA's decentralized model provides flexibility, Nigeria's centralized approach aims to ensure uniformity and accountability (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). Both systems, however, encounter shared challenges such as ensuring electoral integrity, managing voter registration, addressing political interference, and improving voter turnout. These differences and similarities make a comparative study of election administration in the two countries not only relevant but also essential for identifying lessons that can foster democratic consolidation. This study seeks to explore the strengths and weaknesses of election administration in the USA and Nigeria, drawing attention to the role of technology, voter engagement strategies, and institutional frameworks in shaping electoral outcomes. By identifying best practices and contextualizing challenges, the study aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance electoral integrity and democratic governance in both nations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Over the years, the Independent National Electoral Commission being the election management body in Nigeria seems to face challenges in the discharge of its responsibilities, including its dependence on and inadequate control over ad hoc staff, for which it lacks a nationwide database for recruitment; bureaucratic 'red-tapism' and staff attitude; poor delegation of responsibilities and overlapping functions (Udu, Nkwede and Ezekwe, 2015). These problems often result in late preparations for elections, a lack of teamwork and low-level interdepartmental cooperation and communication gaps. Structural deficiencies, an absence of proper career progression, poor record management, inadequate communication between the commission headquarters and its state offices and the over-centralization of planning also negatively affect the commission's work to conduct free and fair elections.

In Nigeria, the recurring incidences of civil unrest and disturbances following the conduct of elections have continued to pose security concerns. Also, emerging security threats such as kidnapping, use of improvised explosive devices, political assassinations among others further deepen these challenges. These threats represent a clear and present danger to the image of Nigeria in particular and peaceful coexistence of the country in general.

Without elections being held regularly and seen to be conducted in a transparently free and fair manner, democracy remains a sham, a forlorn hope, indeed an empty shadow of itself. It is common knowledge that elections, particularly in Nigeria, are often characterized by all manners of malpractices with their attendant, socio-political, economic and security challenges facing Nigeria as a nation. It is therefore against this backdrop that the researcher is poised into comparing election administration in Nigeria and United States of America.

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the differences in electoral processes between Nigeria and United States of America?
2. What are the similarities in electoral processes between Nigeria and United States of America?
3. What are the lessons for Nigerian electoral processes from the United States of America's electoral process?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to compare election administration in Nigeria and United States of America. The specific objectives include:

1. To examine the differences in electoral processes between Nigeria and United States of America
2. To ascertain the similarities in electoral processes between Nigeria and United States of America.
3. To determine the lessons for Nigerian electoral processes from the United States of America's electoral process.

1.4 Implications of the Study

The comparison of election administration in Nigeria and the United States of America holds substantial academic, practical, and societal importance. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges associated with managing democratic elections in two nations with contrasting political, cultural, and historical contexts. By comparing the election administration systems of Nigeria and the USA, the study enriches the field of comparative political science. It provides insights into how diverse governance structures, electoral laws, and socio-political factors influence the conduct of elections.

The findings may identify strengths, weaknesses, and best practices in election management in both countries. This knowledge can be instrumental for policymakers, electoral commissions, and stakeholders in both nations to improve transparency, fairness, and efficiency in their electoral processes.

Elections are the cornerstone of democracy. Understanding how two democracies—one established (USA) and one developing (Nigeria)—navigate electoral challenges such as voter participation, election security, and technology adoption can help foster stronger democratic institutions globally.

Nigeria and the USA face unique challenges in their electoral processes, such as electoral violence, voter suppression, and election interference. A comparative analysis can propose solutions that address these issues while considering local dynamics.

The study can provide recommendations to minimize electoral malpractice and enhance public trust in election outcomes. This is particularly vital for Nigeria, where electoral disputes often threaten political stability.

The study is relevant beyond Nigeria and the USA, as many countries face similar issues in their election administration. The findings can serve as a benchmark for other nations seeking to improve their electoral systems.

The study offers a valuable resource for researchers, students, and institutions studying governance and electoral systems. It also serves as a reference for international organizations, such as the United Nations and the African Union, that work to promote free and fair elections globally. By highlighting the comparative strengths and shortcomings in the election administration of Nigeria and the USA, this study not only advances academic discourse but also contributes to the global quest for robust and inclusive electoral systems.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study compared election administration in Nigeria and United States of America between 2020 and 2024. It also covered similarities and differences in the electoral systems of both countries.

SECTION TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

The concept of election has been variously defined by scholars. However, common among all is that election is a widely and universally accepted means through which, by voting, individuals are openly and methodically chosen to represent a body or community in a larger entity or government. Ali, Dalaram and Dauda (2018) asserted that election entails the process of choosing representatives in any political settings to hold positions of authority. The electorates can decide and choose among the available programs of participators. More so, played an important role in any given societies, for instance, Elections help in promoting public accountability and transparency.

Alabi and Sakariyau (2013) posited that election is qualified as the process of choosing people for particular jobs by voting. He argues further by giving the examples of two major types of election-direct and indirect. The former emphasizes direct participation of voters in election. Each voter goes to the poll and records a vote in favour of one candidate or another. In their opinion, Obianyo and Emesibe (2015) conceived election as a 'formal' act of collective decision that occurs in a stream of connected antecedent and subsequent behaviour. The implication of the above definition is that elections are not necessarily about Election Day activities, although it forms an important component. It encompasses activities before, during and after elections (Nwankwo, 2018).

2.2 Contextual Review

2.2.1 Stages of Election in Nigeria

There are various stages for election in Nigeria. Elections are conducted periodically into various political offices across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The Independent National Elections Commission (INEC) is the Commission set up by the Constitution to conduct, supervise elections in Nigeria for the office of the President, Vice-President, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, Governors, Deputy-Governors, and members of the States Houses of Assembly.

Stages of Election Process in Nigeria

There are several stages and activities that are involved when conducting elections in Nigeria. These stages range from the pre-election to the result declaration. They will be briefly discussed below.

- **Pre- Election Stage-** this stage involves candidate of political parties presenting their manifesto to the general public. Before the general election, all persons qualified to vote are called upon to register themselves, and only those who are duly registered can vote. The age criteria to register as an eligible voter is 18 years and above. In this pre-stage, the Commission announces the date of the election for the process to begin.
- **Primary-** at the primary's stage, the aspirants seeking to run for a political office through a platform of a political party shall face both the parties' screening and primary elections. The party members will elect one aspirant, each among others contesting for the same position or office through the same political party. The winners at this stage shall be nominated by the various political parties to compete for the general election.
- **Nominations-** this stage involves each electoral political party nominating a candidate who would be the forerunner of the election. The candidate nominated must meet the basic qualification requirements as stipulated by the Constitution, Electoral Act, and INEC's guidelines.
- **Campaigning-** this stage involves the electoral political parties and their nominated candidate campaigning actively for the support and votes of the general public. The INEC usually schedules the campaigning periods. Political parties generally do it by promoting their various ideas and promises using multiple media platforms such as television, radios, street outreach, pamphlets, and occasional visits to gain the support and followership of the voters.
- **Accreditation-** the INEC regulations states that the method of voting shall be by the Continuous Accreditation and Voting Systems (CAVS) procedure. According to the procedural system, no person will be allowed to vote at any polling unit other than the persons whose names appear on the register. At 8:00 am, the Presiding officer will declare the polling unit open for accreditation and voting. The accreditation process involves reading the permanent Voters Card (PCV) and the authentication of the voter's fingerprint. The INEC is entitled to abandon fingerprint accreditations if their machines are malfunctioning or due to network issues.
- **Producing Ballot Papers and other Polling Material-** this election stage involves the Commission producing the ballot boxes, papers, and other materials to be used to conduct the election effectively. The ballot papers and boxes are printed and tagged with INEC, and they will be used by voters to cast their votes on election day. Candidates of all participating political parties are put on the ballot papers for various positions being contested.
- **Voting** – voting days in Nigeria are usually during the weekends, especially Saturdays. Under the current electoral law, election to the office of the President and Vice-President as well as National Assembly shall hold first, while election to the office of the Governor and Deputy Governor and State House of Assembly shall hold two (2) weeks after that. This is to ensure that opportunity is created for a rerun if need be. The polling units for voting are declared open, usually by 8 am, or 10 am in some voting centers. The polling officials appointed by INEC will be at the various units to conduct the election. The voters are allowed to cast their votes using the appropriate voter's card after proper identification and accreditation.

- **Collation or counting the votes**– this is one of the crucial stages in the election process. In this stage, after successful voting, the ballots are counted, tabulated, and summarized at every polling center by the INEC Officials. Votes are counted differently for each candidate at every polling unit. The candidate who wins the majority of the votes after a scrutinized counting will be declared the winner. The failure to complete the collation and transmission of results in a quick, transparent, and accurate manner can jeopardize and affect the entire process of the election.
- **Result Declaration**– this is the final stage of an election process. After the successful counting of the votes cast, the candidate and party with the highest votes will be officially announced by INEC officials. The announcement of the result is a mandatory requirement of the electoral process. Upon the declaration of the result, the winners shall be presented with the Certificate of Return by the presiding or returning officers.

In announcing the electoral result, the winners will be declared at the various levels where the following occurs;

- Candidates contesting an election to the office of the Governor shall be declared the winner if he has the highest number of votes cast at the election and not less than one-quarter of all the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the Local Government Areas in the state.
- Candidates contesting election to the office of the President shall be declared the winner if he has the highest number of votes cast at the election and not less than one-quarter of all the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the States of the Federation and the FCT Abuja.

The success of any election conducted in Nigeria is dependent on effective planning. The INEC is constitutionally required to conduct elections in Nigeria. In conducting free and fair elections in Nigeria, INEC must always ensure that the accreditation, voting, counting, collation, and result declaration stages of an election are appropriately conducted following its guidelines and regulations.

2.2.2 Stages of Election in United States of America

Step 1: Primaries and Caucuses

There are many people who want to be President, each with their own ideas about how the government should work. People with similar ideas belong to the same political party. This is where primaries and caucuses come in. Candidates from each political party campaign through the country to win the favor of their party members (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). Beginning in February the main voting events Primaries and Caucuses will lead to a selection of delegates who will represent the people at the upcoming conventions. The main focus will be on the results from Iowa New Hampshire Nevada and South Carolina which can usually determine who the final presidential nominee for each party will be (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). In a Caucus, party members

select the best candidate through a series of discussions and votes. In a Primary, Party members vote for the best candidate that will represent them in the general election.

Step 2: National Conventions: Each party holds a national convention to select a final presidential nominee. State delegates from the primaries and caucuses selected to represent the people will now “endorse” their favorite candidates and the final presidential nominee from each party will be officially announced at the end of the conventions (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). The presidential candidate also chooses a running mate (Vice Presidential candidate). The presidential candidates campaign throughout the country to win the support of the general population.

Step 3: General Election: People in every state across the country vote for one President and Vice President. When Americans go to the polls in November they will select their favorite presidential candidate and their running mate (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). When people cast their vote, they are actually voting for a group of people called electors. Except in the states of Maine and Nebraska, if a candidate receives the majority of the votes from the people of a state then the candidate will receive all electoral votes of that state. The presidential nominee with the most electoral votes becomes the President of the United States.

Step 4: Electoral College: The Electoral college is a process in which electors or representatives from each state in number proportional to the state’s population cast their vote and determine who will be president (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). Each state gets a certain number of electors based on its representation in Congress. There are a total of 538 electors selected according to each state’s policy. Each elector casts one vote following the general election, and the candidate who gets more than half (270) wins. The newly elected President and Vice President are inaugurated in January.

2.2.3 Voting In the United States

***Voting:** A number of voting methods are used within the various jurisdictions in the United States, the most common of which is the **first-past-the-post** system, where the highest-polling candidate wins the election (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). Under this system, a candidate who achieves a **plurality** (that is, the most) of vote wins. The **State of Georgia** uses a **two-round system**, where if no candidate receives a majority of votes, then there is a runoff between the two highest polling candidates.*

Since 2002, several cities have adopted instant-runoff voting. Voters rank the candidates in order of preference rather than voting for a single candidate. Under this system, if no candidate achieves more than half of votes cast, then the lowest polling candidate is eliminated, and their votes are distributed to the next preferred candidates. This process continues until one candidate achieves more than half the votes. In 2016, Maine became the first state to adopt instant-runoff voting (known in the state as ranked-choice voting) statewide for its elections, although due to state constitutional provisions, the system is only used for federal elections and state primaries.

Eligibility: The eligibility of an individual for voting is set out in the constitution and also regulated at state level. The constitution states that suffrage cannot be denied on grounds of **race or color, sex, or age for citizens eighteen years or older** (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). Beyond these basic qualifications, it is the responsibility of **state legislatures** to regulate voter eligibility. Some states ban convicted criminals, **especially felons**, from voting for a fixed period of time or indefinitely. The number of American adults who are currently or permanently ineligible to vote due to felony convictions is estimated to be 5.3 million. Some states also have legacy constitutional statements barring those legally declared incompetent from voting; such references are generally considered obsolete and are being considered for review or removal where they appear (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020).

About 4.3 million American citizens that reside in Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories do not have the same level of federal representation as those that reside in the 50 U.S. states. These areas only have non-voting members in the U.S. House of Representatives and no representation in the U.S. Senate. Citizens in the U.S. territories are also not represented in the Electoral College and therefore cannot vote for the president. Those in Washington, D.C. are permitted to vote for the president because of the Twenty-third Amendment (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020).

Voter registration: While the federal government has jurisdiction over federal elections, most election laws are decided at the **state** level. All U.S. states except **North Dakota** require that citizens who wish to vote be **registered**. In many states, voter registration takes place at the county or municipal level. Traditionally, voters had to register directly at state or local offices to vote, but in the mid-1990s, efforts were made by the federal government to make registering easier, in an attempt to increase turnout. The **National Voter Registration Act of 1993** (the "Motor Voter" law) required state governments that receive certain types of federal funding to make the voter registration process easier by providing uniform registration services through drivers' license registration centers, disability centers, schools, libraries, and mail-in registration. Other states allow citizens same-day registration on Election Day (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020).

An estimated 50 million Americans are unregistered. It has been reported that registering to vote poses greater obstacles for low-income citizens, racial minorities and linguistic minorities, Native Americans, and persons with disabilities. International election observers have called on authorities in the U.S. to implement measures to remediate the high number of unregistered citizens (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). In many states, citizens registering to vote may declare an affiliation with a political party. This declaration of affiliation does not cost money, and does not make the citizen a dues-paying member of a party. A party cannot prevent a voter from declaring his or her

affiliation with them, but it can refuse requests for full membership. In some states, only voters affiliated with a party may vote in that party's primary elections. Declaring a party affiliation is never required. Some states, including Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Washington, practice non-partisan registration.

Noncitizen voting: Federal law prohibits **noncitizens** from voting in federal elections.

As of 2024, 7 state constitutions specifically state that "only" a citizen can vote in elections at any level in that state: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, North Dakota, and Ohio.^[14]

Voter ID laws

Voter ID laws in the United States are laws that require a person to provide some form of official identification before they are permitted to register to vote, receive a ballot for an election, or to actually vote in elections in the United States. Proponents of voter ID laws argue that they reduce electoral fraud while placing only little burden on voters. Critics worry the costs to voters without IDs will outweigh unclear benefits it would have on real or perceived fraud.

Absentee and mail voting: Voters unable or unwilling to vote at polling stations on **Election Day** may vote via **absentee ballots**, depending on state law. Originally these ballots were for people who could not go to the polling place on election day. Now some states let them be used for convenience, but state laws still call them absentee ballots. Absentee ballots can be sent and returned by mail, or requested and submitted in person, or dropped off in locked boxes. About half the states and territories allow "no excuse absentee," where no reason is required to request an absentee ballot; others require a valid reason, such as infirmity or travel. Some states let voters with permanent disabilities apply for permanent absentee voter status, and some other states let all citizens apply for permanent status, so they will automatically receive an absentee ballot for each election. Otherwise a voter must request an absentee ballot before the election occurs (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020).

In Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah and Washington state, all ballots are delivered through the mail; in many other states there are counties or certain small elections where everyone votes by mail(Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020). As of July 2020, 26 states allow designated agents to collect and submit ballots on behalf of another voter, whose identities are specified on a signed application. Usually such agents are family members or persons from the same residence. 13 states neither enable nor prohibit ballot collection as a matter of law. Among those that allow it, 12 have limits on how many ballots an agent may collect. Americans living outside the United States, including active duty members of the armed forces stationed outside of their state of residency, may register and vote

under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). Almost half the states require these ballots to be returned by mail. Other states allow mail along with some combination of fax, or email; four states allow a web portal (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020).

A significant measure to prevent some types of fraud has been to require the voter's signature on the outer envelope, which is compared to one or more signatures on file before taking the ballot out of the envelope and counting it. Not all states have standards for signature review. There have been concerns that signatures are improperly rejected from young and minority voters at higher rates than others, with no or limited ability of voters to appeal the rejection. For other types of errors, experts estimate that while there is more fraud with absentee ballots than in-person voting, it has affected only a few local elections.

Early voting: Early voting is a formal process where voters can cast their ballots prior to the official Election Day. Early voting in person is allowed in 47 states and in Washington, D.C., with no excuse required. Only Alabama, New Hampshire and Oregon do not allow early voting, while some counties in Idaho do not allow it.

Voting equipment: The earliest voting in the US was through paper ballots that were hand-counted. By the late 1800s, paper ballots printed by election officials were nearly universal. By 1980, 10% of American voters used paper ballots that were counted by hand, which dropped below 1% by 2008. Mechanical voting machines were first used in the US in the 1892 elections in Lockport, New York. The voting equipment used by a given US county is related to the county's historical wealth. A county's use of punch cards in the year 2000 was positively correlated with the county's wealth in 1969, when punch card machines were at their peak of popularity. Counties with higher wealth in 1989 were less likely to still use punch cards in 2000. This supports the idea that punch cards were used in counties that were well-off in the 1960s, but whose wealth declined in the proceeding decades. Counties that maintained their wealth from the 1960s onwards could afford to replace punch card machines as they fell out of favor.

Levels of election

Federal elections

The United States has a presidential system of government, which means that the executive and legislature are elected separately. Article II of the United States

Constitution requires that the election of the U.S. president by the Electoral College must occur on a single day throughout the country; Article I established that elections for Congressional offices, however, can be held at different times. Congressional and presidential elections take place simultaneously every four years, and the intervening Congressional elections, which take place every two years, are called midterm elections.

The constitution states that members of the United States House of Representatives must be at least 25 years old, a citizen of the United States for at least seven years, and be a (legal) inhabitant of the state they represent. Senators must be at least 30 years old, a citizen of the United States for at least nine years, and be a (legal) inhabitant of the state they represent. The president and vice president must be at least 35 years old, a natural born citizen of the United States, and a resident in the United States for at least fourteen years. It is the responsibility of state legislatures to regulate the qualifications for a candidate appearing on a ballot paper, although in order to get onto the ballot, a candidate must often collect a legally defined number of signatures or meet other state-specific requirements.

Presidential elections

The president and the vice president are elected together in a presidential election. It is an indirect election, with the winner being determined by votes cast by electors of the Electoral College. In modern times, voters in each state select a slate of electors from a list of several slates designated by different parties or candidates, and the electors typically promise in advance to vote for the candidates of their party (whose names of the presidential candidates usually appear on the ballot rather than those of the individual electors). The winner of the election is the candidate with at least 270 Electoral College votes. It is possible for a candidate to win the electoral vote, and lose the (nationwide) popular vote (receive fewer votes nationwide than the second ranked candidate). This has occurred five times in US history: in 1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, and 2016. Prior to ratification of the Twelfth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1804), the runner-up in a presidential election became the vice president (Emma. Kampelman and Robert. 2020).

Electoral College votes are cast by individual states by a group of electors; each elector casts one electoral college vote. Until the Twenty-third Amendment to the United States Constitution of 1961, citizens from the District of Columbia did not have representation in the electoral college. In modern times, with electors usually committed to vote for a party candidate in advance, electors that vote against the popular vote in their state are called faithless electors, and occurrences are rare. State law regulates how states cast their electoral college votes. In all states except Maine and Nebraska, the candidate that wins the most votes in the state receives all its electoral college votes (a "winner takes all" system). From 1972 in Maine, and from 1996 in Nebraska, two electoral votes are awarded based on the winner of the statewide election, and the rest (two in Maine and three in Nebraska) go to the highest vote-winner in each of the state's congressional districts.

Congressional elections

Senate elections

The Senate has 100 members, elected for a six-year term in dual-seat constituencies (2 from each state), with one-third being renewed every two years.^[31] The group of the Senate seats that is up for election during a given year is known as a "class"; the three classes are staggered so that only one of the three groups is renewed every two years. Until the Seventeenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1913, states chose how to elect Senators, and they were often elected by state legislatures, not the electorate of states.

House of Representatives elections

The House of Representatives has 435 members, elected for a two-year term in single-seat constituencies. House of Representatives elections are held every two years on the first Tuesday after November 1 in even years. Special House elections can occur between if a member dies or resigns during a term. House elections are first-past-the-post elections that elect a Representative from each of 435 House districts that cover the United States. The non-voting delegates of Washington, D.C., and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands are also elected.

House elections occur every two years, correlated with presidential elections or halfway through a president's term. The House delegate of Puerto Rico, officially known as the resident commissioner of Puerto Rico, is elected to a four-year term, coinciding with those of the President.^[31]

As the redistricting commissions of states are often partisan, districts are often drawn which benefit incumbents. An increasing trend has been for incumbents to have an overwhelming advantage in House elections, and since the 1994 election, an unusually low number of seats has changed hands in each election. Due to gerrymandering, fewer than 10% of all House seats are contested in each election cycle. Over 90% of House members are reelected every two years, due to lack of electoral competition. Gerrymandering of the House, combined with the general deficiencies of the first-past-the-post voting system, and divisions inherent in the design of the Senate and of the Electoral College, result in a discrepancy between the percentage of popular support for various political parties and the actual level of the parties' representation. In particular, gerrymandering has been found to benefit the Republican Party more than it does the

State elections

State law and state constitutions, controlled by state legislatures regulate elections at state level and local level. Various officials at state level are elected. Since the separation of powers applies to states as well as the federal government, state legislatures and the executive (the governor) are elected separately. Governors and lieutenant governors are elected in all states, in some states on a joint ticket and in some states separately, some

separately in different electoral cycles. The governors of the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands are also elected. In some states, executive positions such as Attorney General and Secretary of State are also elected offices. All members of state legislatures and territorial jurisdiction legislatures are elected. In some states, members of the state supreme court and other members of the state judiciary are elected. Proposals to amend the state constitution are also placed on the ballot in some states.

As a matter of convenience and cost saving, elections for many of these state and local offices are held at the same time as either the federal presidential or midterm elections. There are a handful of states, however, that instead hold their elections during odd-numbered "off years."

Local elections

At the local level, county and city government positions are usually filled by election, especially within the legislative branch. The extent to which offices in the executive or judicial branches are elected vary from county-to-county or city-to-city. Some examples of local elected positions include sheriffs at the county level and mayors and school board members at the city level. Like state elections, an election for a specific local office may be held at the same time as either the presidential, midterm, or off-year elections.

Features of the election system in USA

Multiple levels of regulation

In the US, elections are actually conducted by local authorities, working under local, state, and federal law and regulation, as well as the US Constitution. It is a highly decentralized system.^[4]

In around half of US states, the secretary of state is the official in charge of elections; in other states it is someone appointed for the job, or a commission. It is this person or commission who is responsible for certifying, tabulating, and reporting votes for the state.

Party systems

Americans vote for a specific candidate instead of directly selecting a particular political party. The United States Constitution has never formally addressed the issue of political parties. The Founding Fathers such as Alexander Hamilton and James Madison did not support domestic political factions at the time the Constitution was written.^[42] In addition, the first president of the United States, George Washington, was not a member of any political party at the time of his election or throughout his tenure as president. Furthermore, he hoped that political parties would not be formed, fearing conflict and stagnation. Nevertheless, the beginnings of the American two-party system emerged from his immediate circle of advisers, with Hamilton and Madison ending up being the core leaders in this emerging party system. Due to Duverger's law, the two-party system

continued following the creation of political parties, as the first-past-the-post electoral system was kept.

Candidates decide to run under a party label, register to run, pay filing fees, etc. In the primary elections, the party organization stays neutral until one candidate has been elected. The platform of the party is written by the winning candidate (in presidential elections; in other elections no platform is involved). Candidates formally manage the campaign and fund raising organization independent of the party. The primary elections in the main parties are organized by the states, who also register the party affiliation of the voters (this also makes it easier to gerrymander the congressional districts). The party is thus little more than a campaign organization for the main elections.

However, elections in the United States often do become *de facto* national races between the political parties. In what is known as "presidential coattails", candidates in presidential elections usually bring out supporters who then vote for his or her party's candidates for other offices, usually resulting in the presidential winner's party gaining seats in Congress. On the other hand, midterm elections are sometimes regarded as a referendum on the sitting president or incumbent party's performance.

Ballot access

Ballot access refers to the laws which regulate under what conditions access is granted for a candidate or political party to appear on voters' ballots. Each state has its own ballot access laws to determine who may appear on ballots and who may not. According to Article I, Section 4, of the United States Constitution, the authority to regulate the time, place, and manner of federal elections is up to each State, unless Congress legislates otherwise. Depending on the office and the state, it may be possible for a voter to cast a write-in vote for a candidate whose name does not appear on the ballot, but it is extremely rare for such a candidate to win office.

Campaign finance

The funding of electoral campaigns has always been a controversial issue in American politics. Infringement of free speech (First Amendment) is an argument against restrictions on campaign contributions, while allegations of corruption arising from unlimited contributions and the need for political equality are arguments for the other side.^[45] Private funds are a major source of finance, from individuals and organizations. The first attempt to regulate campaign finance by legislation was in 1867, but major legislation, with the intention to widely enforce, on campaign finance was not introduced until the 1970s.

Primaries and caucuses

In partisan elections, candidates are chosen by primary elections (abbreviated to "primaries") and caucuses in the states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

A primary election is an election in which registered voters in a jurisdiction (*nominating primary*) select a political party's candidate for a later election. There are various types of primary: either the whole electorate is eligible, and voters choose one party's primary at the polling booth (an open primary); or only independent voters can choose a party's primary at the polling booth (a semi-closed primary); or only registered members of the party are allowed to vote (closed primary). The blanket primary, when voters could vote for all parties' primaries on the same ballot was struck down by the United States Supreme Court as violating the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of assembly in the case California Democratic Party v. Jones. Primaries are also used to select candidates at the state level, for example in gubernatorial elections.

Caucuses also nominate candidates by election, but they are very different from primaries. Caucuses are meetings that occur at precincts and involve discussion of each party's platform and issues such as voter turnout in addition to voting. Eleven states: Iowa, New Mexico, North Dakota, Maine, Nevada, Hawaii, Minnesota, Kansas, Alaska, Wyoming, Colorado and the District of Columbia use caucuses, for one or more political parties.

The primary and caucus season in presidential elections lasts from the Iowa caucus in January to the last primaries in June. Front-loading – when larger numbers of contests take place in the opening weeks of the season—can have an effect on the nomination process, potentially reducing the number of realistic candidates, as fund-raisers and donors quickly abandon those they see as untenable. However, it is not the case that the successful candidate is always the candidate that does the best in the early primaries. There is also a period dubbed the "invisible primary" that takes place before the primary season, when candidates attempt to solicit media coverage and funding well before the real primary season begins.

A state's presidential primary election or caucus usually is an indirect election: instead of voters directly selecting a particular person running for president, it determines how many delegates each party's national political convention will receive from their respective state. These delegates then in turn select their party's presidential nominee. Held in the summer, a political convention's purpose is also to adopt a statement of the party's principles and goals known as the platform and adopt the rules for the party's activities.

The day on which primaries are held for congressional seats, and state and local offices may also vary between states. The only federally mandated day for elections is Election Day for the general elections of the president and Congress; all other elections are at the discretion of the individual state and local governments.

Election information on the web

In most states of the U.S., the chief election officer is the secretary of state. In some states, local officials like a county registrar of voters or supervisor of elections manages the conduct of elections under the supervision of (or in coordination with) the chief election officer of the state. Many of these state and county offices have web sites that provide information to help voters obtain information on their polling places for each election, the

various districts to which they belong (e.g., House and Senate districts in the state and federal legislature, school boards, water districts, municipalities, etc.), as well as dates of elections and deadlines to file to run or register to vote. Some allow voters to download a sample ballot in advance of the election.

More systematic coverage is provided by websites devoted specifically to collecting election information and making it available to the public. Two of the better known such sites are Ballotpedia and Vote Smart. These are run by non-profit, non-partisan organizations. They have paid staffs and are much more tightly controlled than Wikipedia.

USElections.com^[47] tries to provide similar information but relies on volunteers in a way that is more like Wikipedia than Ballotpedia and Vote Smart.

The website 270towin provides actual electoral college maps (both current and historic) but also the ability to use an interactive map in order to make election predictions. Ongoing election news is reported as well as data on Senate and House races.^[48]

Criticisms and concerns in USA Election Administration

Voter suppression and subversion

Voting laws and procedures between the states vary as a consequence of the decentralized system, including those pertaining to provisional ballots, postal voting, voter IDs, voter registration, voting machines and vote counting, felony disenfranchisement, and election recounts. Thus the voting rights or voter suppression in one state may be stricter or more lenient than another state.^[50] Following the 2020 US presidential election, decentralized administration and inconsistent state voting laws and processes have shown themselves to be targets for voter subversion schemes enabled by appointing politically motivated actors to election administration roles with degrees of freedom to subvert the will of the people. One such scheme would allow these officials to appoint a slate of "alternate electors" to skew operations of the electoral college in favor of a minority party.^[51]

Vote counting time

As detailed in a state-by-state breakdown,^[52] the United States has a long-standing tradition of publicly announcing the incomplete, unofficial vote counts on election night (the late evening of election day), and declaring unofficial "projected winners", despite that many of the mail-in and absentee votes have not been counted yet.^[52] In some states, in fact, none of them have yet been counted by that time.^[52] This tradition was based on the assumption that the incomplete, unofficial count on election night is *probably* going to match the official count, which is officially finished and certified several weeks later. An intrinsic weakness of this assumption, and of the tradition of premature announcements

based on it, is that the public is likely to misapprehend that these particular "projected winning" candidates have *certainly* won before any official vote count has been completed, whereas in fact all that is truly known is that those candidates have some degree of likelihood of having won; the magnitude of the likelihood (all the way from very reliable to not reliable at all) varies by state because the details of election procedures vary by state.^[52] This problem affects all non-in-person votes, even those cast weeks before election day—not just late-arriving ones.

Election security

Allegations of voter impersonation, of which there are only 31 documented cases in the United States from the 2000–2014 period, have led to calls for Voter ID laws in the United States.^[54] Notable instances of allegations of stolen elections and election fraud include the 1948 United States Senate election in Texas, in which 202 "patently fraudulent" ballots gave future President Lyndon Johnson a seat in the US Senate and the 2018 North Carolina 9th congressional district election in which ballot tampering was admitted in witness testimony, including filling in blank votes to favor Republican candidates.^[56] A poll from April 2023 found that one in five American adults still believed the 2020 election was stolen from Trump, representing little change from 2021.

Structural critiques

The Electoral College has been criticized by some people for being un-democratic (it can choose a candidate who did not win the popular vote) and for encouraging campaigns to only focus on swing states, as well for giving more power to smaller states with less electoral votes as they have a smaller population per electoral vote compared to more populated states.

The first-past-the-post system has also been criticized for creating a *de facto* pure two-party system (as postulated in Duverger's law) that suppresses voices that do not hold views consistent with the largest faction in a particular party, as well as limiting voters' choices in elections.

SECTION THREE

ISSUES, GAP AND OUTCOME

3.1 Issues

In Nigeria, the recurring incidences of civil unrest and disturbances following the conduct of elections have continued to pose security concerns. Also, emerging security threats such as kidnapping, use of improvised explosive devices, political assassinations among others further deepen these challenges. These threats represent a clear and present danger to the image of Nigeria in particular and peaceful coexistence of the country in general. Without elections being held regularly and seen to be conducted in a transparently free and fair manner, democracy remains a sham, a forlorn hope, indeed an empty shadow of itself. It is common knowledge that elections, particularly in Nigeria, are often characterized by all manners of malpractices with their attendant, socio-political, economic and security challenges facing Nigeria as a nation.

3.2 Gap

From the review of related literature, it was observed that no study has been carried out to compare election administration in Nigeria and United States of America. Specifically, studies have not examined the differences in electoral processes between Nigeria and United States of America; ascertained the similarities in electoral processes between Nigeria and United States of America; or determined the lessons for Nigerian electoral processes from the United States of America's electoral process.

3.3 Outcome

The electoral processes in the United States of America (USA) and Nigeria share some similarities but also exhibit significant differences due to their unique political systems, history, and culture.

1. Electoral System

USA:

The USA uses an indirect electoral system for presidential elections through the Electoral College. Citizens vote for electors who then formally elect the president.

Congressional and state-level elections use a first-past-the-post system (Kerry, 2021).

Nigeria:

Nigeria uses a direct electoral system for presidential elections. The president is elected by a majority vote, but a candidate must secure at least 25% of the vote in at least 24 of the 36 states (plus the Federal Capital Territory) to win outright, ensuring widespread national support (Kerry, 2021).

2. Election Administration

USA:

Elections are decentralized and managed by state and local governments. There is no central electoral commission, leading to varying procedures across states.

Nigeria:

Elections are centrally managed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which oversees all electoral processes, ensuring uniformity across the country (Kerry, 2021).

3. Voting Eligibility

USA:

Voting is open to citizens aged 18 years or older. Registration is state-specific and often requires citizens to proactively register before voting.

Nigeria:

Voting is open to citizens aged 18 years or older. Voter registration is conducted by INEC, and a Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) is required to vote (Kerry, 2021).

4. Election Frequency

USA:

General elections are held every four years for the presidency, and every two years for Congress (House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate).

Nigeria:

General elections are held every four years, including elections for the presidency, the National Assembly, state governors, and state legislatures (Kerry, 2021).

5. Political Parties

USA:

The system is dominated by two major political parties: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Minor parties exist but rarely gain significant traction.

Nigeria:

Nigeria operates a multi-party system, though a few major parties, such as the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), dominate the political landscape (Kerry, 2021).

6. Campaign Financing

USA:

Campaign financing is heavily influenced by donations from individuals, corporations, and Political Action Committees (PACs). Campaigns are highly expensive and heavily regulated by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) (Kerry, 2021).

Nigeria:

Campaign financing is regulated by INEC, which sets limits on campaign spending. However, enforcement is often weak, and issues such as vote-buying and financial misconduct are prevalent.

7. Voting Technology

USA:

Voting methods vary by state and include electronic voting machines, paper ballots, and mail-in voting. There is also early voting and absentee voting (Kerry, 2021).

Nigeria:

Nigeria uses a mix of manual and electronic systems. The BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System) is used to verify voter identity and transmit results electronically.

Voting is done in person with paper ballots.

8. Challenges

USA:

Partisan gerrymandering.

Voter suppression concerns, especially among minorities.

Misinformation and cybersecurity risks.

Nigeria:

Electoral violence and intimidation.

Vote-buying and corruption.

Logistical challenges, such as delays in result collation.

9. Dispute Resolution

USA:

Disputes are resolved through the judiciary, including state courts and, ultimately, the Supreme Court for federal-level disputes.

Nigeria:

Disputes are resolved through election tribunals and appeals can go up to the Supreme Court. However, the process is often lengthy and criticized for lack of impartiality.

Key Similarities

Both countries emphasize democratic principles and allow for peaceful transitions of power.

Voting age is 18 in both nations.

Elections are conducted periodically to reflect the will of the people.

Key Differences

The USA employs an Electoral College for presidential elections, while Nigeria uses a majority vote system with regional requirements.

Nigeria has a centralized electoral authority (INEC), whereas the USA's system is highly decentralized.

Electoral violence and logistical challenges are more prevalent in Nigeria than in the USA.

This comparison highlights how historical, political, and cultural contexts shape the electoral processes in these two nations.

Although the presidential election in the United States of America comes up every four years just like in Nigeria which had its last presidential election in 2019, the nature and processes of the two countries' presidential elections differ considerably in some material respects (Kerry, 2021).

Unlike Nigeria, US has no central electoral commission:

In the U.S., whose democracy is over 200 years old, there is no central or federal electoral commission that conducts the presidential election.

Rather than have a federal commission that supervises the conduct of the election in its 50 states, the American system operates a heavily decentralised commission with each state saddled with the responsibility of conducting its own election.

In fact, all elections- federal, state and local – are conducted by the individual states, including choosing the electors in the Electoral College that elects the president.

In Nigeria, however, there is the Independent National Electoral Commission that supervises and conducts presidential elections in the country, all happening on the same day (Kerry, 2021).

The election takes place in the 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, in the West African nation.

INEC also conducts all the governorship elections in the 36 states.

However, while INEC also has the added responsibility of supervising the integrity of the election, especially as it relates to campaign finance, the US has Federal Elections Commission whose principal responsibility is to protect the integrity of the election process by providing transparency and fairly enforcing and administering federal campaign finance (Kerry, 2021).

Early voting in the US, none in Nigeria

In the U.S. presidential election, there is usually early voting which takes place several weeks running before the main Election Day.

Early voting can either be in-person at early voting stations or absentee which is by post.

The essence of early voting, which availability and time differ from one state to the other, according to political analysts, is to increase voter participation.

It is also meant to decongest polling stations on Election Day.

Early voting in the 2020 election was much more than it was in 2016.

Nearly 99 million American eligible voters had cast their votes before the Election Day which was November 3 in the 2020 American presidential election.

No deadline for presidential campaign in the US.

There is usually no deadline to campaign as candidates can still shop for votes even on Election Day.

The candidates normally use various platforms including TV adverts, podcasts, social media and even rallies to reach out to voters, especially in the swing states that are neither Blue nor Red.

The Blue states are traditionally pro-Democratic Party while the Red states are for the Republicans.

In the just concluded 2020 presidential election, the two dominant candidates – Messrs Trump and Biden – were seen campaigning intensely on D-Day.

U.S. President Donald Trump and Democratic presidential nominee, Joe Biden

In Nigeria, however, all campaigns and rallies stop a few days before Election Day.

Any political party or candidate who openly contravenes the deadline will incur the wrath of INEC.

With the advent of social media, Nigerian politicians contesting in elections now explore various social media platforms to reach out to their supporters and undecided voters even on Election Day as there is no clear provision in the Electoral Act that forbids them from doing so.

The Electoral College

In the U.S., Americans elect their president through the Electoral College while they elect members of the Congress directly (Kerry, 2021).

In the history of presidential elections in the US, only five presidents who did not win the popular votes have become president through the Electoral College.

The last one was Donald Trump who emerged president in 2016 in spite of losing the popular votes to Hillary Clinton, who was the candidate of the Democratic Party (Kerry, 2021).

What Mr Trump's win in 2016 means is that a winner may lose the popular votes and still emerge the real winner of the election.

Although the winner is mostly known once the election is over, members of the Electoral College, however, statutorily meet on December 14 to ratify the election of the winner.

A candidate needs to poll 270 votes of the Electoral College to emerge winner of the election. Mr Biden now has 273 from the 46 states where the results have been projected by the media, to edge out his closest challenger, Mr Trump.

Statutorily, the Electoral College has 538 electors from the fifty states plus Washington D.C.

Each state is allowed by the Federal Constitution to choose its own elector for the Electoral College in accordance with its own laws.

Most award all their electoral college votes to the candidate that gains the most votes in the state by whatever margin, while some award the votes on the basis of congressional districts won. In this election, one of Nebraska's five votes goes to Mr Biden, while the other four goes to Mr Trump who won the most votes in the state.

The Electoral College votes are awarded to states roughly in accordance to their population, but with each state having at least three votes. That is the reason that the largest state, California, has the highest number of electoral college votes (55) while small states like Wyoming, Montana and the Dakotas have three electoral votes each.

American presidential election is a two-step process. The general voters cast their ballots to elect the electors who in turn meet to formally elect the President.

Critics of the process say it is undemocratic because it sometimes prevents the collective choice of the generality of the voters from emerging winner of the election going by popular votes.

However, its promoters continue to play up its merit, saying it serves the purpose of avoiding outright domination by some states.

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, the people elect the president directly.

The candidate, who has the most valid votes cast and the necessary geographical spread, is declared the winner of the election by the country's electoral commission (Kerry, 2021).

Electronic voting in the U.S, none in Nigeria

While there is electronic voting in the United States, which has been on for years, Nigeria is yet to embrace it despite several agitations in different quarters calling for its application in the country.

Electronic voting means the use of computer and other digital-related devices to cast one's vote which is then sorted out via various processes by those saddled with the responsibility to do so to determine its validity or otherwise.

The latest person to add his voice to the use of electronic voting in Nigeria is former President Goodluck Jonathan.

Mr Jonathan said the adoption of e-voting would curb the ugly trend of politicians using thuggery and cultism to win elections in the country.

The Electoral Act (Amendment Bill) 2018 talked about the adoption of electronic voting in subsequent elections in the country. President Muhammadu Buhari, however, declined his assent to the amendment.

Critics of the Buhari administration had said Mr Buhari declined assenting to the bill because he feared being voted out of office in the 2019 presidential election, which he eventually won as the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

In denying the insinuation then, the Presidency via a release from Garba Shehu, presidential spokesperson, said the president declined his assent to the bill because there were "draft errors" in the document.

SECTION FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Conclusion

The electoral processes in the United States of America (USA) and Nigeria share some similarities but also exhibit significant differences due to their unique political systems, history, and culture. The USA uses an indirect electoral system for presidential elections through the Electoral College. Citizens vote for electors who then formally elect the president. Congressional and state-level elections use a first-past-the-post system. Nigeria uses a direct electoral system for presidential elections. The president is elected by a majority vote, but a candidate must secure at least 25% of the vote in at least 24 of the 36 states (plus the Federal Capital Territory) to win outright, ensuring widespread national support. Voting is open to citizens aged 18 years or older. Registration is state-specific and often requires citizens to proactively register before voting. Voting is open to citizens aged 18 years or older. Voter registration is conducted by INEC, and a Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) is required to vote.

4.2 Recommendations

Improving election administration in Nigeria can draw on strategies from the USA while considering Nigeria's unique socio-political and infrastructural challenges. Here are actionable recommendations based on best practices from the USA:

1. Strengthening Electoral Institutions: Independent Electoral Commission: Strengthen the independence of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) by ensuring non-partisan appointments and adequate funding. In the USA, election oversight bodies at the state level are often insulated from political interference. Like in the USA, elections are administered at the state or county level. Nigeria can empower local election offices to handle voter registration, polling, and counting to reduce bottlenecks.

2. Voter Registration and Accessibility

Online Voter Registration: Adopt secure online voter registration systems, as seen in the USA, to make registration easier and reduce human error.

Automatic Voter Registration (AVR): Implement AVR systems linked to national databases such as the National Identification Number (NIN) system. Early Voting and Vote-by-Mail: Introduce early voting and absentee voting (as in the USA) to reduce congestion on election day and improve voter turnout.

3. Use of Technology

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs): Gradually introduce EVMs with tamper-proof features for faster and more transparent results, as used in some U.S. states.

Election Management Software: Utilize secure and scalable software for voter roll management, polling logistics, and real-time reporting.

Cybersecurity Measures: Adopt U.S.-style election cybersecurity protocols to protect databases, electronic voting systems, and results transmission.

4. Transparent Electoral Processes

Independent Election Observers: Encourage partnerships with international and domestic election observers for accountability, similar to the role NGOs play in the USA.

Open Ballot Count: Like in the USA, ballots should be counted publicly at polling stations to ensure transparency.

Election Night Reporting: Establish a central online platform for real-time reporting of election results, as is standard in the USA.

5. Civic Education and Engagement

Public Awareness Campaigns: Run voter education programs about the importance of voting and how to participate, similar to the efforts by U.S. election commissions and NGOs.

Combat Disinformation: Collaborate with tech platforms to combat misinformation during elections, drawing on lessons from U.S. election monitoring efforts.

6. Election Workforce Training

Poll Worker Training: Train election officials and poll workers extensively, as seen in the USA, to ensure efficient operations and accurate reporting.

Volunteer Poll Workers: Recruit and train volunteers from the community, as done in the USA, to reduce staffing shortages.

7. Legal and Structural Reforms

Election Day as a Public Holiday: Like in some U.S. states, declare election days as public holidays to increase voter participation.

Campaign Finance Regulations: Enforce strict regulations on campaign financing, similar to the Federal Election Commission's oversight in the USA.

Dispute Resolution Mechanisms: Establish fast-track courts to address election disputes promptly, inspired by the efficiency of U.S. legal systems in election litigation.

8. Innovations for Inclusivity

Accessibility for Disabled Voters: Implement measures like tactile ballots, wheelchair-accessible polling stations, and mobile voting options, as practiced in the USA.

Language Assistance: Provide ballots and election materials in multiple languages spoken by local communities, modeled after U.S. practices under the Voting Rights Act.

9. Data-Driven Improvements

Post-Election Audits: Conduct routine post-election audits to identify and address irregularities, as done in the USA.

Data Analytics: Use data to track voter turnout, identify logistical issues, and optimize resources for future elections.

10. Building Trust and Transparency: Partner with media outlets to broadcast live election processes, as seen in U.S. elections.

Community Engagement: Hold town halls and stakeholder meetings to discuss reforms and address concerns about election integrity.

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